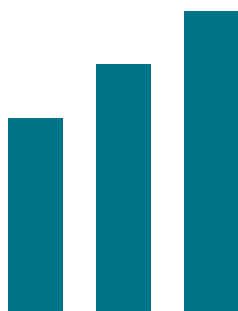


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A CROSS CULTURAL STUDY OF MILLENNIALS AND THE WORKPLACE IN ECUADOR: THE PILOT STUDY

Scientific reaserch paper



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Resumen

La mayoría de los estudios sobre millennials y el lugar de trabajo proporcionan instantáneas nacionales. Sin embargo, muchos países, si no la mayoría, no son homogéneos en lo que respecta a su población. Este documento plantea la necesidad y el beneficio de llevar a cabo estudios nacionales sobre los millennials, que tengan en cuenta los diferentes grupos culturales que existen dentro de esta población ecuatoriana. Se planificó y desarrolló un estudio de la Generación Millennial para Ecuador. Esto incluye generar un instrumento original. El objetivo fue compilar un perfil nacional transcultural de los millennials ecuatorianos, y sus valores y creencias con respecto al lugar de trabajo. El estudio intentó crear un instrumento original, opuesto al uso de instrumentos existentes. La investigación tiene como meta identificar si existen diferencias entre los millennials en Ecuador en función del nivel socioeconómico,

la identidad provincial, el campo de estudio y el género. Existe poca literatura sobre este tema en Ecuador, lo que plantea la necesidad de personalizar un instrumento que se adapte a la cultura local. El proceso presentado aquí puede repetirse y adaptarse para atender estudios similares fuera de Ecuador.

Palabras clave: millennials, lugar de trabajo, estudio piloto, transcultural.

Abstract

Most studies about Millennials and the workplace provide national snapshots. However, many, if not most, countries are not homogeneous when it comes to their population. This paper puts forward the case for the need and benefit of conducting national studies on Millennials, which take into account the different cultural groups that exist

within this population. In this paper, a millennial study was developed and planned for Ecuador. This includes the development and testing of an original instrument. The aim of the instrument was to compile a cross-cultural national profile of Ecuadorian Millennials, and their values and beliefs towards the workplace. The study aims to identify if there are differences amongst Millennials within Ecuador based on socio economic level, provincial identity, field of study and gender. The process presented here can be repeated and adapted to cater for similar studies outside of Ecuador.

Keywords: Millennials, workplace, pilot study, cross-cultural.

Introduction

Barry Salzberg, CEO of Deloitte Global, stated in the 2015 Deloitte Millennial survey:

The message is clear: when looking at their career goals, today's Millennials are just as interested in how a business develops its people and its contribution to society as they are in its products and profits. These findings should be viewed as a valuable alarm to the business community,... that they need to change the way they engage Millennial talent or risk being left behind (Deloitte, 2015, p. 2).

Like most countries, Ecuador is a nation of many peoples that have distinctive cultural differences, which may lead to different values and attitudes towards the workplace.

In response, a cross-cultural national study is appropriate; in order to test for the hypothesis that Millennials' values towards the workplace from across a given nation are not homogeneous. This is a pilot study that seeks to create a reliable instrument that will lead to a cross-cultural national profile of millennials, from Ecuador. The population will be confined to Millennials currently undertaking university study. The reason for this is twofold: to

increase the probability of having a random sample, and to produce results that can have an immediate impact on Millennials and industry, by providing management of medium and large size organisations a tool to better transition Millennial employees, from the university environment to the workplace.

There are three main objectives of the cross cultural national study:

1. Identify the values and attitudes of Millennials, with relation to the professional workplace
2. Identify the life goals of Millennials, with relation to the professional workplace
3. Test if and how gender, socio economic level, province and field of study affect Millennials' values and attitudes towards the workplace
4. Prescribe practical recommendations for managers across the country with relation to designing motivational systems, geared towards recruitment and retention of Millennial graduates

This cross-cultural national study can help managers identify and understand the motivational factors of Millennial graduates, from across Ecuador when recruiting for the workplace. This can be used as a tool to better attract, train and maintain Millennial employees, benefiting both employers and employees.

This type of study may be useful as a basis for studies in other countries, as cross cultural national studies are rare in this field of literature. This case study may be particularly compatible with other countries in Latin America that have a similar diversity of cultures across geographic regions and social classes.

In order to conduct a meaningful study, an original instrument was deemed appropriate. This was due to the general lack of literature on Ecuadorian

Millennials and the workplace. Also, most published studies have focused instruments on the national level, not catering for a breakdown of Millennials within a country. Hence, there is little available literature in the area of cross-cultural national Millennial studies.

This paper first sets out the need for the cross-cultural national study in Ecuador, as well as how the study will be conducted. Then, the process of developing and testing the original instrument is described. In order to create the instrument past Millennial studies were reviewed. In addition, the instrument was revised for relevance based on interviews conducted with human resource managers from across industries in Ecuador. Also, the instrument was tested by interviewing a small sample population from a university. Finally, Cronbach's alpha was used to test for reliability of the instrument.

Literature review. Generational labels

There is little doubt that technological advancements of the past century have led to additional generational, divides between parents and their children. As technological advancements accelerated, so too did the gap between generations. The most noted generations in studies include Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980) and Millennials (1981-1999) (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002). Reeves and Oh (2008) identified three areas where people within each generation connect: they self-perceive their generational membership; they have common beliefs and behaviours, including attitudes on religion, family, marriage, career and politics; and they have a common location in history, such as the Vietnam War for Baby Boomers.

Millennials

The term Millennial is certainly not universal in terms of who is included and who is excluded. Traditionally, they were seen as people who reached adulthood around the turn of the millennium (2000). However, there have been many generational spans referenced for Millennials. The United States National Chamber Federation lists Millennials to include people born between 1980 and 1999 (Seppanen and Gualtierie, 2010). Nevertheless, they acknowledge that there have been at least 21 different generational spans listed for Millennials. The most identifiable trait associated with Millennials is their familiarity with technology, including their taking for granted things like high speed internet access and social networking. A Pew Research Centre (2010) report confirmed that one of the characteristics that differentiates Millennials from their Generation X, predecessors, is their self-identification with being technologically abled.

The Millennial generation is generally acknowledged as having distinct values from prior generations. There have been many international studies that support the connection between generational groups, and differences in values and attitudes towards the workplace, such as Zemke, Raines and Filipczak (1999), Deloitte (2013; 2015; 2016; 2017), Stafford and Griffis (2008), Greenwood *et al.* (2012), PricewaterhouseCoopers (2011) and Susaeta *et al.* (2011).

Susaeta *et al.* specifically investigated whether there was a correlation between values towards the workplace and the two variables, of generational group and culture. The study compared five nations in Latin America, and two generation groups, Millennials and generation X, within each country. They concluded that both the generation people belong to and their national culture impacted the values they held with relation to the workplace.

The study by Stafford and Griffis (2008) identified key characteristics of Millennials with relation to the workplace. These included a strong cohort identification, entitlement perception, reliance on social influence and networks when making important decisions; high priority on education, high use of technology for work, life balance, and they seek to change the world around them, in the workplace and in social and political areas. Stafford and Griffis also supported a number of generalisations of Millennials; these include that Millennials believe they are special, they are sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, they feel they are pressured and they are achieving.

Ecuadorian Millennials and the workplace

Although there are an increasing number of studies about Millennials and the workplace in Latin America, there are few on Ecuador. Many studies in Ecuador are informal and mainly appear in the news as feature stories. One exception is the study *Millennials en Latinoamérica: Una perspectiva desde Ecuador* (Gutierrez-Rubi, 2016). The study provided a broad analysis about Millennials in Ecuador. It used a mix of quantitative and qualitative instruments. The Ecuadorian millennial study by Gutierrez-Rubi conducted online surveys between March 1 and May 6, 2016, receiving 331 responses from across the nation (people between the ages 18-33); most respondents were from the provinces of Pichincha, Guayas, Azuay and El Oro. The survey comprised of 42 questions divided into five categories. Furthermore, the study also conducted 15 qualitative interviews including experts, activists, employers and other relevant parties. In addition, it conducted one focus group of six millennial employees of a well-known multinational company in Ecuador. Gutierrez-Rubi complemented these primary results with secondary sources about Ecuadorian Millennials including local news articles, publications and regional studies.

The Gutierrez-Rubi (2016) study can be seen as an expansion on Telefónica's series of *Global Millennial survey studies* (Telefónica, 2013; 2014; 2016). Gutierrez-Rubi's study covered five areas related to all Millennials across Ecuador: social demographics,

use of technology, education and entertainment, media consumption, political participation and the workplace. It is this last category that this paper wishes to expand on. He dedicated a whole chapter of the final report to the workplace (Millennials at work: reshaping the workplace). Here, six areas were discussed: new ways of searching for work; a profile of the Millennial workplace; job hopping; entrepreneurship amongst Millennials; freelance work and co-working.

There were two main limitations to this study, which will be addressed in the cross-cultural national study. First, in the methodology Gutierrez-Rubi (2016) acknowledged that there were limitations with the sample and survey results:

All online methodology, as is known, often leads to some errors of representation and coverage, as well as a lower response rate. To this we must add that the questionnaire prepared lasted approximately 20 minutes, perhaps somewhat excessive for the target audience, which caused greater margins of indifference and incomplete responses. However, knowing all these disadvantages and risks of self-administered online surveys, we chose this methodology because of its speed, flexibility and low cost (p. 7).

Second, the study was too broad, and did not provide any depth in the area of Millennials' values towards the workplace. Rather, the best results for the overall study can be found in the sections on technology use and communication preferences of Millennials, not the workplace. In the workplace, the study revealed some similar trends amongst Ecuadorian Millennials that were seen across Latin America. Nevertheless, there were some differences that were also discovered. For new ways of searching for work and the profile of the Millennial workplace, Gutierrez-Rubi (2016) revealed original results. However, despite including a discussion on job hopping, entrepreneurial Millennials, freelance work and co-working spaces, he did not provide substantial original results; in these areas, the discussion relied mostly on secondary study comparisons, and in many cases these were not from Ecuador. In addition, the results in these areas

came mainly from the 16 interviews conducted. Moreover, there was no breakdown of cultural variables amongst the Ecuadorian Millennials, represented in this study. Hence, there is a clear need for a cultural breakdown of Millennials from across Ecuador and their values towards the workplace.

Before continuing, it is important to acknowledge that there is an inherent danger of grouping people together solely based on their date of birth. For example, a generation X person may have similar views and values as those generally attributed to Millennials. In addition, there are many cultural factors that play a role in determining a person's values and motivations including sex, economic status, race and culture. Deloitte (2015) warned that any study on Millennials must ensure that the populations are representative samples, as «accepting youth characteristics from a small population of youth in one community as representative of those across the country is not scientifically sound» (p. 17).

The cross national study intends to reduce the sample size and methodology limitations of Gutierrez-Rubi's (2016) study, by incorporating a stable and scientifically sound sample population, and by testing for cultural factors amongst the populations; culture is a critical variable for a true analysis of Ecuadorian Millennials, as Ecuador is not a homogeneous culture. This will yield far more relevant and reliable results. The second limitation will also be addressed. The cross cultural national study will focus on the workplace; hence, it will provide a focused set of results. The end users of this study will include medium and large size organizations and companies, who employ or are looking to employ a significant number of Millennial professionals over the next decade.

Cross cultural national Millennial study

The cross cultural national study will focus on Millennials born from 1990 to 2000, enrolled at university at the time of the questionnaire, as this is the core age of university students enrolled in 2018. This will place the oldest people sampled at 28 years of age, and the youngest at 18 years by the time this study is complete (2018). Outlier samples will be dealt with separately in the results section. In addition, the study will seek to identify if there are differences in Millennials' responses based on a number of factors including gender, regional identity, socio economic level and field of study.

Ecuador is a diversified nation, with cultural differences amongst its geographically distributed populations across its four main regions. The two most populous regions are the coast and the highlands. Guayaquil, Guayas, is the most populous city in the coast and considered a financial capital. Quito, Pichincha, is the capital city of the nation, and considered the cultural and legislative head of the state. In addition, Cuenca, Azuay, is the third largest city in the country, with a reputation for its strong sense of community and value for education. Hence, the study will focus on Millennials in these three regions.

Also, Ecuador is a nation with large social divides amongst its population, seeing a sizeable gap in income and wealth distribution. In order to test the socio economic cultural variable, two universities from each province will be chosen based on the financial prerequisites for enrolment. One will be a private university (self-financed or co-financed), where fees are considered high. The other university will be public, where there is a mix of socio economic groups, and studying is free. In addition, there will be a control question in the instrument asking participants to identify their economic level, from a scale of low to high.

The instrument will be administered with the cooperation of university personal. A random sample will be achieved using a variety of techniques, including classrooms, face to face, email lists and social media. The instrument will be displayed in Question Pro. The sample size will be calculated based on a 95 % confidence level and a margin of error no greater than 7 %. For example, a population of 10 000 would require a minimum of 196 samples per university. Fundamental questions related to values and the workplace will be asked. In order to provide an incentive for participation, a voluntary option will be added at the end of the survey for students to enter a free raffle, in order to be in the running to win a prize.

Prior to developing an original instrument of this type, background research is needed. For this study a number of global, regional and national studies on Millennials and their values towards the workplace were revised; these include Deloitte (2013), Greenwood *et al.* (2012), Susaeta *et al.* (2011), Gutierrez-Rubi (2016) and Universum (2014). Furthermore, key theories linking values to the workplace were consulted. The Council for Excellence in Government and the Gallup Organisation (2007) point to five key values that are important in today's workplace: intellectual stretch, mission match, growth potential, compensation/

benefits and job security. In addition, Deloitte (2013) included the areas of accountability for actions, loyalty, vacations, contribution to company's success, contribution to global progress and national progress; furthermore, they analysed Millennials' desires for ownership of a home, a life partner and savings. Also, Deloitte (2013; 2016; 2017) questioned Millennials' priorities for work, family, the self and financial needs. Finally, Universum (2014) compiled data on leadership perceptions, work-life balance versus wage, influencers on society and the role of parents.

Methodology

As aforementioned, the instrument was developed by filtering through prior papers and studies on Millennials in Latin America and Ecuador. These included both peer review and non-peer review studies. Some of the themes and question types were borrowed from these studies. This was useful as these were deemed fit for publication, and they would serve as a point of reference to compare results to.

Specific questions were directly adapted from existing studies. Questions related to workplace environment and work life balance were adapted from Gutierrez-Rubi (2016). Certain workplace preference factors, were taken from Telefonica (2013); Connell and Bell (2012); Bell and Griffin (2010); Andrea, Gabriella and Timea (2016) and Holt, Marques and Way (2012). In addition, questions relating to the commitment level, or intent to quit was adapted from Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt and Gade (2012). Expected salary was similarly taken from the study conducted by Westerman, Bergman, Bergman and Daly (2011). Leadership ambitions was borrowed from the study by Universum (2014). Ambitions about self-employment was adapted from Telefonica's (2014; 2016) studies. A variety of life goals and importance placed on them were adapted from Telefonica (2013), Bell and Griffin (2010) and Holt, Marques and Way (2012). Ethical behaviour and Millennials' expectations of companies were based on the study by Culiberg and Mihelic (2016).

After incorporating sources to create an instrument, there was an overload of questions totalling 45. In order to test for relevance and reduce the number of questions, qualitative interviews were conducted with human resource managers, from five prominent medium and large size companies in Ecuador. The purpose of the interviews was to provide researchers with a greater sense, of the type of information that is relevant in the Ecuadorian workplace.

The instrument was initially created in English, but as the intended audience is Spanish speaking; the instrument was back translated by a professional translator.

The pilot study

A pilot study ensures that any unforeseen issues are addressed before, administering an instrument to the larger population. This includes procedural problems in the administration, and statistical and analytical process. The pilot study also analyses the appropriateness of the questions as well as the usefulness of answers. Such a study was completed in December 2017. The final cross national study is planned for the period March to September 2018. The pilot study was based in part on a similar pilot study paper by Chandler (2015): *Millennials, entrepreneurs and the Hungarian workplace of the future: the preliminary findings of a pilot study*.

Sample

The sample size of the pilot study was small. This is consistent with Bless and Higson-Smith (2000), which state that a pilot study should include a sample from the population that belongs to the anticipated population, of the actual study (p. 52). Chandler (2015) explained that with "a case study involving a limited number of around 1000 participants, a large sample for the pilot study might result in a less than representative sample of the actual study as the data of those involved in the pilot study would not be used in the main study" (p. 57). The pilot

study took a qualitative approach by interviewing each participant, providing researchers with detailed feedback about the process and content of the instrument. As the study was qualitative, a smaller sample was deemed adequate (Hudson, Thomas and Wilson, 2007; Jacobson and Wood, 2006; Haralambos and Holborn, 1995). In total 18 participants were used.

Qualitative test of the instrument

Participants were interviewed after completing the questionnaire. The interview questions were based on those recommended by Chandler (2015, pp. 21-22), adapted from Bell (1999) and Wallace (1998, p. 28):

1. Were the instructions clear and easy to follow?
2. Were any of the questions unclear or ambiguous?
3. Were you able to answer all of the questions?
4. Did you object to answering any of the questions?
5. Did you find any of the questions embarrassing, irrelevant or irritating?
6. In your point of view, are there any important or concerned issues omitted?
7. Was the layout of the questionnaire clear?

The final question recommended (how long did it take you to complete the questionnaire?) was omitted as the program used for administering the questionnaire automatically logs the time taken to complete the questionnaire. Instructions were given to all participants prior to completing the questionnaire, including the purpose of the interview that would follow. Notes were taken of each interview, which lasted approximately 20 minutes. Participants were given the seven qualitative questions prior to undertaking the questionnaire, so that they could take notes on

each point. Participants were also asked about their level of fatigue from a scale of one to ten.

To test for reliability, Cronbach's alpha was used. Generally, Cronbach's alpha is used to test for reliability where there are Likert scale type questions, especially in longer questionnaires with many items. Cronbach's alpha tests instruments for internal consistency, in order to provide predictability (Mohsen and Reg, 2011). The test result is represented by a score between 0 and 1, where a higher score infers greater reliability (interrelatedness between items). Generally, a score between 0.7 and 0.95 have been seen as acceptable scores for reliability, depending on the study (Mohsen and Reg, 2011). However, a lower score does not automatically mean an instrument is not reliable, such as when there are too few items to bring about a correlation. The test was completed using IBM SPSS Statistics. The data was downloaded in the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS), format directly from Question Pro.

Results and Analysis

The interviews with managers provided valuable feedback, to help improve the relevance of the instrument. The managers were able to provide suggestions for specific areas of interest. This helped filter out some questions that were deemed less relevant, and home in on other areas that were otherwise neglected or lacking. Also, the managers were able to provide some advice as to things, they would find useful when hiring and constructing packages for Millennials. Another inclusion to the instrument was a question about formality. Managers remarked that Millennials tended to be less formal than older generations, including the way they address their seniors and superiors. Furthermore, managers provided some generalisations about Millennials, which will be useful to test in the results. Amongst the key information that was adapted into the instrument was the addition of the question about English proficiency. One interviewee, from the

Hotel industry, stated that Millennials from lower economic means were more likely to have poorer English proficiency.

Managers also provided generalisations about millennials, based on their experiences. All managers confirmed that one of the biggest issues with Millennial employees was their attitude to commitment. They stated that Millennials were willing to quit a job in as short as a few months, because they got bored easily or found a better position. Other generalisations included that Millennials wanted flexibility in their work hours, cared about the community and environment, wanted to be promoted rapidly and used technology well. All of these assumptions can be tested as they feature in the items of the instrument. These statements reaffirm the reliability of the items in the instrument. Following this process, 38 questions were drafted for further testing with a small sample of the population.

The revised instrument focused on two main areas: workplace preferences and attitudes and life goals. In addition, there were some independent categories tested including general skills, such as English proficiency and information technology ability, how they would search for work, the type of organisation they would prefer to work for, and if they intend to study a postgraduate degree. These additional categories were mentioned as areas of interest in some interviews. They are expected to provide organisations with some general background of students' abilities, and some insight as to how best to reach students for recruitment.

Eighteen students from one of the universities where the study will be conducted completed the survey, and were subsequently interviewed. Students pointed out many areas that could be improved in the instrument. The major issues stated had to do with the length of the survey (number of questions). Fatigue set in for most respondents after about question 23. The average time taken to complete the questionnaire was between nine and ten minutes. In response to the fatigue issue, 13 questions were eliminated.

There were also multiple issues about the formality of the questions. Students stated that many of the questions were worded in an overly formal style, which was not common in their daily communication. As a result, it has been decided to amend the language of questions to be less formal, using language that is more *Millennial friendly*.

To test for reliability, Cronbach's alpha test was conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics. The test revealed that the instrument is reliable (see table I). In total, twenty six items were included in the test, covering questions regarding workplace preferences and attitudes and life goals. The Cronbach's alpha score was 0.816, above the generally accepted minimum of 0.8. Five of the instrument items were excluded for the test, as they were deemed to be independent of the overall categories. These included questions about students' English proficiency level, information technology proficiency, how they search for work, the type of organisation they would like to work in, and their intention to study a postgraduate degree.

Table I
Reliability test of instrument using
Cronbach's alpha

Category	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items tested	Verdict
Life Goals/Workplace preferences and attitudes Workplace preferences and attitudes	0.816	26	reliable

(See appendix 1 for complete results tables)

Source: Own elaboration.

In order to promote higher reliability in the instrument, questions were ordered to be better placed within one of the two main categories. Furthermore, 13 questions that were not closely related to any of the core categories were eliminated to help improve the reliability of the instrument.



Conclusions

When conducting studies about Millennials and the workplace, most authors focus on national profiles and trends. However, some countries have diverse cultures within their population, deeming such a study limited. In response, it would be far more valuable for studies to provide a breakdown of results, taking into account key factors. In the case of Ecuador, Millennials are expected to have different views towards the workplace based on their socio-economic level, provincial identity, field of study and gender. A cross cultural national study was planned, but first an original instrument was designed and tested.

The instrument was a questionnaire. In order to have a relevant instrument, local cultural factors needed to be taken into account. This was done by interviewing human resource managers from Ecuador, noting what they would like to know and what they perceived about millennial employees in Ecuador. Furthermore, the instrument was tested on a small sample population of students. Finally, Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the reliability of the instrument.

The instrument is deemed to be relevant and reliable for the intended population. Many questions were adjusted or eliminated based on the relevance tests performed. In terms of the reliability, the instrument was reliable with regards to the core factors being tested including workplace preferences and attitudes and life goals, with a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.816. The comprehensive cross cultural national study is scheduled to be conducted throughout 2018.

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Appendix A Cronbach's alpha test

Table 1
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.816	.826	26

Table 2
Item-Total Statistics

Item number	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1	85.00	82.769	.603	.	.797
2	84.64	88.093	.645	.	.802
3	84.86	87.670	.581	.	.802
4	85.07	90.533	.307	.	.812
5	85.43	91.802	.218	.	.816
6	85.14	88.901	.342	.	.811
7	84.93	89.764	.331	.	.811
8	85.29	95.297	.011	.	.824
9	84.79	89.566	.433	.	.807
10	84.79	87.720	.568	.	.803
11	85.21	89.566	.414	.	.808
12	86.14	82.593	.446	.	.807
13	85.07	89.610	.420	.	.808
14	85.29	90.374	.391	.	.809
15	85.64	82.555	.591	.	.797
16	85.36	85.478	.410	.	.808
17	84.93	93.302	.124	.	.820
18	87.57	85.956	.619	.	.799
19	85.64	83.016	.531	.	.801
20	87.43	93.648	.304	.	.813
21	87.86	92.132	.414	.	.810
22	87.86	93.363	.284	.	.813
23	85.21	88.335	.501	.	.805
24	87.21	101.566	-.339	.	.837
25	86.57	91.187	.276	.	.813
26	87.43	97.956	-.143	.	.828