The significance and challenges of turnover and retention of millennial professionals

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to provide readers with a comprehensive overview of the current state of the millennial literature, highlighting the significance and challenges of millennial professionals, their reported high turnover and the various recommendations designed to engage and retain them.

Design/methodology/approach – An integrated review approach was applied to synthesise contemporary peer-reviewed articles, supplemented by legacy and grey literature and relevant book chapters, to comprehensively explore and construct a cohesive overview of the current research on the millennial workforce.

Findings – Within the wealth of available information, examining the various studies on millennial turnover reveals diverse theories, evidence and opportunities for advancement, underscoring the necessity for more robust empirical studies. The investigation identified three overarching retention strategy themes: (1) intergenerational conflict management, (2) workplace adaptations and (3) solutions rooted in a protean career orientation. In alignment with protean career concepts, coaching shows promise as an underexplored option.

Practical implications – This article holds practical significance by offering researchers a comprehensive and cohesive overview of the millennial literature. Additionally, it gives organisations a novel perspective on the crucial role coaching can play in engaging and retaining millennial employees.

Originality/value – The increased focus on retaining millennial workers in recent decades has spurred a proliferation of articles and books on this subject. However, this body of research remains fragmented, lacking an overview that provides a clear picture of its current state. This review aims to bridge this gap.

Keywords Millennials, Generational differences, Intergenerational conflicts, Retention, Protean career, Coaching

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Employee turnover is typical and sometimes necessary (Donald, 2023), but it can also adversely affect organisations and their workforce (Hassan *et al.*, 2020). Over the past decades, there has been a surge in the media and literature discussing the challenges that organisations face in retaining millennial employees (Kuron *et al.*, 2015; Aydogmus, 2019). Consequently, numerous articles and books have emerged, offering managers various

strategies to improve millennial retention rates (Gabrielova and Buchko, 2021). Despite the wealth of information available, this topic remains diverse and fragmented. This integrated review aims to synthesise data from the existing literature and other relevant sources, providing a concise and unified overview focused on the significance and challenges related to the turnover and retention of millennial professionals.

Method

Review questions

Three questions guided this review: (1) What are the significance and challenges of millennial professionals? (2) What is the current millennial turnover situation, and what are the impacts? (3) What are the proposed strategies to retain millennial employees, and how do they vary?

Search strategy

A systematic search was initially conducted using five online databases: PsycINFO, PsycExtra, ProQuest Central, JSTOR and EBSCOHost. The search used a combination of key terms related to Millennials (e.g. Millennials and Generation Y) and work-related outcomes (e.g. turnover, turnover intention and retention). The inclusion criteria were: (a) works written in English and published between 2018 and October 2023, (b) articles with titles or keywords matching the search terms, (c) scholarly works published in peer-reviewed journals and (d) topics related to employment in organisations. Out of the 70 articles initially identified, only 13 were incorporated into the final review sample. The exclusion of the remaining articles was attributed to various factors, including their lack of relevance to the review questions, duplicate content, inadequate methodologies, overly specific population criteria and issues related to limited access or unavailability.

The snowball method was also employed to enrich the review further by tracing references within the reviewed articles. This iterative process led to exploring additional topics relevant to the review questions, extending beyond the original search parameters. This inclusive strategy encompassed references from other sources, publications predating 2018 and non-peer-reviewed materials, including book chapters and grey literature, such as practitioner-authored papers (e.g. McKinsey, 2022; Chartered Management Institute (CMI), 2022; Hewlett-Packard, 2023). Employing this inclusive strategy was essential to ensure a well-rounded perspective on millennial employees.

This comprehensive approach resulted in a final sample of 74 cited references, encompassing empirical studies (37), literature reviews (15), book chapters (4) and grey literature (18). As themes emerged within this collection, they were systematically categorised and interlinked, constructing a cohesive narrative covering various topics, perspectives and insights related to millennial employees and the review questions. Figure 1 depicts the central themes identified in this review. It also illustrates the structure and information flow of the presented argument.

Millennial professionals

The Pew Research Centre defines Millennials (or Generation Y) as individuals born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019). Though these birth years vary in the literature, there is a consensus that they belong to the final two decades of the 20th century (Holmberg-Wright *et al.*, 2017). They grew up during a period marked by rapid technological advancements, globalisation and increased demographic diversity, significantly influencing their life and work priorities and expectations different from previous generations (Aydogmus, 2018; Solomon and van Coller-Peter, 2019).

Review Questions	Main Themes	Sub-Themes		
1. What are the significance and challenges of millennial professionals?	Millennial Professionals	*Work Values*	*Impact of Technology*	
	Millennials in a Multigenerational Workplace	*Generational Differences*	*Intergenerational Conflicts*	
2. What is the current millennial turnover situation, and what are the impacts?	Millennial Turnover	*Turnover Data*	*Turnover Analysis*	*Turnover Consequences*
3. What are the proposed strategies to retain millennial employees, and how do they vary?	Millennial Retention Strategies	*Intergenerational Conflict Management*	*Workplace Adaptations*	*Protean Career Orientation Solutions*

Source(s): Figure created by authors

Millennials entered the job market in the early 2000s and navigated employment challenges during the 2007–2008 global financial crisis (Aydogmus, 2018; Solomon and van Coller-Peter, 2019). Today, they constitute the second youngest generation of employees (Deloitte, 2022a; Gabrielova and Buchko, 2021) and represent the largest cohort in the American workforce (Fry, 2018). Millennial professionals, synonymous with millennial knowledge workers (Aydogmus, 2018, 2019), now occupy positions at every level within the organisations, with some already in senior leadership roles (Gabrielova and Buchko, 2021; Franklin, 2015). Concurrently, the number of seasoned employees nearing retirement is increasing, intensifying the urgency to attract and retain millennial talents (Papavasileiou and Lyons, 2015).

Work values
Work values represent what individuals deem crucial in their work and careers (Gabrielova and Buchko, 2021), impacting their choices and actions in their professional lives (Kuron *et al.*, 2015). Various factors influence these values, including age, life course (Kalleberg and Marsden, 2019), socioeconomic status, gender, education level (Warr, 2008) and cultural background (Papavasileiou and Lyons, 2015). Additionally, the existing research highlights generational membership as another significant factor in shaping these work values (Rani and Samuel, 2016), with generational cohorts often sharing values based on collective ideals, beliefs and mindsets (Lyons and Kuron, 2014).

Numerous articles emphasise the distinctive work values of the millennial generation. These values include professional growth, a commitment to continuous development, a desire for work–life balance, a quest for meaningful work (Solomon and van Coller-Peter, 2019) and a preference for a fully remote or hybrid work setting (Deloitte, 2023). Whilst financial rewards are also significant for this generation, they are willing to accept lower compensation for a more fulfilling work experience (Smith and Nichols, 2015; Hewlett-Packard, 2023).

Additionally, millennial employees prefer working in collaborative environments, fostering positive relationships with colleagues and proactively seeking feedback to align their efforts with personal goals (Holmberg-Wright *et al.*, 2017; Baker Rosa and Hastings, 2018). They expect supervisor guidance (Baker Rosa and Hastings, 2018) yet value the autonomy and freedom to operate independently (Lu and Gursoy, 2013). Recognition and appreciation are also crucial in their work lives (Solomon and van Coller-Peter, 2019).

Impact of technology

Millennials, often characterised as tech-savvy and labelled digital natives due to their technology-infused upbringing, possess valuable technological knowledge and skills (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010; Mahmoud *et al.*, 2020). However, it is crucial to note that exceptions exist, particularly amongst those within this generation lacking access to technology. This form of digital inequality, termed "digital poverty", garnered significant attention during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasising its profound impact on global education and daily life (Sibilla and Gorgoni, 2022).

For those with technological exposure from an early age, it has empowered them to swiftly learn, adapt, create innovative technical solutions (Aydogmus, 2018; Krishnan and Kakada, 2022) and access up-to-date information effectively (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010), making them valuable assets to organisations (Krishnan and Kakada, 2022). Furthermore, active involvement in social media equips them with proficiency across various platforms for customer engagement and company public relations, skills that older generations may not possess to the same extent (Kapoor and Solomon, 2011; Mahmoud *et al.*, 2020). Today, these technological advantages in the workplace extend beyond Millennials as Gen Z, their younger counterparts, enter the workforce (Gabrielova and Buchko, 2021).

Despite the perceived advantages of digital upbringing, some authors voice concerns about potential drawbacks for Millennials, even though such concerns lack empirical support. Franklin (2015) points to limitations in acquiring essential life and work skills, potentially impacting critical thinking, exploration and reflective abilities. Moreover, despite its advantages, the easily accessible online information presents challenges in sustaining Millennials' focused inquiries and collecting diverse perspectives for accurate data evaluation (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010). Furthermore, the impact of technology on Millennials' inclination towards instant gratification, potentially heightening impatience, is also noted (Solomon and van Coller-Peter, 2019).

Millennials in a multigenerational workplace

The contemporary labour market is diverse, encompassing four generations: Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Generation X (1965–1980), Millennials (1981–1996) and Gen Z (1997–2012; Dimock, 2019). According to Mannheim (1952), each generation, moulded by unique formative experiences, establishes distinct values, attitudes and behaviours, influencing social and workplace expectations (Kapoor and Solomon, 2011). CMI (2022) recognises such diversity as a strategic business asset, highlighting benefits such as knowledge sharing, improved experience retention and a broader skill set within a well-managed, multigenerational workforce. However, effectively navigating generational differences whilst pursuing performance goals also presents organisational challenges (Costanza and Finkelstein, 2015; Gabrielova and Buchko, 2021).

Generational differences

The topic of generational differences has gained significant attention in the media and literature over the past decades (Kuron *et al.*, 2015; Aydogmus, 2019). As a result of changing

age demographics in the global workforce and a growing demand for millennial talent, there has been an increasing body of literature advocating for organisations to adopt distinct approaches when working with, managing and engaging millennial employees compared with past generations (Solomon and van Coller-Peter, 2019). This approach links to the ongoing debate regarding generational differences in the workplace (Costanza *et al.*, 2012; Lyons and Kuron, 2014).

Early studies examining generational differences within a work context have produced contradicting findings (e.g. Cennamo and Gardner, 2008; Kapoor and Solomon, 2011). In attempts to reconcile disparities in published studies, different research teams have taken the task of consolidating, reviewing (e.g. Lyons and Kuron, 2014) or systematically assessing (e.g. Costanza *et al.*, 2012) these findings, but only to produce more conflicting conclusions. Recent studies further exemplify this inconsistency. For example, in the realm of work values research, Kalleberg and Marsden (2019) offer contrasting findings compared to Rani and Samuel (2016) and Tan and Chin (2023), who observed generational differences. Similarly, Tan and Chin (2023) identified generational distinctions when examining workplace attitudes, whereas Cucina *et al.* (2018) reported conflicting results.

Intergenerational conflicts
Cennamo and Gardner (2008) suggest that differences in generational exposure to work environments can lead to variations in work values and preferences, which may trigger intergenerational conflicts. Such conflicts can occur in various work domains, including management and leadership, resulting from generational variations in workstyle preferences and leadership perceptions (Gabrielova and Buchko, 2021) as well as in daily operations due to generational differences in communication preferences, technology usage (Kapoor and Solomon, 2011) and interpersonal communication skills (Holmberg-Wright *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, despite where they manifest in the workplace, Kapoor and Solomon (2011) emphasise the critical need to manage these conflicts, as they can hinder productive teamwork and collaboration and lead to turnover (Smith and Nichols, 2015).

Costanza and Finkelstein (2015) reject the idea of generational differences and instead propose generational stereotyping as the primary driver of workplace conflicts. Generational stereotypes involve ascribing generalised positive and negative traits to individuals based on their birth era. Stereotypes, in general, can lead to contentions through a mechanism supported by the stereotype activation model (Wheeler and Petty, 2001). According to this framework, stereotypes or preconceived notions about a specific group can influence how individuals communicate or interact with others, increasing the likelihood of conflicts, especially when these preconceptions of the other group are negative.

Negative stereotypes about Millennials are prevalent in mainstream media and scholarly publications (Baker Rosa and Hastings, 2018). They are commonly depicted as lazy, entitled, selfish, needy, unmotivated, disrespectful and disloyal (Holmberg-Wright *et al.*, 2017), sparking concerns about how they relate to other organisational members (Smith and Nichols, 2015). These negative stereotypes, amplified by their refusal to follow the "norm" set by the previous generations (Lyons and Kuron, 2014) and the proliferation of misinformation in the media (Costanza and Finkelstein, 2015), hinder Millennials' efforts to earn respect and credibility amongst more senior employees (Smith and Nichols, 2015).

Lyons and Kuron (2014), providing an alternative perspective, argue that conflicts at work are not unusual, especially when a new generational cohort joins the workforce. They explain that younger generations, like Millennials and Gen Z, often play a significant role in driving social change due to their closer connection to contemporary issues than previous generations. Consequently, imposing outdated company policies and practices that do not align with the modern context of these generations is likely to encounter resistance (Hassan

et al., 2020). These younger workers are more inclined to challenge existing norms, serve as change agents and explore new ideas to adapt to their evolving world (Lyons and Kuron, 2014).

Millennial turnover
The current pressing challenge for businesses is the retention of millennial talents (Hassan *et al.*, 2020; Ngotngamwong, 2020). This perception, widely echoed in the popular press despite the limited and mixed evidence available, has led to substantial concerns about the future of organisations. Consequently, it has motivated numerous researchers to delve into this issue as reflected in the multitude of millennial studies conducted in various countries (e.g. Finland (Stevanin *et al.*, 2019), Peru (Holtschlag *et al.*, 2020), the United States of America (USA) (Lu and Gursoy, 2013), etc.) and across different industries (e.g. technology (Aydogmus, 2019), hospitality (Baker Rosa and Hastings, 2018) and healthcare (Papavasileiou and Lyons, 2015)).

Turnover data
Turnover data, a pivotal workforce metric (Gandy *et al.*, 2018), provides insight into organisational dynamics. Deloitte's widely referenced 2016 study in millennial research (Solomon and van Coller-Peter, 2019; Hassan *et al.*, 2020; Ngotngamwong, 2020) revealed a substantial intention amongst two-thirds of global Millennials to leave within five years, with emerging markets exhibiting lower loyalty (Deloitte, 2016). In a more recent study, Deloitte conducted an extensive survey across 46 countries, uncovering a notable upswing in loyalty amongst Millennials and Gen Z between 2021 and 2022 (Deloitte, 2022a). Their findings report attributes this shift to the "Great Resignation" in 2021 (Klotz), marked by the significant rise in resignations and workforce transitions post-COVID-19. However, it is also plausible that in 2022, several millennial respondents were progressing towards the maintenance stage of their careers (Super, 1980), signifying a focus on seeking stability, maintaining work status and securing positions.

Nevertheless, despite this apparent increase in loyalty, nearly a quarter of Millennials worldwide expressed their intention to leave their current jobs within two years (Deloitte, 2022a). These intentions vary accross specific countries: 13% in Thailand (Deloitte, 2022f), 21% in Austria (Deloitte, 2022b), 28% in Brazil (Deloitte, 2022c) and 29% in New Zealand (Deloitte, 2022e), with Finland leading at 39% (Deloitte, 2022d). Globally, 32% of this group are willing to depart without another job lined up, highlighting widespread dissatisfaction (Deloitte, 2022a). PwC's research findings echoed this lack of job satisfaction after surveying 52,195 individuals across 44 countries and various generations, indicating that 23% of millennial employees are ready to explore new job opportunities within the next 12 months, contrasting with 27% of Gen Z, 15% of Generation X and 9% of Boomer workers (PwC, 2022).

Alongside consulting firms, statistical agencies have also provided crucial turnover research data (e.g. McKinsey, 2022). In 2022, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) conducted a comprehensive decade-long survey, categorising data by age and gender. The results indicate that median employee tenure in the USA is longer for men and older workers than for their female and younger counterparts. When transforming this data to illustrate employees' tenure patterns across generations (refer to Table 1), it elucidates consistently shorter tenures for Millennials. It also unveils that millennial tenure increases with age, aligning seamlessly with Super's (1980) career development theory. This theory posits that in the initial career exploration stage, individuals make tentative career choices through trial and error, potentially involving job changes (Kuron *et al.*, 2015). Upon reaching satisfaction, they progress to the establishment stage, where self-development becomes the focus.

Year	Generation	Age group	Average of tenure	Year	Generation	Age group	Average of tenure
		2012				*2014*	
2012	2. Millennials	16–17	0.70	2014	1. Gen Z	16–17	0.70
2012	2. Millennials	18–19	0.80	2014	2. Millennials	18–19	0.80
2012	2. Millennials	20–24	1.30	2014	2. Millennials	20–24	1.30
2012	2. Millennials	25–31	3.20	2014	2. Millennials	25–31	3.00
2012	3. Generation X	32–34	3.20	2014	2. Millennials	32–34	3.00
2012	3. Generation X	35–44	5.30	2014	3. Generation X	32–34	3.00
2012	3. Generation X	45–47	7.80	2014	3. Generation X	35–44	5.20
2012	4. Baby Boomers	48–54	7.80	2014	3. Generation X	45–47	7.90
2012	4. Baby Boomers	55–64	10.30	2014	3. Generation X	48–54	7.90
2012	4. Baby Boomers	65+	10.30	2014	4. Baby Boomers	48–54	7.90
				2014	4. Baby Boomers	55–64	10.40
				2014	4. Baby Boomers	65+	10.30
		2016				*2018*	
2016	1. Gen Z	16–17	0.60	2018	1. Gen Z	16–17	0.60
2016	1. Gen Z	18–19	0.80	2018	1. Gen Z	18–19	0.80
2016	2. Millennials	20–24	1.30	2018	1. Gen Z	20–24	1.20
2016	2. Millennials	25–31	2.80	2018	2. Millennials	20–24	1.20
2016	2. Millennials	32–34	2.80	2018	2. Millennials	25–31	2.80
2016	2. Millennials	35–44	4.90	2018	2. Millennials	32–34	2.80
2016	3. Generation X	35–44	4.90	2018	2. Millennials	35–44	4.90
2016	3. Generation X	45–47	7.90	2018	3. Generation X	35–44	4.90
2016	3. Generation X	48–54	7.90	2018	3. Generation X	45–47	7.60
2016	4. Baby Boomers	48–54	7.90	2018	3. Generation X	48–54	7.60
2016	4. Baby Boomers	55–64	10.10	2018	4. Baby Boomers	48–54	7.60
2016	4. Baby Boomers	65+	10.30	2018	4. Baby Boomers	55–64	10.10
				2018	4. Baby Boomers	65+	10.20
		2020				*2022*	
2020	1. Gen Z	16–17	0.70	2022	1. Gen Z	16–17	0.70
2020	1. Gen Z	18–19	0.80	2022	1. Gen Z	18–19	0.70
2020	1. Gen Z	20–24	1.30	2022	1. Gen Z	20–24	1.20
2020	2. Millennials	20–24	1.30	2022	1. Gen Z	25–31	2.80
2020	2. Millennials	25–31	2.80	2022	2. Millennials	25–31	2.80
2020	2. Millennials	32–34	2.80	2022	2. Millennials	32–34	2.80
2020	2. Millennials	35–44	4.90	2022	2. Millennials	35–44	4.70
2020	3. Generation X	35–44	4.90	2022	3. Generation X	35–44	4.70
2020	3. Generation X	45–47	7.50	2022	3. Generation X	45–47	6.90
2020	3. Generation X	48–54	7.50	2022	3. Generation X	48–54	6.90
2020	3. Generation X	55–64	9.90	2022	3. Generation X	55–64	9.80
2020	4. Baby Boomers	55–64	9.90	2022	4. Baby Boomers	55–64	9.80
2020	4. Baby Boomers	65+	10.30	2022	4. Baby Boomers	65+	9.90

Note(s): Generations are categorised based on the following birth years: >1996 (1. Gen Z); 1981–1996 (2. Millennials); 1965–1980 (3. Generation X) and 1946–1964 (4. Baby Boomers)
Source(s): Modified from BLS (2022, p. 5)

Building on this narrative, whilst observations in Table 1 may suggest frequent job changes amongst Millennials, a more discerning view is revealed through refined data selection and visualisation. Focusing on tenures within the 25–44 age range across various years, Figure 2 reveals a subtle decrease in average tenures for Millennials compared to Generation X at the same age, implying a nonsignificant difference in turnover behaviour between these generations. This nuanced perspective challenges the notion of widespread job-hopping amongst Millennials and aligns with findings from Pew Research (Fry, 2017) and similar studies (e.g. Costanza *et al.*, 2012; Lu and Gursoy, 2013).

Turnover analysis

When evaluating turnover data, it is crucial to consider its source and the methodology used for analysis. Turnover data gathered through questionnaires can present analytical challenges due to inherent limitations (Gray, 2022). Closed-ended questions in these surveys can limit respondents' ability to offer detailed insights, essential for understanding the reasons behind turnover behaviours. By uncritically endorsing findings indicating high turnover, researchers perpetuate the stereotype of millennials as "job-hoppers" (e.g. Hassan *et al.*, 2020), impeding a comprehensive understanding of millennial turnover in the context of various influencing factors.

Recent studies emphasise the intricate connection between turnover and dynamic labour market conditions, shaped by economic factors (Kacerova, 2016), technological advancements (Lyons *et al.*, 2015), skill supply-demand gaps (PwC, 2022; McKinsey, 2022) and geographical location (Lazzari *et al.*, 2022). Deloitte (2022a, 2023) adds further insights, highlighting a continual rise in stress and anxiety levels amongst Millennials, increasing from 38% in 2022 to 39% in 2023. This ongoing struggle with workplace stress that they experience often leads to burnout, contributing to their eventual turnover.
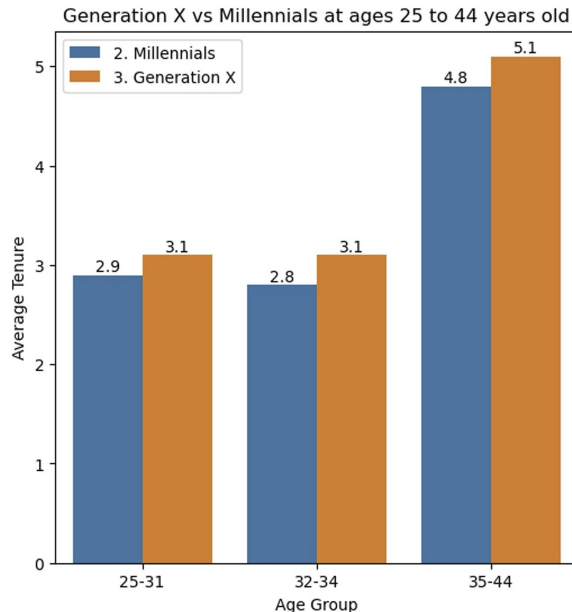

Figure 2.
Generation X vs
Millennials aged 25–44

Source(s): Modified from BLS (2022, p. 5)

In examining millennial turnover, researchers employ theoretical frameworks as an alternative analytical approach (e.g. Lu and Gursoy, 2013; Papavasileiou and Lyons, 2015; Solomon and van Coller-Peter, 2019; Mahmoud et al., 2020). Notably, the person–environment fit (PEF) model stands out, examining alignment with key work aspects, including organisation, supervisor, group and job (Vleugels et al., 2022). Crucial for understanding career choices and development, it emphasises aligning individuals' work values with their workplace to improve performance, engagement and turnover intention (Sorlie et al., 2022). In a traditional career orientation, organisations typically foster and maintain this alignment, which evolves (Vleugels et al., 2022; Donald, 2023) and is often influenced by external incentives like benefits, rewards and acknowledgements (Mahmoud et al., 2020; McKinsey, 2022).

Turnover consequences
Conventional turnover research has typically focused on turnover intention rather than actual turnover (Lazzari et al., 2022). While closely related, turnover intention and actual turnover are distinct concepts, each with unique impacts on organisations and employees (Cohen et al., 2016). Turnover intention signifies an employee's desire to leave within a specific timeframe, influenced by personal factors like health issues or limited job alternatives. The obligation to persist in a dissatisfying role can trigger disengagement, marked by reduced effort, participation and commitment (recently termed "quiet quitting" (Creely, 2022)). These factors collectively impact employee well-being and job performance (Li et al., 2021). When a turnover intention becomes an actual turnover, other adverse consequences emerge.

Actual turnover incurs costs. For organisations, these costs encompass staffing, vacancies and training expenses (Gandy et al., 2018; Ngotngamwong, 2020). Moreover, these considerations may extend to additional costs associated with temporary replacement as others take on extra responsibilities and the necessary investment to efficiently onboard new personnel (Donald, 2023), potentially reducing service quality (Li and Jones, 2013). On an individual level, frequent job changes before gaining and accumulating crucial skills and experiences can hinder career growth and financial stability (Li et al., 2021). Additionally, a career marked by constant job shifts and ongoing job searches can strain individuals cognitively and emotionally, adversely impacting their psychological well-being. Nonetheless, it is crucial to recognise that turnover, despite its downsides, can also be advantageous for organisations and individuals, particularly in achieving a better person-organisation alignment (Vleugels et al., 2022).

Millennial retention strategies
Over the past two decades, the literature on retaining millennials has evolved around three central themes: managing intergenerational conflicts, adapting the workplace to millennials' work values and fostering a protean career orientation.

Intergenerational conflict management
Early millennial research suggested that generational differences caused workplace tensions and subsequent turnover amongst Millennials. Kapoor and Solomon (2011) proposed strategies to address these conflicts, highlighting the importance of organisations investing in understanding and adapting to generational distinctions. In contrast, Kowske et al. (2010) challenged this notion, arguing that the perceived generational differences do not justify the substantial costs of tailoring interventions for each generation. To date, this research continues to be a topic of interest, exemplified by the recent study conducted by Tan and Chin (2023).

Workplace adaptations
In the subsequent stage of millennial studies, retention strategies shifted from examining Millennials in the context of generational differences towards aligning Millennials' work values

with their work environments. To achieve such alignment, organisations need to understand the values shaping Millennials' mindsets, worldviews and satisfaction drivers (Rani and Samuel, 2016). The idea is that these insights would empower organisations to customise their offerings to align with the specific requirements of the talents they need, thereby enhancing their capacity to attract and retain them (McKinsey, 2022). Some of the proposed solutions supporting this workplace adaptation approach include modifications to work practices and company policies (Gandy *et al.*, 2018), endorsement of technological innovations (Krishnan and Kakada, 2022), the establishment of career management systems (Aydogmus, 2018) and promotion of work–life balance and job flexibility (Mahmoud *et al.*, 2020) and more.

Evaluated through the PEF model, these retention strategies suggest that Millennials face organisational challenges due to a misalignment between their work values and those prevailing within their working groups and the overall environment (Li *et al.*, 2023). This misalignment can potentially elevate turnover rates (Rani and Samuel, 2016). Hence, aligning employees' work values across generations or adapting the workplace to meet Millennials' needs better could enhance organisational efforts to motivate millennial talents to remain committed to their current employers (Mahmoud *et al.*, 2020).

Protean career orientation solutions
Recent studies on millennial retention increasingly advocate solutions aligned with a protean career orientation, where individuals take greater responsibility for their career development (e.g. Aydogmus, 2018; Holtschlag *et al.*, 2020). This shift, propelled by globalisation, technology, demographic changes and evolving workplace dynamics, challenges the relevance of traditional career norms like rigid organisational structures and hierarchies (Lyons *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a broad reevaluation of career and life preferences, causing a significant cross-generational group to diverge from traditionalist paths (McKinsey, 2022). The protean career model, representing new career paradigms, emphasises adaptability, self-direction, autonomy and the pursuit of personal goals (Aydogmus, 2018). Briscoe and Hall's (2006) definition of protean career attitude revolves around two dimensions: (1) internal values shaping one's career approach and behaviours and (2) self-direction in career management. Supporting evidence (Holtschlag *et al.*, 2020) validates the effectiveness of this modern career orientation in reducing turnover intentions, particularly when complemented by essential organisational support (Walden *et al.*, 2017).

Integrating the PEF theory into a protean career model holds significant implications. Whilst the core principles of the PEF framework, emphasising alignment and organisational support, remain constant, a notable shift occurs where the responsibility for initiating and implementing necessary changes or improvements transitions from organisations to their staff (Aydogmus, 2018). In this shift, driven by intrinsic values instead of extrinsic motivations (Cortellazzo *et al.*, 2020), employees actively participate in a dynamic, ongoing process. They consciously pursue and sustain alignment with their work environment through an adaptive process termed "work adjustment" (Dawis and Lofquist, 1984). This concept illustrates how individuals can influence their environment and, reciprocally, how the environment can impact their motivation and behaviour (Donald, 2023).

Whilst yielding positive outcomes (Holtschlag *et al.*, 2020), embracing the protean career orientation presents two distinct challenges. Firstly, it presupposes that individuals clearly understand their work values and career aspirations and can make informed decisions to progress in their chosen path. However, this assumption is not always accurate, particularly for younger generations, who often grapple with defining their career trajectories and making informed choices (Kuron *et al.*, 2015). Secondly, adopting the protean career model necessitates that employees exhibit self-direction and self-management skills, which may not always align with the experiences of individuals raised in the digital era (Franklin, 2015). To address these challenges, scholars recommend integrating technology (Aydogmus, 2018),

training, mentoring (Waltz *et al.*, 2020) and coaching into the career development process (Holmberg-Wright *et al.*, 2017; Aydogmus, 2019; Holtschlag *et al.*, 2020; Ngotngamwong, 2020). Emphasising the importance of coaching, Minzlaff and Palmer (2021) highlight its pivotal role in nurturing skills, particularly in cultivating protean behaviour.

The International Coaching Federation (ICF, 2019) defines coaching as a collaborative process where individuals, guided by their coach, unlock their personal and professional potential. Within a solution-focused framework, coaching takes a positive approach, encouraging coachees to identify actionable solutions and fostering growth, learning and self-reflection (O'Connell *et al.*, 2012). Whether working with individuals or groups, this partnership follows a structured process of establishing goals, discovery, creating awareness, identifying solutions, action planning, progress management and accountability. Incorporating guided discovery techniques enhances this process, facilitating a shift from self-limiting thinking to a more adaptable problem-solving mindset (Neenan, 2009).

In contrast to interventions like training and mentoring (Aydogmus, 2019), coaching supports individuals in discovering intrinsic motivations, refining self-management skills and nurturing psychological empowerment (Minzlaff and Palmer, 2021). This empowerment, crucial for enhancing Millennials' career competencies and job satisfaction (Aydogmus, 2018), involves self-control, autonomy, self-efficacy and unwavering belief in one's ability to shape the environment and achieve goals (Spreitzer, 1995). Research also suggests that beyond performance improvement, coaching contributes to reducing workplace stress, a significant concern for the millennial generation and a factor contributing to their turnover (Deloitte, 2023).

Despite the benefits of coaching, the academic research landscape on coaching millennial professionals to mitigate turnover remains limited, with only one identified peer-reviewed empirical study from Solomon and van Coller-Peter (2019). Their research emphasises coaching's efficacy in aligning the psychological contract (Rousseau, 2001) amongst young millennial professionals and their organisations, particularly in career development. This alignment not only enhances affective commitment but also mitigates turnover.

Discussion and conclusions
In recent decades, the media and literature have focused on Millennials in the workplace, highlighting their distinctive qualities amid globalisation and rapid technological changes. As they grappled with traditional work norms, Millennials prioritised work–life balance, collaboration and flexibility. This emphasis sparked discussions about their impact on conventional workplace structures, raising concerns about organisational stability attributed to their perceived job-hopping tendencies. Their high turnover, linked to intergenerational conflicts and a misalignment between their values and work environments, spurred considerations for adapting organisational strategies for retention.

Research on millennial retention, primarily centred on turnover and generational differences studies, reveals empirical gaps and conflicting findings, introducing uncertainty and potential biases into the knowledge base. Many studies emphasise elevated millennial turnover rates, often relying solely on survey data, limiting in-depth analysis. Indeed, diverse turnover data sources underline Millennials' inclination to leave their roles or have shorter tenures, aligning with global trends. Yet, a nuanced perspective questions widespread job-hopping tendencies, suggesting a nonsignificant difference in turnover behaviours compared to Generation X at the same age.

In addition to the bias observed in turnover results, another bias is embedded in the traditional career paradigm, placing the entire responsibility on organisations to align individuals with their work environment, neglecting essential individual empowerment and accountability for personal growth. Recent studies highlight these aspects. Ongoing research on millennial retention underscores the importance of embracing a protean career orientation, relying on critical skills like self-awareness, self-direction and self-management, which are potentially underdeveloped in

digitally raised generations. The recommended overall strategy to nurture these skills involves utilising technology, training, mentoring and coaching within a career development framework. Amongst these options, coaching stands out as the intervention that can empower individuals to instigate necessary changes proactively, fostering elevated job satisfaction and commitment, especially with robust organisational backing. Despite initial evidence supporting its efficacy, a significant research gap remains, urging more comprehensive studies to maximise coaching as a valuable tool for millennial development and retention.

Practical implications

In addition to offering researchers a comprehensive and cohesive overview of current millennial literature, this review holds practical implications for organisations. It sheds light on how coaching can effectively support the engagement and retention of millennial professionals by enhancing their career competencies, job performance and stress management through targeted programs. To maximise the effectiveness of these initiatives, addressing challenges related to generational differences, negative stereotypes and workplace conflicts is essential. By acknowledging the multifaceted nature of turnover and its external influences, organisations could implement strategies like coaching that surpass surface-level issues, delving into Millennials' intrinsic motivations and career aspirations.

Cultivating a positive coaching culture benefits Millennials and fosters all employees' development. It empowers organisations to establish an environment conducive to continuous growth while aligning work values across generations. This proactive approach provides significant advantages for organisations addressing generational diversity challenges, promoting retention, fostering a harmonious and collaborative multigenerational workforce and ensuring sustainable success in a dynamic professional landscape.

Limitations

Despite the wealth of available literature on millennials, sourcing diverse and rigorous empirical studies and exemplary academic reviews integrating the latest relevant turnover data within its broader context presented a notable challenge. Consequently, this integrated review expanded beyond established research and current peer-reviewed articles. It incorporated information from legacy materials, grey literature and book chapters, providing a more comprehensive and current perspective on millennial professionals and the challenges related to their turnover and retention. Addressing another limitation, broadening the approach to include additional databases could enhance the research further. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that the exclusive focus on the English literature in this review may introduce a potential limitation in overall research coverage.

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