

How to retain Generation Y employees?

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the relationship that work-life balance and the perception of organizational support to work-life balance have with job embeddedness (construct that measures the reasons to remain in the organization) in the case of professionals belonging to Generation Y. A quantitative cross-sectional study was developed using instruments adapted from the literature. The sample consists of 211 members of generation Y with three or more years of work experience. The results of the analysis show that there is a positive relationship between work-life balance and job embeddedness in the sample of members of Generation Y. The study is relevant for both academic and professional aspects. The literature reviewed did not present a consensus on work-life balance and its relationship with job embeddedness; therefore the results help to understand this relationship. Likewise, this study focuses on work-life balance independently and not as the absence of conflict. In addition, in response to the demand from literature, young people from Generation Y have work experience in the sample. Considering work-life balance as a relevant factor generates the creation of organizational retention policies.

Introduction

Retaining talent is a business priority because of the benefits it presents for the organization (Yanadori & Kato, 2009). These include maintaining the knowledge that workers possess and reducing the costs associated with recruiting, selecting and training new employees (Holtom et al., 2008). According to Allen et al. (2010), the costs frequently exceed the annual salary of the positions to be hired.

The problem of staff retention seems to be especially important at the present time, given that the young people of the so-called Generation Y are increasingly the protagonists of the labor market. In fact, the consulting sector has initiated studies on Generation Y by detecting that companies need to take effective and rapid measures around it. A worrying fact for business reality is that this generation is attributed little commitment and little interest in job stability (Manpower, 2009). IPSOS Peru conducted a study and found out that 72% of young people who had worked less

than six months in their current job would change it if they were offered a better job (Torre, 2014). Likewise, Phutura Executive consultancy carried out a study in Lima, in which 355 executives of the Generation Y participated, and they found that 25% of the respondents changed employment three times in the last four years (“El reto de retener a los millennials”, 2017).

Given the aforementioned information, it is found that avoiding voluntary turnover of young professionals is a current concern for human resources managers. Researching turnover by analyzing new proposals is a consequence of the need to understand how to prevent employees from quitting. Thus, in the study of the antecedents of turnover, a concept called job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001) has emerged. It focuses on the reasons why workers remain in the company. Job embeddedness studied in young professionals is a significant contribution to the need of retaining them. In fact, lack of loyalty to the organizations in which they work is attributed as characteristic of the Generation Y (Deal et al., 2010).

It has been found that job embeddedness can explain the intention of leaving the company better than job satisfac-

tion and organizational commitment (Clinton et al., 2012). Several studies have been carried out on job embeddedness and its capacity in predicting intention to leave, finding that it is a good predictor (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018; Hussain & Deery, 2018; Sender et al., 2018). Its proposal is relatively new, and the study of its possible antecedents is demanded (Allen & Rhoades, 2013; Karatepe, 2013b; Yang et al., 2011). This paper aims to meet such demand.

Although multiple studies show work-life balance and its effect on work behaviors, little is known about its effect on young professionals' intention to remain in the company and on the relevance they grant this balance (Casper et al., 2007; Lewis et al., 2007; Sturges, 2008; Sturges & Guest, 2004). That is why it is proposed to study work-life balance as a precedent for job embeddedness in the case of young professionals.

In academic research, little has been studied on Generation Y about the effect of work-life balance in the intention of remaining in their company. On the other hand, in the research carried out by consulting companies, the valuation that young people give to work-life balance is mentioned frequently. In Peru, a market study reveals that 65% of young people under 30 value work-life balance (Whalecom, 2013).

It is no coincidence that the generation of young people born since 1982 consider it vitally important that their employer offers work-life balance. Stereotypes are mentioned but the characteristics of this generation have not been verified (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Kowske et al., 2010; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Twenge, 2010). Bambacas and Kullik (2013) suggest that research should explore how flexibility practices affect job embeddedness. Some of the characteristics attributed to Generation Y in the work environment are preferring flexible working hours, focusing on building skills and competencies, seeking immediate feedback on work and using technology for communication (Tennakoon & Senarathne, 2020).

Also, Kossek et al. (2011a) suggest that work-life balance in the Latin American reality needs to be studied since most studies have focused on the American, European or Asian reality.

The gaps show that it is necessary to study young professionals in their work environment to know them properly and avoid establishing organizational policies based on stereotypes. The study of generations at work is desirable because there are authors like Hajdu & Sik (2015) who argue that there is no difference between the work values of the generations and rather that there are similarities among them. Turnover intention of young people demands more research, and job embeddedness provides a way of under-

standing it. Investigating the antecedents of job embeddedness is also demanded in the literature, as well as understanding young people's behavior about turnover.

Based on the information above, the objective of this study is to understand the relationship that work-life balance and the perception of the organizational support to the work-life balance have with job embeddedness in the case of young professionals.

For this purpose, a quantitative cross-sectional study was developed, using instruments adapted from the literature. The sample consists of 211 members of Generation Y with three or more years of work experience. Self-administered questionnaires were applied online.

The structure of the paper presents the theoretical framework of work-life balance, perception of organizational support for work-life balance and job embeddedness. Following this, the hypotheses, the methodology, the analysis of the results, the discussion and the conclusions are presented in detail.

Theoretical Framework

Work-Life Balance

Originally, the work-life relationship was studied as the work-family relationship. The term work-life balance is currently used (Fleetwood, 2007; Lewis et al., 2007) but was derived from the terms work-family conflict and work-family interference. *Work* means formal and paid employment, and *life* means everything that is done outside the workplace (Chang et al., 2010). When using the term *life* instead of *family*, it is emphasized that every individual has the need to be supported to develop a life beyond work (Kossek et al., 2010). Fleetwood (2007) and Lewis et al. (2007) mention that the change in terminology occurred in the late 1990s. According to Chang et al. (2010), the first article in which the term *life* is incorporated instead of *family* appears in 2003.

In the literature it is found that there is no single terminology. The terms *balance* and *conflict* are used interchangeably. This also happens with the term *family* and *life*. Throughout the literature review, the term that each author used in his research will be mentioned.

According to some authors, greater clarity is necessary in the conceptual definition of the terms that refer to work-life balance (Allis & O'Driscoll, 2008; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Kossek et al., 2010) in order to guide researchers and organizational practices. Maertz and Boyar (2011) are very critical in demonstrating that the term work-life balance is treated ambiguously in the literature. They further argue that the definition should be clarified if research in

this field is to progress. Also, Kossek et al. (2011b) demand greater clarity in terms that refer to the work-life balance construct.

In this study, the definition proposed by Haar (2013) that understands work-life balance as a perception and not as a time allocation will be used. It is assumed that employees who work less in order to deal with their personal affairs or those who spend more time in work activities may feel comfortable with that situation. Haar (2013) presents work-life balance as a personal evaluation of the degree to which an individual manages his multiple roles.

Perception of Organizational Support for Work-Life Balance

Kossek, Pichler, et al. (2011) propose the importance of studying the different forms of organizational support that exist in detail, especially when the workforce is made up of more workers who value flexibility between work and life, as is the case of those belonging to Generation Y.

These authors classify social support in the workplace as general and specific. They present four types of social support for work-family conflict: perceived organizational support (POS), supervisor support, perceived organizational support for work-family and supervisor support for work-family.

The general support of the supervisor refers to signs of concern and assistance regarding the employee's requirements to achieve his well-being and achieve effectiveness at work. The supervisor's specific support for work-family aims to make it easier for the employee to manage work and family relationships. In this case, the supervisor cares about the individual in reference to their work and family welfare (Kossek et al., 2011a).

Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to the degree to which an employer values its employees, supports their socio-emotional needs and provides resources to assist them in the management of one of their roles. The perception of organizational support also has a specific component called the perception of organizational support for the family.

Job Embeddedness

The concept of job embeddedness was developed by Mitchell et al. (2001). Job embeddedness is a construct that considers that employees are connected in a social network. This network "catches" the employee in his work (Felps et al., 2009). That is to say, job embeddedness is defined as the combined forces that prevent the employee from leaving his job (Yao et al., 2004 as cited in Crossley et al., 2007).

The connection is presented on three levels: links, fit and sacrifice.

All three aspects are considered for both labor and extra-labor aspects. That is to say, job embeddedness in work and job embeddedness outside work were identified. The first refers to the forces that keep the employee "tied" to his position and the second to the aspects of personal and community life that keep him geographically stable (Ng & Feldman, 2010). It is necessary to mention that job embeddedness is a relatively new construct and is under development (Zhang et al., 2012).

Hypothesis

The model is based on two theories. The first one is the Theory of Social Exchange, proposed by Blau (1964). According to this theory, social exchange relationships evolve when employers care about their employees, which generates beneficial consequences (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In other words, the rewards and costs evaluated by the participants of a relationship will determine their behaviors and the quality of this relationship (Mauno et al., 2011). Social exchange involves high levels of trust and obligation and goes beyond the labor contract (Murphy et al., 2003).

The second one is the Theory of Role Conflict, proposed by Kahn (1964). It defines the type of conflict between roles as one in which individuals are pressured to assume different roles. On this basis Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined the conflict between work and family.

The proposed model focuses on the perception of employees about themselves and about the company. When employees perceive that the company cares about them and their personal life, in a reciprocal attitude, they generate positive attitudes towards the company (Butts et al., 2013).

Karatepe (2013a) proposes that work-life balance is one of the indicators of high performance work practices. He also argues that employees who have high-performance work practices seem to be more entrenched in their employment. With regard to job embeddedness, Felps et al. (2009) mentioned that work-life balance would have a positive relationship with job embeddedness.

On the other hand, Crossley et al. (2007) suggest that companies that offer flexible schedules and family-friendly policies could encourage job embeddedness. It can be expected that work-life balance, once reached, will be valued, so the sacrifice of losing this balance is relevant if one thinks about changing companies. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1. Work-life balance is positively related to job embeddedness in members of Generation Y.

The perception of organizational support for work-life balance is understood as the degree to which workers perceive that their employers or supervisors care that they experience positive work-life relationships. The perception of organizational support for work-life balance will focus on the employer worrying that his employee can perform well in the workplace and in the non-work environment and on providing resources to achieve work-life balance (Kossek, Pichler, et al., 2011). When individuals feel socially supported at work, they feel they can handle work-life issues (Kossek, Pichler, et al., 2011).

The relationship between organizational support and job embeddedness is based on the theory of Social Exchange. Karatepe (2013b) indicates that employees with greater organizational social support will be more entrenched in their employment. This is because the factors that create roots are links, fit and sacrifice. The greater the links that the worker has in his network, the greater the degree of union with his employment (Mallol et al., 2007). A close relationship between the supervisor and the employees generates greater links.

Likewise, the norms and values of an organization are a fundamental part to determine the fit (Mitchell et al., 2001), or when the worker feels identified with the organizational culture. The organizational social support transmits the norms and values of the organization, so if the worker feels that he fits in that environment he will feel more embedded. Regarding young people, Twenge and Campbell (2008) argue that organizational support is highly valued by them. Likewise, Felps et al. (2009) argue that the perceived organizational support positively predicts job embeddedness. According to the above, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2. Perception of organizational support for work-life balance is positively related to job embeddedness in members of Generation Y.

Method

The objective of this research is to determine the relationship of work-life balance and perception of organizational support for work-life balance with job embeddedness in members of Generation Y. A quantitative, correlational study was developed, with a dimension of cross cutting time. The survey technique was used through a certified online panel. Self-administered questionnaires were applied to young people belonging to Generation Y with the following characteristics: were between 25 and 35 years old, had 3 or more years of work experience, were employed in medium and large companies in the city of Lima (Peru), and were university graduates.

The survey was conducted in the city of Lima during the months of April and May 2017. A response of 211 cases was obtained, with a sample error of $\pm 6.75\%$. Respondents received the questionnaire virtually.

Some characteristics of the sample are as follows: 55% men and 45% women; 51% married, 46% single and 2% divorced; 59% have children; 55% work at baseline, 39% belong to middle management and 6% hold a management position. Respondents work in various sectors of the economy, mainly in commercial, industrial, communications, educational, financial and health.

Measurement

Variable: Work-Life Balance

The literature reviewed indicates that to measure balance, conflict measures have been used. However, the researchers suggest defining balance more clearly and measuring it as an independent construct. Haar (2013) defines work-life balance as the individual's perception of his proper management of the different roles he exercises. The scale proposed by Haar was used, and there are three advantages: a) the scale has been specially designed for the work-life balance construct (not for conflict as often found), b) the relationship measured is work-life and not work-family as usually found in the literature and c) the scale allows the individual to assess whether he considers his life to be balanced, as suggested by Greenhaus et al. (2003). The proposed scale for the measurement of the work-life balance variable measures the perception of the respondent on his ability to handle his multiple roles. The heading proposed by the author warns: "the following statements refer to your work, family, and roles in life (if you do not have children, the family may include a couple, siblings, friends, roommates, etc.)". The scale is composed of three items. An example of an item is "Today I think I enjoy all facets of my life equally well." The Cronbach's alpha of the scale is .87. A 5-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree.

Variable: Perception of Organizational Support for Work-Life Balance

The scale developed by Allen (2001) was used. It consists of 14 items and seeks to measure the global perception of employees to the degree to which the organization supports the family. The scale measures the beliefs of the individual surveyed regarding the support provided by his organization. The respondent is asked to what extent he considers that the statements represent the philosophy or

beliefs of his organization. An example of an item is “The ideal employee is one who is available 24 hours a day.” A 5-point Likert scale will be used, ranging from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree.

Variable: Job Embeddedness

Job embeddedness is a construct developed to explain why people remain at work. It was originally defined as composed of three dimensions: links, fit and sacrifice (Mitchell et al., 2001). The scale developed in 2006 by Holtom et al. 2006, as cited in Felps et al. (2009) was used. This scale consists of nine items, and its Cronbach alpha is .87. An example of an item is “At work I interact frequently with my work group.” A 5-point Likert scale is used, ranging from 5 = totally agree to 1 = strongly disagree. Given the characteristics of the work environment of the city of Lima, it was decided not to work with questions related to the non-work environment.

Results

The objective of the analysis is to know the relationship that work-life balance and the perception of organizational support for work-life balance have with job embeddedness of young professionals. The respective indexes were initially constructed for measurement. Before carrying out the regression analyzes, it was found that the construct of perception of organizational support for work-life balance presented an incoherent measure, lacking content validity. The respective factor analysis showed that the construct was not one-dimensional. Under these circumstances it was decided not to perform the measurement corresponding to Hypothesis 2.

Regarding Hypothesis 1, after performing the corresponding factor analysis, a multiple linear regression analysis has been carried out, considering compliance with the necessary assumptions. Control variables considered were sex, position in the organization and seniority in the company. The regression analysis is presented in Table 1.

According to these results, we can say that the work-life balance index is significant at a 99% confidence level; that is to say, there is an effect towards job embeddedness which is positive. With this result, the hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

As you can see, the hypothesis about the positive relationship of work life balance and job embeddedness is fulfilled. This means that the greater the perception of the

Table 1
Summary of the regression analysis

Independent Variables	Dependent variable Job embeddedness	
	β	t
Female sex	-0.129	-2.077*
Position: baseline	-0.051	-0.785
Management position	0.079	1.226
Years in the company: Between one year and three	0.094	1.155
Years in the company: more than three	0.273	3.303**
Work-life balance	0.380	6.145**
R^2	0.235	
R^2 corrected	0.213	

Note: * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.001$.

Multiple linear regression analysis.

Control Variables: sex, position in the organization and seniority in the company.

Work-life balance index is significant at a 99% confidence level.

balance between labor aspects and personal aspects, the greater the job embeddedness. By finding the work-life balance variable significant, we find that this balance is relevant for the sample of Generation Y. The literature reviewed did not present a consensus on this aspect. Little attention had been paid to work-life balance for people who may not have family responsibilities. The results show that it is a factor to consider if it is desired to create embeddedness in the members of Generation Y. Additionally, it gives rise to a series of possibilities for the development of organizational retention policies. Providing the policies that can generate a greater work-life balance for members of Generation Y will generate a positive impact on job embeddedness; that is, it will contribute to the retention of young professionals. This finding is important because the idea of balance between work and life has focused mainly on working women, and it was necessary to know if young professionals of both sexes who don't necessarily have family responsibilities also demand it.

As for the inconsistent measure of the construct “Perception of organizational support for work-life balance,” an explanation is outlined. One possible reason is that respondents have answered each item considering their own opinion on each sentence and not the instructions in the statement that asked for their opinion on the company's culture regarding organizational support. That is, the online instrument probably did not contribute adequately to the measurement of this construct.

Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

The study contributes to the academic field and the organizational field. As for the theoretical implications, the contributions are given both in the field of work-life balance and in that of job embeddedness. Regarding work-life balance, the request to study work-life balance as an independent concept and not as the absence of conflict has been met. In addition, work-life balance has been studied and not work-family balance, considering that the life and not the family approach is more inclusive in terms of the definition of work-life balance, since it also applies to people without family responsibilities. With regard to job embeddedness, it has also contributed to the request to study its possible antecedents. Work-life balance has been explored as an antecedent of job embeddedness and has been found significant for the sample of Generation Y. The study of this generation in the workplace is a recurring request in the literature in order to stop resorting to stereotypes. Additionally, the sample under study belongs to a Latin American country and thus also contributes to the request to study this construct in realities different from that of the United States and Europe. The Latin American labor reality presents a series of particular characteristics. In Peru, punctually, the working hours in the case of professionals with university studies can exceed the eight hours legally supported, so it is of interest to study aspects related to work-life balance. Another important aspect about the sample is that it represents members of Generation Y who have three or more years of work experience. This also responds to a request of the literature about knowing not only what young people believe they will want but what they really perceive by being employed in practice.

With regard to practical implications, the study allows entrepreneurs to recognize the importance that Generation Y gives to work-life balance, so they can generate policies or offer programs that collaborate with the worker to perceive that he is in balance between these aspects of his life. It is important that these programs should be offered not only to those who have family responsibilities but also to those who live alone as well. In this way a culture of diversity is fostered in which the importance of the personal scope is recognized for all workers, regardless of their family responsibilities. It is also relevant to consider work-life balance as an aspect that generates job embeddedness. That is, that support for this issue will not only be contributing to the welfare of the worker but to his retention through the dimensions of links, fit and sacrifice. Programs to promote work-life balance would be more related to sacrifice and fit.

Regarding the limitations, we must mention the extension of the questionnaire since an instrument that measures

five constructs was used, and for a respondent it is always better to answer a short instrument. For future research, it is proposed to study the perception of organizational support for work-life balance and the relationship it may have as a precedent for job embeddedness in the members of Generation Y. Likewise, developing research on specific programs of work-life balance that organizations offer and that are of interest to Generation Y is another possible area of study. It is relevant to continue exploring the possible antecedents of job embeddedness since it is hoped to achieve the retention of this generation.

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