



Millennial Workers in Ride-Hailing Start-Ups: Preferences, Work-Life Balance, and Retention

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Abstract

Millennial workers, as the majority of the workforce in Indonesia, possess unique characteristics such as quick adaptation to technology, a preference for work flexibility, and a high need for work-life balance. However, they also have weaknesses, such as high mobility, dependency on technology, and vulnerability to stress due to high expectations. This study aims to analyze the characteristics of millennial workers in start-up companies, particularly in the ride-hailing sector. A survey method was employed, involving 404 respondents from Go-Jek, Grab, and Maxim. The data were analyzed descriptively to describe demographics, educational levels, tenure, and work preferences. The results show that millennial workers prioritize flexibility, innovation, and technology but tend to have short tenures. These findings provide recommendations for companies to adopt management strategies based on technology, flexibility, and approaches that support employee engagement to enhance retention and productivity.

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1. INTRODUCTION



The millennial generation, which consists of individuals born between 1980 and 2000, is now the majority of workers in Indonesia. According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (2020), this generation accounts for around 37.8% of total workers in Indonesia. Millennials are known for having characteristics that set them apart from previous generations, including rapid adaptation to technology, the need for flexibility in work, and a focus on work-life balance. They tend to want a work environment that supports creativity and provides room for innovation. However, these characteristics also present challenges for companies, especially in retaining millennial workers who often have a high level of mobility and easily move to other jobs that are more in line with their expectations (Deloitte, 2024; PwC, 2023).

A major problem companies face is the difficulty in retaining millennial workers, who are often perceived as less resistant to pressure and less loyal to the company. A study by Schaufeli and Bakker (2020) shows that although millennials are highly engaged at work if given the freedom to innovate, they are more prone to stress when work demands are out of balance with their personal values, such as work-life balance and flexibility. Another drawback is their reliance on technology, which if not supported by the right infrastructure, can decrease productivity. In addition, millennials also tend to prefer jobs that do not tie them to organizational structures that rigid, such as freelance or remote work, which adds to the challenge for companies in managing them effectively (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2020).

Previous research has discussed the influence of the millennial generation on organizational dynamics, with a focus on employee engagement and its effect on productivity. De Jong and Hartog (2020) and Janssen (2022) revealed that millennial workers are more motivated to innovate and make creative contributions when they feel empowered and work in a supportive environment. However, these studies mostly discuss millennial workers in the context of large organizations or more traditional sectors, while this study is different as it focuses on the start-up sector, specifically ride-hailing companies such as Go-Jek, Grab, and Maxim. Start-ups have more dynamic challenges in managing millennial workers due to the more flexible and technology-based nature of the company, which requires more innovative and adaptive management strategies.

This research aims to identify the characteristics of millennial workers in the start-up sector, as well as how these characteristics affect organizational dynamics. The main focus of this research is to analyze the preference for work flexibility, the need for technology, and the relationship between worker engagement and their retention rate. With this understanding, this research is expected to provide recommendations for start-up companies in designing more effective human resource management strategies, in order to improve the retention and productivity of millennial workers who contribute to success companies in this highly competitive market.

2. METHODS

This research uses a quantitative approach with a survey method to collect relevant data regarding the characteristics of millennial workers in start-up companies. The survey method was chosen because it allows data collection from a large number of respondents and can describe the general situation (Creswell, 2021). The population in this study are millennial workers who work in start-up companies, especially those engaged in the ride-hailing sector in Indonesia, such as Go-Jek, Grab, and Maxim. The sample of this study consists of 404 millennial workers who were selected based on certain criteria, such as being between 24 to 40 years old and working at these companies for a certain period of time. The sampling technique used is stratified random sampling, where the population is divided into strata based on certain categories, such as gender, education level, and tenure, then samples are randomly drawn from each stratum to ensure even representation.

Data was collected through a questionnaire distributed to respondents online and in person. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions that measured millennial workers' characteristics, work preferences, and factors that influence their satisfaction and engagement at work. Before being distributed, the questionnaire was tested to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive analysis to describe the characteristics of respondents in terms of demographics, education level, tenure, and preferences. In addition, frequency and percentage analysis were used to describe the distribution of the variables studied in this study.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the characteristics of millennial workers in the start-up sector, particularly ride-hailing companies such as Go-Jek, Grab, and Maxim. Based on data from 404 respondents, the characteristics of millennial workers include a preference for work flexibility, work-life balance, and the need for meaningful work. The following are the findings based on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as the relationship with relevant theories.

3.1. Results

The start-up sector, especially the ride-hailing industry in Indonesia, has become one of the most attractive work environments for millennials. With millennials making up the majority of the workforce, organizational dynamics within these companies are heavily influenced by the unique characteristics of this generation. Understanding the demographics, education, tenure and preferences of millennial workers is important to identify factors that influence their engagement, performance and retention in the workplace.

Through the analysis of data from 404 respondents, this research delves deeper into how the characteristics of millennial workers can be both an asset and a challenge for human resource management in the start-up ride-hailing sector. Before discussing the results of the study in detail, it is important to review the demographic background and preferences of the respondents as a basis for understanding the dynamics that occur within the organization.

The characteristics of respondents in this study are divided into several categories which include gender, tenure and education level of respondents. The following is a description of the characteristics of respondents in this study:

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Gender		Length of Service		Education	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Male	216	53,5	-	-	-	-
Female	188	46,5	-	-	-	-
≤5 years	-	-	342	84,7	-	-
>5 years	-	-	62	15,3	-	-
High School / Equivalent	-	-	-	-	27	6,7
Bachelor (S1)	-	-	-	-	339	83,9
Master (S2)	-	-	-	-	38	9,4

Source: Data Processed (2024)

From table 1, it can be seen based on Gender: The respondents consisted of 216 males (53.5%) and 188 females (46.5%). This gender diversity reflects the trend of gender inclusiveness in the start-up sector, even though the tech and ride-hailing sectors are often dominated by men. A study by Deloitte (2024) shows that the tech sector is increasingly attractive to women, although a gender gap still exists in technical roles.

Based on length of service: The majority of respondents (84.7%) have less than 5 years of service, while another 15.3% have worked for more than 5 years. This data reflects the phenomenon of high mobility among millennial workers, who often change jobs after a few years in search of new challenges or better opportunities. Schaufeli & Bakker (2020) in Employee Engagement Theory explain that higher engagement in work tends to increase job satisfaction, but high mobility can occur if the job does not provide long-term satisfaction or sufficient challenge.

In terms of education level: Most respondents (83.9%) have a Bachelor's degree, which shows the importance of educational background in the technology and start-up sector. Employees with higher education, especially in technology and management, are more likely to be accepted in start-up companies. This is in line with the Employee Engagement

Theory (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2020), which states that employees with higher skills and education tend to be more engaged and contribute to innovation in their companies.

From Age: As millennial workers, the majority of respondents are within the age range of 24 to 40 years, in accordance with the definition of the millennial generation. These young workers have characteristics that focus on career development and innovation, which is highly relevant to Transformational Leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2023). This theory underscores the importance of leadership that can empower employees, especially millennials, to innovate and reach their full potential.

3.2. Discussion

Millennials have become a key pillar in the workforce, especially in the dynamic, tech-driven start-up sector such as the ride-hailing industry. The unique characteristics of this generation, ranging from rapid adaptation to technology to the need for work flexibility and work-life balance, have created both opportunities and challenges for organizations.

In the context of the start-up sector, understanding the typology of millennial workers is crucial to designing effective management strategies. Their demographic characteristics, work preferences, and behaviors provide important insights to answer questions related to employee engagement, retention, and performance. The findings of this study provide an in-depth look at the characteristics of millennial workers that can be used as a basis for developing more adaptive and relevant human resource policies.

Work Flexibility and Work-Life Balance Preferences

One of the key findings in this study is millennial workers' preference for work flexibility and work-life balance. As many as 75% of respondents prefer jobs that allow them to set their working hours flexibly or work from home. Deloitte (2024) also revealed that millennials place a high priority on work-life balance, with 70% of respondents from their study feeling that they need more flexible work in order to better manage their personal and professional lives.

Work flexibility is closely related to Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) theory, which states that job resources such as flexibility can reduce job demands and increase engagement. In this context, millennial workers view flexibility as a way to manage job pressures, especially in dynamic environments such as start-ups. Flexibility policies also allow them to balance their professional and personal lives, which is highly valued by this generation (Deloitte, 2024).

Companies that implement hybrid or remote work policies will be better able to attract and retain millennial talent. However, challenges arise in managing remote performance, which requires an output-based performance evaluation system. This strategy has been implemented by many tech companies such as Google and Microsoft, offering time flexibility while ensuring productivity remains measurable (Garcia, 2023).

Work-life balance is closely related to the Organizational Support Theory by Eisenberger et al. (1986). This theory states that employees who feel supported by the organization tend to be more engaged and loyal. Companies that provide flexible work policies, mental health programs, or family-friendly workspaces, as implemented by BetterUp (2023), tend to have higher retention rates.

Purpose and Meaning in Work

Besides flexibility, another prominent finding is millennials' search for purpose and meaning in work. As many as 65% of respondents stated that they are more likely to stay with a company that offers work with positive social impact and aligns with their personal values. Employee Engagement Theory (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2020) suggests that employees who feel their work makes a positive contribution to society or the environment tend to be more engaged and have higher loyalty to the company.

In the millennial context, work is not only seen as a means to fulfill financial needs but also as a means to achieve emotional and social satisfaction. Deloitte (2024) found that

millennials prefer organizations that support social initiatives, such as sustainability or corporate social responsibility (CSR). This shows that companies that align their business goals with global issues tend to be more attractive to this generation.

For example, Grab implemented CSR programs such as carbon footprint reduction through its electric vehicle fleet, which also attracts environmentally conscious millennial workers (Zhang & Liu, 2022). Companies can integrate social causes into their business strategies to create greater emotional engagement among workers.

Challenges of Retention and Management of Millennial Workers

While millennial workers have many advantages, they also face challenges when it comes to retention. This study found that 60% of millennial workers are likely to change jobs in less than 3 years, if they feel their job does not provide enough challenge or development opportunities. Schaufeli & Bakker (2020) suggest that high engagement at work is associated with better retention, but if the company cannot provide continuous development opportunities, millennial workers tend to look for other opportunities that are more attractive.

This phenomenon can be explained through Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory. Herzberg explains that workers leave companies not only because of dissatisfaction with hygiene factors (such as salary or working conditions), but also because of a lack of motivational factors (such as recognition and career development opportunities). In this study, the majority of respondents who had less than five years of service felt that the lack of opportunities for growth was the main reason they left their previous jobs.

To address this challenge, companies should improve career development programs, such as ongoing training, mentoring, or inter-divisional job rotation opportunities (Garcia, 2023). For example, internal training programs at start-ups like Go-Jek have been designed to give employees the opportunity to learn new technologies while still providing flexibility. This not only improves employees' skills but also strengthens their loyalty to the company.

Furthermore, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into human resource and marketing processes may become increasingly relevant for start-up companies aiming to enhance millennial worker retention and engagement. Hendrayati et al. (2024) emphasized that companies adopting AI-driven systems experience increased customer engagement and operational efficiency due to personalized digital interactions. Translating these insights into internal HR functions—such as AI-driven employee feedback systems, career path prediction, or automated wellness tracking—can help companies design more dynamic, responsive workplaces that align with millennials' expectations for flexibility and meaningful contribution.

In alignment with Hendrayati et al. (2024), who revealed that AI integration in Indonesian businesses significantly improves adaptability and competitive positioning, start-up companies employing advanced digital tools—not only for marketing but also for internal people management—are better positioned to attract and retain millennial talent. Incorporating technology that supports hyper-personalized employee experiences may serve as a strategic solution for bridging the flexibility-retention paradox prevalent among millennial workers in high-turnover environments.

4. CONCLUSION

This research reveals that millennial workers' characteristics, such as a preference for work flexibility, life balance, and goal-seeking in work, influence their engagement and retention in the company. Based on human resource management theories, companies that adopt policies that support flexibility, career development, and social engagement can be more successful in retaining millennial workers. Therefore, companies need to adjust their HR policies to better reflect the needs and expectations of millennial workers, in order to improve productivity and retention in the long run.

Suggestions for the company are to improve more structured training and career development programs, as well as implement flexible work policies that support employee well-being. In addition, companies should create a work environment that provides meaning and positive social impact for millennial workers, so that they feel more connected and loyal to the company in the long run.

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