



Vaasan yliopisto
UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

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“It’s so nice to be at work!”

Adopting different perspectives
in understanding
Generation Y at work

ACTA WASAENSIA 339

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION 139
MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION

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Julkaisija Vaasan yliopisto	Julkaisupäivämäärä Joulukuu 2015	
Tekijä(t) Susanna Kultalahti	Julkaisun tyyppi Artikkeliväitöskirja	
	Julkaisusarjan nimi, osan numero Acta Wasaensia, 339	
Yhteystiedot Vaasan yliopisto Kauppatieteellinen tiedekunta Johtamisen yksikkö PL 700 FI-65101 VAASA	ISBN 978-952-476-650-0 (painettu) 978-952-476-651-7 (verkojulkaisu)	
	ISSN 0355-2667 (Acta Wasaensia 339, painettu) 2323-9123 (Acta Wasaensia 339, verkojulkaisu) 1235-7871 (Acta Wasaensia. Liiketaloustiede 139, painettu) 2323-9735 (Acta Wasaensia. Liiketaloustiede 139, verkojulkaisu)	
	Sivumäärä 259	Kieli englanti
	Julkaisun nimike "Onpa kiva olla töissä!" Tutkimus Y-sukupolven käsityksistä työelämän mielekkyydestä	
Tiivistelmä Yhteiskunnallisten muutosten seurauksena Y-sukupolvelaisten määrä tulee kasvamaan tulevina vuosina. Näiden vuosina 1979–1995 syntyneiden on sanottu haastavan työelämän sekä esimiehet ja henkilöstöjohtamisen. Heitä ei ole kuitenkaan tutkittu riittävästi, ja erityisesti suomalaisen Y-sukupolven tutkimus puuttuu. Tässä tutkimuksessa hyödynnetään 1004 tarinaa yhteensä 252 Y-sukupolvelaiselta. Tarinat on kerätty sosiaalisen median (Facebookin) kautta eläytymismenetelmän avulla. Niiden avulla pyritään lisäämään ymmärrystä Y-sukupolvesta työelämässä. Tutkimuksessa hyödynnetään lisäksi useita eri näkökulmia, jotka liittyvät mielekkään työn kuvaamiseen ja käsitteellistämiseen. Siten tutkimus tuottaa uutta tietoa myös työelämä tutkimukseen. Tutkimuksen tavoitteet ovat teoreettisia, metodologisia sekä käytännöllisiä. Tulosten perusteella voidaan todeta, että teoreettisten näkökulmien valossa Y-sukupolvi vaikuttaa arvostavan tilaa kasvulle ja kehitymiselle. Erityisesti esimiehen rooli nähdään tärkeänä, ja Y-sukupolvelaiset arvostavat kunnioitetuksi ja kuulluksi tuleamista sekä esimiehen valmentavaa otetta. Näin ollen myös henkilöstöjohtamisen rooli tulee kasvamaan, sillä esimiehet tarvitsevat taitoja, työkaluja ja aikaa esimiestehtävien hoitamiseksi. Henkilöstöjohtamisen käytäntöjen tulee tukea Y-sukupolven urapolkuja ja auttaa ammatillisessa kehityksessä. Teoreettisesta näkökulmasta tutkimuksen tulokset sekä tukevat vallitsevaa käsitystä Y-sukupolvesta, mutta myös lisäävät ymmärrystä siitä, miten Y-sukupolvi työelämää kuvaa. Metodologisesti tutkimus hyödynsi eläytymismenetelmää ensimmäistä kertaa liiketaloustieteen alalla. Lisäksi kokonaan digitaalisesti suoritettussa aineistonkeruussa on hyödynnetty sosiaalista mediaa. Käytännöllisesti tutkimus tuottaa hyödyllistä tietoa Y-sukupolvesta henkilöstöjohtamisen ammattilaisille sekä esimiehille.		
Asiasanat Y-sukupolvi, motivaatio, henkilöstöjohtaminen, esimies, eläytymismenetelmä, sosiaalinen media, Facebook		

Publisher Vaasan yliopisto	Date of publication December 2015	
Author(s) Susanna Kultalahti	Type of publication Selection of articles	
	Name and number of series Acta Wasaensia, 339	
Contact information University of Vaasa Faculty of Business Studies Department of Management P.O. Box 700 FI-65101 Vaasa Finland	ISBN 978-952-476-650-0 (print) 978-952-476-651-7 (online)	
	ISSN 0355-2667 (Acta Wasaensia 339, print) 2323-9123 (Acta Wasaensia 339, online) 1235-7871 (Acta Wasaensia. Business Administration 139, print) 2323-9735 (Acta Wasaensia. Business Administration 139, online)	
	Number of pages 259	Language English
	Title of publication "It's so nice to be at work!" Adopting different perspectives in understanding Generation Y at work	
Abstract <p>Changing demographics mean the number of Millennials—or members of Generation Y—found in working life will increase in the coming years. Born between 1979 and 1995, the changing situation could pose a challenge to supervisors and human resource management and affect working life in general. Currently, there is a lack of empirical evidence on Generation Y especially in the Finnish context.</p> <p>Drawing on 1004 stories collected via the method of empathy-based stories and social media (Facebook) from 252 Millennials, this study seeks to improve understanding of the role of Generation Y in working life and adopts different perspectives related to describing satisfactory working life to do so. Thus, the study also contributes to working life literature. The aims of the study are theoretical, methodological, and managerial.</p> <p>Based on this research, it is possible to state the following. In the light of different theoretical perspectives, Generation Y appears to value having the room and facilities for growth at work. The role of the supervisor is seen as especially important, and Millennials value being respected, heard, and coached by their supervisor. Thus, the role of HRM will increase as well, as supervisors need to be provided with sufficient skills, tools, and time. HR practices should also support Millennials in their career paths and enable their professional development.</p> <p>The implications of this study are threefold. Theoretically, the results both support and extend existing literature on Generation Y. Methodologically, this study adopted the method of empathy-based stories for the first time in business research, and utilized social media in the completely digital data collection process. The findings also provide useful information for human resource management practitioners and supervisors working with Generation Y.</p>		
Keywords Generation Y, motivation, Human Resource Management, supervisor, method of empathy-based stories, social media, Facebook		

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT¹

Imagine that one day Susanna is finalizing her thesis. She is thinking about the whole process and is feeling very grateful, glad, and excited. Why does Susanna feel like this? Who and what issues have taken her this far? Write a story concerning her journey regarding the thesis.

Well, there must have been pretty important people in her life during the process, and overall social relationships are very important to her. First, she has had great time with her supervisor, Professor Riitta Viitala. Riitta is a multi-blessing, and she is probably the only person without whose help it would be impossible for Susanna to be at this point. It is quite likely that in the hours of discussions arising from being Susanna's supervisor, Riitta has had her fill of challenging and needy Millennials. Susanna is deeply grateful that Riitta has always listened and blessed to have Riitta by her side as an example of life and how coaching should be conducted. Even when Susanna is full of doubt and uncertain how to proceed, five minutes with Riitta does the trick and everything seems possible again.

In addition to Riitta's excellent guidance and prompting to strive for one's dreams, Susanna has received valuable comments and *constructive feedback* from her official pre-examiners, Professor Pia Heilmann (Lappeenranta University of Technology) and Professor Emma Parry (Cranfield School of Management). Their ideas added the final touch to Susanna's thesis. Susanna is also privileged to have Professor Pia Heilmann as her opponent. However, Susanna takes full responsibility for all the choices, decisions, and thoughts presented in her study.

Another person who has been important to Susanna's thesis process has been Research Director, Docent Mikko Luoma. They have shared the process of co-writing an article as well as staying awake during a keynote. Susanna especially appreciates Mikko's ability to make jokes about almost anything.

In addition, other people have been important too. Susanna has enjoyed the *work environment* and *work community* in the Department of Management. She has had wonderful *colleagues* that have been there for her (at least at 8.30 for morning coffee, 11.00 for lunch and 14.00 for afternoon coffee). Susanna has especially enjoyed her time with doctoral students Piia Uusi-Kakkuri (the first

¹ After being dependent on the method of empathy-based stories (eläytymismenetelmä) for almost four years, I decided that it is more than fair to use the same approach in the acknowledgements.

person she got to know when starting work in the university and who made her macaroni casserole when needed), Suvi Einola (the soulmate partner in so many past and future crimes), Anni Rajala (the hilarious yet so honest and straightforward commenter who sometimes just cannot stop laughing), Hilpi Kangas (the sarcastic former roommate), Kati Saarenpää (the care-taking kitchen goddess), and Docent Tiina Brandt (the first client of SK-Travels during conference trips).

In addition to this lot, Susanna has had other amazing colleagues as well, from whom she has learned a lot and who have enabled *development* concerning her academic skills, like Docent Niina Koivunen, Dr Maria Järnlström, and Dr Jenni Kantola. Professor Adam Smale, as the head of the Human Resource Management Research Group and Susanna's current superior, has been of great help during the final steps in the thesis process. Susanna has also received *encouragement* and *respect* from the whole personnel of the Department of Management. In addition, the special contribution from Dr Seppo Luoto is worthy of mention.

It is no wonder that Susanna often thinks that *it's so nice to be at work*.

Susanna's *learning* process has been facilitated by the seminars organized by the HRM Research Group. In addition, the courses and management tutorials organized by KATAJA (the Finnish doctoral program in business studies) and the Graduate School of the University of Vaasa have been helpful in providing tools and techniques that Susanna has needed along the way. In addition, various discussants, opponents, and chairs in several international and domestic conferences have *challenged* Susanna to communicate her work to different audiences. In *communicating* the final piece of writing, Andrew Mulley and the Academic Editing team have been excellent partners in proof-reading Susanna's thesis and essays.

Even though the *support* cannot always be measured in *monetary terms*, different parties have supported the *flexibility* that has enabled Susanna's work, and her thesis to see the daylight. She would like to express her gratitude to the Faculty of Business Studies in the University of Vaasa, The Graduate School of the University of Vaasa, Vaasa University Foundation, The Foundation of Economic Education, Tapio and Seija Luoma Foundation, Marcus Wallenberg Foundation, Otto A. Malm Foundation, The Finnish Work Environment Fund, The Women Association in Lapua (Lapuan Naisyhdistys Ry), The Finnish Concordia Fund, and the KAUTE Foundation.

Even though the thesis process has sometimes been stressful and exhausting, Susanna has been able to maintain her *work-life balance*.

Friends and relatives have constantly shown interest in Susanna's work, but also kept her mind on other important things in life. She is especially grateful to have Janica and Tiia (the Superultimate Babes) in her life.

As for the *family*, Susanna has a witty and provocative brother Miikka whose rock solid opinions and viewpoints have posed the hardest trial of Susanna's work. No opponent should be feared after Miikka. However, Susanna is proud of her brother and his "real job".

Susanna's parents Marjo and Matti are the most important and meaningful persons she is grateful to. If love and devotion is measured by the amount of dust and dog hair that Susanna's mother has cleaned in Susanna's apartment, Susanna's mom would win the first prize (and also in always being right). Mom is the first person Susanna calls in joy and sorrow, and she always has the time, interest, and patience to listen. She is Susanna's best friend. Susanna's father Matti has always been proud of her and been interested in her work. He says that Susanna would succeed well if people were rewarded for being cheeky, and that debating while defending her thesis is going to be the easiest part for her. Susanna is always welcome to go home to Evijärvi, and that means a lot to her. She will always have her family beside her.

Also little Miss Hippu, the four-legged friend of shedding dog hair and pure cuteness, has been by Susanna's side, at least during the nights. From Hippu Susanna has learned the valuable lessons of patience and perseverance, as well as discovering the magic world of sticks and other wonders of nature.

Finally, Susanna has had Jussi in her life providing encouragement and sharing various dreams and wishes. He has witnessed every step of the way during the thesis process, and has always listened with enthusiasm to her going on and on and on about the research and new ideas along the way. He has also had titanic faith in Susanna's graduation one day. However, at some point he probably thought that extra-pressure would do no harm (he was probably worried that they would not get the sword one day), so they made a bet. She won, case closed. Susanna hopes that now that Jussi is holding this book in his hands, he figures out why she was sometimes stressed about cleaning and other domestic chores. But it was worth it, wasn't it?

Vaasa (and partly mentally in Evijärvi), October 2015

Susanna Kultalahti

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Abbreviations

Millennials	Members of Generation Y
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
SHRM	Strategic Human Resource Management
MEBS	Method of empathy-based stories

Part II: Essays

This dissertation is based on five appended papers that are:

- [1] Kultalahti, S. & R. L. Viitala (2014). Sufficient challenges and a weekend ahead – Generation Y describing motivation at work. *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 27:4, 569–582.²
- [2] Kultalahti, S. & R. Viitala (2015). Generation Y – Challenging clients for HRM? *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 30:1, 101–114. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the British Academy of Management Conference 2014, Belfast, UK.³
- [3] Kultalahti, S. (in process). Stories of work engagement among Generation Y. Paper under review in journal. An earlier version of this paper has been presented in the Nordic Academy of Management Conference 2015, Copenhagen, Denmark and Työelämän Tutkimuspäivät 2012, Tampere, Finland.
- [4] Kultalahti, S. (in process). Supervisor as a personal trainer? Generation Y's perceptions of managerial coaching. Paper under review in journal. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 13th International Conference on Society for Global Business & Economic Development 2014, Ancona, Italy.
- [5] Kultalahti, S. & M. Luoma (in process). Towards new people management – Generation Y's perceptions of the role and importance of HRM practices. Paper under review in journal. An earlier version of this paper was presented in Työelämän Tutkimuspäivät 2014, Tampere, Finland.

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*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

Robert Frost

/to my family

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Working life is going through a revolution in terms of demographic changes. The number of people in work is decreasing compared to the number of people outside it, and more people are exiting the job market than entering (Tiainen 2012). At the same time, the effects brought about by retirement and the aging workforce are more noticeable in Finland than in other OECD country (The Finnish Ministry of Labour 2003).

These structural shifts in Western and also in Finnish society have recently been noted, as the change has already started and will continue for some years. According to Eurostat (2015) and the Finnish Ministry of Labour (2003), the reasons behind these current and forthcoming challenges in the changing workforce are, for example, unemployment rates, working conditions and health of the workforce and its motivation, the actual retirement age, and the length of time young people spend in higher education. Although the different sizes of the generations currently represented in the workforce are not the only reason for these shifts, it is however an indisputable issue and characteristic of Finnish demographics. In fact, according to Turner (1998), these issues are also a major cause of generational tensions, and of the generational conflicts that can evolve around them. Turner suggests that more attention needs to be paid to generational cohesion.

All these factors pose a challenge for those managing young employees such as Millennials, or the members of Generation Y. Born between 1978 and 1995 (Smola & Sutton 2002; Arsenault (2004) prolongs the span from 1981 to 2000), Generation Y will be the biggest generation in working life by 2020 worldwide (Erickson 2008) and also in Finland (Alasoini 2010).

It is noteworthy that for the first time since 1985, the biggest group of employees in Finland is under 40 years old. In fact, approximately 45 % of the workforce in 2020 will comprise members of Generation Y. The rapid and radical nature of this change is even more apparent in light of the fact that in 2010, only 20 % of employees in Finland belonged to this generation. (Alasoini 2010.) Examining and understanding this group of people, namely Generation Y, is therefore essential to those monitoring Finnish working life, and the group's expectations

and perceptions should be critically and thoroughly understood. This does not, however, mean that we can neglect or ignore other generations or age groups.

Nevertheless, there is a lack of research in the Finnish context and with Finnish young employees because much of the existing research was conducted in the USA (see e.g., the meta-analysis of Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt, and Gade 2012). Giancola (2006) also expressed concern over whether people from different cultural backgrounds experienced the key moments that shape the generational mindset in a similar way. This emphasizes the need for more research in the Finnish context too, as generations are bound to their cultural and national backgrounds.

In fact, several studies support the view that organizations who recognize and address intergenerational issues and thus counter the issues caused by differing generational views, will perform better than those who ignore this aspect (Gursoy, Maier & Chi 2008; Smola & Sutton 2002). Otherwise the conflicts could result in severe problems, such as decreased performance and productivity followed by decreased job satisfaction (Kupperschmidt 2000). The conflicts could be faced with different means that respect the needs of each generation, such as mentoring and reverse mentoring, flexible practices and policies, and intergenerational training programs (Gursoy, Chi & Karadag 2013).

Moreover, studies show that certain matters should be taken into consideration especially when managing Generation Y employees. For example, Gursoy et al. (2013) found existing differences in work values between different generations among frontline employees from different ethnic backgrounds in North America. They suggest that Millennials prefer strong leadership, value work-life balance, and expect managers to be role models and mentors. Further, their capabilities in technological solutions and in ways of communicating have a crucial effect in workplaces. The authors also imply that collisions between other generations in the workplace are inevitable. For example, Millennials' preference for balancing their professional and private lives could be somewhat difficult to appreciate by leaders coming from other generations, as literature has identified differences between generations at least in work values (Cogin 2012; Cennamo & Gardner 2008; Chen & Choi 2008), job satisfaction (Costanza et al. 2012), attitudes towards work and career (Macky, Gardner & Forsyth 2008), and work-family conflict (Beutell 2013). In addition, the attitude of 'living to work' has been replaced by 'working to live' among Generation Y (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak 2000).

However, the discussion around Generation Y is not unanimous, and there are differing views on whether generations exist or to what extent different

generations have a different mindset, values, and perceptions. For example, in a Finnish study Pyöriä, Saari, Ojala, and Siponen (2013) found no differences in work values between responses from different periods of time, that is, from different generations. The authors concluded that the existence of generational differences could not be confirmed in their study, and also suggested that the distinctive features that have been attributed to Generation Y are exaggerated. However, they admitted Generation Y is not as difficult or challenging as some previous research might have concluded.

In line with the conclusions by Pyöriä et al. (2013), this study does not seek to answer the question of whether Generation Y exists or not, and whether it has different characteristics to older generations. Instead, in this study it is accepted that Generation Y as a phenomenon is at least to some extent institutionalized (see Berger & Luckmann 1967), in that it is involved in public discussions, media, and research. Followed by the line of thought provided by Berger and Luckmann, generations are built in the communication between people, and are an outcome of that interaction.

Thus, the Generation Y phenomenon exists in a sense that it has been given a name and is discussed in different media. One might claim that the young people have always been different and challenging. However, the view that this particular generation has some special characteristics, has gained support in some studies (e.g., Solnet, Kralj & Kandampully 2012; Furnham, Eracleous & Chamorro-Premuzic 2009; Wong, Gardiner, Lang & Coulon 2008). This is also the starting point in this particular study, as it concentrates on understanding this Generation Y phenomenon. In addition, the current research views Millennials as not such a coherent group as has often been proposed (as in Macky et al. 2008 and Loughlin & Barling 2001). Additionally, this study does not settle for just describing Generation Y as it is, but seeks to understand how Millennials and their special characteristics should be acknowledged in HRM, an expansion that incorporates consideration of the role of those supervising the group.

1.2 Research setting and objectives

The aim of this study is improve understanding of Generation Y in the working life context in terms of what Millennials find motivating and their perception of satisfactory working life. In addition, this study also aims to understand Millennials as clients of HRM and as subordinates of supervisors.

The overarching research agenda is to:

Deepen understanding of Generation Y in working life.

This agenda is approached with three main research questions that are linked to the threefold objective of this study, the theoretical, methodological, and managerial.

- *What are Generation Y's perceptions of working life examined from different theoretical perspectives?*
- *How can a research process be carried out in the digital age? Testing social media in data collection.*
- *How can Generation Y be understood as a client of HRM?*

This study positions itself in the field of management and especially in Human Resource Management (HRM), the main context for discussion of working life. The frames of references comprise of motivational theories, especially the two-factor theory, psychological contract, work engagement, managerial coaching, and HRM. The study is also related to diversity management. When it comes to generational research, several fields in addition to business and management studies have been interested in the topic from their own points of view. These include sociology, social psychology, and psychology among others.

Next, I will explain the ontological and epistemological assumptions that have led to certain methodological choices. Ontologically, this study examines perceptions of meaningful work and what makes working life satisfactory, perceptions that are inevitably subjective. Thus, the informants provide their own interpretations of what makes work meaningful and satisfactory. However, the dominant norms and values in society ensure individuals believe in and recognize what is meaningful, and these perceptions have an impact on the evaluation of the informants. In addition, life stage and life history have an effect, which might lead to a certain group of people, for example Generation Y, interpreting and evaluating the meaningfulness of work in the same way. Thus, interpretations are rarely purely individual or independent, as different backgrounds and frames influence people's views and reflections.

The epistemological choices of the study are direct consequences of its ontological assumptions. In this study, a deliberate choice was made to use Millennials themselves as the informants. Another option would have been to turn to external informants, such as supervisors. In addition, the data were not collected in the form of, for example, a survey, as the informants were provided

with the chance to offer their own interpretations (subjectivism). Thus, the data are interpretations of the matter rather than expectations.

Furthermore, the methodology of the study concerns the method of empathy-based stories (MEBS) and the related analysis methods, content analysis and discourse analysis. This study is based on data collected in 2012, including 1004 stories from 252 Millennials, who were reached mainly via social media. The link to the survey was shared in Facebook, and by using the snowball method (see page 48 for the definition), the informants were gathered quite quickly. Each informant provided four stories that were based on given background stories concerning motivation and leadership in both positive and negative contexts. The data collection process is more carefully explained in chapter 3.3.

In addition to their stories, the informants also provided some background information, such as gender, educational background, work situation, type of contract, and number of previous contracts. This information is used in the essays related to this study. Furthermore, different theoretical perspectives have also been adopted in the essays of this dissertation. Utilizing different samples and analyzing methods has led to using a multi-method approach in this study in order to achieve a deeper understanding of Millennials in working life.

Table 1 presents the essays of this study and their basic information, such as sample, method of analysis, research questions, or aim of the research, and key concepts and backgrounds. The full essays are attached to this study and comprise Part II of this dissertation.

Table 1. Articles and essays of the thesis.

<p>Sufficient challenges and a weekend ahead - Generation Y describing motivation at work</p>	<p>RQ1. Which factors do Millennials see as Motivating or demotivating at work and in the workplace? RQ2. What do these results reveal of their perceptions of motivation compared to the literature on motivation? RQ3. How should the emerging results be taken into consideration by HRM in organizations? Sample: 62 working Millennials with a permanent contract Scripts: Positive and negative motivation Key concepts: Generation Y; Human Resource Management; Motivation Analyzing method: Content analysis</p>
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<p>Generation Y – Challenging Clients for HRM?</p>	<p>RQ1. Which factors do Millennials consider motivating at work? RQ2. What do these factors reveal from the perspective of the psychological contract? RQ3. How might HRM practices respond to these expectations? Sample: 62 working Millennials with a permanent contract Scripts: Positive and negative motivation Key concepts: Generation Y; Psychological contract; Human resource management; Motivation Analyzing method: Content analysis</p>
<p>Stories of work engagement among Generation Y</p>	<p>Proposition 1. There are differences when working Millennials and non-working Millennials describe motivating and demotivating issues in working life. Proposition 2. There are consequences arising from Millennials' characteristics that affect HRM efforts to attract non-working Millennials and engage working Millennials. Sample: 96 Millennials with permanent jobs and 77 Millennials studying full time Scripts: Positive and negative motivation Key concepts: Generation Y; Motivation; HRM practices Analyzing method: Content analysis</p>
<p>The supervisor as a personal trainer? Generation Y's perceptions of managerial coaching</p>	<p>RQ1. What kind of perceptions do Millennials have concerning supervisors? RQ2. How is the idea of managerial coaching represented in Millennials' stories? RQ3. What are the implications for supervisors and HRM? Sample: 252 Millennials Scripts: Positive and negative leadership Key concepts: Generation Y; Managerial coaching; Leadership; Supervisor Analyzing method: Discourse analysis</p>
<p>Towards New People Management: Generation Y's Perception of the Role and Importance of HRM Practices</p>	<p>Aim: To examine human resource management (HRM) practices and their consequences as perceived by members of Generation Y Sample: 252 Millennials Scripts: Positive and negative motivation Positive and negative leadership Key concepts: Generation Y; Human Resource Management; HRM practices Analyzing method: Content analysis (including correlation analyses)</p>

1.2.1. Theoretical objectives

The generational discussion has so far been rather normative, and has been influenced greatly by stereotyping and the popular press (see page 38). In other words, the discussion often lacks empirical research and evidence, is not criticized or questioned, and is populist in nature. However, this type of literature cannot be underestimated, since at the same time, it also constructs the current perception of generations, including Generation Y. Especially in the Finnish context, the discussion has been dependent on foreign research, and thus, the Finnish context has to some extent been neglected. Hence, this study contributes to the academic discussion on the generational perspective, enhances the knowledge of Generation Y as a whole and especially of the Finnish element of it, and of their views on what they find appealing in working life.

The research on Generation Y has relied on many different concepts in its attempts to understand Millennials' relationship with working life. This conceptual jungle is also a considerable challenge to working life research in general. Thus, another theoretical objective concerns the multifaceted research on the relationship between individuals and work, and this study seeks to bridge the gap between different concepts. This relationship has been of interest to researchers and academics for decades, even centuries, and during this time the emphasis has been related to several approaches and views. At present, the discussion revolves around, for example, performance, well-being, and job satisfaction. However, no overarching or ideal framework or concept capable of capturing the phenomena of individuals at work has yet been proposed. Instead, different concepts have been introduced over time. In relation to these elements, this thesis also contributes to the academic discussion on what constitutes a satisfying working life. Thus, the aim of this study is also to review the concepts that describe working life from the employee's perspective, and discuss these concepts in relation to each other. This could benefit the Generation Y research as well, because comparing the concepts and the findings based on them improves the understanding of the phenomenon and offers a more holistic picture of Generation Y.

The chosen concepts involved are job satisfaction, work motivation, a rewarding job, the psychological contract, and work engagement. They form the theoretical background of this study alongside the existing Generation Y literature, and describe what might constitute a satisfying working life in the light of recent theoretical discussion. The concepts were chosen based on their relatively solid foundations and position in the literature, and their relevance to this study. They have also been used in previous research on Generation Y. This study also

provides a comparison between these concepts. Similar comparisons have been made previously, but they have often used only a few of these concepts. The antecedents and consequences of these concepts are listed and presented, and the paper also examines whether the concepts overlap or if they stand alone.

Additionally, this study contributes to the theoretical discussion related to working life and especially the relationship between individuals and work. Thus, secondly, there are theoretical objectives in the essays that are part of this study, an example being the accuracy and relevance of Herzberg's two-factor theory concerning Generation Y reviewed in Essay 1. In addition, the psychological contract is viewed in the light of Generation Y in Essay 2. Further, the articles discuss HRM practices and leadership issues as they relate to Generation Y, thus contributing to the literature on HRM, leadership, and generations.

1.2.2. Methodological objectives

In addition to meeting its theoretical objectives, this study aims to add value to the methodological discussion in the digital age through its discussion of using social media in the data gathering process. In so doing it reports on experiences of using a relatively unfamiliar data collection method in the business field, and examines its benefits and potential disadvantages.

In addition, the data collection method used in the current research, the method of empathy-based stories, despite its theoretical and well-established roots, has attracted relatively little business research attention, and has not been used in generational research either. The current study reflects the experience of adopting this method in a new fields of research, and also extends our knowledge of the potential of the method in qualitative research generally.

Moreover, in this study, this method is combined with using social media and specifically Facebook as an engine to reach potential informants. The aim is to find out how social media and especially Facebook can be used in finding informants, and compared to interviewing, for example, should produce more informants that will improve the process of quantifying the data. However, the study is first and foremost qualitative in nature, and hence questionnaires did not support the overall study setting.

These two choices, adopting MEBS in the business field and utilizing social media, contribute to the literature on data collection methods. They also reflect data collection in the twenty-first century and the digital age. The experiences

and results from the data collection process are discussed and reflected in this study.

Moreover, the research on Generation Y and working life overall has been to a relatively great extent quantitative. By adopting qualitative methods, this study contributes also to these fields by providing qualitative-based research.

1.2.3. Managerial objectives

In addition to its theoretical and methodological objectives and contribution, managerial implications and suggestions for practice are well represented in the study. The introduction and the essays increase the understanding of Generation Y from the practitioners' point of view, especially where HRM professionals and supervisors are concerned. Hence, the third main purpose of the study is to enhance the information on Generation Y in working life, especially in the Finnish context.

These managerial objectives support the aim to deliver practical implications. The HR function is responsible for organizing employee-related practices in the workplace, and supervisors often handle the implementation of these practices in routine work. Thus, this study would be incomplete if it neglected to explain its practical relevance and settled for only explaining Generation Y's relation to work as such. As a consequence, this study aims at providing information for HRM in how HRM should take Generation Y into account when they are attracted, recruited, and engaged, as well as how they are motivated. This third objective also responds to the necessity for academic research to have a societal impact.

1.3 Main concepts in the study

Generation Y

This study concentrates on deepening the understanding of Generation Y at work. Generation Y refers to people who are born approximately between 1978 and 1995 (Smola & Sutton 2002). Although differences of opinion remain between scholars concerning the most apt birth years, and because a definite time frame cannot be stated, the thesis relates to this definition by Smola and Sutton (2002). It has been used in the data collection process as well to distinguish informants between generations.

Members of Generation Y are often referred to as *Millennials*. This term is also used in parallel with Generation Y in this study. Different scholars have labelled

this particular generation and its members in other ways too, but Generation Y and Millennials are the most widely used and recognized. However, as this generation was born and been raised in a time of rapid technological changes and development, Millennials have often been labelled *digital natives* as well. The label refers to their capability and willingness to harness technology to serve their needs. They are comfortable using multiple devices and technology in their everyday actions.

Digital age and social media

Millennials have been the first generation to have been “bathed in bits and bytes” (Palfrey & Gasser 2008), in other words to grow up with technology, such as video games, cell phones, computers, Internet, email, and digital music players. In fact, they have spent considerably more time online and watching TV than reading. Thus, their ways of interacting with the world and with other people is heavily influenced by digital solutions (Prensky 2001).

Moreover, according to current beliefs, this young generation has notably superior technology skills compared to older generations. In addition, differences in using technology and growing up with it can have an impact on learning styles and preferences (Jones & Czerniewicz 2010).

Although usage of the Internet has grown enormously, the growth in the use of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, Wikipedia, or blogs has been even more rapid (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). Social media enables online dialogue and interaction with people from all over the world (Briones, Kuch, Fisher Liu and Jin 2011), and it can be defined by using two other concepts, Web 2.0 and User Generated Content (UGC). The former includes the changing nature of how the World Wide Web is being utilized in collaborative way, and also the tools and functionalities that are used in creating continuously modified content. The latter describes the various media that are created by end-users and that are also publically available (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010).

Method of empathy-based stories

The method of empathy-based stories (MEBS) is a data collection method where informants respond to and reflect on background stories or scripts. The scripts describe a situation or a setting in a manner that is usually relatively short and not too detailed. However, the informants can be prompted with different choices

of words or descriptions in order to produce suitable data. The stories that the informants write are not merely essays, as the informants are provided with at least two diverse scripts. The interest often lies in revealing whether themes or issues change when one factor is varied. (Eskola & Suoranta 2005: 110–111; Eskola 1997: 5–7.)

Although the informants' stories concern a third party, that is, the protagonist in the scripts, MEBS assumes that the informants are able to interpret, perceive, and analyze the various social situations represented in the scripts. Thus, the informants empathize with the situations in the scripts. Another assumption is that the acts, or in this case the informants' stories, are not random but based on their own actions and logic. Thus, the informants reflect upon their own experiences, values, understanding, and expectations while responding to the scripts. (Eskola 1997: 12–15.)

According to Eskola (2001: 78), the informants' stories are not necessarily real or true, but are possible stories. Having said that, the stories can be seen as reflecting the informants' perception of the phenomenon, and thus represent reality in the form of the stories. Even though some of the stories can be stereotypical, it is not seen as a problem, as people can make decisions and interpretations based on these very same stereotypes (Eskola 2001: 78; in Hietamäki 2013). At the same time, the stories might reveal themes or issues that the researcher was not aware of beforehand. Thus, MEBS is a suitable way of finding new viewpoints but can also offer confirmation of more familiar issues (Eskola 2001: 78).

1.4 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is organized in two parts. The first part consists of five chapters and is followed by the second part, which includes reprints from five individual essays. The introductory chapter here presents the background of the study, establishes the need for further research, and presents the theoretical, methodological, and practical objectives of the study. The next chapter discusses Generation Y's relation to work, and has three purposes. First, the chapter presents the concepts used in prior research to illustrate what constitutes satisfactory working life. Second, this chapter presents Generation Y as it has been discussed in previous literature. Third, the second chapter discusses human resource management's role in creating satisfactory elements in the workplaces and in working life overall. The third chapter presents the methodological part of this dissertation, including research design, the data gathering process and its

elements as well as the methods of analysis. The fourth chapter provides summaries for each of the five individual essays, and presents their contribution to the dissertation. The discussion and conclusions of this study are found under the title “Generation Y at work”.

The second part of the manuscript consists of reprints of the five original essays, each having their individual implications. Essays 1 and 2 were co-authored by Kultalahti and Viitala. Essays 3 and 4 are sole authored. Essay 5 was co-authored by Kultalahti and Luoma. Kultalahti was the lead author in in all of the essays and had the main responsibility for planning, data collection, analysis, writing, and composing the essays, and for managing the review processes.

2 UNDERSTANDING GENERATION Y'S RELATION TO WORK

The aims of this chapter are twofold: First, it presents the theoretical background of this study by discussing the elements of satisfactory work and working life, which in academic discussion and the previous literature has been approached via several concepts, of which probably the most often used ones are job satisfaction, work motivation, rewarding work, the psychological contract, and work engagement. These concepts are introduced and compared in this chapter. Second, this chapter will introduce the concept of a generation and discuss generational matters and research, as well as presenting the previous literature on Generation Y in working life. As a result, this chapter introduces the academic discussions that are relevant for this study and utilized in attempts to understand Generation Y's expectations and valuations concerning work. Further, this study is particularly focused on the relationship between Generation Y and work. The aim of this study is not to describe Generation Y itself, but to describe its relationship to work. Figure 1 illustrates the structure and positioning of this chapter.

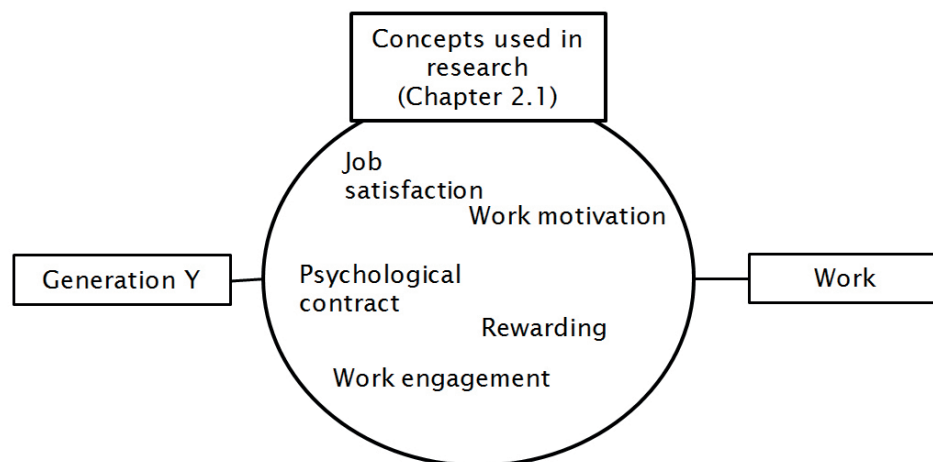


Figure 1. The structure and positioning of the chapter.

2.1 Conceptualizing satisfactory working life

The question of what people want from their job has attracted the attention of researchers for several decades (e.g., Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman 1959). The aim of this chapter is to present the central concepts (namely job satisfaction, work motivation, a rewarding job, the psychological contract, and work engagement) that have been used in discussing people's expectations, attitudes, and preferences for work and working life. These concepts are also compared, while at the same time this chapter presents the theoretical background of this study.

The choice of these five particular concepts does not diminish or undermine the importance and usability of other related concepts. Satisfactory working life and individuals' relationship to work have been studied through dozens of definitions and frameworks in addition to those presented in this study. These particular concepts were chosen for several reasons. First, as the data collection setting included informants who were not working and those who had only a brief employment history, the author decided not to include certain concepts, for example, that of work identity, as they would fit better to informants that actually have experience of working life. Second, the researcher's perception and understanding of the phenomenon and own interests guide the choices and preferences in the study. Third, the data have also had an effect on the concepts chosen.

These concepts are commonly used in other research as well as that on Generation Y, and have a rather strong academic grounding. For example, in their meta-analysis, Costanza et al. (2012) examined job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to turn over in a generational setting. However, they struggled with the meta-analysis and suggested that far more empirical research would be needed in order to isolate possible generational differences. Moreover, they encouraged researchers to concentrate on work-related issues as, for example, the studies on leadership, motivation and training, were somewhat unreliable and scarce. The following sub chapters are dedicated to the concepts.

Job satisfaction

For several decades, researchers have tried to build a comprehensive model to capture the complexity of job satisfaction. However, different approaches have provided differing views especially concerning the basis and causes of job

satisfaction. For example, job satisfaction is seen to stem either from work and the work environment or from more personality-influenced factors. In some theories these two views are also combined as the foundations of job satisfaction. (Judge & Klinger 2008.)

Nevertheless, there has been some agreement among researchers, and especially Locke's (1976: 1304) definition of job satisfaction has received considerable attention in research. That definition is that job satisfaction is "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences." Several factors are described in the literature to have an effect on the perception of being satisfied with one's job, such as pay, promotions, coworkers, supervision, and work (Smith, Kendall and Hulin 1969) as well as recognition, working conditions, and company and management (Locke 1976). Spector (1997) states simply that "job satisfaction is the degree to which people like their jobs." Furthermore, job satisfaction is often seen to comprise two dimensions, intrinsic (e.g., the work itself, supervisor, and colleagues) and extrinsic (e.g., pay and promotions) (Judge & Klinger 2008).

In addition, Locke (1976) has formulated in his value-percept model, that personal values also have a great influence on what is perceived as satisfying at work. The formula

$$S = (V_c - P) \times V_i$$

[Satisfaction = (value content, want – perceived value, have) × importance of the value]

indicates that instead of only examining possible dissatisfying factors at work, it is very important to know whether these factors are important to the individual. In other words, some job characteristic can be dissatisfying, or satisfying, only if meaningful for the person.

In fact, the complexity of job satisfaction is demonstrated by Hackman and Oldham (1976), who added a more personal and individual dimension to compliment the job characteristics model (JCM). The original model included five characteristics: task identity, task significance, skill variety, autonomy, and feedback. However, these five components were not enough to explain individual differences in cases where two people work on the same task with the same job characteristics, but have different levels of job satisfaction. Thus, Hackman and Oldham added an additional component, growth need strength (GNS), which describes the dimension of a need for personal development. This component also moderates the relationship between intrinsic job characteristics (e.g., coworkers, supervision, work itself) and job satisfaction (Judge & Klinger 2008).

Locke and Latham (1990a) also attempted to model job satisfaction. In their model, the high performance cycle, satisfaction stems from a few courses of action. High performance results in job satisfaction, if it is perceived as rewarding, and thus commitment follows. As for high performance, it is a result of meeting tough challenges or goals with an expectation of success and self-efficacy. For the high performance to occur, several other factors should exist as well, namely commitment to the goals, feedback, adequate ability, and low levels of situational constraint. Four mechanisms play an important role in this process: the direction of attention and action, effort, persistence, and the development of task strategies and plans. Locke and Latham (1990a) note that the inability to have previously shown the link between job satisfaction and performance is caused by the indirect and contingent effects that moderate this relationship. When it comes to managing this cycle, managers and supervisors play an important role, as it is implicitly included in the model.

As a matter of fact, managing job satisfaction has remained an important challenge, as several studies have shown that job satisfaction is related to subjective well-being (Judge & Klinger 2008). In addition, job satisfaction has been connected to other workplace behaviors, although the correlations are not always very strong. Job satisfaction has been related to, for example, attendance at work, turnover decisions, decisions to retire, psychological withdrawal behaviors, prosocial and organizational citizenship behaviors, and job performance (see Judge and Klinger 2008 for the full list of references).

Further, the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction has attracted research attention in the past decades, and this relationship seems to be rather strong. According to researchers, there are three different ways to describe the relationship, which can differ to a greatly: (1) in the case of spillovers, both job and life satisfaction affect each other both in positive and negative terms; (2) the opposite case of segmentation distinguishes between these two concepts, and job satisfaction and life satisfaction have no influence on each other; (3) the relationship can also be based on compensation, in which a person might be dissatisfied with one aspect, and uses the other one to achieve overall satisfaction (Judge & Klinger 2008).

Although some of these aspects in the overall perceptions of job satisfaction are out of reach for managers they, and consequently HR, are interested in employee performance and job satisfaction. However, there are potential obstacles that can prevent practitioners from fully understanding the concept of job satisfaction. For example, Saari and Judge (2004) have identified three gaps between HR and scientific research that have remained unsolved. First, they register concern over

the overestimated influence of work itself on job satisfaction. Employees' attitudes stem from several different sources, of which work is only one aspect. Thus, recognizing the other factors influencing job satisfaction would be beneficial. Second, the outcomes of either job satisfaction or dissatisfaction have remained somewhat unclear for decades. HR professionals feel responsible for catering for employees' well-being and working conditions that target job satisfaction, but at the same time they try to manage costs, which in turn are usually reflected in employment relationships. Third, employee attitudes are abstract and complex and as such are not easily measured or influenced.

Drawing from the previously reviewed literature, Figure 2 collates the antecedents and consequences of job satisfaction.

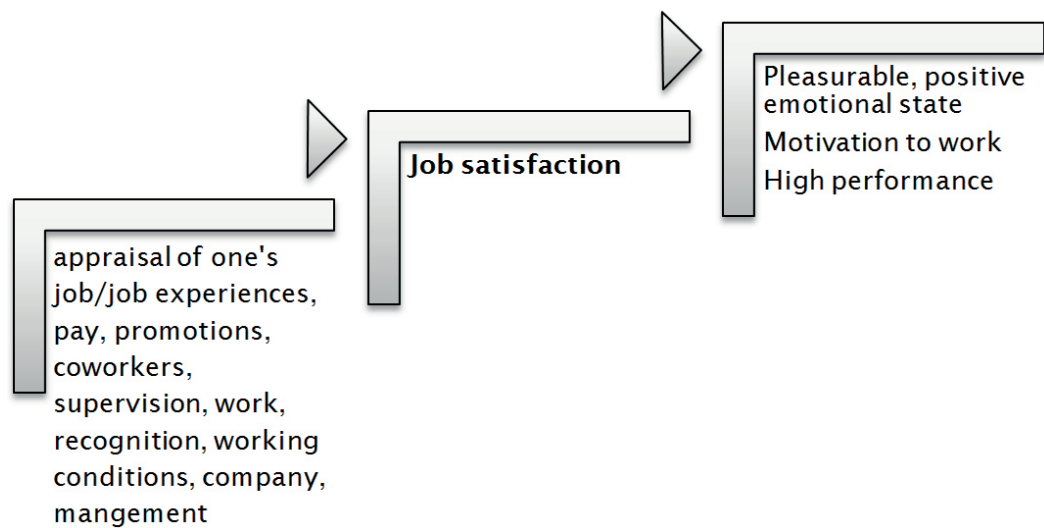


Figure 2. The antecedents and consequences of job satisfaction.

The concept of job satisfaction is close to that of motivation. These two constructs have sometimes been used side-by-side, and it has been difficult in the literature to clearly distinguish them. Both concepts are also multidimensional, complex, and have been the subject of debate in the literature (see e.g., Story, Hart, Stasson & Mahoney 2009; Locke & Latham 1990a), although they have also been separated in research (e.g., Igalens & Roussel 1999). The next chapter will present the concept of motivation.

Work motivation

The roots of motivational research lie in the 1920s, as the first significant pushes to begin studying work motivation were the Hawthorne studies (see Roethlisberger & Dickson 1939). There followed a period of silence until Vroom (1964) attempted to construct an overarching theory on work motivation that could encompass all the dimensions of work motivation, an attempt that has been complemented by various researchers since then. Those theories have examined sources of work motivation (Hertzberg et al. 1959), specific psychological processes (Vroom 1964), goal-setting (Locke & Latham 2002), and personality-related factors (e.g., McClelland 1987) among other topics. However, as Locke and Latham (2004) point out, all of the motivational theories have their limitations, and their popularity has varied over the years. Although there is no universal or well-accepted theory covering the definition of motivation, Deci and Ryan (2000) have stated that motivation concerns “a consideration of innate psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.”⁴

Further, Latham and Pinder (2005) have identified categories in their framework that bring together work motivation: needs; personal traits; values; context, especially national culture, job design characteristics, and person-context fit; cognition, especially goals; and affect and emotion. In addition, although the definition of work motivation and theories around it are numerous, Pinder (1998: 11) captured the several theoretical perspectives of work motivation relatively well, summarizing them as, “a set of energetic forces that originates both within as well as beyond an individual’s being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration.”

However, some of the theories have tried to capture the motivational sources as well, so as to better explain work motivation. A distinction that is relatively often adopted is that between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation aims at achieving a favorable outcome, sometimes regardless of internal enthusiasm (Deci and Ryan 1985), and thus it possesses an instrumental value (Gagné & Deci 2005). Hence the motivation derives from the reward or an outcome instead of the action itself (Gagné & Deci 2005). Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, stems from interest and enjoyment (Deci and Ryan 1985), and the action itself is satisfying (Gagné & Deci 2005). Deci and Ryan (2000) have identified intrinsically motivated behaviors to be “freely engaged out of interest without the necessity of separable consequences, and, to be maintained, they

⁴ According to Deci and Ryan (2000), these three elements form the content of their Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a theory that explains motivation at work. They are also “innate psychological nutrients that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity, and well-being.”

require satisfaction of the needs for autonomy and competence.” Furthermore, intrinsic motivation is often linked to high-quality learning and considered a powerful mode of motivation (Deci and Ryan 1985).

In addition, the division between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has also been presented in Porter and Lawler’s (1968) model of work motivation, and also according to Deci and Ryan (1985) and their Self-Determination Theory (SDT), motivation can be divided into different categories according to the source of motivation. Intrinsic motivation is essentially important and interesting, as it is often related to higher performance and motivation as well as innovation. As jobs become ever more knowledge-based, the meaning of intrinsic motivation and how to have an effect on it has intrigued researchers and practitioners (e.g., Deci & Ryan 2000; Markova & Ford 2011).

However, although intrinsic motivation is usually highlighted in the literature, the source of initial motivation can also satisfy internal needs even in the case of extrinsic motivation. In fact, the bulk of people’s actions are based on extrinsic motivation rather than satisfying inner needs (Ryan & Deci 2000). Further, extrinsic motivation can also become autonomous through important rewards, and can thus also lead to performance, trust, well-being, and satisfaction, for example (Gagné & Deci 2005).

This shift that aims at describing the sources of motivation has developed the work motivation theories further. Based on the first theories, while the variation and explanations behind each motivation theory were different, they all seemed to share an impression that motivation is a unitary concept. As a consequence, it leads motivation to become a concept where the amount of motivation is crucial and determining, and the source and nature of motivation tends to be neglected. (Gagné & Deci 2005.)

When it comes to work motivation research today, Latham and Pinder (2005) conclude that three motivational theories have dominated the field during the last few decades, namely goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham 1990b; see also Meyer, Backer and Vandenberghe 2004), social cognitive theory (Bandura 1977), and organizational justice (Greenberg 1987). Over the course of time, some motivational theories have been more popular than others and have retained their position even in the face of criticism.

In the next section, one of the most widespread and famous work motivation theories, Herzberg’s two-factor theory, is examined. Not only has this theory been relatively popular since it was first published, and used when referring to work motivation, the research setting, especially the data collection process in

this study, resembles that of Herzberg et al.'s (1959): they asked 203 employees to describe a situation where s/he felt exceptionally good or bad about their job. Further, they used content analysis in their analyses (Herzberg et al. 1959: 14, 32). This theory is also the point of reference in one of the essays, Essay 1, and is thus selected for more thorough examination.

Herzberg's two-factor theory

The distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is present also in Herzberg's two-factor theory (Herzberg et al. 1959). In his seminal research based on critical incidents, two different factors are distinguished: motivation factors and hygiene factors. (Herzberg et al. 1959: 14, 32). Motivation factors refer to job-related factors, such as opportunity for growth, recognition, and being happy with performance. These are the factors that essentially provide feelings of motivation and actually increase motivation. Hygiene factors, on the other hand, are preventive by nature, sources of demotivation, and contribute to dissatisfaction, such as working conditions and other factors surrounding the actual job and doing it, salary, administrative issues benefits, and job security. These factors should be taken care of and managed well to prevent employees becoming demotivated (Herzberg et al. 1959: 113–114).

As a consequence of this distinction, there are differences in the sources of motivation and sources of demotivation. Herzberg's theory does not leave much room for dichotomies, as it assumes that the same factor cannot usually result in both motivation and demotivation. In the work context, Herzberg's theory thus suggests that employees are kept happy with some factors and are motivated by some others (Herzberg et al. 1959: 113). However, money and salary that are essentially defined as hygiene factors can also feature as motivation factors, when, for example, a pay rise is the result of good performance and thus indicates recognition and achievement (Herzberg et al. 1959: 117).

Further, according to Herzberg et al. (1959: 114) motivation factors enable feelings of self-actualization and are linked to creativity, and thus satisfy "the supreme goal of man." Unlike motivation factors, hygiene factors do not hold this potential, as they only surround the work itself, which can, in turn, lead to feelings of high motivation and satisfaction.

However, although the two-factor theory has been relatively popular and widespread, it has attracted a fair amount of criticism including of the methodological choices made, the implementation of the study, and its results

(e.g., Opsahl & Dunnette 1966; Hardin 1965; Vroom 1964). However, Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) revisited Herzberg's theory and found it after almost 50 years to be utilizable despite the criticism.

In relation to other motivation theories, and although being somewhat different, Herzberg's theory and SDT, for example, have some common aspects, as they both rely on psychological needs and satisfying them. Further, they also see satisfying these needs may result in higher performance as well as well-being (Gagné & Deci 2005).

Based on the review of work motivation, the following Figure 3 illustrates the nature of work motivation.

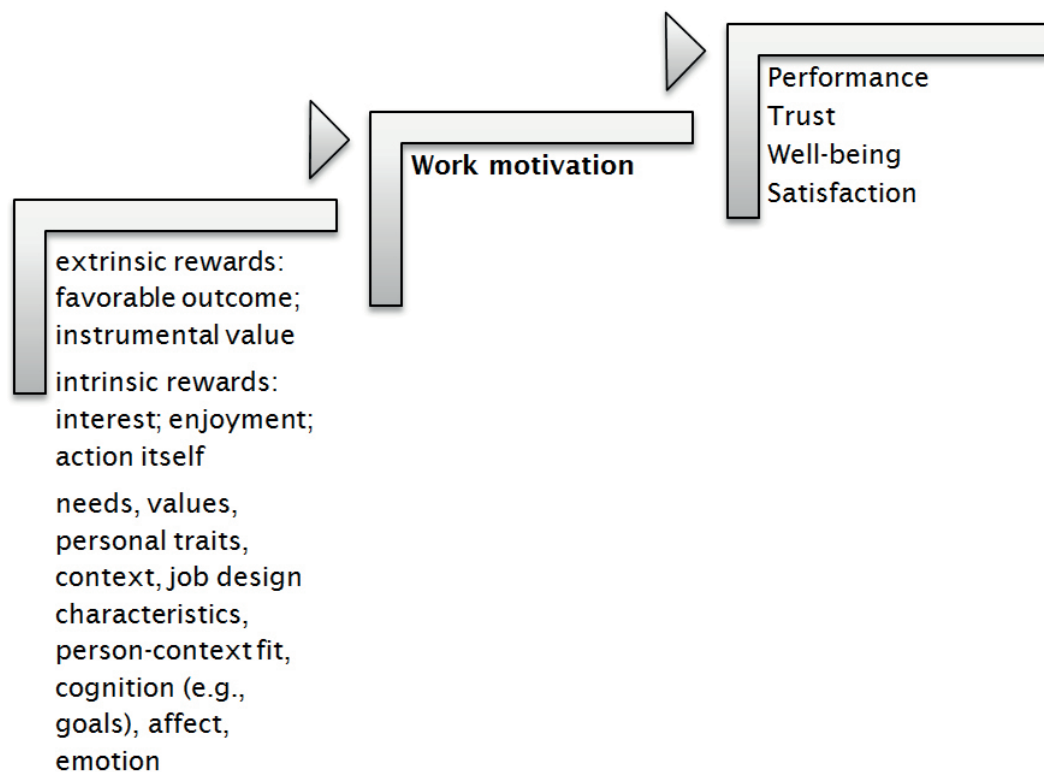


Figure 3. Antecedents and consequences of work motivation.

Rewarding job

Rewarding and motivation are inseparable. When talking about motivating factors and motivation, rewarding is always present, and vice versa. In this study, rewards and compensation are understood broadly. Thus, this chapter presents the overall view of rewards and the underlying patterns and motives rather than

only describing or listing possible practice-level alternatives for reward systems. However, salary, for example, is an essential and important part of compensation (see e.g., Campbell, Campbell & Ho-Beng 1998).

Traditionally and in practice, rewards are often divided into two categories, monetary and non-monetary rewards. Monetary rewards include, for example, salary as well as incentives and perks that have monetary value. They can also be referred to as extrinsic or tangible rewards (e.g., Deci, Kostner & Ryan 1999). Ryan, Mims and Koestner (1983) further divide extrinsic rewards based on whether they are received on or off the job, i.e. whether they are task-related or not. On the contrary, non-monetary, or intangible, rewards cannot be measured in monetary terms. Deci et al. (1999), for example, referred to verbal rewards, or positive feedback. Non-monetary rewards are symbolic, and they do not have monetary value. Non-monetary rewards include, for example, recognition (Markova & Ford 2011; James 2005), non-cash awards, and displaying photos in a public space (Markova & Ford 2011).

Generally, intrinsic motivation (see page 15 for the definition) is believed to be enhanced with non-monetary rewards rather than monetary rewards (e.g., Markova & Ford 2011). In fact, Deci (1971) found that when people in his study were rewarded with extrinsic rewards, i.e. monetary rewards, there was a decrease in intrinsic motivation. However, when the subjects of the study were rewarded with verbal means and their behavior was enhanced with positive feedback, intrinsic motivation increased. Deci et al. (1999) also note in their cognitive evaluation theory that the usage of extrinsic rewards neglects the meaning of people motivating themselves, and thus ignores their own responsibility to do so. Thus, the motivation is somewhat outsourced, for example, to the employer.

Especially when it comes to knowledge workers, non-monetary rewards should be emphasized (Markova & Ford 2011). Markova and Ford (2011) further conclude that in implementing reward systems in organizations, the system should take into account the uniqueness of every employee and different values and needs that follow. In addition, organizations should carefully design and plan the whole reward system, and critically assess every step and procedure and incentive in order to acquire a system that suits the organization and its employees.

In addition to knowledge work, intrinsic motivation and non-monetary rewards have been proposed to suit aging employees, who might not respond to the extrinsic features of rewarding as well as to intrinsically motivating factors (Inceoglu, Segers & Bartram 2012). Markova and Ford (2011) mention that

monetary rewards send different signals to employees than do non-monetary rewards. Further, according to James (2005), non-monetary rewards reflect appreciation of an employee.

A rewarding job can be illustrated as in Figure 4. The figure is based on the literature reviewed in this chapter.

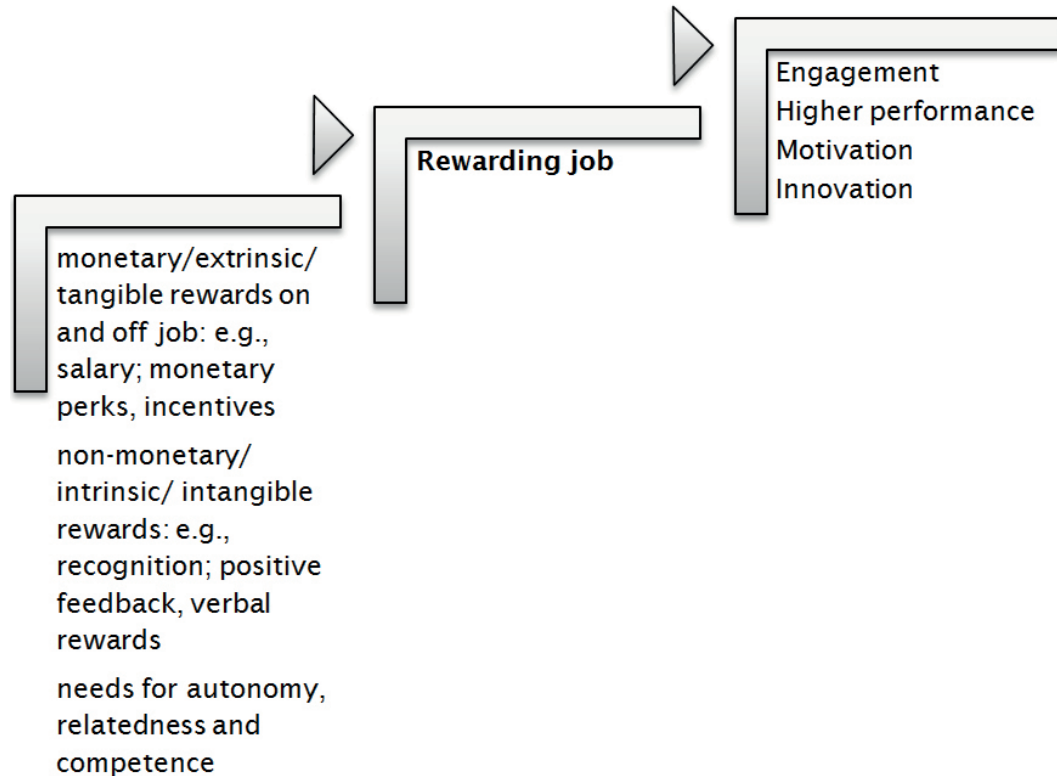


Figure 4. Factors and outcomes of perceived rewarding job.

The Psychological contract

The concept of the psychological contract is a relatively solid construct, and often used when employment relationships in the workplace are discussed and described. It has also been adopted in Essay 2. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive understanding of psychological contract.

Psychological contracts concern socio-emotional relations and the employment relationship between an employee and an employer. They are defined as an exchange process and as “individual beliefs in reciprocal obligations between the individual and the organization” (Rousseau 1989), and they also include perceptions of what employees “owe to their employers and what their employers

owe to them” (Robinson 1996). Based on a subjective employment relationship (e.g., Schein 1980), the current definition of the psychological contract includes not merely expectations, but interpretations of what is promised and, most importantly, beliefs about what the employees think they are entitled to. In fact, expectations can become a part of the psychological contract, but they are not the main premise on which the employment relationship is based. Psychological contracts on the whole include obligations and how they are perceived concerning both the work and the organization (Robinson 1996).

Psychological contracts have become increasingly important in the turbulent and changing commercial environment as they extend beyond formal contracts (Robinson 1996). Further, major events in organizational and working life, such as globalization, extensive lay-offs, insecurity, and constant restructuring, have increased the interest in the psychological contract, as it is related to an interesting discussion concerning the employee–employer relationship, and seems to have gained quite a firm foothold in explaining employee reactions in the midst of constant change (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler 2000).

However, neither the content nor understanding of the psychological contract can be objectively described, as it is built on individual perceptions and beliefs, and is therefore unique to each party, and different parties might not share a common understanding of what has been promised, or perceived to have been promised (Robinson & Rousseau 1994). However, it is important to recognize the form of each psychological contract, as they are strongly related to the attitudes and behavior of the employee (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler 2000) through an incentive for future exchange (e.g., pay for performance, accepting training) (Robinson & Rousseau 1994).

Moreover, a lack of ability or willingness to meet the expectations of the other party might have severe consequences, such as perceived violations of the psychological contract, in which the reactions are both attitudinal and emotional (Rousseau 2001). In fact, one of the main characteristics of the psychological contract is the perception that the other party has not fulfilled their promises and delivered what they were obliged to; such failures are referred to as contract violations (Robinson & Rousseau 1994).

Traditionally, the psychological contract is divided into two different types of contract (Rousseau 1995: 91), as illustrated in Table 2. Transactional contracts are rather short-term and can be characterized in monetary terms. Relational contracts, on the other hand, are also based on non-monetary factors and yield, for example, loyalty (Rousseau 1989). In relation to extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, the transactional contract is seen in the literature as extrinsically

motivating, whereas a relational contract is more related to intrinsic motivation (Robinson, Kraatz & Rousseau 1994, in Osterloh & Frey 2000).

Although these two types can be viewed as located at the ends of the same continuum (Rousseau 1989), the division is usually too simplistic to adequately describe exchange processes in the employment relationship. Thus, the concept of balanced contracts has been introduced to describe the type of contract that mixes elements from both transactional and relational contract (Rousseau 1995: 99).

Table 2. From transactional to the relational characteristics of the contractual continuum, adapted from Rousseau (1990) and MacNeil (1985) (Rousseau & McLean Parks 1993).

Contract characteristics	Transactional contracts	Relational contracts
Focus	Economic Extrinsic	Economic Socio-emotional Intrinsic
Time frame	Closed-ended Specific duration	Open-ended Indefinite duration
Stability	Static	Dynamic
Scope	Narrow	Pervasive and comprehensive
Tangibility	Public Easily observable	Subjective Understood

With regard to emotional impacts, transactional contracts are the more easily terminated. They can also be a stepping stone toward more relative types of contract (e.g., probationary periods). Relational contracts are the more subjective, more likely to include ‘a personal touch’, and can encourage extensive flexibility and feedback on behalf of both parties (Rousseau and McLean Parks 1993).

Although the basis of the psychological contract is built in the initial stages of employment, the nature of this contract is dynamic and changes in the interaction between the employee and the employer. The supporting power in the psychological contract is trust, and the psychological contract is shaped in the course of different events, communication, and interactions. In the case of breach, for example, a misunderstanding, not meeting obligations, or somehow violating this delicate contract, a strong trust in the other party can help overcome the setback. In fact, initial trust might actually prevent a breach from occurring in the later stages of the employment relationship. (Robinson 1996.)

In addition to trust, which seems to act as a form of cornerstone for the psychological contract as it is somewhat easy to define and perceive, there are other constructs that form the psychological contract, specifically schema, promise, and mutuality. The first, schema is the lens through which an individual sees the world, for example, past experiences, which have given meaning to different concepts. The second, promises refers to both verbal and action-based promises made between the parties, and which create expectations of the relationship. The third, mutuality refers to shared understanding of obligations and beliefs that both parties recognize. Mutuality is promoted with, for example, information that is accurate and objective, which has to lead to perceived agreement in order to fulfill the criteria of mutuality. (Rousseau 2001.)

However, a breach of the psychological contract does not refer to plain disputes but to an incident after which the employee might seriously consider quitting the job (Robinson 1996). According to Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) and Robinson and Rousseau (1994), there are only a few employees who have not experienced a breach in their psychological contracts. Robinson (1996) found that in contrast to a quite common belief of the time that employees were more cynical and passive than previously, they might have been showing an initial trust in their employers to fulfill the promises made to them, but violations in of the psychological contract had caused strong reactions likely to lead to unexpected results and negative consequences.

In fact, most of the research on the psychological contract has concentrated on its outcomes and effects, especially in the case of breach (Rousseau 2001), as the outcomes of violations could have a negative impact on, for example, perceived organizational support, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and engagement (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler 2000) as well as on trust, satisfaction, intention to remain, and turnover (Robinson & Rousseau 1994). Robinson and Rousseau (1994) found that the most common types of violations concerned issues related to, for example, training and development, compensation, promotion, nature of the job, job security, feedback (e.g., an inadequate amount based on what was promised), management of change, responsibility, and people (e.g., an inaccurate portrayal of colleagues).

These situations occur often in the employment relationship, and when the psychological contract is formulated between an employee and an employer, the manager is usually the representative of the employer and thus has a significant impact on how the contract is formulated. However, the managers might be handicapped by a lack of organization-wide policies, support, and practices, which can have a negative impact on the contracts. This challenge quite often

occurs at the middle-management level, where the feeling of autonomy is not as strong as it should be in order to formulate the contract with confidence and provide the employees with what they think they are entitled to (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler 2000).

Nevertheless, a psychological contract framework might offer a suitable tool for managers to enhance organizational commitment and cater to the employment relationship. In utilizing the psychological contract, organizational communication plays an important role through three aspects that concern different situations at work. First, communication in the initial stages when the employee is entering the organization; second, communication in day-to-day work; and third, communication that is future-oriented and usually top-down in nature. With this set of communication forms managers feel that breaches occur less frequently than they might otherwise, and that there are positive impacts on employee attitudes and behavior as well. (Guest & Conway 2002.)

In addition to managers, human resource management (HRM) also plays an important role in the realm of psychological contracts. Bal, Kooij and De Jong (2013) suggested HRM is an active party in communicating the intentions of the organization, as employees cannot otherwise access complete information concerning the employer's policies and decisions. Thus, HRM bridges the gap between the employees and the employer's intentions, usually working through managers to do so, and therefore HRM also becomes a party to the psychological contract.

Psychological contract is illustrated in Figure 5. The figure is drawn from the previously reviewed literature.

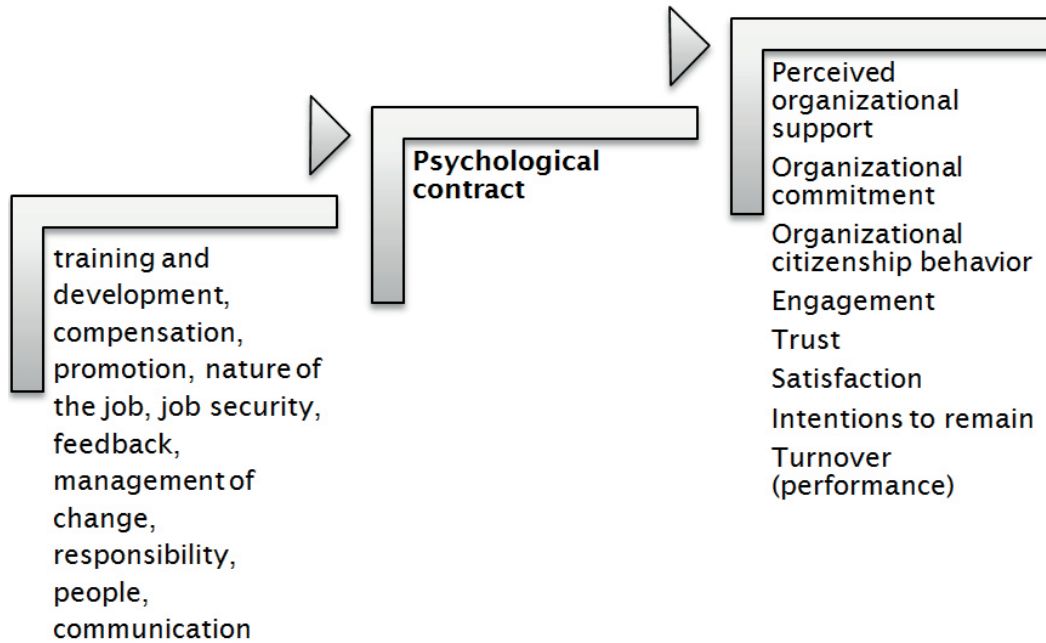


Figure 5. Factors and outcomes of psychological contract.

Work engagement

Work engagement has attracted interest in recent years (Shuck, Ghosh, Zigarmi, & Nimon 2012), and often drawing from Kahn's (1990) work, many studies have attempted to conceptualize engagement (Christian, Garza & Slaughter 2011). However, the definition of work engagement remains unclear, and there is some disagreement among scholars on the applicability of the concept (Newman, Joseph, Sparkman & Carpenter 2011). This could be due to interference from some rather similar constructs such as organizational commitment⁵, job satisfaction, and job involvement⁶, and the fact that the differences between those concepts and work engagement have not been incontrovertibly established (Shuck et al. 2012). Nevertheless, Shuck et al. (2012) propose that employee

⁵ Organizational commitment "represents the emotional state of attachment to the organization" (Christian et al. 2011), and also one's attitude towards an organization (Saks 2006). Compared to engagement, organizational commitment is rather stable (Kahn 1990), and concerns the relationship between an individual and the organization as a whole, whereas in the case of engagement, also job-related circumstances are considered (Christian et al. 2011). Thus, engagement can be seen to be bigger than commitment, and commitment can precede engagement (Shuck et al. 2012).

⁶ Job involvement "implies a positive and relatively complete state of engagement [regarding the] core aspects of the job itself (Brown 1996 b: 235). Also Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran (2005) see job involvement as the psychological relation between a person and his/her job. In relation to engagement, these two constructs are seen as, for example, rather overlapping (e.g., Macey & Schneider 2008), but engagement has also been seen as an antecedent for job involvement (May, Gilson & Harter 2004).

engagement only partially overlaps these three other constructs, and can thus be examined as an individual concept.

However, in their extensive review of literature and analysis of previous studies, Christian et al. (2011) examined the conceptual framework of work engagement. They found several antecedents and consequences of engagement, as well as the mediating role of engagement based on meta-analytic path modeling. Task variety, task significance, transformational leadership, conscientiousness, and positive effect were identified as significant antecedents of engagement. Furthermore, engagement acted as a mediator between these antecedents and two outcomes, namely task performance⁷ and contextual performance⁸.

In addition, Shuck et al. (2012) proposed that engagement is a bigger construct than, for example, commitment. However, the initial step before engagement can in fact be commitment or willingness to commit. The authors also stated that although work engagement and organizational commitment are not too often paralleled in literature, they share some common antecedents and consequences. Based on previous research, Shuck et al. (2012) found that perceived organizational support, a supportive organizational culture, and leadership (Wollard & Shuck 2011; Saks, 2006; Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli 2001; Lok & Crawford 1999) can precede engagement. On the other hand, common consequences can be, for example, organizational citizenship behavior, turnover intent, and performance (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Riketta & Landerer, 2002; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Brown, 1996a).

Moreover, Shuck et al. (2012) note that although conceptualizing engagement is academic in nature, it is essential to examine engagement in the light of more mature and well-researched concepts that are close to the definition of engagement. This is due to increased interest in engagement among practitioners and HRD professionals, even though the definition of engagement is still emergent.

Although there are contradictory views about drawing parallels between engagement and, for example, these three concepts (see Christian et al. 2011), Shuck et al. (2012) stated that due to, for example, common epistemological and theoretical foundations, problems in measuring and utilizing the concepts in

⁷ Task performance, or in-role performance, describes how well an employee is performing in their work (Borman & Motowidlo 1997). According to Christian et al. (2011), engaged employees will perform their duties better.

⁸ Contextual performance “includes activities that promote the viability of the social and organizational network and enhance the psychological climate.” These activities include helping others, obeying the rules and policies of the organization, volunteering even if the job is not within the job description, and promoting organizational objectives. (Motowidlo, Borman & Schmit 1997.)

practice, and problems in differentiating emotion from cognition examining these three concepts is justifiable. However, the authors warn that at a fundamental level and based on previous research, the concepts can also be understood as separate.

In fact, Shuck et al. (2012) do not see engagement as a unidimensional construct, nor would they agree that once an employee is engaged, there is no longer any room for any other action. Instead, they suggest that engagement occurs in routine actions, in a certain context, and with certain group of people.

Further, Chughtai (2013) found work engagement had a mediating role between affective supervisory commitment and three employee outcomes essential for the organization: innovative work behavior, feedback seeking for self-improvement, and error reporting. These outcomes can be crucial to the organization's performance and results, and thus putting effort into increasing employee engagement could lead to positive results in financial terms as well. He concluded that increased commitment to a supervisor could enhance not only employee engagement but also employee innovativeness and learning. Engagement can also enhance extra-role behavior⁹ (Christian et al. 2011).

Although leadership, as well as autonomy and feedback, were included in the model by Christian et al. (2011), the authors note that the relationships were not particularly strong. Thus, these factors that are interesting from the point of view of the practitioners, for example, do not play a particularly significant role when other factors are present as well. However, there is some tentative support for the idea that leadership is related to engagement. The authors note that there might be some as yet unknown moderator in the relationship between leadership and engagement, such as trust or whether the employee feels that it is "safe to engage" (as in Kahn 1990).

According to Christian et al. (2011), work engagement is one example of motivational constructs as in the job characteristics model by Hackman and Oldham (1976). In facilitating work engagement, job design can be used as a facilitator (Christian et al. 2011). In fact, as Christian et al. (2011) suggest, the relationship between work engagement and job characteristics might be rather strong. In this relationship perceived meaningfulness of work also plays an important role. This is in line with Kahn (1990), who proposed this construct to precede work engagement.

⁹ Extra-role behavior describes a situation or a state that goes beyond the formal expectations and job descriptions, is in favor of the organization, and is voluntary. Thus, it is something extra that the employee is willing to do in order to benefit the organization. (Van Dyne, Cummings & McLean Parks 1995).

Drawing from the reviewed literature in this chapter, the antecedents and consequences of work engagement are illustrated in Figure 6.

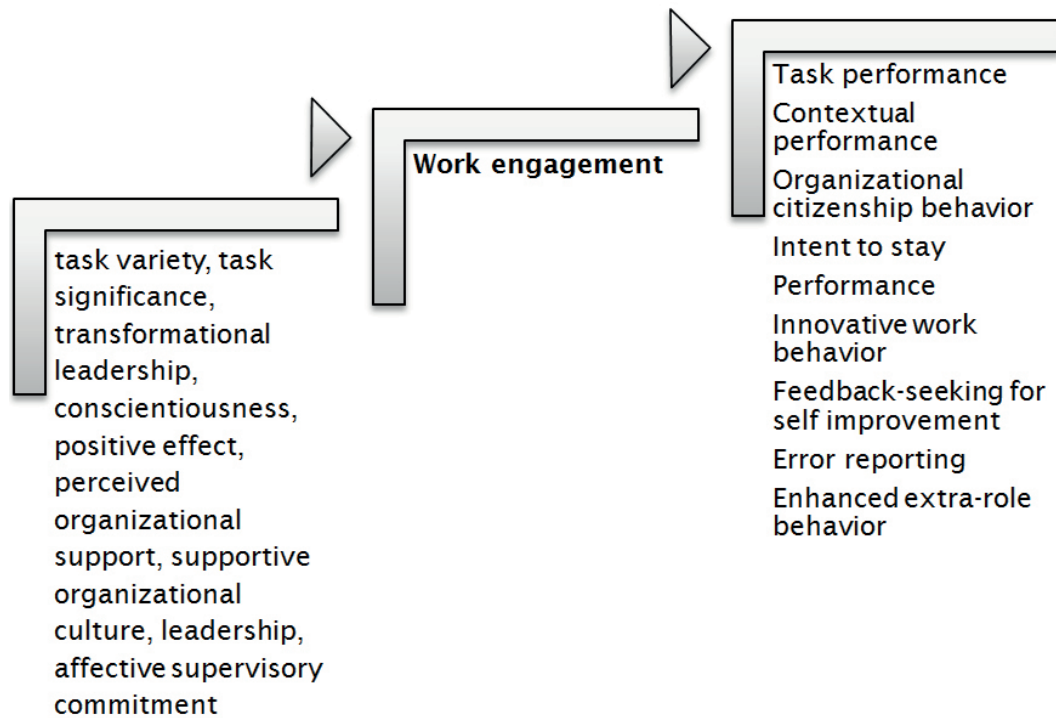


Figure 6. The antecedents and consequences of work engagement.

Meaningful work

The concept of meaningful work or meaningfulness of work¹⁰ has been discussed rather extensively in the Finland in recent years (e.g., Järvensivu 2013; Alasoini 2006; Antila 2006). Järvensivu, Valkama and Koski (2009) emphasize that the main point concerning meaningfulness of work is the feeling as an employee of being able to perform one's task, and feeling that one can cope with the job. In addition, perceived feelings of respect, coping, and recognition should be present and supported by the organization of work, content, and frames.

In addition according to May et al. (2004), meaningfulness at work refers to the relationship between work goals and the standards and values of the individual, that is, the degree to which the individual is willing to put effort into the work. However, due to individual perceptions of what is meaningful, it is difficult to comprehensively define such a subjective concept as meaningfulness. This chapter does however present extant literature that has undertaken the task of

¹⁰ *mielekäs työ, työn mielekkyys*

explaining meaningful work. That recent research includes studies from Finland and elsewhere but measuring meaningful work and defining it carefully has been complicated by fragmented research (Lips-Wiersma & Morris 2009), the complex nature of the concept, and subjective beliefs of individuals on what should be perceived as meaningful (Lips-Wiersma & Wright 2012).

The roots of meaningfulness lie in the humanities. According to this paradigm, meaningfulness is not something that managers can or should provide to employees. On the contrary, meaningfulness is an intrinsic construct and thus should be distinguished from other concepts that can be managed as such. However, this view clashes with leadership- and organization-oriented research, which seeks ways to promote meaningfulness by creating meaningful jobs. If meaningfulness is indeed intrinsic and cannot be managed as such, not only does it collide with the most recent research concerning what is termed the management of meaning, it also leads to a situation where it would be difficult to isolate specific practices that make the work meaningful (Lips-Wiersma & Morris 2009).

However, the presence of meaningfulness and meaningful work has been strong in management theories as well during the past few decades (Lips-Wiersma & Wright 2012). Elangovan, Pinder and McLean (2010) emphasize the meaning of calling in relation to meaningful work. According to them, calling might explain or clarify some questions that have been left unsolved when it comes to work-related behavior. For example, calling, which can be seen as a driving force to action, might benefit the contemporary motivational theories. Further, seeing one's job as a calling might lead to greater job satisfaction. In fact, perceiving the work as meaningful might be a cause of actually working in a job that feels like a calling (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi & Damon 2001), and stress might also be reduced as a consequence (Elangovan et al. 2010).

Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) also note that meaningful work can be enhanced through paying attention to increased diversity in organizations by promoting communality. Further, diversity and communality should be taken into account in future frameworks.

Theory development in other areas has increased the interest in meaningful work. For example, transformational leadership, organizational culture, and employee engagement have touched on the concept of meaning work (Lips-Wiersma & Morris 2009). However, Lips-Wiersma and Morris note that the main interest in research has been in how meaning is or should be managed, instead of examining the underlying constructs or causes of meaninglessness. In addition,

the linkages presented between other concepts and constructs have been relatively weak (Lips-Wiersma & Morris 2009).

According to Kahn (1990), the role that people take at work varies in terms of physical, cognitive, and emotional factors, thus resulting in either personal engagement or personal disengagement. This variation, that is, the level of how much self is occupied, has an effect on both the work itself and the associated experiences. Kahn's study asserts that employee roles are created through meaningfulness, safety, and availability, which are antecedents of the psychological condition of the employee, which is further associated with engagement (see May et al. 2004). These three stages describe the feelings of employees when they are performing their tasks and are considering how much of themselves to put into their role, thus resulting as engagement or disengagement. At the same time they are questioning the level of meaningfulness in investing themselves into the performance, the safety of their actions, and their own availability in the form of the available resources.

Building on Kahn's (1990) work, May et al. (2004) revisited the said conceptual framework. That examination revealed that meaningfulness is strongly and positively related to engagement, to which job enlargement and work role fit are linked. Safety, on the other hand, was associated with rewarding coworkers and having a supportive supervisor.

Meaningfulness can be affected with the effective design of jobs, as well as carefully selecting employees for certain positions. Enhancing meaningfulness through these kinds of processes demands more individual planning and recognizing the needs and characteristics of each employee. Job design can also minimize any strain employees feel. Furthermore, availability (as in Kahn 1990) can be fostered through the development of skills and competences (May et al. 2004).

Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) attempted to build a comprehensive model to measure meaningful work. Their qualitative studies (also Lips-Wiersma & Morris 2009) indicated that meaningful work is built on two continuums, in which the individual is constantly trying to balance the needs of the self and others, and the needs to be (reflection) and to do (action). As a consequence, four dimensions are formed: developing the inner self, unity with others, service to others, and expressing full potential.

Summary and synthesis of the literature

The findings of these previous chapters that conceptualize satisfactory working life are summarized in Table 3. The table presents each concept and their most frequently mentioned antecedents and consequences. The literature review suggests that the concepts attempting to describe a satisfied workforce, overlap somewhat in terms of both antecedents and consequences.

Table 3. The concepts of satisfactory working life.

Antecedents	Concept	Consequence
Appraisal of one's job/job experiences Pay Promotions Coworkers Supervision Work Recognition Working conditions Company Management	Job satisfaction	Pleasurable, positive emotional state High performance Subjective well-being
Extrinsic rewards (favorable outcome; instrumental value) Intrinsic rewards (interest; enjoyment; action itself) Needs Personal traits Values Context Job design characteristics Person-context fit Cognition (e.g., goals) Affect Emotion	Work motivation	Performance Trust Well-being Satisfaction
Monetary/extrinsic/ tangible rewards on and off job (e.g., salary; monetary perks and incentives) Non-monetary/ intangible rewards (e.g., recognition; positive feedback and verbal rewards) Needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence	Rewarding job	Engagement Higher performance Motivation Innovation
Training and development Compensation Promotion Nature of job Job security Feedback Management of change Responsibility People Communication	Psychological contract	Perceived organizational support Organizational commitment Organizational citizenship behavior Engagement Trust Satisfaction Intentions to stay Turnover (performance)
Task variety Task significance Transformational leadership Conscientiousness Perceived organizational support Supportive organizational culture Leadership Affective supervisory commitment	Work engagement	Task performance Contextual performance Organizational citizenship behavior Intent to stay Performance Innovative work behavior Seeking feedback to aid self-improvement Error reporting Enhanced extra-role behavior

Interestingly, the concepts are overlapping in the sense that, for example, work motivation has been connected in research with job satisfaction (e.g., Brown & Peterson 1993; Locke & Latham 1990a) as well as work engagement (e.g., Shuck et al. 2012), and job satisfaction is one of the consequences of work motivation (e.g., Gagné & Deci 2005). Further, rewards and motivation are often discussed in parallel (e.g., Inceoglu et al. 2012; Markova & Ford 2011; Deci 1971). In addition, the psychological contract has an effect on engagement (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler 2000), and job satisfaction at least (Robinson & Rousseau 1994).

Moreover, the concepts share common antecedents, which can partially be seen as HRM practices or at least issues that are connected to the tasks of the HR function (e.g., Guest 1997; Huselid 1995). There are also similarities in the consequences of these concepts, in that they also act as each other's outcomes. Common to these concepts is quite naturally the interest in performance as an outcome, and it is present in the consequences of each concept.

The differences between these concepts are not as visible, but researchers have attempted to distinguish them from each other: for example, distinctions have been drawn between job satisfaction and work engagement (Shuck et al. 2012), and work motivation and job satisfaction (Igalens & Roussel 1999). Nevertheless, the distinctions mooted are hardly apparent and clear. They are also easy subjects to debate, as the concepts are partly under established, and the differences in viewpoints often arise due to various interpretations and re-labeling.

However, some distinctions between these concepts have been found, and they are sometimes seen as each other's antecedents and consequences. For example, Shuck et al. (2012) stated that work engagement and job satisfaction are partly overlapping; Gagné & Deci (2005) found that work motivation precedes job satisfaction; Locke and Latham (1990a) wrote that rewarding job creates job satisfaction; Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) found that psychological contract can result in work engagement, and according to Robinson and Rousseau (1994), also to job satisfaction. Further, since job satisfaction and commitment are viewed as conceptually related and should not be used separately according to literature (Costanza et al. 2012), this study chose to adopt only job satisfaction as one of the perspectives to understand Generation Y.

Hence, it seems that even though the broad picture of satisfactory working life can be approached with any of these concepts, as they are to an extent overlapping and contribute to similar discussions, there are also differences between these concepts according to literature. In other words, at a general level these concepts discuss and approach the same target, and the dissimilarities are

rather subtle but they exist. Overall, the choice to adopt these particular concepts in this study is relevant and justified. Also the decision to choose several perspectives seemed natural as these concepts had been connected in previous research. Moreover, these concepts are among the most discussed topics in recent literature, and they are also present in the essays in Part II of this dissertation. Although the literature review is not exhaustive, it can already be seen that each concept revolves around the same issues and themes. This might indicate that distinguishing these concepts might not be necessary to be able to discuss the characteristics of satisfactory working life.

However, there are important differences in the emphases of different concepts. The ones that were chosen in this study – work motivation, psychological contract, work engagement, managerial coaching, and HRM – approach satisfactory working life through different lenses. These lenses examine, on the one hand, individual-level perceptions, or, on the other hand, the relationship between an individual and supervisor or organization. Hence, the perspective varies between the concepts.

2.2 The generational aspect in working life

The aim of this chapter is to present and discuss the concept of generations. Later in this chapter, the emphasis will be on Generation Y; however, this chapter does not aim to describing Generation Y as such, but rather present the on-going discussion around Generation Y, as the aim of this study is to understand the relationship between Generation Y and work.

Currently, three different generations are present in the workforce: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Table 4 presents a brief summary of these generations, their characteristics, and motivators.

Table 4. The generations in the workforce (partly adopted from Cugin 2012).

	Birth years (Smola & Sutton 2002)	Characteristics	Motivators
Generation Y	1978–1995	Seek work-life balance (Shaw & Fairhurst 2008) and immediate gratification (Eisner 2005), value instant communication (Glass 2007), impatient (Hira 2007)	Flexibility and portable career (Glass 2007), challenging and meaningful assignments (Baruch 2004)
Generation X	1965–1977	Skeptical (Zemke et al. 2000), more concerned about outcome than processes (Glass 2007), distrustful of organizations (Johnson & Lopes 2008)	Formal qualifications (O'Bannon 2001), managerial positions (Eisner 2005)
Baby Boomers	1946–1964	Hard-working (Glass 2007), loyal to employer (Smith & Clurman 1997), value face-to-face communication (Eisner 2005), lacking in technical skills (Adams 1998)	Status symbols (Adams 1998), recognition for experience (Westerman & Yamamura)

The interesting question concerning Generation Y, and generations in general, is whether they are a relevant phenomenon to examine, and to which extent the perceptions of different generations can be distinguished from other characteristics, such as age or career stage. On the whole, the generational discussion involves diversity issues and that concerning working life tends to relate to diversity management, as age and the generations are among the factors that create diversity in workplaces. In fact, lately the interest in diversity management has shifted from traditional features, such as race and gender, to new areas such as age (Gold 2007: 225–226). In addition, each generation is also a country's subculture, that is, a reflection of the time when the generation was raised. Further, the value priorities of the country are embedded in the

generation, forming the mindset and the identity of the generation (Egri & Ralston 2004).

The generational discussion has its roots in sociology, especially in the work of Karl Mannheim (1952) who “emphasized the importance of generations as a guide to understanding the structure of social and intellectual movements.” The sociological theory point of view implies that generational differences have an influence within the workplace as well as in other areas of life. Since Mannheim, many streams of research have been invoked in the generational discussion and provided their own contribution, including sociology, social psychology, psychology, and also business studies, mainly management studies. (Parry & Urwin 2011.)

Perhaps the most common definition of generation is that of Kupperschmidt (2000) who defined a generation as “an identifiable group [...] that shares birth years, age location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages.” In other words, a generation is a group of people born within a specific time period and thus birth year defines the generation (Smola & Sutton 2002). Moreover, based on the shared birth year, members of a generation share “a common location in the historical dimension of the social process” (Parry & Urwin 2011).

However, the beginning and ending of a generation cannot be defined for certain (Smola & Sutton 2002). A generation’s characteristics are based on life events that have a significant impact on the development of the individual, usually in childhood or early adulthood (Smola & Sutton 2002). According to Twenge (2009) every generation reflects the culture in which its members are born, and Smola and Sutton (2002) stated that different life events form different attitudes, values and opinions, and generate divergence between generations. These basic assumptions about a generation are rather stable throughout the person’s life.

Inglehart (1997, in Egri & Ralston 2004) developed an intergenerational theory that stated a generational mindset reflects the socioeconomic conditions occurring during childhood and adolescence that was labeled *the socialization hypothesis*. Although personal values temporarily change throughout life, the socialization hypothesis holds that the value orientation remains stable. The other hypothesis in Inglehart’s theory, *the scarcity hypothesis*, proposes that more emphasis is placed on aspects that are scarce in the period of a particular generation’s youth. As a consequence, the socioeconomic security or insecurity will have a different effect on generations. In the times of insecurity, more emphasis is placed on aspects that might include for example materialism, respect for authority, and rationality, in order to survive. However, in the opposite situation and in times of security, a generation will most likely adopt

other values, such as individualism, tolerance of diversity, and self-transcendence. The latter proposition is relevant to the discussion of Generation Y, as its members are used economic welfare and have had the opportunity to enjoy economic growth and wellness (see page 40).

Arsenault (2004) calls this joint mindset, which is formed in the early years of the members of a generation, *collective memory*. It shapes the generational characteristics, and reaches out to historical events, such as wars, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks (Arsenault 2004); technological development and breakthroughs, such as the Internet and social media (Arsenault 2004); societal and national events and stages, such as economic situations (Egri & Ralston 2004); and popular culture (Parry & Urwin 2011; Arsenault 2004). These events will shape a generation's shared attitudes, preferences and behavior, which has also been termed *generational imprinting* by Parry and Urwin (2011).

The formation of such attitudes is at the same time linked to so-called key events in the society. This view is very much in line with, for example, Järvensivu (2014: 23). In fact, Wyatt (1993) defined six causes and determinations of a generation whereby the following issues are in line with previously discussed literature, as a generation is shaped by:

- A traumatic or formative event
- A dramatic shift in demography which influences the distribution of resources in society
- A “privileged interval” which connects a generation to a cycle of success and/or failure
- The creation of a sacred space wherein sacred places sustain a collective memory
- Mentors that give impetus and voice by their work
- Generations are formed through the work of people who know and support each other.

However, it is important to remember that when discussing generational differences and generational characteristics, we are at the same time discussing stereotypes. Contrary to other stereotypes, such as race, sex, or religion, generational stereotypes are widely accepted and it is more acceptable to rely on those than to stereotypes based on other demographic factors. However, despite

the source of the stereotyping, each of them is only as accurate and reliable as any other stereotype (Deal, Altman & Rogelberg 2010).

There are also rather contradictory but common beliefs and perceptions concerning Generation Y. Hershatter and Epstein (2010) claim that, on the one hand, Millennials are said to be self-centered and entitled, but at the same time the media have generated a good deal of hype around Generation Y by nominating it the next great generation. It remains to be seen whether all the stereotypes and beliefs are realistic or merely something people have started to believe in. Hershatter and Epstein nevertheless conclude that it is possible to predict and identify the behavior of each generation, and that that behavior is also unique to each generation.

At this point it is necessary to note the distinguishing characteristics of a generation and an age or a life stage. Because collective memory and historical location are essential factors relating to generations, they are also the factors that differentiate the concept of a generation from other related concepts. Turning to the issue of life stage, for example, Egri and Ralston (2004) see the life-stage theory as a universal concept, where the life stage, (i.e., the chronological age) determines an individual's preferences, values, and mindset. That is an opposing view to what happens with generations, where the values and mindset are formed in the early stages of the members' development, and these cultural, political, and economic situations are present regardless of the life stage. Costanza et al. (2012) conclude in their meta-analysis that there is a phenomenon that can be called generations, although generational differences or characteristics might not be easy to establish. The phenomenon is, however, that most often cited among parties outside academia, such as the media and consultants.

Further, Parry and Urwin (2011) distinguish between generations, cohorts, and age effects (see Table 4). They conclude that an individual's mindset is a mixture of several effects, and the generation can actually be one of them. Thus, generations and generational characteristics evolve over time. However, Parry and Urwin distinguish between a generation and a cohort.

Table 5. Cohorts, generations, and age (Parry & Urwin 2011).

Theoretical constructs	
Generations	A set of historical events and related cultural phenomena have impacted in a way that creates a distinct generational group. The identification of a generation requires some form of social proximity to shared events or cultural phenomena.
Cohorts	A group of individuals born at the same time who are <i>presumed</i> to be similar as a result of shared experiences. Only chronological proximity to events and other drivers of difference are assumed to distinguish them from other cohorts.
Age effects	The changing views, attitudes and behaviors of individuals as they mature.
Period effects	The (often confounding) impact of the environment on values, behaviors and attitudes that one must take into account when attempting to identify generational, cohort, or age-related impacts.

Moreover, even though this study concentrates on examining a *generation*, it is inevitable that at the same time the study also concerns people that are young and in their early careers. However, the study does not aim at distinguishing generational factors from chronological age or career stage, but it should be noted that some of the perceptions could be traced back to these other factors. For example, progressing in one's career is overall important in the early stages of the career (Appelbaum, Serena & Shapiro 2004), as is also socializing in the workplace in order to build networks (Wong et al. 2008; Bartram, Brown, Fleck, Inceoglu & Ward 2006). Also Sturges and Guest (2004) found that perceptions towards work changed as tenure, and thus age, increased. Overall, in practice all of the studies examining the perceptions of generation Y also deal with young people.

Thus, recognizing these parallel factors is important, but it does not prevent from concentrating on generational aspect. Accordingly the view also held in this study is that rather than claiming that generational characteristics are stable throughout a person's life and there is no room for any sort of variation or changes in values and perceptions, that the formation of one's mindset is somehow logically constructed in the early years of development.

Although these other concepts are acknowledged, in this study it was chosen to concentrate on the generational aspect in examining the preferences of young employees in working life.

The next section addresses this issue more carefully from research's point of view.

Challenges in examining generations

Generational research has only recently emerged and is now taking its first big steps. Accordingly, there is more attention being paid to questions on the reliability and validity of generational research. The field is therefore as yet rather unestablished because of its youth, and, as discussed earlier, the concept of the generation has some competitors that each differ to some extent. Further, there are considerable difficulties in, on the one hand, defining and justifying generational characteristics and, on the other hand, distinguishing those from other factors, such as age. It seems that these difficulties have prevented the establishment of a solid theory and concepts encapsulating generations and generational characteristics. Revealing generational characteristics and justifying them comprehensively would require longitudinal studies lasting several decades. The next subchapter considers these difficulties in studying generations in more detail.

The generational discussion has struggled to progress beyond stereotyping and populism. Deal et al. (2010) pointed out the lack of reliable and prospective (longitudinal) research on generational differences, and Arsenault (2004) claimed that one of the reasons was the lack of extensive and serious research, exacerbated by the lack of a well-established theory on generations. Furthermore, despite the strong roots of generational research, academic empirical evidence has not been convincing because of methodological limitations, such as cross-sectional research approaches, problems in distinguishing generation and age, a lack of evaluation nationally, gender, and ethnicity (Costanza et al. 2012; Parry & Urwin 2011). Moreover, the data have usually been derived at a single point in time, and are subjective, and retrospective. These factors have, for example, prevented the establishment of a dynamic model to elicit the actual differences between generations. Consequently, generational characteristics are not fully utilized, and further, workplace and workforce planning cannot offer optimal support to Generation Y, as it is not fully understood (Jorgensen 2003).

In addition, Mason and Wolfinger (2001) mention that there are at least two challenges involved in measuring and examining generational differences: the maturation and period effects. The former deals with measuring two different cohorts at the same time, when as a consequence the cohorts are of different ages, therefore making it difficult to separate the effect of age from generational

factors. The current situation at the particular point of the examination is of concern in the latter, making it difficult to distinguish between the current state of affairs, or mood, and generational characteristics.

These shortfalls in research and the immaturity of generational research have led the available literature to appear diverse and sometimes undeveloped. Considerable progress has been made in recent years, but there remains a large variety in generational literature. For example, Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) categorized generational literature according to the reliability and source, and identified three strongly influential aspects. First, the generational discussion has been conducted largely in the absence of a theoretical or empirical background, which has weakened it. Most sources can be found in non-expert columns and articles and also in blogs and other internet sources. Such sources are normative and usually affected by urban legends and other assumptions. Second, the other most common source type is books and articles written for commercial purposes. They have a somewhat empirical background, but the trade aspect might influence the reliability and autonomy. Third, the most reliable evidence can be found in empirical studies and research with a scientific background. However, those are the scarcest type of sources.

On the whole, the generational discussion has often been interested in the differences between generations. As a matter of fact, there have been some advances made. For example, Deal et al. (2010) claimed that some areas are likely to present generational differences. First, technology has played a huge role in generational shifts, and this trend will continue. Second, the attitude toward what is allowed in the workplace, and what is accepted has changed. Thus, practitioners might need to, for example, define suitable attire in workplaces, and possibly update the policies as well. Third, organizations will most probably encounter a challenge in trying to ensure Millennials' well-being remains strong: a challenge that could encompass both psychological and physical aspects. (Deal et al. 2010.)

Overall, it is difficult to clearly explain generational characteristics or the effect of a generation on an individual's mindset with reference to existing literature. Nevertheless, the generational aspect has attracted growing interest over the recent decade (Parry & Urwin 2011) as the importance of understanding generational differences has become apparent (Jorgensen 2003). Nevertheless, contributions remain scattered, and there is still a need to create a multidisciplinary research program to benefit working life by helping to understand the intergenerational dynamics involved (Joshi, Dencker, Franz & Martocchio 2010).

Generation Y

Generation Y, or Millennials¹¹, are established terms to describe this generation, but alternatives have been used both in academic research and the popular press including the Net Generation (Kupperschmidt 2006), Echo Boomers (Harris 2005), the Trophy Generation and the Why Me Generation (Crampton & Hodge 2009), Nexters (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak 2000), and Generation Me (Twenge 2009). However, as Generation Y is presumably the most neutral term and does not hold any stereotypes or prejudices, it is consistently used in this dissertation along with the term Millennials, which refers to members of Generation Y.

The interest in Generation Y in working life has increased during the last decade or so. The research has been interested in Generation Y's work values (Cogin 2012; Cennamo & Gardner 2008; Chen & Choi 2008), job satisfaction (Costanza et al. 2012), attitudes towards work and career (Macky, Gardner & Forsyth 2008), and work-family conflict (Beutell 2013), to mention a few. As the Millennials have not been in working life for long, studies have used student samples while examining perceptions working life (e.g., De Hauw & De Vos 2010; Sargent & Domberger 2007), even though Loughlin and Barling (2001) remind that it is important to note that different groups can hold different perceptions resulting in differing implications.

As presented earlier, a generational mindset can be justified only to some extent in light of existing literature and measures. Nevertheless, it is possible to discuss some common and most often mentioned characteristics of a generation. This subchapter presents the discussion around the characteristics of Generation Y in recent literature, and illustrates Generation Y's mindset and the claimed foundation of Generation Y's beliefs and values in the working life.

Generation Y's characteristics and working life

Family background

Millennials have seen their mothers working outside the home and dual-career families have been the norm for them. In many cases their mothers will have built themselves a career before starting a family (Welsh & Brazina 2010).

¹¹ In Finnish, the term “*Y-sukupolvi*” is most widely used (e.g., Tienari & Piekkari 2011; Vesterinen & Suutarinen 2011).

However, the impact of their upbringing has resulted in conflicting views. On the one hand, Millennials might have had over-cautious and overly supervisory parents (Twenge 2009), a situation that could have curtailed their independence and self-reliance. That effect might also have been exacerbated by the media and teachers. However there are dissenting voices, Jamrog (2002) held that being members of dual-career families, Millennials have had to become independent earlier than their parents did. Jamrog then linked that fact to the relationship Millennials have with their supervisors at work, claiming that Millennials desire close ties with their supervisors, to compensate for affection missing from their childhood.

Although Generation Y has been raised in the time of prosperity, and it has enjoyed upswings in the economy, which have given Millennials confidence and optimistic and prosperous expectations for the future (Gursoy et al. 2008; Arsenault 2004; Hart & Brossard 2002), its members have also experienced the 1990s depression, which especially in Finland hit many families hard. As parents' experiences from working life and attitudes towards work shape the development of children's perceptions of work (Barling, Dupre, & Hepburn 1998; Abramovitch & Johnson 1992; Dickinson & Emler 1992), Millennials have grown up witnessing lay-offs and bankruptcies, which have had an inevitable effect on their and their parents' lives and well-being (Zemke et al. 2000). As a result, Jurkiewicz (2000) claims that Millennials are skeptical towards organizations and unimpressed by authority. Also Loughling & Barling (2001) state that Millennials are not willing to make sacrifices in working life, for example concerning work-life balance, because of their parents' bad experiences. Further, according to Jurkiewicz (2000) and Zemke et al. (2000), Millennials are not expecting long-term careers in one organization, they can feel entitled to being independent and working flexibly, dressing casually and also having fun at work.

Work-life balance and flexibility

Also the events in childhood and early adulthood have an effect on each generation's mindset and as a consequence, on values and expectations (e.g., Smola & Sutton 2002). The world where Generation Y grew up has been rather violent, and marked by unexpected and unfortunate incidents conveyed by the media. For example, Generation Y has witnessed some shattering events such as acts of terrorism, school violence and shootings as well as natural disasters in the course of growing up. These experiences have had an inevitable effect on how Millennials face the world and what kinds of values, opinions, and perceptions they possess (Welsh & Brazina 2010). Although Millennials in developed

countries, such as Finland, have not witnessed wars and that sort of violence, the news has travelled fast in the world where they have grown up, and Millennials have witnessed these events almost in real time.

As a consequence, several researchers believe that because of witnessing these shattering events, friends and family are extremely important for Millennials (Hurst & Good 2009; Gursoy et al. 2008; Arsenault 2004; Hart & Brossard 2002). In the workplace, this can result in a desire to ensure they have an adequate work-life balance, as Millennials do not wish to spend all of their time or energy at work (e.g., Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggshall, 2010; Smith, 2010; Hurst and Good, 2009).

Thus, a flexible organizational structure and absence of hierarchy appeal to Millennials, as such an environment makes possible instant rewards and career progression that is not bound to age or tenure, but rather to performance and results. This environment can also promote new ideas being presented effectively (Hershatter & Epstein 2010). On the whole, Millennials are more dedicated to family life and to their family than previous generations (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Technology

Additionally, technological development has always played a big role in societal changes. Hershatter and Epstein (2010) mention that technology is the most important individual factor that has shaped Generation Y's mindset. Millennials have grown up with technology: their ways of communicating and enslaving technology differ enormously from those of previous generations (Welsh & Brazina 2010; Gursoy et al. 2008), and they are also said to be more socially active (Gursoy et al. 2008; Smola & Sutton 2002). Moreover, according to Hurst and Good (2009), Millennials are also aware of global matters, because the Internet has ensured news travels fast and reaches all corners of the globe. Further, the rise of technological solutions has enable distance working, and, as a matter of fact, Millennials are working longer days than their Baby Boomer parents did when they were young (Hershatter & Epstein 2010).

The capability of utilizing technology has inevitable effects on the workplace as well. As 'digital natives', Millennials are able to seek information quickly and produce an overall picture on any matter. As a result, they might lack the ability to find motivation to dig more deeply into a subject and discover more nuances or other opinions. The consequences in the workplace are twofold. On the one

hand, Millennials are able to gather a lot of information in a relatively short period of time and communicate this effectively through different media. On the other hand, they might find it difficult to absorb the complexity of the organizations and miss out on important viewpoints, as their analysis can be too superficial (Hershatter & Epstein 2010).

Supervisor

Whether a result of early independence (Jamrog 2002) or strong parental figures (Twenge 2009), the relationship with Millennials' parents is examined to have an effect on the perceptions towards supervisors. In fact, several studies have recognized the importance of supervisor for Generation Y (e.g., Smith, 2010; Hurst and Good, 2009; Martin, 2005; Jamrog, 2002). Further, Zopiatis, Krambia-Kapardis and Varnavas (2012) as well as Hershatter and Epstein (2010) claim that Millennials might seem more 'high-maintenance' or 'needy' than other staff. Now as they are entering the working life, their perceptions could be reflected in the relationship with their supervisors. They seek approval and affirmation, because they grew up in a world where everyone was rewarded even for only a little effort expended (Hershatter & Epstein 2010). Hence, Millennials need feedback in order to stay on the right track and to receive assurances that they are performing well (Martin 2005). Providing that can be exhausting from the supervisor's point of view. However, Hershatter and Epstein (2010) point out that those supervisors with the time to get Millennials started and to guide them in the initial stages of their corporate career, are likely ultimately to spend less time guiding Millennials than their counterparts who are unwilling to invest the time. For example, mentoring programs have been found to be very effective for both mentor and the mentee. Supervisors are able to practice more personal leadership, and at the same time Millennials receive important knowledge on issues such as career progression and institutional knowledge. (Hershatter & Epstein 2010.)

Even though Generation Y in working life has received attention in previous studies, still more research is needed in order to deepen the understanding of Generation Y in working life (see McDonald & Hite 2008). There is also a special need to provide empirical evidence and examine Millennials' preferences from different theoretical perspectives.

2.3 Generation Y challenging HRM in organizations

HRM refers to all practices and policies that deal with the personnel in an organization. They are also known as high performance work systems (HPWS) (Huselid 1995). Ryan and Wessel (2015) note that the role of HRM is changing due to the presence of a more diversified workforce than was once the case. Future challenges can include, for example, gathering accurate data for decision-making processes, promoting equality and diversity in organizations, recognizing possible differences in the perceptions of, for example fairness, between different demographic groups, such as generations, and improving the communication of different HR decision processes.

Further, HR function and HRM practices play a critical role in attracting and retaining employees. Their role is also important when it comes to Generation Y, as concerns have been raised in several studies over Millennials' willingness to commit to organizations (e.g., Lub, Bijvank, Bal, Blomme & Schalk 2012; Shacklock & Brunetto 2012; Lub, Blomme & Matthijs Bal 2011; Keepnews, Brewer, Kovner & Shin 2010).

The role of HRM practices and the HR function overall is important in facilitating various aspects at work (Alfes, Shantz, Truss & Soane 2013). HRM faces challenges with Generation Y over issues like recruitment and retention (Ito, Brotheridge & McFarland 2013), engagement (Solnet et al. 2012; Amar 2004), and diversity generally (Ryan & Wessel 2015). Thus, the aim of this chapter is to briefly review the human resource function and human resource management practices.

On a general level, the HR function is responsible for planning, staffing, appraising, compensating, and training and development (Wright, Gardner, Moynihan & Allen 2005; Delaney and Huselid 1996; Schuler & Jackson 1987). Regardless of the initial reason behind almost any decision or action in an organization, it has an impact on the employee, both in terms of the end result and the manner in which the situation was handled (Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Mills & Walton 1984: 1–2).

The importance of and interest in HRM is reflected in lively research in the field, and the discussion has been multilevel and multi-focused (Wilkinson, Redman, Snell & Bacon 2010: 3–4). Although the HR function has received a fair amount of criticism in the past for not being able to demonstrate its contribution (e.g., Drucker 1954: 275), HRM practices are now seen as critical and valuable assets for the organization, and treating them as such can result in competitive advantage (Colakoglu, Hong & Lepak 2010: 31; Guest 1997).

In addition to facilitating the employment relationships on an individual level, organizations through these HRM practices are simultaneously striving for advantageous organizational outcomes, such as better performance (Wright et al. 2005). Huselid (1995) was the first researcher to illuminate the relationship between HPWSs and turnover, profits, and a firm's market value, and ever since researchers have been interested in examining the effect of HRM practices on performance.

The categorizations of practices have been at the core of strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices. SHRM refers to human resource management practices that are critical to organizational effectiveness (Boxall & Purcell 2000). One of the earliest models to describe and structure SHRM is that adopted by Fombrun, Tichy, and Devanna (1984: 41), also known as the Michigan model. It has been used as a point of departure in Essay 5.

As previously outlined, HRM practices include processes that touch the everyday life of employees, and are present from the initial stages of employment until the end of the employment relationship (Delaney & Huselid 1996). Further, the execution of these practices is usually the managers' responsibility, and an employee is often made aware of the practices through their supervisor (Bos-Nehles, Van Riemsdijk & Kees Looise 2013; Guest 1997). Thus, as Bos-Nehles et al. (2013), point out, the immediate supervisor should have the ability, motivation, and adequate support to implement their duties in the form of HRM practices. As a consequence, the HR function is also responsible for facilitating the needs of managers and providing them with enough training, as well as relevant policies and procedures, to successfully fulfill their managerial role. Moreover, the HR function has the opportunity to recruit managers that already have competencies in HRM (Bos-Nehles et al. 2013).

Several HRM practices also aim to increase motivation and engagement among employees. This might be achieved through the likes of incentive systems, such as performance-based pay or promotion processes. Thus, in addition to organizational performance, HRM practices also attempt to influence individual performance (Minbaeva, Pedersen, Björkman, Fey & Park 2003; Huselid 1995).

Even though HRM practices are important in attracting, motivating, and retaining also Generation Y employees, there is a gap in research concerning Millennials' perceptions of HRM practices. Nevertheless, there are already some indications that generational perceptions have an effect on HRM as well (e.g., Cogin 2012). However, it is hardly surprising in the light of other findings claiming that Millennials' work preferences and perceptions need attention both in research and in practice (e.g., Shih & Allen 2007; Amar 2004). There are also

direct influences to HRM practices, as Ito et al. (2013) reported that organizations are having difficulties in recruiting and retaining young employees. Thus, HRM would benefit from more research that has practical aim and implications as well.

2.4 Summary

This chapter presented the existing literature on the concepts of a satisfying working life, Generation Y, and HRM's role in managing Millennials. To summarize the findings, it seems that the satisfactory elements of working life can be approached via different concepts and through differing lenses, but the issues still involve similar antecedents and consequences. Thus, the concepts that have been distinguished and discussed in the existing literature—job satisfaction, work motivation, rewarding, the psychological contract, and work engagement—revolve around the same elements, although they have different labels. As a consequence, satisfactory working life can be discussed in the light of different concepts on a general level, and they are all as suitable as each other, as there are no crucial differences between the concepts.

This chapter also presented literature on Generation Y, and discussed generational aspects overall. An interesting question was whether Generation Y can be examined and to what extent generational classifications are true. However, the aim of this discussion was not to answer this question, but instead to highlight the existence of the discussion and the literature examining generational differences from various perspectives. Through these assumptions and perceptions, generational issues and Generation Y are present in the working life. Thus, because HRM and supervisors have important roles in implementing people related processes and practices in the workplace, their characteristics attributed to Generation Y could present a challenge, whether they are absolutely valid or not. The important issue is that there is a label for this particular generation, and that their role in working life is recognized.

Thus, more empirical evidence and research are needed in order to understand Generation Y's perceptions in the working life. In order to do so, different perspectives should be adopted to gain deeper understanding.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter I will present the methodological choices that have been adopted in this dissertation. The study concentrates on the perceptions and views of Generation Y concerning work. Thus, it does not aim to make comparisons between different generations and not even among this group and therefore in accordance with the research design and the aim to understand Generation Y the chosen methodological approach was a qualitative study.

This chapter is structured as follows. First, it examines social media as an engine to gather data, and describes how it was adopted in this study. Second, this chapter presents the data collection method used in this study, the method of empathy-based stories. Third, the data collection process, which utilized social media and Facebook, and the data collected from 252 members of Generation Y are explained. Fourth, this chapter will shed more light on the process of analyzing written texts in this study. Figure 7 illustrates the contents and order of this chapter.

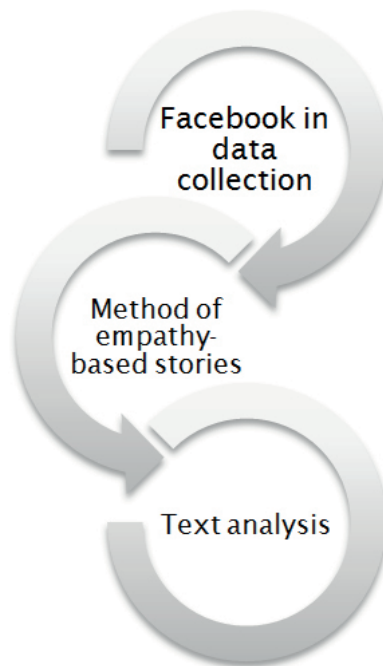


Figure 7. Content of the chapter.

3.1 Reaching people in the digital age

Generation Y has grown up with technology, and is comfortable in using examples like the Internet. Accordingly in this study the data collection was implemented mainly via social media¹², specifically Facebook.

Facebook was chosen as the main channel for its ability to reach potential informants. In this case the main target group were members of Generation Y, who are digital natives and comfortable in using technology and social media. Secondly, and to justify the first point, Millennials are heavy users of the Internet and prefer to engage in online activities (Eisner 2005). Thirdly, social media is also attracting the attention of academics, as it is an affordable way to reach a large number of potential respondents (Boyd & Ellison 2007). Fourthly, Facebook is the most widespread and influential site among the social media networks (Curran, Draus, Schrage & Zappala 2014). Thus, Facebook was considered to be a suitable engine to reach Millennials, as they are comfortable and used to being online. Additionally, the networks in Facebook can be considered extensive, and with the application of the snowball method¹³ it was assumed that sharing the link to the survey in Facebook could reach informants quickly and effectively, also informants that are outside the researchers own network (i.e., friends of friends etc.) could become accessible via Facebook. On the whole, social media can be a suitable tool for data collection, and in comparison to offline data collection methods, allows the same conclusions to be drawn (e.g., Grieve, Witteveen & Tolan 2014; Birnbaum 2004).

Moreover, despite the relatively short history of social media and Facebook, they are among the greatest and most influential technological breakthroughs in history (Curran et al. 2014). Social media, and Facebook, has brought supervisors and subordinates closer together, so they now have more opportunity to interact with one another than ever before (Peluchette, Karl, & Fertig, 2013). This might suit Generation Y, as they value close ties with their supervisor highly (Meier & Crocker 2010; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Further, social media has been used in HR-related issues as well, such as recruiting new employees (see e.g., Curran et al. 2014). For Generation Y, interacting with colleagues and a supervisor in social media could be important in terms of building one's network or accelerating career development (Peluchette et al. 2013). Thus, the meaning of social media is

¹² Boyd and Ellison (2007) define social media as “web based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.”

¹³ The snowball method refers to using one's own networks in order to reach suitable informants (Handcock & Gile 2011), and it has been relatively often used in qualitative sociological research (Birnacki & Waldorf 1981).

important and multifaceted for Generation Y, and it was a rather natural choice to carry out the data collection via social media.

3.2 Method of empathy-based stories (MEBS)

The method of empathy-based stories, MEBS (*eläytymismenetelmä*) was used as the data collection method in this study. MEBS was considered the best option among several data gathering methods because it best suited data collection conducted via social media. Other options available included a survey or essays (e.g., narratives). However, as there were no prior studies to form the basis for questionnaires and the study is qualitative by nature, they were not considered a suitable option. The essay or narrative option was rejected for two primary reasons. First, it was expected that there would be a large number of informants as a result of collecting the data via social media. Second, formulating narrative-type question would have been challenging, and narratives would have worked better in relation to, for example, interviews.

In addition, MEBS is a suitable option for studying a subject that has not received very much attention in previous studies (Eskola, 1991, 10–11). Furthermore, the present study was formulated in such a way that possible stereotypes or prejudices would not limit the informants, but the format instead encouraged them to freely express themselves. This chapter will begin by describing the development of this method and its foundations. All of the essays that are related to this study, utilize the data collected via MEBS.

The method of empathy-based stories, or passive role-playing as it is sometimes referred to owes much to the work and research of Finnish sociologists Antti Eskola and Jari Eskola since 1982 (Eskola 2001: 71). Antti Eskola in particular is the pioneer of the method in Finland, and Juha Suoranta has taken the method further, and is responsible for the foremost discussion of MEBS methodological aspects in his dissertation (Suoranta 1995). Unfortunately, there is little literature on MEBS, and much of what there is originates in theses and working papers.

The method has occasionally used in Finland by sociologists, although the method has not been marketed or branded effectively (Eskola 1997: 8). The interest in passive role-playing in the international context and especially in Anglo-American countries has not been very strong either (Eskola 1997: 8). The active form of role-playing has received more attention in research (Eskola 1997: 7). It refers to a method where the participants themselves, for example, act or play roles in a given story (Ginsburg 1979: 92). However, as Eskola (1997: 16) claims, the passive form of role-playing method is suitable for several research

areas and purposes, and can be modified to suit the researcher's field and needs. During the course of its development, MEBS has been profiled as a data collection method (Eskola 1997: 16).

The passive form means the informants do not have to be present and their expressions are limited to the written form. In other words, they reflect on and act upon the given script and write a story based on the given instructions (Eskola 1997: 6–7). The interest is not only to gather expected or the most likely answers, but also viewpoints that are possible in the given situations and orientation that is described in the script (see pages 51–52) (Eskola 1997: 15).

Originally passive role-playing was developed to substitute for laboratory experiments and tests, where the tested subject could experience (heavy) emotional stress and even manipulation (see e.g., Milgram 1984). In these kinds of tests the possible manipulation and the setting might warp the normal behavior of the informant. Drawing from these problematic situations, and in order to enhance ethical issues in research, the goal and purpose of MEBS have been built on opposite grounds. With MEBS, the patterns and behavior of a human being are maintained and enhanced. These include, for example, weighting different options and consideration, which are an essential part of human life (Eskola 1997: 14–15). Passive role-playing has also been targeted to tackle occurring ethical problems especially in qualitative research, where the informant is usually treated more individually, as opposed to quantitative research where the view of a single respondent is lost in analyses and tables (Eskola 1997: 13–15).

Ethical issues have been emphasized in justifying MEBS, as Eskola (1997: 14) claims that MEBS is not as problematic as some other data collection methods, such as traditional surveys or interviews. In the former the respondent is usually forced to express an opinion via a multiple choice response in which the opinion might be limited to a few options; in the latter the interviewee can be led during the interview and encouraged to express particular views by the interviewer.

The core of MEBS is background stories: the scripts, which are used as orientation for the informants. The informants are provided with at least two scripts, in which usually one factor has been varied. The interest is therefore often to analyze the differences that the informants produce based on the variation. (Eskola 1997: 5–6, 17). The varied factor is dependent on the nature and aim of the study, but using the division between positive tone and negative tone is relatively common (e.g., Juntunen and Saarti, 2000). According to Eskola (2001: 70), this variation that is created through differences in the orientation, distinguishes MEBS from other similar data collection methods, such as essays.

Eskola (2001: 73–74; 1997: 17–18) suggests that the scripts should be relatively simple and short. This is to ensure that the informants are motivated to provide answers, but also not too guided or disoriented, although the aim is to gather information that can be unexpected as well. The orientation in the script does not have to be a clear image of reality, but should describe a situation that might happen under some circumstances (Eskola 2001: 69). The answers also reflect the cultural context (Eskola 1997:15), and seek to explain the logic, reasoning, and explanations behind the scripts (Eskola 1997: 17), although the stories often refer to a third person—the protagonist in the scripts (Eskola 1997: 15).¹⁴

In this study I used four scripts that briefly described a situation where a person comes home from work and his/her state-of-mind is described in simple terms. Sami and Sanna were chosen as the names of the protagonists because they are quite typical Finnish names. Naming the protagonists is suitable when using MEBS, both male and female names have been used before without issue (see e.g., Eskola & Eskola 1995). Further, the scripts introduced one positive and one negative situation concerning both motivation and leadership. After each script, the following instruction guided the informant: “By using your imagination, write a short story or a description based on this situation.”¹⁵ The scripts are as follows:

*Positive script on motivation*¹⁶

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels truly motivated and he has a lot of energy to work. It is nice to go to work in the morning and Sami is always looking forward to the next working day. Why does Sami feel this motivated and so enthusiastic?

¹⁴ Referring to a third person is reminiscent of externalizing, a technique that is used in psychology (see White 1988).

¹⁵ Originally the survey was in Finnish and the question was presented as “Käytä mielikuvitustasi ja kirjoita tilanteesta pieni kertomus tai kuvaus.”

¹⁶ Originally: Kuvittele, että eräänä päivänä Sami tulee töistä kotiin. Sami tuntee olonsa todella motivoituneeksi ja hänellä riittää työntöitä vaikka muille jakaa. Aamulla on kiva lähteä töihin ja Sami odottaa aina uutta työpäivää innokkaana. Miksiköhän Sami on näin motivoitunut ja intoa täynnä?

*Negative script on motivation*¹⁷

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels tired, and he does not seem to find any motivation toward work. It is not nice to go to work in the mornings, and he could not care less about going to work again next week. Sami looks forward to the weekends, when he does not have to go to work. Why is Sami not motivated by his work and why does he not feel at all enthusiastic?

*Positive script on leadership*¹⁸

Imagine that one day Sanna comes home from work. She feels energetic. She is happy and glad that she has her job, just the way it is, and she is not considering applying for any other job. She feels truly engaged with her employer and it is always nice to go to work in the mornings. What has happened between Sanna and her supervisor to make Sanna feel like this and enjoy her work?

*Negative script on leadership*¹⁹

Imagine that one day Sanna comes home from work. She is really irritated and bored. She does not feel like working at all, and she has started to look for another job, as it feels difficult to go to work in the mornings. What has happened between Sanna and her supervisor to make Sanna feel like this and that her work is so thoroughly uninspiring?

The names of the protagonists were selected because they are traditional Finnish names that would be unremarkable to the Finnish respondents. The informants received no further guidance other than the scripts provided. However, in accordance with the nature and objectives of the study, the protagonists were chosen to have links with working life. The other deliberate choice made at the outset was to anchor their states of mind to motivational issues and supervisor-related issues. Motivation is a relatively well-known concept, and it was adjudged safe to use in this context.

¹⁷ Originally: Kuvittele, että eräänä päivänä Sami tulee töistä kotiin. Sami tuntee olonsa väsyneeksi, eikä työtä kohtaan löydy oikein minkäänlaista motivaatiota. Aamulla ei ole kiva lähteä töihin, ja edessä oleva työviikko ei innosta tippaakaan. Viikonloppuja Sami odottaa aina kovasti, ettei tarvitsisi mennä töihin. Miksiköhän Sami ei ole yhtään motivoitunut työstään eikä tunne intoa työntekoa kohtaan?

¹⁸ Originally: Kuvittele, että eräänä päivänä Sanna tulee töistä kotiin. Hän tuntee olonsa energiseksi. Sanna on iloinen ja tyytyväinen siitä, että hänellä on juuri kyseinen työ, eikä työpaikan vaihto ole käynyt mielessäään. Hän on hyvin sitoutunut omaan työnantajaansa ja töihin on mukava lähteä joka aamu. Mitä Sannalle on tapahtunut hänen esimiehensä kanssa, kun Sanna on näin hyvällä tuulella ja työnteko tuntuu miellyttävältä?

¹⁹ Originally: Kuvittele, että eräänä päivänä Sanna tulee töistä kotiin. Hän on hyvin ärtynyt ja tympääntynyt. Työnteko ei maita, ja työpaikan vaihto käy yhä useammin mielessä. Sanna onkin jo alkanut etsiä uutta työpaikkaa, sillä töihinlähtö tuntuu joka aamu vaikealta. Mitä Sannalle on tapahtunut hänen esimiehensä kanssa, kun Sanna on näin huonolla tuulella ja työnteko maistuu puulta?

3.3 Data gathering

In this sub chapter, I will present the data collection process that started with designing the research setting and ended with actually gathering the data.

A pilot study was conducted prior to the actual data gathering (as suggested in Eskola, 1997: 19). The pilot study included the original scripts in their final form. The link to the electronic form was sent to 14 members of Generation Y with different backgrounds (e.g., education, place of work, place of living, work situation), and who were on the friends list of the researcher in Facebook. The researcher chose them as it was possible to distinguish different types of informants based on prior knowledge. During the pilot study, seven friends responded to the initial survey. After this phase, some questions concerning background information of the informants were added. The pilot study confirmed that the scripts were easy to understand and were understood well. The descriptions and stories the informants provided were colorful and informative.

The actual data collection process was initiated in the winter of 2012. The link to the electronic survey was shared on the researcher's own Facebook wall. The researcher requested her friends share the link on their own walls so as to reach as many Millennials who were keen to respond as possible including people from beyond the researcher's own network (people with different demographics, educational backgrounds, work roles etc.). The link was shared on three dates 8.2.2012, 15.2.2012, and 25.2.2012. Each time some of the researcher's friends shared the link on their own networks. As a result, the link reached a number of different people all over Finland.²⁰

In addition to using Facebook, a few e-mailing lists were also used to provide access to more informants. A short description of the study followed by the link was sent on 9.2.2014 to six student organizations operating in the University of Vaasa. Similar mixed recruitment methods have been used in previous research that has had its focus on Facebook (see e.g., Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley 2009). As the snowball method was used, the actual response rate cannot be defined, but that is not necessary in this type of study, as it is also one characteristic of qualitative research when target sample size is not emphasized (Eskola 1997:22). However, at the beginning of the data gathering process it was considered that some 100 informants would be an adequate and reasonable amount. Eventually 252 informants were surveyed, and all of their responses were included in the data. An interesting notion is that the majority of the stories

²⁰ As the scripts in the actual survey were in Finnish, it ruled out the majority of foreign informants, unless they had Finnish language skills. Thus, it can be assumed that all of the informants were Finnish.

were provided based on the link on Facebook, as the amount of informants increased each time the link was shared in Facebook. In Figure 8 the messages that were aimed at reaching informants are illustrated (link in the researcher's Facebook wall, the link shared by a friend, and message sent to student organizations).

The figure shows a sequence of communication. At the top, a Facebook post from Susanna Kultalahti (15 February 2012) asks for help in spreading a survey link. Below it, a message from a friend (20 February 2012) shares the same link. A large grey arrow points from the survey link in the messages down to an email. The email contains the survey details and a thank-you message.

Susanna Kultalahti
15 February 2012 · Vaasa · 🌐

AUTTAKAA TULEVAA TOHTORIA!!
Kaiken ikäiset ja kaikenlaiset ihmiset ovat tervetulleita vastaamaan kyselyyn koskien minun väitöskirjaani. Linkkiä voi huoletta jakaa eteenpäin omille kavereille, työkavereille ja kenelle vain!
<https://eforms.uwasa.fi/lomakkeet/1773/lomake.html>

E-lomake - Johtajuus ja motivaatio
Tämä kysely liittyy Vaasan yliopiston johtamisen laitosella tehtävään väitöskirjalukemukseeni. Väitöskirjassani tarkastelen ja tutkin sitä, miten lähiesimiestyöllä voidaan vaikuttaa Y-sukupolven suorituskykyyn, ja miten Y-sukupolvea voidaan parhaiten johtaa. Y-sukupolvi on syntynyt vuosina 19...
EFORMS.UWASA.FI

via **Susanna Kultalahti**
20 February 2012 · 🌐

Nyt kaikki vastaamaan kyselyyn! Linkkiä voi huoletta jakaa eteenpäin omille kavereille, työkavereille ja kenelle vain.. 😊

E-lomake - Johtajuus ja motivaatio
Tämä kysely liittyy Vaasan yliopiston johtamisen laitosella tehtävään väitöskirjalukemukseeni. Väitöskirjassani tarkastelen ja tutkin sitä, miten lähiesimiestyöllä voidaan vaikuttaa Y-sukupolven suorituskykyyn, ja miten Y-sukupolvea voidaan parhaiten johtaa. Y-sukupolvi on syntynyt vuosina 19...
EFORMS.UWASA.FI

Teen väitöskirjaani Vaasan yliopiston johtamisen yksikössä aiheenani Y-sukupolven johtaminen ja motivaatio. Keraän dataa e-lomakkeen kautta, ja toivoisin, että välittäisitte alla olevan viestini sähköpostilistojenne kautta jäsenistölle.

Hei!

Olen Susanna Kultalahti ja teen väitöskirjaani Vaasan yliopiston johtamisen yksikössä. Aiheenani on Y-sukupolven johtaminen ja motivaatio. Y-sukupolvi on syntynyt vuosina 1978-1995, mutta KAIKKIEN sukupolvien edustajien vastaukset ovat tarpeellisia ja tervetulleita, jotta voin verrata eri sukupolvien odotuksia ja käsityksiä. Alla olevan linkin kautta pääset vastaamaan hieman erilaiseen kyselyyn kuin mihin olet ehkä tottunut. Vastaaminen kestää 5-15 minuuttia. Tarvitsen teidän kaikkien apua, jotta voin myöhemmin väitöskirjassani kertoa, miten meitä tulisi johtaa, ja mikä meitä oikeasti motivoi. Y-sukupolven kun on sanottu olevan erikoislaatuinen ja omaleimainen sekä muuttavan työelämää. Tutkimus tuottaa käytännöllistä tietoa arkipäiväisiin johtamistilanteisiin meidän kaikkien hyväksi, joten on oman etusi mukaista antaa panoksesi tälle tutkimukselle!

Kyselyyn pääset osoitteella:
<https://eforms.uwasa.fi/lomakkeet/1773/lomake.html>

Vastaan mielelläni kysymyksiin ja otan kommentteja vastaan. Ethän myöskään epäroi jakaa linkkiä vaikka omilla Facebook-sivuillasi tai ystävien ja työkavereiden kesken. Y-sukupolvea tutkittaessa ainoa oikea tapa on hyödyntää tietotekniikkaa ja sosiaalista mediaa!

Kiitos arvokkaista vastauksistanne jo etukäteen! Ja kuten mainitsin, kaikki vastaukset iäst riippumatta ovat tärkeitä!

Figure 8. Messages shared in Facebook and e-mails.

The actual survey including the background questions and the scripts were created in the University of Vaasa's e-form platform, meaning the informants

could not use Facebook or another medium to answer the actual questions. Further, they were not able to see each other's answers or any other information. On the first page of the survey the informant was able to answer the background questions. The two scripts concerning motivation were on page two, and the leadership questions were on page three. The informant was able to shift back and forth before submitting their answers. The majority of the questions had to be answered in order to be able to move forward. The time for the response was unlimited, and the answers were handled with integrity and care. No individual informant can be distinguished or traced.

Thus, the study progressed as follows: 1) a link from Facebook (the researcher's wall or from the wall of a person that shared the initial link) or the e-mail list redirected the informant to the University of Vaasa's e-form web page, where the survey was generated; 2) the informant was asked some background questions; 3) second page of the survey included the scripts on motivation (positive script and negative script); 4) on the third page the scripts concerning leadership and supervisor were presented; 5) and finally on the last page the informant was able to submit her/his answers.

The survey form

The survey form consisted of six questions on the informants' background. This information was then used in the Essays (see Table 1).

- Gender
- Year of birth (based on Smola & Sutton, 2002)
 - 1900–1945
 - 1946–1964
 - 1965–1977
 - 1978–1995
 - 1996–2010

- Education
 - Basic education
 - Upper secondary school
 - Polytechnic
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Master's degree
 - Licentiate or Doctoral Degree
- Work situation
 - Working full-time
 - Studying, working part-time
 - Studying, working full-time
 - Studying full-time
- The type of contract
 - Not employed
 - Permanent
 - Voluntarily temporary
 - Temporary, but not by choice
 - Agency worker
- The number of previous jobs
 - 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; Over 10

Description of the informants

The data collection process was effective and relatively rapid. After it was launched on 8.2.2012, 309 people responded to the survey, out whom 252 were

members of Generation Y. The majority of the responses (291) were received by 27.3.2012, and after that only a few additional responses were received, although the link was not actively distributed after that date. The last response included in the data was received 8.9.2012²¹.

The current research utilizes the responses received from people belonging to Generation Y (n=252). The number of women in this sample is 191 and 61 of the informants were men. The majority of the informants had a degree; two had completed only basic education; 77 had completed upper secondary school; 48 informants held a degree from a polytechnic; 60 held a bachelor's degree; and 64 had a master's degree; one informant had either a licentiate or doctoral degree.

Altogether 91 informants were working full-time, and 75 informants were studying full-time. Among the respondents, 58 were studying full-time and working part-time while 28 informants were working full-time and also studying simultaneously but part-time.

Altogether 96 informants held a permanent position, while 41 informants were working on a temporary basis, but were doing so voluntarily. At the same time, 34 had a temporary contract, but not by choice. Four informants described themselves as agency workers, and 77 were not employed at the time of completing the survey.

Work experience was measured by the number of jobs the informants had had. Seven informants had been employed only once, 13 twice, 27 had had three contracts, 18 had had four, 28 had had five employment contacts, 32 informants had six contracts, 27 had had seven, 8 had had 28, 13 informants had a history of nine contracts, 12 informants had had 12, and 47 informants had had more than ten contracts.

Description of the material

Next, I will generally describe the stories that the informants provided. The group of 252 members of Generation Y produced 1004 short stories. The length of the stories varied from a few words up to approximately 150 words, and averaged approximately 60 words. Some of the stories were list form, where the informant had listed things that s/he thought were reasons for the protagonist to feel the

²¹ The last response was received very late compared to the other responses. Although the link to the survey was no longer being actively promoted, this small detail describes the power of social media. It could be that the informant had seen the link to the survey months later, and still decided to answer. Answering was technically possible, as the survey was still open to public.

way they did. However, in most of the stories the informant had used full sentences instead of a list. Generally, the informants did not surmise too much about the characters of the protagonists in their stories. In some of the stories, there were references to youth or the early stages of a career, and in some of the stories in the negative setting the informants described the protagonist as lazy or otherwise responsible for the situation causing them to feel demotivated or having problems with the supervisor.

One of the worries prior to the data gathering was the quality of the stories as they were collected anonymously, online, and via social media. Surprisingly, only a few answers had to be removed because the informant's response was incomplete. Only one informant used language that was somewhat inappropriate due to sexist phrases and references. All other stories were acceptable in terms of relevance and appropriateness. Hence, although the data collection was carried out over the Internet anonymously, and the answers could have been somewhat shorter than when using some other methods as a result, it did not seem to have an effect on the content or the quality of the answers, since only an insignificant proportion of the stories were unusable. It seemed that the informants had treated the survey seriously and provided their real views on the matter.

As the guidance of the informants was deliberately rather loose, the expectation was that the stories could be rather rich and possibly reveal matters that would be somewhat surprising. Furthermore, as there were no prior expectations because of the lack of research in this area (Generation Y in the Finnish context), it was possible and important to treat the stories with an open mind.

Generally, the informants did not surmise too much about of the characters of the protagonists in their stories. In some of the stories, there were references to youth or the early stages of a career, and in some of the stories in the negative setting the informants described the protagonist as lazy or otherwise responsible for the situation causing them to feel demotivated or having problems with the supervisor.

An interesting notion was the when the informants wrote about work, they referred to projects in their stories. Thus, it could be that either they are working on projects themselves, or they see working life as somewhat fragmented, as projects usually tend to have a fixed time period; alternatively, talking about projects may just be a current way in which people talk about work today.

Somewhat unexpectedly, especially in the stories that were based on the negative scripts, the informants used quite a number of metaphors to express themselves.

For example, they referred to “robots” when explaining the feelings of the protagonist, as in this example related to the demotivating story.

“Sami cannot have an influence at work, essentially on anything. He is just a living person who has been assigned to do robot-like things. It is forbidden to use one’s brain although it would be possible to make the work more meaningful and productive if there would be a chance to have an effect in some way. Working times are bad and (neither) the supervisor nor the work environment are inspiring.”²²

One informant wrote that the protagonist is not motivated because he “*feels he is an average dairy cow in a big barn*”²³ or in other words, a small cog in a big machine. In this material the language the Millennials are using is rather rich, and by using these sorts of metaphors they are in fact conveying much more than just the things that they write down in the survey form. In the next story, the informant empathized with the protagonist, and offered a rather vivid description to express why the protagonist is not happy with her supervisor:

“Damn! The tyrant again! Talking to us like we were retards, who don’t know anything about anything although most of us have been working in this firm already for 5 years! The supervisor called me Mirjami yesterday, doesn’t s/he even know her/his own subordinates! And what is it with this informing, courses are passing when nothing is informed.”²⁴

Although the language in this story is quite harsh and informal, it still signals feelings of not being respected or acknowledged. It also discusses the relevance of information and communication in the workplace, as well as the meaning of learning new things and self-development through training.

Overall, the experiences were encouraging and also surprising to some extent. Prior worries included, for example, whether the informants’ stories would be short, written in rather poor language as is sometimes the case in social media, or if the informants would make fun of the stories or simply offer foolish responses. However, this turned out not to be the case. The stories indicated that the informants had really given thought to the task while answering, and they

²² Originally: ”Sami ei voi vaikuttaa työssään oikeastaan mihinkään. Hän on vain elävä ihminen joka on pantu tekemään robottimaisia hommia. Järjen käyttö on kielletty vaikka työhön voisi saada enemmän mielekkyyttä ja tehoa jos siihen olisi mahdollisuus vaikuttaa itse edes jotenkin. Työajat ovat ehkä huonot eikä esimies tai työympäristökään innosta.”

²³ Originally: ”suurnavetan keskituottoinen lypsävä”.

²⁴ Originally: ”No perkele! Kyllä se tyranni taas pääsi vauhtiin! Puhuukin meille kuin oltaisiin jotain vähä-älyisiä, jotka ei tiedä mistään mitään vaikka kuitenkin jo tässäkin firmassa suurin osa työskennellyt jo 5 vuotta! Minuakin se eilen kutsui Mirjamiksi, eikö se tunne omia työntekijöitään edes! ja entäs sitten tämä tiedonkulku, koulutuksetkin kerkiävät mennä jo ohi kun mistään ei tiedoteta.”

seemed to have concentrated based on the maturity evident in the stories. Although in some stories, as in the following one concerning motivating factors, the informant is very informal at first and the story seems irrelevant, in the end the story provides several insights:

“Scenarios: Sami has a deep crush in his colleague/boss, and the best moment of the day is a smile from this person. Sami is too shy to make the initiative to meet her outside working hours, so he spends as much as time as he can in the workplace to make an impression by performing well in his duties. The tasks are motivating and goals are clear; there is meaningful work to do, but the work is not too exhausting, and there is time to recover from the working day. There is an encouraging atmosphere in the work community, and it’s okay to say that *‘it’s so nice to be working’*, and it is not interpreted as brown-nosing the bosses. Sami has found an interesting field of work, and he is able to express himself at work. Work is Sami’s passion and the tasks are natural to him. Sami has probably just started in a new workplace and is having a honeymoon period with the new work community and tasks.”²⁵

Thus, the focus is on work-related tasks, although the beginning of the story was very informal. This story also reveals an interesting notion concerning the balance between work and private life. Repeatedly the stories described situations, both in their positive and negative aspects, covering this issue.

3.4 Analyzing the material

In this chapter, I will discuss the process used to analyze the text. First, I will view how data which are collected with MEBS can be analyzed. Second, I will highlight some of the most common analyzing methods, such as content analysis and discourse analysis, which have been used in this study as well. Overall, the emphasis in this chapter is to generally discuss how to analyze written text and present the outcome of the analysis process concerning this study’s data.

²⁵ Originally: ”Skenaarioita: Sami on pohjattoman ihastunut työkaveriinsa/pomoonsa, ja päivän paras hetki on ihastukselta saatu hymy. Ujo Sami ei uskalla tehdä aloitetta tavatakseen ihastusta työajan ulkopuolella, vaan viettää työpaikalla mahdollisimman paljon aika yrittäen tehdä vaikutuksen ihastukseensa hyvällä suoriutumisella työtehtävistä. Työtehtävät on motivoivia ja tavoitteet selkeitä; on siis mielekästä tekemistä, mutta toisaalta työ ei vie kaikkia mehuja, vaan työpäivästä ehtii palautuakin. Työyhteisössä on kannustava ilmapiiri, ja on ihan ok sanoa ”onpa kivaa olla töissä”, eikä sitä tulkita työkavereiden keskuudessa pomojen mielistelyksi tai siipeilyksi. Sami on löytänyt itseään kiinnostavan alan, ja pääsee työssään toteuttamaan itseään. Työ on Samille myös intohimo ja työtehtävät luontaisia. Sami on ehkä aloittanut juuri uudessa työpaikassa, ja viettää kuherruskuukautta uuden työyhteisön ja työtehtävien kanssa.”

Analyzing MEBS-based data

As MEBS is solely a data collection method, the process of analysis relies on other factors. The analyzing process can be either qualitative or quantitative (Eskola 1991:16). On the one hand, the given orientation in the script can guide the analysis process to some extent, for example, when the stories the informants have written are constructed as narratives, a narrative approach in analyzing the data is possible. However, the stories cannot necessarily be viewed as narratives, and in this case a different approach is more suitable, such as discourse analysis or content analysis. (see, Eskola 1991: 16–25). On the other hand, as in any study, the research question, problem, and setting will guide the researcher in order to examine data in a suitable way. Nevertheless, the data collected via MEBS is similar to interview data, and can be treated and evaluated as such (Eskola 1997: 33).

Eskola and Suoranta (2001) suggest that the researcher would approach MEBS-based data as any pile of texts, regardless of the way the researcher has retrieved these data. Based on the research setting, there are several ways in which to continue the analysis process. In qualitative research it is very important that the researcher becomes familiar with the data and obtains an overall picture of the material. The next steps can include, for example, tabulation or creating themes that can reveal issues that are relevant in the present study. Eskola and Suoranta (2001: 89) remind us that in the case of MEBS, the stories are already themed as a result of the variation in the scripts, for example, a positive theme and negative theme.

Data analysis

The data were preliminarily coded using QSR NVivo (version 9). NVivo is a tool that helps in organizing and coding large volumes of qualitative data. It will assist the researcher in managing the data and restoring descriptive coding (as in Richards, 2009: 99), such as attributes that describe each case. A case in this study is a story.

In NVivo, the coding process produces nodes that can be further organized based on certain themes. When the complete data in this study were preliminarily coded, the stories were divided based on the script. Thus, there were four categories related to either a positive or negative script on motivation or leadership. After that, the coding took place within each category. In other words,

the stories based on each script were addressed individually and the stories were not mixed.

The next step was to code each word, sentence, or any other unit, and theme these codings under the same node. At first, the coding process was rather slow due to the lack of nodes: the nodes were created during the coding process, as there was no ready-made classification or a framework that would have defined the nodes or coding. Thus, the approach to the coding process was rather inductive.

The goal of this preliminary and exploratory coding process was to initially categorize the data and thus to distinguish frequencies, for example. During the coding process, each word, phrase, or sentence was coded to at least some node. Thus, the aim of the coding process was to address and note every single word. As a result, even if a word or phrase was unusable (if for example it was not related to the topic to any extent), it was still coded.

However, the coding and the nodes that were created with NVivo and concerned the whole data on Generation Y, were not used in the individual analyses of the essays that are part of the thesis. The analyzing processes in each separate study are more carefully explained in the related essays.

As there was a large number of the informants and a thousand stories, and because the coding in this initial phase was somewhat exploratory, in the end there were dozens of nodes. Thus, the “*node tree*” (see Richards 2009: 118–119) was rather long but quite thin. However, the coding process was the first and preliminary step toward analyzing the data, and its purpose was merely to make the data more familiar, as well as to discover an overall picture. For example, in the following story, the informant discussed several themes and issues related to a story concerning positive leadership:

“Sanna feels she is special and respected in the work community. Sanna thinks that it is her input that is important. She has gained some skills and training at work, that perhaps she could not have got from anywhere else, and she sort of feels she “owes” the organization, and wants to use her input for this particular employer. Sanna has been able to have an effect on the content of her work and also in setting the goals. Sanna knows what is expected from her, and she is glad to be able to live up to those expectations. Her supervisor remembers to give positive feedback on projects, so Sanna knows that her input has not gone to waste. The supervisor gives responsibilities, but does not accept lazing around. The most important and challenging thing is to engage, engage, and engage.

Every employee should feel themselves an important part of the organization.”²⁶

This particular story is also interesting in that the informant often referred to projects. In addition, this informant makes references to the organization, which were absent in most of the stories. The informants usually referred to “*work*,” “*a workplace*,” or “*a work community*.” In this story the most often mentioned issues were also present, such as feeling appreciated and respected, the meaningfulness of work, and feedback. The story also described the reciprocity in the relationship between employee and employer.

In practice all of the stories were coded to several different nodes, as the aim of the first stage of coding with NVivo was to discover frequencies, and the topics that the informants discussed most. Every part of each story was coded to some node. The length of the coding varied from a single word to whole story. The stories were already divided according to their script, thus, in the beginning of the coding process there were four categories: motivation, positive; motivation, negative; supervisor, positive; and supervisor, negative. These categories were kept separate during the coding.

After the coding was finished, there were several nodes in each category (see Table 5). The number of references inside one node varied from one reference to 105 references. It should be noted that the number of references does not refer to the number of informants. One story can provide several references to one node, if these references are made separately in the informant’s story, and one story can contribute to several nodes. All of the nodes and their number of references are shown in the appendix.

²⁶ Originally: ”Sanna kokee olevansa erityinen ja arvostettu työyhteisössä. Sannan mielestä juuri hänen työpanoksensa on merkittävässä asemassa. Hän on saanut työpaikalta taitoja ja koulutusta, joita ei olisi ehkä saanut muualta, ja hän kokee olevansa omalla tavallaan ”velkaa” organisaatiolle, ja haluaa käyttää oman työpanoksensa juuri kyseisen työnantajan hyväksi. Sanna on päässyt vaikuttamaan työnsä sisältöön ja sen tavoitteiden asetteluun. Sanna tietää, mitä häneltä vaaditaan, ja iloitsee onnistuessaan. Myös esimies muistaa antaa positiivista palautetta hoidetuista projekteista, jolloin Sanna tietää, ettei hänen työpanoksensa ole mennyt hukkaan. Esimies antaa vastuuta, muttei katsele lusmuilua läpi sormien. Tärkeintä ja haastavinta on sitouttaminen, sitouttaminen ja sitouttaminen. Jokaisen työntekijän pitäisi tuntea itsensä tärkeäksi osaksi organisaatiota.”

Table 6. The node frequencies in the preliminary stage of coding.

Category	Motivation, positive	Motivation, negative	Supervisor, positive	Supervisor, negative
Number of informants	252	252	252	252
Number of references	1411	1291	942	1054
Number of nodes	70	70	68	90
Minimum number of references per node	1	1	1	1
Maximum number of references per node	94	70	105	43
Three nodes with most references	Pleasant climate (84) Challenging work (76) Pleasing job (94)	Poor supervisor (66) Uneven workload (66) Poor climate (70)	Feedback (105) Appreciation (55) Rewarding (46)	Lack of respect (43) Lack of positive feedback (39) Negative feedback (37)

4 MESSAGES FROM GENERATION Y

In the second part of this dissertation, five essays are appended. Two of them are published articles and three are under review for journals. Each essay presents some lessons that can be learned and taken into account in practical terms, but also in adding value to chosen frames of reference and theoretical backgrounds. The contributions of the essays touch on three different aspects: motivational factors (Essay 1), engagement (Essay 3), and the relationship with work (Essay 2), the organization (Essay 5), and supervisors (Essay 4).

The aim of this chapter is to introduce these essays. Their summaries briefly present the main literature, findings, and their key contribution. Thus, this chapter illustrates how Millennials might be viewed in their workplaces. However, the purpose of this chapter is not to detail the content of the essays, but rather to present the big picture. Thus, the theoretical discussion and literature is presented in the essays.

4.1 I want to develop myself, but not at all costs!

The previous literature on Generation Y has been rather normative, and there is a lack of qualitative research. Further, motivation at work has been traditionally examined through large surveys, and the generational perspective has not always been present. Essay 1, *Sufficient challenges and a weekend ahead – Generation Y describing motivation at work* aims to examine factors that Millennials find either motivating or demotivating in the workplace, and whether these factors are very similar, that is, if they are different sides of the same coin. The essay also compares its findings to those of the motivation literature generally, and discusses possible implications for HRM.

The essay mainly uses Herzberg's two-factor theory as a frame of reference (Herzberg et al. 1959), because of its dual nature of satisfaction/dissatisfaction. This study setting is somewhat similar to the one in this dissertation. Although the two-factor theory has been the subject of debate during the last decades (e.g., Basset-Jones and Lloyd, 2005; Dent, 2002), it remains a valuable general framework to help understand motivation at work, and one that remains topical (Catania and Randall, 2013; Furnham et al., 2009; Sachau, 2007).

The essay examines a sample of 62 full-time working Millennials, who held a permanent employment contract at the time of the data collection. Each of them

wrote two stories, so the research uses 124 stories based on positive and negative scripts on motivation. In previous studies, work-related issues have often been examined with student samples alone, so this essay contributes to the literature in concentrating on working Millennials.

The essay found informants referred more often to intrinsic motivators than to extrinsic ones. The informants emphasized the meaning of flexibility, work-life balance, social relationships, development opportunities, varying job content, and sufficient workload for the protagonist to feel motivated. In addition, the meaning of the supervisor role was recognized as a source of motivation.

“Sami has a job that has a clear framework, structures and goals. Sami can nevertheless plan the content of the work independently. This also means that Sami does not have the so-called traditional working hours, but can plan when and where to work. [...]”²⁷

Interestingly, the demotivating factors were related to the same themes: an inappropriate job description, a poor atmosphere, working at the expense of private life, inflexibility, and an inadequate contribution from a supervisor.

“It is not working that reduces his motivation to zero. He has problems with his girlfriend and he worries about these things while working. He does not feel like doing anything else than worry alone at home, thus, not even the work is interesting, nothing is okay and he is feeling down.”²⁸

“[...] The supervisor hides behind his/her own unfinished work, does not dangle the carrot, does not wield the stick, offers no way out of the tricky situation. [...]”²⁹

Thus, in terms of theoretical contribution, the study revealed some new and interesting knowledge concerning the dichotomies of positive and negative factors causing motivation or demotivation. Thus, the findings of this paper to some extent contradict those of Herzberg. This might indicate that the motivational constructs are different from Herzberg’s suggestions, or at least this particular group viewed motivation differently than Herzberg’s informants, whose views led to the hygiene and motivation factor distinction.

²⁷ Originally: Sami tekee työtä, jossa on selvät raamit ja rakenteet sekä työn tavoitteet asetettu. Työn sisällön Sami saa suunnitella kuitenkin itsenäisesti. Tämä tarkoittaa myös sitä, että Samilla ei ole niin sanottua perinteistä työaikaa vaan hän voi itse suunnitella milloin ja missä työskentelee.

²⁸ Originally: Työ ei ole se mikä saa Samin motivaation nolille. Samilla on ongelmia tyttöystävän kanssa ja päässään hän pui murheita samalla kun tekee töitä. Mikään muu ei oikein huvita kuin kotona yksin murehtiminen, näin ollen työkään ei maistu, homma ei luista ja fiilis on maassa.

²⁹ Originally: Esimies piiloutuu omien tekemättömien töidensä taakse, ei anna keppiä, ei porkkanaa, ei suunnitelmaa tilanteesta selviämiseksi. Ulospääsyä tilanteesta ei näy.

Overall, this essay identifies implications for several areas. First, it extends our knowledge on motivational constructs and especially the form suggested by Herzberg. It also reveals what motivates Millennials fully engaged in working life. In their stories, they emphasized the willingness to be flexible and develop themselves, but not at any cost: if the work is too demanding or exhausting in some way, or it has a negative impact on their private life, it was described as demotivating.

4.2. I don't want to get bored!

The second essay, titled *Generation Y – Challenging customers for HRM?* continues examining working Millennials' perceptions of work. One of the most important tasks of HRM is to facilitate psychological contracts in the workplace in order to enhance employee commitment and promote motivation in order to attract, motivate, and retain employees (Parzefall & Hakanen 2010; Paauwe & Boselie 2005; Coyle-Shapiro 2002; McDonald & Makin 2000). Thus, this essay uses a psychological contract framework.

The aim of this paper is to examine motivating factors from Generation Y's point of view, and further to investigate the effect of these factors on the psychological contract. The interest is also in discussing these motivating/demotivating factors that are essential for HRM in best serving this group as one of the function's clients. In order to address this issue, the same sample of 62 Millennials working full-time on permanent contracts is used as in the first essay.

When examining Generation Y's preferences through the lenses of the psychological contract, some similarities and differences as well as new insights were found. The findings manifested the importance of varying a job, flexibility, convenient social relations, supervisor support, and of the work-life balance.

“Sami's job is challenging enough and he gets to develop himself in a safe work environment. The atmosphere at Sami's workplace is good, even the most delicate issues can be discussed openly and he gets help and support from his supervisor. People are focused on decisions and aiming for a mutual goal [...] People appreciate each other in the work community, and trust each other's knowledge.”³⁰

³⁰ Originally: Samin työ on sopivan haastavaa ja hän saa kehittää itseään turvallisessa työympäristössä. Samilla on työpaikalla hyvä ilmapiiri, vaikeistakin asioista voidaan puhua avoimesti ja ongelmiin saa apua ja tukea esimieheltä. Toimitaan ratkaisukeskeisesti ja yhteiseen päämäärään tähdäten. [...] Työyhteisössä arvostetaan toisia ja luotetaan ammattitaitoon.

“The employer knows how to take Sami’s needs into account and permits flexible working when needed. The employer knows how to appreciate the employees and invests in well-being and work-life balance.”³¹

However, the findings reveal that with regard to the psychological contract, there were certain issues that the working Millennials emphasized more than previous literature has suggested: developing competencies was raised as an important issue, and the informants’ references to time were noteworthy and twofold. On the one hand, they referred to reciprocal flexibility in timetables and working hours, but on the other hand, they did not put emphasis on job security or long-term careers. Further, monetary issues were not emphasized in the stories.

“There is a balance between Sami’s knowledge and the challenges the work provides. His knowledge is appreciated and he feels he is a useful employee in the work community. Occasionally the work takes him beyond his comfort zone and challenges him, but he’s not put under too much strain.”³²

“The main thing is that the individual feels him/herself and his/her work to be appreciated. Salary is only a supporting factor in this.”³³

Theoretical contribution concerns, according to these findings, that the Millennials in this study did not purely represent either of the two traditional types of psychological contract: transactional or relational. Instead, the informants formulated a more balanced contract, a term given to a type of contract in which elements from both transactional and relational contracts are combined.

The ideal psychological contract described by Millennials challenges HRM especially due to the group’s desire for flexibility in terms of working time. Thus, developing options that enable subtle shifts between, for example, place of work and deciding one’s own schedule, were described as motivating. Another important facet was the job itself. HRM could enhance different job-related practices, such as job rotation, job enrichment/enlargement, as well as special tasks and duties, in order to facilitate Millennials’ engagement with the organization. In addition, support from supervisors and colleagues in the form of

³¹ Originally: [...] Työpaikka osaa ottaa huomioon Samin tarpeet ja mahdollistaa joustavan työskentelyn tarpeen mukaan. Työpaikalla osataan arvostaa työntekijöitä ja panostetaan jaksamiseen ja työelämä / vapaa-aika tasapainoon.

³² Originally: Työssä Samin osaaminen ja työn tarjoamat haasteet ovat tasapainossa. Samin osaamista arvostetaan ja hän kokee olevansa työyhteisölle hyödyllinen työntekijä. Työ vie ajoittain epämukavuusalueella sopivasti haastaen, mutta ei liikaa kuormittaen.

³³ Originally: [...] Pääsääntöisesti kuitenkin niin, että yksilö kokee sekä itsensä että työnsä yhteisössä arvostetuksi. Palkkaus on ainoastaan tätä tukeva asia. [...]

mentoring, development discussions and reviews, teamwork, and coaching are important in matching the requirements of Millennials. Although the findings are merely related to the actions of the HRM function, the role of the supervisors is just as important, since they implement HRM practices in everyday management. Thus, supervisors should be recruited carefully and trained well.

To conclude, the informants' stories contained references to dynamic tasks and dynamic teams, which are suitable platforms for development in terms of support, flexibility, challenges, and variation. Moreover, the supervisor style is described as coaching in order to increase 'competence-condition' and gain new skills that improve the position in working life in the future, but also motivates them and prevents feelings of stagnation.

4.3 I appreciate support!

In the third essay, *Stories of engagement among Generation Y* the idea that was generated in the second essay concerning attracting, retaining, and engaging Millennials, is examined more closely. In addition, it responds to the absence in previous literature of comparisons among the members of Generation Y, which has concentrated on rather homogenous samples such as only employee or student samples.

Drawing from the work-engagement literature, this essay examines motivational factors among two groups of Millennials: those working and those not working. The responses from these two groups are compared, and also the consequences for HRM were examined. Thus, the aim of this paper is to reveal issues that might play an important role in attracting Millennials but also in engaging them once they have been recruited. In this essay, work engagement is understood to comprise two elements: vigor and dedication. Vigor in this context is analogous with energy, perseverance, and resilience, whereas dedication is analogous with a challenging and inspiring job, enthusiasm, and meaningful work. (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzáles-Romá & Bakker 2002.) The sample in this study consisted of 96 working Millennials and 77 non-working Millennials and their 346 stories prompted by positive and negative scripts on motivation.

Theoretical contribution is related to how the informants perceived work engagement.

“He is able to follow the effects of his work from yesterday and he is rewarded for good results. Sami also knows that if he takes care of his duties properly, he will have the opportunity to progress rapidly in his

career. He has fun while working. The work environment is active and there is plenty to do. Colleagues are nice and working in a team goes smoothly. Also, the top management understands the needs of the employees and is flexible enough, so Sami is prepared to be flexible himself for the company.”³⁴

Although the findings showed some similarities between the preferences of working and non-working Millennials, for example the importance of the work environment and the immediate work community was emphasized in both groups, there were also intriguing differences in the themes that these two groups raised. Non-working Millennials raised the issue of mental problems and burnout, which was not present in the working Millennials’ stories. Moreover, working Millennials referred more often to issues related to dedication than those related to vigor.

“Sami is not motivated by his job, because he is being bullied at work. He has also been depressed for a long time, spends his lunch break at the local bar and plans on leaving everything behind. The manager thinks that depression is a sign of a weak mind and a real man would just get hold of himself.”³⁵

Overall, the findings suggest that first, how engagement is constructed in the stories varies between different groups within Generation Y. Second, the findings indicate that different issues attract Millennials that actually engage or make them commit to an organization. In recruiting Millennials, a safe workplace, a competitive salary, and a variety of tasks that match their education could be emphasized during the recruiting process. Following the recruitment of Millennials, HRM could promote its potential to offer flexible work arrangements, varied roles and responsibilities, and supportive supervisory roles. Additionally and across the board, environmental issues at work should be catered for to create a supportive, happy, and healthy workplace.

³⁴ Originally: [...] Joka päivä hän pystyy seuraamaan mitä vaikutusta hänen edellisen päivän työnteolla oli ja hyvistä tuloksista häntä palkitaan. Sami tietää myös, että hoitaessaan työnsä hyvin hänellä on mahdollisuus edetä uralla nopeastikin. Töissä on mukavaa. Työympäristö on aktiivinen ja tekemistä riittää. Työkaverit ovat mukavia ja tiimityöskentely sujuu muutta mutkitta. Myös yrityksen johto ymmärtää työntekijöiden tarpeet ja joustaa sopivasti, joten Samikin on valmis joustamaan yritystä kohtaan. [...]

³⁵ Originally: Sami ei ole motivoitunut työstään, koska häntä kiusataan työpaikalla. Hän on myös pitkään ollut masentunut, kuluttaa lounasaikansa paikallisessa juottolassa ja suunnittelee kaiken jättämistä taakseen. Johtajan mielestä masennus on vain mielen heikkoutta ja todellinen mies ottaisi itseään niskasta kiinni.

In the light of these findings, these two groups are worried about the same issues but are approaching them in different ways. For example, non-working Millennials are worried about being overqualified and underpaid in their future work, and working Millennials are afraid they will get stuck in an unpleasant job or workplace and become frustrated. Thus, the HRM function should evaluate its practices and how it can foster engagement. Moreover, HRM is also responsible for recruitment, which should be considered as a holistic process running from building the employer brand, to the selection of new recruits, and on through to their orientation.

The process of attracting, recruiting, and engaging Millennials is not only essential in organizations, but is also demanding. The perceptions of Millennials and the emphasis they place on things seem to vary according to their working status and during the engagement process. Thus, the paper illustrates that there are different ways to promote engagement in different stages that Millennials both appreciate and need.

4.4 I need help in spreading my wings!

The importance and actions of the supervisor are highlighted both in the data and in previous literature. The supervisor role is also emphasized in relation to, for example, motivation, and engagement. The aim of the next essay, *Supervisor as a personal trainer? Generation Y's perceptions of managerial coaching* is to examine what kind of perceptions do Millennials have concerning supervisors and how the idea of managerial coaching is represented in their stories.

This essay also adopts a “discourse-near” approach (see Alvesson & Kärreman 2000). The discursive material in the form of the data is approached with an aim of reaching beyond the material itself, and discussing its implications as they relate to the coaching leadership style. The data in this essay consists of all 252 informants’ stories based on a positive and negative script on leadership, that is, 504 pieces of writing.

The essay recognized five discourses. The meta-discourse is *Acknowledge me as an individual!*

“The relationship between Sanna and her supervisor is between two adults rather than between a boss and a subordinate. They both respect each other and the other person’s viewpoints, wishes, expectations, and suggestions. Communication between Sanna and her supervisor is open and confidential; the supervisor is easy to approach and precise. The

supervisor seizes on problems and keeps his/her promises, and does not belittle them. The supervisor is skilled at knowing people, recognizes Sanna's personality, and can thus give Sanna the right kind of feedback and opportunities for development. The supervisor is also genuinely keen on the well-being of Sanna and other employees, and sees the personnel as one of the most important resources in the company."³⁶

The four other discourses further develop and illustrate this meta-discourse, and are entitled:

- Respect me!
- Know me and my job!
- Hear me say!
- Help me to develop myself!

The informants constructed a model of leadership that manifests interest in the subordinate and truly listening to him/her. The discourses further represent the need to feel respected and heard, and the developmental needs are also strongly present. The informants want the supervisor to take responsibility for coaching and ensuring they stay on top of their tasks, and to act as a catalyst for their careers or as personal trainer shaping it. This also calls for leadership skills and sufficient time being allocated to supervisory duties. Having said that, the HR function has a big role in providing supervisors with training, tools, and time in order for them to accomplish their supervisor tasks.

“Sanna's supervisor saw potential in the employee and suggested special training for her alongside her work. It was a training that would last for a year, after which Sanna would get a special certificate for her new duties. Sanna was granted some time to think about it, discuss it at home and then she decided to take part in the training alongside the work as her supervisor suggested. Now the training is complete and the new duties that require this certificate seem to be very interesting and challenging.”³⁷

³⁶ Originally: Sannan ja esimiehen suhde on alais-pomo -suhteen sijaan aikuinen-aikuinen -suhde, jossa molemmat osapuolet kunnioittavat toisiaan sekä toisen näkökulmia, toiveita, odotuksia ja ehdotuksia. Kommunikaatio Sannan ja esimiehen välillä on avointa ja luottamuksellista, esimies on helposti lähestyttävä ja täsmällinen. Esimies puuttuu ilmenneisiin ongelmakohtiin reippaasti ja pitää sovitusta asioista kiinni, eikä vähättele niitä. Esimies on taitava ihmistuntija, hän tuntee Sannan persoonallisuuden ja osaa sen kautta antaa Sannalle oikeanlaista palautetta sekä kehitysmahdollisuuksia. Esimies on myös aidosti kiinnostunut Sannan ja muiden työntekijöidensä työhyvinvoinnista ja näkee henkilöstön yhtenä tärkeimmistä yrityksen resursseista.

³⁷ Originally: Sannan esimies näki työntekijässään potentiaalia ja ehdotti tälle erityiskoulutusta työn ohessa. Kysymyksessä oli vuoden koulutus, jonka jälkeen Sanna saisi erityispätevyuden uusiin

“Sanna feels that she is drudging and drudging, but the employer/supervisor does not notice her efforts enough. She feels she is doing useless work, “it doesn’t matter whether I’m here or not,” or she might be bitter toward the employer “they don’t even realize that they couldn’t cope without me.”³⁸

In terms of theoretical contribution, managerial coaching was strongly reflected in the Millennials’ stories, even though there were interesting remarks of aspects that are strongly related to managerial coaching. First, the informants perceived feedback more as an inherent tool than a separate aspect of coaching relationship. Second, development issues were emphasized as in coaching literature overall. Third, the meaning of goal-orientation was not in the focus of the stories. Fourth, aspects of managerial coaching are weighted rather equally in literature, however, the study indicates that Millennials can find some aspects more important than others.

The previous paper noted the differences within Generation Y, despite it mostly being labeled a homogenous group in previous literature. The findings of this paper also imply that Millennials appreciate being treated as individuals, and that their individual preferences and expectations should be taken into account in the relationship with their supervisor. Further, the views of the Millennials in their stories are not unanimous, indicating individual differences and the need to recognize them as individuals.

4.5 I provide new insights!

The previous essays have emphasized the meaning and role of HR as one of the key players in accommodating Millennials’ needs and expectations. Hence, the aim of the fifth essay, *Towards new people management: Generation Y’s perception of the role and importance of HRM practices* is to examine HRM practices and their consequences as perceived by members of Generation Y. A further aim is to recognize possible new areas of HRM practices that could respond to the needs of Millennials. In this paper, the examination is based on the Michigan model, which distinguishes four different categories of HRM practices: selection, appraisal, rewards, and development.

tehtäviin. Sanna sai harkita asiaa, neuvotella asiasta kotona ja päätti lähteä tekemään esimiehen ehdotuksen mukaista koulutusta osa-aikaisesti työn ohessa. Nyt koulutus oli juuri päättynyt ja uutta erityispätevyyttä vastaavat tehtävät tuntuivat erittäin mielenkiintoisilta ja haastavilta.

³⁸ Originally: [...] Sanna kokee raatavansa ja raatavansa, mutta työnantaja/esimies ei huomio hänen saavutuksiaan riittävästi. Sanna kokee tekevänsä turhaa työtä "aivan sama, olenko mä täällä ollenkaan", tai sitten hän on katkera työnantajalle "ne ei edes tajua, ettei ne pärjäis ilman mua". [...]

HRM practices are an intrinsic construction of any organization, and HRM is often viewed as an important contributor to organizational performance (e.g., Becker, Huselid, Pickus & Spratt 2001; Huselid, 1995). Based on previous research, (e.g., Colgin 2012), generational characteristics and differences between generations have inevitable implications for HRM practices. However, the literature concerning Millennials' perceptions of HRM practices is almost non-existent.

This paper utilized the whole data of 1004 stories from 252 Millennials. Their perceptions of the consequences of HRM practices are analyzed by using content and correlation analyses. After the data were coded using the consequences of traditional HRM practices presented in the Michigan model, the attention was turned to additional and rather contemporary HRM-related consequences in the informants' stories.

“His supervisor motivates him and gives him new assignments so that the tasks remain diverse and that he can develop as an employee. His supervisor supports him, and he gets respect in the form of verbal feedback and rewards. The supervisor has expressed clearly that he has potential for promotion.”³⁹

Three additional categories were then identified: work-life balance, composition of and atmosphere in the working community, and the meaningfulness of work. These categories were used in the second phase of the coding to improve the analysis.

“Sami's work is mentally satisfying and his colleagues are positive. Sami gets straight feedback from his supervisor and he feels that his work is meaningful and respected. Even the compensation plan is in place; Sami has just received a pay rise and he will soon be assigned more demanding tasks. Sami has successfully fit together his work and family life, and the life appears to be in good balance.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Originally: Esimies motivoi häntä ja antaa uusia tehtäviä, jotta työtehtävät ovat monipuolisia ja hän kehittyy työntekijänä. Hänellä on esimiehen tuki ja hän saa arvostusta työpaikalla esimieheltä sanoin sekä palkan muodossa. Esimies on myös ilmaissut selkeästi että hänellä on etenemisen mahdollisuus töissä.

⁴⁰ Originally: Samin työ on henkisesti tyydyttävää ja hänellä on hauskat työkaverit. Sami saa esimieheltään suoraa palautetta ja hänestä tuntuu, että hänen työllään on merkitystä ja sitä arvostetaan. Kompensaatiomallitkin ovat kohdallaan; Sami on juuri saanut palkankorotuksen ja häntä odottaa haastavimmat tehtävät. Sami on onnistunut sovittamaan työn ja perhe-elämän yhteen ja elämä tuntuu olevan kaikin puolin balanssissa.

The results indicate that the categories of the Michigan model are well represented in the informants' stories. In addition, strong correlations exist between these four categories.

However, certain consequences were not directly linked to any of the existing HRM practices. Of these three additional consequences, the working community was especially strongly associated with the consequences of more traditional HRM practices. Interestingly, concerning both the traditional and additional consequences, the correlations between positive and negative outcomes were always highly significant. This finding indicates that the HRM practices that create positive outcomes when properly managed, can also create negative outcomes when managed poorly. This finding offers a new and interesting perspective on Herzberg's two-factor model, which distinguishes between hygienic and motivating factors.

In terms of theoretical contribution, the findings suggest potential enlargements for the traditional HRM practices. Thus, there is a pressure to build a more coherent model of HRM practices, at least from Generation Y's point of view. The findings on the importance of the work community and the meaningfulness of work are in line with previous studies that have examined Generation Y's preferences and expectations in working life. However, the existing models and frameworks of HRM practices do not offer sufficient understanding in the light of this study. The paper suggests a model that takes better into account Generation Y's perceptions of HRM practices.

5 GENERATION Y AT WORK

This concluding chapter summarizes the contribution of the dissertation. The aims of the dissertation are threefold. The structure of this chapter is aligned with these three aspects. First, the study contributes to the understanding of Generation Y in the working life context. In order to be able to do so, the study also described and compared concepts that have been used in examining satisfactory working life in the discussion on generations. Second, the study had also methodological purpose. Utilizing an innovative and new data collection method in the business field, combined with using social media, offers an opportunity to assess new tools for data collection in the digital age. At this point of the chapter, the study is evaluated, limitations are discussed, and suggestions for future research are presented. Finally and third, the final aim is to provide insights and deeper understanding for practitioners, especially HRM professionals and supervisors, who are responsible for creating working life experiences for Millennials.

The essays are based on data collected with MEBS, the method of empathy-based stories. The data collection process utilized Facebook to find suitable informants. A total of 252 Millennials each wrote four stories on motivation and leadership, resulting in 1004 short stories. There were certain themes that were repeatedly mentioned in the stories: work environment issues; flexibility in terms of place, time, and methods; leadership issues; meaningfulness of work and job content; sufficient workload; and work-life balance.

Overall, this study targeted, and succeeded in, increasing our understanding of Generation Y. The contributions and implications of the study are discussed in the following sub-chapters.

5.1 Theoretical contributions

The discussion on Generation Y

The study aimed at providing deeper understanding of Generation Y. Most of the findings are line with previous studies that have emphasized the meaning of the work environment and social relationships (Cennamo & Gardner 2008; Gursoy et al. 2008; Solnet & Hood 2008; Smola & Sutton 2002), flexibility (Behrstock-Sherratt & Coggsall 2010; Broadbridge, Maxwell & Ogden 2007), the importance of the supervisor (Hurst & Good 2009; Martin 2005; Jamrog 2002),

varied job content and the importance of that job content (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Dries, Pepermans & Kerpel 2008; Wong et al. 2008), opportunities for development and career advancement (De Hauw & De Vos 2010; Wong et al. 2008; Sturges, Guest, Conway & Davey 2002), and the need to cater for work-life balance (Cennamo & Gardner 2008). However, as this study uses different perspectives, it is possible to examine Generation Y through different lenses in order to deepen our understanding.

This study found also new and additional information to advance the discussion on Generation Y. Some previous studies have emphasized the meaning of money to Generation Y (e.g., Dries et al. 2008), but monetary issues and salaries did not emerge from the stories gathered as part of the current research. Although there were naturally some references to money, they were mainly brief, or the informants referred to uncompetitive or unfair salaries. This finding could be related to cultural characteristics, as in Finland the financial safety net is rather supportive, and there are financial benefits in case of, for example, unemployment. Thus, at least the basic level of income is guaranteed. Further, culture might have another influence as well. In Finland people are not used to talk about salaries and it can also be considered as inappropriate. These factors might partially explain the small number of references to monetary issues. However, McDonald and Hite (2008) found a similar pattern in their qualitative study, where the informants were mostly worried about adequate income, and repeatedly mentioned that money alone is not an indicator of career success and does not fulfill their ideals.

In addition, especially in studies conducted in North America, research has claimed Generation Y to be selfish and more negative than previous generations, and to have narcissistic tendencies (e.g., Twenge 2009; Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell & Bushman 2008a & 2008b; Wong et al. 2008). The data in this study did not find signs of personality trait. In fact, the informants' stories were very modest, and there was a certain reciprocity present in the stories: if the organization or the employer was flexible and treated employees well, the protagonist demonstrated similar characteristics in turn. Moreover, the stories did not include any excessive expectations, needs, or wants, and were fair and reasonable. Thus, this study provides confronting news in the sense that Millennials in this study did not present issues that could be considered impossible or difficult to resolve or approach. These different findings and impressions across countries could be due to cultural differences, as cultural issues have an inevitable effect on generational mindset (e.g., Twenge 2009; Giancola 2006). In fact, the Finnish culture can be relatively modest and humble compared to, for example, Anglo-American culture, and these cultural

characteristics are also attached to Finnish Millennials. Thus, the Finnish Millennials' perceptions and way of expressing themselves might differ compared to Millennials from other countries and cultures.

Another interesting finding was that the stories were almost entirely lacking references to job security and long-term careers. Some previous studies have stated that Generation Y is not willing to engage with an employer (e.g., Myers & Sadaghiani 2010), and this is also a popular belief and stereotype in the popular press. One might counter with the question of what Millennials should engage themselves with. Part-time and temporary jobs, unstable situations in working life, or lay-offs during the economic recession. It could be that the Millennials do not even expect to have stable positions due to the turbulent state of working life. However, it does not mean that they are totally unengaged and not willing to show any loyalty. Instead of engaging themselves with the organization, which might seem difficult and dangerous as employees are constantly being laid-off, they might be engaging with other factors, such as the work itself, the project at hand, the work community, or even their own career. Additionally, the meaning of the organization does not always come through clearly, as is evident from the few references to organizations in the stories. If the Millennial is very engaged with his/her work—which this study indicates is an important issue—it is not relevant in which organization the work is performed. This might result in changing workplaces relatively often, and from the outside it might appear as a lack of engagement and willingness to commit. Hence, the object of engagement in Generation Y's case might not be the organization, and that can be interpreted as selfishness.

However, based on the stories it is possible to provide a description of a satisfied employee that captures the overall impression of Generation Y; assuming that the Millennials have reflected on their own expectations, needs, and values in the stories:

I am a Millennial. For me, work is important, but I also enjoy things outside work, such as my family and hobbies. Sometimes I would like to have some time off to take care of my personal matters. It does not mean that I do not appreciate having a job that I find meaningful, and where I am respected and appreciated. In fact, I want to develop myself as a professional in my own field. Because the work is not the issue that ultimately defines who I am, I want to know that I am doing an important job. It is not arrogance. I want my supervisor to acknowledge my efforts and receive feedback so that I know I am on the right track. It is not too much to ask. I know that in today's working life the work should not be

taken for granted, so I am happy if I can find my place there. Some might say that work does not have to be fun, but I enjoy having nice time with my colleagues. Is it that bad? At the end of the day, I want to be able to say

“it’s so nice to be at work.”

Discussion on satisfactory working life

In addition to contributing to the academic discussion on Generation Y, this study also contributes to the theoretical discussion on the concepts of satisfactory working life. The perceptions of Millennials were examined in this study with stories that only loosely guided the informants. Thus, it was possible to concentrate on issues that the Millennials themselves raised and highlighted.

Although Generation Y has been examined previously using the concepts that were also chosen for this study, similar comparisons are few, especially in the generational context. The chosen concepts, job satisfaction, work motivation, rewarding job, psychological contract, and work engagement, provided lenses on Generation Y’s relation to work.

Adopting several perspectives in the essays also revealed some further information on the concepts relevant to Generation Y. The data found several dichotomies concerning motivating and demotivating factors, so that Herzberg et al.’s (1959) division between hygiene and motivating factors was not evident in this data. In addition, when looking the data through a psychological contract lens, the stories did not expressly manifest either of the traditional forms of psychological contracts, even though the emphasis was on the relational type. However, the element of job stability and the long-term view were missing. This finding strengthens the recently adopted view of balanced contracts.

Moreover, concerning work engagement, Millennials’ perceptions varied to some extent depending on whether they were working or not. These results indicate that the construct of work engagement varies at least when Generation Y is entering working life. In addition, the Millennials’ stories were strongly related to managerial coaching. This finding indicates that coaching-style leadership could be worth trying among Millennials. Moreover, Millennials’ perceptions of the importance of HRM practices provided some new extensions to traditional HRM models, especially concerning working community and environment.

These findings provide interesting insight and new viewpoints for research and literature concerning working life. However, the findings could be partially due to the nature of qualitative research. As the majority of the seminal research concerning these concepts is quantitative, adopting qualitative methods can reveal a wider spectrum of information and also reveal new insights.

Thus, the essays in this study contribute to individual discussions of the concepts, but the overall study setting and theoretical aim of this study also offers more general contributions. The jungle of concepts is a broader challenge in examining what makes working life satisfactory, and it can be extended to touch other groups of employees than just Generation Y.

Based on the Millennials' stories, the chosen concepts overlapped to some extent, but there were also differences in their emphases and perspectives (whether related to individual attitude's or the relationship between employee and the employer). However, it seems that the antecedents and consequences of these concepts are rather similar. In fact, some of the concepts are consequences of each other, showing that the field of concepts examining satisfactory working life is mixed and somewhat untidy. Even so, all of the concepts have the same general mission: to understand what people want from their jobs and to help them to perform well. Further, on a broad, abstract level the differences in these concepts touch different angles of the same phenomenon.

Hence, the findings strengthen the meaning of different concepts and the theoretical constructs. They are useful and suitable for examining the different tones concerning research on working life. They also concern different aspects, such as attitudes and perceptions of an individual or the relationship between an individual and organization. Adopting different perspectives always provides additional information, and different lenses can reveal factors that are not emphasized through other perspectives.

5.2 Methodological contributions

The methodological contribution relates to adopting MEBS in the business field, and especially using it in social media. These choices were made for two primary reasons. First, as this study is about Generation Y, it seemed natural to reach them via social media. In addition, the study explored new ways of finding informants in the digital age, because the era offers different options for doing so than were available in the past. In previous research, Generation Y has often been studied using convenience samples, such as students, or drawn from a particular field of work, such as nurses. Thus, this study aimed at utilizing innovative

methods. Second, MEBS was chosen as the data collection method, as it was suitable to use in the context of social media. It was not as exhaustive or time-consuming as some other methods (e.g., interviews), but it was still a serious alternative, and a suitable method for exploratory research and for use in mapping a research field. It can also reveal issues that the researcher does not anticipate. Results from a MEBS-based study can also be used as a baseline for questionnaires. Having said that, conducting a quantitative survey did not match with the research agenda in this case, thus ruling out that form of data collection. However, other qualitative methods such as interviews would not have produced a large enough collection of data to support both qualitative and quantitative analysis methods. The chosen data collection process is evaluated in the following paragraphs.

Probably the biggest advantage in using MEBS was its effectiveness in collecting the data. It seemed that responding to the scripts provided rich and multifaceted answers. Further, MEBS provided enough orientation for the informants, but it also left room for individual reasoning and viewpoints, which resulted in diverse stories. In order to achieve and reveal new insights and viewpoints in interviews, the questions cannot be too structured, and the interviewer cannot direct the interviewee too much. Thus, MEBS is more related to open interviews than semi-structured ones.

Moreover, as this relatively pleasant data collection method was further boosted with social media, the data collection process was intensive and informants were reached efficiently. As a consequence, it was possible to gather a large dataset in a short period of time. It was also interesting to note that the amount of answers peaked each time the link to the survey was shared in Facebook.

Combining these two approaches, MEBS and Facebook, resulted in an even more efficient process than collecting MEBS-based data under other circumstances. MEBS has usually been utilized in scenarios like classrooms and meetings, where the informants are asked to work on a paper form. However, this part of the MEBS literature dates back to times when social media was almost non-existent. Thus, it was not possible to evaluate the data collection process via social media. Nevertheless, as this study shows, it is possible to adopt MEBS in the digital age and utilize social media as a way to reach a large number of potential informants.

However, the advantages accruing from the actual data collection method (MEBS) and data collection engine (Facebook), should also be discussed separately. The quality of the answers that were retrieved via Facebook was almost surprisingly good. The amount of discarded answers was insignificant, and it seemed that the informants had really made an effort in expressing their

viewpoints and reflections in their answers. They might have shown respect and effort because the initial source was often their friend or friend of a friend (the researcher). Thus, if the research setting supports, for example, quantifying qualitative data, the experience gained from this study suggest using social media as a means to reach informants is suitable and appropriate.

Having said that, as in any method, also in the case of MEBS its suitability for the data collection process should be carefully and separately considered in each study. The advantages and benefits that the method might offer in some cases are not self-evident and do not support every kind of study. Thus, this method does not substitute for interviews, for example. Moreover, although the experiences and outcomes in this study were positive and encouraging, it could be that in the future researchers might face problems with the quality of the stories that the informants provide. One possible way to prevent those sorts of problems is to carefully plan and design the scripts, as well as use suitable data collection engines that support the nature of the study.

Moreover, the possible limitations and challenges concerning the methodological choices in this study should also be discussed. When it comes to MEBS, it is not possible to know if the informant really holds the opinion they wrote in their stories. However, this problem can occur in interviews as well, and it cannot be eliminated in any study (see Dean & Whyte 1958).

In addition, one of the concerns regarding MEBS is that it only provides stereotypes. Eskola and Suoranta (2001: 116–117) as well as Eskola and Eskola (1995:160, 165) note that even though some of the stories are stereotypes, there are also exceptional and uncommon stories. Thus, in addition to stereotypes, it is interesting to note the other issues that the informants mention. In fact, the authors do not see problems with producing stereotypes either, because they are still part of the informants' reality, and concern their everyday life. Furthermore, they mention that whether the stories are true or not is not central to the analysis: the stories concern perceptions, and individuals sometimes make even life changing decisions based on perceptions (Eskola & Suoranta 2001:116–117; Eskola & Eskola 1995: 160, 165). The stories the informants provided in this study should be considered their perceptions of how things might be with regard to the scripts. After all, the stories are Millennials' perceptions and thus present their reality.

According to Eskola (1997: 35–40), the traditional concepts used to evaluate the research process, its reliability and its validity are problematic regarding MEBS, especially if the data is treated and analyzed in a qualitative manner. However, when using MEBS, the researcher can concentrate on diligently describing the

analysis process, and on extracting quotations that help to assess the interpretations. However, the study should remain convenient to read, as too many quotes make the reporting too heavy. Validity can be approached and confirmed by, for example, referring to and comparing previous studies. In addition, one possible way to improve reliability is to use triangulation or different methods alongside MEBS (Eskola 1997: 35–40).

Further, in this data collection setting the researcher and the informant did not meet face-to-face, a factor that can have both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, it might be easier for the informant to answer the questions in a place and situation where they feel more comfortable than they would sitting in the same room as the researcher. Thus, they might feel that they have more time and they are more comfortable in weighing up their answers. They can also be more honest, when they are answering anonymously. On the other hand, in face-to-face interviews the researcher is able to ask further questions and focus on interesting comments that the informants might be making. It might also be possible to notice, or at least suspect, if the informant is lying. As a consequence, the researcher can be more reserved when analyzing results based on interviews rather than answers that were collected online. Moreover, in interviews it is possible to ensure that one informant contributes only one set of information instead of filling in the survey several times. However, this sort of situation can occur in the data collection processes of quantitative studies. On the whole, MEBS faces the same challenges as any other better established and widespread data collection method.

Overall, the study adopted different perspectives in examining Generation Y and aiming to deepen understanding of Millennials in working life. However, the scripts already referred to motivation and a supervisor. This was a deliberate choice, because it was important to use concepts and phrases familiar to the informants. In Finland, the word motivation is well-recognized, even if the nuances from the theoretical point of view might not be familiar. Nevertheless, although the informants were guided as little as possible, they did have an initial impression of the nature of the study. Thus, there could be some tensions and effects on the stories due to the nature and wording of the scripts. In this case, the role and interpretation of the researcher become important in ensuring the stories reflect well-defined theoretical constructs.

5.3 Evaluation of the study, limitations and future research

This chapter presents the evaluation of this qualitative study before considering suggestions and opportunities for future studies. The evaluations and limitations are discussed in parallel, as suggested by Perttula (1995).

Evaluation of the research

The researcher in a qualitative study can be seen as an interpreter of the phenomenon. Accordingly, the subjective nature of qualitative research usually warrants some attention. Some of this reflection was already undertaken earlier in this chapter in the section concerning the relationship between the researcher and the research itself.

The aim of this section is to discuss and reflect on the choices that the researcher was forced to make. Inevitably some other choices could have led to different conclusions. In evaluating this qualitative study and discussing its limitations, a framework from Perttula (1995: 102-104) is used, because it outlines the criteria that should be discussed in relation to a qualitative study.

1. *Consistency of the research process.* There is a logical connection between the phenomenon, data collection method, theoretical approach, method of analysis, and reporting the results. During the process, each of the choices was made based on previous choices, starting from defining the research problem. The data were the guiding force in this study, and some parts of the process were specified later. In reporting the findings, careful attention was paid to making the process as open and reliable as possible to assist the reader in following the line of thought. One of the most important choices was made in the very early stages of this study concerning the language. In relation to the form of the dissertation, the language issue was considered during the process. As the stories were collected from Finnish Millennials in Finnish, a natural choice would have been to write the dissertation in Finnish as well. It is true that sometimes when translating the stories it felt almost wrong to have to relate the phrases in the informants' stories that do not translate well in order to reveal the vivid expressions. However, the emphasis in this research was not to evaluate the stories and discourses from a linguistic point of view. In addition, the fact that there is a considerable interest on the part of an international audience in generational matters and Generation Y influenced the choice to write the study in English.

2. *Reflection in the research process.* All of the choices have been justified and defined, and the reader will be able to follow the process underpinning the study. Attention has been paid to providing concrete descriptions of the issues encountered and to the limitations of the study. During the research process, there have been a number of choices that have had an effect on the outcome of the study, and which are discussed also in this chapter. In a way the research setting and research problem can be seen as the first choice. They opened the door for qualitative research, after which an important choice had to be made concerning data collection and analyzing methods.

3. *Data-orientation in the research process.* The study has progressed “data first”. Further, the results and findings are based on the data, not on the researcher’s impression or understanding of the matter. However, there are limitations that concern the data gathering method and especially the nature and quality of the informants’ stories. Facebook was used as an engine in collecting the data and might have had an impact on the informants’ answers. In digital communication forms, such as Facebook, the writing style is often brief and sometimes grammar and syntax is neglected, and the stories might have been longer or more carefully phrased if they had been collected in, for example, classrooms, meetings, or on other occasions where the researcher meets the respondents face-to-face. However, the decision to use an online medium was deliberate given the methodological aims of this study. Moreover, Millennials are especially comfortable using technology and computers, so using data collection methods that demand hand-writing, for example, can be more challenging and difficult from their perspective. In fact, in future studies it would be interesting and beneficial from the point of view of the effects of the digital age to compare the stories that were retrieved from social media and those gathered via more traditional methods. Otherwise MEBS is solely a data collection method, and its limitations should be discussed only from the point of view of the material that it provides.

4. *Linkage to context in the research process.* In this study, the context can be interpreted as how individuals perceive the world, and as a consequence, these perceptions can only be examined from this perspective. The context of the study was presented in the scripts, which linked the survey to touch upon motivation and leadership. Otherwise the informants interpreted the situation in the scripts and wrote their tailpieces from their own perspectives. As a matter of fact, this was the purpose of the data collection: to reveal factors that the informants mentioned without deliberately guiding them. Thus, the informants’ stories can be interpreted as the opinions, perceptions, and interpretations of Millennials.

5. *Combining methods.* First, MEBS is only a data collection method, and in this study, it did not affect the choice of the method of analysis. This study has adopted three methods: content analysis, discourse analysis, and quantified content analysis together with correlation analysis. Thus, the study uses a mixed method approach, and all of these methods are in line with the research questions and aim of the study, and are thus justified. However, the generalizability of the results should be discussed, even though the study adopted multiple methods. Although the sample was rather large for a qualitative study, it is not possible to generalize the results to apply to every Millennial. In addition, the study setting concentrated on examining Millennials' perceptions and was interested in what factors they discuss in relation to working life, rather than specifically examining what they actually find motivating or what kind of expectations they have of their supervisor. However, this choice was justified as there is not a lot of qualitative research on Generation Y available, and the study aimed to reveal factors that Millennials themselves raise when casually referring to working life. In that sense, the study was successful and concentrating on perceptions was also a somewhat new approach in this field. Having said that, the results cannot be generalized to a great extent. Further, the study setting cannot distinguish generational aspects from age-related perceptions. Thus, the findings can reflect generational mindset as well as to young people's perceptions at the same time. In addition, another limitation concerns the impact of culture. The aim of this study was not to provide a cultural comparison, even though differences in cultural contexts are acknowledged in the study. However, this study seeks to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon called Generation Y in one particular national and cultural setting. Thus, the choice not to concentrate on cultural comparison delimits the generalizability of the results.

6. *Cooperation in research.* The author of this dissertation has cooperated with other researchers on some of the articles while working alone on other parts. This has increased the amount of reflection incorporated into the process, and also permitted access to the viewpoints of researchers from different generations. In addition, the larger research community has had an effect on this research through communications, evaluations, and discussions.

7. *The subjectivity of the researcher.* It is necessary to reflect and report on the meaning and role of the researcher as a subject of the research by dint of belonging to Generation Y. Some expectations, needs, or values can have an effect on subjectivity. However, working with other researchers of another generation has offered an opportunity to consider the material with them as well, and by making suitable choices in the course of the process, it has been possible to diminish the influence of the individual researcher. Being a Millennial myself,

having an opinion on the position of Generation Y in working life is unavoidable, and the challenge became not to develop too close an attachment to the material, and to avoid interpreting the results in such a way that I had a personal impact on the analysis. In addition, because the research involved conducting mainly content analysis, it was relatively easy not to get personally involved, and there were no problems in concentrating on the voices emerging from the data, as these informants' urge to speak was strong. Nevertheless, it was relatively easy to relate to the stories and recognize similar thoughts, but at the same time to keep a distance. It was also interesting to notice, that along the way it became ever easier to distinguish my own thoughts from what the material was revealing. This is a demonstration of the learning process undertaken by a researcher.

8. *The responsibility of the researcher.* In qualitative studies, the researcher is ultimately the only one that can evaluate the process from a responsibility perspective, because the reports can never be so accurate as to permit another researcher to reconstruct the process. Thus, the responsibility factor is an important part of evaluating the research. In summary, all of the steps in this research process have been conducted systematically and responsibly.

Suggestions for future study

The limitations described previously can be choices that have been made along the way, and more importantly, they can also contribute to future research by suggesting streams or actions of research that contribute to the field. Some of the limitations have been discussed in previous chapters and in each essay in Part II, but the limitations referred to in this section concern general issues in this study.

Overall, this study revealed issues that are worth taking into account both in research concerning working life and also generational issues, especially Generation Y. First, the jungle of concepts concerning working life remains still somewhat blurry, and objective comparisons are still needed. Further, it would be of interest to examine these concepts in the light of Generation Y, as this study indicates that it could be important and beneficial to adopt generational viewpoint and approach the phenomena through demographic lenses.

One of the limitations concerned the generalizability of the results. In future research, the results from this study could be used as a foundation for a survey, which might deliver more generalizable results. In addition, the concern that was raised in this study regarding how homogenous a group Generation Y essentially is, could be more carefully examined with quantitative methods that could also

reveal the possible differentiating factors among Millennials. On the other hand, adopting more in-depth qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could provide more profound knowledge on Millennials. As qualitative research concerning Generation Y has been scarce, future research could approach the issue with qualitative methods.

In addition, it was not possible in this study to compare Millennials from different professions or fields of work. In future, this aspect would be interesting and research would benefit from comparisons between Millennials. This view is supported in previous literature as well (e.g., McDonald & Hite 2008), and differences between Millennials working in various industries could yield different results, as can be the case between different cultures as well.

Overall, the research related to Generation Y needs further strengthening. Even though the field is yet somewhat underdeveloped and debatable, the lack of empirically sound research has unfortunately characterized generational field. In addition, the popular nature of the generations as well as the stereotypes and urban legends that have dominated in media, have partially prevented from serious and well-established research. As a consequence, future studies have to pay attention to methodological choices, and they also have to respect the difficult distinction between generation and age. Too much research has taken the generational aspect for granted and left too much room for speculation. Thus, especially in research that compares different generations, the researcher should make these reservations clear. Further, adopting methods that can control for age-related issues could be preferred.

Having said that, too often interest has been paid only on comparisons between different generations. From this study's point of view, it is interesting to concentrate on one particular generation as well, as long as the study setting and research problem support this view. However, both types of research are needed in order to understand ever more diversified workforce.

5.4 Managerial contributions

The third focus and aim of this research was on providing managerial implications for practice. The focus of these was particularly on HRM-related issues and the supervisor role, as is explained below.

Implications for supervisors

The appended essays can provide important insights for managers and supervisors in their daily work with Millennials. The informants highlighted the importance of having a supportive, listening, and encouraging supervisor, who is up-to-date with their tasks and is familiar with what they are actually doing. Their stories also illustrate that the supervisor is seen as an important factor in the workplace to create an atmosphere that is pleasant and enables interaction between employees. If there is competition or tension in the work environment, the supervisor should take actions that promote a healthy and friendly atmosphere. Further, the informants wrote a great deal about how a good supervisor is interested in their thoughts and ideas, and listens carefully to what subordinates have to say.

On a more general level, the informants' stories relate to the coaching leadership style. The supervisor was seen as a coach or personal trainer in terms of the Millennials' career, and sometimes their life too. Additionally, the supervisor was seen as a facilitator for the employees and their work. In fact, the informants described supervisor duties as also including ensuring equality in terms of workload between employees and ensuring employees are content with their job responsibilities, either by providing additional challenges or a variety of tasks, easing their workload if necessary, or enhancing the meaningfulness of the work. In fact, in many cases it would be enough for the Millennials to have a sense of doing meaningful work and that their work is appreciated by the supervisor. This is a most important issue, as it is not always possible to tailor job descriptions to suit every employee's needs.

Millennials put a lot of pressure on the supervisor role. However, although a supervisor's attitude towards being encouraging, supportive, and friendly is a matter of personality and choice, there are certain factors that demand external assistance and where the supervisors themselves need support. In facilitating these needs of the supervisor, attention turns to HRM and the HR function, and this aspect is discussed below.

Implications for HRM

In order for the supervisors to perform well in their managerial duties, they need help from HRM, and it is an issue that is examined in the essays of this dissertation. Perhaps above all else, supervisors need training to perform their duties. Whether it is training concerning HR systems and processes or on how to

handle a challenging interaction with employees, HRM is relevant. As with any other skill, being a good supervisor is something that can be learned, and the supervisors should receive ongoing training to enhance their supervisor skills as well. HR should also be aware that in recruiting a supervisor, more attention should be paid to the ability to perform the supervisor tasks, rather than just being an expert in a particular field. Overall, HRM is responsible for putting the right people in the right positions.

The needs for training are also reflected in another important facet that the supervisors need: time. Skilled supervisors can smoothly facilitate development discussions with their team members both in terms of practical arrangements and utilizing the discussion as a proper tool for development. Moreover, supervisors should be provided with enough time to accomplish their duties. In this respect, the organizational setting is important, since supervisors' job descriptions should emphasize the meaning of being a supervisor instead of having a variety of tasks that are not related to leading subordinates. Being a supervisor should be considered 'an occupation' in itself in organizations, in order for the supervisors to actually have time to get to know their employees. Otherwise supervisor tasks can easily be neglected, if the emphasis is on other matters or supervisors are rewarded for the accomplishment of things unrelated to being a supervisor.

In addition to training and time, supervisors need tools to perform their tasks. The tools can be IT systems that include systems for managing not only compulsory elements such as work times and holidays, but also elements that are related to following and supporting employees' training needs, competences and development. These IT platforms can also include forms, guidelines, and instructions. In implementing a holistic platform or even in using leaner technological solutions, HRM is responsible for execution. Supervisors however need more than just technological tools, and for example, a smooth procedure or a functional form to guide a developmental discussion should be considered a tool as well.

The implications for HRM should not be seen only from the supervisor's perspective, although it is an important one. This study also revealed that the Millennials' perceptions of the HR function challenge HRM to take a bigger role in the organization, indicating the sphere of influence of HRM should perhaps be enlarged. The consequences of HRM practices should be to emphasize issues related to the work environment, the meaningfulness of work, and work-life balance, as they were discussed alongside more traditional HRM practices and their consequences.

Summary of the managerial implications

The managerial implications can be distinguished by which party they primarily concern; supervisors or HRM. These implications are related to some extent, as the outcome is the interplay of their actions. In other words, the performance of supervisors in implementing their duties is to some extent dependent on the provision of training, tools, and time, or support from HRM. On the other hand, state-of-the-art HRM practices are of limited use if supervisors do not have the proper attitude to the supervisor role.

Chapter 4 introduced messages from Millennials that were based on the essays. Table 6 combines these messages together with suggestions for supervisors and HRM.

Table 7. Suggestions for supervisors and HRM for working with the Millennials.

Message	If you are a supervisor:	If you are responsible for HRM:
I want to develop myself, but not at all costs!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss developmental needs and desires on a regular basis • guide the Millennial's career moves • remember that the Millennial has a life outside work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore options for tailor-made career paths • consider initializing mentoring programs
I don't want to get bored!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stay up-to-date with Millennials' job roles and responsibilities • remember to give feedback and encouragement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore options for job rotation or job enrichment and enlargement • explore options to promote flexibility
I appreciate support!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support your Millennial • make job descriptions clear • provide the Millennial with sufficient resources and time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance the employer brand • ensure that expectations that originate from the recruiting process are fulfilled • invest in induction programs • do not get offended if the Millennial decides to leave
I need help in spreading my wings!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen • be respectful • treat every Millennial as an individual • show interest in the Millennial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that your rewarding system is functional • consider rewarding and motivating methods other than money • ensure that the supervisors are skilled and motivated
I provide new insights!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remember that Millennials are not a threat, and they can develop you as a supervisor • do not hesitate to turn to HRM professionals for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance your role and that of HRM in catering for the employees • target developing new solutions that can make your employees feel better at work

All in all, the supervisors and HRM professionals will have interesting times ahead with Generation Y. The needs and wants that were reflected in the perceptions of Millennials in the light of this study, would benefit the whole working community. In the end, who would not want to be heard, appreciated, and respected. However, Millennials can be more eager to state their opinions, raise faults, and demand things to change if they are unpleasant. As a result, Generation Y's voice could result in improving the whole working life.

5.5 Concluding remarks

The aim of this study was to deepen understanding of Generation Y at work. Further, the study had three main objectives, which were theoretical, methodological, and managerial.

Based on this study it is possible to conclude:

- Generation Y appreciates and values opportunities for development. This has consequences for both HRM practices and the work of supervisors if employers are to improve the likelihood of Millennials perceiving working life as satisfactory and meaningful, and if HRM policy is to enable engagement.
- The concepts that have been used in prior research to describe the elements of satisfactory working life are essentially rather similar. However, there are nuances to these concepts, different connotations, and differences in emphasis between them. Thus, researchers applying the concepts should carefully consider and weight which concept is the most suitable in each case. The preferences of the researcher are also important, even though the choice of concept should be primarily based on its theoretical assumptions and nature.
- Social media, especially Facebook, is a suitable data collection engine and a way to recruit informants. Combined with the snowballing method, informants can be reached effectively. In addition, using the method of empathy-based stories in business fields should be encouraged, as MEBS can serve several purposes and be used in various ways to reveal the interpretations and perceptions of informants.
- More research on Generation Y is still needed in order to cater for their needs and values in working life. This would also strengthen the theoretical background and discussion on generational matters.

6 REFLECTIONS

I would be lying if I said that I am not happy and relieved that this process is over. I do not consider this process as difficult or exhausting, but it is challenging in many ways. Even though I have not been alone or buried under hundreds of articles in my own room, the thesis has demanded a lot of initiative, and forcing myself to do what I needed to do. And that's it.

The choice to start examining Generation Y was made as soon as I commenced my master's degree thesis. Even though some of the themes changed, Generation Y remained a constant. It is both a blessing and a challenge to choose a relatively populist topic. I have had the privilege both to justify my topic among more established and theoretical ones, and also to communicate my thoughts to different audiences. In a way, the current thesis has already opened some doors even before being published.

In this study, another important yet unestablished theme that I have adopted in addition to Generation Y is the method of empathy-based stories. Those are the two most important themes, and some might say they are bold and innovative choices; choices that took considerable courage and enthusiasm. I would say they have been from time to time difficult to handle, impossible to understand, and apparently leading nowhere. However, all the time I have had the confidence in myself that if I really want to do this, I can. It is just a case of sitting down and starting.

However, during the process and mostly due to these two particular themes, I have not been stressed about plans and agendas changing. I have been stressed because there were no plans or agendas at every point. It has been said that writing a dissertation demands that you are passionate about the subject, that you lose track of time while reading or writing about it, and that you have a never-ending thirst for more information and knowledge. My view is somewhat different. Probably one of the reasons that the process has not been too turbulent or too exhausting, is that I have had other things in life as well; whether it be the dog that needs to go outside, regular coffee and lunch breaks, or my mom coming to visit me. In a way, I have not defined myself through the thesis. Yes, it has been an important part of my life, and yes, at times it has been all I was able to think about. Nonetheless, most of the time for me this has been like any job that has to be done.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that the topic is not important or close to me. Having heard many supervisors, managers, and practitioners say that they need more information on Generation Y and that there seems to be something different in this particular generation, has inspired me along the way. One of the main reasons to choose the topic for my thesis in the first place was the practical point of view: the study has to have a strong emphasis on the everyday life of people in organizations, and it has to be pragmatic. Generation Y, is among the most popular of topics; as the literature review in this study demonstrates. Perhaps that has taken some edge off the theoretical aspects of this topic, but it is merely one of the many choices I have been able to make (and sometimes been forced to make) along the way.

Having said that, choosing another path or opening another door would have led to a different kind of result. However, I am happy and satisfied that I made these brave decisions, even though they did not always feel that enjoyable. I remember one management tutorial, where I was complaining about my choice of data collection method. At that time, I (for a brief moment) wished I had chosen a more established method and approach. One of the attendees said to me: how much would you be complaining if you would not taken this chance and had chosen a more traditional, but probably a more boring way to go. Indeed.

The thesis process is also meant to teach you something, concerning not only the topic but yourself as well; and it does, even if it sounds like a cliché. I have learned that I am naturally quite lazy and a master of procrastination. I need strict deadlines, no matter how artificial, and a feeling that somebody is looking over my shoulder all the time. If not, I find other things to do very quickly. The importance to me of having a supervisor who realized this and provided the guidance and supervision that was good for me, cannot be stressed too much. I am not one of those who can immerse themselves in work, I need an external push—and boy did I get one everytime I needed it!

Another lesson has been in methods and methodology. I feel my mindset is relatively quantitative, and I get the quantitative stuff easier than the qualitative. Thus, writing a qualitative dissertation is probably the biggest challenge during this process. It has been difficult to comprehend and conceive what I can do and say in relation to qualitative data and studies. I remember asking my supervisor whether qualitative studies are just a lot of words and opinions without any considered background. She laughed (as many times when I asked something when fed up with something complex). However, that was indeed the starting point for my qualitative research.

At this point, it is easy to be sentimental, and I will allow myself that. I know many people are proud of me, especially those most important to me. To be honest, I am proud of myself too. When it comes down to it, the dissertation is about me—a Millennial in working life⁴¹.

*True education is a kind of never ending story —
a matter of continual beginnings,
of habitual fresh starts,
of persistent newness.*

J. R. R. Tolkien

⁴¹ As indicated in the acknowledgements in italic font.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Figures of the informants' background

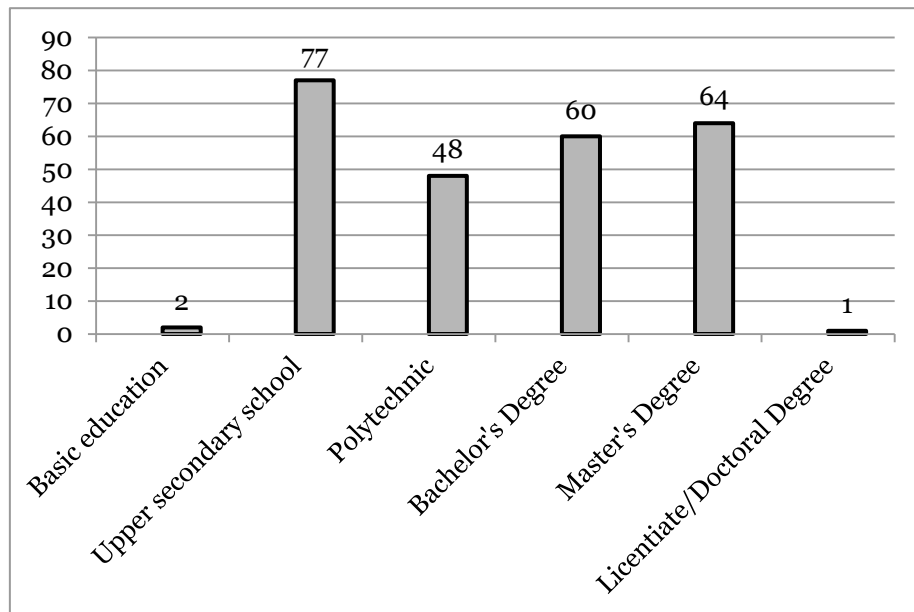


Figure 9. The educational background of the informants.

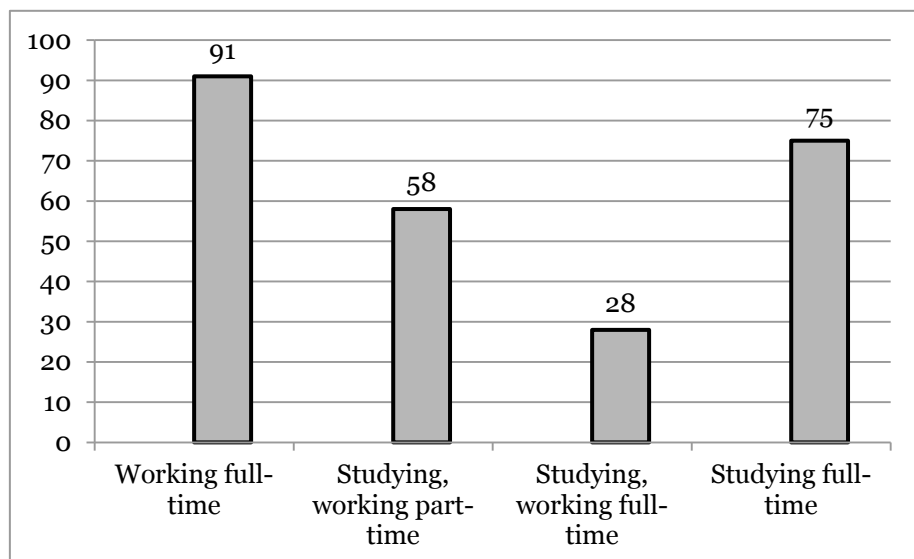


Figure 10. The work situation of the informants.

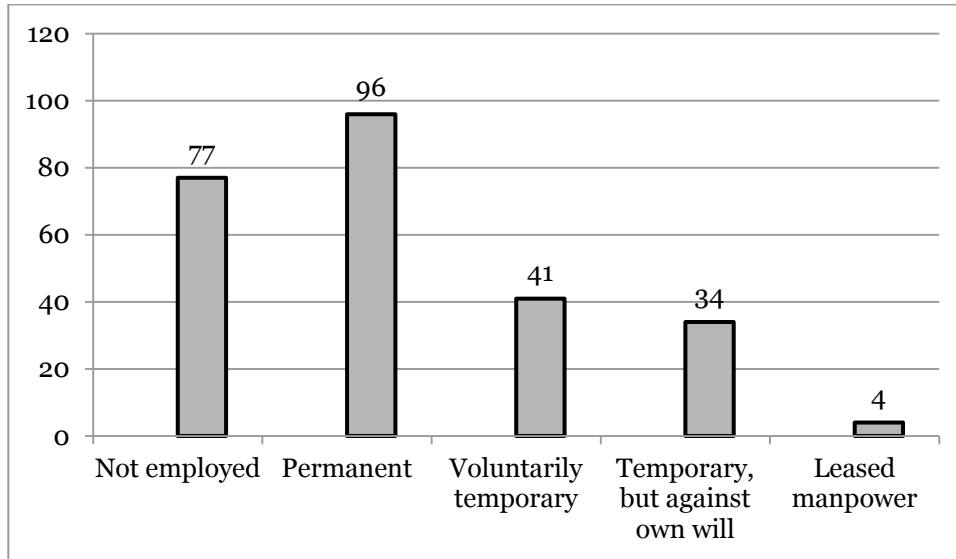


Figure 11. The type of contracts among the informants.

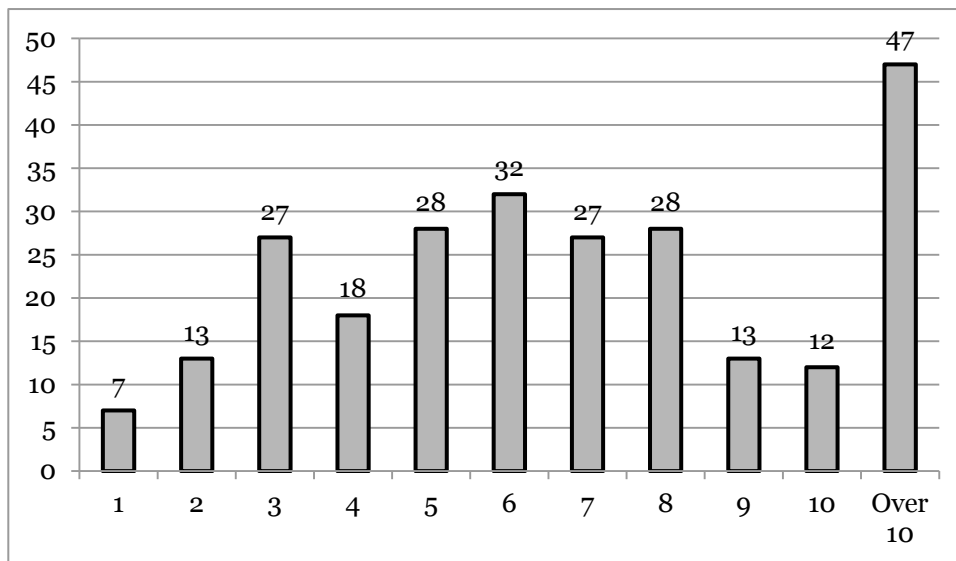


Figure 12. The amount of previous contracts.

Appendix 2

Nodes and number of references in the preliminary coding phase with NVivo (original Finnish name of the node).

	Motivation, positive	Number of references
1	Pleasant job (Mieluisa työ)	94
2	Pleasant environment (Hyvä ilmapiiri)	84
3	Challenging work (Haasteelliset työt)	76
4	Pleasant colleagues (hyvät työkaverit*)	74
5	Rewarding job (Työ palkitsee)	54
6	Good supervisor (Hyvä esimies)	49
7	Appreciation (Arvostus)	49
8	Pleasant work community (Mieluisa työyhteisö)	45
9	Sufficient salary (Riittävä palkka)	45
10	Private life (Yksityiselämä)	45
11	Job-competence fit (Työ vastaa osaamista)	45
12	Interesting tasks (mielenkiintoiset työt*)	43
13	Sufficient workload (Sopiva työkuorma)	43
14	Feedback (Palaute)	41
15	Flexibility (Joustavuus)	40
16	Encouragement (Kannustus)	40
17	Work-life balance	38
18	Trust (Luottamus)	30
19	Creativity and development (Luovuus ja kehittäminen)	27
20	Possibilities to influence (Vaikutusmahdollisuudet)	22
21	Good work condition (Hyvät työolot)	21
22	Variation (Vaihtelevuus)	20

23	Pride of work (Ammattilypeys)	20
24	Support from colleagues (Työkavereiden tuki)	20
25	Job-education fit (Koulutuksen vastaavuus)	19
26	Justice (Oikeudenmukaisuus)	19
27	Learning (Oppiminen)	19
28	Open atmosphere (Avoin ilmapiiri)	17
29	Career progression (Uralla eteneminen)	16
30	Possibilities to progress (Etenemismahdollisuudet)	16
31	Listening (Kuunteleminen)	15
32	Communality (Yhteisöllisyys)	15
33	Clear job description (Selkeä työnkuva)	14
34	New task (Uusi työtehtävä)	14
35	Pleasant field of work (Mieluisa ala)	13
36	Responsibility (Vastuu)	13
37	Good workplace (Hyvä työpaikka)	13
38	Inspiring job (Innostava työ)	13
39	Feeling of success (Onnistumisen tunne)	11
40	Healthy lifestyle (terveelliset elämäntavat*)	10
41	Good team (Hyvä tiimi)	10
42	Bonuses (Bonukset)	8
43	Possibilities to develop (Kehittymismahdollisuudet)	8
44	Growing responsibility (Vastuun kasvaminen)	8
45	Rejected references (Hylätyt)	7
46	Workplace romance (Työpaikkaromanssi)	5
47	Education (Koulutus)	5

48	Working independently (Itsenäinen työskentely)	5
49	Positive attitude (Positiivinen asenne)	5
50	Organization (Organisaatio)	5
51	More than work (Enemmän kuin työ)	5
52	Payrise (Palkankorotus)	4
53	Entrepreneurship (Yrittäjyys)	4
54	Values (Arvot)	3
55	Support (Tuki)	3
56	Variation of work (Työn vaihtelevuus)	2
57	Introduction (Perehdytys)	2
58	Non-physical work (ei-fyysistä työtä)	2
59	Harmony (Harmonia)	2
60	Societal issues (Yhteiskunnallisuus)	2
61	Corporate responsibility (Yrityksen vastuullisuus)	2
62	Praises (Kehuminen)	2
63	Rewarding (Palkitseminen)	2
64	Permanent contract (Vakituinen työ)	2
65	Change (Muutos)	1
66	Not too many expectations (Ei liikaa odotuksia)	1
67	Corporate management (Yrityksen johto)	1
68	Job rotation (Työkierto)	1
69	Job-expectations fit (Odotuksia vastaava työ)	1
70	Job stability (Työn jatkuvuus)	1
TOTAL		1411

	Motivation, negative	Number of references
1	Poor environment (Huono ilmapiiri)	70
2	Poor supervisor (Huono esimies)	66
3	Inconvenient workload (Epäsopiva työkuorma)	66
4	Frustration (Turhautuminen)	53
5	Unsuitable work (Epäsopiva työ)	45
6	Lack of possibilities to influence (Vaikutusmahdollisuuksien puute)	41
7	Negative atmosphere (Negatiivinen ilmapiiri)	40
8	Routinezation (Rutiininomaisuus)	40
9	Lack of challenges (Haasteettomuus)	39
10	[Work] does not provide joy (Ei tuota iloa)	39
11	Feeling of unworthiness (Arvottomuuden tunne)	37
12	Lack of appreciation (Arvostuksen puute)	37
13	Unreasonable salary (Kohtuuton palkka)	34
14	Haste (Kiire)	32
15	Bored (Leipääntyminen)	31
16	Private life (Yksityiselämä)	31
17	Difficult tasks (Vaikeat työtehtävät)	29
18	Lack of incentives (Palkkioiden puute)	29
19	No support (Ei tukea)	27

20	Cynicism (Kyynistyminen)	20
21	No possibilities to progress (ei ole etenemismahdollisuuksia*)	20
22	Envy and competition (Kateellisuus ja kilpailu)	20
23	Not belonging to work community (Kuulumattomuus työyhteisöön)	20
24	Poor work community (Huono työyhteisö)	19
25	Poor work condition (Huonot työolot)	19
26	Disagreements (Erimielisyydet)	17
27	No listening (Ei kuunnella)	17
28	Workplace bullying (Työpaikkakiusaaminen)	16
29	Wrong field of work (Väärä ala)	16
30	Problems in private life (Oman elämän ongelmat)	16
31	Stress (Stressi)	16
32	Injustice (Epäoikeudenmukaisuus)	15
33	Insecurity (Epävarmuus)	15
34	Failure (Epäonnistuminen)	15
35	Unclear job description (Epäselvä työnkuva)	15
36	Working for money (Rahan vuoksi)	14
37	Own attitude (Oma asenne)	12
38	Education does not fit the job (Ei vastaa koulutusta)	12
39	Inflexibility (Joustamattomuus)	11
40	Health problems (Terveydelliset ongelmat)	11

41	Too little spare-time (Liian vähän vapaa-aikaa)	11
42	Stalking (Kyttääminen)	10
43	Exhaustion (Väsymys)	10
44	No encouragement (Ei kannustusta)	10
45	Negative feedback (Negatiivinen palaute)	10
46	Boredom (Kyllästyminen)	9
47	Giving orders (Käskyttäminen)	9
48	Resigning, getting sick-leave (Irtisanoutuminen, sairausloman hakeminen)	9
49	Cliques (Kuppikuntaisuus)	9
50	Poor working time (Huono työaika)	9
51	No feedback (Ei palautetta)	8
52	Difficult personalities (hankalat persoonat*)	8
53	Burnout (Loppuunpalaminen)	7
54	Hierarchy (Hierarkkisuus)	7
55	Negative spillover (Negatiivinen siirtymä)	6
56	Secrecy (Salailu)	5
57	Sistrust (Epäluottamus)	5
58	Unclear expectations (Epäselvät odotukset)	4
59	Diminishing (Vähättely)	4
60	Fearing (Pelkääminen)	3
61	Unenjoyment (Viihtymättömyys)	3
62	Pressures to succeed (Menestymispaineet)	3

63	Sense of duty (Velvollisuudentunne)	2
64	Poor introduction (Perehdytyksen puute)	2
65	Inconsistency (Epäjohdonmukaisuus)	1
66	Unengagement (Sitoutumattomuus)	1
67	Low work morale (Alhainen työmoraali)	1
68	Problems in paying salaries (Palkanmaksuongelmat)	1
69	Rejected references (Hylätyt)	1
70	Lack of education (Koulutuksen puute)	1
TOTAL		1291

	Supervisor, positive	Number of references
1	Feedback (Palaute)	105
2	Appreciation (Arvostus)	55
3	Rewarding (Palkitseminen)	46
4	Possibilities to influence (Vaikutusmahdollisuudet)	41
5	Discussions (Keskustelut)	40
6	Getting along with the supervisor (Tulee toimeen esimiehen kanssa)	39
7	Encouragement (Kannustaminen)	33
8	Supervisor listens (Esimies kuuntelee)	29
9	Support for development (Tukea kehittymiseen)	29
10	Reciprocity (Vastavuoroisuus)	27
11	Openness (Avoimuus)	24
12	Support (Tuki)	24
13	[Supervisor] can give constructive feedback (Osaa antaa rakentavaa palautetta)	24
14	Responsibility (Vastuu)	22
15	[Supervisor] knows subordinate's duties (Tuntee alaisen työtehtävät)	21
16	Trusting the subordinate (Luottamus alaiseen)	21
17	More challenges (lisää haasteita*)	19
18	[Supervisor] acknowledges whole work community (Huomioi koko työyhteisön)	19
19	Trust (Luottamus)	18
20	Pleasant tasks (Miellyttävät)	18

	työtehtävät)	
21	Flexibility (Joustavuus)	17
22	Assertive supervisor (Esimiehen jäämäkkyys)	16
23	New task (Uusi tehtävä)	14
24	Sufficient workload (Sopiva työmäärä)	14
25	Subordinate can fulfil oneself (Alainen voi toteuttaa itseään)	14
26	Recognizes subordinate's potential (Tunnistaa alaisen potentiaalin)	13
27	Rejected references (Hylätyt)	13
28	Pleasant work environment (Hyvä työilmapiiri)	12
29	Clear goals (Selkeät tavoitteet)	12
30	Clear expectations (Selkeät odotukset)	12
31	Extra education (Lisäkoulutus)	11
32	Work-life balance	11
33	Personal ties with the supervisor (Henkilökohtaiset välit esimieheen)	9
34	Supervisor as a facilitator (Esimies fasilitaattorina)	8
35	Rewarding job (Työ palkitsee)	8
36	Presence (Läsnäolo)	8
37	Salary (Palkkaus)	7
38	Working as a team (tehdään tiiminä töitä*)	6
39	Kindness (Ystävällisyys)	6
40	Other reasons than supervisor (Muitakin syitä kuin esimies)	5
41	Sticking up for the subordinate (Pitää alaisen puolia)	5

42	Supervisor knows about private life (Esimies tietää yksityiselämästä)	5
43	[Supervisor] caters for well-being (Huolehtii hyvinvoinnista)	5
44	Supervisor like a colleague (Esimies kuin kollega)	5
45	Supervisor takes responsibility (Esimies ottaa vastuuta)	4
46	[Supervisor] acknowledges private life (Huomioi yksityiselämän)	4
47	Acknowledging subordinates' individuality (Alaisten yksilöllisyyden huomioiminen)	4
48	Supervisor advises (Esimies neuvoo)	4
49	[Supervisor] knows the subordinate (Tuntee alaisen)	3
50	Good relationships between supervisor and subordinate (toimivat esimies-alaissuhteet*)	3
51	Good introduction (Hyvä perehdytys)	2
52	Job stability (Työsuhteen varmuus)	2
53	Giving room (Työrauha)	2
54	Good work conditions (Hyvät työolot)	2
55	Supervisor is not too close (Esimies ei liian läheinen)	2
56	Sense of humor (Huumorintajuisuus)	2
57	Gender equality (Sukupuolinen tasa-arvo)	2
58	No need to fear the supervisor (Ei tarvitse pelätä esimiestä)	2

59	New supervisor (Uusi esimies)	2
60	Leading by example (Esimerkillä johtaminen)	2
61	Possibilities to learn from the supervisor (Esimieheltä voi oppia)	2
62	Supervisor distributes information (Esimies jakaa tietoa)	2
63	Delegating (Delegoiminen)	1
64	Workload becomes lighter (Työkuorma kevenee)	1
65	Supervisor provides ideas, is creative (Esimies ideoi, on luova)	1
66	Sense of security (Turvallisuudentunne)	1
67	Nominal supervisor (Nimellinen esimies)	1
68	Possibility to distance work (Etätyömahdollisuus)	1
	TOTAL	942

	Supervisor, negative	Number of references
1	Lack of appreciation (Arvostuksen puute)	43
2	Lack of good feedback (Hyvän palautteen puute)	39
3	Bad feedback (Huonoa palautetta)	37
4	Uneven workload (Epätasainen työkuorma)	33
5	Tensed relationship (Tulehtuneet välit)	32
6	Challenging communication (Haastava keskusteluyhteys)	31
7	Unsatisfactory job description (Tyydyttämätön työnkuva)	29
8	Supervisor is not interested in the subordinate (Esimies ei ole kiinnostunut alaisesta)	28
9	Subordinates do not have possibilities to influence (Alaisilla ei vaikutusmahdollisuuksia)	27
10	Supervisor does not listen (Esimies ei kuuntele)	27
11	Supervisor does not acknowledge performance (Ei huomaa suorituksia)	25
12	Supervisor is too demanding (Esimies vaatii liikaa)	25
13	Progressing is a hinder (Eteneminen esteenä)	23
14	Undeserved critique (Aiheetonta kritiikkiä)	23
15	Inappropriateness (Epäasiallisuus)	21
16	Favoring, discrimination (Suosiminen, syrjintä)	21
17	Injustice (Epäoikeudenmukaisuus)	20
18	Supervisor does not react to the needs of the subordinate (Esimies ei	20

	reagoi alaisen tarpeisiin)	
19	Effects on work-life balance (W-LB-vaikutukset)	20
20	Supervisors attitude, personality (Esimiehen asenne, persoona)	19
21	Work is numbing (Työ puuduttaa)	18
22	[Supervisor] does not acknowledge subordinate's opinions (Ei huomioi alaisen mielipidettä)	18
23	[Supervisor] is too authority-oriented (liian auktoriteettimainen*)	18
24	Unpleasant work environment (Huono työilmapiiri)	18
25	Lacks in leadership skills (Johtamistaidoissa puutteita)	15
26	Willingness to change place of work (Työpaikanvaihtohalu)	15
27	[Supervisor] does not appreciate work input (Ei arvosta työpanosta)	15
28	Unopenness (Epäavoimuus)	15
29	Uneven challenges (Epäsopivasti haasteita)	15
30	Inflexibility (Joustamattomuus)	15
31	Supervisor superintends strictly (esimies valvoo tiukasti*)	14
32	Salary is not motivating (Palkkaus ei kannusta)	14
33	Effects on work community (Vaikutukset työyhteisöön)	14
34	Lack of personal contact (Henkilökohtaisen kontaktin puuttuminen)	13
35	Maximizing the profits ("Voiton maksimointia!"*)	13
36	[Supervisor] does not know subordinate's field of work (Ei tunne alaisen työkenttää)	12

37	Supervisor is not the only reason (Esimiehellä ei yksin vaikutusta)	12
38	Problems in the subordinate too (Alaisessakin vikaa)	11
39	[Supervisor] does not keep promises (Ei pidä lupauksiaan)	11
40	Lack of support (Tuen puute)	11
41	[Supervisor] does not encourage (ei kannusta*)	10
42	Lack of trust (Luottamuksen puute)	10
43	Talking behind one's back (Selän takana puhuminen)	10
44	Unclear job description (Epäselvä työnkuva)	9
45	Supervisor does not know the substance of work (esimies ei ymmärrä työn substanssia*)	9
46	Embarrassing the subordinate (Alaisen nolaaminen)	8
47	[Supervisor] does not acknowledge individualism (Ei huomioi yksilöllisyyttä)	8
48	Unclear expectations (Epäselvät odotukset)	8
49	Supervisor does not help (Esimies ei auta)	8
50	Lack of incentives (Palkitsemisen puute)	8
51	Rejected references (Hylätyt)	8
52	[Supervisor] does not take responsibility (Ei ota vastuuta)	7
53	Supervisor bullies (Esimies kiusaa)	6
54	Getting personal (Henkilökohtaisuuksiin meneminen)	6
55	Distrust (Epäluottamus)	6
56	Bad leadership style (huono johtamistyyli*)	6

57	Others affect supervisor (Muut vaikuttavat esimieheen)	6
58	Job insecurity (Työsuhteen epävarmuus)	5
59	Threatning, intimidating (Uhkailu, pelottelu)	5
60	Subordinates feeling of insufficiency (Alaisen riittämättömyyden tunne)	5
61	[Supervisor] does not acknowledge well-being (Ei huomioi hyvinvointia)	5
62	No additional training (Ei lisäkoulutusta)	5
63	[Supervisor] is not easy to approach (Vaikeasti lähestyttävä)	5
64	Ignorance (Välinpitämättömyys)	5
65	Inequality (Epätasa-arvo)	4
66	Supervisor is set in one's way (esimies on kaavoihin kangistunut*)	4
67	Not all bad (Jotain on hyvinkin)	4
68	Subordinate is on his/her own (Alainen oman onnensa nojassa)	4
69	Supervisor does not take care of HR duties (Esimies ei hoida hr-tehtäviä)	3
70	[Supervisor] does not motivate (Ei motivoi)	3
71	Competing for supervisors attention (Esimiehen huomiosta kilpailtava)	3
72	Mixed signals (ristiriitaisia signaaleja*)	3
73	Supervisor does not interfere on bullying (Esimies ei puutu kiusaamiseen)	3
74	Supervisor changed to a worse one (Esimies vaihtui huonompaan)	2
75	Subordinate is in a wrong field of work (Alainen väärällä alalla)	2
76	[Supervisor] does not acknowledge	2

	whole work community (Ei huomioi työyhteisöä)	
77	Poor work conditions (Huonot työolot)	2
78	Unreasonable expectations (Kohtuuttomat odotukset)	2
79	Subordinate's own disengagement (Oma sitoutumattomuus)	2
80	Gender inequality (Sukupuolinen epätasa-arvo)	2
81	Competition with the supervisor (Kilpailu esimiehen kanssa)	2
82	Selfishness (Itsekkyys)	1
83	[Supervisor] does not put effort in working tools (Ei panostusta työvälineisiin)	1
84	Inexperienced supervisor (Kokematon esimies)	1
85	Insecure supervisor (Epävarma esimies)	1
86	Supervisor has own supervisor (Esimiehelläkin on esimies)	1
87	Problems in supervisor's motivation (Esimiehen motivaatio-ongelma)	1
88	Spinelessness (Selkärangattomuus)	1
89	Bittered subordinate (Katkeroitunut alainen)	1
90	Supervisor is too much like a friend (Esimies liian kaverillinen)	1
	TOTAL	1054

SUFFICIENT CHALLENGES AND A WEEKEND AHEAD – GENERATION Y DESCRIBING MOTIVATION AT WORK

Abstract

Purpose

The aims of this qualitative paper are to examine some perceptions of Millennials concerning what makes work motivating and working life, and discuss their implications for human resource management (HRM) practices.

Design/methodology/approach

Empirical data was collected via Facebook using the method of empathy-based stories (MEBS) (or the passive role-playing method). The theoretical framework of the study is grounded in the literature on motivation.

Findings

In this study's sample, the full-time working Millennials wrote more about intrinsic motivators than extrinsic ones. In addition, there were several dichotomies of positive and negative factors causing either motivation or demotivation. Thus, the results contradict to some extent with the ones of Herzberg's. The stories revealed that the most important things having an effect on motivation as well as demotivation were an interesting, varying and flexible job and good relationships with colleagues and supervisor.

Practical implications

The results revealed some particular factors that should be taken into account when designing HRM practices to dovetail with the motivational drivers of the Millennials: flexibility, work-life balance, convenient social relationships, need for coaching-based leadership and the opportunity to develop.

Originality/value

The originality of the study partly rests in its methodological innovativeness. Often adopted by sociologists, this study introduces the method of empathy-based stories to the business field. Furthermore, Facebook is still seldom used in data gathering. While much of the extant research on Generation Y is quantitative in nature, the adoption of a qualitative approach in this study allows for the voice of Generation Y to be heard.

Keywords: Generation Y; Human Resource Management; Motivation

INTRODUCTION

The main task of the human resource management (HRM) function is to create human capital in organisations and facilitate high performance workplaces in order to create competitive advantage (*e.g.* Boxall and Macky, 2009; Paauwe, 2004; Becker *et al.*, 2001). One of the most important means is to attract, recruit and retain motivated and talented people, and to do that in a better way than the competitors can. This concern is especially related to the youngest generation entering working life, *i.e.* Generation Y – a group commonly agreed to have been born between 1982 and 2000 (Hart and Brossard, 2006; Arsenault, 2004). Members of Generation Y are often referred to as Millennials.

Millennials represent a quarter of the world's population, and they will dominate the future workforce in a decade (Erickson, 2008). Thus, it is important for organisations, especially human resource practitioners, to understand Generation Y and develop HRM processes appropriate for them.

There is some evidence that Generation Y is different from other generations (Arsenault, 2004; Smola and Sutton, 2002), even if this view is not totally unanimous (*e.g.* Ciancola, 2008). The presence of differences between generations has been reinforced by social constructionist views (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Several external forces in society influence the creation of a shared value system among people in each historical context, and while the world is continually changing, so too do the shared value systems between generations (Parry and Urwin, 2011). The differences are manifested, for example, in values and beliefs about work and organisations, work ethics, work-related goals and what is expected from working life (Gursoy *et al.*, 2008; Smola and Sutton, 2002; Kupperschmidt, 2000). Some researchers state that the generational differences are at least partially related to people's different life situations, to their age (Furnham *et al.*, 2002) and job tenure, as well as the number of years spent working full-time (Furnham *et al.*, 2009).

The literature includes several descriptions of the typical and distinctive features of Millennials and comparisons with those of other generations. According to them Millennials are comfortable with technology (Smith, 2010; Welsh and Brazina, 2010), socially active (Gursoy *et al.*, 2008; Smola and Sutton, 2002), and comfortable with change (Hart and Brossard, 2006). Moreover, they are eager to develop their skills and take on new challenges at work (Wong *et al.*, 2008).

The important question for HRM professionals and supervisors is how to assist Millennials to flourish at work in order to secure good organisational

performance (see Guest *et al.*, 2003). Psychological factors have been recognised as extremely important to that flourishing. Academics have adopted a wide variety of concepts when discussing the topic, for example job satisfaction (Avery *et al.*, 1989), commitment (Meyer *et al.*, 1993), work engagement (Sonnentag, 2003) and the psychological contract (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994). Despite the diverse academic discussion around the concepts with detailed separations, the phenomenon behind them at an abstract level is the same. They are all interested in the “*psychology of an ideal employee*”, that is, an employee who is willing to put a lot of effort into working towards the goals that are important for the company. All of the concepts are closely related to motivation and overlap to great extent in the literature.

In this paper, we seek to gain a deeper understanding of the Millennials’ perceptions of work motivation. We refer to motivation in a broad sense (see *e.g.* Moynihan and Pandey, 2007; Locke and Latham, 2004), and follow Herzberg and colleagues’ (1959) motivation theory, which is mainly concerned with *motivators*, that is the factors that create motivation. Despite criticism, Herzberg’s theory has continued to demonstrate its utility nearly 50 years after it was developed (Basset-Jones and Lloyd, 2005). The data collection method we adopted in this paper is a somewhat updated version of Herzberg’s.

To date, literature on the topic of Millennials at working life has been particularly normative in nature, but there is some recent empirical evidence for Millennials having some special attributes (*e.g.* Solnet *et al.*, 2012; Furnham *et al.*, 2009; Wong *et al.*, 2008). There are also references to the topic in studies using age as one of the demographic variables (*e.g.* Moynihan and Pandey, 2007; Saks, 2006; Eskilden *et al.*, 2004). Some of the results are controversial, and therefore more research on the topic is needed. Thus, the aim of this paper is to extend the knowledge about Generation Y employees by using qualitative research methodology.

Our main research questions are:

Which factors do Millennials see as motivating or demotivating at work and in the workplace?

What do these results reveal of their perceptions of motivation compared to the literature on motivation?

How should the emerging results be taken into consideration by HRM in organisations?

The paper contributes in four areas. First, there is still a lack of qualitative empirical research on Generation Y, and this paper attempts to narrow that research gap. Second, motivation at work has been largely examined through surveys that include established variables from traditional models of motivation. The current research is complementary in that it applies an innovative data gathering method (the method of empathy-based stories (MEBS) or passive role-playing via Facebook). Third, our research design contributes to the discussion on Herzberg and colleagues' theory and its contemporary relevance (see *e.g.* Basset-Jones and Lloyd, 2005). Fourth, the paper deepens our understanding of Generation Y employees and thus could help HR professionals to improve the way they attract, motivate and retain this group.

In the next section, we briefly introduce the concepts of motivation and present some earlier findings on motivators of Millennials at work. Then we present our empirical study: the method, data, and results, and finally, we present our conclusions and implications.

WORK MOTIVATION

The rationale behind theories of work motivation is to provide a framework through which organisations can better influence their employees' drive to work and increase their enthusiasm (Furnham *et al.*, 2009). Work motivation has been defined as, for example, "a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behaviour and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration" (Pinder, 1998, 11). Motivation has been seen as having two forms: intrinsic motivation (*i.e.*, doing an activity because one finds it inherently interesting and satisfying) and extrinsic motivation (*i.e.*, doing an activity for an instrumental reason) (Catania and Randall, 2013; Stringer *et al.*, 2011; Lawrence and Jordan, 2009). There is research evidence showing that work motivation makes the employee more committed to the organisation (Moynihan and Pandey, 2007), positively influences job performance, (Springer, 2011) and increases job well-being (Fernet *et al.*, 2010), and is influenced, for example, by work content (Houkes, 2001), goal setting (Brown and Latham, 2000), performance feedback and social recognition (Van-Dijk and Kluger 2004; Stajkovic and Luthans, 2001), monetary rewarding (Stajkovic and Luthans, 2001), and flex-time (Barney and Elias, 2010).

During the long history of research on work motivation, several perspectives have been studied and theories developed in relation to the topic (see *e.g.* Latham and

Pinder, 2005). Research often examines motivation alongside job satisfaction (Furnham, 1999; Tietjen and Myers, 1998), which has been defined as the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs (Spector, 1997). The dominant assumption, based primarily on surveys, is that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are different ends of a continuum, where at the midpoint an individual is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (see Basset-Jones and Lloyd, 2005).

One of the first researchers who noted that the factors that contribute motivation might be different from those that contribute demotivation was Herzberg (1959). Herzberg and his colleagues proposed two separate psychological dimensions, which are "satisfaction-no satisfaction," and "dissatisfaction-no dissatisfaction" (Herzberg *et al.* 1959, 81.) Accordingly, the factors contributing the dimensions were labelled *motivators* and *hygiene factors*. Motivators refer to factors intrinsic within the work itself, and hygiene factors refer to extrinsic factors, which are connected to the conditions that surround the work (Springer, 2011). The state of employee motivation is an outcome of those factors.

More than four decades after its development, Herzberg's theory has regained attention (*e.g.* Catania and Randall, 2013; Furnham *et al.*, 2009; Sachau, 2007; Basset-Jones and Lloyd, 2005). Despite having received criticism (see *e.g.* Basset-Jones and Lloyd, 2005; Dent, 2002), some researchers consider it valuable as a general framework for understanding the dual nature of satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Sachau (2007) even sees a strong relation between Herzberg's theory and new research on positive psychology. He also suggests that HRM professionals should use it as a meta-theory of employee growth and development.

Herzberg's two-factor theory was raised here because of the design used in his study. He and his associates asked accountants and engineers to describe the positive and negative work events (Herzberg *et al.* 1959, 81). This qualitative study adopts a similar approach in order to gain a deeper understanding about what drives Millennials' work motivation.

Empirical evidence on generational differences in motivational drivers in the workplace is limited (Wong *et al.*, 2008) and contains discrepancies. For example, in the study of Solnet *et al.* (2012), Millennials rated their engagement, job satisfaction and organisational commitment to be significantly lower than groups of other generations. However, Furnham *et al.* (2009) did not find any significant correlation between motivation and age, job tenure or years of full-time working. Catania and Randall (2013) did not find any differences between older and younger respondents with respect to their intrinsic motivators, but

young respondents in the study were more concerned with extrinsic motivators, especially financial factors. Wong *et al.* (2008) found that there were no differences between generations on the subject of job security as a motivator, but younger employees were more motivated by opportunities to advance in their careers than older generations. A recent study conducted in the Nordic countries (Eskilden *et al.*, 2004) showed that the relationship between job satisfaction and age was linear, that is the younger the employee, the less satisfied they were at work. However, it may be more important to understand the particularity of each group in the organisation than to identify differences between the generations. In addition, Appelbaum *et al.* (2000) argued that the lack of motivation to work hard is more attributable to life stage than to the cohort.

In the next section, we present our research design and the findings.

METHOD

The aim of this study is to investigate the perceptions of work motivation among Millennials in depth. Our research design resembles that of Herzberg *et al.* (1959) in some aspects; first in that we too adopted a qualitative approach, and also in that we adopted a method where the results concerning work motivation are so pronounced that it is possible to consider them separately. Herzberg used interviews involving critical incident analysis, which at the time was a relatively new method of data collection. More than 50 years later, we followed by adopting relatively innovative methods too.

We used the method of empathy-based stories (MEBS), or passive role-playing, which has often been used in fields other than management, such as sociology. In this method, at least two background stories are provided, and respondents are asked to interpret, explain or complete them. In the stories, one factor is varied in order to be able to make comparisons. The main interest is to see how the stories change when an essential factor is varied. The stories provide signs and indicators as to of how the matter might be seen (Eskola, 1991, 7, 12). The advantage of using a role-playing method is to enhance the patterns people use in everyday situations: the consideration of and weighting applied to different options. As an active, thinking individual, there is no need to limit one's behaviour. Moreover, the respondents are referring to a third party, which makes it easier to answer the questions. They do not have to open themselves up personally, but instead can generalize the issue by describing the feelings, behaviour and actions of an imaginary person. In addition, when using MEBS there is no tension caused by interaction, something that can arise for example in

interviews. Nevertheless, as they offer answers, individuals still reflect their own expectations, values and perceptions in the process.

MEBS is a convenient preliminary way to map out a research field that has not yet been widely studied, in order to create a valid and appropriate survey (Eskola, 1991, 10–11). It is therefore appropriate to use in research on Millennials in Finland and their motivation, as there is a lack of specifically work-related research, and the majority of the literature is normative in nature.

In our research, the respondents were presented with two stories connected to motivation, one positive and one negative. They were asked to give responses to both stories, which were:

1) Positive story

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels truly motivated and he has a lot of energy to work. It is nice to go to work in the morning and Sami is always looking forward to the next working day. Why does Sami feel this motivated and so enthusiastic?

2) Negative story

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels tired, and he does not seem to find any motivation for working. It is not nice to go to work in the mornings, and he could not care less about going to work again next week. Sami is looking forward to the weekend, so that he does not have to go to work. Why is Sami not motivated by his work and why does he not feel at all enthusiastic?

Generation Y is comfortable with technology, and so the qualitative data was collected electronically with an e-form in 2012 via social media (Facebook). The stories were written in electronic form in the order above. Beneath each story was an unlimited space for the respondent's answer. At the end of both stories, a question was presented: "*why does he feel the way described earlier*" and the respondents were encouraged to write a story to illustrate their answers to the question.

This relatively innovative data collection method was very effective. First, the link to the questionnaire was posted once on Facebook on the researcher's own wall. The link also asked others to share it on their walls. This was repeated three times to acquire more stories. The questionnaire was completed by 309 respondents, of whom 252 were Millennials. The respondents were asked their

year of birth, gender, education, work situation (working/studying), type of contract (permanent/temporary) and the number of previous jobs.

We decided to concentrate on Millennials with the strongest connection to working life. In this article, we use a sample consisting of the stories of 62 Millennials working full-time on a permanent contract, in order to examine the motivational aspects affecting them at work. The selected group of 62 answered both of the questions and comprised 20 men and 42 women. Of these, one had basic education, eight had upper secondary school as their educational background, 19 had polytechnic education, three possessed a Bachelor's degree and 31 held a Master's degree. Thirteen of the sample had less than four previous jobs, 18 had from four to six previous jobs, 18 had from seven to nine previous jobs and 13 of them had at least ten previous jobs.

The respondents produced 124 short stories offering explanations for the two cases described earlier. The length of the texts varied from 25 to 100 words. MEBS is solely a data collection method. Nevertheless, it can be used with a variety of analysing techniques. In order to examine the data, we chose to use a content analysis method in this paper.

FINDINGS

After the positive story, the informants were asked why the person, Sami, felt so motivated and enthusiastic. In their explanations, certain themes were repeated in several answers. First, many respondents mentioned that the work environment and the climate in the workplace were good. Examples offered to explain what made it so included a pleasant and open atmosphere, enthusiastic and encouraging colleagues and equality among employees. Colleagues were often mentioned in explanations, and they were described as supportive, encouraging and trustworthy. Interestingly, the organisation as a whole was not mentioned in this context but the closest work unit was.

The respondents appreciated flexibility in working hours, working methods and other work arrangements. Deciding one's own schedule and organising one's own work were mentioned. Further, they saw it as appropriate for them to be flexible themselves and sacrifice some of their free time as well, if needed. In return, they want to be appreciated and given something extra, such as money or time off from work in lieu. Surprisingly, they seemed to expect this freedom to be clearly demarcated by such mechanisms as a framework and goals, as reflected in the following excerpt:

Sami has a job that has a clear framework, structures and goals. Sami can nevertheless plan the content of the work independently. This also means that Sami does not have the so-called traditional working hours, but can plan when and where to work.

The content of work seemed to be crucial for motivation. It is interesting to note that in the stories the work being undertaken was often referred to as a project. Quite a number of the respondents surmised that the work is new or the tasks have changed recently, since the person in the story feels motivated. This indicates that Millennials value work projects that vary, are challenging and developmental but at the same time not too time consuming. In short, challenging, but only moderately so. Additionally, they emphasised reasonable time frames and other resources. The respondents did not want to be buried in work.

He has challenging work tasks and there are enough of those, but not too much.

Work-life balance was something mentioned repeatedly in the stories. Work should apparently not take over one's life. Having sufficient free time seemed to be an important source of well-being at work. When discussing this topic they viewed motivation very broadly. The respondents also stated that a feeling of motivation could derive from being generally satisfied with life. Overall, Millennials seemed to presume that working people are more than just employees, and should be treated as individual human beings whose feelings and emotions, roles, and resources affect their different life spheres.

If things at home are in order and you are happy, it is also easy to go to work in the mornings.

The lack of motivation was examined with the same method. In this case, the story was reversed: Sami returns home from work apparently demotivated. There was a further mention of him looking forward to the weekends, so he does not have to go to work. The negative motivation stories were to a great extent related to the same sources of motivation mentioned in the positive stories.

Here too private life was strongly emphasised. Both psychological and physical aspects were taken into consideration. In explaining Sami's lack of motivation, the informants described situations in which something was wrong in his private life or they guessed he had problems with people close to him. For example, difficulties with a partner were repeatedly mentioned. Additionally, informants

connected the lack of motivation to physical problems caused by insufficient sleep or time to exercise or an unhealthy diet.

It is not working that reduces his motivation to zero. He has problems with his girlfriend and he worries about these things while working. He does not feel like doing anything else than worry alone at home, thus, not even the work is interesting, nothing is okay and he is feeling down.

Some stories also described having a bad or incompetent supervisor as demotivating. Such stories gave examples of less than ideal behaviour by supervisors that included not giving feedback or giving only negative feedback, avoiding the leadership role and presence, unreliability, and exercising the wrong kind of authority.

The supervisor is not that interested in what his/her subordinates are doing, and only gives feedback when something goes wrong.

The supervisor hides behind his/her own unfinished work, does not dangle the carrot, does not wield the stick, offers no way out of the tricky situation.

According to the Millennials' stories, a boring job and feelings of stagnation fuel demotivation. They see routines as a threat to motivation. A continual feeling of development and sufficient challenges seem to be important factors to counter demotivation.

Maybe the job is boring, poorly managed, and without any goals.

In addition, the atmosphere at work was noted repeatedly in the respondents' tales, as it had also been in the tales following the positive scenario. Evidently, for Millennials, one's colleagues and the climate can both motivate and demotivate. The main factor contributing to a demotivating climate in the workplace is apparently poor communication, though conflicts and exhausting competitiveness were also mentioned.

The atmosphere at Sami's workplace is negative. People complain behind each other's backs, but are not willing to do anything to improve the situation. The management does not share information or discuss matters with employees...There is stalking, only self-interest, conflicts over territories and ambitious takeovers.

Even though the current turbulence affecting all fields of work has led to rising unemployment among young people, stability at work was not emphasised in the

stories. Moreover, there were only a few remarks that concerned monetary factors. Surprisingly, young people who are just building their own life including homes, cars, and other material things do not discuss salaries when explaining poor motivation.

To sum up, the most influential factors in the positive and negative stories were partly the same, but in a reverse form. New and interesting projects are important motivators, and staying too long in the same job destroys motivation. Flexibility increases motivation and inflexibility demotivates. In addition, a pleasant community at work motivates, and a poor community demotivates. Work-life balance also seems to be an important factor in both motivation and demotivation. Interestingly, a supervisor's influence was emphasised in the demotivating stories, but it did not gain that much support in the motivating ones. Furthermore, suitable challenges were seen as motivating, just as lack of respect shown was repeatedly mentioned in the negative side.

Table 1. Main findings of the stories.

Positive, motivating stories	Negative, demotivating stories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new, interesting work project • nice work community • possibility of growth and development • flexibility at work • work-life balance • happiness in private life • <i>sufficient</i> challenges, but a not overly demanding job <p>everything is fine at home</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working on the same task for too long, feelings of stagnation • poor atmosphere at work • working at the expense of private life • poor supervisor performance • inflexibility in the workplace • feelings of not being respected or heard • negative impacts on private life (e.g. lack of sleep, not enough time for hobbies) • not getting help when needed <p>vague job</p>

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our first research question was “*which factors do Millennials see as motivating or demotivating at work and in the workplace?*”. In general, our findings were very much in line with some earlier studies (*e.g.* Behrstock-Sherratt and Cogshall, 2010; Smith, 2010; Cennamo and Gardner, 2008; Solnet and Hood, 2008; Wong *et al.*, 2008): interesting work content, flexibility with timetables and working hours, a possibility to learn and develop at work, a good atmosphere in the community of work and a nice supervisor were important factors of motivation in the written stories of the Millennials. However, our qualitative data revealed some interesting variance in the degree of emphasis placed on these issues.

First of all, catering for work-life balance was a very critical factor for our sample of Generation Y. The respondents did not separate being an employee from being a human being as a whole. According to the stories, in order to feel well at work, Millennials want to have enough time for the things they love: hobbies, physical exercise, family and friends. While they wrote of protagonists’ readiness to be flexible at work when needed, they underlined that they are not ready to sacrifice their private life for work. This finding is in line with previous studies (Behrstock-Sherratt and Cogshall, 2010; Smith, 2010; Hurst and Good, 2009; Shaw and Fairhurst, 2008; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007) and indicates that work-life balance has to be considered seriously when creating preconditions for the work motivation of Millennials.

Another strong emphasis in the data was that on the closest working community. Instead of talking about the company, Millennials linked all of the stories to the closest working community. It was an important source for motivation and demotivation in the stories. Most of the examples offered in relation to good motivation at work were connected to pleasant colleagues and a good work community. This is in line with previous studies (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010; Hurst and Good, 2009). In addition, our data indicated that Millennials have high expectations concerning their colleagues: everyone should be as motivated and engaged as they themselves are, just as Martin (2005) stated in her paper. Moreover, in the stories describing a motivating workplace the supervisor in particular was portrayed as a very important source of motivation. Many of the respondents wrote accounts about a supervisor not giving feedback, not caring, not seeing or hearing, and thus undermining motivation and enthusiasm. All in all, beneath the storytelling we can see a strong desire to be seen and appreciated as a human being. This is also in line with previous studies (Smith, 2010; Hurst and Good, 2009; Martin, 2005; Jamrog, 2002). These findings suggest that

recruiting motivated and skilled supervisors, as well as building good teams and work climates are important means in supporting the work motivation of Millennials in organisations.

Martin (2005) has stated that change does not frighten Generation Y, but the lack of it does. The respondents in our study did not write about promotion, formal roles or status symbols, but they wrote a lot about varying and interesting tasks instead. In our data there were a lot of stories where the protagonist is demotivated just because he has been working in the same job for too long and has become bored. Compared to that, they very rarely wrote about money, and the few who did, wrote about an unfairly low salary in relation to labour input being a demotivating factor. Even the idea of job security as a motivating factor was not apparent from the stories. Instead, Millennials saw the opportunity to constantly learn and develop through new tasks and challenges as one of the most motivating factors. This may indicate that they place particular value on maintaining their employability in the context of uncertainty in the labour markets. This may also be indication of impatience and unrealistic views about their own capabilities. However, our material did not reveal the background for these expectations and thus it would need further examination.

Our second research question was “*what do these results reveal of their perceptions of motivation compared to the literature on motivation?*”. Fifty years ago, Herzberg *et al.*'s qualitative study (and many quantitative studies since) empirically established the idea of separate factors causing motivation or demotivation. In our study where the Millennials freely offered explanations for good or bad motivation, they did not separate the factors to a great extent. In fact, several dichotomies were found of positive/negative factors causing motivation/demotivation: content, amount and quality of work itself, flexibility at work, a supervisor, atmosphere in the workplace, and the private life situation. Only bureaucracy was related solely to demotivating (hygiene) factors. All of the factors are hygiene factors except work itself.

Our study indicates that people construct their ideas of motivation at work differently than suggested by the structures in Herzberg's model. Our study also revealed differences in the emphasis placed on different factors in informants stories. For example, the significance of the quality of private life was of great importance as an indicator of work motivation in this sample.

In our sample the Millennials clearly wrote more about intrinsic than extrinsic motivators. It was interesting that the informants who are full-time workers mentioned salary only a couple of times as a demotivator when they were asked to write about motivation freely. Instead, their arguments about the motivation

or demotivation of the protagonist had strong connections to the basic needs of individuals defined by Ryan and Deci (2000): autonomy, competence and relatedness. The need for autonomy manifested in desires for flexibility in timetables and locations, the need for competency manifested in desires for continual learning and development, and the need for relatedness manifested in strong emphasis on the relations with the workmates and the supervisor. In their stories Millennials expressed that fulfilment of these basic needs are motivating and if they are not fulfilled, their motivation suffers.

Our third and practical question was *“how should the findings be taken into consideration by HRM in organisations?”*. Our study indicates that Millennials expect some things at work, which go against traditional HRM practices in many organisations. Above all, they expect the emphasis to shift towards increased flexibility at work (time, place, equipment *etc.*) and varying job responsibilities. Thus, flexible working hours and the possibility to work from remote locations are not appropriate for all work, but when it is possible, it could be worth testing with Millennials. Additionally, Millennials’ need for continual change at work challenges HR professionals to devise tailor-made positions and career paths that make it possible to move from one task to another with gradually increasing demands. In practice, the traditional ideas of work enrichment and enlargement are still applicable. Millennials’ strong desire for continual learning and developing might be best managed with individual development plans, systematic and frequent development discussions with supervisors or mentors. The perennial desire for a healthy workplace with a good climate, work-life balance, and the support and attention of a supervisor may be even stronger among Millennials than among employees in general. These aspirations could be easiest to build by developing a coaching leadership style and by giving supervisors time and support to carry out their supervisory duties.

As with any other study, this one has its limitations. The first concerns the data gathering. We were able to reach a number of Millennials via Facebook in a very short period of time, and even though we used an external e-form to collect the actual data, this might have had an effect on the stories. The stories might be shorter because the writing style in social media can be much shorter and not highly edited compared to other methods. This might cause challenges for the analysis. Nevertheless, the data collection was successful: sharing the link to the questionnaire in Facebook was a fast and convenient way to reach potential respondents. The method of empathy-based stories also seemed to be beneficial, because it produced rich material for investigating work motivation. However, we have to keep in mind that the Millennials wrote stories about Millennials, and

that may tell more about how they interpret “the typical case” than about their own motivations.

In future, this study should be extended through a more in-depth analysis, and the data might be extended by the inclusion of interviews, for example. The psychological contract would be a research direction particularly worthy of qualitative examination among Millennials. The need for relatedness (see Ryan and Deci, 2000), which was revealed as a very important factor behind the motivations in the Millennials’ stories, are also worth closer examination in this era of a more and more turbulent working life.

In the light of our findings, motivated Millennials represent great potential for work organisations: they are eager to develop, they are ready to multitask, they are flexible, they desire feedback and support from their supervisors, and they are wise enough to understand the importance of work-life balance as a crucial factor for well-being at work.

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GENERATION Y – CHALLENGING CLIENTS FOR HRM?

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Susanna Kultalahti is a Millennial herself and is preparing her doctoral thesis on Generation Y, mainly concentrating on motivational factors and supervisor issues. The main aim of her dissertation is to make a theoretical contribution, as Generation Y has only been lightly investigated in Finland, but she also wants to provide supervisors and managers with practical information with a strong empirical background on issues affecting Generation Y. She obtained excellent grades in her Master of Science Degree in 2011.

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Generation Y – Challenging Clients for HRM?

Purpose

The aim of this qualitative study is to examine the preferences of working members of Generation Y concerning the work they find motivating and their working lives. The study also presents the implications of those findings for HRM strategies and practice.

Design/methodology/approach

Empirical data were collected mainly from Facebook using an empathy-based story method (or passive role-playing method). The theoretical frame of the study consists of the theory of the psychological contract, and the findings are reported from the perspective of the need for HRM development in organisations.

Findings

The results show that HRM should consider certain factors when organising HR practices to maximise the motivation of the members of Generation Y. These include flexibility, convenient social relationships, and the need for coaching-based leadership and development opportunities, to mention but a few. This study indicates that Generation Y values a relational psychological contract that is somewhat different from the traditional one.

Practical implications

According to this study, Millennials challenge HR professionals to devise creative HR practice solutions. From an employee's perspective, HR services should offer more choice and flexibility within clear rules and structures. The authors discuss the implications for practice of formulating a psychological contract with Generation Y.

Originality/value

The paper contains a methodological innovation in using Facebook as a vehicle for data gathering. Additionally it applies the method of empathy-based stories; a method still rare in research in the field of business.

Keywords: Generation Y; Human Resource Management; psychological contract, motivation

Introduction

Human resource professionals in private and public organisations will face considerable challenges during the next ten years: a large number of employees will retire and will have to be replaced by new employees. That will require HRM functions to attract and commit the youngest generation now joining the workforce, often referred to as Generation Y (or Millennials), which comprises those born between 1978 and 1995 (Smola and Sutton, 2002 – although Arsenault (2004) used the timespan 1981–2000).

We are particularly interested in understanding those factors that might be central to HRM's efforts to attract Generation Y into organisations, and to motivate and commit them when they are there. We lean here on the psychological contract as a frame of reference, because its theoretical grounding is solid (Rousseau, 1995) and a recent stream of research has proved its value for companies (Paauwe and Boselie, 2005). The concept of the psychological contract is very closely related to organisational commitment (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; McDonald and Makin, 2000) and it also has clear connections to motivation (Parzefall and Hakanen, 2010).

Our main research questions are: *Which factors do Millennials consider motivating at work? What do these factors reveal from the perspective of the psychological contract? How might HRM practices respond to these expectations?*

In this paper, we examine Millennials' expectations of work in order to understand the group as *customers* and *consumers* of HRM. The notion of viewing employees as different segments has received only minor attention in HRM literature, despite being noted as best practice in HRM (Enz and Siquaw, 2000). Moreover, HR functions have been criticised for being slow to understand the implications of the different expectations and preferences of employees (Yarnall, 1998). Therefore, we make some practical suggestions for HRM practices as part of the concluding section of this paper.

We are not aiming to prove that Generation Y is different from any other generation or even different from other generations when they were the same age as Generation Y is now. Instead, we empirically examine how the research findings concerning Generation Y's work-related expectations, which originate mainly in the UK, USA and Australia, manifest themselves in the Finnish context. Additionally, we use an innovative qualitative method, whereas most of the previous studies on Generation Y have been quantitative.

Next, we introduce the psychological contract and discuss it from the HRM perspective. After that, we briefly present some findings concerning Millennials in the work context and consider some related challenges faced by HRM. We then present our empirical study: the method, data and results. Finally, we present our conclusions and outline some implications for HRM practice.

Formulating psychological contracts with Millennials

Committing competent people to the organisation has been noted to be one of the most important tasks of HRM, and one that should be based on the commitment strategy (Delery and Doty, 1996; Walton, 1985). In an organisation following a commitment strategy, job descriptions are broad; employees' skills are actively developed; the company organises extensive socialisation activities; compensation is more related to individual skills than it is bound to equality; people are encouraged to participate; communication is open and the company offers employees at least some assurance of security (Davidson and McPhail, 2011; Delery and Doty, 1996). Above all, a commitment-based HR strategy and practices aim to establish a psychological contract with the employees (MacDuffie, 1995).

The psychological contract has been defined as "an individual's belief, shaped by the organisation, regarding promissory and reciprocal obligations" (Rousseau, 2005, p.5). An individual's subjective interpretation of the actions of an organization and the construction of the psychological contract is based on the cognitive assessment of how well the employer fulfils its promises, and that in turn influences the employee's feelings and attitudes (Guerrero and Herrbach, 2008). Psychological contracts have been categorized, and Rousseau (1990), for example, identified two types: relational and transactional contracts (see also Mallon and Duberley, 2000; Meyer and Allen, 1991). Transactional contracts are economic in nature, often have short or uncertain timeframes and are predicated on a presumption of pure self-interest. In contrast, relational contracts are based on long-term relationships with diffuse obligations and concerns for both economic and non-economic benefits. MacDonald and Makin (2000) see these two different contracts as two ends of a continuum and thus any psychological contract may contain both transactional and relational elements, but in different proportions. The contract is formed as soon as an employee enters the organisation (Tomprou and Nikolaou, 2011), and it influences his/her behaviour for the duration of the employment with the organisation (Sonnenberg *et al.*, 2011).

If an employee perceives that an employer is not investing in the relationship, the employee may feel a reduced sense of commitment, trust and loyalty, and that easily leads to feeling that they are going to work just for the financial reward (Sonnenberg *et al.*, 2011; Cherlyn Skromme and Baccili, 2006; Robinson *et al.*, 1994). Correspondingly, perceptions that the psychological contract is being honoured are associated with, for example, strong in-role performance, innovativeness, organisational citizenship, commitment, trust, job satisfaction, reduced turnover, diminished intention to quit, intention to remain and loyalty (Zhao *et al.*, 2007; Ramamoorthy, *et al.*, 2005; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003). Parzefall and Hakanen's (2010) findings in the Finnish context offered further evidence supporting the proposition that relational psychological contracts promoted motivation, commitment, feelings of self-worth and a sense of significance among employees.

There is evidence of the advent of contracts that combine relational and transactional elements, and these have been labelled balanced contracts (Hess and Jepsen, 2009; O'Neill and Adya, 2007; Hui *et al.* 2004). They combine preferences for qualities like mutual concern and flexibility (examples of the relational) and well-specified performance-reward contingencies (examples of the transactional) (Rousseau, 2004). Such balanced contracts exemplify the concept of the protean career (see Hall and Moss, 1998), where an employee accepts certain obligations and balances them against benefits to safeguard their continued employment. The core preferences of the protean career path are freedom and the opportunity for growth at work (Hall, 2004).

Thus, the question of how to achieve at least the minimum acceptable alignment of interests in a company is an important and challenging one for HRM, as it is within the power of HRM to influence the psychological contracts through HR practices (Koene and Van Riemsdijk, 2005; Westwood *et al.*, 2001;). Important situations – the so-called key moments – for the development of psychological contracts are, for example, recruitment, performance appraisal, training, compensation-related discussions and the relationship with the supervisor (Suazo *et al.*, 2008; Robinson *et al.*, 1994; Rousseau and McLean Parks, 1993).

An interesting question arises as to how the next generation entering working life construct the psychological contract. In recent years there has been evidence of some consensus in the academic literature that Generation Y differs from the same age groups in previous decades, even if this view is not unanimous (e.g. Ciancola, 2008). Parry and Urwin (2011) have stated that members of each generation share “a common location in the historical dimension of the social process” and that when society changes, generations also adopt a different

mindset. Differences are manifested in attitudes, beliefs, behaviour and values (see e.g. Xander *et al.*, 2012; Macky *et al.*, 2008; Arsenault, 2004; Hill, 2002; Smola and Sutton, 2002).

There are several studies available revealing specificities of Generation Y regarding their work-related expectations, attitudes and behaviours. That research highlights the importance of job content (De Hau and De Vos, 2010), training and development (Sturges *et al.*, 2002), social connections and cooperation at work (Cennamo and Gardner 2008; Wong *et al.* 2008), meaningful work (Rawlins *et al.*, 2008, Dries *et al.*, 2008), work-life balance (Smith, 2010; Cennamo and Gardner, 2008), job security (De Hau and De Vos, 2010), career advancement (De Hau and De Vos, 2010; Wong *et al.* 2008), self-actualisation, intrinsic benefits, and a work environment that is nurturing and supportive (Solnet and Hood, 2008). However, Broadbridge *et al.* (2007) noted that young employees are ready to sacrifice their work–life balance in the short term or even to relocate in order to find a satisfying career. Salary is as important for them as for other generations (Dries *et al.*, 2008), but they appreciate instant bonuses and various perks more (Hurst and Good, 2009). Furthermore, they expect flexibility at work and to feel wanted and important in the workplace (Behrstock-Sherratt and Cogshall, 2010; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007). Millennials expect their supervisors to be close and to have a leadership style characterised by a balanced mixture of allowing flexibility while setting high demands. Millennials value being given responsibility, time to learn from trial and error, clear direction and the freedom to do things in their own way (Jamrog, 2002), in addition to consistent and constructive feedback (Smith, 2010; Martin, 2005) and appreciation (Hurst and Good, 2009). However, the outcomes of research into generational differences also include some contradictory theories (see e.g. Hess and Jepsen, 2009; Chen and Choi 2008).

In the next section, we present our qualitative study, in which we investigate how Millennials construct stories of positive and negative interaction between an employee and work and the workplace.

Data and analysis

The data collection method used in this study is a special type of qualitative study – the method of empathy-based stories (MEBS), or passive role-playing – which has been used in research in fields other than management, such as sociology (Eskola, 1991: 7, 12). It is based on the idea that an informant responds to different stories in which one specific factor varies. These are called background

stories (see below). The informant reads each of the stories one by one and acts, recites or writes the tailpiece or explanations for the story. In this case, we asked informants to write tailpieces for one positive and one negative story. We chose to use concepts familiar from everyday discussions. In the first story, the person was described as feeling enthusiastic, motivated and always eager to start a new day at work. The second story described the opposite situation: the person felt tired and demotivated, and as looking forward to the weekend, as it meant not having to go to work. At the end of both stories, the same question was presented: why does he feel like this?

Positive background story

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels truly motivated and he has a lot of energy to work. It is nice to go to work in the morning and Sami is always looking forward to the next working day. Why would Sami feel this motivated and be so enthusiastic?

Negative background story

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels tired, and he cannot seem to find any enthusiasm for his work. It is not nice to go to work in the mornings, and he could not care less about going to work again next week. Sami is looking forward to the weekend, so that he does not have to go to work. Why is Sami not motivated by his work and why does he lack all enthusiasm?

The advantage of using MEBS over another data collection method is that it enhances the patterns that people use in everyday situations as they weigh different options. Additionally, in role-playing, there is no need to limit one's behaviour as an active, thinking individual. The informants are also referring to a third party, which makes it easier to answer the questions. Nevertheless, while answering, they still reflect their own expectations, values, and perceptions (Eskola, 1991: 10-11).

Because Generation Y is alert to and comfortable with technology, the data were collected electronically by an e-form circulated via social media (Facebook), in 2012. First, the link to the external questionnaire was posted on Facebook, with a request that it be shared on friends' walls. Thus, we utilized the snowball-method. The informants were not able to see each other's answers. The link provided in Facebook led to an external website hosting the e-form questionnaire. Each informant provided their own stories without knowing what the previous respondents had written.

The data gathering method was very effective: a total of 252 Millennials (born between 1978 and 1995 with an age range at the time of the data collection of 17–35) responded and provided their insights. All of the informants were Finnish. The questionnaire and the instructions were in Finnish, as were the stories they provided. There were no limits set to the length of each story.

For this study, we wanted to examine the motivational perceptions of those Millennials, who have already started full-time work, as they would have already formed opinions and have experience of work practices. The criteria led us to examine the responses of 62 working Millennials (20 men and 42 women) who answered both questions. Figures 1 and 2 reflect information gathered on education level and the number of previous jobs.

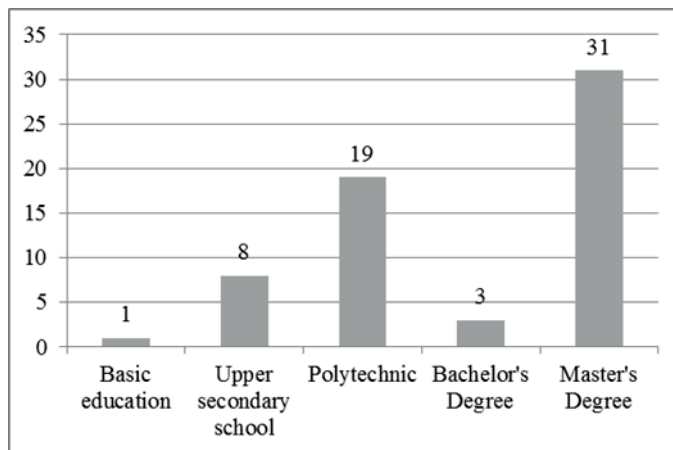


Figure 1. Education level of the informants.

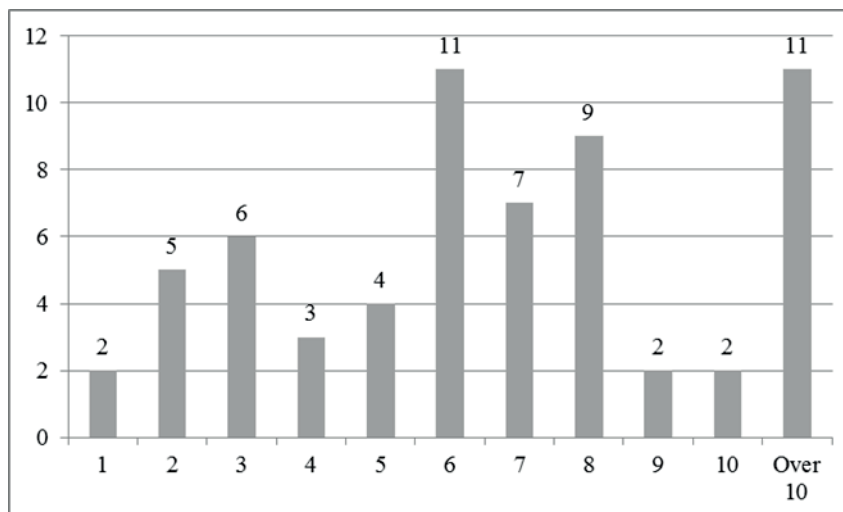


Figure 2. Number of previous jobs of the informants.

The aim in this paper was not to make comparisons based on the different background variables, as that represents another theme. Moreover, the sample at hand is relatively small, thus it would not be appropriate to make further generalizations. Most importantly, the sample is not equally distributed when it comes to gender, and only roughly so in terms of educational background. Nevertheless, there seems not to be differences when comparing the stories between the three background variables, and the same themes arise when discussing work-related preferences.

The informants produced 62 positive and 62 negative tailpieces as explanations for the two cases described in the background stories, and those tailpieces varied in length from three to just over a hundred words. We analysed them using the content analysis method, and employed NVivo to assist in analysing and understanding the data.

In the next section, we view the most often mentioned themes from both of the background stories based on the issues raised in the tailpieces. The number in brackets expresses the frequency of the issue in the 124 tailpieces. The excerpts were selected to best represent the views of the informants.

Findings

After they had read the background stories, the respondents were asked why the person in the stories felt either motivated or demotivated. Their explanations produced certain themes that were repeated by several respondents. First, many respondents mentioned that in the positive cases, **the work environment** and, especially, **the climate** in the workplace are good (76). Comments described, for example, a pleasant and open atmosphere, enthusiastic and encouraging colleagues and equality among employees. Interestingly, the employer organisation was not mentioned in this context and instead the comments referred to the closest work community; a work team or department. Colleagues were often cited as an important element in a motivating working environment, and at their best were described as supportive, encouraging and trustworthy. Thus, colleagues and the working climate can act as both motivating and demotivating factors:

Sami's job is challenging enough and he gets to develop himself in a safe work environment. The atmosphere at Sami's workplace is good, even the most delicate issues can be discussed openly and he gets help and support from his supervisor. People are focused on decisions and aiming

for a mutual goal...People appreciate each other in the work community and they trust each other's knowledge. (*Respondent 269, female*)

The atmosphere in his workplace is oppressive, disapproving and involves looking for someone to blame...Sami's manager and/or colleagues breathe down his neck, and no new ideas on potential improvements or courses of action are taken into consideration... The bad behaviour of a colleague is ignored, on the contrary, he gets a pat on the back. Staff events outside office hours that would improve the atmosphere are not organised. (*Respondent 185, female*)

An interesting note was that when the respondents talked about **work** (92), they often used the term "project". In their positive tailpieces, the projects were interesting: they varied, were challenging and aided development, but at the same time, they were not too demanding or time consuming. In general, the work itself should be challenging, but only moderately. The respondents do not want to be buried in work.

There is a balance between Sami's knowledge and the challenges the work provides. His knowledge is appreciated and he feels he is a useful employee to the work community. Occasionally the work takes him beyond his comfort zone and challenges him, but he's not put under too much strain. (*Respondent 264, male*)

Quite a number of the informants also mentioned that the work should be novel or tasks should change frequently for the person in the story to feel motivated. They were concerned with becoming bored with their jobs, instead, they mentioned **possibilities to develop** (31). Reciprocally, new tasks, a variety in the working day and new things happening every now and then are described as motivating: "*every day brings something new*". Especially in the negative tailpieces, feelings of stagnation and a lack of opportunity to develop cause demotivation:

Sami's work tasks are too easy and already familiar. The same themes and same problems are repeated over and over again, and Sami feels that his career development and learning are stuck. (*Respondent 274, female*)

In his job, Sami has to battle with things that do not advance the outcome of the work. Time and effort is spent fighting against the same old issues rather than on creating something new. Sami has the ability to create whatever, but the rigidity of the system is suffocating his creative mind. (*Respondent 282, male*)

Further, **flexibility at work** (27) was mentioned frequently. The informants appreciated flexibility in working hours, working methods and other work arrangements. Deciding one's own schedule and organising one's own work was mentioned as a source of motivation. Moreover, the respondents emphasised the importance of a sufficient but not overwhelming workload. They want to be given enough resources and time to accomplish their tasks. In fact, work overload was cited as a concern in the negative stories. Managing one's own time seems to be important in order to maintain the balance between different aspects of life.

Actually, the change in Sami has not happened overnight, but gradually. Because of his new job description, he does not feel able to influence things like he used to, even though he is sacrificing more to work than ever before. At work, Sami does not have time to have lunch or coffee with colleagues and he often works late. There is no time for hobbies and his wife keeps on [reminding him] that there should be time for the family as well. The new supervisor does not encourage him, but demands more. Sami starts to feel exhausted under the workload. (*Respondent 233, female*)

Nevertheless, flexibility does not seem to be a one-way street: Millennials describe themselves as willing to sacrifice some of their free time as well, if needed: "*When needed, Sami works [longer], but in return he gets more free time when it is quieter*". Millennials want their sacrifices to be appreciated and rewarded, for example with a financial bonus or extra time off work. Reciprocity was a strong theme in the tailpieces:

The top management also understands the needs of the employees and is flexible enough, so Sami is also willing to be flexible towards the company himself. (*Respondent 237, male*)

The respondents often stated that a feeling of motivation could originate from overall satisfaction with one's personal life. In particular, a good **work–life balance** (24) was found to motivate the working Millennials. Having sufficient free time was often mentioned as an important source of motivation. The negative stories featured a more frequent emphasis on the private life. Respondents described situations in which something was wrong in Sami's private life or of problems with loved ones. The inference is that in order to feel good at work, Millennials want to have enough time for the things they love: hobbies, physical exercise, family and friends. They imply that if there are problems with the family – issues in the relationship with their partner or insufficient time to play with the children – it is inevitable that negative effects,

and often severe ones, will be seen at work. Difficulty with spouses was repeatedly mentioned in the negative stories.

... and personal matters have an effect on coping at work. If things are fine at home and he is happy, it will also be easier to go to work in the mornings. (*Respondent 235, female*)

Our data indicate that Millennials do understand very well that they are also responsible for how they feel at work. In the negative tailpieces, lack of motivation was also attributed to lack of sleep, insufficient time for exercise or an unhealthy diet. The perspective of **physical condition** (10) is seen as equal to other more traditional factors in creating positive or negative feelings associated with work.

Sami has worked long days for a long time because he is so enthusiastic, but now his [physical condition is] starting to indicate that it is time to take care of himself. When this has gone too far, even the work starts to feel like a burden...The supervisor is still supportive, but fails to take into account the well-being and coping issues of an active employee well enough. (*Respondent 284, female*)

Leadership or a supervisor (51) was mentioned in both the positive and negative tailpieces. The negative stories featured supervisors being criticised for not giving feedback, for a lack of interest in subordinates' work, for not being encouraging or appreciative, for being mean or bossy and for being inconsistent. The tailpieces show the Millennials expect supervisors to support them. A good supervisor may also be a factor in the level of enthusiasm and motivation an employee has.

The supervisor hides behind his/her own unfinished work, does not dangle the carrot, does not hold the stick, offers no way out of the tricky situation. (*Respondent 241, female*)

While today's turbulence in working life has led to a number of redundancies, **monetary issues** were not significantly represented in the stories. Even though they were mentioned 19 times, the statements were considerably modest compared to, for example, the discussion around work-life balance. The informants who mentioned money in their tailpieces at all wrote about an unfairly low salary in relation to the effort expended being a demotivating factor. Further, there was not even an emphasis on **job stability** (2).

To highlight the main findings and the issues mentioned most frequently, we constructed two typical stories (a positive and a negative one) based on the matters Millennials themselves mentioned:

A positive story for a Millennial:

When it comes to the supervisor, colleagues, or work itself, Sami feels appreciated and respected. He has nice colleagues and the atmosphere across the work community is encouraging and pleasant. Sami has fun with his colleagues in and outside work. The work itself provides as much of a challenge as Sami wants, and opportunities for development exist. Nevertheless, Sami has a balance between his work and private life, and work is not the only thing that defines him or fills his life. Sami has the ability to choose when, where and how to work as much as is possible, and he appreciates it. Sami feels his supervisor invests in his development, trusts and understands him. The supervisor is on his side.

A negative story for a Millennial:

Sami is bored with the same old tasks, and even though he is extremely busy and exhausted, he does not feel he is doing anything important. The supervisor is failing to recognise his efforts, and his colleagues do not show appreciation of his work either. In fact, the atmosphere is strained and Sami does not get support from anyone at work. Because of the overload of work, Sami does not have the time or energy to play with his kids or exercise. It is easier to fall on to the couch after another long day at work. Some of the problems at home are caused by work, but there are also things that have had a negative effect on Sami's performance: but he is not heard at work. Sami is not able to influence his own work in order to sort his life out. He is too tired to try to find another job or a way out.

Conclusions

Overview of the findings

Our findings are largely in line with the main stream in previous literature on Generation Y and the psychological contract. Moreover, our material reveals the importance of the following motivational factors: constant learning and developing at work; interesting, challenging and varied tasks; social relations and the supervisor's behaviour; reciprocal flexibility with timetables and working hours; and work-life balance (e.g. Behrstock-Sherratt and Cogshall, 2010; Hau

and De Vos, 2010; Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010; Hurst and Good 2009; Wong *et al.*, 2008; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007; Martin, 2005; Sturges *et al.*, 2002). The findings indicate that the preferences of Millennials are very similar in different countries around the world.

It is also interesting to note which aspects the Millennials did not bring up as motivating factors in relation to work. First, they did not mention monetary issues. This is in line with some earlier studies that have revealed that Millennials are not very money-oriented in their work-related values (Sargent and Domberger, 2007). However, our finding may at least partially be influenced by the cultural background to our survey. In Finland it is generally not considered appropriate to speak about salary. Second, in line with some previous studies, our informants did not mention promotion, which may indicate both an interpretation of the reality in their organisations and thus greater interest in multitasking and job enrichment rather than formal roles and status symbols (see e.g. Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggshall, 2010; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007.) Third, they did not raise long-term contracts or job security as important motivational factors, an omission that is in line with some previous findings (e.g. Xander *et al.*, 2012). This might indicate that Millennials in Finland have already become used to the idea that short-term contracts and job insecurity constitute the new norm, especially in the early career stages. Throughout their lives, they will have seen that even the best employers hire and fire people in tandem with the fluctuations in the economic situation. Fourth, the employer itself did not play any role as a motivator in the stories. This is in line with several studies on protean careers (e.g. Sargent and Domberger 2007; Hall, 2004) according to which young employees in particular concentrate on developing their value in the labour market instead of trusting that any organisation will offer a secure long-term career. Moreover, in the stage of the early career, it is typical of young employees not to anchor themselves in the organisation (Lub *et al.*, 2012).

Our material exposed two interesting perspectives, which are worth considering for both researchers and practitioners. The first is the strong manifestation of the three very basic universal psychological needs of human beings, namely the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 2000, 229). Those needs are revealed for example in the preference for continual learning and development, good social relations at work and flexible working schedules. The need for supervisory support was emphasized particularly strongly in the stories, especially in the stories of demotivation, where we read of supervisors failing to give feedback, not caring, and not seeing or hearing the employee. Those stories tended to portray the protagonist Sami as bold and tough, but needing a lot of care and support. However, the strength of Millennials' need to

feel they are important has also been reported in previous studies (Behrstock-Sherrat and Coggshall, 2010; Twenge, 2009). This indicates that Millennials' expectations and experiences of working life should be examined anew in light of the contemporary motivation theories.

The other interesting perspective in the material is the Millennials' partially paradoxical ideas in relation to *time*. They expect flexible schedules and working hours. Time is portrayed as a means of payment in relation to the employer: Millennials are prepared to commit to working long hours, if they can take free-time when they need it. They expect enough time to learn while engaged on continually varying tasks. However, they are not ready to spend a lot of time on the same stable task. They would like to manage their time with regard to their work–life balance. To sum up, time seems to be a valuable, flexible, and individual commodity for them. The concept of time among Millennials (and also in other groups) as it relates to work would merit further examination.

In our material, neither the transactional nor the relational (and not even the balanced) form of contract was manifested very clearly. Instead, the Millennials in our sample constructed combinations of relational and balanced contracts. They were very much relational in nature, but without reference to long-term contracts or the idea of security.

Implications for Human Resource Management

In the light of the Millennials' writings, we now consider what kind of challenges the expectations of the group pose for that HR function.

First, to serve the needs of Millennials, HR practices should offer some flexibility in terms of time and place. While total flexibility is rarely possible, it would be worth considering offering Millennials flexible working hours whenever possible. In addition, Millennials are likely to be attracted to an organisation, and motivated once there, by opportunities to work remotely from the office and in a mobile manner. The findings of our study and of some others should persuade HRM practitioners to search for creative ways to develop compensation structures less determined by the monitoring of time spent at the workplace. These constraints set a challenge that should be addressed not only by HR, but also by unions and politicians keen to optimise productivity in a changing world.

Second, the HR functions should consider Millennials as a special group in relation to human resource development activities. Millennials obviously want

their learning to be of the hands-on variety, and that offers HR the option to explore job rotation, personal coaching, mentoring, development discussions and development reviews, opportunities to learn in expert teams, special tasks, job enlargement and job enrichment. It is also clearly important to the members of Generation Y that they be treated as individuals, and perhaps the best way to do so is to follow the lead of the most enlightened employers and devise personal development plans and tailor-make positions and career paths that make it possible for them to move from one task to another, with gradually increasing demands. Millennials seem to seek also continuous feedback, especially from the supervisor.

Third, recruiting good supervisors, and developing them and offering ongoing support, is extremely important in organisations employing Millennials. Supervisors are powerful actors influencing the work climate that is very essential for the Millennials' motivation. Additionally, they can support their professional development by giving feedback, by planning development activities and by organizing tasks. Moreover, they can influence the work-life -balance of employees by managing the work loads. In their activities, supervisors should adopt the coaching leadership style. In fact, in light of our material, it may be easiest to formulate a relational psychological contract – in a slightly different format – by developing a coaching leadership style and by giving supervisors sufficient time to perform their supervisory role.

Ultimately, Millennials are not ready to sacrifice their private life totally for work. For some organisations, that may presage the end of being able to exploit the willingness of employees to work extra hours at home in the evenings and at weekends without pay, and may therefore lead to a need to expand the headcount. This may become a problem in organisations employing a cost-driven strategy and operating under intense pressure to increase efficiency.

Many dimensions of the respondents' descriptions are not new, and some of them challenge HRM professionals to delve into an old bag of practice tricks. Most of the issues that the Millennials' stories reveal to be important to them are expectations we all held at one time. However, they are the generation entering working life at this time, and they have some specialities that make them worth considering as a special group of customers for the HR functions.

This study, like any other, has its limitations. Our main concerns have to do with the data gathering. We were able to reach a number of Millennials via Facebook in a very short period, and although we used an external e-form to collect the actual data, the channel chosen might have affected the informants' stories. Those stories might be shorter because the language and writing style used in

social media tends to be far shorter and less carefully edited than it is in other forms of expression. Nevertheless, our data collection was successful: sharing the link to the questionnaire on Facebook was a quick and convenient way to reach potential respondents.

Enterprises and public organisations should now proactively improve their attractiveness to young talent, and develop their capability to improve the commitment of young employees by creating HRM modifications appropriate for Generation Y. In order to be able to do that, HRM will need support in accurately identifying the expectations of the Millennials on their staff.

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STORIES OF ENGAGEMENT AMONG GENERATION Y

Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine Millennials' work engagement by analyzing their perceptions of motivational factors at work. The paper also compares those perceptions on the part of working and non-working Millennials. The findings are presented both in theoretical and practical terms.

Design/methodology/approach: The views of working and non-working Millennials are compared based on data collected via Facebook. The method of empathy-based stories (MEBS) was adopted in collecting the data.

Findings: the findings are in line with previous studies that have addressed Millennials' preferences in working life, for example, work environment, social connections, job content, and flexibility. Non-working Millennials mentioned more clearly either vigor or dedication concerning the elements of work engagement, whereas the stories from working Millennials were mixed between these two dimensions. Thus, the perceptions of work engagement might differ depending on the work situation.

Practical implications: The distinction in the study setting between working and non-working Millennials provides new information for HRM professionals wishing to both attract young employees and also engage and retain those already in the workforce.

Originality/value: In addition to using an innovative data collection process in terms of harnessing social media and utilizing a relatively rarely used method in the business field, the study provides new insights through its examination of Generation Y. The paper suggests that Generation Y should not be viewed as a homogenous group, and future studies should concentrate on the possible distinctions among Millennials. Additionally, qualitative studies concerning both engagement and Generation Y remain rare.

Keywords: Generation Y; Engagement; Motivation at Work

Research paper

Introduction

Working life has undergone major shifts in recent years in Finland and in Europe as a whole, and these shifts look likely to continue to exert an influence in the coming years. For example, mass-retirements and the impact of an aging workforce will cause inevitable demographic changes (Eurostat, 2015), and as a consequence, there could be more people not involved in working life (e.g., retired) than actually working in the near future (Tiainen, 2012). In addition, the demographics of working life are changing, as the relative proportion of young employees, namely Generation Y, will increase. In fact, it is estimated that by 2020, as much as 45 percent of the workforce worldwide will comprise members of Generation Y (Erickson, 2008). This trend seems similar in other European countries as well, and seems likely to result in labor shortages and increased amount of recruitment (Christensen Hughes and Rog, 2008). However, organizations already face difficulty in finding suitable strategies to recruit and retain employees (Ito *et al.*, 2013), and there are signs that workers' interest in lifelong jobs is declining (Baruch, 2004). Furthermore, research suggests Generation Y might be less willing to engage themselves with their employment than their predecessors (Solnet *et al.*, 2012).

Human resource management (HRM) will face the effects of the major shifts in the employment environment (Bakker *et al.*, 2011), and an age diverse workforce will challenge HRM to change its role, for example, it will be required to show initiative to promote diversity in the organization and cater for the issues it generates (Ryan and Wessel, 2015). In fact, Generation Y is according to Shih and Allen (2007) an important employee group that has an effect on working life. Additionally, because of the intense "war for talent" (see Michaels *et al.*, 2001) and changing motivational constructs that attract, retain, and engage Generation Y in comparison to older employees (Amar, 2004), organizations and especially the HRM function will increasingly have to invest in both attracting new employees from schools and also in engaging those already recruited in order to retain them, that is, Generation Y (e.g., Lub *et al.*, 2012; Shacklock and Brunetto, 2012). An important element to executing HRM policy in this respect will be the immediate supervisor (Bos-Nehles *et al.*, 2013).

Research during the last decade or so has recognized characteristics specific to Generation Y. For example, according to these studies Generation Y appreciates social activities and a pleasant atmosphere at work, and the impact of the work environment could be greater than it was for other generations (Gursoy *et al.*, 2008; Smola and Sutton, 2002). In addition, frequent and constructive feedback (Martin, 2005; Smith, 2010) and catering for the work-life balance (Smith, 2010)

are among the top priorities of Millennials. Moreover, the role of the supervisor has been reported to be an important issue for Generation Y (*e.g.*, Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010; Arsenault, 2004; Jamrog, 2002).

However, even though there have been some previous studies concerning Generation Y at work, comparisons within the group are rare, and research to date has tended to treat Generation Y as a homogenous group. For example, most of the empirical research is concentrated only on either working Millennials (*e.g.* Gursoy *et al.*, 2013; Hess and Jepsen, 2009; Cennamo and Gardner, 2008) or has used student samples (*e.g.* De Hauw and De Vos, 2010; Hurst and Good, 2009; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007; Sargent and Domberger, 2007; Terjesen *et al.*, 2007), despite the research aiming at examining Generation Y in the context of working life. Furthermore, previous studies have tended to generalize, even though stereotyping and prejudices have been recognized as a concern with generational literature (*e.g.*, Deal *et al.*, 2010). In addition, most studies have been quantitative.

Research on Generation Y should concentrate on examining different groups within this generation and on recognizing possible differences between Millennials, particularly concerning their situation in working life. For example, according to studies conducted in the Nordic Countries, career preferences are prone to change, for example as a person moves along their educational path (Kloster *et al.*, 2007) and as options broaden after acquiring a degree (Rognstad *et al.*, 2004). Additionally, Terjesen *et al.* (2007) found differences between the genders while eliciting attractive organizational attributes among Generation Y, and Konrad *et al.* (2000) reported the findings of their meta-analysis suggested that generational differences arise and should be examined in future studies, dedicating special attention to understanding Generation Y better than currently.

As Generation Y will dominate the workforce in a few years and because it will be vital to understand this generation better, this study contributes to the field by comparing the views of both working and non-working Millennials concerning their sources of motivation and what demotivates them. Hence, this study proposes that:

There are differences when working Millennials and non-working Millennials describe motivating and demotivating issues in working life.

In addition, this study has practical implications. As discussed earlier, the HR function and HRM overall will face pressures as Generation Y continues to stream into working life. However, because research to date has focused on generalizable findings, there is not sufficient understanding of Generation Y, as it

might not be a homogenous group. In addition, future challenges around recruiting and retaining young employees will inevitably affect HRM. Thus, this study proposes on a practical level that:

Millennials' characteristics will have consequences for HRM trying to attract non-working Millennials and engage working Millennials.

The following section reviews previous literature on Generation Y before initiating discussion on work engagement. Then the main findings of the study are presented and finally its conclusions summarized.

Generation Y in working life

A generation is a group of people born within a specific time period (Smola and Sutton, 2002). Members of a generation share “*a common location in the historical dimension of the social process*” (Parry and Urwin, 2011). The collective mindset of each generation consists of attitudes, beliefs, behavior and values (Arsenault, 2004; Smola and Sutton, 2002), and every generation has created a culture of its own (Arsenault, 2004).

The youngest generation now entering the workforce is Generation Y, also known as Millennials. According to Smola and Sutton (2002), Millennials were born between 1978 and 1995, although there is still some debate over how to constitute different generations and their years of birth (Hess and Jepsen, 2009; Smith, 2010; Smola and Sutton, 2002). The mindset of Generation Y has been shaped by some earth-shattering events such as acts of terrorism, school violence, and natural disasters. These particular experiences have, according to previous research, affected how Millennials address the world and the kinds of values, opinions, and perceptions they hold (Arsenault, 2004). Moreover, Millennials have grown up with technology: they are capable of communicating in different ways, and manipulating technology and using it in their everyday activity (Smith, 2010).

Since Generation Y began to enter the workplace a little over a decade ago, research interest has shifted to examine Millennials in working life. The majority of the research has sought to examine the preferences and characteristics of Millennials as they relate to work. While the field remains somewhat unestablished and it has been challenging to deliver high-quality research (*e.g.* Costanza *et al.*, 2012; Parry and Urwin, 2011; Jorgensen, 2003), some characteristics have still been found to be essential in describing Millennials.

For example, Millennials are reported to be demanding when it comes to working arrangements and compensation (Smola and Sutton, 2002), and according to Jamrog (2002), they have high expectations of their supervisors, and they appreciate having close ties with them. Further, according to Gursoy *et al.* (2008) and Smola and Sutton (2002), Millennials are active socially and enjoy having social contacts during their working day, which might also be reflected in the need to be respected by management and colleagues (Hurst and Good, 2009).

Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) report that Millennials' relationships with their supervisors differ from those of older generations. Additionally, Millennials prefer a leadership style that incorporates a balance of flexibility, high demands, responsibility, time for trial and error, clear directions, and freedom to do things in their own way. Those preferences impose considerable pressure on supervisors, especially when all this should be accompanied by constant and constructive feedback (Smith, 2010; Martin, 2005). Further, Arsenault (2004) claims that Generation Y wants its leaders to challenge the system and spur change.

According to previous studies, in terms of motivating Generation Y, personal fulfillment is likely to encourage them more than external factors (Behrstock-Sherratt and Cogshall, 2010). Nevertheless, instant bonuses and a variety of perks can also be used as forms of feedback for Generation Y (Hurst and Good, 2009).

Generation Y also rates the importance of maintaining a work-life balance higher than previous generations (Smith, 2010). Nevertheless, Broadbridge *et al.* (2007) noted that today's young employees are ready to sacrifice their work-life balance in the short term or even relocate in order to establish a satisfying career. In order to facilitate Millennials' needs concerning flexibility, empowering them could provide such flexibility and also a feeling of being wanted and valued (Behrstock-Sherratt and Cogshall, 2010; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007).

In addition, as Millennials are sometimes accused of being unwilling to engage themselves with organizations, the object of engagement for Millennials could be projects and work instead of the organization (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010).

Work engagement

In this paper, Generation Y and its members' motivational perceptions concerning recruiting and retaining are viewed in the light of work engagement. As presented earlier in this paper, attracting and retaining a new workforce is

becoming a critical challenge for organizations, and deeper understanding is needed on how Generation Y could be engaged. This chapter presents the concept of engagement first by defining it and then discussing it from the practical point of view, that is, from HRM's perspective.

Even though the definition of engagement is rather unclear, it has still attracted interest in recent years, especially concerning the practitioners' point of view (e.g., Arrowsmith and Parker, 2013) but also in developing established research (e.g., Alfes *et al.*, 2013). Starting from Kahn's (1990) work, which defined personal engagement as people employing and expressing "themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances", Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) later defined work engagement as a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption." First, *vigor* refers to being energized and investing in one's work, and also the capability to face hardship. Second, *dedication* includes senses of, for example, enthusiasm, inspiration, and pride. Third, *absorption* concerns fully concentrating on the job, the loss of the sense of time while working, and finding it difficult to detach oneself from work. (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002.) Absorption can be linked to the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), even though being fully absorbed, and thus engaged, is more of a long-term state than flow, that can peak in particular situations.

In this paper, work engagement is understood merely through the first two constructs of work engagement; vigor and dedication. Vigor concerns issues such as bursting with energy, feeling good when going to work, persevering, working for long periods of time, resilience, and feeling strong. Dedication deals with finding a job challenging and inspiring, having enthusiasm for, as well as pride in the work, and accordingly finding it meaningful. (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002.)

These two dimensions of vigor and dedication have been used in previous quantitative studies (see the longitudinal studies by De Lange *et al.*, 2008 and Hakanen *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, Gonzales-Roma *et al.* (2006) suggest that vigor and dedication are the core dimensions of work engagement. Work engagement is seen as a rather stable state of mind, as indicated in a longitudinal study by Seppälä *et al.* (2015). The aim of this paper—undertaking a comparison between working and non-working Millennials—resembles that of the validation study on work engagement by Schaufeli *et al.* (2002), who tested their model with both student and employee samples. They found that the constructs of work engagement are rather similar across those groups.

When comparing work engagement to other rather similar concepts, such as commitment (as in Shuck *et al.*, 2012), there are some common characteristics. Nevertheless, Shuck *et al.* (2012) propose that commitment precedes engagement, that is, commitment is one of the antecedents of work engagement. Moreover, Arrowsmith and Parker (2013) note that while research has addressed the issues *related to* work engagement and similar concepts, concentrating solely on the concept of work engagement is still rare.

In order to enhance or facilitate work engagement, there are some prerequisite antecedents or conditions. For example, Christian *et al.* (2011) link work engagement and job design, as they view the relationship between job characteristics⁴² and work engagement as potentially rather strong. In addition, they also mention that perceived meaningfulness of work plays an important role in this relationship. Seppälä *et al.* (2015) similarly found that both work content and personality aspects, *that is*, individual characteristics should be noted when assessing work engagement.

In organizations, work engagement is associated with energetic, self-efficacious employees with a positive attitude and high levels of activity (Bakker, 2009). Those employees would also be able to transform their energy into activity outside work as positive spillovers, making them generally active individuals at and outside work (Bakker *et al.*, 2011). In addition, work engagement has also been linked to performance (*e.g.*, Christian *et al.*, 2011; Bakker and Bal, 2010), and financial outcomes (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2009), as well as innovativeness (*e.g.*, Chughtai, 2013).

Accordingly, HR professionals, are among the people who have become interested in engagement-related issues and recognize it as a topic that should both be studied more and promoted more than it is currently (Arrowsmith and Parker, 2013). In fact, according to Alfes *et al.* (2013), organizations wishing to communicate their interest in and commitment to their employees use HRM practices as an important channel to do so and it is also possible to solidify work engagement through the application of these practices (Matthijs Bal *et al.*, 2013). Accordingly, line managers have become HRM's top priority because line managers execute HRM practices through their routine interaction with their subordinates (Alfes *et al.*, 2013). Thus, the interplay between the HRM function and line managers is central to the creation of positive outcomes (Alfes *et al.*, 2013), and as Seppälä *et al.* (2015) concluded, engagement could best be enhanced through the routine activity occurring in the workplace.

⁴² Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Model (JCM) includes five components: task identity, task significance, skill variety, autonomy, and feedback.

Data and analysis

The data collection process utilized two rather innovative methods. The first was the method of empathy-based stories, MEBS. The second utilized social media to reach the informants.

Motivational factors were examined using a passive role-playing method, called the method of empathy-based stories (MEBS). In MEBS, different background stories, or scripts, are described to the informants, but in each story one specific factor is varied. The informants are then asked to take the role of the protagonist (see Ginsburg, 1978: 92) and write a short story related to the given description (Eskola, 1991: 7.) MEBS was chosen as the data gathering method as it is particularly suited to exploratory research (Eskola, 1991: 10–11), it can be modified according to the research field and interest, and can be analyzed using traditional qualitative analysis methods (Eskola, 1997: 16). These characteristics supported the study setting in this research, which targets a deeper understanding of the motivation of Generation Y and to add to the body of qualitative research on the group. In addition, MEBS can reveal issues unfamiliar to the researcher before the process was implemented (Juntunen and Saarti, 2000). As the aim of this study is to examine possible variations within the group of Generation Y, MEBS offers a suitable method to understand how a phenomenon is experienced in a certain group and whether there are differing views inside that group (Halttunen and Sormunen, 2000; Juntunen and Saarti, 2000). Overall, MEBS deals with the same issues as any other data collection method in qualitative studies.

The scripts in this study described a situation in which a person comes home from work. At the end of both stories a question was presented: why does the worker feel as was described. Furthermore, the informants were encouraged to write a short story to illustrate their answer the question. The scripts are as follows:

Positive script

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels truly motivated and he has a lot of energy to work. It is nice to go to work in the morning and Sami is always looking forward to the next working day. Why would Sami feel this motivated and be so enthusiastic?

Negative script:

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels tired, and he cannot seem to find any enthusiasm for his work. It is not nice to go to work in the mornings, and he could not care less about going to work again next week. Sami is looking forward to the weekend, so that he does not have to go to work. Why is Sami not motivated by his work, and why does he lack all enthusiasm?

After the questionnaire was created using the scripts above, the informants were approached, mainly via Facebook. The form of approach was chosen because members of Generation Y are comfortable being online and are so almost constantly. The questionnaire itself was located on an external platform, and the link to the questionnaire was shared in Facebook three times in 2012. Viewers were asked to share the link by posting it on the Facebook walls of their friends. The data collection process was both convenient and effective, and produced 252 informants who were members of Generation Y.

These 252 Millennials produced altogether 1004 stories, of which 504 concerned motivation. However, as the aim of this paper is to shed light on motivational factors between working Millennials and non-working Millennials, a sample of the data was chosen for use in this particular research setting. As a consequence, the dataset comprises 173 replies: 96 of those informants had a permanent job, and 77 were not working at all. The stories based on the script concerning the motivation were chosen for this study. As a result, the data available for analysis are as follows:

- Millennials with a fixed employment contract: 96 positive stories and 96 negative stories
- Millennials with no employment contract: 77 positive stories and 77 negative stories

A content analysis method was adopted, and the data were preliminarily coded with NVivo. After several rounds of coding, following findings emerged from the data.

Findings

Main findings derived from the stories are presented in Table 1. The results are distinguished in four categories following the precedent from previous sections:

positive and negative stories of the working Millennials with a permanent contract, and positive and negative stories from non-working Millennials.

	Permanent contract (n=96)	No contract (n=77)
Positive, motivating stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate working community, work environment (54%) • Job content (36%) • Meaningful work (35%) • Supervisor (33%) • Feedback (20%) • Salary (19%) • Progressing, learning (18%) • Flexibility (18%) • Sufficient work load (16%) • Work-life balance (15%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate working community, work environment (62%) • Meaningful work (43%) • Work-life balance (32%) • Education-job fit, suitable field of work (27%) • Job content (22%) • Suitable challenges (22%) • Salary, compensation (22%) • Flexibility (19%) • Supervisor (18%) • Progressing, learning (16%)
Negative, demotivating stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate working community, work environment (44%) • Frustration (34%) • Supervisor (34%) • Sufficient workload (29%) • Meaningful work (25%) • Job content (24%) • Work-life balance (19%) • Salary (14%) • Feedback (10%) • Inflexibility (8%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate working community, work environment (60%) • Frustration (49%) • Sufficient work load (30%) • Supervisor (22%) • Unsuitable field of work (19%) • Depression, mental problems, burnout (17%) • Progressing (getting stuck) (17%) • (Uncompetitive) salary (17%) • Work-life balance (14%) • Feedback (12%)

Table 1. Main findings of the stories (the percentage of informants that mentioned the issue)

As Table 1 illustrates, there were some similarities between the groups and also between the positive and negative settings. As previously described, *immediate*

work community, work environment, and colleagues were overall the most often mentioned issue in every category, regardless of the nature of the script (positive or negative), or the background of the informants (working or non-working). Thus, the Millennials emphasized the meaning of social connections in creating motivation and also as causes of feeling demotivated. On the other hand, an acrimonious work environment was also noted as something that could lead to a lack of motivation.

As might be expected, the *job content* topic was also present in all categories, even though the emphasis changed based on the script. Interestingly, in both of the negative settings being *frustrated*, as in the subject being bored or not being happy about his tasks, appeared as the second most often mentioned issue. Further, the informants discussed how the work appears *meaningful* to the protagonist in the positive setting. However, the opposite reaction was not as clear in the negative settings, even though some of the informants mentioned that the protagonist does not perceive his job as meaningful.

Notably, although they were mentioned, *salary* and remuneration did not appear among the most often mentioned issues in any of the categories.

While there were similarities between the four categories, the emphasis did vary to some extent. For example, *supervisor* was discussed in each category, but more often among working Millennials than in the other group. In addition, the frequency of mentions of *work-life balance* varied between the categories. Furthermore, receiving constructive *feedback* was valued more by working Millennials. In addition, non-working Millennials did not pay a great deal of attention to the *workload* being sufficient, even though in the rest of the categories this issue was mentioned several times.

Moreover, a common feature was the lack of references to *job security* by either group of Millennials, despite some passing references to redundancies.

Analyzing the differences between the four categories reveals some interesting themes that warrant further discussion. Interestingly, *workplace bullying, mental problems, burnout, and depression* were only mentioned by the non-working Millennials. This indicates that the picture non-working Millennials have of working life is to some extent harsh and negative, as they raised these issues without having direct experience of working life themselves.

Another noteworthy issue is that of the education-job fit, which was addressed in different terms by each group. The non-working Millennials were particularly concerned with whether they would find suitable positions after graduating in

their chosen field. Interestingly, working Millennials did not discuss this matter in their stories, even though it seems unlikely that they all have jobs that match their level of education and aspirations.

Discussion

This study first examined work engagement among two groups of members of Generation Y, working and the non-working people, based on their perceptions of work motivation. Their responses were compared and as a result some conclusions can be drawn on what attracts Millennials to employers, and which factors employers wishing to engage them might emphasize.

Overall, the findings are in line with previous studies that emphasize the meanings of social connections and the work environment (Hurst and Good, 2009; Martin, 2005), job content and job characteristics (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggsall, 2010; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007), flexibility and empowerment (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggsall, 2010; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007), fear of stagnation and getting stuck (Martin, 2005), and work-life balance (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggsall, 2010; Hurst and Good, 2009; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007) among Generation Y. The fact that relatively many of non-working Millennials raised the issue of finding the right field and a suitable position implies that this group of Millennials is concerned with whether they will be able to find their place in working life after finishing higher education. In fact, Generation Y is the most educated generation so far worldwide (Eisner, 2005), and as a whole, Millennials have high expectations of their careers, and those expectations include having challenges and responsibility in the early stages of their careers (Hurst and Good, 2009).

This study made two propositions, which are reviewed below.

There are observable differences when working Millennials and non-working Millennials describe motivating and demotivating issues in working life.

The results and major findings allow some conclusions to be drawn. It seems that the factors that attract and engage Millennials differ to some extent. Non-working Millennials are more concerned about how to survive in the workplace, about finding a suitable and challenging job, and about obtaining adequate remuneration.

When the results are viewed from an engagement point of view, that is, with a view to vigor and dedication, there are identifiable patterns that are repeated in this study. Vigor was manifested in descriptions of sufficient workload and being frustrated with a job. Interestingly, vigor was present more clearly in the negative scenarios of non-working Millennials, who in addition to exhaustive workloads and frustration, wrote about depression, mental problems, and burnout. In their validation study, Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) also noticed that students reported significantly higher levels of burnout (presented as the opposite to engagement). It could be that not being employed is a cause of anxiety and distress, and that is reflected in the stories.

The aspect of dedication was associated with more themes than was vigor. For example, suitable job content and perceived meaningfulness of the job were present in almost all of the categories, with the exception of the stories of the non-working Millennials explaining the protagonist's lack of motivation. The issues of suitable challenges, progressing, and learning were also mentioned several times across the sample.

However, non-working Millennials' negative stories merely represent issues related to vigor, and their positive stories include more themes related to dedication. In the case of the working Millennials, their stories reference these two constructs in a more balanced way. There appear to be some differences between these two groups, indicating that there is scope for how to engage Millennials to be given more attention in research.

Millennials' characteristics will have consequences for HRM trying to attract non-working Millennials and engage working Millennials.

There are several indicators visible in the findings that emphasize the meaning of HRM in meeting Millennials' preferences in order to attract and engage them. Organizations recruiting Generation Y workers would do well to emphasize certain factors including a pleasant workplace; a competitive and adequate salary, and some kind of merit recognition system; healthcare schemes or other methods to promote well-being; and a variety of tasks or challenges that are appropriate to the employee's level of education. Once employers have recruited Millennials they should emphasize their ability to provide flexible forms of working (in terms of time, place, equipment etc.), varied roles and responsibilities, support from supervisors, and to ensure a work-life balance. Overall, increased attention to work environment issues would meet the needs of Millennials and thus help motivate and engage them.

The analysis of Millennials thoughts on work arrangements indicates that the absence of new challenges, too much routine work, or unspecific job descriptions adversely affect their motivation. If a promotion is not possible, members of Generation Y might appreciate the opportunity to multi-task or welcome job enlargement while they await promotion. This should be taken into account when HR is designing job descriptions, trainee programs, and career paths. Further, this study suggests that Millennials want to be given sufficient resources and time to accomplish their tasks in order to retain a suitable workload. Catering for Millennials' competencies through, for example, workplace learning or mentoring programs, could help them in terms of development and coping with their tasks. Furthermore, the balance between work and private life could be addressed with flexible working arrangements whenever possible, and this is an area where the supervisor role is important to everyday management.

Limitations and future studies

As in any study, the current one has its limitations that can also indicate openings for future studies. First, the data collection process introduced in this study merits some discussion. Even though there were several benefits in using Facebook, such as efficiency, convenience, and access to a good number of Millennials, there can be some drawbacks in using social media, such as its tendency to encourage shorter answers, even though the data were collected on an external platform outside Facebook. However, the experiences from this study are encouraging, and reaching informants in this digital age can be powered by social media.

Second, even though the sample is rather large for a qualitative study, generalizations are challenging, and should be attempted only with caution. For example, despite the turbulence currently engulfing working life having led to redundancies, neither salaries nor remuneration were raised to a significant degree in the stories. In fact, there were only a few remarks on monetary factors. The informants did not even emphasize the broader aspect of job security or stability. However, it would be unwise to conclude in the light of these findings that Millennials would not appreciate stable positions and are not willing to engage themselves. Nevertheless, this finding is interesting and would benefit from further research.

Despite the rather unavoidable limitations, this study should encourage future research to adopt new methods in collecting data and harnessing social media. As this study concentrated only on work engagement, other studies on Generation Y

might consider burnout-related issues, an opposite to work engagement, as health issues are of concern among young people in Europe (Eurostat, 2015). In addition, longitudinal studies and in-depth interviews would definitely advance the discussion around Generation Y, as both academics and practitioners are interested in tackling the issues around generations.

Conclusions

It seems inevitable that organizations must take notice of Millennials and their needs. Even though there has been debate over whether generations exist in the first place, we are still facing a working life where a large number of employees have grown up in a different world than the rest. Moreover, stereotyping and generalizing characteristics can be dangerous, as Generation Y seems not to be a homogenous group. Instead, there is strong evidence of variations among Generation Y, which should be more carefully approached in future studies.

As a consequence, what signals work engagement will differ according to different situations, for example, working or non-working status. This indicates that the factors that attract Millennials, and which should therefore be emphasized both in the recruiting process and in employer branding, differ from the factors that might be used to engage Millennials and retain them in an era of competitive labor markets.

Thus, Millennials are worth taking seriously as one group of customers of HRM, and as this study suggests, it is important for HRM to pay attention to different groups of Millennials, such as those studying and those already working. Supervisors are key players when HRM practices are delivered at the employee's level, and supervisors will need to acquire competencies through training to carry out their duties. Research can help both supervisors and HRM to acquire essential information on Generation Y.

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THE SUPERVISOR AS A PERSONAL TRAINER? GENERATION Y'S PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGERIAL COACHING

Purpose: Managerial coaching has become an interesting field for both academics and practitioners in recent years, as turbulent working life has encouraged constant learning and expectations concerning performance have grown tougher. In addition, the positive outcomes available from coaching have attracted attention, and an increasing number of HRM-related duties have become the responsibility of supervisors. At the same time, the number of Millennials, members of Generation Y, in the workplace is increasing, and as a group they have been said to pose a challenge to supervisors. Accordingly, this qualitative study examines the factors Millennials discuss in relation to supervisors, and how managerial coaching is manifested in their stories.

Design/methodology/approach: The data consist of 504 stories from 252 Millennials. The data were collected by adopting two innovative methods: the use of Facebook and the method of empathy-based stories (MEBS). The discursive analysis is used in analyzing the data.

Findings: Five discourses are identified. They reveal that Millennials make strong references to managerial coaching, indicating that it is important tool in managing them. Additionally, they strongly emphasize their relationship with their supervisor, and value the role of feedback as a tool available to supervisors.

Practical implications: The study provides information for HRM and supervisors concerning Generation Y. In the light of this study, coaching-style leadership is preferred among Millennials.

Originality/value: This is probably the first study to examine how Millennials construe leadership and how they reflect on managerial coaching.

Keywords: Generation Y; managerial coaching; leadership; supervisor

Research paper

Introduction

During the last few decades, both academics and practitioners have become interested in the role of managerial coaching in enhancing organizational success (Kim et al., 2013), as supervisors have been recognized as the key influencers of employee development and learning rather than HRM professionals (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Ellinger et al., 2003). Previous literature has also viewed managerial coaching as a highly recommended leadership practice (e.g., Beattie et al., 2014; Hamlin et al., 2006). However, empirical evidence on managerial coaching is scarce (Hagen, 2012), and there are certain gaps that would deserve more attention (Beattie et al., 2014). Beattie et al. (2014) have identified gaps in research, and according to them, demographic variables, such as age and generation, should be examined in order to increase understanding of managerial coaching and improve the effectiveness of the coaching process. In addition, other previous studies have also concluded that age should be examined more in relation to managerial coaching (Ladyshevsky, 2010; Hawkins and Smith, 2006; Heslin et al., 2006).

By the year 2020, Generation Y will be the dominant generation in working life worldwide (Erickson, 2008). Born between 1979 and 1994 (Smola and Sutton, 2002), Millennials are said to differ from previous generations concerning their work preferences (e.g., Gibson et al., 2009; Chen and Choi, 2008; D'Amato and Herzfeldt, 2008), as generational characteristics, and thus generational differences, are tracked to the events in childhood and early adulthood that shape the generation's mindset (Parry and Urwin, 2011).

Millennials often come from dual-career families where the parents have been protective, but, on the other hand, they have also seen lives ending unexpectedly in natural disasters, school shootings, and terrorist attacks (Welsh and Brazina, 2010). These have all shaped the beliefs, values, perceptions, and attitudes of Generation Y (Macky et al., 2008; Smola and Sutton, 2002). The technological advances they have witnessed have made Millennials competent in the use of a range of technologies (Arsenault, 2002). This unique mindset is reflected in the leadership preferences of Generation Y (Arsenault, 2002).

Overall, generational characteristics have been neglected and underappreciated both in research and in practice (Westerman and Yamamura, 2007; Arsenault, 2004; Kupperschmidt, 2000). Particularly with regard to managerial coaching, empirical and academic research are non-existent, although there is evidence that Millennials prefer coaching-based leadership (Kultalahti and Viitala, 2014). Qualitative research on Generation Y is also scarce, despite there being many

areas of research that have contributed to the generational discussion. Nevertheless, contributions are fragmented, and there is a need to improve understanding of the matter (Joshi et al., 2010).

This qualitative study tackles these gaps in research by examining managerial coaching from Generation Y's point of view. The purpose of this study is to seek answers to the following questions:

- What kind of perceptions do Millennials have concerning supervisors?
- How is the idea of managerial coaching represented in Millennials' stories?
- What are the implications for supervisors and HRM?

The data were collected via social media from 252 Millennials. Each of them produced two stories concerning leadership based on both a positive and a negative scenario, resulting in 504 stories. The study follows the social constructivist view (Berger and Luckmann, 1994), and the research design and the researcher's relationship to the data, as well as the perception of language, resembles the social constructivist view (see the section on research design below).

The next section presents the currently available research literature on managerial coaching and Generation Y. Then the research design is presented. The analysis of the data led to the identification of the five discourses presented. Finally, the study's conclusions and recommendations for future research are also presented.

Managerial coaching in facilitating the needs of Generation Y

Coaching has its roots in master-apprentice relationships and athletics (Ellinger et al., 2003), and to date, research has identified several forms of coaching, such as managerial coaching, peer coaching (Hagen and Peterson, 2014), executive coaching (Hagen and Peterson, 2014; Hamlin et al., 2008), business coaching, and life coaching (Hamlin et al. 2008). Managerial coaching, as with other forms of coaching, concerns "the explicit and implicit intention of helping individuals to improve their performance in various domains, and to enhance their personal effectiveness, personal development, and personal growth" (Hamlin et al., 2008). According to Popper and Lipshitz (1992), the coaching process ultimately

concerns not only knowledge transfer, but also enhancing the self-efficacy of the “trainee” (or “coached” in the terms of Anderson, 2013). Self-efficacy is defined as “person’s belief in his ability to do things in a certain specific area” (Bandura, 1977).

This study concentrates on the aspect of managerial coaching, especially its hierarchical form, as it concerns the relationship between a supervisor and a direct subordinate in order to achieve positive outcomes, such as performance (Ellinger and Bostrom, 1999; Popper and Lipshitz, 1992), development and learning (Beattie et al., 2014; Ellinger et al., 2003). These aspects have also been found to be important for Generation Y (e.g., Sturges et al. 2002).

Managerial coaching in organizations usually takes different forms than more specialized coaching events, as the coaching process between the supervisor and the subordinate can occur in informal discussions and occasions that might not even be intended as coaching sessions. It can also be considered part of the leadership practice (Anderson, 2013). Within the realm of managerial coaching are providing effective feedback (Anderson, 2013; Popper and Lipshitz, 1992), goal setting and planning, and orientation toward development and performance (Anderson, 2013; Hamlin, 2004; Popper and Lipschitz, 1992). It is also related to empowering employees (Anderson, 2013; Hamlin, 2004; Ellinger and Bostrom, 1999)

Hagen and Peterson (2014) point to recent research listing several outcomes that can be improved by coaching. Those include organizational performance, individual development (Liu and Batt, 2010), job satisfaction and role clarity (Kim et al., 2013). Coaching literature has also emphasized the aspect of long-term learning (Ellinger et al., 2003). Moreover, Hamlin et al.’s (2006) meta-analysis identified five themes related to facilitating learning effectively in coaching processes: “creating a learning environment, caring and supporting staff, providing feedback, communicating, and providing resources including other people” (as cited by Beattie et al., 2014).

These themes have also been present in previous literature concerning Millennials’ preferences at work. The group is said to appreciate social connections and social working (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010), flexibility (Behrstock-Sherratt and Coggshall, 2010), work–life balance (Cennamo and Gardner, 2008), training and development (Sturges et al., 2002) and a job description appropriate to their needs (De Hau and De Vos, 2010). They would also like to work in a supportive environment that offers them feedback (Martin, 2005) and makes them feel appreciated (Hurst and Good, 2009). They are not afraid of seeing changes around them, on the contrary, they are afraid that things

will not change (Martin, 2005). It has also been reported that Millennials are demanding and high maintenance employees (Zopiatis et al. 2012; Hira, 2007), although Weyland (2011) concluded that engaging and managing Generation Y only requires new ways of thinking. The preferences of Millennials are heavily affected by the actions of their supervisors, especially the immediate supervisor. Jamrog (2002) in noting the importance of the supervisor to Generation Y has even stated that Millennials are not afraid of having personal ties with their supervisor (e.g., Smith, 2010; Hurst and Good, 2009; Martin, 2005; Jamrog, 2002).

In the light of these previous findings it seems that managerial coaching would be a very suitable leadership approach for Generation Y. Thus, it is important to examine how Millennials themselves perceive managerial coaching, which is also the aim of this paper.

The next chapter presents the data collection method and process.

Research design

The study utilizes the method of empathy-based stories (MEBS), which has also been referred to as passive role-playing (Eskola, 1991), in the data collection process. MEBS utilizes the same patterns people use in their routine actions (consideration, speculation), as the method sees the informant as an active individual (Eskola, 1997: 12–14). By enhancing these patterns, and because the reactions of individuals are not random but based on their own experiences, beliefs, expectations, and perceptions, MEBS aims to reveal which factors the informants find relevant and important (Eskola 1997: 15). MEBS is a suitable choice in this data gathering process, as it has advantages in mapping out a research area or conducting more or less exploratory research (Juntunen and Saarti, 2000), such as that on Generation Y's perceptions of managerial coaching.

In MEBS, the core of the data gathering process is the scripts. Usually there have to be at least two different scripts, because one crucial factor is varied between them. It is often justified to vary positive and negative aspects in the script (see e.g., Juntunen and Saarti, 2000). However, the frame of the script and other issues that are mentioned in them should stay relatively stable in order for the researcher to be able to concentrate on the variation between the stories (Eskola 1997: 16–18).

Regarding the scripts in this study, there are two that concern leadership and supervisory issues. The informants were asked to respond to the scripts by writing a story or an explanation.

Positive script: Imagine that one day Sanna comes home from work. She feels energetic. She is happy and glad that she has her job, just the way it is, and she is not considering applying for any other job. She feels truly engaged with her employer and it is always nice to go to work in the mornings. What has happened between Sanna and her supervisor to make Sanna feel this way and enjoy her works so much?

Negative script: Imagine that one day Sanna comes home from work. She is really irritated and bored. She does not feel like working at all, and she has started to look for another job, as it feels difficult to go to work in the mornings. What has happened between Sanna and her supervisor to make Sanna feel like this and that her work is so thoroughly uninspiring?

The data were gathered in 2012, and comprise 504 short stories written by 252 Millennials. Social media (namely Facebook) was utilized to reach the informants. The scripts were created on an electronic platform, and the link to the survey was presented on Facebook three times. In addition, some e-mailing lists were also employed to give access to more potential informants. The study exemplifies the use of the snowball method, because those viewing the link were asked to forward it to their contacts. The responses were lodged on an external platform, meaning the informants were not able to see each other's stories.

The analysis and background perceptions

As a starting point for the analysis, the answers, which varied from one short sentence to approximately 150 words in length, were coded with NVivo and analyzed using the traditional content analysis method. Thus, the main themes and issues became apparent. Second, the longest stories were selected for closer examination, as the shortest merely listed factors. This sample included 19 positive stories and 17 negative stories that averaged over 100 words in length. In these stories, the informants had used rich language and clearly given thought to their explanations for the scenarios presented and their potential consequences. The stories that were not selected for deeper analysis did not provide any additional information, and the saturation point was reached using the chosen sample. These stories were further coded and marked using different colors. Based on this phase of the analysis and careful reading and consideration, five

discourses were finally distinguished from the stories (please see the next section).

Concerning the analysis, the paper decided to concentrate on examining *how* the informants wrote about the issues rather than evaluating the level of truth in their accounts as such (see Eskola 1997: 96–97 or Eskola 1991: 20–21). Furthermore, the interest was not merely in similarities or patterns in the material, but also in dissimilarities between the informants' stories (i.e., in obtaining a multi-voiced view or multiple perspectives).

The paper leans on the social constructionism view (see Berger and Luckmann 1967), in the sense that in this study the language is seen as a part of the reality rather than only a mediator of reality or a reflection of it (Eskola: 1995: 288). Additionally, discourse analysis is utilized as a research method that is more like a loose framework or a set of guiding principles instead of strict regulations (Potter and Wetherell, 1990). The paper further relates to the views concerning discourse analysis and the use of language by Alvesson and Kärreman (2000). They call for a "*discourse-near*" approach, which they further identify as discursive pragmatism. It does not diminish the meaning of language or language use, but it takes a step toward a more speculative form of discourse analysis, that allows discussion of the indications and conclusions behind the discursive material. Moreover, the roots and antecedents of this particular approach are the same as in any discursive view. The authors call for pragmatism in methodological issues, and highlight that ultimately the research interest defines the most suitable approach (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000).

Adopting the views of Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) requires interpreting the possible meanings behind the actual language (text) the informants used. However, the main interest concerns the texts themselves, but the paper has tried to work toward interpretations and conclusions based on the material. In relation to this approach, the purpose is to respect the richness of social reality and will therefore strive not to underestimate it. On the contrary, one of the objectives is to capture the different viewpoints, contradictions, and tensions. This led me to reflect upon the narrations and adopt a speculative view when presenting the findings. Overall, the paper is giving voice to Millennials' narrations in this study, but the researcher takes the next step as well when analyzing, interpreting, and concluding. This is considered as the relationship between the researcher and the material for Millennials.

Discourses

In this study, the aim was to examine how managerial coaching is represented in the stories of Millennials. Thus, mentioning the supervisor in the scripts was intentional, as this study focuses on managerial coaching from the subordinate's perspective. All of the informants treated the scripts in the expected way, in that they referred to the supervisor and explained his/her actions, such as receiving feedback, respect, or rewards from the supervisor (both material rewards such as pay rises, salary, and bonuses; and non-material ones like career opportunities and greater responsibility). In addition, and especially in relation to the negative scripts, an unequally distributed workload was labeled a negative action of the supervisor. Only a few informants directly ascribed the protagonist's feelings to something other than the actions of the supervisor, for example, the work itself.

In the next section the strongest discourses are presented: one meta-level discourse and four other discourses that complement each other. They overlap somewhat, but it can be considered as inevitable because the themes the informants mentioned are complex, as is managerial coaching in practice.

Acknowledge me as an individual!

The strong meta-level discourse deals with acknowledgement. A storyline in the discourses addressed how feeling acknowledged was the key for the protagonist to feel well and happy. This was demonstrated with the supervisor's ability to offer tailor-made solutions based on the protagonist's capabilities, desire, and life situations. There is a need to feel special in the supervisor's eye, and feel that the supervisor can be trusted to take care of the protagonist.

“The relationship between Sanna and her supervisor is between two adults rather than between a boss and a subordinate. They both respect each other and the other person's viewpoints, wishes, expectations, and suggestions. Communication between Sanna and her supervisor is open and confidential; the supervisor is easy to approach and precise. The supervisor seizes on problems and keeps his/her promises, and does not belittle them. The supervisor is skilled at knowing people, recognizes Sanna's personality, and can thus give Sanna the right kind of feedback and opportunities for development. The supervisor is also genuinely keen on the well-being of Sanna and other employees, and sees the personnel as one of the most important resources in the company.”

Furthermore, positive accounts portrayed the supervisor as interested in the protagonist's life and well-being, and as demonstrating that interest by discussing issues with the protagonist, encouraging her, and ensuring that everything was fine with her. Recognizing her efforts and being evenhanded with all of the employees was also a matter that was raised relatively often. In the case of the protagonist feeling unwell or being disappointed or bored with her job, the stories submitted indicated the contributors saw it as the concern of the supervisor to provide help and some kind of solution.

“Sanna feels that she is drudging and drudging, but the employer/supervisor does not notice her efforts enough. She feels she is doing useless work, “it doesn’t matter whether I’m here or not,” or she might be bitter toward the employer “they don’t even realize that they couldn’t cope without me.”

However, there are also differing views. Some of the informants mentioned how the supervisor and the subordinate are not too close and the supervisor should take his/her position as a true leader. Even so, the view that these parties are close and know each other on a personal level is more commonly used and stronger.

The next four discourses further develop and illustrate the meta-discourse.

Know me and my job!

Some of the stories describe how individual matters and the personal life (skills, family, different situations at work *etc.*) are taken into account by the supervisor when making decisions. In order for the supervisor to be able to allocate the resources of every individual in a fair and suitable manner, the stories highlight how the supervisor should, first of all, be interested in the subordinate and, second, be willing to sacrifice some time to get to know the work, the person, and the way he/she works and performs. Interestingly, the stories describe how the supervisor has allocated interesting tasks to work on, and that the supervisor has targeted the skills and resources correctly. Some of the informants have mentioned that this is the responsible way to act.

According to the stories, the wrong kind of allocation might lead to the resources and skills going to waste. The informants also wrote about an unequal workload and too many tasks and responsibilities, which may result in stress or stir an intention to quit. In relation to knowing the subordinate not only on a personal

level but professionally as well, the informants wrote quite a lot about work allocation. The tone of these stories was that the supervisor has given the tasks or has ignored this, or that the protagonist has been allocated suitable tasks by her supervisor. This might indicate that the level of self-direction could be relatively low. At the same time, the informants might also mean that they consider allocating work a task that the supervisor is responsible for. It seems that in the stories the protagonist is happy to receive help and instructions from her supervisor, and that she is not afraid even of direct orders. In fact, they have led to positive outcomes according to the stories.

“The supervisor is responsible as a boss and knows not only their own field, but has had the ability to structure Sanna’s job description clearly and has let Sanna to have an influence over her own work. In the end the supervisor is responsible. The supervisor genuinely cares about how Sanna is managing her work and knows if there is something in other parts of her life that has an effect on taking care of the work. The fine balance between the freedom of the employee and the responsibility of the supervisor or, the other extreme, neglect, is in order in this case.”

Respect me!

The informants often discussed being respected, heard, and appreciated not only as an employee but also in terms of their efforts being noted. They mention both material (e.g., pay rises, bonuses) and non-material (e.g., career development, new tasks) rewards, but the most discussed issues related to offering thanks and encouraging feedback. In fact, offering thanks played a big role in this particular discourse. When considering the demands or wishes in the stories, the informants were very modest. They were not expecting great rewards, at least not in monetary terms. They described how a plain *“thank you”* might be sufficient. It was also a matter of recognizing the efforts and results, but they were merely expecting the supervisor to make clear that the protagonist’s work had been noted.

The informants refer to respect on a relatively abstract level. That might indicate that they expect to receive respect automatically from their supervisor, although they emphasize this matter heavily in their stories. For the informants, it is not enough to know in their heart how they are performing, but they want to hear it from the supervisor in a genuine and honest way. Thus, this particular discourse is probably the one that most overlaps with the meta-level discourse.

The stories imply that a supervisor giving feedback and showing respect in any way is offering a clear signal to the subordinate regarding his/her performance. However, this process seems problematic, as the informants were not able to specifically identify what makes the supervisor respectful, even though they mentioned offering thanks, giving feedback, and also showing genuine respect. Nevertheless, especially based on the negative scripts, unfair comments, inappropriate supervisor behavior, or treating the protagonist only as a “robot,” creates feelings that the subject is not respected.

Nevertheless, some sort of multi-voiced view can be recognized in this discourse. Some of the informants mentioned sufficient salaries and salaries overall, as well as a pay rise. However, there is another opinion that was relatively strongly emphasized which involves the informants stating that the salary or money overall does not have an effect on how the protagonist perceives her work. However, in some cases the mentions of money had to do with, for example, an unfairly low salary or pay rises that were promised but never delivered.

“The supervisor does everything he/she can for Sanna and that is why Sanna feels herself precious and significant as an employee.”

“Sanna feels that she is dignified and doing an important job, the supervisor enables proper mental and physical conditions at work.”

“Employees’ strengths or skills are not being utilized, neither does the supervisor respect the employees or at least not all of them. Sanna does not feel she is receiving respect, help, or encouragement; on the contrary, only negative feedback and the supervisor keeps hurrying her up.”

Hear me say!

Open and regular communication played a large role in the Millennials’ stories, and they referred to both formal and informal discussions with the supervisor. The stories often featured reciprocity, where both parties listened to each other and tried to understand the other’s point of view. The stories painted a picture of mutual respect between the parties even if views were not always consensual, one where the protagonist was able to speak her mind and knew that she would be heard. On the other hand, a challenging working relationship dialogical connection or an ignorant supervisor might lead to a situation where the

protagonist feels unhappy and this unsatisfying relationship with the supervisor results in feelings of insecurity, that the relationship is unreliable, and something close to betrayal.

“The supervisor and Sanna have an open and free dialogical connection, and they both appreciate each other as an employee. They both trust that what has been agreed on [will be implemented] and both of them take care of their own duties. Sanna and her colleagues have an influence over the decisions made in the work community and regarding its development.”

Help me to develop myself!

The stories quite often raised the issue of opportunities for development. This might indicate that the informants were transmitting their fear of stagnation. It seems that they see the supervisor as a coach or a personal trainer, who provides them with sufficient challenges and helps them to acquire skills, and to exploit opportunities for career advancement. These stories also reveal the informants' perceptions and expectations concerning working life. It might seem that they would like to take advantage of their supervisor's experience and skills in leading people, and thus require more hands-on management. Moreover, in their stories the informants see the supervisor as a career facilitator, and consider that the supervisor should take this responsibility seriously. In fact, they seem to take this for granted, as an automatic process embedded in the relationship with the supervisor. Moreover the stories suggest that in a situation marked by too much routine work, the supervisor should act and exploit the capabilities of the subordinate more efficiently in order to prevent too much stress.

The Millennials' stories suggest they value assistance with their career development from the supervisor and feel that development issues should be the responsibility of the supervisor. The threat of becoming bored with the job or getting stuck seems to trouble the respondents. The balance between too little or too great a challenge seems to be delicate, and the supervisor really has to know what the subordinates want. In the tailpieces, the protagonist was described as disappointed when there were not equal opportunities to receive training or if the supervisor was not interested in taking responsibility of the development of the subordinates. The protagonist was also described as frustrated when her skills and capabilities were wasted on work that offered no challenge. Concrete instructions and feedback, discussions, flexibility, and attention from the supervisor are mentioned in the stories. Similarly, neglect by the supervisor and

the supervisor not being keen to promote the development of the subordinate are referred to in the negative stories.

“Sanna’s supervisor saw potential in the employee and suggested special training for her alongside her work. It was a training that would last for a year, after which Sanna would get a special certificate for her new duties. Sanna was granted some time to think about it, discuss it at home and then she decided to take part in the training alongside the work as her supervisor suggested. Now the training is complete and the new duties that require this certificate seem to be very interesting and challenging.”

“Sanna feels that she is not getting clear instructions from the supervisor, nor clear responsibilities and she is not appreciated as an expert in her field.”

However, even though fear of stagnation can hint at a need for development and learning, it can also refer to uncertainty about possessing sufficient skills and competences to address new challenges or cope with changes to roles and responsibilities. Thus, the supervisor’s task might not be solely to be responsible for work allocation, but also to facilitate the development of self-reflection through leadership (see Ellinger and Bostrom, 1999).

Figure 1. illustrates the discourses and their relationship to the meta-level discourse. The four sub-discourses are seen as building the meta-level discourse concerning acknowledgement.

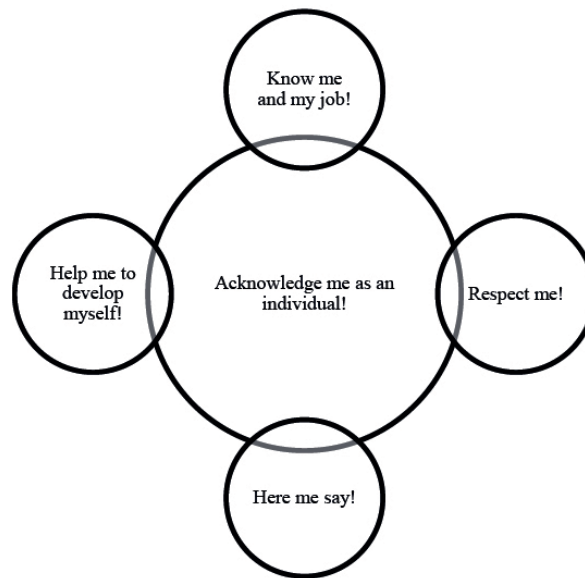


Figure 1. Illustration of the discourses

Discussion

Many traditionally human resource management practices are increasingly being assigned to supervisors instead of HRM professionals. In taking them on, supervisors need to adopt several different roles, such as that of a coach (Ellinger et al., 2003). However, managerial coaching cannot be implemented without support from human resource development strategy and attention being paid to leadership development (Anderson, 2013). The HR function is also important in facilitating the coaching process, such as training supervisors to be effective coaches and evaluating the outcomes of the process in monetary terms (Beattie et al., 2014). This is important in light of the findings by McGovern et al. (1997), who suggested that supervisors can easily overlook the training and development aspect, if it is not facilitated properly.

This study aimed at examining managerial coaching as perceived by Generation Y. The findings relating to the first research question concerning Millennials' overall perceptions of the supervisor were in line with previous studies on Generation Y. For example, recognition is important to Millennials (Gursoy et al., 2008) and they value respect (Eisner, 2005) as well as personal attention from the supervisor (Gursoy et al., 2008). Further, Zopiatis et al. (2012) concluded that while Millennials enjoy social activities and relationships, they still want to retain a high level of individuality. Further, the need for constant feedback was also identified by Martin (2005).

However, the discourses included some multi-voiced views as well. The strongest dealt with salary and knowing the supervisor personally. When the informants described motivating supervisor actions, monetary issues did not feature noticeably, but there were some contradictory notions. A few of the stories strongly emphasized the relative unimportance of remuneration, but some informants mentioned pay rises, monetary perks, and salaries. On the other hand, the opposite views strongly held that money is not an issue in motivating people, and that it does not have an effect on how a person perceives his/her work. Further, there was a discrepancy regarding the depth of relationship with the supervisor. On the one hand, the issues the informants discussed suggested the supervisor really should know the subordinate on a personal level and be very familiar with the subordinate's performance and work tasks too. Without this kind of affection or interest, it is not possible to allocate the tasks in a way that would take into consideration the skills, competences, and the situation in the personal life of the subordinate. On the other hand, some single answers pointed out that this kind of deep relationship is not a prerequisite for the protagonist to feel good, and that the supervisor and the subordinate should not necessarily be that close.

The discourses that built this paper were relatively as expected. However, there was one perspective that is somewhat surprising, and which appears across different discourses. The informants were concerned about equality and fair treatment. It cannot be said with certainty whether they value equal opportunities, if they are selfish and looking after their own interests or even if they evaluate their performance to be higher than anyone else's. Thus, they might feel rewards are their right and that additional perks are important too. Interestingly, they did not solely describe the protagonist, but placed her in the wider work community and described how the supervisor treats all the employees, not only the protagonist in the stories. That ability to see beyond the protagonist in the stories seems to suggest the commentators were not purely self-interested. This might be due to Millennials being very social and appreciating a pleasant work community (Eisner, 2005; Smola and Sutton, 2002). This aspect is also strongly related to managerial coaching, which emphasizes collaboration, team performance and collective goals in addition to individual aspects (Hagen, 2012; Rogers, 2000; Phillips, 1994). Nevertheless, Millennials apparently want to be acknowledged for their efforts and do not want to suffer for someone else's mistakes or poor performance.

Turning to the second aspect of this study, we should consider what these findings reveal from the point of view of managerial coaching. Hamlin et al.'s (2006) meta-analysis found that creating a learning environment, a caring and

supporting staff, providing feedback, communicating, and providing resources including other people, were related to effective learning in coaching relationships, and this study strengthens that view. Based on the findings and discourses identified in this study, Millennials are discussing the same issues on a broad level.

Interestingly, even though the importance of managerial coaching generally comes through strongly in the Millennials' stories, the study revealed certain aspects worthy of specific mention. Previous literature on managerial coaching emphasizes the importance of feedback (e.g., Beattie et al., 2014; Anderson, 2013; Popper and Lipschitz, 1992). However, while in this study the informants did emphasize feedback, it was not a separate discourse. In fact, informants perceived feedback as a tool inherent in three discourses: it was found to be important in acknowledging individualism, showing respect, and facilitating development. Furthermore, development issues are at the core of any type of coaching (Hamlin et al., 2008), an aspect also emphasized by the Millennials. Another interesting notion is that while managerial coaching literature emphasizes the meaning of goal-orientation (e.g., Hamlin et al., 2008; Popper and Lipshitz, 1992), the discourses in this study do not focus strongly on this aspect.

Additionally, the literature weights the aspects of managerial coaching rather equally. However, the findings suggest that when it comes to Generation Y, there could be some issues that Millennials find more important than others. The discourses emphasize a supportive, listening, and encouraging relationship between the coach and the coached. This aspect is acknowledged by the literature as well (e.g., Hamlin, 2004; Ellinger and Bostrom, 1999), but it was strongly emphasized in this study. In fact, being on good terms with the supervisor and having a good relationship with that individual seems to be central to managing and also coaching Millennials effectively.

The third aspect of this study was a practical one concerning the implications for supervisors and HRM. The supervisor is seen as a sort of a personal trainer involved in the Millennial's career that the Millennial is willing to respect. This personal trainer plans, facilitates, and follows the development of the Millennial. The process would take into consideration the initial level of capabilities and skills, and each step of the process would take the Millennial closer to a mutually defined goal. Moreover, individual matters and differences would be noted, and support and encouragement would be provided along the way. Over time, the Millennial would become more and more independent, and capable of assessing

his/her own progress. These aspects are also reflected in existing managerial coaching literature.

Managerial coaching is reflected so strongly in the stories that it could indicate that Millennials prefer coaching-style leadership. Consequently, organizations would be wise to map out their options in facilitating a thorough process for managerial coaching that could respond to the needs of Generation Y. In this process, the HR function and HRM would play an important role in implementing the leadership program and equipping supervisors with sufficient skills and adequate processes (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007).

Conclusions

This is probably the first study to examine how Millennials construe leadership and how they reflect on managerial coaching. The five discourses reveal Millennials' preferences concerning their supervisors. The discourses, based on the stories of 252 Millennials, quite clearly state that primarily the supervisor has to build a relationship with the Millennial that is based on individualism and individual consideration. This would lead to a somewhat tailor-made relationship between the subordinate and the supervisor and would inevitably affect the coaching relationship too.

The meta-discourse *Acknowledge me as an individual* might seem trivial at first. However, the material and this discourse strongly indicate that supervisors should pay attention to individual traits, efforts, experiences, and expectations. It might lead to a situation where we cannot take generational stereotypes for granted, as there seems to be heterogeneity in the group. However, the near collective opinion of Generation Y seems to be that Millennials should be treated as individuals, that is, as they are. The four other discourses support this view and are also in line with the meta-discourse. The multi-voiced view inside Generation Y is most interesting, as the media, for example, has tried to put all Millennials into one group marked by several strong stereotypes.

Overall, most of the informants seem to be saying that the supervisor needs to be interested in the subordinate. Although the views were not unanimous, the message is quite clear. *Acknowledging a person as an individual* is a difficult and time-consuming task. However, it leaves some room for the individual characteristics of the members of Generation Y, as it cannot be assumed that every Millennial would like to be treated in the same way. In fact, the supervisor needs to be truly alert and sensitive when listening to the Millennial subordinate. This requires consideration, time, and effort from the supervisor to get to a level

where she/he can genuinely treat the subordinates in the way they prefer. On a more practical level, it first demands conversations with the subordinates and time devoted to careful listening and understanding.

Recent literature has called for demographic characteristics to be noted in managerial coaching literature (Beattie et al., 2014). In the light of this paper, it does indeed seem that examining issues like generations in relation to managerial coaching could enhance managerial coaching literature. In the case of Millennials, their perceptions strongly indicated a preference for coaching-style leadership, albeit with some nuances.

Even though the current research has identified interesting aspects in the managerial coaching relationship with Millennials, the study also has its limitations. As the data collection process was promoted via Facebook, it could be that this context has had an effect on the answers, as they might be shorter than if provided via some other channel. However, Facebook was only a platform to distribute the link to the survey, and actual data collection took place via a university's platform. Nevertheless, Facebook excelled at reaching a great many Millennials.

As qualitative research concerning Generation Y has been scarce, future research could examine the extent to which Millennials direct their attention to the supervisor's role. However, there are no studies that map out working life as a whole from Generation Y's point of view. Thus, it would be beneficial to understand which issues Millennials actually see as important to working life, and the inevitable effects on HR should also be studied. The current research suggests that HR should provide supervisors with processes and tools that fit the organization's needs, and that supervisors should also be trained to undertake their supervisor duties, meaning recruiting supervisors would become an even more important task and responsibility for HR.

After this mapping of the territory, more information is needed on Millennials' expectations of leadership. This study could be further developed by others using in-depth interviews. It would also be relevant to study Millennials' supervisors and their perceptions of what they think Millennials need. This would take the field forward and offer more empirical evidence on Generation Y, as well as on managerial coaching concerning possible demographic variances (as suggested by Beattie *et al.*, 2014).

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TOWARDS NEW PEOPLE MANAGEMENT: GENERATION Y'S PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF HRM PRACTICES

Purpose: This paper examines human resource management (HRM) practices and their consequences as perceived by members of Generation Y, which will be the most numerous generation group in the workforce by 2020. We base our examination on the application of the Michigan model, which distinguishes four different categories of HRM practice: selection, appraisal, rewards, and development.

Design/methodology/approach: Building on these categories, we further classify their consequences from the subordinate's point of view. These consequences are analyzed based on data from 252 members of Generation Y using content and correlation analysis.

Findings: The results show a strong presence of the four categories, but also reveal three additional attributes that were repeatedly mentioned by the respondents: work-life balance, work community, and the meaningfulness of work. The results of the analysis lead us to propose a model that organizes the (consequences of) relevant HRM practices in a way that takes better account of the specific perceptions of Generation Y.

Originality/value: This study contributes to the better understanding of HRM practices in an ever more diversified workforce.

Keywords: Generation Y; Human Resource Management; HRM Practices

Research paper

Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) is viewed as an important contributor to organizational performance (e.g., Becker et al., 2001; Huselid, 1995), and it is widely stated that competitive advantage can be created through people management (e.g., Boxall, 1996). Further, HRM practitioners report that job preferences between younger and older employees can vary to the extent of causing conflict in the workplace (Burke, 2005).

The younger employees in question belong to Generation Y, and they will be the most numerous generation in the workforce by 2020 (Erickson, 2008). According to previous literature, Generation Y will pose challenges to HRM in areas like recruitment and retention (Ito, Brotheridge and McFarland, 2013), engagement (Solnet, Kralj and Kandampully, 2012), and diversity generally (Ryan and Wessel, 2015). However, there has been very little research on actually linking HRM practices and generational preferences, especially among Generation Y, even though Cogin (2012) found significant differences between generations when examining work values, suggesting implications for HRM practices, especially related to work and rewards programs.

This paper aims to narrow this gap in research by examining how members of Generation Y perceive the role and importance of various HRM practices in order to advance understanding of the contribution of HRM in the context of a diverse workforce. As our point of departure, we use the so-called Michigan model (Fombrun et al., 1984), which distinguishes four different areas of HRM practices, namely, selection, appraisal, rewards, and development. We study narratives produced by a sample of 252 Millennials on positive and negative situations at work, and analyze how the consequences of HRM practices from the Michigan model relate to the narratives. Furthermore, we identify potential additional areas of HRM practices that the respondents refer to in their narratives. We use correlation analysis to discover how the consequences of both traditional and potential new HRM practices interact in the minds of Millennials.

In the next chapter, we will present Generation Y and discuss its relation to the area of working life. Then we illustrate HRM practices and concentrate on the individual's perspective. That is followed by the report on an empirical study that presents the research setting, results, and analyses as well as the suggested model for HRM based on the perceptions of Generation Y. The final section addresses implications and conclusions.

Generation Y in working life

Generation Y, also known as Millennials, is the group of people born between 1978–1995 (Smola and Sutton, 2002), although having said that, there is no unanimous definition of the range of years of birth, and Arsenault (2004), for example, used the time-span 1981–2000. According to Kupperschmidt (2000), a generation is “*an identifiable group that shares birth years, age location, and significant developmental stages.*” It is claimed that generational characteristics form during childhood and early adulthood, as the societal situation and major events shape each generation’s mindset (Parry and Urwin, 2011; Kupperschmidt, 2000). The generational mindset extends to values, worldview (Kupperschmidt, 2000), beliefs, and behavior (e.g., Macky et al., 2008; Smola and Sutton, 2002).

In recent years, various media and researchers have become interested in generational differences and stereotypes, especially among Generation Y (Guillot-Soulez and Soulez, 2014). However, there is still a lack of methodologically sound research and empirical evidence (Lyons and Kuron, 2014). The existing literature is also often normative in nature (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010), and its findings often debatable owing to the influence of cultural and contextual factors (Lyons and Kuron, 2014; Kuyken, 2012). Further, some research has succeeded in demonstrating differences between generations, and that Millennials possess some special characteristics (e.g. Cogin, 2012; Cennamo and Gardner, 2008; Dries *et al.*, 2008; Wong *et al.*, 2008). Hence, more empirical evidence and research is needed.

The studies on Millennials have shed light on their preferences in working life. They are examined to be comfortable with technology (Smith, 2010), change (Martin, 2005), social connections and social working (Gursoy *et al.*, 2008), and also development and new challenges (Wong *et al.*, 2008). Further, De Hauw and De Vos (2008) emphasized the meaning of job content, meaningful work, and career development when motivating Millennials. In addition, several studies have discussed the importance of work-life balance (e.g., Cennamo and Gardner, 2008; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007) and demands for flexible working arrangements (Behrstock-Sherratt and Cogshall, 2010; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007) for Generation Y. Cogin (2012) found that, unlike older generations, Generation Y appreciates leisure time being balanced with working time. Work-life balance overall has been one of the characteristics for Generation Y in other studies too (e.g. Behrstock-Sherratt and Cogshall, 2010; Smith, 2010; Hurst and Good, 2009; Broadbridge *et al.*, 2007), implying that private life should be taken into account when organizing work practices for Millennials.

These characteristics will certainly have an effect on preferences concerning working life, and predictably, in the future the mindset of Generation Y will be more prominent in organizations (see Solnet and Hood, 2008). Terjesen *et al.* (2007) examined organizational attributes and their attractiveness among graduating Millennials. They found that, for example, investing in training, acknowledging individualism, opportunities for career progression, and variation in daily tasks were top priorities among the respondents. It is also proposed that organizational factors and development within or with the help of the organization will be more significant for Generation Y than for older generations. This future scenario challenges the designers of HRM strategies to ensure they are in line with Millennials' work attitudes and values (Solnet and Hood, 2008).

As we discuss in the next section, these factors are also the focus of HRM practices and their consequences for the individual.

HRM practices and an employee

The practices of HRM are intrinsic constructs of any organization. They serve a dual purpose in the sense that first they provide a foundation for daily interaction among individuals and, second; they form a central means for channeling strategy to influence employee behavior. The latter aspect, which is widely known as strategic HRM (see *e.g.* Lado and Wilson, 1994; Butler *et al.*, 1991; Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Fombrun *et al.*, 1984), will not be specifically discussed in the current study, whereas the former aspect, HRM practices as the shapers of the individual's working context, will be.

There is no single approach to HRM that would distinguish between different HRM practices in a universally accepted manner. Instead, it appears that every description of HRM explicitly or implicitly creates a categorization of its own. In general, scholars of HRM agree only that within the broad concept of HRM, there are a number of areas of activity that differ from one another and that link with different aspects of employment.

However, in various explicit presentations of HRM practices, the core appears to be composed of similar areas, such as recruitment, training and development, compensation (in the original Michigan model, the term *rewards* is used), and performance appraisal. Furthermore, the European conceptualizations of HRM practices (*e.g.* Armstrong, 2012; Mabey and Salaman, 1995) appear to put more emphasis on employee relations as an additional category of HRM practices than the American conceptualizations do.

One of the most influential—and also, one of the earliest—presentations of HRM practices is that of Fombrun *et al.* (1984), which is also known as the Michigan model after its place of origin. The Michigan model distinguishes between selection, appraisal, compensation, and development and connects each of these practices to the performance of the organization. Below, each of these practices and their impact on an individual employee is briefly discussed.

Selection refers to activities that replace or complement the organization's human resource. Selection can also be negative in the sense that it can be used to place individual employees outside the organization, and can then incorporate activities like workforce reduction, lay-offs, outsourcing, and outplacement. In all these cases, the question is about matching the workforce with the needs of the organization. What follows from the use of selection parameters at the individual level is a congruence between an individual's characteristics and the requirements of work and, in the case of internal labor markets, career advancement, when an employee moves forward to a new position, in which s/he can better utilize his or her skills.

In their meta-analysis of the field, Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2005) note that the studies of person-job fit, which is at the core of selection, have outlined two basic conceptualizations: the first being the demands-abilities fit, in which employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities are commensurate with what the job requires and the second type that occurs when employees' needs, desires, or preferences are met by the jobs they perform. Career advancement, for its part, is typically explained by reference to the traits of an individual, which influence the seeking out of and fit with more demanding positions (House *et al.*, 1991), and with an individual's human capital, which is proposed to increase productivity and should thus be rewarded with higher status and pay (Becker, 1975).

Appraisal is understood to comprise activities evaluating the performance of an individual or a group against set targets and, further, that outline areas for improvement. The most typical appraisal activities include performance reviews, 360-degree evaluations, individual development planning, and feedback provision on a formal or informal basis. Individuals gain from effective appraisal by acquiring an enhanced understanding of the quality and quantity of their work, an opportunity to monitor their professional development, and a realistic image of their behavior as a member of a working community.

Fombrun *et al.* (1984) recognize the individual-level consequences of appraisal as being of central importance when compared to the team- and organization-level consequences of appraisal. In his holistic review, Fletcher (2001) emphasizes how appraisal processes link to the goal orientation and self-awareness of an

individual to form the main mechanisms for this individual-level impact. However important the impact of appraisal as a separate HRM practice may be, it is widely agreed that the unique value of appraisal becomes apparent through the linkages that this practice has with the remaining HRM practices, that is, with compensation and development.

Compensation is generally understood to be a highly sensitive area of HRM. It refers to the use of activities that maintain and further reinforce the favorable behavior of an organization's human resource. The most often cited aspects of compensation include the areas of financial and non-financial compensation; the identification of various components of total compensation, such as basic pay, performance-related pay, competence-related pay, and employee benefits; and the division between individual and collective compensation.

The most obvious consequence of compensation for an employee is evidently her/his daily income, but the linkage between compensation and an individual has been examined intensely through the application of psychological concepts, such as motivation, which has been explained by goal-setting (*e.g.* Locke *et al.*, 1981) and expectancy theories (Vroom, 1964) in particular, and later and increasingly, by the views relating to reinforcement theory (*e.g.* Kuvaas, 2006; Komaki *et al.*, 1996). Recently, in addition to motivation other concepts such as commitment and job satisfaction, have been advanced to address the individual-level consequences of compensation (*e.g.* Paik *et al.*, 2007; Igalens and Roussel, 1999), but in general, it appears that causalities and regularities between the use of compensation and its indirect consequences are extremely heterogeneous.

Finally, development completes our listing of HRM practices. Development comprises activities that increase the competence of the workforce and direct that competence for the benefit of the organization. Development is a rich subject both in academic and practical discussions, and it is often approached through its sub-areas, such as management development (*e.g.* Mumford and Gold, 2004; Woodall and Winstanley, 1998), organization development (*e.g.* French and Bell, 1999; Beckhard, 1969), or vocational development (*e.g.*, Robinson and Robinson, 1989).

The individual-level outcomes of development, learning and competence, have increasingly attracted attention in recent decades largely because of the popularity of the resource-based view of management, which places competence, and the ability to increase it, at the heart of building superior performance. From an individual's perspective, development provides necessary skills, which enable the individual to realize his or her part of the "wage-work bargain" (see Peck, 1994; Prieto, 1993), which has long been understood to form the basis of modern

employment. Subsequently, the aspect of employability (*e.g.*, Rajan, 1997) enriched the discussion on the value of development for an individual (see also Garavan *et al.*, 2000).

The presented areas can be seen as forming the core of contemporary HRM practices. Noting the above-mentioned increased presence of Millennials in the workforce and their characteristics compared to the earlier generations, it is worthwhile to study how the Millennials perceive these practices as contributing to the positive or negative outcomes of management at the individual level.

Next, we present the empirical part of our study.

Empirical study

Data collection

We utilized the method of empathy-based stories (MEBS, also known as passive role-playing) (Eskola, 1991) in the data collection process. MEBS leads the informant to assess an everyday situation via a simple and short background story called the script. The informant is then asked to continue the story or answer questions it raises. While doing so and referring to the protagonist, the informant still reflects on her/his expectations, experiences, and values. (Eskola 1991, 7, 10–12.) The decision to use MEBS in this study was motivated by the method being apt for studies that are exploratory in nature, or that involve a researcher wishing to examine new fields of research. MEBS can also be used in order to discover new insights into a familiar topic. (Halttunen and Sormunen, 2000; Juntunen and Saarti, 2000.)

The data collected with MEBS can be treated as any other qualitative data because MEBS is only a data collection method. The variation in the scripts, however, makes it possible to draw comparisons between stories based on different scripts (Eskola, 1991). The division between a positive and negative setting is used relatively often (see Juntunen and Saarti, 2000).

In this study, the informants were provided with four scripts that described various situations at work. Each informant responded to all four stories. After each of the stories, a question was presented: Why does s/he feel the way described earlier?

Positive script on motivation

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels truly motivated and he has a lot of energy to work. It is nice to go to work in the morning and Sami is always looking forward to the next working day. Why does Sami feel this motivated and so enthusiastic?

Negative script on motivation

Imagine that one day Sami comes home from work. He feels tired, and he does not seem to find any motivation for work. It is not nice to go to work in the mornings, and he could not care less about going back to work next week. Sami looks forward to the weekend, so he does not have to go to work. Why is Sami not motivated by his work and why does he not feel at all enthusiastic?

Positive script on leadership

Imagine that one day Sanna comes home from work. She feels energetic. She is happy and glad that she has her job, and happy just the way it is, and she is not considering applying for some other job. She feels truly engaged with her employer and it is always nice to go to work in the mornings. What has happened between Sanna and her supervisor, when Sanna is feeling like this and she likes her work?

Negative script on leadership

Imagine that one day Sanna comes home from work. She is really irritated and bored. She does not feel like working at all as it feels difficult to go to work in the mornings, and she has started to look for another job. What has happened between Sanna and her supervisor to make Sanna feel like her work is like watching paint dry?

The data were gathered in 2012 with the help of social media (Facebook). The link to the electronic survey was shared on the lead researcher's wall on three occasions. As a result, a total of 252 Millennials replied. The current research concentrates solely on the stories of the Millennials in order to examine their perceptions of HRM practices. Thus, the aim is not to make comparisons between generations.

Each of the 252 Millennials provided responses to the four scripts. Thus, the data consist of 1004 short stories from these informants. The length of their stories varies from a few words to over 300 words. The informants were not able to see

each other's answers as the survey was housed on an external platform outside Facebook.

Analysis

In order to analyze the data, we applied the four categories of the Michigan model, selection, appraisal, rewards, and development, as explained above. Instead of the informants' references to the pure practices, we were interested in their references to the individual-level consequences of the practices mentioned. Drawing from the theoretical discussion above, we combined the practices and their respective consequences in the manner shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories for the analysis

HR practice	Consequence
Selection	Person-job fit, career advancement
Appraisal	Feedback, work result monitoring
Rewards (compensation)	Salary, perks, income
Development	Competence, learning opportunities

We coded the data using these categories. The following example illustrates the practice of coding.

Informant 236:

“His supervisor motivates him and gives him new assignments so that the tasks remain diverse and that he can develop as an employee^D. His supervisor supports him, and he gets respect in the form of verbal feedback^A and rewards^R. The supervisor has expressed clearly that he has potential for promotion^S.”

The coded areas in the narrative have been underlined. The superscript letters S (selection), A (appraisal), R (rewards), and D (development) indicate to which HRM practice the coded area (i.e., the individual-level consequence of HRM practice) is associated.

After this phase, we turned our attention to potential additional HRM-related consequences in the narratives. During the initial reading and coding phases, three additional types of references appeared repeatedly, namely, references

related to the 1) work-life balance, 2) composition of and atmosphere in the working community, and 3) meaningfulness of work.

The following example includes the superscript letters W, C, and M to indicate the references' association to the additional categories mentioned above.

Informant 188:

“Sami’s work is mentally satisfying^M and his colleagues are positive^C. Sami gets straight feedback from his supervisor^A and he feels that his work is meaningful and respected^M. Even the compensation plan is in place; Sami has just received a pay rise^R and he will soon be assigned more demanding tasks^S. Sami has successfully fit together his work and family life and the life appears to be in good balance^W.”

We calculated the frequencies of each of the original and additional categories in the narratives. Table 2 shows the frequencies of different categories in different types of narratives and across the entirety of the material when all types of narratives written by a single informant are treated as one.

Table 2. The frequencies of references in different HRM-related categories.

Consequence of HRM / Nature of narrative	Selection	Appraisal	Rewards	Develop- ment	Work-life balance	Working community	Meaning- fulness
Motivation, positive	111	42	58	62	76	190	199
Motivation, negative	115	42	52	31	73	183	178
Leadership, positive	80	134	58	60	20	30	54
Leadership, negative	58	86	28	31	24	51	59
Motivation, total	226	84	110	93	149	373	377
Leadership, total	138	220	86	91	44	81	113
TOTAL	364	304	196	184	193	454	490

Table 3. Correlations of all HRM-related consequences (N=252).

	Total Selection	Total Appraisal	Total Rewards	Total Development	Total Work-life balance	Total Working community	Total Meaningful work
Total selection	1	.096 .130	.311 .000	.318** .000	.079 .214	.122 .054	.082 .192
Total Appraisal	.096 .130	1	.152 .016	.292** .000	.115 .068	.094 .139	.000 .997
Total Rewards	.311** .000	.152* .016	1	.241** .000	.227** .000	.294** .000	.091 .151
Total Development	.318** .000	.292** .000	.241** .000	1	.050 .430	.193** .002	.153* .015
Total Work-life balance	.079 .214	.115 .068	.277** .000	.050 .430	1	.095 .135	.129/ .041
Total Working community	.122 .054	.094 .139	.294** .000	.193** .002	.095 .135	1	.205** .001
Total Meaningful work	.082 .192	.000 .997	.091 .151	.153* .015	.129* .041	.205** .001	1

* p < .05

** p < .01

Next, the internal structure of HRM-related consequences was studied through correlation analysis. The aim was to discover if certain consequences were related, that is, if they would appear in conjunction. This analysis was conducted separately for each narration type, original and additional categories, and the data as a whole. The correlations in the entire dataset, when all narration types of single respondents were merged together are presented in Table 3.

Results

The frequencies indicate that, of the original HRM-related consequences, those that appeared the most often in various narrative types were related to selection. Following closely were the consequences related to appraisal. Of all the consequences, the most frequently mentioned related to the additional ones, namely, to the meaningfulness of work and to the features of the working community.⁴³

Regarding the original HRM-related consequences following from the Michigan model, the consequences related to development associate very strongly with the consequences of all other original HRM practices (see Table 3). This suggests that development as an individual practice would occupy a central position in the view of Millennials.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 3, the mutual correlations between the consequences of additional HRM practices are far less numerous than the correlations between the consequences of original HRM practices. This notion gives reason to assume that the additional areas of HRM that emerged from the data do not form a similar kind of holistic package as the original ones derived from the Michigan model.

Based on the above notions, as depicted in Figure 1, we suggest a model that combines both the original and additional consequences that appeared to be the most significantly linked with each other. This places the consequences of development at the center, because they record the strongest correlations with most other categories. The consequences of all the original HRM practices are included in our model, because they all appear to correlate significantly ($p < .05$)

⁴³ An interesting notion is that the correlation of any given consequence between the informants' positive and negative narrations was always highly significant ($p < 0.01$), which means that, generally, the same HRM practice that creates positive outcomes for an individual when managed properly, creates negative outcomes when managed improperly. This applies for both original and additional consequences.

or highly significantly ($p > .01$) with the remaining original consequences. Of the additional consequences, we include only the functionality of the working community, because it correlates the most clearly with the consequences of the original practices.

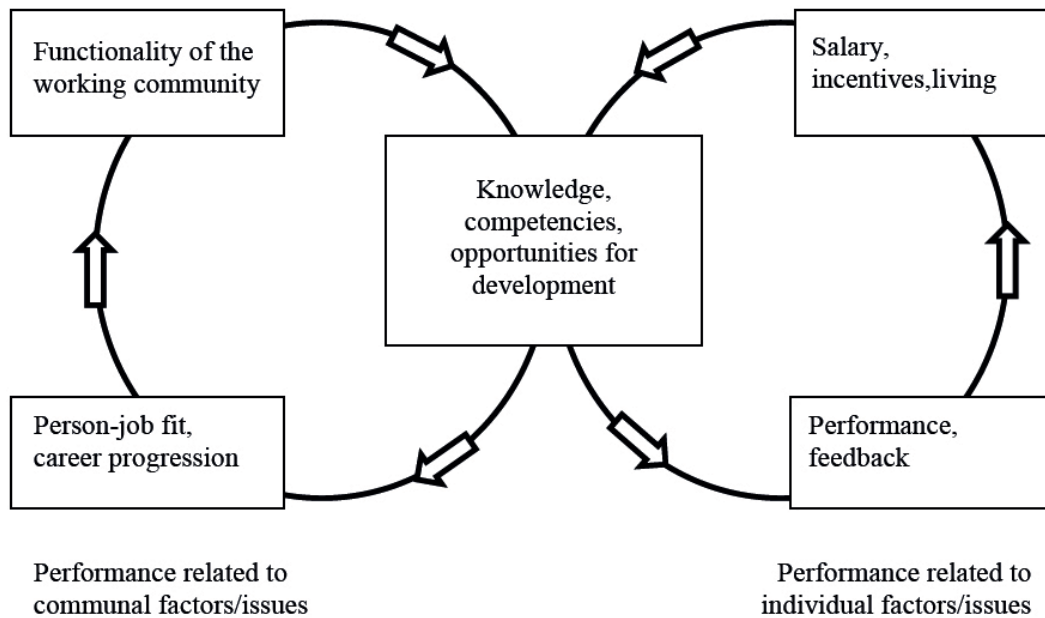


Figure 1. Suggested model for HRM based on the perceptions of Generation Y.

In the resulting model, we identify two dynamics, one that supports the performance of a community and the other that supports the performance of an individual. The use of human resource development practices serves a special role in linking these dynamics. We suggest that in the era of Millennials, the contribution of HRM practices derives from the mastery of the viewpoints related to both collective and individual performance simultaneously.

Discussion

In this paper, we investigated the role and importance of various HRM practices as perceived by Millennials. We used the Michigan model as a point of departure, but we also allowed potential new areas of HRM to emerge endogenously from the data. We also suggest a model that takes into account the perceptions of Generation Y concerning the consequences of HRM practices.

The results indicate that, in general, the areas of HRM identified in the Michigan model are well represented in the narratives produced by Millennials. Strong

correlations between the consequences deriving from selection, appraisal, rewards, and development give reason to assume that the respondents value the active use of these practices and the internal fit that is achieved by their alignment.

However, the respondents also emphasize consequences that cannot be directly linked to any of the traditional HRM practices. These include work-life balance, the composition of and atmosphere in the working community around them, and the meaningfulness of their work. Of these additional consequences, the features of the working community in particular proved to be strongly associated with the consequences of more traditional HRM practices.

While this study is exploratory in nature, the notion of the correlations between positive and negative outcomes (*i.e.*, the same factor causing both outcomes) might merit more attention in the future, as it opposes one of the traditional models. This absence of the division between hygienic and motivating factors, for example, is rather contradictory with the findings of Herzberg (1959). Thus, it could be that the Millennials' mindset is creating a pressure to update or at least review the traditional models and frameworks.

Overall, the results fall in line with previous studies, and the findings concerning possible enlargements (*i.e.*, the additional HRM practices) for the traditional HRM model are not totally unexpected, as previous research has reported similar findings concerning the importance of work-life balance (*e.g.*, Cennamo and Gardner, 2008), the work community and atmosphere in the workplace (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010), and a meaningful job and job description (De Hauw and De Vos, 2010) for Generation Y. The results should encourage us to continue to build a more coherent model of HRM practices, to offer a relevant management tool in the context of an increasingly diverse workforce.

Limitations

Although this study is exploratory in nature, as with any other study there are some limitations that must be acknowledged. The first concern the limited amount of background information on the respondents. In the light of these data, it is not possible to make comparisons between respondents from different fields of work, or between those working in the private and those working in the public sector. Another limitation concerns comparisons between different generations, which would be interesting to conduct and examine whether older generations highlight the same issues as Millennials. Nonetheless, the number of Millennials

at work is increasing as is the impact they are having, so even if older generations had similar perceptions, they would then be in line with the thoughts of Generation Y. Thus, this limitation does not diminish the relevance of our conclusions. The third limitation concerns the data collection process. Even though we were able to reach a large number of Millennials, their narrations could have been affected by the use of social media to contact them, as that can trigger a less formal and briefer writing style than in other contexts. However, the language the Millennials used was rich and informative.

Theoretical and practical implications

The most obvious theoretical implication of this study stresses the need to expand the traditionally dominant view of relevant HRM practices. The additional component, the functionality of the working community, seems to merit special attention as a sought-after consequence in the Millennium era. Its importance has been stressed in many previous studies (e.g. Govaerts et al., 2011; Gelade and Ivery, 2003), but typically it has been approached as an overall outcome of successful HRM, not as a consequence of any single practice or a set of practices. As our study does not delve into the dynamics that generate, assess, or correct functionality, we would welcome further studies that focus on this area, in particular in the context of the workforce of the future.

This study also encourages scholars to examine the perceptions that various stakeholder groups hold on the consequences of HRM. This has been an undervalued viewpoint until recently, as the mainstream studies on the value of different practices have typically focused on the “objective” contribution measured in the form of set and realized targets, and key performance indicators and the like. The emphasis on perception leads the discussion to the subjectively valued contribution and potential differences between the viewpoints of different stakeholders, such as top and middle management, HR professionals, trustees, and the staff as a whole, which may open new avenues to explore the role HRM ultimately plays in organizations.

Our study has practical implications as well. The first issue concerns how people management is conducted in organizations based on our suggested model. As the model includes the dimension of the functionality of the work community, which has not been as evident in previous models, it should be taken into account in practical terms as well. Another practical consequence is how HRM should address managing the workforce coherently, as the model suggests that each dimension should be taken into account, and none of the dimensions be weighted

more than others. Owing to the exploratory nature of this paper, however, the aim is not to comprehensively address these issues, but rather to encourage future studies in at least two ways. First, to examine the internal fit of HRM practices when additional dimensions are included; and second, to consider the potential need to revise traditional models to better suit the new diverse workforce so as to facilitate performance.

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