Millennials: Do They Need a Hero to Make Their Workplace More Welcoming?

Ully Rachmawati; Martina Dwi Mustika; Bertina Sjabadhyni
Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Indonesia
e-mail: ullyrachmawati87@gmail.com

Abstract

This research sought to examine the influence of psychological capital on the relationship between job resources and work engagement on the millennial generation. By surveying 322 employees working in various types of organizations (government agencies, state-owned and private) in several major cities in Indonesia using mediation analysis to evaluate the hypothesis, this study reveals that psychological capital partially mediates the relationship between job resources and work engagement. The limitations faced during this study regard the method and research design used; hence, future studies may anticipate these issues. The findings further strengthen the significance of psychological capital on stimulating the level of millennials' work engagement. In addition, job resources must not be neglected, since it also influences work engagement.

Keywords: job resources, millennial, psychological capital, work engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between employees and workplaces is dynamic and unavoidable. Though salary is an important factor when choosing a job, other factors of equal consideration include workplace challenges, learning opportunities, skill improvement, opportunities to utilize ideas and creativity, work meaningfulness, and work-life balance; evidently, each account for a large portion of an employee's decision-making in relation to job offers (Martin, 2005; Namita, 2014). This phenomenon is no exception to Generation Y ((Kopertyńska & Kmiotek, 2015; Martin, 2005) who is often referred to as the 'millennial generation' born between 1981 and 2000 (Sanner-Stiehr & Vandermause, 2017). Due to their unique characteristics regarding attitudes, values and beliefs (Chou, 2012), this generation is often placed in the spotlight. Together with these characteristics, they are often stereotyped as independent, confident, entitled, possessing a high degree of freedom and flexibility (particularly in relation to job opportunities, which enable them to experience new opportunities and challenges), as well as lack of loyalty and engagement (Karthikeyan, 2017; Kopertyńska & Kmiotek, 2015; Martin, 2005). However, they are also most likely to remain in an organization or job that fulfills their expectations (Kopertyńska & Kmiotek, 2015). These characteristics may potentially complicate and challenge organizations to understand not only from workplace perspective, but also from an employee's viewpoint (Sanner-Stiehr & Vandermause, 2017).

Supportive work environments and organizations (including authority figures such as managers) are likely to increase millennial employees' job performance (Martin, 2005). Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to maintain employees' level of engagement in a workplace, since it can

positively affect consumer satisfaction, productivity, loyalty, and turnover (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006).

Numerous experts have attempted to define employee engagement (seeHarter et al., 2002; Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). For example, Kahn (1990) conceptualized personal engagement as a condition in which an employee demonstrates their personal selveswhen perform a job. Further, Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) suggested that the concept of engagement emphasizes positive attachment in a work environment and is characterized by a high level of dedication and energy while working. However, in this study, work engagement is defined as "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption"(Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-romá, & Bakker, 2002, p.74).

Schaufeli et al. (2006) elaborated the characteristics of each dimension of work engagement. They found vigor is characterized by employees who demonstrate high levels of energy and ready to make more effort at work, dedication is characterized by high levels of pride, enthusiasm and meaningfulness at work, and absorption refers to an inescapable sense of happiness and concentration. These three characteristics are viewed as that which defines work engagement.

Wollard and Shuck (2011) categorized the antecedents of engagement as: resources that derive from individuals (optimism, self-efficacy, coping style, curiosity, feeling of choice and control, and core self-evaluation) and resources that derive from an organization (feedback, job characteristics, job control, encouragement, and supportive organizational culture).

Similarly, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli(2007, 2009) also conveyed that work engagement is associated with both job resources and personal resources. Moreover, personal resources proved to act as a mediator between job resources and work engagement. To further deepen an understanding of the antecedents of work engagement, resources are classified into two groups: personal resources and job resources (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Therefore, organizations must maximize employee engagement by identifying both the necessary actions and resources that must be implemented (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005; Namita, 2014).

Empirical research has shown that job resources are closely tied to employee engagement (seeMauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen, 2007; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). They constitute physical, social, psychological or organizational aspects of work that can help employee to achieve work goals, reduce job demand and stimulate personal development (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Job resources are present in various forms at an organizational, social and interpersonal, structural works and task level, these take form as career opportunities, promotions, remuneration and job security, social and interpersonal relationships with work colleagues and superiors, one's work environment, coaching, one's ability to participate in decision-making, work autonomy, the diversity of tasks, task significance and feedback (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Langenhoven, 2015). The stimuli deriving from positive work environments could evoke psychological capital (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006).

Xanthopoulou et al. (2007) supported this notion, maintaining that job resources act as the precursor to developing personal resources.

Personal resources such as optimism, self-efficacy, resilience (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008) and organizational-based self-esteem (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007) are also considered to affect work engagement; therefore, employees with high levels of work engagement are more likely to achieve success (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). This study used psychological capital constructs to determine an employee's personal resources. Luthans, Youssef and Avolio (2007b) defined psychological capital as a positive psychological condition characterized by hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (HERO).

Hope is the ability to guard and motivate oneself to achieve their goals (Luthans et al., 2007b; Snyder, 2002), self-efficacy is a belief in one's own abilities to accomplish challenging tasks (Bandura, 1994; Luthans et al., 2007b), resilience is an individual's ability to adapt, survive and resurrect when experiencing difficulties (Luthans et al., 2007b; Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014), and optimism is the hope of positive or successful results in the present and future (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstrom, 2010; Luthans et al., 2007b). The four components of psychological capital, known as "HERO within" (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2015, p.180), can provide an outlook for performance and job satisfaction (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007a).

In relation to job resources, a person who works in a supportive environment will be more committed to finishing an assigned job (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Similarly, Luthans et al.(2007b) stated that individuals with high psychological capital are more motivated when performing their work duties, they are confident and optimistic of their outcomes and are able to successfully control their duties. Further, they will also possess a positive perception of their work environment and their job itself. Thus, individuals with greater psychological capital possess an internal locus of control and are intrinsically motivated to work (Luthans et al., 2007b).

The purpose of this research is to understand the influence of personal resources, which consist of the HERO components in regard to the relationship between job resources and work engagement. This study also explores their effect in the form of psychological capital and job resources for millennial employees. The urgency of this study lies on the likelihood of millennials dominating the workforce within the coming years; hence, it is important to fully understand the characteristics of this unique generation.

This study employed job-resource components that match the unique characteristics of the millennial generation. This includes job autonomy and feedback (either direct from work or from other parties in an organization), as well as social support from both colleagues and superiors. Thus, the hypothesis formulated in this study is as follows:H1: *Job resources* affect the level of work engagement in Millennial employees through the mediation of psychological capital
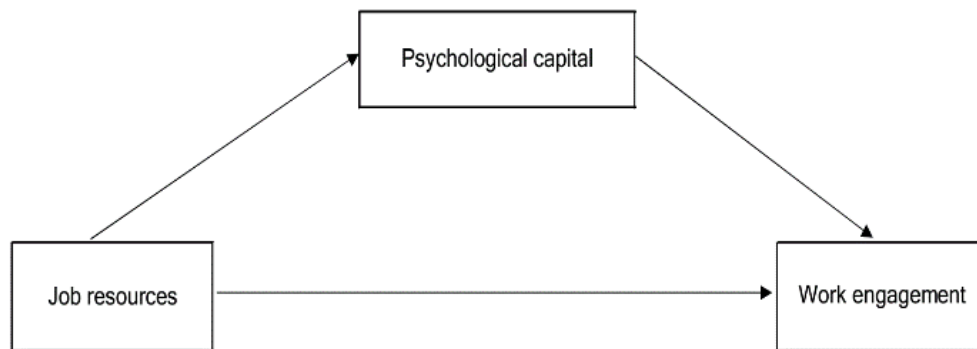
Figure 1: Proposed model illustrating the relationship between job resources, psychological capital and work engagement

METHODS

To acquire the data for this study, surveys in the form of an online questionnaire using Google Forms were employed. The study samples were millennial employees born between 1981 and 2000 working in either government agencies, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), national and multinational private firms, and other types of organizations (such as start-ups, educational institutions and insurance) in several cities in Indonesia.

The data retrieval process was carried out using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods. A purposive sampling method was used to determine the subjects who fulfilled the criteria and possessed a willingness to provide information about the role of psychological capital in mediating the relationship between job resources and work engagement for millennial employees (Kumar, 2012). The questionnaires were distributed in groups with predefined criteriathrough social media platforms such as WhatsApp, LINE and Facebook (private message). Employing a snowball sampling method, the researchers requested the respondents' willingness to participate in the survey and spread the questionnaires to colleagues or relatives who were judged as meeting

the sampling criteria. From 358 respondents, only 322 people could be further processed.

This study utilized three measurements: work engagement, job resources, and psychological capital. All measuring tools were processed for adaptation, including for Indonesian translation and review by expert judgment.

Work Engagement. Consisting of nine items, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) (Schaufeli et al., 2006) formed the basis on which to measure work engagement in this study. This scale measures work engagement according to three components: dedication, absorption, and vigor. The sample item of this variable is 'I am enthusiastic about my job' (dedication), and the tool designed for this indicator is a seven-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 'I never felt this' (1) to 'I always feel this' (7).

Job Resources. To measure job resources, an adaptation and translation of the Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ) (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) was used. The dimensions used in this study are only those that are directly associated with the characteristics of millennial employees, such as job

autonomy, social support, and job feedback. The sample item of this variable is 'the job gives me the chance to use my personal initiative or judgment in carrying out the work' (job autonomy), and the tool designed for this indicator is a six-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6).

Psychological Capital. To measure psychological capital, we used HERO constructs from Luthans' Psychological Capital scale which was constructed by de Waal and Pienaar (2011). This scale consists of 12 items representing the four HERO components of this study, and the items used are the three best of each dimension, as found by de Waal and Pienaar (2013). The sample item from this gauge is 'failure just makes me try harder' (self-efficacy), and the tool designed for this indicator is a six-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6).

The Cronbach's alpha test is the necessary first step to measure the reliability and validity of the measurements employed in this study. Hayes's (2018) PROCESS 3.0 was also employed to perform simple mediation model analysis for hypothesis testing.

RESULTS

Based on demographic data on millennial employees, the samples were dominated by women (212 respondents, 65.8%), those aged between 25 and 37 (254 respondents, 71.55%), those with a bachelor's degree (72.7%), and those who have worked for a one-year period (170 respondents, 52.96%). Further, the majority of respondents was employed at a staff level (223 respondents, 69.3%), had permanent employment status (225 respondents, 69.9%), and worked at either national or multinational private companies (138 respondents, 42.85%).

Table 1: *Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations, and Reliabilities of the Scales Used in this Study (Cronbach's α on the Diagonal)*

	Mean	Standard deviations	Job resources	Psychological capital	Work engagement
Job resources	4.50	.67	(.920)		
Psychological capital	4.97	.54	.560**	(.882)	
Work engagement	4.77	.86	.575**	0.556**	(.882)

Note: ** indicate two-tailed significancy

Table 1 describes the means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and correlations of each variable along with its dimension. All measuring tools were found to have adequate internal consistency with the coefficient α between .882 and .920. The correlation between the variables showed a positive and significant relationship (r = .556–.575, p = <.01).

Table 2: Mediation ModelCoefficients(Cronbach's α on the Diagonal)

					Consequent				
	Total Effect on Y (WE)			M (PsyCap)			Y (WE)		
Antecedent	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	β	SE	p
Constant	13.879	2.418	.000	35.672	2.042	.000	−1.214	3.161	.701
X (JR)	.308	.025	.000	.253	.021	.000	.201	.028	.000
M (PsyCap)	-	-	-	-	-	-	.423	.062	.000
	R^2= .316			R^2 = .305			R^2 = .404		
	$F_{(1,320)}$ = 148.006, p = .000			$F_{(1,320)}$ = 140.312, p = .000			$F_{(2,319)}$ = 107.937, p = .000		

Note: JR: Job Resources; PsyCap: Psychological Capital; WE: Work Engagement.

Table 2 shows the coefficients of the mediation model for this study. Based on the data, it is clear that psychological capital partially mediates the relationship between job resources and work engagement, both through indirect effects (β = .107, *SE* = .018, *LLCI* = .073, *ULCI* = .143) and direct effects (*c* = .201, *SE* = .028, *t* = 7.070, *p* = .000, *LLCI* = .145, *ULCI* = .257).

The results also demonstrate the positive and significant influence of job resources on psychological capital (*a* = .253, *SE* = .021, *t* = 17.467, *p* = .000, *LLCI* = .211, *ULCI* = .295). Similarly, psychological capital also significantly and positively influences work engagement (*b* = .423, *SE* = .062, *t* = 6.835, *p* = .000, *LLCI* = .301, *ULCI* = .545). The findings confirm the hypothesis proposed in this study that psychological capital partly mediates the relationship between job resources and work engagement.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the role of psychological capital on mediating the relationship between job resources and work engagement, with its results indicating a partial mediation of psychological capital for this relationship. Indeed, previous studies confirmed this study's findings that psychological capital and job resources stimulate work engagement (Xanthopoulouet al.,2007). As Luthans et al. (2006) highlighted, job resources enable self-efficacy, self-esteem, and employee optimism, and further heighten their capability to control their work environment. In the case of millennial employees, psychological capital enables them to process and utilize social support, feedback (both in terms direct from the job and input from others), and their work autonomy, as a result, employees feel more engaged in every process of their work. We can conclude that employees who receive support from their work environment are (in various type) more likely to showcase their ability to perform their duties and, hence, improve their level of work engagement. However, without the support of any psychological capital, job resources still have a direct and significant relationship with work engagement.

A supportive work environment (especially from superior and collegue),performance feedback, and work autonomy enables employees to feel meaningful and enthusiastic, increases their levels of concentration and effort, thus, resulting in more

engaged workers. Previous studies also demonstrated that job resources (opportunities, autonomy, organizational support, social support, performace feedback, financial rewards, team climate) directly affect work engagement (Alzyoud, Othman, & Isa, 2015; Coetzer & Rothmann, 2007; Farndale & Murrer, 2015).

This research is expected to contribute to academia in relation to factors that can influence work engagement in millennial employees. It can also provide practical solutions for organizations (especially in Indonesia) regarding the importance of personal and organizational issues that can affect work engagement in millennial employees who are joining previous generations (Generation X and baby boomers) in various workforces.

This study used a cross-sectional approach in which both predictor variables and criteria were measured simultaneously. According to Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), this allows common method bias; indeed, the researchers attempted to anticipate this by scrambling items on the questionnaire given to the respondents. This research also used self-reporting as a data source. To ensure the accuracy of this information, the respondents were informed to complete the questionnaire truthfully.

Based on the findings, conclusions and limitations of this research, the following is recommended.

Future studies could anticipate the issues encountered during this study by providing a break between data collection for predictor variables and criteria. Future studies may also employ qualitative methodologies or mixed methodologies to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the field. Subsequently, future studies can distinguish the scale format between variables to anticipate the presence of bias. Finally, future studies could examine other job resources such as task variety, task significance, and task identity, all of which have not been tested in this study.

CONCLUSION

This study was designed to examine the role of psychological capital on mediating the relationship between job resources and work engagement for millennial employees. The findings confirmed the alternative hypothesis that psychological capital partially mediates this relationship. However, an important issue to underline is that job resources can still affect work engagement even without the presence of psychological capital. Therefore, the conclusion reached in this study is it is imperative for an organization to cope with strategies regarding how best to improve its employees' psychological capital to elevate work engagement. In addition, companies must ensure their job resources are in accordance with the needs of millennial employees.

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