

# **EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS AMONG GENERATION Y EMPLOYEES IN KENYA**

**A CASE OF 4<sup>TH</sup> YEAR FINALISTS, MOI UNIVERSITY**

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## **Abstract**

*The entry of generation Y employees into the labour market has added to the growing complexity of the Kenyan and global workforce. This complexity is reflected in their values, beliefs, ethical considerations, cultural, ethnic and religious affiliation, gender and sexuality among other diversities. Interpreted differently, these diversities have implications on recruitment and selection procedures, job design, reward mechanisms, motivational programmes, productivity and overall performance of organizations. This paper explores the attitudes, hopes, aspirations, dreams and ambitions of generation Y (also referred to as millennial) employees in Kenya in a bid to understand their employment expectations. It is established that the millennials expect their employers to offer welfare services and challenging*

*jobs. They also expect to be allowed to work in casual clothes with minimum supervision and be provided with work stations featuring the latest technology. In addition, they expect to work in organizations with positive work ethics and be rewarded handsomely for the roles they will play in their future employment. In addition, this paper will offer invaluable suggestions to employers on how best to attract, reward, motivate and retain generation Y employees for excellent performance in their organizations.*

*Keywords: employment expectations, generation y, ideal work place, motivational activities, reward mechanisms*

## **INTRODUCTION**

*“They are the newest generation to enter the labor market, yet they already have clear ideas about what they expect from you as an employer. They are in high demand, so if you can’t meet their needs, they’ll find someone who can” (Stuart & Lyons, 2008)*

The generational composition of the workforce is changing rapidly. Today, the workforce includes Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees. While the Baby Boomers are beginning to retire and Generation X is moving into senior management positions, the proportion of Generation Y in the workforce is increasing rapidly (Thompson, 2011). The entry of generation Y employees into the labour market has added to the growing complexity of the Kenyan and global workforce. This complexity is reflected in their values, beliefs, ethical considerations, cultural, ethnic and religious affiliation, gender and sexuality among other diversities. Interpreted differently, these diversities have implications on recruitment and selection procedures, job design, reward mechanisms, motivational programmes, productivity and overall performance of organizations.

Faced with this new paradigm shift, organizations have to continuously adapt to the ‘new normal’ in order to attain sustainable competitive advantage. This will be achieved by effectively managing Generation Y employees who have been described as confident, independent, goal-oriented, optimistic, adaptable to change, desiring a more balanced life and highly educated (Kersten, 2002; Jenkins, 2007; Crampton & Hodge, 2006)

According to Meier & Crocker (2010), Generation Y (hereinafter the millennials) were born into technology and often know more about the digital world than their teachers and parents. The millennials present a challenge to managers who must train and motivate them so that their strengths become a benefit to their organizations. To be successful in the future, it will be important for companies and managers to understand these new employees. In emphasizing

this point, Tulgan & Martin (2001) noted that organizations that can't – or won't – customize training, career paths, incentives and work responsibilities (to Millennials) need a wake-up call. This is the new reality for the business world.

Whereas many of the characteristics of the millennials are significantly different from previous generations, there is little research on employment expectations of the millennials more so in the context of Africa. This paper attempts to map out the general employment expectations of these new employees in a bid to fill the gaps in literature as well as add a Kenyan (and African) dimension to the ongoing debate on workforce diversity.

### **Statement of the problem**

As global competition intensifies, attraction and retention of talented employees can provide sustainable competitive advantage to organizations. However, the job seeking population the world over is undergoing a radical change. Many jobseekers today are likely to be in the 20 to 30 year age group with aspirations which are different from previous generations (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Herein lies what could be referred to as the 'management quagmire' in many business entities. This quagmire is particularly heightened with the arrival of the millennials into the workplace with new demands, new expectations and new approaches to work and life.

Stuart & Lyons (2008) echo the concerns of those who feel obligated to alter their workplaces in drastic ways to accommodate the influx of millennial workers that has only just begun. These outcries are based on various sources, some of which are credible while others are exaggerated. But regardless of how much they differ from previous generations, it is clear that millennials have developed a very unique identity, and this collective personality will undoubtedly shape how they approach their adult lives as they grow into them (Thompson, 2011).

The implications of millennial workers in the workplace are enormous. Whereas radical changes may be necessary in order to create a new work environment conducive for this new breed of workers, it would be important to first understand their motivations and work ethics. This is the subject matter of this paper.

### **Objectives and Significance of the Study**

This paper seeks to address the following:

- a) Provide a general overview of employment expectations of fourth year finalists of Moi University taking into account their attitudes, hopes, aspirations, dreams and ambitions;
- b) Discuss the employment expectations of fourth year finalists of Moi University in the context of findings from other research studies as obtained from relevant literature;

The researcher hopes that by addressing the above objectives, Kenyan (and international) employers as well as members of the reading fraternity will benefit a great deal as the information obtained will fill the gaps in literature as well as contextualize key findings into the Kenyan (and African) situation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **What is a generation?**

Ryder (1965) defines a generational cohort as “a group of individuals similar in age who have experienced the same time period.” On the other hand, Schaie (1965) states that a generation, or a generational cohort, is a group born in the same defined period of years that have been exposed to similar societal and historical life events during critical stages of their formative development. Both Ryder and Schaie provide a good starting point, but really, a generation is more complex than these definitions suggest (Thompson, 2011).

Kowske et al. (2010) are of the opinion that members of the same generation are around the same ages upon momentous events in both society, such as wars, social movements, and significant technological advances. Solnet et al., (2012) add that such members also experience similar milestones in their own lives, such as beginning school, entering the workforce, and retiring at the same point in time. Yet according to Kupperschmidt (2000) a generation is defined as an identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages, divided by five to seven years into the first wave, core group, and last wave. Members of a generation learn similar responses to social and environmental stimuli and develop a shared set of value systems and ways of interpreting events. The external forces that influence the creation of shared value systems differ from one generation to the next, leading to identifiable differences in the way each generation reacts to authority, their work-related values and what they will do to satisfy their values (Gursoy et al., 2008).

### **What determines generational cutoffs?**

Even with adequate definitions, determining generational levels remains an imprecise science (Thompson, 2011). Generational cutoffs, such as persons born between 1978 and 1998, are necessary for research purposes, but it would be difficult to argue that someone born in 1977 is inherently different or similar to person born in 1978, as their generational designations might suggest. These cutoffs, though, allow for a greater understanding of human behavior, as they permit researchers to discover the effects of landmark events on a given generational cohort – an impossible task in the absence of cutoff years. As Kowske et al. (2010) noted, experiencing landmark events at similar developmental points shapes a generation, and while many

generations may experience a given event, their age of exposure will be key in determining how they respond and how their outlooks are affected.

Lack of agreement on the defining life events for a generation (for example, regional events that impact some more than others) has led to a concomitant lack of agreement on the precise start and end years for each generation that is currently in the workforce: Gen Y, Gen X and the Baby Boomers (Solnet et al., 2012). Nevertheless, it is useful for the purposes of categorization to define the period of years that identifies each generation. As Thompson (2011) notes, understanding how generations are defined allows researchers to determine what differentiates one cohort from another.

After reviewing a large range of sources, including academic journals, popular blogs and trade publications, Solnet et. al. (2012) used the following classifications in their study on examination of work attitude differences of Generation Y employees in Australia: Gen Y: born between 1979 and 1994 Gen X: born between 1965 and 1978 Baby Boomers: born between 1945 and 1964.

In their study on the American workforce, Barsch & Kelly (2014) used the following age classifications: Post War/Silent Generation/Traditionalists: Born approximately between 1928 and 1945; Baby Boomers: Born approximately between 1946 and 1964; Generation X: Born approximately between 1965 and 1979; Generation Y (Millennials): Born approximately between 1980 and 1995, and; Generation Z: Born approximately starting in 1996. The HR Specialist (2014) seems to be in agreement with the approach taken by Barsch and Kelly (2014). We adopted this latter view of the generational cut offs and were particularly interested in the last wave of the millennials (1990 – 1995) as they constitute the bulk of undergraduate students in Kenyan universities currently.

### **Who are the millennials?**

An understanding of the millennials would suffice as a way of obtaining the necessary insight into their thinking and appreciation of the world of work and life in general. This generation has been shaped by parental excesses, computers, and dramatic technological advances (Niemiec, 2000). One of the most frequently reported characteristics of this generation is their comfort with technology (Kersten, 2002). In general, the millennials value team work and collective action (Zemke et al., 2000), embrace diversity (The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Office of Diversity, 2006), are optimistic (Kersten, 2002), and are adaptable to change (Jenkins, 2007). Furthermore, they are flexible (Martin, 2005), independent, and desire a more balanced life (Crampton & Hodge, 2006). They are also multi-taskers (The National Oceanographic and

Atmospheric Office of Diversity, 2006), and are the most highly educated generation (Pew Research Center, 2010)

Millennials are individuals born between 1980 and 1995 (The HR Specialist, 2014). However, the lower limit for the millennials may be as low as 1978, while the upper limit may be as high as 2002, depending on the source (Tolbize, 2008). Members of Generation Y may include individuals born between 1980 and 1999 (Campton & Hodge, 2006); 1978 and 1995 (The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association Office of Diversity, 2006); 1980 and 2002 (Kersten, 2002); and 1978 and 1988 (Martin, 2005). The label associated with this generation is not yet finalized (Tolbize, 2008). Current labels include Millennials, Nexters, Generation www, the Digital generation, Generation E, Echo Boomers, N-Gens and the Net Generation. Members of this generation have labeled themselves as the Non-Nuclear Family generation, the Nothing- Is-Sacred Generation, the Wannabees, the Feel-Good Generation, Cyberkids, the Do-or-Die Generation, and the Searching-for-an-Identity Generation.

Millennials, who are persons born as early as 1977 (Simons, 2010) and as late as mid-2000s, (McLellan, 2008) depending on the source, are often a difficult group to categorize, but researchers have made significant progress in identifying common traits of the average millennial. For example, in *Millennials and K-12 Schools* (2008), notable demographers Neil Howe and William Strauss pinpointed what they called the seven core traits of the millennial population, which include special, sheltered, confident, team oriented, conventional, pressured, and achieving. These seven adjectives, which appear often in subsequent research on the millennials, account for a significant proportion of the behaviors in which millennials engage, but they exhibit other traits as well. For example, the Pew Research Center echoes that millennials are confident but also notes above-average levels of self-expression, liberal tendencies, and openness to change (Pew Research Center 2010). A London Business School (2010) study contends that millennials are reflexive, diverse, impatient, and selfish.

The contradictory nature of some of these descriptions – conventional vs. open to change, sheltered vs. confident, team oriented vs. selfish – speaks directly to the complexity of this generation and explains why researchers continue to struggle in pinpointing what exactly separates the millennials from previous generations (Thompson, 2011).

### **What do the millennials want in the world of work?**

Previous studies on what the millennials want from the workplace have discovered various findings. This generation varies from previous generations by many factors. One noteworthy factor is the work ethic of this generation as this has been a common characteristic given by researchers stating that they prefer a fun working environment, non-monetary work perks, and

flexible hours (Fernandez, 2009). Lowe et al. (2008) discovered that the top three ways to attract millennial employees was through an enticing salary, a friendly and casual work environment, and by having growth and development opportunities, such as training programs. Organizations who can acknowledge that the millennials is driven by change, and are constantly looking for different challenges and new things to learn and do (Robert Half International, 2011), can utilize the fact that these employees are looking for development and provide them with non-repetitive tasks in order for them to remain mentally stimulated while on the job. The millennials have been reported to respond positively to regular feedback, updated technology and an organization that rewards positive work (Lowe et al., 2008).

Millennial employees were also found to highly value traditional benefits, salary and health insurance benefits (Bearfield, 2009). They have been known to care about flexibility, such as working from home or limiting long hours (RHI, 2011). Furthermore researchers have gone in depth and looked at which characteristics they have stated as most important in the workplace. It was discovered that the millennials value “intellectual challenges, a need to succeed, seek those who will further their professional development and constantly measure their own success” (Eisner, 2005). Research has also been done to try and understand what the millennials have not responded positively towards or disliked in the workplace. Eisner (2005) concluded that millennial employees prefer to be given time off as opposed to receiving money. It was deemed that intrinsic values, such as telecommuting and training opportunities were ranked as less important work factors (Bearfield, 2009).

In order to corroborate these findings, the researcher surveyed some of the millennials available to him notably the fourth year finalist of Moi University. These finalists belong to the last wave of Generation Y (1990 – 1995) (The HR Specialist, 2014). By the time of the survey, a number of them were already engaged in part and full time employment. Others were volunteers and interns in public and private organizations in Kenya. The majority were active jobseekers having applied for vacancies in various places since as finalists, they were already in transition to the ‘outside world’. In general, these finalists demonstrated a clear understanding of the work environment and had quite a lot of revealing hopes, attitudes, dreams, aspirations and ambitions typical of the millennials.

The survey instrument was an open ended questionnaire which required the respondents to (a) state their year of birth, (b) state their expectations of an ideal workplace, (c) state the motivational activities, programmes and/ or mechanisms they expected from their ideal employers and (d) state other reward mechanisms other than salary that they expected from their ideal employers.

## METHODOLOGY

A total of 105 respondents were sampled using stratified and simple random sampling from a population of 315 fourth year finalists in the School of Human Resource Development, Moi University. In order to facilitate this, the finalist class (population) was categorized into departments from where a sample was drawn from each to constitute the respondents of the study. The researcher was satisfied that a third of the population of each department was enough to be a representation of the population per department. The overall sample was therefore deemed suitable enough to represent the fourth year finalists in the school. The various samples from the different departments would also contribute to the diversity of views, opinions, aspirations, dreams and ambitions which is the core subject of this paper. The researcher was also contended that the sample used in the study would also represent the rest of fourth year finalists of Moi University. Table 1 below presents the sampling frame we used in the study.

Table 1: Sampling frame

<b>Departments/Courses</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample</b>
Human Resource Management	78	26
Strategic Management	53	17
Communication and media studies	75	25
Project Planning and Management	51	17
Entrepreneurship studies	58	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>105</b>

After the sample size was determined, the respondents were randomly selected and briefed on the purpose of the research. Each of the 105 respondents was then issued with an open ended questionnaire and given time to respond to the research questions.

### Preparation and sorting out of data

Before proceeding to data analysis, respondents were sorted out in terms of age. Here, the researcher was interested in establishing the ages of the respondents with the view of eliminating those aged above 24 and below 19 as they did not belong the last age set (wave) of the millennials (1990 – 1995) (The HR Specialist 2014). Five respondents indicated that they were born in 1989 whereas none indicated that they were born after 1995. As a result, the five respondents were eliminated from the final analysis. Hence a total of 100 questionnaires were analyzed.



Table 2: Categorization of respondents by age

Year of birth	Age	Number	%
1989	25	5	5
1990	24	23	23
1991	23	38	38
1992	22	27	27
1993	21	12	12
1994	20	0	0
1995	19	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>105</b>	<b>105</b>

### Research Variables

Since open ended questionnaires were used in data collection, all responses were noted and grouped under general themes reflecting the three variables used in the study that is, *ideal workplace*, *motivational programmes/activities/mechanisms* and *reward mechanisms*. The responses formed the characteristics of the general themes which (themes) became (were used as) the descriptive factors of the variables used in the study. Table 3 below shows the operationalization and characterization of the variables used in the study.

Table3: Operationalization and characterization of variables

Variable	Operational Themes	Characteristics
<b>Ideal workplace</b>	Welfare facilities/services	Transport services, housing, childcare services, medical services, refreshments, teas, lunches, entertainment facilities, indoor sports activities, security, ample work station, clean workplace, cafeteria, kitchen, gym, spa, sleeping pods, stress zones, margarita Mondays, rest rooms.
	Nature of job/task	Challenging task, jobs that require creativity and innovation, flexible work arrangements, shifts, breaks, offs, abolish dress code, job rotation, reduced work week, Friday considered as weekend, minimal supervision.
	I.C.T facilities/services	Printers, copiers, duplicators, consumables, laptops, desktops, internet, wifi, social media (facebook, myspace, instagram, whatsapp) email.
	Positive work culture	No discrimination on any basis, no sexual harassment, cooperation, teamwork, free flowing communication, visionary leadership, good labour relations, involvement of staff in decision making, delegation of roles, no bureaucracy.
	Growth opportunities	Mentorship, training, scholarships, career development.
<b>Motivational programmes/activities/mechanisms</b>	Training	Seminars, workshops, benchmarking missions, orientation, field trips, field days.

	Development	Scholarships, educational sponsorships <i>Tab 3...</i>
	Teambuilding	Picnics, retreats, sports days, company days, CRS programmes, dinners, luncheons, galas, parties, meetings.
	Work holiday	Vacations, holidays, leaves, offs, sabbaticals
	Counseling services	Group counseling, debriefing sessions, conflict management, self talk, stress management
<b>Reward mechanisms</b>	Commendation	Certificates, medals, letters, trophies, awards
	Recognition	Praise, bonuses, commissions
	Promotions	New title, salary increase, added responsibility, change in job group
	Allowances	House, commuter, medical, risk, education, pension
	Incentives	Tokens, vouchers, gift hampers, cash surprises

## ANALYSIS

Having operationalized the study variables into thematic areas complete with their defining characteristics (responses/employment expectations) all the 100 questionnaires were revisited again for the purpose of awarding scores. For each characteristic noted, a specific theme was awarded a mark. Multiple characteristics describing a particular theme all earned one mark to avoid duplication of responses. This formed the basis for awarding frequencies for the responses (employment expectations). Table 4 below shows scores for employment expectations of the 4<sup>th</sup> year finalists of Moi University in descending order starting with the most recurrent themes.

Table 4: Showing frequencies of responses for operational themes

Item		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Variable/Operational Themes		(f)	(%)	(%)
<b>Ideal workplace</b>	Welfare facilities/services	79	79	79
	Positive work culture	75	75	75
	Nature of job/task	61	61	61
	I.T facilities/services	47	47	47
	Growth opportunities	18	18	18
<b>Motivational activities</b>	Teambuilding	69	69	69
	Training	66	66	66
	Work holiday	54	54	54
	Development	32	32	32
	Counseling services	07	07	07
<b>Reward mechanisms</b>	Allowances	66	66	66
	Commendation	52	52	52
	Promotion	51	51	51
	Incentives	44	44	44
	Recognition	37	37	37

## FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

In order to facilitate a more detailed and informed discussion, employment expectations under each variable were categorized into 1<sup>st</sup> tier and 2<sup>nd</sup> tier expectations. 1<sup>st</sup> tier expectations were those most recurrent expectations that scored above average (50%) whereas the 2<sup>nd</sup> tier expectations were less recurrent and scored below 50% as shown in table 5 below:

Table 5: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> tier employment expectations of fourth year finalists of Moi University

<b>Ideal workplace</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Tier Expectations</b>			
	Welfare facilities/services	79	79	79
	Positive work culture	75	75	75
	Nature of job/task	61	61	61
	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Tier Expectations</b>			
	I.T facilities/services	47	47	47
Growth opportunities	18	18	18	
<b>Motivational activities</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Tier Expectations</b>			
	Teambuilding	69	69	69
	Training	66	66	66
	Work holiday	54	54	54
	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Tier Expectations</b>			
	Development	32	32	32
Counseling services	07	07	07	
<b>Reward mechanisms</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Tier Expectations</b>			
	Allowances	66	66	66
	Commendation	52	52	52
	Promotion	51	51	51
	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Tier Expectations</b>			
	Incentives	44	44	44
Recognition	37	37	37	

### Variable 1: Ideal workplace

#### *Welfare facilities/services*

Millennials grew up around the emergence of start-up companies who were created by and recruiting young people because younger people were more familiar with technology – the basis of many of these companies. Because these companies became known for their “play place” work environments, they normalized amenities that were previously seen as unattainable workplace luxuries. When employers add workplace amenities such as fitness centers and lounges, they are supporting work-life balance while keeping their employees in the workplace (Ng & Schweitzer, 2010). The ideal workplace for the millennials of Moi University is

characterised by welfare facilities and services. The most recurring characteristics of such welfare facilities and services include transport services, housing, childcare services, medical services, refreshments, teas, lunches, entertainment facilities, indoor sports activities, security, ample work station, clean workplace, cafeteria, kitchen, gym, spa, sleeping pods, stress zones, margarita Mondays and rest rooms.

This thinking is not farfetched as several companies are already offering some of these amenities. Companies like Google provide spas, high-end cafeterias, haircutting services, an on-campus massage therapist, game rooms, and laundry services (Strickland, 2011). Google is not the norm, and even the most ambitious millennials should not expect such a wide array of services from their employer. However, millennials do take workplace amenities into consideration in choosing an employer and staying with an employer (Thompson, 2011).

### **Nature of job/task**

For a Millennial, the ideal job will appeal to their core characteristics. In order for them to enjoy a given job, they must find the experience interesting and feel engaged beyond their office work (McClellan, 2008). This heightened commitment to engagement appears to be a reflection of their childhoods, where they were constantly involved in activities to become (and appear) more well rounded. After enough exposure to a busy lifestyle, an empty calendar can lead to feelings of boredom and chronic anxiety (Thompson, 2011). The millennials of Moi University seem to be in agreement with these findings as they expect an ideal workplace to include challenging tasks and jobs that require creativity and innovation. The craving for such challenging tasks also draws from the millennials nature to multitask (McClellan, 2008). Generation Y are simultaneously surfing the web, texting friends, listening to their iPods while also watching TV (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008) They are likely to perform best when such abilities are identified and matched with challenging work that pushes them fully (Martin & Tulgan, 2006).

As Loughlin & Barlin (2001) observe, Generation Y do not perceive work as an investment in the future of the company and want immediate payoffs, such as independence, flexible hours, casual dress and an element of 'fun' at work. This narrative agrees with that of the millennials of Moi University who also want flexible work arrangements, shifts, breaks, offs, abolishing of dress code, job rotation, reduced work week (Friday considered as weekend) and minimal supervision.

### **Positive work culture**

Millennials are children of Baby Boomers who, according to Thompson (2011) were voracious consumers of any literature pertaining to strong child development, and they adjusted their

parenting styles accordingly. While these teenagers (millennials) faced both internal and external pressure to excel at their new pursuits, instructors and parents were careful to tread lightly in criticism, hoping to avoid any damage to their now fragile egos. These children, who for years were praised and rewarded for completing even the smallest of tasks, had become ill-prepared to process and draw from criticism, no matter how constructive (Thompson, 2011). The millennials of Moi University are no different as they expect to work in organizations where there is no discrimination or sexual harassment, where there is cooperation, teamwork, free flowing communication, visionary leadership, good labour relations, involvement of staff in decision making, delegation of roles, and little or no bureaucracy.

### ***ICT facilities/services***

Millennials adopt to new technologies instantly, and Simons (2010) notes that they “are more intimate with the interactive and collaborative technologies that are ever-present in their educational, social, and professional lives. This comfort with technology has become an all-consuming part of the millennial identity, as 73% of Americans feel that millennials can be defined by their attachment to technology (Abaffy, 2011). Simons (2010) also notes that many millennials are so attached to technology that they are not only comfortable learning through interactive technology, but many of them prefer this to a traditional classroom experience. The ideal workplace for the respondents in the study has the full range of information and communication facilities and services such as printers, copiers, duplicators, consumables, laptops, desktops, internet, wifi, social media (Facebook, Myspace, Instagram, Whatsapp) and email. The fact that the millennials of Moi University indicated technology as a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier expectation has to do with what Simons (2011) refers to as ‘an intimate and ever present phenomenon’ in the millennial world to an extent that it is now being regarded as a ‘normal and indispensable’ requirement, one that doesn’t need to be mentioned yet expected to be present in all workplaces.

### ***Growth Opportunities***

Training and development can play a major role in the attraction and retention of millennials. Lowe (2008) advocates that training and development have to become part of an organization’s culture, requiring a long-term commitment. Millennials place a high value on the ability to keep learning and advancing their skill set. They are motivated by a desire to enhance professional skills in order to remain marketable (Sayers, 2007). Organizations that provide a broad spectrum of learning opportunities such as on-the-job training, job rotation, mentoring, coaching, opportunities for further academic study etc., will be more successful in attracting and retaining

millennial employees. Baruch (2004) states that Generation Y are less interested in a lifelong job and are more interested in challenging and meaningful assignments for their self development. The millennials of Moi University expect mentorship, training, scholarships and career development opportunities despite rating these growth opportunities as a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier expectation.

## **Variable 2: Motivational Programmes/activities/mechanisms**

### ***Teambuilding***

Millennials grew up as the focus of the family, leading parents to revolve their own lives around their children's increasingly busy social schedules (McKellan, 2008). With increasing pressure to involve one's children in extracurricular activities both for resume building and self-development, it became insufficient to merely divide one's life between school and "free time," so millennials engaged in athletics, music, performance, community service, and leadership more than any generation before them (Abaffy, 2011). This is why Picnics, retreats, sports days, company days, CRS programmes, dinners, luncheons, galas, parties and meetings are good ideas about teambuilding activities for the millennials of Moi University. James (2010) observes that millennials like jobs with ample opportunities for involvement. Whether through community service opportunities, company athletic leagues, cooking classes, or dance workshops, employers should be prepared to create opportunities for their employees to engage themselves in. These opportunities not only provide alternative avenues for employee/employer engagement, but they also provide for a higher degree of camaraderie with colleagues.

### **Training**

According to Rodriguez (2008), employees with opportunities for growth are less likely to leave. It is when they feel that they have reached a static point with an organization that they feel the need to pursue new opportunities. Learning opportunities lead to increased retention because employees feel valued when a company provides tangible investment in their futures. Employers might be inclined to see the risks involved with this type of investment, as it makes their employees more valuable in the marketplace, and they could potentially take this training to a new organization, but research has shown that the benefits often outweigh the risks (Thompson, 2011). In addition to the increased productivity and retention, the knowledge gained from workplace learning opportunities can diffuse to an entire office if employees are encouraged to present their new material to their colleagues. According to the millennials under study, their training expectations include activities such as seminars, workshops, benchmarking missions, orientation, field trips and field days.

## **Work holiday**

Millennials seek a more balanced lifestyle between their work and non-work lives and have different expectations from their work compared to previous generations (Kerlake, 2005). Organizations must focus on meeting the social requirements of staff by ensuring an appropriate work-life balance, allowing flexible working hours etc. Millennials consider work-life balance as a necessity, rather than a luxury (O'Malley, 2006). They place a high value on relationships with friends and family and are more interested in making their jobs accommodate their family and personal lives (Spiro, 2006). The millennials under survey believe that vacations, holidays, leaves, offs and sabbaticals constitute some of the arrangements that can make their work life balance more rewarding.

In emphasizing the importance of work life balance for the millennials, Smola and Sutton (2002) note that the millennial generation seeks a different psychological contract with future employers, emphasizing a better balance between work goals and personal goals. Employers that resist the reconciliation of firm goals with this rising desire to place more emphasis on one's personal life will most likely see drops in productivity, talent acquisition, and company reputation (Thompson, 2011).

## **Development**

Even after the training process is completed, millennials will still feel as though they need additional support from their managers, and they seek a strong mentor relationship to provide this support. They often "anticipate and can benefit from a surrogate "parent in the form of a company coach or role model from whom to learn the 'ropes' and assist with problem solving." (Barnes, 2008). Millennials crave this relationship because it plays a fundamental role in the aspects they seem to most crave from a job: growth and comfort. A mentor provides a safety net onto which they can fall without fear, asking questions and absorbing advice. Millennials have had this relationship in the past, either from teachers, coaches, or parents, and keeping some semblance of this past will be extremely beneficial (Thompson, 2011). The millennials of Moi University expect scholarships and educational sponsorships to feature among development opportunities in their future workplaces. Development featured prominently as a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier employment expectation perhaps owing to the fact that the primary objective of most fourth year finalists currently is employment and not further education.

## **Counseling services**

Both at home and in school, millennials have spent the majority of their lives hearing that they are special and that they deserve to be treated as such. They want their managers to take an

interest in them, to reach out to them, and to treat them as though they are unique (Thompson, 2011). This is, potentially, another reflection of the millennials' unique childhoods and backgrounds, as this generation is far more accustomed to receiving customized attention than previous generations were. When managers are able to develop relationships with their employees and adjust their management style accordingly, millennials will respond positively. Through developing these relationships and providing individualized attention, managers should know their employees well enough to provide emotional support. Millennials want to know that even in the face of failure, they will be supported and encouraged by their supervisors (Thompson, 2011). The millennials in the study did not show much regard for support services as counseling. However, a few indicated that they expected services such as group counseling, debriefing sessions, conflict management, self talk and stress management in their future job stations.

### **Variable 3: Reward mechanisms**

#### ***Allowances***

According to Meler & Crocker, (2010), millennials expect to receive medical insurance, paid holidays, ample paid vacation, and other perks from their employers. This explains the on-going trend of more companies now offering these benefits. While exceptions can be made, and they often are, a strong total rewards package – the sum of basic compensation, bonuses, commissions, and benefits packages remains a formidable strength in alluring bright young minds to any career. As with employees of any age and generation, millennials respond to financial incentives, and while there is often a schism between their perceived self-worth and their actual market value, there are enough employers making extraordinary human capital investments that millennials can often find someone willing to bid at their sometimes astronomical asking prices (Thompson, 2011).

This does not mean, however, that employers who are unwilling to offer competitive pay packages will be unable to bring in and retain top talent, but they will have to find other ways to make their organizations appealing to a group of employees who have grown up during tremendous economic growth and who are accustomed to a materialistic lifestyle (Thompson, 2011).

Through examining millennials, it is clear that they are very ambitious, and these ambitions will clearly guide how they decide to shape their professional lives, meaning that they have enormous retention implications. Some researchers have noted an apparent increase in achievement goals such as fame and fortune, a quality that is found in the millennials who place a very high premium on the perception of success (Barnes, 208). The millennials of Moi



University are no different as they expect their ideal employers to provide a wide range of allowances such as house, commuter, medical, risk, education and an attractive pension plan.

### ***Commendation***

Self-development is an oft-cited goal for millennials, as they have consistently been flooded with messages urging them to fulfill the best versions of themselves (Koc, 2008). This need to self-actualize remains an important quality for millennials and is reflected in the way they work. As Thompson, (2011) notes, any opportunities to provide employees, especially millennials, with a tangible sense of accomplishment and reward should be seized upon, as it is this feeling of triumph that leads to their overall job satisfaction. Coupled with their craving for instant gratification, millennial employees expect constant commendations for work accomplished even for the minutest of roles. The millennials of Moi University expect to be commended through such ways as being awarded certificates, medals, letters, trophies and various awards in their future jobs.

### ***Promotion***

More than any other generation, the millennials' ambition manifests itself in a constant need for growth and advancement and is perhaps the most defining career aspiration of the millennial generation (Thompson, 2011). In analyzing different "turnover triggers" across generations, Deloitte found that "lack of career progress" ranks first among millennial employees' reasons for leaving. Furthermore, a majority of employees who have plans to leave their current organizations feel that their employers are inadequate in creating career paths and advancing top performers (Deloitte, 2011) Again, this effect impacts retention as well, as a substantial 41% of Millennials feel that promotion and job advancement opportunities are the most effective retention initiative (Deloitte). The respondents in the study indicated that new titles, salary increase, added responsibility and change in job group were some of the promotion approaches they expect in their ideal jobs.

### ***Incentives***

Although cash is important, research indicates that millennials are attracted to non-cash incentive programs, which focus on rewards such as travel or unique merchandise. The trophy value of non-cash rewards is found to have a larger and more lasting impact on employee motivation, providing a constant reminder of a particular achievement (O'Malley, 2006). Employees under the age of twenty nine, expect their employers to provide more benefits and other perks than their older counterparts (Balderrama, 2007). In addition, Cheese (2007)

emphasizes the importance of providing a number of options in a reward and compensation package, allowing the employee to self-select things of greater value. Employers should provide a cafeteria-style benefits package that allows for flexibility depending on the employees circumstances (Allen, 2004). Millennials are likely to trade more pay for work that they feel is more meaningful, at a company where they feel appreciated. The millennials of Moi University indicated that they expected incentives such as tokens, vouchers, gift hampers and cash surprises from their prospective employers.

### ***Recognition***

Because millennials are so accustomed to technology, which provides instantaneous feedback, millennials expect to experience instant gratification (Thompson 20110). Beyond the desire for high compensation and good benefits, millennials also crave more intangible rewards such as respect and individualized attention (McClellan, 2008). In the past, this respect was earned rather than immediately awarded, but millennials expect it instantly. Again, this is most likely to be a reflection of their coddled childhoods, as they spent much of their youths protected, respected, and sheltered (Barnes, 2008). Because this generation is so emotionally delicate, they do much better with praise than with criticism. It should come as no surprise that a group of pressure-laden young workers would want to feel appreciated, but often their reactions exceed what managers can give. Since millennials so often want to hear positive remarks but not negative critiques, they become “angry and resentful” upon hearing critical evaluation (Espinoza et. al. 2011).

The need for praise is just a small part of millennials’ sometimes insatiable need for feedback, possibly the most important distinction between millennials and their counterparts in other generations (Thompson, 2011). This requirement of feedback can most likely be traced to a combination of two factors. First of all, millennials have been raised in environments where they were constantly provided, and encouraged to seek feedback (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010) Secondly, millennials are accustomed to online interactions, where feedback is instantaneous, leading them to want not only feedback, but immediate feedback (London Business School, 2010). Apart from praises, the millennials of Moi University prefer to be recognized and rewarded through bonuses and commissions.

### **CONCLUSION**

True to their generation, the millennials of Moi University have reiterated their ‘high maintenance’ outlook. They have clear expectations as they are on the verge of transition into their ideal workplaces. They expect to be showered with welfare services, given challenging

jobs, work in casual clothes with minimum supervision and be provided with work stations featuring the latest technology. In addition, they expect to work in organizations with positive work ethics and be rewarded handsomely for the roles they will play in their future employment. The study was conducted among the 4<sup>th</sup> year finalists in the School of Human Resource Development, Moi University. This constitutes a major limitation in the study as findings may not be generalized to finalists in other universities in Kenya. In addition, the opinions and views constituting the findings of the study belong to the last wave of the millennial generation (1990-1995) (The HR Specialist 2014) hence may not apply to the millennials in earlier age sets. However, the findings are valid in so far as this study is concerned.

What remains now is for employers to figure out the best possible ways and means of attracting, motivating and retaining this diverse and complex generation that is increasingly becoming a formidable force in the workplace in Kenya and around the world.

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