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Teh Yong Zhao, Jugindar Singh Kartar Singh, Ibiwani Alisa Hussain

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Wellbeing of Millennials Working Remotely in Malaysia

Teh Yong Zhao, Jugindar Singh Kartar Singh, Ibiwani Alisa Hussain

Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation, Malaysia
Email: TP062276@mail.apu.edu.my, jugindar.singh@apu.edu.my,
ibiwani@staffemail.apu.edu.my

Abstract

The wellbeing of millennials working remotely is gaining more attention from researchers and scholars due to the greater number of them forming the workforce. This study explored the impact of working remotely on Malaysian millennials' wellbeing (EWB) and the perceived expectations of millennials towards achieving better EWB in Malaysia. Based on the beliefs and assumptions of the researcher, the appropriate philosophy was interpretivism. In this exploratory study, an inductive approach was more appropriate. In this basic qualitative study, in-depth semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather information from nine millennials currently working remotely in Malaysia. The data collected was transcribed, and thematic analysis was done manually to do coding and identification of themes. The first question was to explore the antecedents of EWE experienced by millennials. The themes that emerged encompass workplace transparency, health and wellness programs, outcome-oriented culture, transformational leadership, and workplace relationship. The second research question was to explore the barriers that obstruct EWB. The barriers originating from this study include role conflict, remote working, lack of career advancement, work overload, and workplace conflict. The third research question was to explore the perceived expectations of millennials towards achieving better EWB. The themes include personalized career development plans, fair reward systems, hybrid working arrangements, and team harmony. The themes that emerged from this study could be used to develop a wide-scale survey of employees working remotely. The finding in this study has delivered an in-depth understanding of the context of the current millennial working experience and perception regarding EWB in Malaysia. Several themes identified in this study can be used to improve the effectiveness of millennials working remotely.

Keywords: Millennials, Employee Wellbeing, Work-life balance, Stress, Organization Culture, Workplace Transparency, Role Conflict.

Introduction

In recent years, the issue of employee well-being (EWB) has become the core focus of human resource management (HRM). Much empirical and theoretical work has shown that EWB plays a vital role in organisations through positive effects that include influencing job

satisfaction, work engagement, reducing employee turnover rate, and burnout rate (Ilies et al., 2015). In addition, the EWB is one of the most crucial constructs to ensure that HRM practices can be implemented successfully within an organisation. This ultimately leads to an improvement in employee performance (Wood et al., 2012). Due to the importance of EWB towards employees' overall performance, organisations are now paying attention to understanding workplace well-being (Hamilton et al., 2021). In Malaysia, the Malaysian Well-being report 2019 showed that the overall citizens' well-being increased by 0.6%, from 120.3 (2018) to 121.0 (2019) (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2020). This shows that Malaysian workers put in more hours at work but are less productive. Malaysia has one of the highest percentages of productivity loss, albeit the average working hours is 15 hours, surpassing Australia, Singapore, and Hongkong (Chu, 2017). Malaysian organisations lost 73.3 days of work time per employee per year due to presenteeism and health-related absenteeism, costing the organisations an estimated RM1.7 million. Thus, this indicated that the EWB is not being given serious consideration in Malaysia.

The EWB of millennials is now also being emphasised as an essential criterion in reshaping the workforce due to the retiring workforce from the baby boomers generation (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2019). The millennials are set to significantly impact the workforce by constituting up to 75% of the global labour by 2025 (Deloitte, 2014). In Malaysia, the millennials now represent the largest cohort, consisting of 26% of the total population in 2020 (Tjiptono et al., 2020). Specifically, 40% to 50% of the entire Malaysian workforce are millennials (PWC, 2012). Thus, millennials' strong desire to advance the concept of an "ideal" working environment has further pushed the organisation to evolve and embrace the significance of EWB. Furthermore, it is crucial for today's organisations to understand the future workforce expectation and ensure millennials' EWB can be fulfilled at work (Nielsen et al., 2017).

Numerous studies have shown that one of the significant challenges today's organisations face is in retaining millennials employees, as millennials have the shortest job commitment compared to the previous generations (Queiri et al., 2015). In Malaysia, the turnover rate among employees is two and a half years, which is considered high, and this turnover trend is mainly dominated by millennial workers (Hee and Rhung, 2019). Hence, this has caused the organisation to experience low employee performance and leadership voids (Calk and Patrick, 2017). Studies have shown that millennials are now more likely to experience mental health problems when compared to the previous generation as the quality of work-life has reduced significantly due to a heavier workload than Generation X (Thorley and Cook, 2017).

Past studies have shown that up to 44% of global millennials have experienced stress and anxiety all the time, and 49% of them indicated that they are less happy than their parent generation (Deloitte, 2020). Furthermore, The Edge (2020) reported that the millennials in Malaysia are the most stressed-out generation at work, where they continuously suffer from mental health and stress at work. Around 51% of the employees in the survey have experienced work-related stress (The Edge, 2020). Therefore, millennials now need to continuously control their health throughout their working career due to high competitiveness in the labour market. According to PWC (2012), up to 97% of millennials have indicated that work-life balance is one of their priorities. Thus, this has caused the pursuit of EWB among millennials to continuously be highlighted, especially in the labour-intensive sector (Brown et al., 2015). To ensure the organisations in Malaysia can be sustained in the long term, EWB should be emphasised because it is one of the most significant factors in affecting millennials' turnover rate and absenteeism (He et al., 2019). As the millennials'

growing environment is significantly different from the previous generation, organisations need to explore the current perceived expectations and factors affecting millennials' EWB to retain and attract talent (Harvard Business Review, 2013).

Therefore, EWB is positively related to several outcomes such as organisation commitment, and job satisfaction and negatively related to burnout and turnover intention (Gordon et al., 2019). However, the current antecedents and barriers affecting millennial EWB, such as organisation culture and dynamic environment, remain unexplored (He et al., 2019). Although research by Wahab (2020) examined EWB among employees in Malaysia, the study focused on low-skilled employees in the manufacturing sector. This study will focus on millennials, who now form the bulk of the workforce.

In addition, it is still not clear what are the barriers to EWB are and what the determinants of EWB among millennials in Malaysia. Furthermore, most studies conducted in western countries are based on quantitative methods, and there is a dearth of studies that explored in-depth information on the well-being at work experienced by millennials. Hence, findings from other countries might not be applicable in Malaysia as perceived EWB, such as quality of work-life, will vary due to demographic differences (Parveen et al., 2017). In order to fill the research gap, this study aims to explore the current antecedents of EWB and barriers that hinder the achievement of a better EWB in Malaysia by millennials.

Literature Review

Employee Well-being is defined as "living in a state that is in some sense good" (Warr, 2012). Traditionally, EWB refers to individual stress management, but evidence has implied that solely emphasising the stress intervention does not result in positive organisational outcomes and is less effective in the long term (Baumeister and Alghamdi, 2015). The current scope of EWB has broadened to the extent of employees' ability to handle stress, deliver work performance, and achieve their potential in a career path (Chari et al., 2018). Studies have implied that EWB includes two perspectives which are happiness and self-actualization. Happiness is the presence of a positive mood, life satisfaction, and the absence of a negative mood. Self-actualization included autonomy, mastery, self-acceptance, and positive relatedness (Keeman et al., 2017).

Studies also implied that the EWB involves the aspect of psychological well-being. Poor psychological health, such as anxiety and fatigue, will cause decrement in employee cognitive resources such as working ability and health (Ho and Kuvaas, 2020). Poor psychological health often leads to a decline in motivation and energy. This results in poorer contextual performance-related outcomes such as organisational citizenship behaviour (Ford et al., 2011). In addition, studies have also shown that effective well-being is a core dimension in EWB and psychological well-being. Affective well-being is the pleasurable emotional or perceived stress that one experiences from the workplace and organisation. (Rahimnia and Sharifirad, 2015). Furthermore, the EWB also constitutes the aspect of physical well-being, which involves work-life balance practices, workplace safety, and health policies that enable employees to reduce workplace injuries (Clarke and Hill, 2012). Therefore, EWB encompasses several dimensions that encompass social well-being, psychological well-being, physical well-being, self-actualisation, and general happiness (Kashyap et al., 2016).

Studies have also shown that the EWB can significantly contribute to greater employee performance and productivity (Shagvaliyeva and Yazdanifard, 2014). Promoting EWB allows organisations to promote employee engagement and team cohesion (Bakker, 2015). In addition, the organisation will be able to reduce employee absenteeism and turnover rate,

which ultimately leads to an improvement in organisational productivity and performance (Keeman et al., 2017). Therefore, studies have shown that the EWB remains one of the fundamental aspects of how an organisation can sustain competitive advantage and ethical work practices.

Millennials generally refer to those born between the period of 1981 and 2000. They will soon comprise half of the global workforce (Anderson et al., 2017). Compared to other generations, the millennial generation is more entrepreneurial, motivated, and ambitious (Buzza, 2017). As millennials have been exploring the latest technological advancements, their mindset and belief is more globally oriented and enables multitasking (Supanti and Butcher, 2019). In addition, the millennials no longer see their employers as content experts as they can now find reliable content information using the internet. Technology advancements have also moved millennials towards a more flexible work arrangement and informal workplace (Nolan, 2015). Indeed, millennials who prefer a casual working environment desire more open and less formal meetings (Bannon, 2011). Since the generation is much more independent, they often have a sense of entitlement in the workplace and are expected to have continuous career development (Meier and Crocker, 2010). Millennials have a higher ability to accept new knowledge, and they are more comfortable with changes (Okioga, 2013). Therefore, millennials are more willing to adopt change and shift to new opportunities (Kumar and Velmurugan, 2018).

Henderson (2012) stated that millennials prioritise intrinsic job satisfaction and prefer a positive working environment over pay. Studies have indicated that millennials are more concerned about career development, work-life balance, quality of life, work autonomy, and overall well-being (García et al., 2019). Therefore, the importance of work-life balance has received more attention as millennials expect to work in a family-friendly work environment, open work environment, and friendly supervisor (Kumar and Velmurugan, 2018). As millennials have experienced more group-based learning throughout their years in school, they are more likely to commit and contribute their best performance in the organisation when their work is structured in teams (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010).

The challenge is in managing and supervising the millennials as they are more demanding of immediate feedback on performance, clear direction, and constant intellectual challenge (Saxena and Jain, 2012). The organisation now faces difficulties in fulfilling millennials' demands as the group is negatively stereotyped as having low loyalty and commitment to the organisation. They are more willing to leave for a better opportunity (Moorthy, 2014). On the contrary, studies have revealed that millennials have great job loyalty and are more willing to stay with the organisation in the long term (Kaifi et al., 2012). Research has also highlighted that psychological well-being has played an essential role in the retention of millennials. Forward-thinking organisations should embrace the transformation from "boomer-centric" to "millennial-centric" organisations to employ and retain millennials.

Work life balance is another emerging construct related to EWB that has attracted attention recently. Work-life balance (WLB) refers to the concepts that can be seen from the standpoint of balancing 'work' and 'life'. Moreover, WLB can be achieved if individuals can balance multiple roles or tasks and minimise the conflict between these two domains (Kumarasamy et al., 2015). Conversely, the imbalance between work and life will cause a hostile work attitude and stress, leading to employee burnout (Lawson et al., 2013) WLB includes these three main components: satisfaction balance, time balance, and involvement balance (Ronda et al., 2016). Studies have also shown that supervisor support, flexible working arrangement, and co-worker support has played a significant role in supporting WLB

(Wong et al., 2017). Many organisations have now acknowledged the importance of work-family culture and have started implementing WLB practices such as flexible working schedules to enhance employee satisfaction (de Sivatte et al., 2015). In addition, employees who access services such as parental leave, support from supervisors, and childcare are more likely to reduce their conflict in work life, leading to greater job satisfaction and lesser stress (Helmle et al., 2014). Hence, creating a supportive and healthy environment can enable employees to balance personal and work responsibilities, thus enhancing employee work performance (Dhas, 2015).

Studies have shown that WLB can leverage EWB and job outcomes as it positively influences aspects of psychological well-being and career satisfaction (Rahim et al., 2020). Other studies have also indicated that EWB and overall life satisfaction can be enhanced when employees can access work-life balance policies as they are more likely to feel empowered and have more control over their work and life. Thus, it ultimately leads to greater productivity and a sense of commitment (Kashyap et al., 2016). However, Carlson et al. (2011) argued that work-family conflict could significantly cause poorer mental and physical health. Therefore, an increase in work-life conflict can lead to a greater level of EWB. However, studies have argued that there is no pre-determined measurement to indicate work-life balance as individuals will have different perceptions of work-life balance (Kumar and Velmurugan, 2018).

Relationship between stress level. EWB or work-related stress (WRS) is a form of stress to which an employee is exposed in organisations during Work (Mucci et al., 2015). Moreover, WRS often impairs employee quality of life, causing severe negative outcomes. Kaplan et al. (2017) stated that people who experience high stress have a high probability of experiencing sicknesses that can impact their physical well-being. The study by Khan and Khurshid (2017) revealed that employees who experience high levels of stress would have lower EWB, including mental and physical well-being). WRS occurs when an employee feels uncertain about what the company can achieve in the future and when the employee perceives themselves as incapable of handling any work-related pressure (Kurnia, 2015). WRS has two components, namely job threat stress and job pressure stress. Studies have shown that job stress will reduce EWB, but job pressure stress will not (Bell et al., 2012). Conversely, some studies have also argued that WRS and EWB constitute separate but overlapping spectrums as the absence of stress do not equal EWB, but EWB promotion will contribute to stress reduction (Keeman et al., 2017).

Another important construct is organizational culture. Organisational culture is a complex set of commitments, ideologies, values, and traditions that are shared throughout the organisation (Anning-Dorson, 2017). Moreover, the organisational culture and how employees perceive their work environment are essential in EWB (Dóra et al., 2019). Studies have indicated that social support and a team-oriented environment play a vital role in fostering EWB (Pow et al., 2017). Employees working in the team culture have shown the highest level of enjoyment and productivity with the lowest levels of stress in hierarchical, adhocracy, and market cultures. The organisation-focused resource (support and culture of fairness) will directly influence EWB. Human Resource (HRM) practices are one of the vital organisational factors in shaping employee perceived well-being (He et al., 2019). Studies have indicated that HRM practices such as appraisal, training and development, and compensation can affect the EWB by fulfilling physical or psychological demands (Livingston and Thompson, 2019). Additionally, other researchers have indicated that HRM can enhance EWB by fostering a supportive, caring, committed work environment. In fact, HRM practices

that possess flexible job design and a trusting environment will also lead to EWB (Supanti and Butcher, 2019). Research has also highlighted that HRM practices can positively contribute to mental health by emphasising workplace happiness and organisational justice (Kim, 2019). Hence, HRM practice will ultimately lead to greater EWB and job engagement (Heffernan and Dundon, 2016).

The role of leadership is another construct that affects EWB. In today's dynamic global working environment, there is increasing evidence indicating that organisations have recognised the influence of leadership in EWB (Samad, 2015). Alfes et al (2010) have also stated that leadership is the crucial determinant affecting EWB in the perspective of health and engagement. The absence of positive leadership will lead to the creation of stress among employees and reduce overall EWB. Trafvelin et al (2011) added that transformational leadership is significantly and positively associated with EWB. The characteristics of transformational leaders can lead to greater quality of employee emotions, physical and mental health, allowing an employee to deliver optimal performance (Hamar et al., 2015). Studies have also emphasised responsible leadership in contributing to EWB. Responsible leadership can be defined as a leader who embraces social leadership and focuses on sustainable development (Antunes and Franco, 2016). Responsible leadership delivers day-to-day communication with employees, such as encouragement, supporting, leading, and coaching, contributing to a leader and follower relationships that impact EWB (Gordon et al., 2019).

Methodology and Research Methods

The aim of this qualitative study is to explore the antecedents and barriers to millennials' well-being at Work in Malaysia. This research followed the stages as stated in the 'Research Onion' (Saunders et al., 2016). The research onion specifies the various stages in research, starting from research philosophy. This study is based on interpretivism philosophy and an inductive approach. In this qualitative study, research questions were developed, and data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The target population was millennial employees, and purposive sampling was used to identify the participants. Data analysis was done manually, and themes were identified.

The selected research philosophy was positivism. The interpretivism philosophy was adopted for this research. Interpretivism philosophy indicated that it is essential for the researchers to emphasise the uniqueness and differences of humans as social actors. In a qualitative study, it is vital to understand the social phenomena from the perspective of the social actors being studied (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). This study adopted the inductive approach as it is more aligned with the philosophy of positivism. The inductive thinking enabled the research to start from observation and move to detect patterns and themes in the data. Saunders (2016) stated that the induction approach is appropriate for qualitative study as it is being carried out through thematic analysis in determining the research objectives.

The Research strategy was a survey, and the methodological choice was qualitative. For this study, basic qualitative research was undertaken to explore the antecedents and barriers that affect millennials' well-being. In this basic qualitative research, the researcher was interested in understanding how people construct their world, how people interpret experience, and what attributes people experience (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). The methodological choice was a qualitative research method. The qualitative research method refers to the research about a person's behaviours, lives, feelings, emotions, lived experience,

social movement, and interaction. This qualitative research allowed researchers to deliver more details and rich descriptions of respondents' experiences, opinions, and feelings that enabled readers to develop a more comprehensive overview (Chalhoub-Deville and Deville, 2008).

In this research, the interview method was adopted as it allows the interviewer to ask questions and get responses from the respondent. Furthermore, the in-depth interview allowed the studied population to freely express any feelings and ideas related to the topic (Trigueros et al., 2017). Specifically, the individual interview was carried out based on electronically through tools like Google Meet. This research consists of semi-structured interviews based on flexible topic guides that deliver a loose structure of open-ended questions to explore the attitudes and experiences. Hence, this semi-structured interview enabled the researchers to uncover concerns and issues that are yet to be anticipated by collecting information on and interpreting meaning based on the respondents' lived experiences (Trigueros, 2017).

For the determination of sample size, there is no specific rule of thumb on the sample size for qualitative research. Kuzel (1999) recommended 5–8 participants in a homogeneous sample, and Parse (1990) recommended 2-10 participants to attain saturation of data. Boddy (2016) concluded that a sample size of one single case could be adequate. The saturation point is the point at which the data reveals no new properties nor yields any further theoretical insights (Charmaz, 2014, p. 345). Purposive sampling was used to identify the qualified participants (Creswell and Clark, 2011). This sampling method is being selected because it is more readily accessible, less costly, more convenient, and only selects respondents who are relevant to the research design. The target population was millennials working in Malaysia.

The data collected was transcribed for further analysis. Thematic analysis was done manually to identify the codes and the themes (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). To analyse the data, the researchers read thoroughly and familiarised themselves with the data to ensure ideas from the participants were captured and interpreted. The coding process for all the data was conducted to explore the qualitative text by categorising, meaning, and marking similar text strings with a code label. Themes were identified by grouping similar codes. The theme is defined as a broad category that involves several codes that are related to one another, and it can represent an idea or thought that is crucial for a research question. Each theme was defined carefully, and this involved formulating the meaning of each theme to develop a greater understanding of the data.

Results and Discussion

In this study, data was collected from ten participants who are all millennials that are currently working in Kuala Lumpur. The sample size complied with Parse (1990), who recommended 2-10 participants to attain saturation of data. The participants' ages range is between 23-and 30 years old with at least one year of working experience. The ten participants were considered adequate based on the saturation point, which is when the data revealed no new properties nor yielded any further theoretical insights (Charmaz, 2014, p. 345). For the eighth participant, only minimal new information was obtained. For the ninth participant, no further new information was obtained. The ethical principle of privacy and confidentiality, the names were kept confidential. They were referred to as Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. The themes that emerged through the coding process are stated below:

Research Question 1. What are the current antecedents that support millennials' EWB?

The following themes were revealed:

Workplace Transparency

This research has shown that workplace transparency was the primary antecedent that can support millennials EWB, as 6 participants indicated this claim. The participants demonstrated that open and transparent communication enables them to voice out their ideas, opinions, and thoughts in the workplace or during meetings without any boundaries. In addition, it leads participants to feel being valued and vital to the organisation's success in a transparent workplace. A transparent workplace allows millennial employees to be retained in the company. Open communication improves EWB by reducing the participant's stress in performing their task because it can eliminate tremendous reporting and communication processes that would delay their work performance. This activity has allowed them to share ideas and engage with upper management and make them feel comfortable during work.

Participants 1 and 2: *'A company that can lesser hierarchical and bureaucratic level leads to workplace transparency, which has ultimately.'*

Participant 3: *"transparency of the working environment is one of the main aspects that makes me want to work in this company."*

Participant 4: *"This has made blaming culture and office politics less likely to happen in the workplace as greater trust between employees is facilitated, which aids in greater EWB."*

The finding above has been found consistent with the literature on stress. Stress is identified as one of the mediators of EWB. Bharucha (2018) also stated that the company that initiates greater transparency within an organisation could attain a high-performing workplace. It was also mentioned that a transparent and honest workplace allowed the company to have a greater employee retention rate as employees are comfortable saying how they feel and have greater involvement in the company. The finding is aligned with Morrow (2020), who indicated that transparency in the workplace could foster trust and clear communication within the organisation. However, it has yet to be explored whether workplace transparency helps to improve EWB by reducing office politics, avoiding blaming culture, and increasing employee productivity. Lavoie (2015) also highlighted that workplace transparency leads to greater engagement as employees are allowed to voice out their ideas.

Health and Wellness Program

Another prominent theme highlighted by the participants was the health and wellness program. The respondents stated that the health and wellness program provided by the company could be a significant driver that positively influences working millennials. There were 5 participants who indicated that working in a company that invests resources and time in supporting both employees' mental and physical health can lead to greater EWB. The health and wellness program highlighted by the participants included medical benefits, employee assistance programs, festival celebrations and gifts, exercise activities, and staff benefits. The participants stated that that company that has invested in employee wellness programs resulted in making them feel more valued by the organisation.

Participants 2 and 4: *"well-designed wellness program improves the EWB as it enables employees to reduce the financial burden and concern of accessing adequate medical treatment."*

Participant 4: *"the health and wellness program has made him physically healthy, initially advancing the EWB."*

Participant 8: *"contentment with the wellness policy developed by the company, which intended to prioritise employee mental health by having close session discussions with employees."*

The finding of this research is consistent with the study of Lahiri et al. (2018), which highlighted that well-being programs, such as exercise, and employee assistance programs improve employee mental health and physical health. However, the strength of such programs is still not clear. Carroll (2018) argued that the wellness program would have only a minor impact on employee well-being. This finding is also consistent with Wieneke et al. (2019), which stated that wellness programs lead to a more favourable perception of the organisation.

Outcome-oriented Culture

Outcome-oriented culture can be an emerging theme in this study. There were 3 participants who highlighted this theme. The participants stated that companies that emphasise results, achievement, and action as their core values could contribute to millennials' EWB. The participants have indicated that the outcome-oriented culture motivates them and improves their EWB.

Participant 5, *"I am allowed to work anywhere and anytime, as long as I fulfil the objective established by my supervisor. This culture allowed me to avoid work-life conflict as I will not be forced to work overtime"*.

Participant 7: *"There is no need to adhere to non-value-added miscellaneous procedures, protocols, and timekeeping. The outcome-oriented culture has allowed the company to evaluate millennial employee performance and work quality based on the result instead of focusing too much on the process"*.

Participant 1: *"The outcome-oriented culture improves EWB as it fosters greater collaboration between employees because the objectives are ultimately achieved through the collective effort of many people."*

This finding has indicated that millennials' EWB can be positively influenced by outcome-oriented culture as it has given the flexibility and improved work performance. These findings were consistent with past literature, which has stated that millennials are more inclined toward flexible work arrangements and time base working structures in performing their task. However, past studies are limited on the benefit of outcome-oriented cultures, such as avoiding confusing processes and improving work performance can impact EWB. Therefore, this study revealed the importance of outcome-oriented culture in improving millennials' EWB.

Transformational Leadership Style

Another significant theme identified was transformational leadership. The respondents stated that leaders who possess a transformational leadership style characteristic could positively affect the EWB. The participants stated that this leadership style motivated them and reduced uncertainty and stress. They prefer the leader to proactively provide support and recognition, set clear goals, and establish high expectations that can directly inspire their passion and emotion during work. The participants stressed that the characteristic of the transformational leadership style allowed them to feel cared for as support and empathy were provided.

Participant 5: *"she will always give a clear direction and guide me."*

Participant 7: *"She thought me all the way. She makes me feel like she is one of my family"*

members”.

Participant 9: *"this leadership style has cultivated EWB, creativity, and problem-solving skills because we were given more opportunities to be involved in the decision-making process. I feel valued as a leader who will solicit ideas, takes risk, and challenges assumptions. The leader is a role model to emulate, inspire employees to grow in careers"*.

Participant 8: *"I inspire to be like her. This has allowed me to feel psychologically safe, making me want to work long-term"*.

This finding is consistent with the literature on leadership. A transformational leader could improve EWB by showing individual consideration, creating employee development opportunities, and acting as a role model to gain respect, admiration, and trust. Thus, the finding has clearly shown that leaders who have developed a clear and inspiring vision can improve the millennial worker EWB. Therefore, it is argued that transformational leadership has played a more significant role in millennials' EWB. The finding is also in line with Tran et al. (2018) study, which indicated that employees would trust their leader who can deliver a higher level of support, encouragement, respect, and trust leading to greater EWB.

Workplace Relationships

Another theme shared by the participant of this study is the support and care from good workplace relationships.

Participant 3 *"I treated them more like a friend rather than a colleague. The positive relationship among colleagues fosters appreciation between each other. Even sometimes when I help them do a very simple and small favour, they will show their appreciation."*

Participant 8: *"The positive relationship between peers, such as understanding, respect, and trust, has improved working experience and EWB in the workplace. They are open to talking about everything, and they will always stay positive about things despite being super busy."*

Participant 9: *"The supportive colleagues enable me to work more comfortably in the company, leading to an enhancement in EWB."*

The finding is consistent with the research of Jia and Shoham (2012), which has indicated that co-worker relationships can provide employees with a source of emotional support as they will have a deeper understanding of the internal working environment. Peer support can significantly reduce stress at work. The finding from this research also aligns with the JDR model literature, which job resources can positively influence. The study of Caillier (2017) has also proven the same result as this study. High-quality workplace relationships could impact the organisation's performance as it allows the employee to be more committed and minimise exhaustion and job stress.

Research Question 2. What are the current barriers that obstruct millennials' EWB in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia?

The following themes were revealed.

Role Conflict

Three participants indicated that the role conflict has negatively influenced their EWB.

Participant 1: *"To my dismay, the allocated job is too diverse, and it requires me to stress out in performing multiple tasks at a time."*

Participant 2: *"there was a role conflict when we were being allocated to manage a task that is not my specialty. It is making me very stressed when I need to cover every different job scope that is actually not proficient in my area."*

Participant 5: *"I feel stressed when my employer allocates tasks that are not my profession."*

This result is consistent with the JDS model, where it is indicated that high job demand causes employee psychological issues that will lead to job strain and health impairment. This will negatively impact EWB. This finding was found to be consistent with the literature on stress. Employees who experience role conflict will have a negative impact on employees' psychological well-being. However, this finding contradicts the study by Thakur (2018), who indicated that there is no relationship between role conflict and psychological well-being.

Lack of Career Advancement

Three participants highlighted that lack of career advancement is the barrier that is related to EWB.

Participant 2: *"The company emphasises profitability. This affects long-term career growth. It has caused me to be demotivated to work at the organisation. I really feel very tough to go to work every morning."*

Participant 4: *"Although the company has provided a great salary package, lack of career development and learning often makes a considerable impact on employees. Employees and their contributions are unappreciated. They only treated us like a robot"*.

Participant 5: *"Slow promotion and increment would also affect EWB, making me want to quit my job in the short-term. It is important to have salaries that are comparable to my personal contribution"*.

The findings are aligned with Kumar and Velmurugan (2018) research, which highlighted that millennials would shift to other opportunities if their expectations were not met. These findings are consistent with the JDS model, as it is stated that individual well-being and happiness can be affected by job resources, such as opportunities for personal development. The finding also aligns with the Self Determination Theory, where external factors such as promotion and reward can influence motivation and well-being.

Work Overload

Work overload is another theme shared by the three participants in this study. The participants have stressed that the unreasonable workload being assigned has caused a severe negative impact on their physical and psychological health. The participants experienced a high level of exhaustion and burnout. The result of this study indicates that millennials have sacrificed most of their daily time, including the weekend, to manage their tasks and have no time to take care of their EWB.

Participant 3: *"I am working 24/7 every day in a year. The sense of responsibility and the workload I am handling is not really reflecting positively on my health."*

Participant 6: *"I could not finish my task on hand, and I do not have time to do any other new task either. It makes me feel uncomfortable, which is like forcing me to do work on extra hours"*.

Participant 9: *"I sacrifice activities that contribute to joy in performing the heavy workload. There is no work-life balance. This affected mental and physical health."*

This finding is also consistent with past studies (Khan and Khurshid, 2017), which stated that the imbalance of work-life due to long working hours and work overload would lead to stress and employee burnout. In addition, the finding also corresponds with the JDS model, which shows that millennial employees' psychological and physical health is at the highest risk when there is a greater level of work demand accompanied by a relatively low level of job resources. The study by Boxall (2014) also stated that work overload causes lower job

satisfaction and increase stress level and work-life imbalance.

Workplace Conflict

Participants expressed that workplace conflict can lead to a negative impact on EWB. A few participants felt uncomfortable and stressed about office politics within the organisation.

Participant 2: *"The differences in team norms will often cause employee inequality. This sometimes further leads to office politics within the organisation"*.

Participant 4: *"Having a poor relationship and biasness often harm millennials EWB as they often feel dependent and struggle to work in environments where there is conflict and low justice."*

Participant 9: *"The workplace conflict had impacted his EWB because it fosters blaming culture in the team. This makes it difficult to cooperate and seek help from another department"*.

Based on the finding above, it has clearly shown that millennial employees who experience workplace conflict will suffer from stress and burnout. This finding is consistent with Sonnentag et al. (2013) research which highlighted that relationship conflict can negatively impact EWB.

Research Question 3. What are the perceived expectations of millennials towards achieving better EWB in Malaysia?

The themes revealed are as stated below.

Hybrid Working Arrangement

A common expectation suggested by the participants was the hybrid working arrangement. The hybrid working arrangement is an effective strategy for millennial employees to improve their EWB.

Participant 4: *"working from home and office bring several pros and cons but working from home in the long term will cause stress. Working in the office for a long time was tiring and boring. Thus, having a hybrid working arrangement was ideal for improving EWB."*

Participant 6: *"A hybrid working arrangement is a strategy to enhance EWB. Sometimes working from home can feel isolated, and sometimes working in an office makes me feel stressed. Thus, balancing between two will optimise his working experience."*

Participant 7, *"Work from home would cause stress due to internet connection disruption. Travelling to the office will be a waste of time. Therefore, implementing a hybrid working arrangement will be a sensible strategy"*.

Based on the literature review, the flexible working arrangement plays a significant role in WLB (Wong et al., 2017). The hybrid working style corresponds to a flexible working arrangement, where millennials prefer flexibility in choosing to work at the preferred workplace. It is also important to note that flexibility has become a norm among millennials. The above finding is consistent with Bob (2021), which indicated that companies who implement hybrid working arrangements could ensure productivity and relieve anxiety and isolation experienced by employees.

Equitable Rewarding System

The finding from three participants identified that a fair rewards system is perceived as contributing to greater EWB.

Participant 6: *"We must constantly work overtime without adequate compensation. The company should provide more financial rewards and exercise fairness to improve EWB. I will*

be willing to put more efforts and extra hours to hit my target."

Participant 8: *"Having a fair reward system where employee's compensation and rewards are based on their performance improved motivation and EWB."*

This perceived expectation has been found to be consistent with the Self Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), which states that the rewards system influences individual behaviours. Having a fair rewards system can allow millennials employees to remain highly enthusiastic in performing their work. The results also correspond to the findings by (Jehangir et al., 2015). It was shown that fair reward distribution could significantly impact employees' motivation, reduce conflict, and increase enthusiasm at work.

Personalised Career Development

A common theme among the participants was personalised career development. It was greatly preferred as one of the ideal strategies for helping millennials improve their EWB. A personalised career development setting refers to the company enabling millennial employees to have an opportunity to plan their future career paths with the company, which can ultimately empower them.

Participants 1 *'having a personalised career setting allowed employees to reach a mutual win-win situation with the organisation. This can allow employees to feel secure for their career in future"*.

Participant 4: *"Personalised career development is a helpful strategy to adopt to improve EWB. Human resource managers need to understand the main interest of employees working in the company to provide proper guidance"*.

Participant 7: *"The company to focus on team goals and employee personal goals."*

Participant 8: *"I hope that training provided will emphasise the job scope and provide external trainers to improve relevant areas that suit of interest."*

Past studies have indicated that millennials are constantly striving for continuous improvement, and the prospect of learning new skills should not remain slim. This finding is consistent with past literature, which has indicated that millennials tend to expect more challenges and changes in their work. The adoption of personalised career development can significantly act as an effective support system in helping millennials avoid being stagnant in their career path.

Team Harmony

Another theme being proposed by the participants was team harmony. The participants suggested that companies should emphasise building a harmonious working relationship between employees to improve their EWB.

Participant 1: *"The company improves the working environment by having a resting room for a salesperson, who constantly work outside the office. Having some bonding activity in the company will also likely improve the company environment and lead to better EWB."*

Participant 2: *"I think the company can also organise more bonding activities because we have to spend the majority of our time working, so doing that can actually improve the working environment."*

Participant 9: *"the company should hold events such as a team-building program and vacation leave to build greater teamwork and improve their mental health at work."*

The results indicated that millennial employees value teamwork and relationships between employees to improve EWB. This is consistent with Pow et al. (2017) finding, which revealed that a team-oriented environment plays a vital role in fostering EWB as it delivers

the highest level of enjoyment.

Implications, Limitations and Recommendations

The finding from this study contributed to both managerial and theoretical perspectives. This study has uncovered some of the common antecedents and barriers faced by millennial employees. An understanding of EWB by employers can enable better engagement and performance by millennial employees. This study highlighted that workplace transparency plays a significant role in supporting millennials' EWB. Therefore, it is crucial for the organisation to focus on transparency, health and wellness programs, outcome-oriented culture, and workplace relationships to ensure an effective EWB that leads to engagement and retention of millennial employees. The barriers that hinder the achievement of EWB include work overload, lack of career advancement, role conflict, and workplace conflict. Thus, organisations must review the current management practices that hinder the achievement of EWB. Effective intervention is recommended to optimise business performance by avoiding unreasonable policies that obstruct millennials' EWB. In order to increase EWB, the themes uncovered in this study encompass team harmony, a hybrid working environment, and an equitable rewarding environment. From the theoretical perspective, this study has filled the research gap that was identified. This study revealed factors that can hinder and uplift the millennials' EWB.

In this in-depth qualitative study, several themes that hinder or uplift employees' EWB were revealed. However, this study consists of some limitations that can pave the way for future studies. In this study, the effect of the categorical variables such as ethnic background was not included. Future studies can examine the moderating effect of categorical variables such as ethnicity. In-depth interviews with open-ended questions and probing were used to collect data. However, as in any other qualitative study, the sample is small, and there is a lack of generalizability. Therefore, future studies should use mixed-method research such as an exploratory sequential mixed method to further verify the findings through a survey where the sample size can be larger. The target population in this study was millennials in Malaysia. The determinants of EWB can vary across industries. Therefore, future studies should cover both small and large industries. A comparison between the small and large industries can provide a better picture of the impact and strategies to deal with the impact.

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