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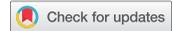
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Maximizing the Potential of Millennial Communication Professionals in the Workplace: A Talent Management Approach in the Field of Strategic Communication

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ABSTRACT

Although millennials have been extensively examined in the popular and academic literature, there have not been sufficient studies in strategic communication that help us fully understand this unique and influential cohort in the communication profession. The purpose of this research is to take a talent management approach to gain a deep understanding of millennial communication professionals' (MCPs) generational attributes as related to their workplace values, and how such values would affect key phases such as recruitment, engagement, development and retention in talent management in strategic communication. Two national panels were recruited to run comparative analyses with one panel consisting of MCPs and the other panel consisting of communication managers and executives who have direct working and/or supervising experience with MCPs. The comparative results provide a detailed report on perceptual gaps on generational attributes, as well as different expectations on talent management. Research and practical implications are discussed.

Introduction

Although there is an abundance of literature about Millennials as a unique and influential consumer group generally (Smith, 2012; Valentine & Powers, 2013), there is little research on millennial communication professionals. As the largest workforce group in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2015), the Millennial generation has already generated substantial effects on multiple industries and in various contexts (Kim & Ammeter, 2008; Ma & Niehm, 2006). The Deloitte Global Millennial Study (2016) reveals that millennials are eager to make an impact through their employers. Millennials want to be involved with good social causes at the local level to establish a greater sense of influence, which further builds up a greater level of loyalty to their employers. At the same time, organizations also face the reality, as well as the challenge, that young talent moving from one position to another too fast and too frequently before they can fulfil organization's long-term development goals. With the belief that strategic talent management plays a potentially critical role in connecting talented employees, organizational context, organizational culture and social causes with organizational effectiveness and long-term reputation (Collings & Mellahi, 2009), this study attempts to learn millennial communication professionals' expectations on organizations' talent management efforts and strategies.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to seek a deeper understanding of how millennial communication professionals' generational attributes as related to workplace affect key phases such as recruitment, engagement, development, and retention in talent management. We believe that knowing their traits, attitudes, and beliefs as related to workplace values enables organizations to: 1) explore

strategic talent management approaches to attract, engage, develop, retain, and gain from this generation, and 2) assess leadership development opportunities to help prepare these young professionals to be future leaders in the field.

To achieve the overall goal of this study, we designed two online surveys to obtain two comparative national audience panels that would give us comprehensive self-reported knowledge and balanced assessment of this unique generation. In our first online survey, we recruited a national panel of adult Millennial communication professionals (MCPs) who were born between 1981 and 1996 (Pew Research Center, 2015). This panel consists of 420 MCPs who currently hold a full-time position in the field of communication in diverse organizations. Our second online survey consists of a national panel of 420 senior communication managers and executives (MGRs) who directly work with, supervise, and manage MCPs in the workplace. Although recruited respondents in these two national panels do not have a direct reporting relationship or connection, we believe that having two panels of qualified respondents allows us comparing results, identifying perceptual gaps, and eventually providing recommendations for effective talent management.

Following this rationale, we asked both panels to share their perceptions about MCPs' generational attributes as related to their workplace values. Five dimensions as related to workplace values were assessed, including work centrality, reward and recognition, risk taking orientation, work-life-social value, and tech-savvy orientation. We further investigated both panels' expectations and perceptions on key phases in talent management process (i.e., recruitment, engagement, leadership readiness, leadership development, and retention). After comparing results from the two panels, we conclude our argument by offering insights that organization can consider incorporating into their talent management procedures. Both research and practical implications are discussed.

Literature review

Background: millennial communication professionals in the workplace

Research on the millennial employees indicates that this generation is significantly different from previous generations, particularly in higher levels of self-esteem, assertiveness, and narcissism than previous generations at the same age (Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010). Research also indicates millennials are confident, driven, and high-achieving individuals. These rising professionals place significant values on flexibility, creativity, information technology skills, and social causes. A most recent Global Millennial Survey conducted by Deloitte (2016) showed that millennials value the degree of flexible working in their organization as they believe flexible working arrangements support greater productivity and employee engagement while enhancing their personal well-being, health, and happiness. At the same time, millennials are also more accepting of diversity and inclusion, team-oriented, capable with advanced technology as adept multitaskers (Farrell & Hurt, 2014; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

Such shift in values is also reflected in the ways millennials communicate. According to Cafasso (2007), millennials communicate in fundamentally different ways from recruiters and require a new set of tactics from those used to hire Generation X. They expect their organization to provide challenging assignments, employ other millennial colleagues, offer regular positive feedback, and give flexible work arrangements (Behrens, 2009). Research also indicates that millennial employees enter the workforce with "different, often broader, perspectives about the world marketplace, supervisor-subordinate relationships, cultural diversity, performance of tasks, and ways that communication and information technologies can be used to enhance organizational performance and maximize productivity" (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, p. 235). These unique attributes can be viewed as critical recruitment drivers to attract top talent. Organizations may also treat such attributes as opportunities to foster and develop millennial leaders (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

Millennials seek continued learning opportunities in the workplace (Lykins & Pace, 2013). They expect learning on the job, both within and beyond their organization, to be a sustainable process that benefits them for a long-term run. As part of the learning process, millennials prefer to be regularly evaluated so they could advance quickly in their careers (Deal et al., 2010). However, many millennials neglect the organizational hierarchy and speak to senior managers as if they were their peers (Ferri-Reed, 2012). To avoid these mistakes, organizational supervisors may incorporate professional training on career-building skills to help millennials set appropriate expectations into mentorships (Ferri-Reed, 2012). Overall, previous research on millennials in general confirms the impact this cohort can bring to organizations and society.

Not until recently, public relations research started showing interests and efforts in understanding how such generational attributes may affect millennial communication professionals and their job functions in the workplace. According to Gallicano (2013), millennials' perceptions of diversity are multifaceted, including hiring more qualified and racially or ethnically diverse employees, creating a mentorship program to advance diverse practitioners, creating a multicultural group to promote diversity, or inspiring a culture that promotes subtle acknowledgements of diverse individual's work and value. Some recent research also found that current communication students in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland hold a strong interest in pursuing their career in the occupational field of public relations and they hold a positive perception of public relations as a profession (Fröhlich, 2013).

Based on Gallicano, Curtin, and Matthews' (2012) research on millennial employees working in full-service communication firms, millennials employees enjoyed positive relationships with their agencies and most are satisfied with the amount of control mutuality they experience. Although nearly three-quarters of studied millennial employees indicated their organization has made efforts to develop a relationship with their generation, only about half expressed their intended long-term relationships with their firm employers (Gallicano et al., 2012). At the same time, millennial employees also expressed that their frustration of a lack of empowerment, significant hierarchy and distance from managers, and concerns regarding ethics and unfulfilled promises. Similarly, Kiesenbauer and Zeffass (2015) compared perceptions of current communication leaders with those of the next generation, namely the Millennial generation, and found both current and future leaders' understanding of corporate communications has evolved toward a more strategic and sophisticated level. Emerging communication leaders expect more flexibility and freedom when performing their tasks. In addition, they expect a higher level of empathy and trust from their leaders.

When confronted with ethical dilemmas, the majority of millennials prefer to avoid an issue, gather extensive information, and follow organizational rules, rather than take a controversial stand (Curtin, Gallicano, & Matthews, 2011). Research also revealed seven categories of stressors as related to millennial communication professionals' job satisfaction, including inadequate compensation, limited work-life balance, poor communication, low empowerment, high competition and tension, unethical practices, and hierarchical structure (Gallicano et al., 2012). Such findings on stressors are not surprising. When exploring future PR professionals' perceptions of work, life, and gender issues in public relations, Sha and Toth (2005) also found male and female members of the Public Relations Student Society of America hold significantly different views about gender equity in promotion, work-life balance, and salaries. More than a decade has passed, but such sharp perceptual gaps have not changed much. These stressors present the failure of organizations to manage young communication professionals effectively, despite the efforts taken to recruit top talent. Such stressors also present continued challenges to managers and senior executives in the organizations to identify effective approaches to improve the job satisfaction among millennial communication professionals, as well as to offer sustainable career-planning efforts to millennial communication professionals as they will be the future leaders of the communication profession.

Theoretical framework: talent management theory

The topics of talent and talent management have become one of the major forces to drive practice and discourse among businesses and consulting firms (e.g., McKinsey & Co.) in the

past decade. Such research on talent management in businesses has focused on individual organization's practice while facing a criticism of lacking definitions and theoretical frameworks (Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). The lack of a universal understanding of talent management leads to a common debate about its aims and scope, as well as its role in offering vision and leadership beyond businesses. Such debate reflects the ongoing controversies about whether we should see talent management as an inclusive approach (i.e., talent management is about managing the talent of all employees.), or whether we should take a more exclusive approach to understand it (i.e., talent management is about the talents of high potential or high-performing employees only.) (Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010). As the discussion on talent management evolves, various key trends at the organizational level have been researched in the literature on talent management, including effective talent management in the context of mergers and acquisitions (Collings & Mellahi, 2009), understanding talent expectations for international business operations (Tarique & Schuler, 2010), and talent management among the top-management team (Joyce & Slocum, 2012).

Although limited research on how to manage the various generations of talent in the workplace starts to appear in the literature (e.g., Meister & Willyerd, 2010), few has focused on linking talent management to understand the millennial generation of the workforce, despite the fact that this generation has become the largest workforce group in the U.S. (Pew Research Center, 2015). In this study, we use the concept of talent management and the strategic talent management process as our theoretical framework to guide research design. We argue that it is necessary and crucial to incorporate millennial communication professionals into organizations' strategic talent management processes from the initial recruitment phase through engagement and leadership development until the phase of retention and gain.

As a widely accepted definition in the literature on talent management, Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and Sels (2014) define talent as systematically developed innate abilities of individuals that are deployed in activities they like, find important, and in which they want to invest energy. They also argue that all talent progresses through a particular lifecycle of recruitment, training, performance, development, and retention, which is defined as the talent management cycle. Based on Nijs et al.'s (2014) research, talent management enables individuals to perform excellently in one or more domains of human functioning, or as performing consistently at their personal best.

As various topics have been researched and discussed under the scope of talent management, the development and evolution of talent management theory reflects a shift away from traditional approaches that focused on organizational elites and human resources management, toward a perspective that emphasizes talent particularly suited for today's dynamic and competitive business environment. Strategic talent management can be conceptualized as a three-step process: (1) to identify key strategic positions within the organization that definitively and significantly contribute to the organization's competitive advantage, (2) to develop a talent pool of high-potential and high-performing candidates to fill these key positions, and (3) to establish a "differentiated human resource architecture" to simplify the process of filling key positions, and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization (Collings & Mellahi, 2009, pp. 304–306). According to Collings and Mellahi (2009), this process is mediated by work motivation and organizational commitment, and is further complicated by generational attributes and expectations.

Based on the results of trade research (e.g., Deloitte, 2016), millennial communication professionals likely expect different talent management and leadership development systems than previous generations. New millennial talent may benefit from mentorship and networking programs initially, but will ultimately require human capital and skill development to become senior management leaders. Thus, talent management practices may be used to engage, retain, and develop millennial employees. Consequently, organizations will benefit from the talent management processes by achieving higher employee productivity, increased customer retention, reduced risk, and stronger operational and financial performance (Schiemann, 2014).

Rationale and research questions

Drawing on the talent management literature, this study contributes to research on communication management by focusing on the millennial generation of communication professionals. Specifically, we extend previous research on millennials by creating a unique focus, often discussed but not fully understood, on the millennial communication professionals and their potential impact on recruitment, retention, engagement and sustainable leadership development, namely the talent management cycle in the field. Research findings of this study will be practically applicable for communication firms and organizations seeking to incorporate the expertise of millennial professionals in strategic communication practice.

Another important aspect of this research is to explore the perceptual gaps on generational attributes as related to millennial communication professionals' workplace values. We examine particularly the interplay between the unique generational attributes of the millennials and their performance at workplace by comparing their self-evaluations to the evaluations of communication managers or supervisors who have had direct working and/or supervising experience with MCPs. In addition, we aim to use comparative results to find out the perceptual gaps and expectations on several key talent management steps (i.e., recruitment, engagement, development, and retention). By fully understanding this unique but influential cohort's strengths, weaknesses, and expectations, organizations and executives shall be able to develop personalized approaches and supportive organizational context to maximize MCPs potential in the workplace. At the same time, knowing the perceptual gaps can also provide a comprehensive reflection tool to MCPs so they can could set appropriate self-expectations and those on organizations. Specifically, we proposed five research questions to guide this study:

RQ1: What are the perceptual gaps between MCPs and MGRs on millennial professionals' *generational attributes as related to workplace values*?

RQ2: What are the perceptual gaps between MCPs and MGRs on millennial professionals' *engagement in the job and in the organization*?

RQ3: What are the perceptual gaps between MCPs and MGRs on millennial professionals' *leadership readiness*?

RQ4: Do MCPs and MGRs see organizations' efforts in offering *leadership development* differently? If so, what are the differences?

RQ5: Do MCPs and MGRs see organizations' efforts in *recruiting and retaining* top talent differently? If so, what are the differences?

Methodology

Research design and sample

Data for this study were collected through two national online surveys. Two national panels of qualified respondents were successfully recruited by using a privately held research company that specializes in benchmarking consumer, brand, and employee experience insights.

The first sample consisted of a national panel of 420 Millennial Communication Professionals (MCPs) who currently hold a full-time position in the field of communication in diverse organizations. In this study, we defined MCPs in present study as all communication professionals born between 1981 and 1996, including the year of 1981 and the year of 1996 (Pew Research Center, 2015). Such age range allows us to examine MCPs' perceptions on job- and organization-related conditions across various organization and in different contexts.

Our second sample consisted of a national panel of 420 senior executives (MGRs) who currently work in the field of public relations and communication. As a filtering condition, qualified MGRs in this group must have directly worked with, supervised, and managed millennials in their organization. To avoid potential methodological bias, respondents in these two panels do not have connection nor direct reporting relationship in the workplace. Detailed demographic profiles for the two samples are reported in later sections.

Measures

To establish appropriate measures, the present study proceeded in two stages. The first stage was to develop scales to measure generational attributes and values that were meaningful in the context of studying millennial communication professionals in the workplace. The second stage was to adapt existing scales based on the theoretical framework of talent management to match the scope of this research in addressing millennial communication professionals' expectations on talent management process (i.e., recruitment and retention, engagement, leadership readiness, and leadership development). The following paragraphs listed measures used in this study.

Generational attributes of millennials as related to workplace values

To measure generational attributes as related to millennial communication professionals' values in the workplace, we derived items from the literature on the psychographic profile of the millennial generation (e.g., Bolton et al., 2013; Smith, 2012; Valentine & Powers, 2013), industry research on the millennial generation (e.g., Deloitte's Global Millennial Survey, 2016), as well as the results of in-depth interviews that we have conducted with millennial communication professionals through our previous research projects (e.g., Reeves, Meng, & Reber, 2015). Based on existing research, we have identified five major dimensions of generational attributes as critical and relevant to millennial communication professionals' workplace values. These five dimensions are *work centrality*, *reward and recognition orientation*, *risk taking orientation*, *work-life-social value*, and *tech-savvy orientation* as defined in industrial research and existing literature.

Each dimension was measured by four items derived from the preceding literature. A definition describing each dimension was provided. Based on the definitions, respondents in the millennial professional group were asked to self-identify their agreement with item measures, yet respondents in the executive group were asked to rate the millennial professionals they directly work with, supervise, and manage in their organization. All items were measured using seven-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (absolutely not true) to 7 (absolutely true). We hope to use these five dimensions to capture millennial communication professionals' values and beliefs as related to their generation, as well as reflected in their workplace.

Work centrality represents the degree to which one considers work an important part of his or her life, as well as the role that work plays in one's life. A sample item to measure work centrality is "I am ambitious in making progress and gaining new responsibilities." Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the measures of work centrality was .791.

Reward and recognition orientation represents the degree to which one values transactional-related outcomes at work, such as organization's reward systems, recognition, competitive pay, and promotion. A sample item to measure reward and recognition orientation is "I am always motivated to work hard for more income." Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for reward and recognition orientation was .721.

Risk taking orientation refers to the extent to which individuals feel comfortable in environments that provide challenges, changes, and unpredictable situations. A sample item to measure risk taking orientation is "I am willing to change if the change will make my work more efficient and effective." Internal consistency reliability for risk taking orientation was .664.

Work-life-social value refers to the value that individuals place on work-life quality, flexibility within the workplace, as well as the social responsibility actions an individual can take. A sample

item to measure work-life-social value is “I am very supportive of social causes and socially responsible companies.” Internal consistency reliability for work-life-social value was .661.

Tech-savvy orientation refers to the extent to which individuals feel comfortable in learning and applying new technology to work and their sense of the importance of technological innovation. A sample item would be “I believe the newest communication technology will greatly improve my job efficiency.” Internal consistency reliability for tech-savvy orientation was .863.

Employee engagement

Employee engagement was measured at two levels (i.e., engagement in the job and engagement in the organization) based on Saks’ (2006) research. The first level measures how engaged a millennial communication professional is in current job based on respondents’ agreement with job-function-related statements such as “Sometimes I am so into my job that I lost track of time.” A scale of three items measuring job-function-related engagement was adapted from Saks (2006). The second level measures how engaged a millennial communication professional is in current organization based on respondents’ agreement with organization-related statements such as “One of the most exciting things for me is getting involved with things in this organization.” Three items were adapted from Saks (2006) to measure engagement in the organization in present study. All items were measured using seven-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Internal consistency reliability estimates for engagement in the job and at the organizational level were .793 and .876, respectively.

Leadership readiness

Leadership readiness is the degree to which a millennial communication professional is confident about his/her leadership capabilities. In this study, measures assessing millennial communication professionals’ leadership readiness were adapted from Meng and Berger’s (2013) research on public relations leadership. Six items corresponding to six core dimensions (i.e., self-dynamics, ethical orientation, team collaboration, relationship building skills, strategic decision-making, and communication knowledge management) describing excellent leadership in public relations as defined by Meng and Berger (2013) were used. A sample item is “I am confident that I now have sufficient capabilities to providing a compelling vision for how communication can help the organization.” In addition, a seventh item was added to assess their overall confidence in leadership readiness (i.e., I am confident that I have now sufficient capabilities to become an excellent leader in communication in the near future). Similarly, respondents in the millennial group were asked to self-report their own assessments while respondents in the executive group reported their evaluations on millennial employees based on their observation and supervising experience. All items were measured using seven-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Internal consistency reliability estimate for leadership readiness was .915 across the entire sample.

Leadership development

Millennial communication professionals’ individual obligations in leadership development refers to the extent to which they have committed themselves to exerting a range of behaviors and efforts in seeking out leadership development opportunities both within and beyond their current organization. In this study, measures assessing leadership development efforts were adopted from Rousseau’s (1990, 2000) research on employees’ psychological contracts in organizations in developing leadership skills and capacity. Six item measures were adapted from Rousseau’s (1990) research. A sample item is “I am actively developing my leadership skills and capacity by building essential job-related skills to increase my value to my organization.” All items were measured using seven-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Internal consistency reliability estimate for leadership development was .857 across the entire sample.

Recruitment and retention of top talent

Recruitment and retention are two important components in talent management (McDonnell, Lamare, Gunnigle, & Lavelle, 2010). In this study, measures assessing organizations' recruitment and retention efforts were adopted from Kim, Froese, and Cox (2012) and McDonnell et al. (2010). To measure recruitment, we asked respondents in the millennial group to recall and evaluate major reasons why they were attracted and took the position with their current organization. A total of eight items were adapted from Kim et al. (2012). A sample item is "I was attracted to my current organization because it has a fine reputation."

To measure retention, we then asked respondents in the millennial group to assess their current organization's efforts to retain capable and skilled communication professionals. More specifically, retention was measured at two dimensions based on McDonnell et al. (2010). The first dimension addresses organizations' retention efforts on *reward and pay*. A sample item is "My organization rewards high-performing individuals." A total of nine items were adapted to measure the reward-and-pay retention efforts. The second dimension reflects *the work-life balance approach* that organizations have strived for. A sample item is "My organization supports individuals in dealing with personal problems." A total of five items were adapted from McDonnell et al. (2010) to address the work-life balance approach. Same sets of questions were also used in the executive group but we have worded the statements in order to ask respondents to assess their organization's efforts in recruitment and retention from the perspective of an executive. Reliability analyses showed strong internal consistency for recruitment (Cronbach's $\alpha = .804$), the reward-and-pay retention (Cronbach's $\alpha = .922$), and the work-life-balance retention (Cronbach's $\alpha = .832$).

Lastly, we included several control variables that may influence millennial communication professionals' perceptions as well as executives' evaluations on millennials. It is possible that millennial professionals' years of tenure will generate an influence on their survey ratings. Therefore, we asked respondents in both groups to report their *years of tenure in current organization* by choosing prespecified categories by years. *Organizational type* was measured by categorical variables reflecting the nature and ownership of the organization (e.g., publicly held, private, self-employed, nonprofit, etc.). In addition, for the executive group, we measured *the size of millennials* by asking respondents in this group to report the total number of millennial employees they had the opportunity to directly work with, supervise, and manage. Respondents' *age, gender, ethnicity, and educational level* were additional control variables in this study.

Results

Sample profiles and descriptive statistics

Basic demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey for both groups, including gender, age, organizational type, years of tenure in current organization, ethnicity, educational level, as well as areas of job responsibilities. The descriptive data of the millennial group (sample 1) indicated that 63.1% of participants were females ($n = 265$) and 35.0% were males ($n = 147$). Millennial respondents reported working for various types of organizations including private or state-owned companies ($n = 133$, 31.7%), publicly held corporations (i.e., stock ownership) ($n = 86$, 20.5%), communication or public relations agencies ($n = 86$, 20.5%), and the group of nonprofits, government organizations, educational institutions and political organizations ($n = 73$, 17.4%). A significant percentage of participants in the millennial group have earned a Bachelor Degree ($n = 221$, 52.6%). Caucasians ($n = 316$, 75.2%) and African Americans ($n = 46$, 11.0%) were the main ethnic groups in the sample. We asked the millennial group to report their years of tenure in current organization. Descriptive results showed that 31.0% of participants ($n = 130$) have worked for their current organization for more than one year but less than three years, followed by 29.0% of them ($n = 122$) choosing the category of "more than 3 years but less than 5 years."

The descriptive data of the executive group (sample 2) showed 50.0% of participants were females ($n = 210$) and 48.8% were males ($n = 209$). The top three types of organizations surveyed executives reported working for were private or state-owned companies ($n = 160$, 38.1%), publicly held corporations ($n = 84$, 20.0%), and the group of nonprofits, government organizations, educational institutions and political organizations ($n = 82$, 19.5%). A significant percentage of participants in the executive group have earned a bachelor's degree ($n = 174$, 41.4%) or a master's degree ($n = 88$, 21.0%). Caucasians ($n = 357$, 85.0%) dominated the executive sample with African Americans ($n = 26$, 6.2%) being the second largest ethnic group in the sample. The executive group's answers on "years of tenure in current organization" varied, ranging from less than five years ($n = 69$, 16.4%), more than 5 years but less than 10 years ($n = 136$, 32.4%), more than 11 years but less than 20 years ($n = 145$, 34.5%), to more than 21 years ($n = 70$, 16.7%).

Finally, we asked the executive group to report the size of millennial communication professionals they currently work with, supervise, or manage. Results showed that the majority of them have directly worked with small groups of MCPs, e.g., 1–5 MCPs ($n = 170$, 4.5%) and 6–10 MCPs ($n = 103$, 24.5%). Only about 35% of surveyed executives reported that they have worked with relatively larger size of MCPs, e.g., 11–15 MCPs ($n = 73$, 17.4%) and more than 16 ($n = 74$, 17.6%). Table 1 displays the common demographic questions asked in both surveys, and Table 2 displays the unique demographic questions that have been tailored to fit the context for each surveyed group and used to control for potential biasing effects.

RQ1: Perceptual gaps on generational attributes as related to workplace values

RQ1 pertained to identify the perceptual gaps on generational attributes and values of millennials by comparing the rating results from the two samples. For the five dimensions of generational attributes

Table 1. Sample profile and demographics in general ($N = 840$).

	MCPs ($n = 420$)	MGRs ($n = 420$)
	Freq. (Percent)	Freq. (Percent)
Gender		
Female	265 (63.1%)	210 (50.0%)
Male	147 (35.0%)	209 (48.8%)
Other	8 (1.9%)	1 (.2%)
Ethnicity		
White, Caucasian	316 (75.2%)	357 (85.0%)
African American	46 (11.0%)	26 (6.2%)
Asian, Asian American	24 (5.7%)	9 (2.1%)
Hispanic, Latino	17 (4.0%)	18 (4.3%)
Native American	1 (.2%)	3 (.7%)
Multiracial	14 (3.3%)	6 (1.4%)
Other	2 (.5%)	1 (.2%)
Organization type		
Publicly held corporation	86 (20.5%)	84 (20.0%)
Private or state-owned company	133 (31.7%)	160 (38.1%)
Communication or PR agency	86 (20.5%)	51 (12.1%)
Nonprofit, government, educational, or political	73 (17.4%)	82 (19.5%)
Self-employed	29 (6.9%)	40 (9.5%)
Other	13 (3.1%)	3 (.7%)
Education level		
Senior High Diploma or below	69 (16.4%)	47 (11.2%)
Associate Bachelor Degree	69 (16.4%)	80 (19.0%)
Bachelor Degree	221 (52.6%)	174 (41.4%)
Master Degree	44 (10.5%)	88 (21.0%)
Doctoral Degree	3 (.7%)	15 (3.6%)
Other	14 (3.3%)	16 (3.8%)
Total	420 (100.0%)	420 (100.0%)

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for unique controlled variables ($N = 840$).

Executive group (MGRs)	$n = 420$		Millennial group (MCPs)	$n = 420$	
	Freq.	(Percent)		Freq.	(Percent)
Age			Age		
37–49	189	(45.0%)	21–25	141	(33.6%)
50–59	189	(45.0%)	26–30	140	(33.3%)
60 and above	42	(10.0%)	31–35	139	(33.1%)
Years of tenure			Years of tenure		
Less than five years	69	(16.4%)	Less than one year	80	(19.0%)
More than 5 but less than 10 years	136	(32.4%)	More than one but less than 3 years	130	(31.0%)
More than 11 but less than 20 years	145	(34.5%)	More than 3 but less than 5 years	122	(29.0%)
21 years or more	70	(16.7%)	More than 5 but less than 7 years	53	(12.6%)
–	–	–	More than 7 years	35	(8.3%)
Sizes of Millennials to supervise			Sizes of Millennials to supervise		
1–5	170	(40.5%)	–	–	–
6–10	103	(24.5%)	–	–	–
11–15	73	(17.4%)	–	–	–
16 or more	74	(17.6%)	–	–	–

affiliated with the Millennial Generation that we have defined and asked respondents to rate, our results confirmed there are significant perceptual gaps on self-reported generational attributes vs. observed ones as reflected in the workplace. In general, MCPs rated themselves significantly higher on almost all items in the dimensions of work centrality, reward and recognition orientation, risk taking orientation, and work-social-life value except for one item indicating the preference of working in teams. MGRs actually rated MCPs higher on team collaboration than MCPs rated themselves ($Mean\ diff. = -.31, t = -2.83, p < .01$).

Results indicated that the biggest perceptual gap appeared in the dimension of *work centrality*. MCPs reported high levels of agreement on all four items reflecting their beliefs in work and considering work as an important part of their life with mean scores ranging from 6.07 to 6.21 on a 7-point scale. MCPs considered themselves as being very organized and structured at work ($M = 6.07, SD = 1.06$) and willing to work overtime ($M = 6.07, SD = 1.17$). However, respondents in the executive group did not report such high ratings based on their supervising experiences. MGRs agreed that their millennial employees are ambitious in making progress ($M = 5.27, SD = 1.46$) and passionate about work ($M = 5.22, SD = 1.41$) but they also reported relatively low scores on being organized and structured at work ($M = 4.94, SD = 1.51$) and willing to work overtime ($M = 4.59, SD = 1.70$). Similar patterns also showed on other dimensions depicting generational attributes such as reward and recognition orientation, risk taking orientation, and work-social-life value.

The surprising findings appeared in the dimension of tech-savvy orientation. Industrial and trade research such as the Deloitte Global Millennial Study (2016) revealed the Millennial Generation value and embrace new technology and are comfortable in leaning and applying technology innovation to improve job efficiency. However, our survey results showed that respondents in the millennial group were not that confident about their passion for and the usage of technology in the workplace, if compared to their managers' observed scores. Respondents in the executive group rated their millennial employees significantly higher on all four items reflecting tech-savvy orientation. For instance, managers observed that using the newest communication technology helps millennial professionals add on a sense of achievement ($M = 6.13, Mean\ diff. = -.63, t = -7.88, p < .01$), while MCPs reported a much lower score on the same item ($M = 5.50, SD = 1.30$). Table 3 displays the detailed mean comparisons on all items on generational attributes as related to workplace values.

RQ2: Perceptual gaps on MCPs' engagement in the job and in the organization

RQ2 aims at finding out the differences between MCPs and MGRs when they say they are engaged in their current job and organization. As explained before, we tested two levels of employee

Table 3. Perceptual gaps at the item level on generational attributes of millennials ($N = 840$).

Generational attributes as related to workplace values	MCPs	MGRs	Mean diff.	t-value d.f. = 838
	n = 420 Mean	n = 420 Mean		
Work centrality				
Ambitious in making progress	6.21	5.27	.94	10.97**
Very organized and structured at work	6.07	4.94	1.13	12.61**
Willing to work overtime	6.07	4.59	1.48	14.68**
Passionate about my work	6.19	5.22	.97	11.15**
Reward and recognition orientation				
Optimistic about rewards and recognition	5.58	5.28	.30	3.18*
Always motivated to work hard for more income	6.29	5.19	1.10	12.30**
Highly motivated by praise and recognition for the work	6.03	5.55	.48	5.56**
Highly motivated by opportunities for advancement and promotion	6.21	5.45	.76	9.53**
Risk taking orientation				
Willing to take risks at work	5.33	5.00	.32	3.38**
Willing to change if it makes work more efficient and effective	6.15	5.15	1.00	11.73**
Making ethical decision is the priority	5.60	5.04	.56	5.51**
Decisive when facing challenges and unpredictable situations	5.68	4.63	1.05	10.79**
Work-social-life value				
Value diversity of people at work	5.97	5.65	.32	3.85**
Value work-life quality more than income	5.21	4.69	.51	4.97**
Very supportive of social causes and socially responsible orgs.	5.73	5.56	.17	1.97*
Prefer working in teams, rather than working alone	4.67	4.98	-.31	-2.83**
Tech-savvy orientation				
Value innovation in communication technology	5.80	6.13	-.33	-4.60**
Stay updated with the latest developments in comm technology	5.50	6.03	-.52	-6.38**
Use the newest comm tech at work adds on a sense of achievement	5.50	6.13	-.63	-7.88**
Believe the newest comm tech will improve job efficiency	5.67	6.08	-.41	-5.21**

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

engagement in present study: one focusing on job-function-related engagement perceptions, and the other addressing organization-related engagement. Our comparative results showed significant perceptual gaps on employee engagement. Generally, respondents in the millennial group reported they felt very engaged in the job and the organization with mean scores ranging from 5.18 to 5.89 on a 7-point response scale. However, respondents in the executive group reported much higher scores on employee engagement with mean scores ranging from 5.39 to 6.20, indicating they are much more engaged in this job and in this organization than millennial employees. Specially, MGRs reported significantly higher levels of engagement in the organization than MCPs ($M = 6.01$, $Mean\ diff. = -.46$, $t = -5.43$, $p < .01$). Such results may be explained by the covariate effects of tenure years in the organization, which was not reported in this paper. Because MGRs have worked in the organization longer and have been involved in more organization-related decision-making processes, their engagement level with the organization tends to be higher, if compared with those job-function-related engagement perceptions. Table 4 displays the detailed mean comparisons between the two group on engagement in the job and the organization.

RQ3: Perceptual gaps on MCPs' leadership readiness

RQ3 addressed the question of "do you think you are ready to be a leader in the field?" Our results showed very interesting perceptual differences between MCPs and MGRs on MCPs' leadership readiness. MCPs are confident about their leadership skills and capabilities based on their self-evaluated scores with means ranging from 5.73 to 6.04. The leadership skill receiving the highest rating from MCPs is ethical orientation, namely "I am confident that I have now sufficient capabilities to demonstrate a strong ethical orientation and set of professional values" ($M = 6.04$, $SD = 1.08$). However, MGRs rated MCPs on the same item significantly lower ($M = 5.15$, $Mean$

Table 4. Perceptual gaps at the item level on engagement in the job and in the organization ($N = 840$).

	MCPs		MGRs		t-value
	n = 420	n = 420	Mean diff.	d.f. = 838	
Employee engagement	Mean	Mean	Mean diff.		
Engagement in the job					
I really throw myself into my job.	5.83	6.03	-.21		-2.70*
Sometimes I am so into my job that I lost track of time.	5.43	5.78	-.35		-3.65**
I am highly engaged in this job.	5.89	6.20	-.32		-4.29**
Engagement in the organization					
Being a member of this organization is exhilarating.	5.18	5.39	-.21		-2.15*
One of the most exciting things for me is getting involved with things in this org.	5.36	5.63	-.27		-2.87*
I am highly engaged in this organization.	5.55	6.01	-.46		-5.43**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

$diff. = .89, t = 9.96, p < .01$). MCPs have indicated the leadership readiness in providing a compelling vision for how communication can help with organization, which is the item received the highest rating from the perspective of MGRs ($M = 5.32, Mean\ diff. = .42, t = 4.89, p < .01$). MGRs' ratings also indicated that MCPs need to practice more leadership skills in leading work teams to resolve issues as this is the item received the lowest score from the MGRs ($M = 5.14, Mean\ diff. = .59, t = 6.24, p < .01$). It is great to find out that MCPs have the desire to lead and feel confident to lead. At the same time, it is also important to incorporate MGRs' assessment in tailoring leadership training programs. The ratings on leadership readiness of the total sample are shown in Table 5.

RQ4: Different perceptions on organizations' leadership development efforts

RQ4 asked whether MCPs and MGRs see their organizations' efforts in providing leadership development opportunities differently. The results of independent sample t -tests revealed significant perceptual differences as shown in Table 6. For seven approaches in leadership development that we asked respondents to assess, there were four specific aspects MCPs rated significantly lower than MGRs did. For example, MGRs reported that their organization provides support and encourages millennials to work with a mentor to help individual development ($M = 5.37, SD = 1.34$), but MCPs reported a much lower score on the same item ($M = 4.92, Mean\ diff. = -.45, t = -4.10, p < .01$). At the same time, MCPs reported that they have received good training to build essential job-related skills with their organization ($M = 5.95, Mean\ diff. = .49, t = 5.78, p < .01$). There are two aspects that we didn't find any differences between the two groups, which are participating in professional associations to build networks and taking on a leadership role in a community organization. Such perceptual differences, no matter positive or negative, leave us room to discuss future implications in later sections. Detailed comparative results on leadership development efforts are shown in Table 6.

Table 5. Perceptual gaps on millennial communication professionals' leadership readiness.

	MCPs		MGRs		t-value
	n = 420	n = 420	Mean diff.	d.f. = 838	
MCPs: I am confident that I have now sufficient capabilities to:					
MGRs: The millennials whom I have worked with possess sufficient capabilities to:	Mean	Mean	Mean diff.		
Provide a compelling vision for how communication can help my organization.	5.74	5.32	.42		4.89**
Demonstrate a strong ethical orientation and set of professional values.	6.04	5.15	.89		9.96**
Lead work teams to successfully resolve issues.	5.73	5.14	.59		6.24**
Develop productive relationships and coalitions to successfully deal with issues.	5.90	5.23	.67		7.99**
Be seen as a valuable contributor in strategic decision-making processes.	5.95	5.25	.69		8.25**
Possess sufficient professional communication knowledge.	5.90	5.26	.64		7.65**
Become an excellent leader in communication in the future.	5.89	5.22	.67		7.41**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 6. MCPs and MGRs see organizations' leadership development efforts differently.

MCPs: I am actively developing my leadership skills and capacity by	MCPs		MGRs		t-value
	n = 420	n = 420			
MGRs: My organization provides support and encourages millennials to	Mean	Mean	Mean diff.	d.f. = 838	
Build essential job-related skills to increase my value to my organization	5.95	5.46	.49	5.78**	
Participate in internal training and development programs.	5.34	5.61	-.27	-2.79**	
Participate in external training and development programs.	5.02	5.22	-.20	-1.94*	
Work with a mentor to help my development.	4.92	5.37	-.45	-4.10**	
Participate in one or more professional associations to stay current and build networks.	5.06	5.15	-.09	-.83	
Play a leadership role in a community organization.	4.92	4.92	-.002	-.02	
Plan to continue my education at a college or university.	4.56	5.19	-.63	-5.12**	

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

RQ5: MCPs and MGRs see organizations' recruitment and retention efforts differently

In regard to **RQ5**, which asked whether MCPs and MGRs see organizations' recruitment and retention efforts differently, the results of independent sample *t*-tests revealed sharp differences between the two groups. When asking MCPs to report the key recruitment drivers that attracted them to their current organization, the top rated factors are: (1) organization's fine reputation ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.15$), (2) organization having an open and positive culture ($M = 5.76$, $SD = 1.19$), (3) organization's great geographic location ($M = 5.74$, $SD = 1.45$), (4) organization offering excellent opportunities for growth and development ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.22$), and (5) organization seems offering a balanced work-life approach ($M = 5.58$, $SD = 1.43$). From the perspective of MGRs, the top three rated recruitment drivers are: (1) organization offering competitive pay and benefits ($M = 5.63$, $SD = 1.22$), (2) organization having an open and positive culture ($M = 5.58$, $SD = 1.59$), and (3) organization's fine reputation ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.27$). It is interesting to find out that when it is time to choose a place to work, what MCPs think are important may not be the same assumptions MGRs are consuming. Such comparative results are shown in [Table 7](#).

When assessing organizations' efforts in retaining top talent, MGRs reported significantly higher scores than MCPs did, especially on the dimension relevant to the reward-and-pay approaches. MGRs believed that their organizations are doing a much better job in retaining MCPs by providing competitive pay ($M = 5.61$, $SD = 1.25$), rewarding high-performing individuals ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.32$), and providing leadership and mentorship programs ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.44$). MCPs thought their organization has done well in retention but is not providing sufficient career-planning support ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.73$) nor providing enough leadership and mentorship programs ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.80$). As for the retention dimension focusing on creating work-life balance, not

Table 7. Perceptual gaps on recruitment drivers ($N = 840$).

Organization's recruitment drivers	MCPs		MGRs		t-value
	(n = 420)	(n = 420)			
	Mean	Mean	Mean diff.	d.f. = 838	
It has a fine reputation.	5.77	5.50	.28	3.30**	
It seemed to be a very socially responsible organization.	5.42	5.22	.21	2.08*	
It offered competitive pay and benefits.	5.34	5.63	-.29	-2.98**	
It offered excellent opportunities for growth and development.	5.71	5.48	.23	2.63**	
It seemed to offer a balanced work-life approach.	5.58	5.31	.26	2.75**	
It appeared to have a very open and positive culture.	5.76	5.58	.17	2.07*	
I know someone who works here, and they strongly endorsed the company.	4.63	5.10	-.47	-3.74**	
It was a great location (geographically) for me.	5.74	5.48	.26	2.73**	
It seemed to have great travel opportunities.	4.05	4.54	-.49	-3.77**	

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 8. Perceptual gaps on retention efforts to retain top talent.

Organization's retention efforts	MCPs	MGRs	t-value	
	(n = 420)	(n = 420)	Mean diff.	d.f. = 838
Reward-and-pay approach				
Provides career and promotion opportunities.	5.44	5.59	-.15	-1.54
Provides competitive pay.	5.16	5.61	-.45	-4.43**
Rewards high-performing individuals.	5.37	5.72	-.35	-3.44**
Maintains a performance-based pay and reward system.	5.00	5.40	-.39	-3.47**
Provides growth and development opportunities.	5.62	5.66	-.04	-.46
Provides career-planning support.	4.87	5.15	-.28	-2.57*
Provides leadership and mentorship program.	4.95	5.39	-.44	-3.97**
Provides up-to-date technologies and an innovative working environment.	5.37	5.65	-.28	-2.98*
Is staffed with supervisors who are skilled communicators and leaders.	5.43	5.66	-.23	-2.37*
Work-life-balance approach				
Supports individuals in dealing with personal problems.	5.20	5.43	-.22	-2.20*
Supports a balanced work-life approach.	5.52	5.46	.05	.53
Offers flexible working hours and locations.	5.23	5.28	-.05	-.45
Embodies an open and positive organizational culture that values diversity.	5.61	5.68	-.07	-.75
Engages in socially responsible strategies and programs.	5.40	5.38	.01	.15

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

much differences were identified between the two groups except for one item, supporting individuals in dealing with personal problems. MGRs reported their organizations are doing a good job, although MCPs suggested there's room to improve (*Mean diff.* = -.22, $t = -2.20$, $p < .05$). Table 8 displays the mean comparative results.

Discussion

This research endeavored to identify specific generational attributes as related to workplace values of millennial communication professionals, as well as to identify perceptual gaps on employee engagement, leadership readiness, leadership development, recruitment and retention drivers between millennial communication professionals and communication executives who have directly work with, supervise and manage millennials. Since the millennial generation has become the largest workforce group in the United States in various occupations (Pew Research Center, 2015), our research responds to a timely need to research millennial professionals in the field of communication, as well as obtain a deep understanding of their expectations on key aspects of the talent management cycle, including recruitment, leadership development, engagement, and retention. By conducting a depth and thorough comparative analysis based on two national samples, we are particularly interested in the perceptual gaps identified between MCPs and their MGRs. The magnitude of these gaps raises the importance of knowing this generation of communication professionals in order to bring out their full potential to be the future communication leaders. A deep understanding of the perceptual gaps on key components in talent management can be of value to managers and organizations seeking to recruit and retain this segment. The findings of the present research provide several specific insights not only on the nature of the Millennial Generation, but more importantly the practical implications on re-exploring and re-defining the roles and functions of MCPs in their organizations to bring out their full potential.

First, besides providing empirical evidence to understand the key generational attributes millennial communication professionals feel true to themselves in the workplace, this study reveals the different understandings of such values as observed by their managers through their interactions with MCPs. Such perceptual gaps can be used to not only help managers understand MCPs more from the perspectives of MCPs, but also help MCPs realize the areas they believe they are good at (e.g., work centrality and risk taking orientation) but, however, more improvement and appropriate demonstration and commitment are much needed to meet the expectations of their managers. Generational attributes as related to

workplace values are a central mechanism that leverage millennial communication professionals' involvement, productivity, influence and impact on employee engagement and organizational performance. It also corresponds with Rousseau's (1990) opinion that new hires establish their own psychological contracts with their employer. Organizations need to add adequate consideration of generational characteristics and expectations to ensure the success of long-term commitment.

Second, findings of this study provides some insights in understanding the key factors in talent management system by comparing the rating results of two national panels: a group of MCPs and a group of MGRs who have direct working and/or supervising experience with MCPs. We fully agree that the job market for communication industry is always flooded with young professionals. The true challenge sits between the amounts of young professionals organizations may recruit vs the actual number of true talent organizations can retain. However, organizations within the industry, from corporates to agencies as well as other types of organizations, faces the reality that young talent moving from one position to another too fast and too soon before such talent can be retained for organization's long-term development goals. It is relatively easy to achieve recruitment goal. However, retention of young talent itself lacks of a sustainable process.

As our research primarily focuses on providing suggestions on building up a holistic talent management system within the organization with the hope that such argument and efforts can generate a positive impact on the communication profession and solve some talent management challenges. Our findings indicate that millennial communication professionals are passionate about taking on various leadership roles on the job and are actively seeking out leadership development opportunities both within and beyond their current organization. Even though they are not quite ready yet based on their managers' assessment on their leadership readiness, it will be extremely helpful to focus on leadership practices and challenges, such as providing leadership practice tools and supporting leadership development initiatives. Such efforts would help transfer MCPs' passion for leadership roles to fulfil their desire to generate an impact on certain aspects of organizational performance, both tangible and intangible, through various tasks and projects.

Third, our results indicate that factors such as a fine reputation, an open and positive organizational culture, a great geographic location, a balanced work-life approach, and a continued opportunity for growth and development exert a great impact on MCPs when it is time to choose the job and the organization. Efforts in building up such organizational context should carry all the way above and beyond the recruitment process. The two dimensions of organizational retention efforts—the reward-and-pay approach and the work-life-balance approach—when combined positively will further contribute to building up that sustainable organizational context. They could provide managers with a checklist and a roadmap about which areas of organizational context to invest their efforts in order to engage millennial communication professionals and to enhance their recruitment and retention outcomes.

Lastly, our results open up a discussion between recruiters and millennial communication professionals in order to effectively address talent management challenges and opportunities. It is critical for organizations to take into account the institutional environment and culture when building up the talent management system. At the same time, it is equally important for millennial professionals to take responsibilities and do a comprehensive self-reflection at the individual level. MCPs expect more freedom, flexibility, independence, and more self-initiated assignments on the job. However, at the same time, MCPs also need to assess their intercultural and cross-functional competencies both within and beyond organizational tasks to avoid misidentifying appropriate positions and capabilities. A mutual-benefits perspective is much needed for a sustainable talent management cycle.

Conclusions and practical implications

Through analyzing the perceptual gaps on MCPs' generational attributes, engagement, leadership readiness, leadership development, and recruitment and retention expectations between two groups of respondents: MCPs and MGRs who have experience working with MCPs, this study brings to

attention the importance of focusing on creating a sustainable and competitive talent management system by incorporating unique generational attributes. The Deloitte Global Millennial Survey (2016) points out that millennials feel accountable for many issues in the workplace that they feel they can make an impact through opportunities involved with good causes via the workplace. In order to have long-term, sustainable success at recruiting and retaining top talent, organizations must strive to provide millennial employees with a greater sense of influence and make them see they can make an impact through their employers.

Changes and efforts need to take place in the core aspects of the talent management system such as recruitment, culture, development and retention. Make the recruitment a personalized process based on honest job descriptions. Nearly two-thirds of surveyed MCPs said their job decisions were driven most by an organization's reputation, location, and its open and positive culture. If these are key factors millennials are seeking, how can organizations appeal to them in meaningful ways? The practical implication for organizations is when you offer an integrated package of personal growth and professional development, be careful with your claims. Providing a job description that is consistent with the actual work when young hires are on the job. Approaches such as including one of young rock stars in the interviews and hosting a small social/virtual event for the MCPs may deepen commitment and spark results. It's important to discuss the organization's diversity initiatives as millennials are the most racially diverse generation in American history. Our research results confirmed that MCPs would like to work for a socially responsible organization. To further strengthen the retention efforts, organizations could position themselves in the community, describe their CSR activities, and share "invisible" culture by linking such efforts to a social cause that can bring the organization to life.

Fortunately, MCPs in our research agreed they generally have a high level of work and organizational engagement, although it was not as high as their managers. They come to the job with excitement and enthusiasm, but these qualities often slide after they stay with the organization for one year. The engagement level dropped to the lowest for those with 1–3 years of experience based on the rating results from the millennial group in present study. Such unfortunate reality in the workplace may drive MCPs to seek other employment due to poor leadership, poor cultural fit, or better financial and career opportunities. Thus, managers and executives need to consider personalizing the engagement efforts by focusing on motivating MCPs. MCPs want to be paired with a trained mentor, receive regular feedback, be assigned to a leadership role to lead small projects, be involved in cross-functional meetings to keep their learning expectations high, and be involved in a community project.

Results from our study also encourage communication managers and executives to make efforts to transfer millennial communication professionals' passion for leadership to *leadership readiness*. Our surveyed executives said their organizations do a good job in providing mentoring, job-related skills training, and continued education opportunities. However, MCPs said such support is not enough, and they are eager for more leadership development opportunities as their desire to lead is strong. Organizations can personalize leadership development by providing continued mentorship programs, offering frequent performance feedback, enriching MCPs' interpersonal skills, and providing some employee-centered innovation opportunities. At same time, organizations might contextualize such efforts by pairing MCPs with organizational veterans to lead projects, inspiring MCPs by communicating organizational strategy through storytelling, and including them in strategic-thinking and planning initiatives.

It is not surprising to see surveyed MCPs who stayed and maintained a consistently high level of engagement give a shout-out to their organization for its open and positive culture, work-life-social balance, commitment to diversity and social responsibility and support for continued development. Moreover, such intangible retention drivers benefit MCPs the most when the traditional financial and performance-based rewards also play a role. To personalize retention, organizations should share power and decision-making, engage MCPs through cross-specialty projects to build loyalty, provide career counselling, recognize achievements more often, provide

flexible work schedules, and support community engagement. To contextualize the process, organization might increase MCPs' budget responsibilities, insist on equal pay, and provide top-level development programs.

For millennial professionals who have the desire to make a difference in the community and profession, try to leverage their leadership credentials. Chances are you will engage with someone who shares strong values for transparency, diversity and social responsibility and who can help brighten the future of communication profession to further influence future generations such as Gen Z. Building up a talent management system usually involves multiple aspects of organizational efforts (McDonnell et al., 2010). Taking a holistic view by considering what the Millennial Generation is good at, expecting, and desired to bring is crucial in making effective changes. We hope that the current study adds another small piece to understand the big picture of millennial communication professionals in the workplace.

Limitations and future research

Finally, results presented in this article did not further test the possible intervening and interrelated relationships those key phases (e.g., recruitment, engagement, leadership development, and retention) in talent management cycle. Such interrelated relationships may further contribute to the understanding of talent management system and its role in organizational effectiveness. Future data analysis and research could explore and depict such relationships. Future data analysis could also take into the consideration of controlled variables (e.g., years of tenure, unit size of MCPs, etc.) to test the covariate effects they may generate on talent management system.

Although this study present substantial answers to some unknown issues as related to managing millennial communication professionals in the literature, the results should be interpreted in light of its limitations. A major limitation is that although we were able to obtain two significant national samples of professionals and executives working in the profession of communication in general, there is no direct reporting or working relationship between the two groups. The fact of using single informants from different organizations may not represent the reality of millennial communication professionals in their organizations. Future research can extend our research by incorporating multiple informants from the same organization.

In addition, regarding methodology, we are also fully aware that, in order to dive deeper and find out the "why" beyond the face value our statistical results are presenting, it is critical to carefully manage data collection and data analysis. Using multiple methods and data sources can help avoid mono-method bias. One limitation lies in quantitative, cross-sectional research is the limited capacity to dig deep on "why." For future research, we propose the use of multiple methods and data sources to fully understand talent management as a relational construct by considering the interrelationships at the individual, organizational, institutional, and international levels. Future research could employ qualitative and longitudinal methods of research to explore some detailed aspects within the big scope of talent management such as gender differences, if there's any. It is also helpful if future research can retrieve industry's or assessment centers' evaluation reports as a complimentary source of data to ensure greater accuracy when reflecting key trends as reported in survey data.

Finally, we realized that some key contexts that have been research in talent management, ranging from individual level (e.g., strategies managing individuals to balance the work-life challenge), to organizational level (e.g., organization-wide practices and HRM strategies influencing talent management), and to international level (e.g., multinational companies' talent management practice transcending national borders) as we have reviewed in literature. However, we were unable to locate some trans-industry or trans-network research on talent management yet. Although our research context is grounded solidly in the field of strategic communication, future research should strive to explore whether talent management models can transcend (or not) different organizations, industries, networks, or beyond the national borders.

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