

Millennial Traits and the Perception of Career Outcome Expectations

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between millennial identity and career outcome expectations. The research is to investigate whether factors such as age, gender, employment and enrollment affect the perception of high career outcome expectations. We identified the millennial identity as the independent variable. The measure that was used for the dependent variable was the career outcome expectations. The findings from the study show that some factors such as the younger age spectrum, part time and full time institution enrollment and the male gender represented the perception of high career outcome expectations. The total number of participants for the study was 126 millennials. With only 26.8% of participants being male and the rest female and the lack of participants in specific age categories, the research can be viewed as bias. The skewed results creates a limitation for this study which in turn lacks a conclusion. Further research needs to be made in order to better understand whether there is a correlation between the millennial identity and career outcome expectations.

Introduction

Every generation has always had different perceptions associated with them and therefore the newest generation entering the workforce has become a very interesting subject. The following research will try to prove that millennial traits affect the perception of career outcome expectations. The goal of this study will be to evaluate the stereotypes of people born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s and how they affect career expectations and potential goals. Through a survey method, the results and discussion as well as the limitations will be able to identify whether or not millennials career outcome expectations is real or simply stereotypical.

Literature Review

Prior research has already been made on career expectation outcomes. More precisely a 12 item Vocational Outcome Expectation Scale was developed by McWhisrter et al in 2000. They used four anchors ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree to measure whether there is a positive correlation between young adolescents and what they believe their future career will bring. As we are trying to prove a similar correlation, it was chosen to include these twelve question in the survey. There was thought that there shouldn't be a difference between high school students and people considered to be millennials. Plus, this literature has the same dependent variable than the one chosen for this research which is career outcome expectations. The twelve items measured in the literature are explained below with context on how they are relevant to our study.

Motivational planning for the future: This item indicates whether millennials have been motivated to think about their future success from a young age. (Wieck, 2008) Motivational planning has been found to increase the number of better opportunities for satisfying career.

Success and Achievement: Millennials that demonstrate confidence are said to be a better fit for leadership positions. (Belal et al, 2012) This would help demonstrate that confident millennials are more likely to have better careers.

Career Optimism: Wieck says that millennials are thought to have eternal optimism that helps them in the way they perform in the workforce. (Wieck, 2008) Having optimism as a criteria associated with better outcome expectations from millennials is a valuable assumption as millennials may face more stereotypes when entering the workforce and being optimistic about the process could push them to excel.

Narcissism: Prior research on millennials states that millennials are very important in organizations but to use millennials new abilities to their full potential, will require businesses to change the way they operate. (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) This criteria could be an opportunity as well as a limitation to proving a positive correlation between millennials and career outcome expectations especially since this concept depends on the ability for the organizations to adapt and not simply based off the millennials personality traits.

More External Locus of Control: Twenge and Campbell made prior assumptions that millennials have more external control beliefs that shows they don't take responsibility for their actions if mistakes occur. (Twenge & Campbell, 2008) If millennials taking the survey would score high in this section, it would unbalance our assumptions saying that millennials' personality doesn't have a role in having positive career expectation.

Intrinsic Values: Myers and Sadaghiani proposed that millennials are happy with work promotions or recognition and do not simply value monetary things. This item would help prove that millennials would take any employment opportunities not simply based off how much they would make, thus helping to prove that millennials have less chances of being unemployed.

High Expectations: A study on millennial say that millennials are more willing to change jobs more quickly if they don't get rewards fast enough for the work they do because millennials were spoiled growing up. (Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010) Entering this aspect in our survey would help show that a low score on this question means that millennials' personality have a positive effect on their careers and not a negative one.

Careerism: Hauw and Vos' study in 2010 explained the relation between millennials who are optimistic about entering the workforce and how that attitude affects their expectations from their future jobs. (Hauw & Vos, 2010) This personality trait from the millennial generation can help this study gage this group of people's high expectations on their career outcome.

Socially Conscious: Smith and Clurman wrote “the unique ideas about the lifestyle to which a given generation aspires”, and this idea falls under this item on the twelve item scale. (Smith and Clurman, 1997) If millennials score high on this portion of the survey, it will indicate that since they are aware of what is socially acceptable as a career, they will want a good employment opportunity.

Achievement Oriented: Millennials have been pronounced to think the most about their future employment outcome. (Wieck, 2008) This prior research helps to guide this current in the right direction by enforcing the thought that millennial personality affects outcome expectations.

Parental Involvement: Since millennials’ parents were known to be “helicopter parents”, this pushed those young adults from this generation in wanting to please their parents in their career choice. (Downing, 2006) By including this item in the survey, it can help prove the correlation between these young adults and their expected careers. This literature helps to establish the millennial identity and how it can reflect job employment as such this study is trying to prove.

Work-life Balance (Flexibility): Millennials are “seeking rapid advancement and the development of new skills, while also ensuring a meaningful and satisfying life outside of work”. (Ng et al., 2010) This literature reinforces the theme of this specific generations’ specific characteristics with their career outcomes. This item brings a small amount of value in helping to determine whether millennials actually think about their career expectations or if they have different priorities, thus showing no relation between millennials and high career outcome expectations.

Inclusively, this literature proves that these specific items can be used in proving the relationship with millennials and career outcome expectations. The importance is that items need to be added to the survey to ensure that the correlation proven for career expectations is specific to millennials. Overall, prior literature and other researchers' opinions on millennials and the workforce does support the idea of this research.

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that millennial identity will have a positive relationship with career outcome expectations. The independent variable, millennial identity, is the focus of this study since it has been found that many stereotypes have been attached with this new generation. This study wants to see if millennials personality traits have made a difference in entering the workforce and what type of career one will have. Therefore, the dependent variable, is the career outcome expectations since this will change depending on how millennial identity is perceived. In other words, this study will try to prove that stronger millennial identity will increase career outcome expectations.

Methodology

Participants

The sample consisted of 156 people within the age range of 18-34, both male and female (and/or other). No geographical boundaries were set. Participants were either full-time students, part-time students, or neither. In addition, they were either full-time employed, part-time employed, or neither. Due to surveys not being completed properly or having gaps in responses, only a total of 126 (80.7%) of responses were usable. The completed responses consisted of 92 (72.4%) females and 34 males. The most common ages were 21 and 22 years of age, together making up a total of 52.8% of usable responses.

Participants were recruited through Facebook, e-mail, and word-of-mouth. Once brought to the online survey hosted on the University of Guelph's Qualtrics server, the participants were briefed on the purpose of the study, and also required to complete a mandatory consent form before they begin, both on the same page. Participation in the survey was voluntary and participants reserved the right to withdraw at any point during the survey. They were also made aware that any information gathered will remain anonymous.

Measures

Millennial identity of participants was measured using 30 (millennial identity items) items provided by Professor Sean Lyons where respondents would answer based on a 5-point Likert type scale. This measure was created through a large list of millennial stereotypes generated by the class of the researchers. The stereotypes generated were taken from academic literature articles as well as popular press articles. Professor Sean Lyons then took these stereotypes and created a millennial identity validation questionnaire (69 original items) to be filled out by millennials, which was then reduced to the 30 items used in this study. The options were: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

Career outcome expectations of participants were measured using the 12-item Vocational Outcome Expectation scale (VOE) developed by McWhirter, Rasheed, & Crothers (2000). This 12 item-scale measures respondent's level of positive expectations regarding the outcomes of their career choice (McWhirter et al, 2000). Ratings are made on a 4-point Likert scale with the options: strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The specific items used in this study's questionnaire can be found in Table 1. The control variables used in the study are age, gender, student status, and employment status.

Table 1: Vocational Outcome Expectations Scale (McWhirter et al, 2000)

Vocational Outcome Expectations Scale

Directions: Please respond to each question by marking your answers along the 4-point scale shown below:

	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	Strongly agree 4
1. My career planning will lead to a satisfying career for me.	1	2	3	4
2. I will be successful in my chosen career/occupation.	1	2	3	4
3. The future looks bright for me.	1	2	3	4
4. My talents and skills will be used in my career/occupation.	1	2	3	4
5. I have control over my career decisions.	1	2	3	4
6. I can make my future a happy one.	1	2	3	4
7. I will get the job I want in my chosen career.	1	2	3	4
8. My career/occupation choice will provide the income I need.	1	2	3	4
9. I will have a career/occupation that is respected in our society.	1	2	3	4
10. I will achieve my career/occupational goals.	1	2	3	4
11. My family will approve of my career/occupation choice.	1	2	3	4
12. My career/occupation choice will allow me to have the lifestyle that I want.	1	2	3	4

Analysis Procedure

Pearson correlation was used to determine the correlation between Millennial identity and the VOE scale, which further helps to derive conclusions between the two variables and the hypothesis. The Pearson Correlation is the strength of relationship between two variables. It ranges from -1 (perfect negative correlation) through 0 (no correlation at all) to 1 (perfect positive correlation). A correlation of less than 0.4 is weak, between 0.4 and 0.6 is moderate, and 0.6 or higher is strong.

Results

The correlation between the first six set of questions (McWhirter) and the second set of questions were found to be large ($r=.599$). The results between millennial identity and the 12 measures were found to have a very weak positive correlation with some having a negative correlation. The connection between the first six measures and the second six have a strong positive connection to each other while the overall 12 measures were found to have a weak and/or negative connection to millennial identity.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Millennial Identity	-.111	0.152	0.091	.285	-.025	.052	.240	0.147	.350	.239	.272	.149

The largest correlation found between the measures and millennial identity was question 9 ($r=0.350$). The connection between the individual measures and millennial identity were found to be very weak and unrelated. Although the relationship between the measures and millennial identity seems weak, this does not imply for causation. We are unable to determine whether the responses made by participants are due to the fact that they identify with the millennial generation without further testing.

Gender

Question #	Deviation (M)	Mean: Male (34)	Deviation (F)	Mean: Female (92)	Difference (Mean)
2	.65	3.38	.55	3.21	0.17
4	.61	3.41	.58	3.28	0.13
7	.70	2.85	.59	2.96	0.11
8	.73	3.21	.56	3.08	0.13
11	.77	3.32	.58	3.47	0.15

The total count for participants were 126 with 34 male and 92 female. The results of the survey shows that the average responses made by both genders were very similar with a difference of .17 at most. The table above lists the questions that had the largest difference in responses. Although the difference is very minimal between genders, responses show that males overall have higher expectations than females regarding success in their occupations and desired income. Females responses show higher expectations regarding occupational status and desired occupations. The standard deviation for males were much closer to one in comparison to females. This shows that most of the male participants provided similar responses in comparison to females. Although the standard deviation of males is higher than females, the results should be considered skewed due to the larger amount of female participants in comparison to males. Future research should include an equal amount of both male and female participants.

Age

The survey asks participants to include their age in order to determine whether responses fluctuate due to age difference. This will help identify whether the perception of career expectations differs between the age of participants that identify as millennials.

Age	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
# of participants	1	16	2	6	7	11	34	33	11	3	1	1

The ages 15, 17, 24, 25 & 26 had less than 5 participants. The results found from these ages should not represent the majority of millennials in this age category due to the lack of participation. We then categorized participants age into two separate categories: 15-20 and 21 and above. Categorizing the ages into two groups will help provide a more accurate representation of the age group due to the larger number of participants. We will be able to better determine whether the perception of career expectations of the younger spectrum of millennials differ from the older spectrum.

Question #	Deviation (15-20)	Mean: 15-20 (43)	Deviation (21 and Older)	Mean: 21 and Older (83)	Difference (Mean)
2	0.47	3.33	0.63	3.22	0.11
5	0.63	3.28	.61	3.19	0.09
6	0.63	3.42	.60	3.31	0.11
9	0.54	3.40	.62	3.17	0.23
11	0.59	3.53	0.67	3.35	0.18

The difference between the mean of the two age groups were found to be very minimal with the largest difference being 0.23. Overall the younger spectrum of millennials have higher career expectations than the older spectrum of millennials. The younger spectrum had a higher score for desired occupation, success within their occupation and have optimistic career expectations overall in comparison to the older spectrum. The standard deviation results for both the younger and older spectrum of millennials were slightly over 0.5 but none were close to one. This means that participants were not consistent and differed in responses. The number of responses for the older spectrum was greater than the younger spectrum. Further research should include an equal amount of participants for both age spectrums for consistent data.

Possible reasons for younger spectrum to have more optimistic career expectations can be related to the lack of work and/or career experience. Further research can be done that is specifically geared towards the younger spectrum of the millennial generation to determine whether the high career outcome expectations stem from a young age.

Employment

Question #	Full Time (Mean)	Part Time(Mean)	Neither (Mean)	Total (Mean)	Deviation (Total)
4	3.52	3.34	3.16	3.31	.59
10	3.32	3.17	3.02	3.15	.59
11	3.09	3.48	3.49	3.41	.65

The results regarding the participants employment status shows that those who were currently employed full time are more likely to have higher career expectations related to their skills and occupational goals. Participants who were currently unemployed showed higher expectations responding to approval of occupation. The deviation from total participants show that the responses differ greatly regarding career outcome expectations.

Enrollment

Question #	Full Time (Mean)	Part Time (Mean)	Neither (Mean)	Total (Mean)	Deviation (Total)
2	3.27	3.43	3.06	3.25	.58
3	3.10	3.43	3.18	3.13	.59
8	3.11	3.29	3.06	3.11	.61
11	3.47	3.71	3.00	3.42	.65
12	3.11	3.57	3.06	3.13	.68

The results regarding student enrollment status shows that those that are not currently enrolled in school had lower career outcome expectations in comparison to those who were enrolled in part time and/or full time. Those who were enrolled in part time school shows the highest career outcome expectations. Part time students responses show higher optimistic career outcome expectations.

Using the scale of 1-4 with 4 relating most similar to the participants, results show that most participants rated their answers 3 out 4 regarding how relatable the statement was. Managers should make use of this information as a starting point for further research to determine where the high career outcome expectation stems from. This can help industries

proactively set career expectations for the millennial generation. For example, the results regarding the age spectrum shows that the younger millennials have a higher career expectations in comparison to the older spectrum. This possibly means that the expectations were set at a very young age that carries onto adulthood as millennials start entering the workforce. Millennials who are currently enrolled in some form of education show signs of higher career outcome expectations. This can lead to a hypothesis regarding whether educational institutions are creating an environment where millennials have incredibly high career outcome expectations. Further detailed research should be conducted in order to determine these answers that organizations are able to utilize.

Discussion

These findings suggest that millennial identity had a weak but, positive correlation when contrasted with career outcome expectations. There were some clear correlations that were recorded but not all. When comparing millennial identity to career outcome expectations most results were considered statistically significant at the .01 and .05 levels. When comparing millennial identity to all three vocational scores the correlations were; .142 for the 6 point vocational scale, .322** for the new 6 item vocational scale, and .263** for the 12 item vocational scale. Although these scores show a positive correlation they do not show moderate or strong correlation. This weak correlation however is still note worthy for research but, is not enough to prove the hypothesis presented with confidence. The correlation of the new 6 item vocational scale (.322**) and millennial identity does constitute further investigation.

The results of this survey showed a correlation of (.800) between responses to the question, are you confident your career/occupation choice will allow you to have the lifestyle that you desire and their millennial identity score,. The responses in this category have a negative overall trend when analyzing by age, with younger respondents replying more positively to this question (20 and younger). This shows a slight optimism among younger respondents and could be due to a number of factors such as their misguided sense of career aspirations at a younger age. It is suspected that as respondents age, regardless of their birth generation their responses to this question become less optimistic likely due to realistic expectations settling in. Broadening survey participant requirements would allow us to determine if this correlation is based off age or if there is a negative trend between the answer to this question and the age of the respondent. Responses regarding control over career decisions were surprisingly one of the only negative correlations (-.25) found in the survey results. There are no clear implications as to why this is the case other than that, it is likely the outcome is not statistically significant. A larger pool of survey respondents would improve the validity of this statistic and would allow for an outcome that is statistically significant.

Overall millennial identity does demonstrate a weak, but still significant correlation with career outcome expectations in the results of this survey. This means that career outcome expectations show a weak but noteworthy correlation between millennial identity. Though the results suggest the hypothesis has been proven the correlation show does not allow this assertion to be made with a high level of confidence due to the limitations it faces. The slight correlation warrants ground for further investigation utilizing a larger sample size and more refined survey questions.

Limitations/Directions for Future Research

After our study was conducted it was clear to see from the results that there were several limitations and opportunities for future research. The study showed that there was a big difference in the total number of female and male participants that contributed to the study and there was a higher age range from participants that were aged 21-26. For future research we could consider including a larger population of participants that are from a variety of different locations other than Guelph as this could have an impact on the overall results.

Female Vs. Male Participants

A limitation that we found from our results is a gender ratio. We need an equal or closer number of male and female participants as it introduced an unwanted bias as there were less male participants compared to females. Our study involved 93 females (73.2%) and 34 (26.8%) males. The high number of female participants could skew the data because of gender differences. For example, female participants scored lower in categories such as “I will be successful in my chosen career path and my family will approve of my career/occupational goals”. Although this may have been statistical coincidence female and male means differ more than 0.1 between the genders, which is the largest gap between genders. If we received more male respondents it could have an effect on our final results.

Age Range of Participants

Another limitation that was found from our study was the age range. This had an effect on our results as we received more participants that were aged 21-26. A total of 83 participants participated in our survey and fell under the age 21-26 while only 43 participants fell in the age of 15-20. Results showed that the younger generation had a stronger correlation to having a “better future and being successful in their chosen career”. There is a .11 difference between the two different age ranges for both of these questions. This is a minor discrepancy but is a valid point when looking at overall career outcome expectations based on age. If we received more people that fell under the age 21-26 this could have an impact on our results by giving our us less bias and more valid results.

Occupation of Participants

The majority of survey respondents (81%) were full time students in the Guelph area. This could affect our data as only 5.5% of respondents were part-time students and 14.5% were not in school currently. Although this study spotlights students and those who have not entered the workforce as they have not begun professional career advancement, a more well-rounded pool of respondents would justify the responses and allow further sub grouping to determine trends within the millennial generation.

Directions for Future Research

When conducting our study most participants that were asked were from the location of Guelph. For future research our study should expand into other locations to allow for a wider location range, as it would minimize the bias in responses. Areas such as Ottawa and Toronto would increase a more diverse range of experiences, opinions, and beliefs.

Conclusion

Overall, the investigation of this study was positive in determining a correlation between millennial identity and career outcome expectations. This is an indication that the millennials will be able to use this information for their future endeavors while job searching, as well as in their future work positions. This will allow an understanding of their goals, obligations and commitments that they will need to achieve for the outcome wanted.

The lack of male participants with a high of 73.2% women introduced unwanted bias in the results and would be eliminated with a larger, more diverse applicant pool. With the correlations between questions, it was possible to abstract a conclusion to participant's association of occupational goals in correlation with their life, society and career path. A recommendation would be to expand the survey to a wider location range, as this would minimize biases in the results. Areas such as Ottawa and Toronto would increase a more diverse range of experiences, opinions and beliefs.

References

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