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# EFFECT OF TEAM COHESION ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG THE MILLENNIALS IN MALAYSIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The study aims to examine team cohesion as a mediator in determining employee engagement among the Millennials in the Malaysian context. This paper includes a few factors based on the social exchange theory, which highlights the reciprocity of what is contributed will be complemented to the provider that is the organization. A cross-sectional survey design is used for the study featuring a self-administrated questionnaire. This study uses the quantitative method and the cluster sampling technique has been used to draw the sample. Data is collected from 205 respondents and the data is analysed using SPSS and Smart PLS software. The findings disclose that feedback, goal setting, rewards and recognition, supervisor-subordinate relationships have a positive significant effect on team cohesion, and team cohesion mediates the relationship between feedback, goal setting and supervisor-subordinate relationship with employee engagement. This research adds to the current body of literature based on social exchange theory in looking into the effect of team cohesion as a mediator to enhance engagement of the Millennial in the Malaysian context.*

**Keywords:** Employee Engagement, Malaysian Millennials, Social Exchange Theory, Team Cohesion.

## INTRODUCTION

Millennials are different from other generations because of their high self-esteem, high expectations, and most of the time are a bit disengaged about their career (Schullery, 2013). So, even if they are quite ambitious, and growth oriented; they denied being micromanaged especially with rigid corporate structures. However, they are concerned with work life balance between job and social life expectation. They are also particular with career development opportunity, making new friends, serving the community, and want employers to trust them by giving more challenging jobs (Jha, Sareen & Potnuru, 2019). Jha et al. (2019) explain that engagement for Millennials means they are given more opportunities for their career development and as well as the organizations. Engagement is important to them because it exhibits employees' passion, intelligence, and enthusiasm at work. All these are appreciated by the organization.

Past researches have proven employee engagement among the Millennials can influence performance and productivity of the organizations. Therefore, this study proposes the drivers for employee engagement should be able to cater the needs and expectations of this generation in a better way, thus, engagement would enhance maximum performance. This generation is very particular whether their organizations could offer a meaningful job or not, and if the offer is below their expectations, they have the potential to change jobs and job engagement (Anitha & Aruna, 2016). According to Mansor and Jaharuddin (2018) employee engagement intensified emotional

connection. The employees would feel attached to the organizations and would exert greater commitment towards their jobs if their expectation is fulfilled by the organization. Anything that involves human emotion is hard to understand and measure. It is a challenge which the management has to overcome. Thus, past researches have suggested enablers such as superior approaches to increase productivity, lower labor costs, and increase the value of labor outputs and innovation should be included (Mansor & Jaharudin, 2018). Another concern of this paper is to focus on the differences in the characteristics and behaviors between generations, which would affect the way they work. For example, there would be a negative impact if the management misunderstood the needs and expectations of the majority workforce. This phenomenon has been suggested by past researches and a study by Reilly (2012) supported this fact. He states that different generations affect the organization practice differently. Literatures also suggest that gen Y employees are very particular about their personal life and needs a flexible work arrangement (Dwyer, 2009), and if possible they want to work with creative people as a team (Haynes, 2011) to boost their motivation.

The uniqueness of this study is by taking team cohesion as the mediator to promote millennial employees' engagement, who is known to be a very challenging generation. These employees are growth oriented but dislike micromanaged working style. This is performed purposely to ensure the dominants that we proposed would promote greater engagement among this generation, which has been given less attention by earlier researchers specifically, in Malaysian context.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Engagement is one of the most significant concepts in management field which has received a great attention in recent years (Crawford et al., 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). In academia, Kahn (1990) defines it based on personal role engagement that measures the individual's cognitive, emotional and physical expression of the authentic self at his or her workplace. This definition is normally used in the quantitative personal engagement scales. There are many definitions for employee engagement. This paper uses the definition of engagement as the extent to which employees are involved with, committed to, enthusiastic and passionate about their work as described by Macey and Schneider (2008). Recent meta-analyses and qualitative reviews have identified the strongest and most reliable predictors of engagement (e.g. Crawford et al., 2014; Christian & Slaughter, 2007; Halbesleben, 2010). Halbesleben's (2010) meta-analysis suggests feedback, autonomy, social support and organizational climate are significant to employee engagement. Additionally, based on Crawford et al.'s meta-analysis, factors such as work role fit, job variety, rewards and recognition, recovery and opportunities indicate development as antecedents to work engagement.

### **Determinants for Employee Engagement among Millennial Employees in Malaysian Context**

In this paper, the social exchange theory is used to support the objectives of this paper that is to determine the determinants that influence the employee engagement and examine the role of team cohesion as the mediator. This is done because past researches have provided greater support that SET is very significant when referred to the motivational process (Deci et al., 1991). In order to maximize the benefits in this paper, the researchers' main interest is to determine the factors that influence the Millennial, who looks for more challenging jobs to satisfy their needs and interests. It has also been acknowledged that job resources are part of the motivational processes and are relevant as the predictors of work engagement (Bakker et al., 2008; Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2007; Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Past scholars have studied determinants of employee engagement in various perspectives including the influence of leadership styles (Mansor et al., 2017; Chin, Lok & Kong, 2019), autocratic, democratic and Laissez-Faire (Yao et al., 2017); work-life balance (Ganesan, Azli & Fageeh, 2017; Pandita & Singhal, 2017; Johari, Tan & Zulkarnain, 2018); rewards and recognition (Shahril, 2010) on employee engagement. Some studies have even been done on Generation Y. However, the different type, size and environment of the organizations where the employee works would influence the engagement and produce different outcomes. This study aims to understand more about determinants that could influence the behavior or specifically to make Millennials to be more engaged at workplace and help them to be responsible and able to lead the organization in the future. The study suggests that Gen Y is the majority workforce in any organization currently and they have the power to decide on the organization performance, sustainability, and continuous improvement. These have been proven and their roles are undeniable and important (Rosli & Hasim, 2017). Additionally, the literature describes that the behavior and interest of the Millennials need to be understood and preserved. For example, it is stated that organization which put more effort to promote engagement among the younger generation would be more competitive and would have a significant and positive influence on organizational output and effectiveness (Fadilah, Kaliannan & Nafis, 2015). However, it is also suggested that the organization needs to provide continuous attention on this generation and employee engagement because they have the personality and the characteristics of being creative, care free but highly potential for job hopping (Rosli & Hasim, 2017).

Ryan and Deci (2000) have pointed out that employee needs to be linked as a team or group, which suggest the importance of team and being connected to people in the organization (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2010). This is also known as psychological need of relatedness. It is anticipated that Millennials characterized positive team environments in the organization as a mean to develop mutual trust and mutual respect among the employees (Louka, 2011), thus further engagement would increase stability and security association among employees, employer and colleagues (Carlton & Winsler, 1998). This study predicts determinant has not been given due attention especially in employee engagement or team cohesion. Previous studies have explored the association between faith and diversity of work behavior with commitment to the objectives and performance of the team (Costa, Roe & Taillieu, 2001; Lawler, 1992; Hempel, Zhang & Tjosvold, 2009); in improving cooperation and organization (McAllister, 1995). The significant of determinant, based on the literatures, states that there is a significant association between highly cohesive teams and performance (Mullen & Copper, 1994; Carron et al., 2002). Studies on team setting have detailed out the association between performance and team cohesion. In terms of sports, it is more powerful and significant compared to working environment (Carron et al., 2002). Additionally, Carron et al. (2002) state that the members in a strong cohesive group are more integrated and dedicated to attain achievement compared to the less cohesive group.

### **Employee Career Development on Team Cohesion**

A study conducted in the nursing homes of United States reveals that career development provides opportunities for growth and enriched team work as well as communication. It also builds self-respect and self-confidence among the employee which reduces turnover and increase engagement (Wilson, Eaton & Kamanu, 2002). Another organization known as Northern Uganda Social Action recommends career development (counseling, team meeting and training) increases community involvement (Blattman, Fiala & Martinez, 2011).

## **Employee Feedback on Team Cohesion**

The millennial employees hope to get feedback on every job they performed. They want instant and frequent feedback in order to be recognized faster, so that they could rectify the limitation immediately. Past researches suggest that group cohesiveness could be promoted when there is proactive communication among the group members (Carless & Paola, 2000). This is because the interaction and communication would allow the team members to have dual relationship, and increase the group cohesiveness. This has been proven important because it is linked to the group performance (Goodman, Ravlin & Schminke, 1987). When an individual member receives feedback from the peers in the group, it would help them to reconsider and change their mindset or behavior. It is also suggested the feedback among the team members could lead to the improvement of the overall performance (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), and could increase the engagement of the team members (Gamberini et al., 2011). Therefore, team cohesiveness and performance could be promoted within the group when every member recognized the importance of feedback which helps them to be closer and work together.

## **Goal Setting on Team Cohesion**

The role of team work is unquestionable in meeting the goal of an organization. As stated by Saavedra et al. (1993); Weldon and Weingart (1993) goal interdependence needs to be induced by the assignment of collective goals, provision of group feedback, and rewards for collective performance. Every member in the team should be able to cooperate and work together to perform the tasks and achieve team performance. If they fail to cooperate, it would lead to task failure as well as the incompleteness of collective goals. Previous studies have suggested that collective goals enhance the development of cooperative strategies and improve group performance (Mitchell & Silver, 1990; Weingart & Weldon, 1991). However, the members are required to sacrifice self-interest to gain cooperation from others and complete a collective goal (Comeau & Griffith, 2005). Goal-oriented and mutual interdependence enhance a friendly working atmosphere, which cultivate and consolidate team or group cohesion among the members (Hogg, 1992). Interaction and communication are involved while completing their tasks and these help every individual to recognize themselves as an essential player in achieving collective goals. As every member identifies the roles within the group, cohesion would be developed. Additionally, Austin and Bobko (1985) point out that the connection between group goal setting and group cohesion would support the goal achievement. This is supported by earlier study that suggests when group has clear goals and its members are able to identify the roles, team or group cohesion would be improved (Raven & Reitsema, 1957).

## **Reward and Recognition on Team Cohesion**

Monetary and non-monetary rewards are crucial. This could encourage greater effort and commitment from the employees, as it directs workers' capabilities and efficiency; and help organization to achieve the goals (Gana & Bababe, 2011). Their absence could revert and negatively affect the employees' performance and the achievement of the organization (Palmer, 2012). Past studies have also proven that there are significant effects between rewards and attitude towards those individuals or groups (Lott & Lott, 1965; Byrne, 1991). Their studies indicate that individuals would be more attracted to groups in they could interact. This mark groups cohesiveness and when individuals receive rewards in the presence of the group members; those who do not receive the rewards would feel they are being punished. According to Podsakoff and Todor (1985) reward and punishment would create positive relationship between leaders and team members and

enhance cohesiveness, and drive productivity. In order to develop group cohesion, employee should be given recognition on his or her achievement and contribution (Hollenbeck & Williams, 1987; Biondo & Pirritano, 1985).

### **Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship on Team Cohesion**

A team needs to achieve a common goal to reach a common platform and could be done if each member complements each other and avoid unnecessary conflicts among themselves. Thus, a constructive and open communication is crucial in team building. As suggested by Carron (1988) communication among the team or group members could ease their effort to build similar beliefs and promote agreeable attitudes; and logically increase the potential for team cohesion. In fact, research has shown that communication could enhance mutual understanding among individuals (Insko & Wilson, 1977) and a feeling of group closeness (Plutchik, 1981). Additionally, it is suggested that a supervisor-subordinate relationship could influence and promote involvement in the decision-making process, and thus has positive influence on group cohesion (Carron & Chelladuri, 1981).

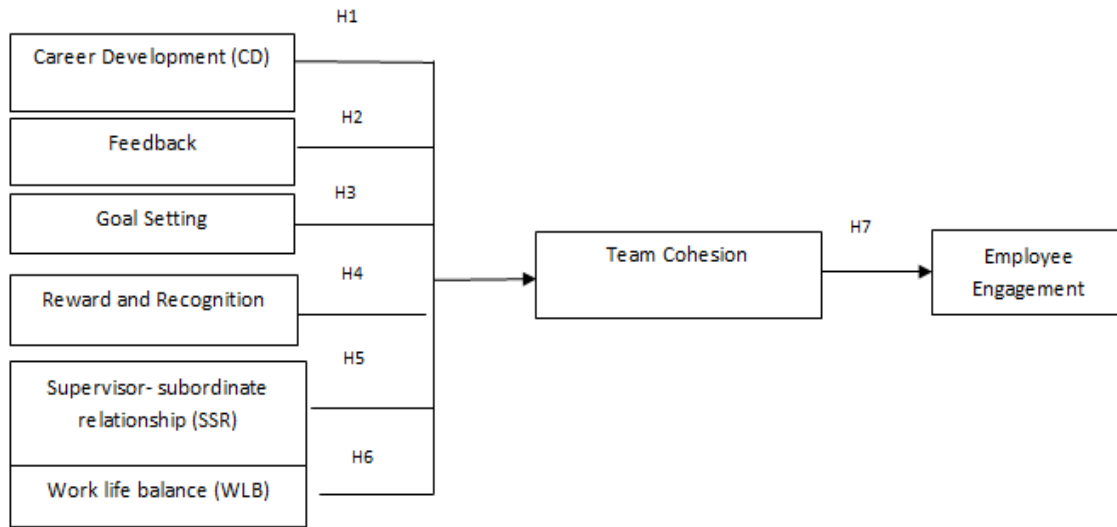
### **Work Life Balance on Team Cohesion**

Millennial wants flexible and life balance. Working in a team help them to perform the job better and faster as the work could be delegated based on expertise, skill and ability. Through a work life balance, employer could offer a balance between personal life expectations and employment needs (Deery, 2008; Kottabi, 2011; Mas-Machuca, Berbegal-Mirabent & Alegre, 2016). It could also be found in organization which supports the needs of the individual by offering flexible working hour and arrangement, working from remote, and focusing on the work outcomes (Result Oriented Work Environment). These are relevant to the characteristics of the Millennial, and are done with the support of the employers (Deery, 2008). Thus, employees might attain job satisfactions due to the choices given. This would create employee's happiness and engagement at work. Additionally, it is stated that work-life balance helps employees to adjust their working hours and this could raise the productivities, achieve the goals of the organization as well as promote a balanced lifestyle (Hutcheson, 2012).

### **Team Cohesion on Employee Engagement**

A cohesive group consists of members who are attracted to one another and want to remain as part of the group (Cartwright, 1968). Cohesive groups are further characterized by a high degree of commitment to the group task (Goodman, Ravlin & Schminke, 1987). The relationship between cohesion and group performance is complex, and more often it is assumed instead of examined (Goodman et al., 1987). Cohesive groups have a high degree of commitment to the group task, and a high degree of commitment to achieve the goals of the group (Berkowitz, 1954; Shaw, 1981). Group, which is cohesive, is more committed to the aims and actions of the group than non-cohesive groups. Schachter et al. (1951); Berkowitz (1954) found that members of cohesive groups accept attempts by confederates within the group more readily. This attitude influences them to increase or decrease their production. Group cohesiveness is the only variable that correlates significantly to the organizational performance and strongly predicts its outcome (Keller, 1992). Nankunda (2019); Robbins and Judge (2008); Quick and Nelson (2009) suggest that team cohesion has positive impact on employees' engagement.

Based on the literature review and underpinning theory, the following conceptual framework and hypotheses are formulated:



**FIGURE 1**  
**RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

*H1: There is a positive effect of career development on team cohesion among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H2: There is a positive effect of feedback on team cohesion among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H3: There is a positive effect of goal setting on team cohesion among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H4: There is a positive effect of reward and recognition on team cohesion among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H5: There is a positive effect of supervisor subordinate relationship on team cohesion among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H6: There is a positive effect of work life balance on team cohesion among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H7: There is a positive effect of team cohesion on employee engagement among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H8a: There is mediating effect of team cohesion between the relationship of career development and employee engagement among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H8b: There is mediating effect of team cohesion between the relationship of feedback and employee engagement among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H8c: There is mediating effect of team cohesion between the relationship of goal setting and employee engagement among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H8d: There is mediating effect of team cohesion between the relationship of reward and recognition and employee engagement among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H8e: There is mediating effect of team cohesion between the relationship of supervisor subordinate relationship and employee engagement among the millennials in Malaysia.*

*H8f: There is mediating effect of team cohesion between the relationship of work life balance and employee engagement among the millennials in Malaysia.*

## METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional survey design is used for the study featuring a self-administrated questionnaire which is suitable to collect information from the enormous numbers of respondents. The study uses quantitative method and cluster sampling technique to select the sample. The study is set to focus few criteria of the respondents. I) The millennials are currently working and has previous work experiences for at least 2 years. II) They should be between 22 to 38 years old. Questionnaires are distributed by the HR managers who have been contacted by the researchers prior to the distribution. Some of the questionnaires are distributed manually to the respondents.

The researchers managed to collect 205 questionnaires within three months, the response rate was 32%. However, it is sufficient to be used as sample for this study. The respondents are Millennials who were working in organizations located in Wilayah Persekutuan Putrajaya, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, and some from the other states in Malaysia, such as Johor Baharu, and Ipoh in Perak, which are considered as among the places with highest population of employees, and Johor, represented the south region of Malaysia, and Ipoh, Perak, represented the north region of Malaysia. The study seeks permission from the HR department prior to its data collection. All responses are treated confidentially and no information would be disclosed without permission.

The questionnaire is adapted from several existing researches with similar theme, and the questions are basically adapted and adopted to suit the aim of this study that is to investigate the mediating effect of team cohesion and the relationship between factors of the IVs and the DV. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the items, a pilot study is conducted. Validation and pre-testing are done with the millennials and experts. There are nine sections. Section A collects the information on demographic profile of the respondents, while the rests (Section B, C, D, E, F, G, H and I) measure items which are relevant to employees' engagement, career development, feedback, goal setting, reward and recognition, supervisory-subordinate relationship, work life balance and team cohesion. All the data are then processed using SPSS 22 and Smart PLS 3.3.3. As the parametric test (skewness & kurtosis) is violated and the sample size is only 205, researchers have applied Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) instead of covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) to test the hypotheses for the proposed model (Memon et al., 2020) in spite of considering this study as confirmatory (the framework is supported with theory and supported by literature). Descriptive statistical tools are used to characterize the respondents of the study.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### Respondent Profile

The majority of the respondents are female (54.1%) as compared to male (45.9%). Approximately 36.10% of the total respondents are 22-25 years old, followed by 31.70% are 26-30 years old and 32.20% are more than 31 years old. 44.4% of the respondents have first degree and 56.6% work in private organizations. While, 22.90%, 28.30%, 22.40%, 13.20%, 4.90% and 8.30% of the respondents have been working in the present organization less than 1 year, 1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-8 years, 9-10 years, 10 years and above respectively. The demographic frequency is illustrated in Table 1.

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Gender	Male	94	45.90
	Female	111	54.10
Age	22-25 years old	74	36.10
	26-30 years old	65	31.70
	31-38 years old	66	32.20
Academic Qualification	SPM and below	24	11.70
	Certificate	17	8.30
	Diploma	56	27.30

	Bachelor	91	44.40
	Master and above	17	8.30
Sector of Organization	Private	116	56.60
	Public	83	40.50
	Others	6	2.90
Working Period (in present organization)	Less than 1 years	47	22.90
	1-2 years	58	28.30
	3-5 years	46	22.40
	6-8 years	27	13.20
	9-10 years	10	4.90
	10 years and above	17	8.30
<b>Total</b>		<b>205</b>	<b>100.00</b>

## Measurement Model

The set of data is analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling via Partial Least Squares regression (SEM-PLS). A two-stage approach (i.e., measurement model and structural model) is applied in evaluating the set of data. In the measurement model, both reliability and validity of the constructs are established. The reliability is determined based on a few assessments namely Cronbach alpha coefficient, outer loading, composite reliability and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (refer to Table 2). The Cronbach alpha coefficient values range between 0.805 and 0.919 meet the minimum cut-off value of 0.70 for all the constructs (Hair et al., 2017). Additionally, as suggested by Sarstedt et al. (2017) the outer loading and Composite Reliability (CR) is above the minimum cut-off score of 0.70 with the range between 0.599 to 0.871 and 0.861 to 0.932 respectively. One of the items which refers to employee's engagement (EE3); is deleted due to low outer loading (Hossan, Aktar & Zhang, 2020). This is done in order to increase the CR and AVE. Subsequently, all the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores (from 0.512 to 0.689) are above the threshold score of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017).

Construct	Items	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Work Life Balance			0.805	0.861	0.512
	WLB1	0.784			
	WLB2	0.808			
	WLB3	0.759			
	WLB4	0.599			
	WLB5	0.744			
	WLB6	0.561			
Goal Setting			0.849	0.898	0.689
	GS1	0.742			
	GS2	0.886			
	GS3	0.871			
	GS4	0.814			
Team Cohesion			0.903	0.925	0.673
	TC1	0.811			
	TC2	0.84			
	TC3	0.857			



	TC4	0.824			
	TC5	0.778			
	TC6	0.812			
			0.919	0.932	0.578
Rewards and Recognition	RR1	0.704			
	RR2	0.724			
	RR3	0.772			
	RR4	0.796			
	RR5	0.796			
	RR6	0.795			
	RR7	0.775			
	RR8	0.739			
	RR9	0.764			
	RR10	0.731			
			0.872	0.907	0.662
Feedback	F1	0.809			
	F2	0.829			
	F3	0.839			
	F4	0.785			
	F5	0.805			
				0.886	0.911
Career Development	ECD1	0.791			
	ECD2	0.752			
	ECD3	0.748			
	ECD4	0.816			
	ECD5	0.765			
	ECD6	0.769			
	ECD7	0.748			
			0.903	0.922	0.583
Employee Engagement	EE1	0.802			
	EE2	0.854			
	EE3	Item Deleted			
	EE4	0.749			
	EE5	0.785			
	EE6	0.754			
	EE7	0.841			
	EE8	0.825			
	EE9	0.83			
			0.913	0.929	0.623
Supervisor/ Subordinate Relationship	SSR1	0.746			
	SSR2	0.795			
	SSR3	0.800			
	SSR4	0.844			
	SSR5	0.820			
	SSR6	0.792			
	SSR7	0.715			
	SSR8	0.793			

Note: EE3 items deleted due to low loading; CR (Composite Reliability); AVE (Average Variance Extracted)

Discriminant validity is confirmed by evaluating the heterotrait-monotrait ratio as recommended by Henseler et al. (2015). Table 3 details the HTMT value of all the measurement items are lower than 0.85.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Career Development								
Employee Engagement	0.518							
Feedback	0.598	0.463						
Goal Setting	0.624	0.549	0.679					
Rewards and Recognition	0.777	0.554	0.745	0.729				
Supervisor-subordinate relationship	0.437	0.536	0.637	0.425	0.518			
Team Cohesion	0.556	0.582	0.715	0.725	0.693	0.564		
Work Life Balance	0.683	0.362	0.553	0.749	0.765	0.284	0.520	

Note: HTMT<0.85

### Structural Model

Table 4 illustrates all the constructs with VIF value lower than offending score of 3.33 (Diamantopoulus & Siguaw, 2006). Thus, the research concludes that collinearity issue is absent in the study. A bootstrapping approach with 500 subsamples is employed to test the path relationship of the model. The results support most of the hypotheses. Table 4 illustrates the results of the hypotheses and their significance. There is positive significant effect of feedback ( $\beta = 0.207$ ,  $t=2.672$ ,  $p<0.05$ ); goal setting ( $\beta = 0.329$ ,  $t=3.463$ ,  $p<0.05$ ); reward and recognition ( $\beta = 0.231$ ,  $t=2.150$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and supervisor-subordinate relationship ( $\beta = 0.175$ ,  $t=2.785$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) on team cohesion. There is significant effect of team cohesion on employee engagement ( $\beta = 0.538$ ,  $t=7.755$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). On the other hand, employee career development ( $\beta = 0.006$ ,  $t=0.056$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) and work life balance ( $\beta = -0.041$ ,  $t=0.466$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) have no significant effect on team cohesion.

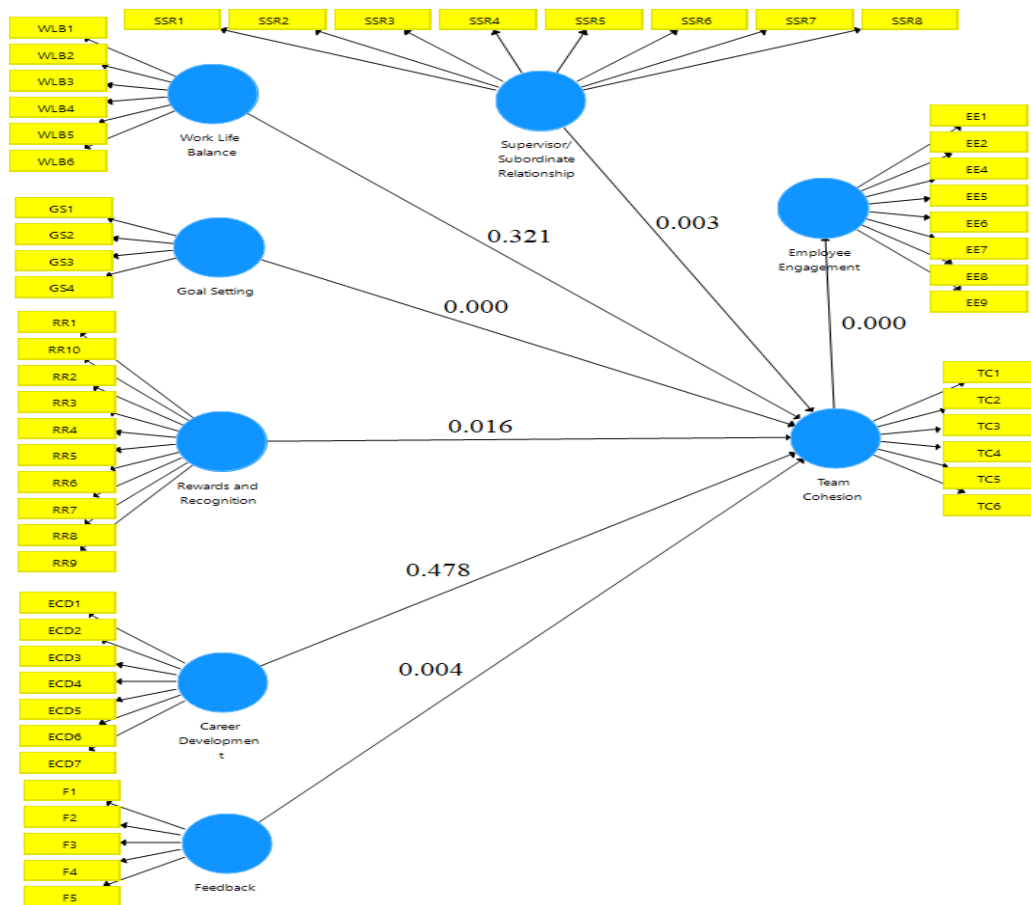
56.7% of the variance in team cohesion is explained by the exogenous variables (i.e., employee career development, feedback, goal setting, reward and recognition, supervisor-subordinate relationship and work life balance). Meanwhile, 29% of the variance in employee engagement is explained by team cohesion. Cohen (1988) suggests the values of R square as substantial predictive.

The guideline as suggested by Cohen, (1988) in evaluating the effect size is used and has the value of 0.35, 0.15, and 0.02 which indicate large, medium, and small effect size respectively. With reference to Table 4 the results show feedback ( $f^2=0.043$ ), goal setting ( $f^2=0.117$ ), reward and recognition ( $f^2=0.039$ ) and supervisor-subordinate relationship ( $f^2=0.045$ ). These demonstrate a medium effect size in generating  $R^2$  on team cohesion. However, career development ( $f^2=0.001$ ) and work life balance ( $f^2=0.002$ ) indicate a small effect size. Additionally, team cohesion ( $f^2=0.408$ ) carries a large effect size in producing  $R^2$  for employee engagement. Lastly, Q square is used to measure the predictive relevance of the model (Stone, 1974; Geisser, 1975). Both  $Q^2$  value for team cohesion (0.350) and employee engagement (0.171) are achieved above threshold value of 0, signifying that the model has sufficient predictive relevance.

Path Relationship	Beta	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	VIF	R <sup>2</sup>	f <sup>2</sup>
H1) Employee Career Development -> Team Cohesion	0.006	0.101	0.056	0.478	2.125		0.001
H2) Feedback -> Team Cohesion	0.207	0.077	2.672	0.004	2.276		0.043
H3) Goal Setting -> Team Cohesion	0.329	0.095	3.463	0.000	2.125		0.117

H4) Reward and Recognition -> Team Cohesion	0.231	0.107	2.15	0.016	3.167		0.039
H5) Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship -> Team Cohesion	0.175	0.063	2.785	0.003	1.569		0.045
H6) Work Life Balance -> Team Cohesion	-0.041	0.087	0.466	0.321	2.114		0.002
H7) Team Cohesion -> Employee Engagement	0.538	0.069	7.755	0.000	1		0.408
Team Cohesion						0.567	
Employee Engagement						0.29	

Note: VIF < 3.33; f2 (0.02-small effect, 0.15-medium effect, 0.35- substantial effect)



**FIGURE 2**  
**STRUCTURAL MODEL WITH P VALUE**

According to Aguinis et al. (2016); Rungtusanatham et al. (2014) team cohesion mediate the relationship between feedback and employee engagement ( $\beta= 0.111, t=2.477, p= 0.014$ ). Besides, the relationship between goal setting and employee engagement ( $\beta=0.177, t= 3.204 p=0.001$ ); supervisor-subordinate relationship and employee engagement ( $\beta=0.094, t=2.740; p=0.006$ ) are mediated by team cohesion. However, no significant mediating effect on team cohesion has been identified between career development and employee engagement ( $\beta=0.003, t = 0.055, p=0.956$ ), rewards and recognition and employee engagement ( $\beta=0.124, t= 1.759, p=0.079$ ); and work life

balance and employee engagement ( $\beta=-0.022$ ,  $t=0.447$ ,  $p=0.655$ ). These mediation effects of employee engagement are presented in Table 5.

Path Relationship	Indirect	Std.	t-value	p-value
	Effect	Error		
H8a) Employee Career Development -> Team Cohesion -> Employee Engagement	0.003	0.056	0.055	0.956
H8b) Feedback -> Team Cohesion -> Employee Engagement	0.111	0.045	2.477	0.014
H8c) Goal Setting -> Team Cohesion -> Employee Engagement	0.177	0.055	3.204	0.001
H8d) Reward and Recognition -> Team Cohesion -> Employee Engagement	0.124	0.071	1.759	0.079
H8e) Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship -> Team Cohesion -> Employee Engagement	0.094	0.034	2.74	0.006
H8f) Work Life Balance -> Team Cohesion -> Employee Engagement	-0.022	0.049	0.447	0.655

## DISCUSSION

The research aims to determine the factors that influence employee engagement at work among the Millennials, and examines the effect of team cohesion as the mediator by using social exchange theory. In this paper, the researchers have tested determinants such as employee career development, goal setting, feedback, reward recognition, supervisory-subordinate relationship and work life balance. Most of the determinants reveal significant and positive relationship and two determinants indicate no relationship with the team cohesion. Work Life Balance (WLB) has negative and non-significant effect and Employee Career Development (ECD) has no significant effect on team cohesion. Thus, H1 and H6 have been rejected. The result suggests that ECD and WLB are not relevant and do not affect team cohesion of the Millennial. These are perceived as individual factors. Normally, ECD has a significant effect on team cohesion. ECD is the lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure, and transitions in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving preferred future. Creating work environment that prioritizes WLB is important to the Millennial because it promotes healthier and productive workforce (Deery, 2008). However, this study is unable to prove that WLB has an impact on team cohesion among the Millennial.

The factors that have positive effect on team cohesion are feedback, goal setting, reward recognition, and supervisor-subordinate relationship. Feedback is obtained by listening actively, taking time to analyze the situation, and then thinking of the best possible solution to perform better. The millennials generation has an open mindset, transparent, and avoids instant feedback because it would allow positive criticism and change to improve results. As stated earlier, interaction and communication between team members could increase the group cohesiveness and performance (Goodman, Ravlin & Schminke, 1987). The finding of this study has proven feedback has positive impact on team cohesion for the Millennials employees in Malaysia. Thus, hypothesis H2 has been accepted.

Millennials are able to focus when they are given the trust to perform and achieve the goals which help workers to take up ownership and pride to perform their work. In addition, it helps to keep everyone motivated. Setting goals at the initial stage could also encourage people to work together. As stated in past researches, team performance could be achieved if cooperative strategy is

offered (Mitchell & Silver, 1990; Weingart & Weldon, 1991), this encourages everyone to work towards a common goal, and the result of this study has proven that there is a positive relationship between goal setting and team cohesion among the Millennial. Hence, hypothesis H3 has been accepted.

The role of monetary and non-monetary rewards in determining the engagement is undeniable. Some studies have proven that there are significant effects between rewards and attitudes on individuals or groups (Byrne, 1971; Lott & Lott, 1965). Millennials' efforts must be rewarded to ensure loyalty and avoid burnout. For example, when colleagues are allowed to nominate one another for rewards, it demonstrates that they appreciate the opportunity and they need each other's support and opinion. The result of this study has proven that reward and recognition has positive relationship with team cohesion. Thus, hypothesis H4 has been accepted.

Maintaining a healthy employer-employee relationship requires mutual respect and open communication, which have to be shown through actions. It has been acknowledged that currently bureaucracy need to be replaced with flattened relationship between superior and subordinates. This could reduce the gap, enhance mutual trust and agreement that would lead to employees feeling contented. The study has proven that supervisor and subordinate relationship affect team cohesion. Therefore, hypothesis H5 has been accepted. This is similar to the result in the study conducted by Carron and Chelladuri (1981) which suggests a supervisor-subordinate relationship could determine and promote involvement in the decision-making process and thus influence group cohesion positively.

Team cohesion ensures unity while performing task and responsibilities to achieve common goal. Thus, it is very important to ensure team members understand the fact that they are responsible to achieve group goals; and therefore, should contribute for the overall success of the group. Millennials support this objective easily, because most of the time, they like to socialize and work as a team, and this study has proven that there is a significant effect of team cohesion on engagement of Malaysian millennials employees. So, hypothesis H7 has been accepted. The result is supported and similar to past studies which have been conducted by Nankunda (2019); Robbins and Judge (2008); Quick and Nelson (2009). They found and suggest that team cohesion have positive impact on employees' engagement.

Furthermore, this study tests the team cohesion as the mediator between the exogenous variables (ECD, WLB, Goal setting, rewards and recognition, feedback, and supervisor and subordinate relationship) and the endogenous variable (employee engagement). The results display that team cohesion does not have mediating effect between the relationship of ECD, WLB and employee engagement among millennials employees in Malaysia. Thus, hypothesis H8a and H8f have been rejected. There is no mediating effect of team cohesion in the relationship between rewards and recognition and employee engagement (hypothesis H8d has been rejected). There is the mediating effect of team cohesion between the relationship of employee engagement and feedback, goal setting, supervisor-subordinate relationship, that has been proven in this study. Thus, hypotheses H8b, H8c and H8e have been accepted.

### **IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY**

This paper indicates that findings with regard to employee engagement among the Millennial, have shown factors such as feedback, goal setting, reward and recognition, supervisor-subordinate relationship have relationship with the employee engagement. Team cohesion mediates the relationship between these factors with employee engagement. It specifically depicts that Millennial appreciates if the management emphasizes fair and effective feedback in the workplace. Management practices normally would give effect on management process, where when employees are given the opportunity to respond, give ideas and defend their views, they would feel the process

is fair and transparent. Previously, in the traditional thinking, feedback was given only when change is necessary, however, this is no longer practical especially in the modern organization where organization become very much result oriented. Next, the study found that Millennial is very concerned with his or her career development and are very interested to be involved on how the organizations planned to create their career path development. Therefore, leaders must be able to understand this interest and suggest suitable offers to the employees. It is anticipated that when organization is able to provide a promising development opportunity, Millennials employees would show higher employee engagement.

Furthermore, the paper found that Millennials could be expected to support as well as to be the executors of the company's vision and goals, as long as the employers are seen as motivator for them to react and engaged. The study also reveals that supervisor and subordinate relationship could give significant impact in influencing employee engagement among the Millennial. This is important because, a mentor-like relationship with their leaders makes learning easy, reduced gap and promotes team cohesion between superior and subordinates. Furthermore, it would challenge the traditional assumptions, beliefs and ways of doing things, and it is discouraging for them if the leader rejects their ideas and views.

Generally, it is understood that people work for rewards inclusive of pay, recognition, status and other monetary and nonmonetary rewards. They are willing to put extra effort to meet life expectations, but at the same time, still giving priority to gain meaningful works while receiving the rewards and recognition. A practical implication for leaders to consider is giving the best package of rewards, whether monetary or non-monetary. It is also suggested that even an open and transparent communication with the millennial, could create motivating work environment to enhance team cohesion which influence the engagement among them.

### **LIMITATION AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE STUDY**

This study is conducted using a cross-sectional study. It measures the variables using a single point at one time. Therefore, in order to enhance the results, it is suggested, in future studies researchers should measure the proposed model using a longitudinal analysis. This is because; the result would show the effect and impact of team cohesion after some times and not at similar time. The study would also be better off in terms of it results. If there are more respondents, the analysis would be based on the comparative studies, and hopefully there is a possibility to foresee the impact of organizational culture or national culture in this theme. Furthermore, future research would also want to extend the framework by using moderating variables between the exogenous variables (feedback, goal setting, supervisor-subordinate relationship, reward and recognition) and endogenous variable (employee engagement) to discover why or how a particular relationship or effect enhance the results.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Millennial is currently the majority workforce in the labor market and as they become the highest figure of employees in any organization, their role in influencing the performance, sustainability, and continuous improvement of the organizations are undeniable. Organization needs to ensure people remain connected in the organization, and are always motivated and engaged. However, the challenges are even more critical now; especially Millennials' expectations are very complex and keep changing. For that reason, this study is conducted to add value in this theme as it focuses on testing and measuring the factors such as goal setting, feedback, career development, feedback, supervisor and subordinate relationship and work life balance and the mediator of team cohesion, which, are commonly acknowledged to be relevant

to the younger generation in the current years. The study has developed a model which illustrates that by having the right engagement factors specifically for millennials, their engagement would be maximized and consequently reduce turnover. Based on the results, the study has proven that the engagement of Millennials can be enhanced when the organizations offer effective feedback, goal setting, reward and recognition and supervisor-subordinate relationship that would lead to common thinking, and common goals through team cohesion. The study indicates team cohesion is significant in work engagement of the Millennials. Thus, it could be concluded that organizations should inculcate the culture that promote teamwork, team relatedness and team performance when dealing with younger generation at the workplace. It is also suggested the designation of tall and hierarchical structure should be avoided in the team to create a healthy work environment and strengthen employee engagement.

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