Melinde Coetzee · Ingrid L. Potgieter Nadia Ferreira *Editors*

Psychology of Retention

Theory, Research and Practice



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Preface

Introduction and Overview of the Book

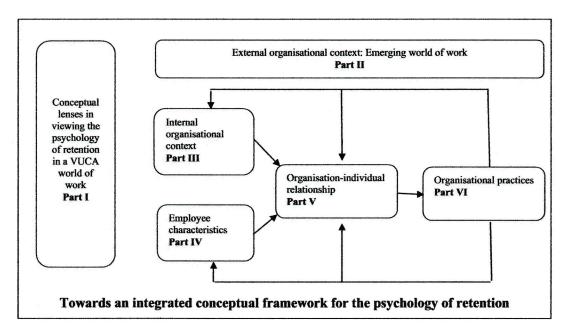
Psychology of Retention: Theory, Research and Practice covers up-to-date theory and research that inform retention practices in the contemporary volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (VUCA) landscape. The various chapters, written by professional scholars, subject matter experts and practitioners in the field of retention, contain much rich information about the psychology of retention as manifested in real-life contexts across the globe. Presented from an integrated conceptual framework for the psychology of retention, the book is novel in exploring retention from both classical (e.g. Job Demands-Resources Model, Self-Determination Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, Broaden-and-Build Theory and Expectancy Theory) and new models and conceptual frameworks relevant to the contemporary work context. Apart from being anchored in sound theoretical frameworks and research evidence, the various chapters provide practical guidelines for retention practice and recommendations for future research. The book is timely when considering the continuing "war for talent" in times of skills scarcity demands globally. Losing talented employees can be a costly exercise for organisations because of severe losses in terms of productivity, creativity, efficiency and profit. Talent retention is also important for business competitive advantage and sustainability and, therefore, as highlighted by the various chapters, remains a topic of high interest and challenge for most organisations and practitioners.

Generally, the scholars in this book describe retention as a systematic attempt by an organisation to develop and nurture an encouraging environment that promotes employees' decision to remain in the organisation through policies that consider various needs. The various chapters refer to the concept of retention ("retain") as meaning (1) "to hold or keep in possession" and (2) "to engage the services of". The psychological focus of this book emphasises practices relevant to the digital era brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution's rapid technological advancements. Contemporary retention practices are focused on engaging employees fully in the organisation as a continuous contemporary theme. To this end, the book

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focuses especially on deepening the reader's understanding of the role of various psychological and job/career factors in retention. The chapters also point to differing needs of a multigenerational and diverse workforce for which retention practices should cater. The chapters also evaluate the role of organisational practices such as work ethics, mentoring and rewards in contemporary retention practice.

The book is divided into six major parts as illustrated below. The six parts represent the elements of an integrated conceptual framework for understanding the psychology of retention.



Part I of the book, Conceptual Lenses in Viewing the Psychology of Retention in a VUCA World of Work, comprises two chapters that illustrate the psychology of retention from the perspective of two conceptual lenses, namely the Job Demands-Resources dual process model (Chap. 1) and the Flow@Work Model (Chap. 2) which is relevant for not only retaining employees, but also to improve business performance in the contemporary world of work.

Part II of the book (Chaps. 3 and 4), External Organisational Context: Emerging World of Work, positions the psychology of retention within the pervasive influencing context of the VUCA and digital landscape which demands innovative thinking regarding retention practices that promote employee engagement over the long term. The authors make a compelling case for retention practices that address the needs of a fast-evolving digital era employee. Articulating an appealing employee value proposition (EVP) and mapping and surveying employee experiences in terms of meaningfulness and engagement across various areas of the employee journey within the organisation are emphasised.

Part III of the book, *Internal Organisational Context*, comprises four chapters (Chaps. 5–8) that illustrate the dynamics of the psychology of retention within the internal organisational context. The dynamics of personal and organisational

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resources, factors influencing person—job fit and embeddedness, and the creation of need supportive environments and practices are highlighted. The basic premise is that employee behaviour is a function of personal and environmental factors that manifest within a specific organisational context. The interplay between these factors should be considered in understanding the reasons why employees decide to stay in or leave an organisation. The authors highlight key insights that inform retention practices.

Part IV of the book, *Employee Characteristics*, comprises five chapters (Chaps. 9–13) that explore the role of employee characteristics in the psychology of retention. The various chapters extend on the basic premise of Part III and demonstrate how socio-demographic diversity impacts on retention by examining how person-organisational factors interact with individuals' socio-demographic characteristics.

Part V of the book, Organisational-Individual Relationship: Psychological Contract, comprises three chapters (Chaps. 14–16) that illustrate the role of the psychological contract in the psychology of retention. Linking back to the external organisational context (VUCA and digital landscape see Part II) influencing the psychology of retention, Part V contributes to a better understanding of especially Millennials' expectations at work and their retention.

Part VI of the book, *Organisational Practices*, comprises four chapters (Chaps. 17–20) that address work ethics, mentoring and reward solutions as important practices in the psychology of retention. The authors reiterate that retention practices should address the total rewards elements of compensation, benefits, performance management, work-life balance, recognition, and talent development and career opportunities.

In a nutshell, the various sections of the conceptual framework illustrate that retention strategies and practices should be aligned to the changing nature of work and jobs which is influenced by the technological advancements of the digital era and knowledge economy. Retention practices should take cognisance of the psychological contract expectations and career development needs of a diverse workforce and especially those of young talent (e.g. Millennials). In this regard, the employee value proposition (EVP) is a critical element of a retention strategy. Employee engagement continues to be a pervasive theme for retention. Retention strategies should include fostering a conducive and supportive environment for enhancing employees' engagement, intrinsic motivation and commitment. Managers and practitioners need a sound understanding of the psychological and job/career factors, and job demands and job resources that contribute to engaging or disengaging (withdrawal) behaviours. A holistic approach, including a total rewards strategy which focuses on retention-related policies and practices relevant to compensation and benefits, performance management, work-life balance, reward and recognition, talent development and career advancement opportunities, training and development, supervisor support and employee wellness/well-being, is seen as essential for staff retention. The book advocates the notion of design thinking relevant to the digital era to map actual employee experience throughout the employee journey in the organisation. Assessing and monitoring employees'

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experiences of the organisation across the various areas of a total rewards strategy, including sourcing and recruiting, pre-boarding, onboarding (orientation and initial training), communication, and community involvement, job embeddedness, person—job fit, organisational culture, performance and development mentoring and feedback, continuous learning and growth feedback, retirement, termination or resignation, will ultimately help to foster employee engagement.

We acknowledge that retention is a complex theme and that the chapter contributions only provide a snapshot of the themes and practices of relevance and interest in the contemporary work context. Although the book generally presents retention, low turnover rates and low turnover intentions as the hallmark of a healthy organisation, we also acknowledge that not all staying or retaining is necessarily good and to the benefit of the organisation. As Holtom and colleagues (Chap. 5) so eloquently point out, with turnover comes an influx of potentially new and creative energy and talent to fuel an organisation forward. However, we trust that the readers of this book will find the theory, research findings and practical retention guidelines helpful to their own understanding of the psychological principles underpinning retention. We also hope that the thoughts and suggestions presented in the various chapters will stimulate further research endeavours that will contribute to much-needed innovative evidence-based retention practices that benefit both employees and their organisations.

Enjoy reading the book!

Pretoria, South Africa

Melinde Coetzee Ingrid L. Potgieter Nadia Ferreira

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Chapter 14 Millennial and Psychological Contract: Social Constructivist Approach



Ade Irma Anggraeni

Abstract The psychological contract as a manifestation of employment relationship needs to touch the motivational aspect of employees in line with the increasingly intense competition in recruiting and maintaining the talented worker, especially the millenial generation that currently occupies the largest portion of the workforce. Work characteristics and values of the millennial generation affect the dynamics of psychological contract management that has become more focused on flexibility and employability skill development. Millenial workers-motivated to develop professional competence—tend to like collaborative work environments. Based on the social constructivist paradigm, organizations can facilitate learning process of millennial workers through social interaction. The process of sharing knowledge becomes the focus of millenial workers in order to improve decision-making ability, problem solving and communication building. The social constructivist approach becomes relevant in managing psychological contracts in the context of millennial workers, especially in encouraging their participation and contribution as a form of self-esteem fulfillment and self-actualization. This chapter presents practical implications of millenial worker collective activity in developing millennial worker knowledge, especially related to the organizational efforts in building learning culture. In addition, human resource practitioners are expected to be able to gain a valuable guidance in devising strategies to maintain millenial workers by focusing on building professional and social competence. There are also mentoring guidelines for career development based on millenial worker characteristics.

Keywords Millenial workers • Psychological contract • Retention Employment relationship • Learning culture • HR practices • Career development Social constructivism

environment for employees so that they can balance the time between work and personal life (Vos and Freese 2011). It becomes so important because the millennials seek a workplace that is challenging, solid leadership, non-traditional work schedules and friendly organizational culture (Raines 2002). It deals with the study results of Pyoria et al. (2017) on the work orientation of millennials, it can be concluded that this generation puts family life and pleasure as a priority. It means that in the effort to manage millennials in the workplace, it is necessary to consider the work-life balance components. This study also discusses the work commitments of millennials. The results conclude that this generation is committed to the work that they are interested in. The characteristics of this generation have a tendency to switch jobs, but still in same work fields for the purpose of gaining the work experience in the field of interest.

Psychological contract is an approach used by the organization to maintain the spirit, commitment and performance of employees in the face of increasingly dynamic business demands. Intensive socialization is an organizational effort to prepare and assist employees to face the process of organizational transformation (Vos and Freese 2011). Socialization is also considered by new employees as a proactive effort of the organization in creating a conducive working environment (Tomprou and Nikolau 2011). In the context of change, the millennials would like to work in the environments that encourage collaboration rather than competition (Gutfreund 2014). This generation also has a goal of working on innovative activities and the achievement of social missions (Walsh 2015). Therefore, the process of organizational change is interpreted by the millennials as an opportunity to build a collaboration which aims to harmonize the dynamics of organizational motion that demands creativity and personal goals that want to contribute to a better social life.

Psychological contract is an employees' belief about the organization's proactive efforts in understanding and facilitating the needs and expectations of employees. Expectations become the basis for employees in contributing and otherwise the organization need to manage employee expectations through a fair exchange mechanism. Employees will work effectively when there is fairness between what the organization will give and what employees should give to the organization. For that reason, a psychological relationship should be capable of creating emotions that lead to the attitudes and positive behavior of employees. This relationship can harmonize the relationship between the employees and the organization (Armstrong 2009). This relationship helps the organization in predicting the output that employees can provide. In the context of millennial generation management, it should be a major concern as this generation has the belief that their opinions are worth listening to. This generation also has high confidence that they are able to achieve success (Vanmeter

Introduction

Research in the field of employment relationship emphasizes that human resource management does not just stop at the practical adoption of HR management practices without considering the dynamics of aspirations and employee expectations. Therefore, some written agreements and HR management practices require supporting components to be well internalized and achieve their primary goal of directing employee attitudes and behaviors in a harmonious atmosphere. The latest developments in the field of employment relationship concludes that successful organization building competitive advantage through human resources have a tendency to follow up the agreements and the written policies in the form of psychological contract (Hughes 2008).

Psychological contract is also an important concern for the organization as the competition gets deeper in recruiting and retaining talented employees. In the competition for high-skilled employees, psychological contracts are used as an employer branding that can provide a foundation for talented employees in interpreting employee value proposition (O'Donohue 2009). To build employer branding, the management of psychological contract needs to consider improving and developing talented employees who can add value to the organization (Rosethorn 2009).

There is a substantial change in the management of employment relationships. In the past, companies emphasized more on providing assurance to employees to work until retirement in the company. Past employee relationships were also identical with the rewards that tend to be based on equity, and incremental benefit adjustment (Chambel and Fotinha 2009). But this strategy creates problems especially when the company plans to expand and move massively to achieve more optimal performance and competitiveness. These rewards and benefits cause serious problems because employees are not motivated to build competence within the organization (Bittner and Schipper 2014). This condition causes the organization and employees tend to move in different directions so that at a certain point, the company does not have competent human resources to run its business. This strategy is also potentially incompatible with the demographic characteristics of the labor force that comes with different expectations. Certainly, it is really different to the previous generation. If the previous generations were more motivated on working guarantees to retirement, the characteristics of the current millennials generation tend to be more mobile and they are very unique in terms of the combination of orientation toward high career achievement as a form of self actualization and the necessities of work in the environment conducive work (Moore et al. 2015).

Psychological contract as a strategy for retaining employees needs to consider the generation change component. (Strauss and Howe 1991). Today, the millennials occupy the largest proportion of the global workforce. This generation needs special attention because their expectations and needs are very different to the previous one (Deloitte 2014). The characteristics of the millennial generation that consider themselves as a privileged resource within the organization raises expectations.

They expect that the organization need to treat them differently (Lancaster and Stillman 2010). The millennial generations have a high self-esteem because the social environment and family believe that these generations will achieve success. It needs to understand that the characteristics of millennial generation in the work-place also aim to build an effective communication. This generation is team-oriented because they grow up with peers, through collaborative learning in group learning systems. The dominant characteristic of these generations is high achievers because they process with high educational standards (Ferri-Reed 2013).

The millennials are also the generation of technology users and they are fast response in following the development of technology and social media (Taylor 2014; Winograd and Hais 2011). As this generation is very close to technology, they believe that working with social media can boost the work productivity, especially for speeding up the work processes, becoming more organized as well as building more active working relationships.

Developing Millenials Careers Through Psychological Contract

In the context of talented employee management, psychological contract plays a role in encouraging employees to develop sustainable knowledge-sharing capabilities (O'Neill and Adya 2007). Employees who are committed to their personal career development, tend to be proactive in sharing knowledge to improve the work professionalism. Chen (2014) affirmed that the importance of building a psychological contract can provide space for career development and employee retention. In line with that, Dhanpat and Parumasur's research (2014) concluded that the effectiveness of psychological contract is determined by its strategic components. This becomes relevant that the organization needs to design the factors that can grab the millennials' interest. This generation has an expectation that their workplace provides an opportunity to contribute to the success of the organization, to have a quality training and education program, harmonious superior-subordinate relationships, challenging work experience and open communication (Lynch 2008). So, the strategic components developed by organization in managing the millennials need to focus on the massive use of technology, the development of work-to-live mentality, regular feedback, the development of collaborative activities in daily routines and the opportunities to engage in community at the work place (Vincent 2012).

Psychological contract has wide scope covering throughout the process of recruitment to career development for the employees within the organization. The career development programs are run and socialized by the organization fairly and transparently in the perception by employees to build positive employees relationships. Furthermore, the flexible work programs organized by organization in the perception by employees as an organization's effort provide a conducive working

environment for employees so that they can balance the time between work and personal life (Vos and Freese 2011). It becomes so important because the millennials seek a workplace that is challenging, solid leadership, non-traditional work schedules and friendly organizational culture (Raines 2002). It deals with the study results of Pyoria et al. (2017) on the work orientation of millennials, it can be concluded that this generation puts family life and pleasure as a priority. It means that in the effort to manage millennials in the workplace, it is necessary to consider the work-life balance components. This study also discusses the work commitments of millennials. The results conclude that this generation is committed to the work that they are interested in. The characteristics of this generation have a tendency to switch jobs, but still in same work fields for the purpose of gaining the work experience in the field of interest.

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The results of Freese et al. (2011) concluded that the effectiveness of the psychological contract is determined by the competence development and the

employees' development within the organization. This condition makes employees feel that the organization they work with, can fulfill their expectations for talent development. The employees are motivated to develop themselves when the demands of work require them to maximize all their capabilities. Herriot et al. (1997) argued that the components of work can motivate employees to master and develop their skills. The research conducted by Corder and Ronnie (2017) concluded that psychological contract affects employee motivation, especially on the aspects that involve support, flexibility and direction. The study has found that employees have expectations about openness in communication and involvement in decision making. The psychological contract components that are considered important by employees also relate to the opportunities to improve professionalism through training. A various and challenging work design can encourage employees to master new skills to meet job demands. It deals with the expectations of the millennial generation that wants flexible working time and professionalism development (Sujansky and Ferri-Reed 2010; Lancaster and Stillman 2010; Riccardi et al. 2014).

Career Development Approach as the Strategy of the Millenials Retention

One of the career theories is the Self Concept Theory of Career Development by (Super 1980) based on the dynamic interaction between mental development, experience, environmental characteristics and stimulation in shaping career development. This theory was developed further by Savickas (2002) and he argued that career development is strongly influenced by the social environment and relationships affect each other between the individuals and their environment. In order to develop a career, the individuals need to work to meet the existing standards in the environment and be accepted by their social environment (Leung and Chen 2007).

Career is interpreted as the series of behaviors and habits related to the work of a person throughout his life (Hall 1996). To develop a career, one needs the ability and knowledge to respond to work challenges and constantly learn to improve the personal qualities, be able to adapt to the environmental changes and remain focused in achieving superior performance to achieve the organizational goals (Collard et al. 1996). The ability to adapt and grow in a dynamic work environment embodies career development. It is built by a career management process and it involves an interaction between the individual and the work environment by engaging the risk-taking with the wisest consideration and can be built by every employee (London 1983).

Career development studies began to develop in the late 1990s as concluded by Bernard (1996) that everyone can develop a career by increasing optimism and opening up to sharing possibilities. The concept of career resilience is a new paradigm in the study of employment relationships. In the old paradigm,

organization provides a clear work. It is a status as a member of the organization and long-term employment guarantees. In return, employees are required to work hard, be loyal and perform well. Nevertheless, the view has quite radically changed along with the phenomenon of free trade, the process of industrial engineering, downsizing and the development of information technology. The employees are no longer to focus on long-term job security, but the ability of the organization to provide career development for the employees. So, the employees' competency and skills can always keep up with the demands of the labor market (Kristof-Brown 1996).

There is a supporting literature revealed by Latack (1984) who divided the dimensions of career resilience into six dimensions: adaptability, individual assessment toward the outcomes, individual beliefs toward his ability, independence, risk-taking and tolerance to uncertainty and workplace pressures. The ideas of Luthar et al. (2000) interpreted the career resilience as a dynamic development process of individual, not just personal characteristics so that anyone can master the ability.

Concerning the concept of career resilience, the existence of millennials in the workplace poses some challenges but also positively impacts the organization. The millennials are the generation that has a high tolerance for changes. The career development programs of millennials need to be designed to optimize their capabilities and engagement in changing situations and ensure that their best contribution impacts on improving their careers. This is because these generations want a work environment that values their self-development and gives them the opportunities to learn new things (Gilbert 2011). The millennials look for workplaces that are able to provide challenges in employment and professional development skills. These necessities should be addressed by the organization with a focus on providing feedback toward the achievement of performance as the millennials retaining strategy (Park and Gursoy 2012). Specifically, it is necessary to include the management initiatives of knowledge and the teamwork in the millennials' planning careers to increase their involvement. The implementation of this strategy requires a leadership role as a partner in the millennium planning process. The process of meeting the employees' expectations and the organization occurs in this process. The organization needs to provide a clear guidance in helping the millennials to design their career paths. Thompson and Gregory (2012) asserted that millennials will be loyal to the organization if they are given the opportunities to develop their abilities and relationships with other members of the organization.

London and Mone (1987) concluded that individual who has career resilience, is able to control the situations, to take risks under the uncetainty conditions, to tolerate in confusing situations, to have confidence that they are capable of achieving goals, to be independent, to be adaptable in environmental changes, and able to work together with other organization members. Furthermore, Collard et al. (1996) developed the concept of career resilience to six characteristics including the ability to understand the personal potentials, to orientate adding values to the work, to focus on the future, to dedicate themselves engaging in learning process, to be flexible and able to build cooperation network in organization.

One's career resilience is determined by two aspects: the personal aspect and the aspect of the work environment. In the context of work environment, career resilience is obtained through the organizational support in the form of constructive feedback and the opportunities to work autonomously. Career resilience also becomes a practical study in counseling programs in various organizations. This concept is used in the career development process so that the organization builds the work environments and the relationships that are able to encourage the employees' career resilience. Generally, the organization has adopted a career resilience model in four stages. First, the organization actively explains this concept in the form of employee professionalism development policy. Second, the organization determines a career counseling process to build employees' understanding of the personal value and expectations of employees in the workplace. Third, the organization helps employees to identify and face challenges in achieving the desired career through an understanding of employee intrinsic motivation. Fourth, the organization builds communities for employees so they can develop themselves together (Rickwood 2002).

The application of career development theory in organization does not only rely on the individual independence in building career. Byster (1988) concluded that although the individual is the primary architect in building his career, the individual also needs a help to find the personal value and the expectations in the work. The organization also needs to provide supports so that the employees can meet changes in the organization. It deals with Kerka (1993) who believes that a clear and real information about the concerned work is a major component that can encourage employees to be more capable to do the job.

London (1983) built the dimensions of career resilience into three domains: self-manageability, risk-taking and connectivity. Self-managing ability is divided into sub domains. They are self-esteem ability, ability to work autonomously, adaptability, self-control, desire to get achievement, initiative, creative, have personal work standard and progress orientation. Furthermore, courage to risk-taking is divided into sub domains. They include the ability to tolerate the uncertainty. Connectivity components include the ability to establish relationships for career development and the necessity of acceptance by colleagues and leaders.

King (2003) explained that there are seven aspects about career resilience. They are not easily giving up in the face of difficult situations, persistent in pursuing career goals, able to control the situation, remain responsible for completing work in uncertain conditions, taking risks, responsible for career planning personally, avoid to get more boss' attention for self-advantage.

The concept of career resilience evolves as the business environment changes. The processes, patterns and technologies adopted by the organization give a new perspective on career concepts (Bridges 1995; Cascio 1995; Kotter 1995). In addition, the increasingly flat organizational structure and design and organizational tendencies to delegate non-core business creates new challenges and opportunities for the employees to develop their careers (Hammer and Champy 1994; Meyer 1996; Handy 1988). These changes have an impact on human resource management so that the organization needs to focus more on identifying the intellectual and

learning needs within the organization (Kiechel 1993; Birchall and Lyons 1995). Starting from the understanding of the changes above, Fourie and Vuuren (1998) elaborates the concept of career resilience into three dimensions: self-belief, independence and willingness to accept a change.

Based on the changes in the business environment, Bryant (1995) thought about the needs for organization to focus on building the employee resilience. The organization needs to direct the positive behavior of the employees so that they can be optimistic and able to interact with the work environment quickly and efficiently. This opinion confirms an expert opinion, Conner (1992). He concluded that the individual who has career resilience, can assimilate to the new working conditions.

Millennials are the generation that seeks to find the organization that is able to meet their expectations. This generation is known to be very career-oriented and has high career ambitions. (Kong et al. 2015). This generation also has a strong work ethic and high learning skills so it requires a work environment that can provide a consistent feedback and support. To retain the millennials, the organization needs to encourage them to determine career paths clearly and find some ways to develop the millennial employee skills toward the top performers. The main concern of the millennials is the rapid development of performance even in an environment of rapidly organizational change. The millennials require challenges of work. It deals with the expectations of millennials who tend to love the career progress that comes from acquiring new professional skills. It deals with Bannon's et al. (2011) explanation that the millenials presence at work—with its uniqueness, talents and abilities—are capable of significantly changing the work environment. Maxwell (2013) asserted that if the organization commits to retaining millennial employees, the organization needs to build the millennials to be ready for jobs that can drive and guide them to maximize their skill sets.

Building Career Resilience Through Learning: A Social Constructivist Approach

The constructivist existence in the learning process begins with criticism of the rigid behavior and focuses only on the intrapersonal aspect (Mayer 1996). Individual acquires knowledge and learning not exclusively but through the role of active learner and interaction with the social environment (Vygotsky 1978). Thus, learning in a constructivist view emphasizes the social interaction aspect as a stimulus for individual cognitive development. Social constructivist is a realistic approach that emphasizes learning activities in a highly contextual and specific community (Woolfolk 2004). Learning in a social constructivist view involves a process of personal and social development that performs a function as a whole community. Thus, knowledge is a new understanding formed by the situation in the community. There is a collective subjectivity derived from the participation and contribution of each member of the community that is real and original (Davydov and Kerr 1995).

Summary

This chapter presents the development of research in the field of psychological contract as a strategy in managing millennial generation, reviewed from the perspective of social constructivist. This section describes the typical characteristics of millennial generations that need to be considered in designing the effective psychological contracts. One of the strategic aspects of the psychological contracts implementation is related to an understanding of millennial expectations on career development within organizations. Career development is the basis for building the capabilities and resilience of millennial employees in order to give their best contribution to the organization. It can be built by adopting a social constructivist perspective that focuses on aspects of social interaction in the learning process that are capable of encouraging the increasing knowledge, abilities and employee participation of millennials. At the end of this chapter discusses about the mentoring programs that need to be included in the psychological contracts implementation as an effort to retain millennial employees.

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