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## Lived Experiences of Job-Hopping Millennials During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dottie Dancy  
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# Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Dottie Dancy

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2023

Abstract

Lived Experiences of Job-Hopping Millennials During the COVID-19 Pandemic

by

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MA, Walden University, 2018

BS, American Public University, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Industrial-Organizational Psychology

Walden University

February 2023

## Abstract

Millennials, also known as “the job-hopping generation,” are on the brink of becoming the largest generation in the workforce by 2025. In March 2020, a global pandemic was declared due to the spread of the virus known as COVID-19, which led to more than 5.3 million deaths globally. Prior research has been conducted concerning the job-hopping tendencies of Millennials, but previous studies have not incorporated the life-changing event of the global pandemic and how it may have changed the beliefs and attitudes of the Millennial generation. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the voluntary job-hopping beliefs and attitudes among Millennials who worked entry- to early career-level jobs during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. This study utilized a phenomenological approach with a sample of six voluntary job-hopping Millennials. Data for this study were collected through the use of interviews with a semistructured interview guide. This study was guided by Strauss-Howe’s generational cohort theory and Lee and Mitchell’s unfolding theory of turnover. The findings indicate that Millennials do not intend to job-hop as frequently since experiencing the global pandemic but are looking for an employer who aligns with what they value within the workplace. Implications for social change consist of employers re-evaluating the culture of their workplace, ensuring an equitable compensation package, providing a clear and obtainable path for career growth, and valuing a work/life balance. The results of this study may provide employers with a path of direction for retaining the longevity of Millennials in the workforce, deterring job-hopping among Millennials amidst the global pandemic, and reducing revenue loss due to turnover in the workplace.

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## Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and friends who have inspired, encouraged, and supported me along the way. A special dedication to my grandmother, Allie Samuel, in loving memory of my great grandmother Essie Samuel “Big Momma” and my grandmother, Pauline Sledge. These women have paved the way for me to have the opportunity to obtain an education and inspired me with their words of wisdom over the years to reach the highest achievement. I appreciate them believing in me and instilling in me that I can do whatever I set my mind to do. I know they are so proud of me. To my parents, Dottie and James Sledge, I thank you for being my unwavering backbone of support through all my schooling and to this point. Thank you for your encouragement and subtle pushes to keep me moving along this journey. To my children, Louis Jr., and Hope, thank you for your love and kind words during this process. I hope I serve as a beacon of light to you both, that your dream doesn't have to be a dream, it can be your reality and that if you persevere you can achieve whatever it is that you set your mind to. Never give up hope, never give up on your dreams no matter how difficult the task, keep God first, and walk in your reality.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The Millennial generation is different from all other generations in that they are deemed to have a low organizational commitment through their means of job-hopping. Employers face a stark reality and a cumbersome challenge to attract and retain the Millennial generation. With the Millennial generation becoming the prominent generation in the workforce, outnumbering the baby boomers and the traditionalists, the need to halt the job-hopping tendencies of Millennials has become vital for organizations success and survival. For this study, Millennials are defined as any person born between the years 1982–2000 (Strauss & Howe, 1997).

Employee turnover costs the company money, time, and resources (Juvitayapun, 2021). There are direct and indirect costs to employee retention. According to Simeonoglou (2020), the hiring of a replacement employee can cost a company money up to 6.2 times after the new employee has been hired. A direct replacement can cost a company 50%–60% of an employee's salary (Juvitayapun, 2021). The studies on Millennials in the workforce has been occurring for over 20 years, and companies are still struggling with how to attract and retain the Millennial generation (Jacobs, 2020). The onset of the global pandemic in 2020 has put a strain on the economy, inclusive of the job market. The job-hopping tendencies of Millennials may have shifted and therefore need to be re-evaluated. Exploring the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the pandemic could help prepare employers for what the future job market will entail focusing on the pros and cons of the Millennial generation.

## **Background**

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that within this decade (2019–2029) the Millennial generation will outnumber all other generations within the workforce (Torpey, 2020). According to Jacobs (2020), Millennials will make up 75% of the workforce by 2025. Employers struggle to retain the Millennial generation in the job market which costs the U.S. economy over \$30.5 billion annually (Ivanović & Ivančević, 2019). The turnover rate for Millennials is the highest among any prior generation (Jacobs, 2020). According to Jacobs, Millennials tend to job-hop on average every 2 years.

At the end of 2019, a disease known as COVID-19 broke out in China's city of Wuhan (Khalifa et al., 2021). This disease, caused by a virus known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), can affect both animals and people, with symptoms of influenza to more severe respiratory symptoms that can lead to death. In early 2020, COVID-19 spread to the United States and other parts of the world. The outbreak and spread of COVID-19 led to a global pandemic that was still present in 2021 (Khalifa et al., 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Sheposh, 2021). Initially, the WHO thought the disease only had a 3%–4% fatality rate, but they quickly found that the mutations of the virus made the virus harder to fight which led to more than 270.33 million reported global cases and more than 5.3 million deaths globally (Sheposh, 2021). Economists all agree that the global pandemic has had a negative effect on the global economy (Khalifa et al., 2021). With states implementing mandatory shutdowns, brick-and-mortar jobs shifted to employees

working from home and students shifted to learning from home (Zhang & Warner, 2020). Virtual platforms and environments were heavily utilized during the global pandemic. The job market became unstable. Employers laid people off to cut costs and survive the global pandemic, and some employers declared bankruptcy and closed their businesses, which left employees without a job. In addition to employees being laid off, retiring, or resigning, some employees quit due to fear of contracting the virus or because they had to stay at home and teach their children.

As the first quarter of 2021 ended, the global pandemic was still present, but mandatory shutdowns had been lifted, death rates had declined, vaccinations had been administered, and people were trying to return to some normalcy. However, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the quit rates of employees reached an all-time high of 4 million, despite the job opening rate being at an all-time high of 9.3 million at the end of April 2021 (Cooban, 2021).

Anthony Klotz, a Texas A&M associate professor, coined the phenomenon of employees voluntarily leaving their job in a mass record of over 4 million as “the Great Resignation” (Stark, 2021). A study conducted found that 78% of Millennials are dissatisfied with their job and the younger generation (Gen Z) is 98% dissatisfied with their jobs. Among all generations, the study found that 66% of Americans are making job-changing career moves (Stark, 2021). The Great Resignation is being driven by the Millennials and Generation Z, which are the two generations most dissatisfied with their work-life (Smart, 2021). It is clear that the employees have the upper hand over the employers in the job market at this point and time (Smart, 2021).



In May of 2021, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved an emergency use of the COVID-19 vaccine to be given to adolescents aged 12–15 to combat the spread of the virus to children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had approximately 1.5 million COVID-19 cases reported to them in adolescents ranging from 11–17 years of age from March 1, 2020, to April 30, 2021 (FDA, 2021).

The CDC pointed out that in late June 2021, the COVID-19 numbers began to increase, which was a set back from the decline of COVID-19 (FDA, 2021). The COVID-19 virus had mutated into a different strand known as the Delta variant. The Delta variant is two times more contagious than COVID-19 and has the potential to cause a more aggressive form of the illness than that of prior COVID-19 in individuals who are not vaccinated. Individuals who are vaccinated can still transmit the disease but appear to not be infectious for a lengthier period of time and can combat the virus more effectively than unvaccinated individuals. The Delta variant is highly contagious and began affecting babies and teenagers. The CDC released information that masks wearing coupled with vaccinations were needed to prevent further transmission of the Delta variant. In the third quarter of 2021, COVID-19 cases had sparked, hot spots were popping up on the maps, schools were in session, and the debate of whether or not masks should be worn, and individuals should be mandated to take the vaccine was a debacle. According to Kelly (2021) a poll found that 44% of employees would quit their job if their employer mandated vaccinations. With the rise of the Delta variant, some school districts had returned to a virtual platform.

The gap in literature is what shift the Millennial generation will take after experiencing this major event in life and how this experience will determine the future of the job market for Millennials and employers based on their lived experience through this pandemic. The exploration of the lived experiences of Millennials is needed in order to contribute to how employers can retain talent by understanding the needs of the Millennial generation after experiencing the pandemic and the multiple variants of the virus. This is significant to the future of employment and the changing workforce from pre-pandemic to post-pandemic with the Millennials decision on whether to job-hop or not will weigh heavily on the employers as the Millennial generation is set to be the dominant generation within the workforce within the next 3 years.

### **Problem Statement**

The gap in literature that I explored in this study is to understand the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. It is not known how Millennials have approached job-hopping during the pandemic. Understanding the attitudes of Millennials in the midst of the pandemic is crucial in order to understand their decision on whether or not to continue to job-hop. The social problem is high job turnover among Millennials during the pandemic. Employers struggled with retaining the Millennial generation in the workforce pre-pandemic and Millennials job-hop to have both their intrinsic and extrinsic needs met (Jacobs, 2020). This study will give insight to employers on how Millennials view job-hopping in the midst of the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the voluntary job-hopping beliefs and attitudes among Millennials who worked entry to early career-level jobs during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. The Millennial generation is different from prior generations in that they tend to job-hop every 2 years if their intrinsic and extrinsic needs are not met. Employers struggle to attract and retain the Millennial generation which leads to high turnover rates, loss of money, and the potential for an unstable work environment in years to come. In 2020, the onset of a global pandemic began. The global pandemic is an unexpected life event that has affected the entire world. What is not understood is how the Millennial generation's view of job-hopping following a life-changing event such as the global pandemic has changed their beliefs and attitudes with regard to job-hopping during the pandemic.

Prior research has been done to discuss what employers must do in order to retain Millennial generation workers, but previous studies have not incorporated the life-changing event of the global pandemic and how it may have changed the beliefs and attitudes of the Millennial generation. As Millennials are on the brink of becoming the largest generation in the workforce, it is vital to understand the experiences of the global pandemic on the Millennial generation as it may shape the future of their behavior in relation to job-hopping. This study may serve as a starting point for employers who are seeking to retain the Millennial generation beyond 2 years and for employers seeking to understand how the pandemic has further shaped the needs of the Millennial generation in relation to job-hopping following the global pandemic.

### **Research Question**

The research question that guided this qualitative study was the following: What are the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual frameworks that support this research are Strauss-Howe's generational cohort theory and Lee and Mitchell's unfolding theory of turnover. Strauss-Howe's theoretical work has been used extensively in studies concerning generations and generational differences. The approach provides details on how the generational cohorts are comprised of the age and locality of where a person is born in history, views and beliefs, and a sense of belonging (Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1997). The composition of the generational cohorts is known to have shared life events, experiences, and commonality in age which not only define the generational cohorts but also constitute the generational differences that exist.

The unfolding theory of turnover is a more advanced theory that has been used to explain the phenomenon of job-hopping as companies continue to deal with turnover in their organizations. The unfolding theory of turnover classifies four pathways with five different cognitive reasons for how employees process the decision to job hop or leave an employer (Lee et al., 1999). This theory is instrumental as studies have identified that the process of leaving a job is not solely tied to job dissatisfaction.

### **Nature of the Study**

To address the research questions in this qualitative study, the specific research design included a phenomenological approach. According to Churchill (2018), phenomenological refers to the phenomena and understanding how the phenomena or experiences parlay into an individual's life. For the purpose of this study, the phenomenon that is addressed is job-hopping during the global pandemic. The target population is the Millennial generation. To be eligible for the study, participants had to be classified as a part of the Millennial generation, born between 1982–2000.

### **Definitions**

*COVID-19* (Coronavirus 2019) is a disease that originated from severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which contains a single strand of RNA stacked with a spiky crown of proteins that attach itself to a host cell and can infect humans and animals (Sheposh, 2021).

*Generational cohort* is defined as a group of people who are known to have shared life events, experiences, and commonality in age (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

*Global pandemic* is defined as an infectious disease that is spread across large regions or areas (Ali et. al., 2020).

*Job-hopping* is defined as spending 2 years or less on a job before moving to a new job (Jacobs, 2020).

*Millennials*, or *Generation Y*, are defined as any person being born between the years of 1982–2000 (Strauss & Howe, 1997).

*The Great Resignation*, also known as “the Big Quit,” is a term coined by Anthony Klotz which refers to the mass number of employees who quit their jobs and made career changes in a record number of 4 million American workers (Stark, 2021).

*Viruses* are a compilation of microscopic organisms that can reproduce by being in contact with a living host (Sheposh, 2021).

*Voluntary turnover* is turnover that is initiated by the employee and not the employer (Lee et al., 1994).

### **Assumptions**

There are a few assumptions made relative to this study. I assumed that the Millennials interviewed during this study would answer all of the questions openly and honestly. Another assumption was that I would be able to get 5–10 people for my sample considering the global pandemic affected the entire world, the economy, and the job market. The last assumption was that the answers to the interview questions would represent the attitudes and beliefs of a number of Millennials who experienced similar situations based on Strauss-Howes generational cohort theory (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Since this is a fluid situation with the global pandemic still raging, this is an opportune time for Millennials to participate in a survey that can give insight to employers on how to cater their place of employment to the changing attitudes and beliefs of the Millennial generation after experiencing a life-altering event.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study addresses the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the pandemic. The scope of this study is limited to the Millennial generation who were

currently employed at the start of the COVID-19 global pandemic and who had a history of job-hopping prior to the global pandemic. This particular group of the Millennial generation is chosen because of their current classification as a job-hopper. Their experiences provide insights into how the global pandemic has or has not changed their beliefs and attitudes on job-hopping. This study was delimited by not including any Millennials who were not considered job-hoppers prior to the pandemic and did not include any other generational cohorts. The reason for not including these individuals is that their classification does not include a job-hopper which is the primary focus of this study.

### **Limitations**

Although the global pandemic has affected the economy inclusive of the job market and labor shortages, a limitation to this study is the indecisiveness of the Millennial generation considering the job market since the permanent effect of the global pandemic has not settled as variants of the virus continue to surface. An additional limitation to this study is the generalizability of the study in terms of the Millennial generation's cohort beginning and end dates along with what constitutes early and late Millennials.

### **Significance**

This study is significant in that it addressed the gap in understanding by focusing specifically on the job-hopping Millennial generation and the effects the global pandemic has had on their future decision on whether to job-hop or not. Millennials have been known to job hop every 2 years, but with this vicarious life experience of a global

pandemic, employers are struggling to attract and retain talent in the workforce. Thus, my theoretical frameworks of the generational cohort theory and the unfolding theory of turnover can explain the shift seen in the Millennial generation due to experiencing the life-changing event of the COVID-19 pandemic. This current-day issue is vital to the future of employers and organizations wanting to attract and retain talent, as the Millennial generation will be the largest generation to occupy the workforce in history by the year 2025 (Jacobs, 2020). The results of this study could provide employers with a path of direction for retaining the longevity of Millennials in the workforce, deterring job-hopping among Millennials amidst the global pandemic, and reducing revenue loss due to turnover in the workplace. This study will contribute to social change by sharing the knowledge of the Millennials tendency to job-hop in an unstable environment which consists of job insecurity. With the knowledge of job insecurity, nowadays Millennials are more likely to gain and retain employment which will be good for the workforce and society. By knowing the patterns of the Millennial generation driven by altering life experiences, employees/organizations can better prepare strategies and implement plans that will be cohesive to the employer and the Millennial generation for future employment.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 introduced the staggering life-altering event that transpired in 2020, with the outbreak of COVID-19 that sparked a global pandemic still hovering over the world in 2022. This chapter provides not only details of the global pandemic but also insights into how the global pandemic has affected the economy inclusive of the job



market and has shifted the generations within the workforce. The generation focused on in this study is the Millennial generation, which is set to be the dominant generation in the workforce in 2025. Chapter 1 identified the struggles employers have faced in attracting and retaining the Millennial generation who are known primarily to job-hop every 2 years and the significant challenges employers have experienced since the global pandemic and the Great Resignation. This chapter highlighted the importance of identifying the job-hopping beliefs and attitudes of Millennials who are working entry to early career-level jobs during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic is through this qualitative study especially since the Millennials will be the dominant generation in the workforce. Since there has been an exodus of the Baby Boomers and some of Generation X due to voluntary quitting, early retirement, or retirement in general, there is potential that the Millennial generation may be the primary generation within the workforce before 2025. The pertinent research question was introduced in this chapter and the framework that guided this qualitative phenomenological study was introduced. Strauss-Howe’s theoretical framework provides details on how the generational cohorts are comprised of the age and locality of where a person is born in history, views and beliefs, and a sense of belonging (Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1997). The target population in this study was introduced and assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study were also discussed. As Chapter 1 concludes, the transition to the literature review is vital in understanding the current literature in the body of research, the participants that are the focal point of this study, and the theoretical framework which

grounds this study. Chapter 2 provides insight into the population of interest in this study and a more in-depth overview of the theoretical framework is explored.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review was conducted to provide an overview of the current research as it relates to job-hopping concerning the Millennial generation and the beliefs and attitudes of the generation toward voluntary job-hopping after experiencing the pandemic. Although studies have been conducted on the Millennial generation and the challenges that they pose to employers in terms of retention and attraction, there are very few studies that have focused on the job-hopping tendencies of the Millennial generation during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic and how this will shift this generation as it concerns the future of employment.

After a brief description of the literature search strategy used, this chapter begins with Strauss-Howe's generational cohort theory and Lee and Mitchell's unfolding theory of turnover, which are the grounding theoretical frameworks for this study. Strauss-Howe's generational cohort theory has been used in other studies to highlight the differences that are noted among each generational cohort. Each generation is composed of a commonality of beliefs and values that each specific cohort identifies with. Strauss-Howe's generational cohort theory explains why the variation exists between each generation, thus why each generation is unique seeing how the experiences and life events are different from generation to generation. Lee and Mitchell's unfolding theory of turnover has been used in other studies to understand the cognitive decision-making process of why individual's voluntarily job-hop or choose to leave their job outside of the normal pathway of job dissatisfaction. As organizations deal with turnover, this advanced theory enlightens organizations on whether the voluntary job-hopping done by the

employee is a negative view of the organization or personal reasons that did not involve the organization.

The next section will detail the three primary generations that are in the workforce (baby boomers, Generation X, and the Millennial generation). This section will provide an overview of some of the key moments in history that have defined each generation and the consensus on how each generation is defined. Next, the research literature is discussed as it relates to Millennials in the workplace, challenges faced by Millennials in the workforce, along with challenges faced by employers in terms of attracting and retaining talent. This section will focus on why the Millennial generation is more apt to job-hop and the challenges and recommended approaches to attract and retain the Millennial generation pre-pandemic. Finally, I explore the literature concerning the current situation of the global pandemic, which will hone in on the critical life event experienced by every living generation, but for the purpose of this study, the focus will be on the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Walden University's library was my primary research tool. This literature review included the following keywords: *Millennials, Generation Y, Generation me, baby boomers, Generation X, generational differences, job-hopping, generational cohort, coronavirus, COVID-19, pandemic, global pandemic, retention, attrition, turnover, intrinsic motivating factors, extrinsic motivating factors, organizational commitment, and Great Resignation*. The literature found from these topics came from PsycARTICLES,

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Bureau, Google Scholar, PsycBOOKS, and Academic Search Complete.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The phenomenon of interest for this phenomenological qualitative study is understanding the lived experiences of Millennials regarding job-hopping during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron Covid-19 pandemic. To address this phenomenon of interest, the conceptual framework utilizes two theories to direct this study: Strauss-Howe's generational cohort theory and Lee and Mitchell's unfolding theory of turnover.

#### **Generational Cohort Theory**

Strauss-Howe's generational cohort theory explains what comprises a generational cohort. A generational cohort is comprised of the age and locality of where a person is born in history, views and beliefs, and a sense of belonging (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Each generational cohort will have shared life events, experiences, and commonalities in age. This theory consists of four turnings that complete the phases of life. According to Strauss and Howe (1997) a cycle occurs every 20-22 years and is a representation of the phases of life. The phases of life include childhood, young adulthood, midlife, and elderhood. A complete turning is equivalent to a phase of life that correlates to an aged individual between the ages of 80-90 years old. The varied experiences of each generation bring about a turning. This theory was chosen because an immense amount of research has indicated that each generation has different values and different life experiences that shape who they are from generation to generation.

## **The Unfolding Theory of Turnover**

The unfolding theory of turnover was developed by Thomas Lee and Terence Mitchell in 1994 (Lee et al., 1999). Lee and Mitchell (1994) have identified that companies have long struggled with voluntary turnover. Voluntary turnover is turnover that is initiated by the employee and not the employer. The unfolding theory of turnover suggests that before an employee quits their job, they go through one of five cognitive processes depicted by shocks and no shocks before making their final decision to quit their job. Within this theory, the thought processes that an employee goes through are categorized as pathways. There are four pathways, with five cognitive decision-making processes an employee goes through. The first three pathways focus on the “shock” element that occurs before an employee makes their decision and follows through with the act of quitting (Lee et al., 1996). A shock is anything that jolts or has shaken up the individual that initiates the psychological decision-making process involved in quitting. The last pathway depicts two cognitive thought processes that involve no shock to the employee’s decision to quit (Tellez, 2014).

### ***Pathway 1***

The first pathway is initiated by a shock that is personal to the employee and has been prescribed. This element of shock is not negatively associated with the job itself but is a predetermined plan that is acted on by the employee. For example, the individual has always wanted to live in another state, and the opportunity comes up for that person to move. This is something that was already prescribed in the person’s cognitive processes. Another example is that an individual could have preplanned that whenever they get

pregnant and have their baby that they will be a stay-at-home mom. When the event actually occurs, it jolts their memory of their preplanned decision, and they follow through with the act of quitting. Pathway 1 is not negatively associated with the employer but is determined by the personal preplanned motives of the person. Preplanned or prescribed decisions are often made quickly but may come as a shock to the employer who was not aware of their thought processes concerning these potential events.

### *Pathway 2*

The second pathway is negatively associated with the element of shock and perceived image violation by the employee's organization (Lee et al., 1999). An image violation is a set of images that makes the person re-assess their commitment or attachment to that particular organization (Lee et al., 1994). There are three sets of images a person can assess: value image, trajectory image, and strategic image. The value image is focused on an individual's personal views or beliefs about the situation. The trajectory image is focused on the individual's career goals. The strategic image is focused on an individual's goal towards the attainment of their career goals. For example, the person may feel that they are top talent within their company and envision their new role within the organization. When the person goes for the promotion and is denied, they are enthralled with the element of shock that they did not get the job at first, followed by a feeling of their image being violated. This image violation can be strategic, trajectory, or both in that their career goals and pathway toward their goal attainment have been stunted or denied. The person begins to question their attachment to the organization and feels that they can no longer work for a company where they are not valued and can no

longer see themselves advancing at this company. At this point, the person decides to leave without a search for alternatives.

### ***Pathway 3***

The third pathway can be a combination of the shock element that can be either negative, positive, or a neutral decision to leave an organization. This pathway is generally characterized by an unexpected job offer. At this juncture, the person is forced to evaluate their current job with the newly presented job offer and determine whether an image violation has occurred at their current job. The person evaluates whether they are valued at their current job and whether there is room for progress. Unlike the other pathway of decision, this decision is made with an alternative job offer in mind.

### ***Pathway 4***

The fourth pathway has two cognitive processes that are similar but have different paths resulting from the decision to quit. Pathway 4a is initiated by an overwhelming feeling of job dissatisfaction that occurs. The person is so dissatisfied with their job that they just quit without having a plan such as a job alternative lined up. Pathway 4b is similar to 4a with the person having an overwhelming feeling of job dissatisfaction. However, their job dissatisfaction drives them to search for alternative jobs while still being employed. Once they find employment, they quit their job. Pathway 4 is similar to other theories involving turnover that are associated with intrinsic and extrinsic needs not being met which can lead to job dissatisfaction and ultimately employee turnover. For comparison of Pathway 4, another theory that is recognized is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory.



## Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow (1943) developed a motivational theory, known as the Hierarchy of Needs Theory. According to this theory, there are five hierarchal needs that need to be met for an individual to be motivated. The hierarchal needs are broken up into basic needs, psychological needs, and self-fulfillment needs. As shown in Figure 1, the needs are depicted within a pyramid and consist of the following: basic needs (physiological needs and safety needs), psychological needs (belonginess and love needs), and self-fulfillment needs (esteem needs and self-actualization).

**Figure 1**

*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*



*Note.* From “Maslow’s hierarchy of needs & creativity,” by N. Skillicorn, 2021.

<https://www.ideatovalue.com/crea/nickskillicorn/2021/05/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-creativity>

According to McLeod (2007) for human physiological needs to be met the basic needs to sustain life must be met first such as having food, rest, water, and feeling safe and secure. Having the basic needs of life met, allows individuals to be able to move into the next stage of the pyramid which is physiological needs. The physiological needs or social needs of humans encompass the feeling of belonging and being loved through relationships. Relationships can consist of family, friends, groups, or organizations. The satisfaction of relationships comes from the love, intimacy, and acceptance of an individual's social needs.

Self-fulfillment needs are derived from the fulfillment of an individual's basic and physiological needs. An individual's esteem needs are met by two categories: esteem for oneself through the mastery of an achievement or goal, and esteem from others, which is met by one's status or respect from other individuals. The last of the hierarchy of needs theory is self-actualization. Self-actualization is met by an individual being able to be all that they are capable of being.

Maslow (1943) believed that a person is always "becoming." This means that an individual has the capability of moving through multiple stages of the pyramid to meet their maximum height of self-actualization. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory is important as it relates to what motivates the different generations, specifically the Millennial generation. Maslow noted that as the basic needs and physiological needs of humans are met, there is an appetite to continue to become and this is relative to one's desire for self-fulfillment.

Maslow explained that an individual may be able to transcend up and down the pyramid based on life experiences that may disrupt the fulfillment of one's hierarchy of needs such as job loss or divorce. Maslow's theory is a factor for employees in the workplace and those facing various life-altering experiences. There are intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate employees within the workplace and their place of becoming.

### **Advancement of the Unfolding Theory of Turnover**

Lee and Mitchell's advancement of the unfolding theory of turnover recognized that there are cognitive reasons beyond Pathway 4 for why individuals choose to job-hop or leave their place of employment that are not distinctly associated with job dissatisfaction. This theory allows for personal pre-determined reasons and other factors to be considered regarding a change of employment. Job-hopping is not always a negative view towards an organization although it is considered turnover for the place of employment.

### **Theoretical Framework and its Recent Uses**

It is important to understand how Strauss-Howe's generational cohort theory and Lee and Mitchell's unfolding theory of turnover are used and applied in this study. The generational cohort theory has been used in several recent studies that focused on Millennials within the workforce. For example, Pasko et al. (2021) conducted a study utilizing a cross-sectional study of 300 employees who represent different generations to identify if there is a significant difference among generations in their preference of work-related attributes. The study utilized the data from 300 employees who filled out the

cross-sectional survey to identify if any difference existed among different generations in terms of their preference of work-related attributes. The study found that major differences exist among generations in four areas of work-related attributes. Pasko et al. utilized the generational cohort theory to explain this phenomenon of variations of work-related attributes as it relates to the different generations for the following categories of work preferences: work/life balance, job security, career advancement, and company leadership. Employers/leadership must learn their employees as each generational cohort differs from the next.

Herrando et al. (2019) conducted a study using an online survey of 715 social commerce website users (16-55 years old) of three generations (Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z) to understand if there are different levels of trust in social commerce websites when it comes to generational cohorts. The study focused on how each cohort processes information when received if company-generated versus user-generated. Herrando et al. utilized the generational cohort theory in conjunction with the trust transfer theory to explain the findings. The study found that each generation had a different trust level as it pertains to information received. For example, Gen X trust more social information if the source comes from their company, Gen Z trust more social information if it comes from users, and Gen Y trust more social information generated by companies to a higher extent than Gen X (Herrando et al., 2019). This study implies that each generation must be considered within their own generational cohort on what they trust and not grouped together, as each cohort has generational differences that stand out independently of each other.

Jonck et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study on 301 employees of a South African sample population to examine their work values, in order to understand if any differences exist based on generations in terms of work values. The sample population was comprised of three different generational cohorts: Millennials, Generation X, and the baby boomers. Jonck et al. (2017) found statistically significant differences and similarities in terms of work values among each generation. The following themes were identified with mainly similarities and differences among the three generational cohorts: social interaction and risk, how they value authority, and creativity. This study utilized the generational cohort theory focusing on a commonality of a distinct set of circumstances and environmental factors that take place within each generation, thus shaping each generational cohort (Jonck et al., 2017).

Robinson (2017) conducted a study on leadership strategies that federal government managers can utilize to lead a multi-generational workforce. This study aimed to provide managers with an understanding of the multi-generational workforce by providing key insights into what deters turnover intentions and what encourages organizational commitment from employees. This study utilized Kahn's employee engagement theory along with Strauss-Howe's generational cohort theory. Robinson found that although having a multigenerational workforce has many benefits, it also encompasses its challenges for managers who lack the knowledge of how to manage each generation. This is due to each generation having its own attitudes, expectations, and values (Robinson, 2017). In an effort to increase the knowledge of managers in how to lead a multi-generational workforce, employers should utilize strategies involving

training, team building, and communicating that focus on leading the multi-generational workforce.

### **Lee and Mitchell's Unfolding Theory of Turnover**

One of the first studies using this model was conducted with a sample of 44 nurses that had left their place of employment at the hospital. Semistructured exit interviews were conducted with the 44 nurses and a follow-up survey was conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the original exit surveys taken by the nurses. To test whether the theory was reliable, the responses from the interviewees had to fall into one of the classifications of the pathways of the unfolding theory of turnover. If a significant number of the responses fell outside the pathways, the theory would not be valid. The results of this study yielded that the participants were classified into one of the four pathways. The results showed that the two predominant pathways were pathway 3 (32% of the nurses classified) and pathway 4b (23% of the nurses classified). The least predominate classification was pathway 4b (14% of nurses classified).

Lee et al. (1999) conducted a replication of the original study in 1999. This time the survey population was 229 accountants who had left the company over the span of 3–5 years. Instead of interviewing the participants, the authors took a more quantitative approach and mailed out the open-and-closed-ended surveys to the participants. The results revealed that 93% of the responses were able to be classified into one of the four pathways, with Pathway 3 (59% accountants classified) being the most predominant pathway for the reason people left the company, and Pathways 1 and 2 (3% accountants classified) being the least reason for people leaving the company. The results from this

study increased the support for this theory. Due to the results of these two studies, the theory was concluded a sound and viable theory by Lee and Mitchell (Tellez, 2014). The results from both of these studies centered in on the fact that different pathways for people leaving can be based on the different professions of individuals.

This theory continues to be tested by researchers from different countries and has some mixed results with past employees of companies being classified between 77-100% of the time into the different pathways. Limitations to some of the studies is due to the process of the interviews or surveys and the time frame that has lapsed since the interviewee has left the company (Tellez, 2014). However, studies by Donnelly and Quirin (2006) had a 91% classification rate, and a study by Tellez (2014) had an 81% overall classification rate. This theory is important for employers to understand as it helps explain the “why” behind their job turnover. This theory is very important in relation to the phenomenon of job hopping as it debunks the common belief that individuals who job-hop are only job-hopping due to dissatisfaction on the job.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts**

#### **Generational Differences**

Each generational cohort experiences dominant events within their lifetime based on Strauss-Howe’s generational cohort theory (1991). These experiences and events help shape and continue to evolve the generation and generations to come. There are three prominent generations within the workforce today: baby boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials (Generation Y).

### ***Baby Boomers***

Baby boomers were born between 1946-1964. Today, the oldest baby boomer born in 1946, is 76 years old. According to the Statista (2021) by 2030, all baby boomers will be 65 or older, making them the second largest population in the world right under the Millennial generation. According to the Statista (2021) the baby boomers represent 70.68 million people. The baby boomer generation has several momentous moments in history that have shaped who they are today. The baby boomers were born after World War II, and they experienced drastic economic and progression movements within their generational cohort. They experienced the launching of the Civil Rights Movement which began in 1955, when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus (Olito, 2020). In 1970, John F. Kennedy was the youngest man elected President of the United States. In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. led the March on Washington where he gave his famous, “I Have a Dream” speech. In 1963, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated, and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn into Presidency. In 1964, segregation was banned by President Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Olito, 2020). The Baby boomer generation also experienced the first launching of the technological age in terms of computers being used in the workforce.

All of the experiences and events that the baby boomers have experienced, shaped who they are today. The baby boomers are a strong generation who believed in hierarchal systems, a position of authority, and a commitment to hard work (Bridges, 2018). The baby boomers are known for their loyalty to an organization, their drive to succeed, and their strong work ethic.



### ***Generation X***

People in Generation X (Gen X) were born between 1965 and 1980. Today, the oldest Gen X born in 1965, is 57 years old. According to the Statista (2021) Gen X represents 64.95 million people. The “x” within Gen X stands for a generation that could not be defined (Ghosh, 2021). Gen X is often referred to as the latchkey generation because they were left alone for periods of time after they came home from school. Gen X experienced many societal issues and was in-fluxed with parental separation and divorce. Constant change surrounded this generation and that change made Gen X more inquisitive about why the norm was the norm for example. Gen X experienced the fall of the Berlin wall, they grew up in a different society following the post- Civil Rights movement which focused on more equality and diversity, they received more education with a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering, math), and they grew up in a technological age to include personal laptop computers (Ghosh, 2021). Due to the experiences of Generation X, their generational cohort has been known to be skeptical, independent, self-sufficient, and adaptable to changing situations.

### ***Millennial Generation***

The Millennial Generation (Gen Y) was born between 1982 and 2004. Today, the oldest Millennial born in 1982, is 40 years old. According to Statista (2021) Millennials represent 72.26 million people. The Millennial generation’s parents wanted to provide a different type of parenting style, shying away from their latchkey experience. The parents of the Millennial generation were not critical and were very protective of their children as they sought to be involved with their children by creating a work/life balance (Ghosh,

2021). The advancement in the technological age proved to be very progressive in the lives of Millennials, as they find their information at their fingertips or a click of a button through the means of the internet. The Millennial generation is a highly educated generation, a very social and confident generation, and are the most accepting generation in terms of diversity. In the workforce, Millennials are known for their job-hopping tendencies and companies often struggle to attract and retain the Millennial generation (Jacobs, 2020).

The Millennial generation experienced a significant level of historical life-defining moments in history centered around violence from terrorist attacks, war, and gun violence from school shootings that have shaped who they are today. In 1999, the Columbine High School massacre occurred, in which at that time in history was the deadliest high school shooting in the history of the United States. In 2001, what has become known as 9/11 transpired, in which terrorist attacks against the United States occurred, targeting, and striking the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (Ghosh, 2021). Between 2007 and 2009, an economic downturn occurred known as the Great Recession. The Great Recession was the severest economic decline since the 1930's when the Great Depression happened. For the older Millennials, the effects of the Global Financial Crisis that occurred in 2008 that led to the Great Recession is a historical event as the Great Recession impacted the Millennials who were just beginning to enter the workforce. In 2008, the Millennial Generation experienced the election and presidency of President Barack Obama, the 44<sup>th</sup> President, and the country's first African American President. The Iraq and Afghan wars which resulted from the 9/11 terrorist attacks are among the

historically defining moments of the Millennial generation, followed by the tech revolution in which the internet and smartphones made progressive progress (Ghosh, 2021).

In 2012, the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting took place, and this mass shooting marked the deadliest shooting in an elementary school to occur in the United States. This shooting again sparked the discussion on gun control. In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized gay marriage, and in 2016, the Orlando nightclub shooting occurred, which is recorded as the largest mass shooting in U.S. history at this point in time, and the deadliest terrorist attack since 9/11 (Ghosh, 2021).

### **Millennials in the Workplace**

Millennials have been known as the most challenging generation in the workforce to manage thus far. In the workplace, Millennials have values and beliefs that need to be met for them to be committed to an organization. Neville and Brochu (2019) explored the various generations in the workplace and how they describe professionalism, work ethic, and work-life balance. The findings revealed that the way in which the generation views work ethic, work-life balance, and professionalism differs from prior generations (Neville & Brochu, 2019). Each generation has different views based on their experiences within their generational cohort. Historically, the view of the Millennial generation is that they are job-hoppers. Although Millennials are classified as job-hoppers, it should not overshadow their value of work or their work ethic.

Pyöriä et al. (2017) conducted a study on the Millennial generation which focused on whether the Millennial generation values work less than their aged generations. The

results from the study concluded that even though the Millennial generation is more apt to change occupations than their aged generation, there is no indication that they value work less than their aged generations but that other values have also gained importance over time which can constitute for a different work/life balance. Stewart et al. (2017) contextualized a vast number of articles and empirical studies on generational differences and found that Millennials are the only generation in the workplace that does not link or associate organizational commitment with workplace culture. Millennials view work differently categorized by duty, reward, and drive.

### **Job-Hopping Millennials**

A survey confirmed that the younger generations, such as the Millennial generation, are dominating the job-hopping trend (Barstow, 2021). A technology firm, Elements Global Services, analyzed google searches between February 2020 and July 2021 and found that one of the primary search terms for restless workers was jobs offering high pay (Barstow, 2021).

Lake et al. (2018) studied the motives for job-hopping and identified two motives for job-hopping (escape and advancement motives). Individuals who utilized the escape motive left the job due to disliking their work environment (negative reactivity). Individuals who utilized the advancement motive were leaving their current jobs for career advancement (positive reactivity). The findings revealed that both the escape and advancement motives are associated with an increased amount of turnover, organizational withdrawal, and quick turnover decisions.

Rivers (2018) explained the Millennials process of decision-making regarding whether to stay with an organization or job-hop. Rivers (2018) found that “competitive compensation, job enjoyment, opportunities for professional growth, supportive work environment, reasonable free/flex time, finding their niche, and excellent benefits” (p.4) are the 7 factors that contribute to a Millennial’s decision whether to job-hop.

### **Organizational Commitment**

Hansen and Leuty (2012) studied four generations (silent generation, baby boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y) in the workforce and how their experiences affected their organizational commitment. Findings revealed that every generation has shared life experiences that are common which in turn helps shape what each generation values within the workforce (Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Jacobs (2020) explored the experiences of Millennials in the workforce to their organizational commitment and intrinsic needs in the workplace. Jacobs (2020) found in his analysis of data that Millennials value recognition, a supportive environment, work flexibility, opportunities for professional development, and treatment from leadership that is appropriate, and stresses the importance of adequate employee compensation. Sledge (2016) studied what extrinsic and intrinsic motivating factors appeal to employees of Generation Y (Millennial generation) and the findings revealed that “affiliation, empowerment, bonuses, and public recognition over other forms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators” appeal to the Generation Y employees (p.4).

### **Millennials in the Pandemic: Changing Economy**

In 2020, the Millennial generation experienced their first global pandemic that shifted the economy and everyday normal life. This pandemic marks another monumental moment in the history of this generation. How the pandemic was experienced by Millennials is still being explored. However, the American Psychological Association (APA, 2021) recorded that the pandemic weighed heavily on Millennials physical and mental health. A survey conducted found that 31% of Millennials have a worsened mental state, 62% of Millennials felt lonely during the pandemic, 75% of Millennials stated they could have received more emotional support than what they were provided during the pandemic, and 70% of Millennials had unwanted weight gain, leading them to be the number one generation with the most weight gain reported during the pandemic (APA, 2021).

Ployhart et al. (2021) conducted a study that focused on the relationship of new hires after experiencing COVID-19. The findings revealed that companies need to put a more concentrated focus on COVID-19 policies to eliminate health stressors for new hires. Trougakos et al. (2020) also conducted a study after the onset of COVID-19 which focused on how work and working from home, home life, and health concerns were impacted by COVID-19 health anxiety (CovH anxiety). Trougakos et al. (2020) found that work, home life, and health were negatively affected by CovH anxiety. It is important to understand how the global pandemic has shaped the view on job-hopping for Millennials as the economy is trying to recover, as the silent generation and the baby

boomers have exited the workforce pre-maturely, and companies are still trying to find ways to attract and retain the Millennial generation.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The literature presented documented what life events occurred during the primary generations within the workforce today and how those life events have defined each generation. For the Millennial generation, they are historically known for their job-hopping tendencies within the workforce. Based on the literature, what is clear is that Millennials prefer work/life balance, meaningful work, and compensation still plays a role in their decisions. Additionally, the literature reveals steps for organizations to increase their employee retention by integrating what is known about the intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors of the Millennial generation. Although the literature exists on these topics, what is not explored is the lived experiences of the job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic and how the attitudes and beliefs of the Millennials as it pertains to job-hopping have changed. The results of this study will address the gap in literature as it pertains to the different attitudes and beliefs of the Millennials generation in their view of job-hopping after experiencing this phenomenon of the global pandemic.

The impact of the global pandemic on the Millennials may further change their view on work ethic, work-life balance, and professionalism. Even though job-hopping was a trend pre-pandemic, the pandemic has amplified the phenomenon. Restless millennials had time during the pandemic to analyze their priorities and research has found that millions of Americans priorities have changed since experiencing the

pandemic (Barstow, 2021). During the pandemic, the work environment shifted from a brick-and-mortar building to employees working remotely from home. A study conducted by Ohu and Dosumu (2021) focused on flex work and telecommuting in the workplace due to the COVID-19 virus. They found that Millennials will be taking charge in the post-pandemic work environment seeing how they are more agile and flexible in this remote work environment (Ohu & Dosumu, 2021).

This can present an additional layer of challenges to employers if they are not cognizant of the motivating factors, attitudes, and beliefs of the Millennial generation. It is of utmost importance for employers to understand the lived experiences of the job-hopping Millennials during the pandemic to identify if any of their attitudes and beliefs toward job-hopping has changed. Understanding their experiences and views can help employers identify strategies to curve the job-hopping trend of the Millennials by meeting their needs, thus increasing job retention and attraction of the Millennial generation. The next chapter will provide detailed information on the research design and rationale. Chapter 3 will discuss the role of the researcher and detail the specifics of the methodology used to conduct this study.



### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the voluntary job-hopping beliefs and attitudes among Millennials who were working entry- to early career-level jobs during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. Millennials are known for their job-hopping tendencies within the workforce. For decades, Millennials have been known as the generation that is not committed to one organization and will job-hop to have their intrinsic and extrinsic needs met (Jacobs, 2020). Prior research has been conducted concerning the job-hopping tendencies of Millennials, but previous studies have not incorporated the life-changing event of the global pandemic and how it may have changed the beliefs and attitudes of the Millennial generation.

The goal of this study was to understand the experiences of the global pandemic on the Millennial generation as it may shape the future of their behavior in relation to job-hopping. The findings from this study will help employers who are seeking to attract and retain the Millennial generation beyond 2 years be able to strategize and create a plan to deter job-hopping by increasing employee retention and attrition. This chapter presents the research design, role of the researcher, and methodology used to conduct this study, and identifies the participants and instrumentation used for this study. Furthermore, in this chapter, I discuss the target population, data collection and analysis, and any issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

This study addressed the research problem using a qualitative approach. The specific qualitative design I used was the phenomenological approach. According to

Churchill (2018) *phenomenological* refers to how the experience was perceived from the viewpoint of the individual. For the purpose of this study, the phenomenon that was addressed is the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials. A qualitative study was chosen over a quantitative approach because this study was exploratory in nature. There was an opportunity to explore and understand the lived experiences of the Millennials and their voluntary job-hopping tendencies since experiencing the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative approach digs deeper by gaining in-depth information from the participant concerning their experiences as it relates to the phenomenon. A quantitative approach would have required more statistical data to analyze which was not available at this time concerning this study.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I served as the primary instrument for the data collection and data analysis portion of this study. The role of the researcher is to protect the information that is gathered from the thoughts and feelings of the participants concerning this study. The role of the researcher is to collect the information from the participants using semistructured interviews. I did not have any personal or professional relationships with any of the research participants. I remained open and unbiased as I collected the data from the participants, so as not to turn off the participant or make them uncomfortable in answering questions due to body language or facial expressions made by me.

### **Methodology**

For this study, I used purposeful sampling. This sampling method was conducive as a deeper understanding into the experiences of the Millennials during the global

pandemic was needed in order to complete the study. I also used semistructured interview questions. In order for the participants to be in a comfortable setting, the interviews took place via the videoconferencing platform Zoom (<https://zoom.us>). The interviews were audio recorded, and transcripts of the interviews were documented. I was the primary means of data collection and analysis. The results from the survey were used to identify the reasons why Millennials continue to job-hop after experiencing the pandemic.

### **Participant Selection Logic**

The target population for this study was Millennials. For the purpose of this study, Millennials were defined as any person being born between the years of 1982–2000 (Strauss & Howe, 1997). The following conditions had to be met in order to be a participant in this study. The participant had to be a Millennial, born between January 1982 and December 2000, working entry- to early career-level jobs. The participant's work history had to demonstrate their consistency in job-hopping. Job-hopping is defined as spending 2 years or less on a job before moving to a new job (Jacobs, 2020). The participants must voluntarily job-hop. The participants must have experienced the global pandemic 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19.

Purposeful sampling was used in this study along with the criterion sampling strategy. Purposeful sampling is used in studies where the researcher seeks to gather very detailed and rich information on a particular phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). Criterion sampling is a strategy of sampling used when participants must meet certain criteria to be eligible to participate in the survey. Generally, phenomenological studies utilize criterion sampling, as participants need to have experience or knowledge

concerning the particular phenomenon of interest to discuss the depth and breadth of the phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2015).

### **Instrumentation**

The data from this study were collected through the use of a semistructured interview guide (see Appendix A). The first section of the interview guide focused on gaining the background of the individual such as their name, age, gender, race, employment status, and the frequency of job-hopping. In the second section of the interview guide, the questions focused on the participants experiences as it relates to voluntary job-hopping during the pandemic. The open-ended questions were asked to allow the participant to open up and feel free about sharing their experiences. According to Adams (2015) the advantage of using semistructured interviews is that it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions along the way. This was important as it concerned a phenomenon that did not have a plethora of historical data at that point in time. The ability to ask probing questions allows the researcher to dig deeper into the experience of the participants by allowing follow-up/probing questions to be added. To ensure the data were captured accurately, each interview was recorded and transcribed. The audio and transcription of each interview guarded against error and also captured the data needed to replicate this study and build upon the research.

### **Procedures for Recruitment**

Recruitment of participants began after I received approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board to proceed with the study (Approval No. 08-11-22-0619160). To recruit participants for my study, I utilized a social media platform and the snowball

recruitment strategy. The social media platform I used was LinkedIn. I posted an electronic message stating the scope of the study and the requirements for participants. The snowball recruitment strategy allows individuals to pass along the information about a study being conducted to their acquaintances who qualify to participate in the study (Ghaljaie, 2017). If anyone knew of someone who qualified as a participant, I asked them to forward the details to other potential candidates. Once I received communication that the individual would like to be a participant in my study, I emailed them the recruitment letter along with the attached demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B). After I received the demographic questionnaire back from the potential participant, I verified that they qualified for the study. Once I identified that the individual qualified to be a participant, I sent a consent form to their personal email. An email response of “I consent” confirmed them as an official participant in the study. From this point, the participant received an email with a schedule of times to complete the interview by phone or Zoom.

### **Target Population**

The target population for this study was the Millennials. There were specific criteria for the Millennials to qualify to participate in this study, as stated in the Participant Selection Logic section above. LinkedIn was used to recruit qualified participants for this study.

### **Data Collection**

I collected the data by means of a semistructured interview with each participant who met the qualifications stated under my targeted population. I interviewed each

qualified participant virtually through Zoom meetings with the camera off. The interviews lasted 45–60 minutes and were audio recorded and transcribed. Manual coding and NVivo (version 12) software were used to identify themes. The participants were made aware when they originally signed up to participate in the research study that the interview would last 45–60 minutes and would be audio recorded. Participants were informed again prior to me starting the interview.

Furthermore, in an effort to allow the participant to speak freely, I reassured the participants that their information was confidential, and their identity would not be revealed in the published findings, but that I would have specific coding in place to take the place of their name upon publication of the findings. According to Cowles and Nelson (2015) researchers have a responsibility to maintain the confidentiality or privacy of the participants. I made sure that I did not use their real names within the study to maintain their confidentiality. By allowing the participant to choose the virtual platform of the interview, it allowed the participant to be most comfortable within their environment of choice. By utilizing a semistructured interview guide with open-ended questions, it allowed for the participant to express themselves freely by not making them feel restricted with their responses to the questions.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Oluwafemi et al. (2021) data analysis is important in qualitative research because it involves sharing the interpretations and meanings from the transcripts of the interviews that have been conducted. The method I used to analyze the data was thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) pointed out that thematic analysis is a method

that assists with reporting themes or patterns within the data collected. The thematic analysis allows for the interpretation of the data collected and is commonly used within qualitative research. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) discussed the six steps of thematic analysis which include: (a) familiarizing yourself with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the report. The NVivo software was utilized to help organize the data electronically and produce the reports based on the codes and themes created through manual coding in the first five steps.

The first step is to review all of the data and gain familiarity with the data collected (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). I reviewed the transcripts of the recordings of the interviews and uploaded them into the NVivo software. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that becoming familiar with the data is important as the researcher will look from beginning to end at the data collected to identify common themes and develop codes. Once the data were collected, I went through a process of continually re-reading the data to become familiar in order to move to step two of the process which was creating the codes. After I had read over the data collected, I began open coding. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017) open coding is utilized when there is not a pre-set coding system in place. This step is important as it is the beginning of organizing the data into something meaningful. I inserted the codes I had manually created from the data into the NVivo software.

I looked at the codes I created based on the data, and I began to develop themes. Themes are developed based on patterns found in the data. According to Maguire and

Delahunt (2017) a theme is a pattern of something significant found in the data. After the initial themes had been created, I reviewed the themes. I ensured the themes made sense and that there was no overlapping in initial themes that were created, and I examined whether other themes existed within the data by utilizing the NVivo software. I finalized and defined the meaning of the themes in order to produce the final analysis through the NVivo software.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is a huge component of qualitative research, and the trustworthiness of the study determines if it will be seen as viable or not. Trustworthiness is what strengthens the value of research (Amankwaa, 2016). Four criteria should be considered when establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

Credibility was noted by Lincoln and Guba as one of the most important aspects of trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004). Credibility is making sure the study and the participants are sure of its intended purpose. I ensured that credibility was within my study by ensuring the participants were able to answer the questions fully without being interrupted. I also checked whether they had anything to add in addition to the answer they had already provided in order to ensure they felt they answered or explained their response to a question adequately.

In this research, transferability was established through the use of thick description. Thick description encompasses the validity of what has happened within context (Lincoln & Guba, 1988). I made sure the interview setting, questions, and



answers were documented accurately in order to ensure the transferability of this study in other contexts. Dependability refers to making sure the research and the outcome of the study is accurate and can be repeated (Amankwaa 2016). To maintain the dependability of the study, I ensured that the procedures with which I conducted this research study were thoroughly documented, which allowed for any inquiry audits to be performed by an independent researcher not involved in the original study (Amankwaa, 2016). Additionally, the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and specifics into how I recruited participants and conducted the interview are available. This allows for this study to be replicated by another independent researcher.

Confirmability ensures that the research was not shaped by the researcher's biases or interests and that the research is strictly based on the responses of the participants (Amankwaa, 2016). I established confirmability within this study by the use of an audit trail. An audit trail is a transparent view of what the researcher has done from the beginning to the end of the research. It includes all of the raw data from coding to establishing themes, and any notes taken throughout the duration of this study (Amankwaa, 2016).

### **Ethical Procedures**

As the researcher, I ensured that this research study was completed in an ethical manner. It is important for the researcher to inform the participants of how their data will be utilized during the study, and how their information will remain confidential even after the study is over (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). One of the principles under ethical procedures of the APA is to ensure that individuals rights and dignity are respected by maintaining

the confidentiality, privacy, and self-determination of all individuals who participate within the research study (APA, 2017). Additionally, the researcher is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the participants in the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I made sure participants were fully informed on what the purpose of this research study was, how it would be conducted, how the information would be used and stored, and how their information would be protected through the participant consent form. Section 4.01 of the APA *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* explains that it is the obligation of the researcher to take the necessary precautions to ensure any information stored from participants remains confidential (American, 2017). I ensured the participants information remained confidential by storing the information in an encrypted file within a password-protected device and replacing their names with participant identifiers. I ensured that the participant was clear about how their information would also be stored for 5 years after their participation. I made it clear that at any time the participant did not feel comfortable or did not want to continue with the interview, they had the liberty to discontinue the interview process.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 presented the methodological approach chosen for this study. It also presented the design and rationale for the purpose of this study that was conducted. The chapter provided details about how the study was conducted with the use of semistructured interviews and the rationale for choosing this type of instrumentation. Further, this chapter focused on how participants for the study were chosen, highlighted the targeted population being the Millennials, discussed how the data were collected, the

software that was used, analysis of the data, and how the information was safe guarded for the privacy of the participants. This chapter addressed the issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures, and how following the proper procedures provides confidentiality for all participants and allows the opportunity for replication of this study in the future.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the voluntary job-hopping beliefs and attitudes among Millennials who worked entry- to early career-level jobs during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. With Millennials projected to be the predominant generation within the workforce by the year 2025 (Jacobs, 2020), it is essential for employers to understand how the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic has changed the beliefs and attitudes of the Millennial generation as it concerns voluntarily job-hopping.

This chapter presents the findings from this qualitative study conducted on the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic to answer the following question: What are the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic? Chapter 4 will further consist of the setting, demographics, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results of the study, and conclude with a summary.

### **Setting**

Participants were recruited to participate in this study through LinkedIn, a social media platform. The purposeful snowball method was also utilized to gain participants for this study. Potential candidates for the study reached out via email. The post on LinkedIn was re-shared by various contacts on their LinkedIn pages and four potential participants were gained through the use of the purposeful snowball method. I queried the potential participants to see if they fit the criteria for the study. However, the four individuals did not fit all of the criteria for the study and were disqualified from the

recruitment process. One participant, who was interested in participating in the study via LinkedIn, did not respond to the consent form. Since the potential participant did not respond to the consent form, the potential participant was unable to be recruited as a participant for this study. Out of the 11 participants who had an interest in participating in this study, only six fit the criteria and followed the necessary steps to participate in the study.

I provided the participants a consent form and reiterated to them that participation in this study was completely voluntary. Participants had to confirm their consent via email by responding, “I consent” before being confirmed as a participant and before scheduling the interviews. Interviews were scheduled based on the participants availability. I asked the participants to choose a time when they could be in a quiet environment to complete the interview. The participants were aware that the interview would be audio recorded and transcribed for the purposes of data analysis.

### **Demographics**

The study consisted of six millennials who were all African American. There was a representation of five women and one male. Five of the participants resided in the state of Georgia and one participant resided in the state of Ohio. Table 1 displays the participants’ demographics.

**Table 1***Demographic Data*

Participant	Gender	Year born	Age	Race	Jobs in the past 6 years	Location
P1	Female	1993	29	African American	4–5	Georgia
P2	Female	2000	22	African American	6 or more	Georgia
P3	Female	1986	36	African American	2–3	Georgia
P4	Female	1989	33	African American	4–5	Ohio
P5	Male	1985	37	African American	2–3	Georgia
P6	Female	1997	25	African American	2–3	Georgia

**Data Collection**

The six participants were given the option to have their interview conducted by phone or via Zoom audio-only. All of the data collected during this study was done utilizing email and Zoom audio-only. No interviews were held directly on the phone. I conducted the interviews using a semistructured interview guide and did not exceed 60 minutes. The interviews were scheduled based on the availability of the participants and interviews were conducted in a quiet place to hear the interviewee and the interviewer as well as protect the privacy of the individual. All interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed through Zoom.

**Data Analysis**

The interviews were conducted via Zoom with cameras off. Zoom was also used to record and transcribe each interview. Each interview went through a quality check with

the audio recording and the transcription of the interview to ensure accuracy. In an effort to relay a clear message to the audience, certain verbiage was removed from the transcript as long as it did not change the context or content of the interview. Verbiage that was removed, was filler words such as uh, um, and uh-huh. The Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis that I used to analyze the transcripts from the interviews consists of the following six steps:

1. **Familiarizing oneself with the data.** For this step, I became familiar with the data from beginning to end by re-reading the transcripts and listening to the audio of the interviews repeatedly. I uploaded the transcripts of the interviews to the NVivo software.
2. **Generating initial codes.** For the second step of this process, I started open coding. When there is not a pre-set coding system in place, the researcher is to utilize open coding (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Initial codes were generated based on the interview questions, and additional codes were created from the interview transcripts. I documented the codes generated in a Microsoft Word document and then transferred the codes into the NVivo software.
3. **Searching for themes.** For this third step, I analyzed the initial codes created to identify themes from the collected data. I identified commonalities found within the codes and grouped them together to create themes. Specific quotes from the interviews were also reviewed and aligned with specific themes that I identified.

4. **Reviewing the themes.** For the fourth step, I reviewed the created themes and cross-checked them using the NVivo software. NVivo was utilized to identify if any other themes would emerge from the data and to confirm through cross-checking that the themes identified were viable. The themes I created were in alignment with the themes generated through NVivo.
5. **Defining and naming themes.** For the fifth step, the themes I identified were defined based on the data that had been collected, reviewed, and analyzed. I decided the names of the themes based on specific quotes that were significant and the grouping of the codes that identified the themes.
6. **Producing the report.** For the sixth step, I used the NVivo software to organize the specific quotes that aligned with the themes created. Quotes were identified for each theme developed that were generated from the research questions and queried to produce the report that showcases the importance of each category identified within each theme to produce the report.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is an instrumental component of qualitative research. The trustworthiness of the study determines if it will be seen as viable or not. Trustworthiness is what strengthens the value of research (Amankwaa, 2016). Four pieces of criteria should be considered when establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

Credibility was established with all participants by ensuring they had an opportunity to add any additional information regarding the study topic and the responses



provided to the questions asked during the interview. Research participants were allotted space and time to add any additional information they felt was warranted during the interview process in response to the research questions to ensure the intent of their responses was clarified, and five out of six participants obliged.

In this research, transferability was established through the use of thick description. Thick description encompasses the validity of what has happened within context (Lincoln & Guba, 1988). I documented the interview setting, questions, and answers accurately to ensure the transferability of this study in other contexts.

Dependability refers to making sure the research and the outcome of the study are accurate and can be repeated (Amankwaa 2016). I established dependability by carefully documenting the systematic approach to the study. The following are the seven steps that were followed with each research participant:

1. I posted a recruitment announcement via LinkedIn.
2. Upon receiving an email of interest in participating in the study, I sent the recruiting e-mail, demographic information sheet (see Appendix B), and consent form to the participant.
3. After receiving the response from the participant via email stating, "I consent" and the demographic information sheet, I created a secure file for the participant and established a pseudo codename for the participant.
4. The semistructured interviews were scheduled and conducted with participants via Zoom audio-only based on their availability.
5. The audio recording and transcription of the data were reviewed.

6. I developed codes and themes from the data.

7. I utilized NVivo software to synthesize the data and findings.

Confirmability ensures that the research was not shaped by the researchers' biases or interests and that the research is strictly based on the responses of the participants (Amankwaa, 2016). I established confirmability through the use of an audit trail. All seven steps were documented in how the study was conducted from start to finish. When developing codes and themes, only data from the research participants were used. Specific quotes from participants were shared to help detail how some themes were generated through the data.

## **Results**

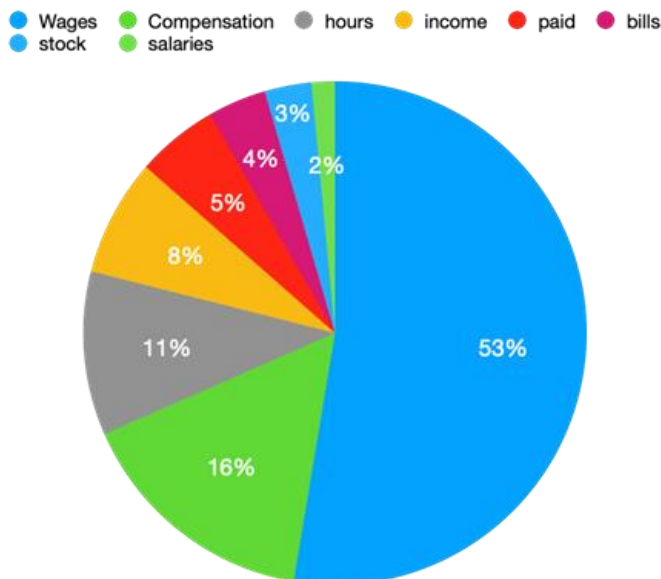
Research question: What are the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic?

Several themes emerged regarding the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. The dominant themes that emerged from the research question were as follows: (a) employee monetary compensation, (b) declination of job-hopping, (c) valued work environment, (d) multiple streams of income, (e) job-hopping experience during the pandemic, (f) family matters, (g) organizations have an equal playing field, and (h) self-promotion. The sections below outline the major themes created to answer the research question of this study.

### **Employee Monetary Compensation**

In discussing the reasoning behind why Millennials became job-hoppers; what drove them to become job-hoppers, a common theme emerged around employee

monetary compensation (see Figure 2). Figure 2 shows the breakdown of how the participants referred to compensation, whether it was in the form of getting stocks from an employer, the hours which they were allotted every week, or the need for getting compensated to pay the bills and provide the necessary essentials for their family. All participants regarded monetary compensation from their employer as the main factor or a subfactor of what contributed to their job-hopping. When asked the reason for job-hopping and what drove them to job-hop, P1 stated, “Some reasons was pay, the pay wasn’t there.” Other factors included Millennials exploring what they wanted to do in terms of work and making sure the schedule did not compromise the responsibilities they had in their personal life. For example, P4 shared, “I think it was mainly just trying to figure out what I wanted to do while I was in school. Just things that I wanted that fit nicely with my school schedule and the pay rate.” A participant shared that in addition to not having a favorable work environment in terms of how employers treated their employees, the main reason they decided to job-hop was due to compensation. Participants voiced the importance of being adequately compensated monetarily and linked their compensation to how employers can show they value their employees.

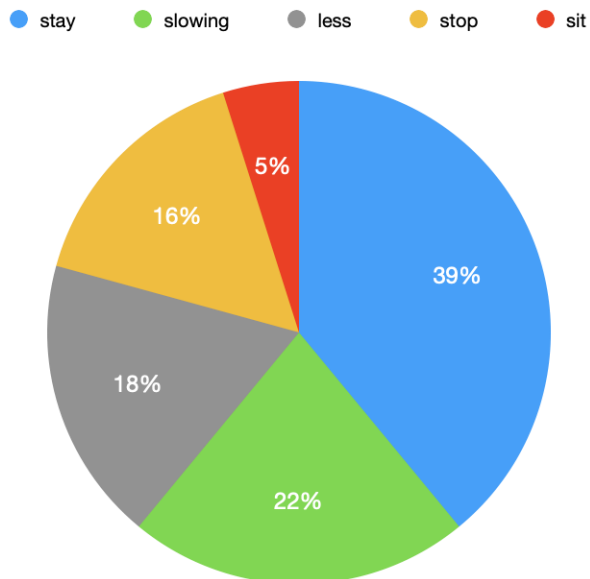
**Figure 2***Theme 1: Employee Monetary Compensation***Declination of Job-Hopping**

In discussing how Millennials job-hop every 2 years or less, the participants were asked whether they would continue to job-hop since the pandemic as frequently as they used to. All participants unanimously responded with a “no.” Their experiences during the pandemic changed their thought process on frequently changing jobs. P1 shared, “I know I look at it differently now because it doesn’t help. Thinking about job-hopping for me, it just hurts in the middle of it when everything is going on.” Participants shared that the pandemic brought a sense of uncertainty and instability that made them re-evaluate their decision on switching jobs as frequently and made them put what they valued and what they wanted in terms of their work environment in perspective. P3 mentioned, “So, I realized, I want to sit tight. I know that there is a lot of risk happening right now. I don’t

want to be the last person hired in the team over the next, next few months, so I would just sit still.” What they have experienced has led to a decision of declination in job-hopping (see Figure 3). Figure 3 shows the consistency in responses from the participants in the declination of job-hopping from participants wanting to slow down, stay at their current place of employment, or sit still in their current place of employment longer than what they would have normally prior to experiencing the pandemic. P4 responded, “knowing that I am in a stable job right now makes me not want to move to another job.” Although job-hopping may continue, there is a possibility that the extent to which job-hopping was being done by Millennials may be declining. Not only did the participants indicate that they did not plan on job-hopping as much as they used to since experiencing the pandemic, but some discussed opening their own businesses. When asked how their attitudes and beliefs have changed since experiencing the pandemic, five out of six participants views on job-hopping have changed to the extent they do not see it as a good work ethic, nor do they believe they need to continue to job-hop. P6 responded, “I don’t see it as good thing, I mean if your only at a bunch of jobs for one to two years, it doesn’t really look too good on your resume, so I am opposed to it I guess.” Although P5, would not continue to job hop as frequently, when sharing how their attitudes and beliefs have changed since experiencing the pandemic, he shared that even though staying and growing with one company is ideal, it is not easy to be completely committed to one company due to the lack of employer commitment, but he believes that a person should always have other options to ensure they are not blindsided.

**Figure 3**

*Theme 2: Declination of Job-hopping*



### **Valued Work Environment**

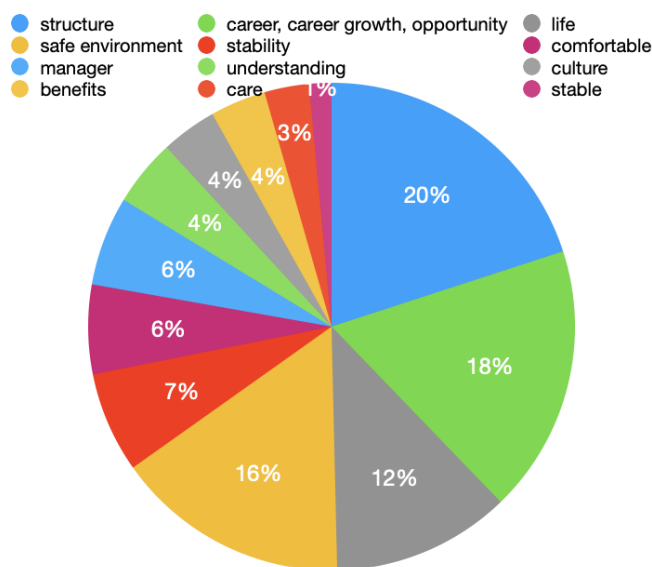
Job-hopping Millennials shared what they valued in their work environment. P6 simply stated, “Stability.” P5 shared that employers often want you to commit to their organization, but they do not place a lot of value on their employees. P5 stated, “I feel like if I left today, they’d hire a rep tomorrow for the same territory with no problem and with less money.” P5 wants to feel valued by the higher ups of the company and not just feel like another number when it comes to working for an organization. When participants were asked about what would make them want to retain their employment with a company beyond 2 years, most Millennials shared what they valued, and therefore what they look for in an employer. P2 valued a workplace where they feel safe and where employees are treated well along with good compensation. P3 valued having a great

leader, a fair review process, along with an opportunity to grow with the company.

Participants shared the importance of having a work environment where they feel valued is multidimensional. Millennials shared being able to feel valued by their employer, compensation, having a safe and stable environment, and opportunities for career growth are all what they value from their desired work environment (see Figure 4). Figure 4 highlights what participants expect their company to care about when it comes to their employees. They expect if an employer cares about their employees that they will create a culture of stability, safety, good benefits, and opportunities for career growth and development. P4 shared, “the pandemic has taught me to value a place that is concerned about me in my life, in my family, and the work, there is a work life, balance.”

**Figure 4**

*Theme 3: Valued Work Environment*



## **Multiple Streams of Income**

When inquiring about the participants experiences during the pandemic, a common theme emerged around having an additional stream of income in order to not solely depend on one income or job (see Figure 5). P5 shared,

I feel like another thing when it comes to jobs is you can't put all your eggs in one job like you have to always have other streams of income outside of that. I feel like with the pandemic that really opened my eyes.

Some participants began opening their own businesses to provide supplemental income for their family amid their experience with the pandemic. Witnessing several businesses lay off their employees, employees being fired, or forced into early retirement really made participants evaluate their current place of employment and their response to the pandemic alongside how they can create a supplemental source of income in case they were to experience layoffs from their jobs. Having the fear of being laid off during the pandemic or knowing that there was a possibility of lay off's that could occur, influenced 3 out of 6 participants to be thinking of ways to have multiple streams of income. P4 shared that since experiencing the pandemic she and her husband wanted to have more than two streams of income coming into the household just to have an extra income on the side. Participants who were single with one stream of income and who were married with two streams of income coming into their household thought it would be wise to have an additional stream of income. P5 responded,

You know, when it comes to income, I do not want my job to be my main source of income. I need to have some other forms of income, just in case the inevitable

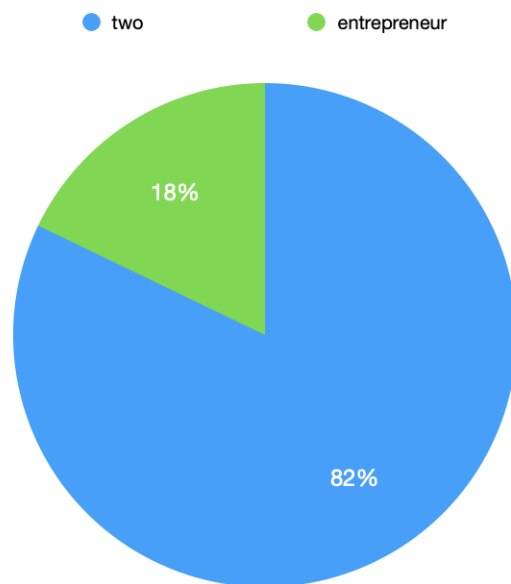


does happen as far as with getting laid off, or you know, just work slowing down and things like that.

Participants who wanted multiple streams of income looked to be entrepreneurs and create their own source of income independent of having to work for someone else. They preferred their additional source of income to come from entrepreneurship.

### Figure 5

*Theme 4: Multiple Streams of Income*



### Job-Hopping Experience During the Pandemic

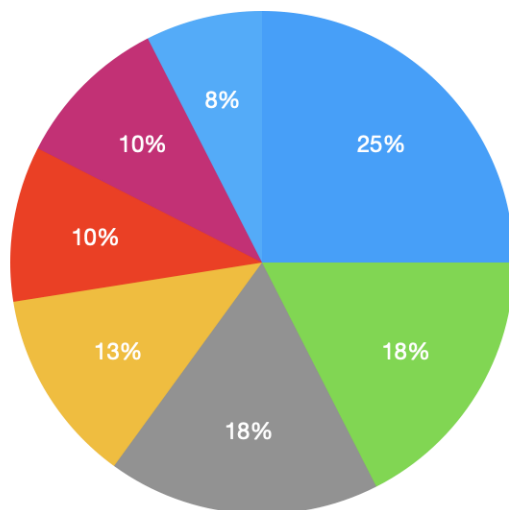
The participants were open in sharing their experiences during the pandemic. In particular, when participants were asked what their experience was in voluntarily job-hopping during the pandemic, three participants indicated it was challenging and the remainder of the three participants indicated they had an easier time (see Figure 6). P3 mentioned, “it was relatively easy for an experienced recruiter.” P3 had been a recruiter

for five years which allowed her to have the insights on which jobs to potentially focus on and where to steer away from. Additionally, P3 had companies who were reaching out to her, and had she wanted to make a change, she had ample opportunity to do so. P1 was challenged with changing jobs during the pandemic due to her trying to find childcare for her children and adjusting her hours at work in order to still provide for them and take care of them simultaneously. P4 had a frightening experience while trying to change jobs to work under an internship during the pandemic. Businesses had laid off employees, forced some into early retirement, but some companies also went on a hiring freeze. Employees were asked to do more with less people. P4 almost experienced not being able to work for the company because they were going to stop accepting people due to the pandemic. This would mean no income for her, and it was a frightening experience. Fortunately, P4 was able to begin her internship and be hired on with the company before they began their hiring freeze. P5 was job-hopping during the pandemic. P5 started his job at the height of the pandemic in April 2020 with a new company. The expectations of the role he took on changed dramatically from an outside seller to an inside seller with different parameters around the job. In turn, P5 considered his job to be tougher in the beginning, but his overall experience was that it worked out in his favor.

## Figure 6

### *Theme 5: Job-hopping Experience During the Pandemic*

● hard ● easy ● problem ● unstable ● risk ● impacted  
● layoffs



## Family Matters

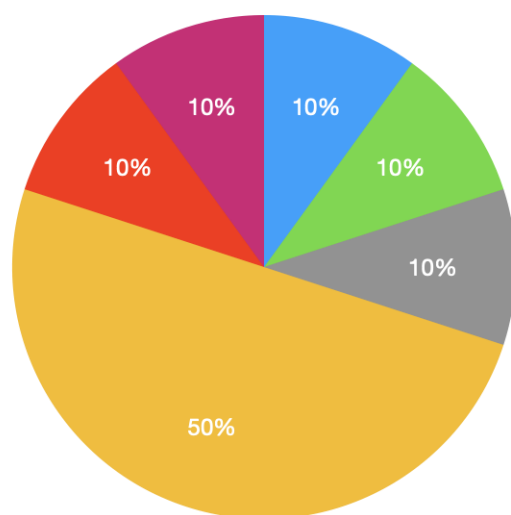
The family matters theme really came through with 5 out of 6 participants in the interview (see Figure 7). When asked about the reasons for changing jobs in their most recent job change P4 shared that life has changed. P4 realizes that she is getting older and that her family dynamic has changed from being single to now married with children. The ability to change jobs as frequently isn't so easy because she has a family that must be considered. Before a job change is made for P4, she now considers what the insurance and benefits package entails and what the commute will be. Ultimately, participants are taking into consideration what job best aligns with their family needs. Through the interviews, it was apparent that the pandemic put what was important into perspective and that is why family is one of the themes. Participants were adamant that being able to

be present for their families and support their families is their main goal. The family dynamic consists of single-family households, married individuals, and extended family. P5 mentioned that extensive travelling due to a territory expansion of his job increased his time away from his family. P5 stated, "I was spending about 2 to 3 days away from my family, and I had my son, who was 2 years old at the time, and my wife was pregnant with our second child." P5 had to walk away from his job because his family dynamic had changed, and he no longer could fulfill his family obligations and be away 2 to 3 days a week from home. P6 attributes becoming a mother as the reason to her change in mindset of not wanting to job hop anymore.

### Figure 7

#### *Theme 6: Family Matters*

● mother ● mom ● wife ● family ● child ● children



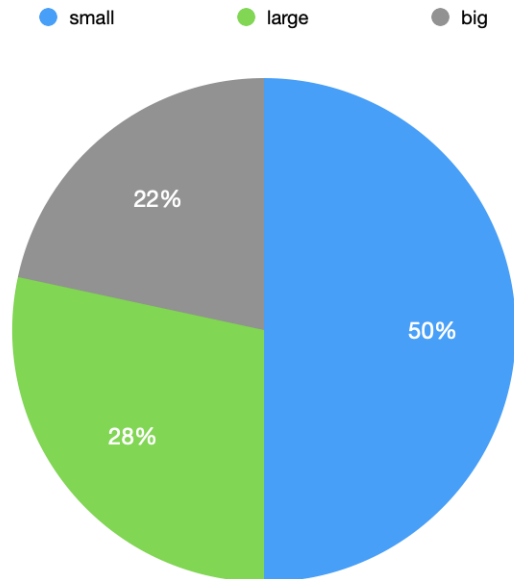
### **Organizations Have an Equal Playing Field**

Employers, both large and small, experienced various changes and challenges during the pandemic in terms of making sure their businesses stayed afloat and trying to operate on a minimal budget to survive the pandemic. P3 believes that a larger corporation has a more substantial budget than a smaller corporation and for this reason P3 would prefer working at a large corporation versus a smaller company since experiencing the pandemic. With cost being a factor, some businesses laid off employees or some were forced into retirement unless employees just quit. Although larger corporations carry a prestigious name, P5 believes that there is always a risk with a larger corporation as it concerns budget cuts. P5 mentioned that although he has worked for large corporations throughout his career, he recognized that the pandemic had caused increased layoffs and companies were realizing that they don't need a staggering amount of people to do the job at headquarters. Taking this into consideration, participants were asked had their viewpoint on whether they prefer to work with a large corporation or smaller business changed since experiencing the pandemic. Essentially, P5 thought the larger the company, the more the layoffs and lack of loyalty the company has towards its employees. For this reason, P5 believes that a smaller company would offer more autonomy and stated, "my next role like I wouldn't be surprised if I was at you know a smaller company." Participant's responses were predicated based on their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and their views and beliefs concerning how companies implemented COVID-19 protocols and procedures played a role in their decision to stay with a small or large corporation. P4 felt that larger corporations were pressuring their

employees to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it came out and some larger corporations were mandating their employees get the COVID-19 vaccine to maintain their employment. P4 worked for a smaller company during the pandemic and felt that working for a smaller company benefited her as she did not want to get the vaccine. The way in which the smaller company handled the conversation about the vaccine was appreciated by P4 as she stated, “they weren’t like putting a hammer to you like you got to get this, or you can’t work here.” The experience of not being pressured into getting the vaccine made P4 value working for a smaller company and eliminated her concerns of having to find another job because of her personal decision to not get the COVID-19 vaccine. However, P6’s position on whether to work for a large or smaller company changed. P6 responded, “I used to like working for small businesses, I don’t anymore. I enjoy working for a fortune 500 company. I think it’s more structure.” The responses were split among the Millennials with 3 participants who wanted to work for a large fortune 500 corporation, and the remainder 3 participants who wanted to work for a smaller corporation (see Figure 8). Based on participants responses, organizations have an equal playing field in acquiring talent from the Millennial generation.

**Figure 8**

*Theme 7: Organizations Have an Equal Playing Field*

**Self-Promotion**

Self-promotion was an interesting theme that emerged from the participants during the interview. Self-promotion was a theme that emerged from the participants sharing their experiences of job-hopping during the pandemic. When sharing their experiences, 5 out of 6 participants noted that they were giving themselves a self-promotion when they job-hopped because when they switched jobs they often got something better than their previous place of employment in terms of titles, work responsibilities, and compensation. P5 responded,

And it's just one thing that I've known with my last company, you know, as far as with just switching titles from a tier one to a tier 2 sales rep, where I mean it takes 4 to 5 years, really, that's maybe a \$10,000 bump in pay -if that, compared

to - you can look somewhere else, work in the same industry, sell the same products just with a different company: and come in as a tier 2 or 3 making \$30,000 or \$40,000 more dollars than you were making. I mean, that is a self-promotion for me compared to just kind of riding out, grinding, not getting the results that you want, you know, getting frustrated, just waiting.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 4, I discussed the data results and the major themes that answered the study research question. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the voluntary job-hopping beliefs and attitudes among Millennials who worked entry to early career level jobs during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. A total of six participants were virtually interviewed using Zoom meetings audio only for this qualitative phenomenological study. The semistructured interview questions were designed in order to understand the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. Strauss-Howe’s generational cohort theory and Lee and Mitchell’s unfolding theory of turnover was applied to this study. There was a total of five female participants and one male participant. All participants were African American. All six participants were voluntary job-hoppers who were working entry to early career level jobs during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic.

The study participants response to the research question, generated the following dominant themes: (a) Employee Monetary Compensation, (b) Declination of Job-hopping, (c) Valued Work Environment, (d) Multiple Streams of Income, (e) Job-



hopping Experience During the Pandemic, (f) Family Matters, (g) Organizations Have an Equal Playing Field, and (h) Self-promotion. The themes that emerged from this study, indicated the experiences job-hopping Millennials went through and their attitudes and beliefs as it relates to job-hopping since experiencing the pandemic. The participants indicated a declination in terms of job-hopping and don't aspire to do it as frequently since experiencing the pandemic. The pandemic put things in perspective and highlighted what Millennials value such as family, compensation, a safe and stable environment, and an opportunity for career growth. Millennials still seek to work for an employer but believe that having multiple streams of income would be beneficial since experiencing the pandemic. Additionally, it can be concluded from the interviews that since experiencing the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic, that working entry to early career job-hopping Millennials did not view job-hopping as an attractive quality to employers, and in fact seek to work for organizations that align with their values in order to grow their career with that company beyond 2 years.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to understand the voluntary job-hopping beliefs and attitudes among Millennials who worked entry to early career-level jobs during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. For the purpose of this study, the phenomenon that was addressed was job-hopping during the global pandemic. This was the first time Millennials had experienced a global pandemic, which is an unexpected life event that affected the entire world. What was not understood was how the Millennial generation's view of job-hopping following a life-changing event, such as the global pandemic, had changed their beliefs and attitudes with regard to job-hopping. With Millennials set to be the predominant generation in the workforce in the upcoming years, employers struggle to retain talent.

The phenomenological approach was used to contribute a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied through the data collected from the participants. Data were collected through the recruitment of participants utilizing the LinkedIn social media platform. Interested participants inquired by email to participate in the study from an electronic post they saw on LinkedIn. I collected data through the use of semistructured interviews from six participants. The data were then organized, codes were created, and the themes from the data were named and defined. The results of this study indicated that there is a declination in terms of job-hopping. Job-hopping Millennials do not aspire to job-hop as frequently since experiencing the pandemic but aspire to work beyond 2 years with an employer who values them, compensation, a safe and stable environment, and an opportunity for career growth. Although Millennials still seek to work for an employer,

they believe that having multiple streams of income would be beneficial since experiencing the pandemic. Chapter 5 consists of the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and will conclude with a summary.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings from this research confirm and extend the literature found in Chapter 2: Literature Review. The following themes were identified in this study: (a) employee monetary compensation, (b) declination of job-hopping, (c) valued work environment, (d) multiple streams of income, (e) job-hopping experience during the pandemic, (f) family matters, (g) organizations have an equal playing field, and (h) self-promotion.

Rivers (2018) explained the Millennials' process of decision-making regarding whether to stay with an organization or job-hop. Rivers found that "competitive compensation, job enjoyment, opportunities for professional growth, supportive work environment, reasonable free/flex time, finding their niche, and excellent benefits" (p. 4) are the seven factors that contribute to a Millennial's decision whether to job-hop. Jacobs (2020) found in his analysis of data that Millennials value recognition, a supportive environment, work flexibility, opportunities for professional development, treatment from leadership that is appropriate, and stress the importance of adequate employee compensation. The results from this study confirmed the findings of previous research although not in the same order of preference. All participants indicated that compensation was the main factor or sub-factor in their decision to job-hop. Participants indicated that having a safe environment where they feel valued and have opportunities for career

growth is important to them as they look for an employer that they can stay with beyond 2 years. The participants responses echoed that having a work/life balance was very important and was tied to the theme that emerged of family matters. When participants were asked if there was anything else that they wanted to add or would want to let employers know of how to help retain the Millennials one participant, P5, gave an analogy of job-hoppers as speed daters due to the treatment and lack of loyalty they feel from employers which does not encourage long-term employment. This participant noted that once you find the right company that measures up to your values and pays you what your worth, then you will marry that company and be committed until retirement.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Lee and Mitchell (1994) identified voluntary job turnover that is initiated by a shock element as the unfolding theory of job turnover. When participants in my study were asked the reason for their recent job change, each response aligned with a pathway of the unfolding theory of job turnover. For example, P4 mentioned she was so dissatisfied with her job that she had to quit to protect her mental health. She realized the company did not care about its employees and walked away from the business after securing another job. This situation correlates with Pathway 4b of the unfolding theory of job turnover, where the person is overwhelmingly dissatisfied with their job, which leads them to search for alternative jobs while still being employed (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Once the new job is secured, the person quits their previous job.

P5 shared that recruiters sometimes message him through LinkedIn for potential job offers. The job offers that he has accepted have been promotions in terms of

compensation and job titles and have a defined path and timeline in opportunities for career growth. P5 experienced Pathway 3 of the Unfolding Theory of Job Turnover, where a shock element has occurred with an unexpected job offer and the person is forced to evaluate their value at their current job and if there is room for progress (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). P5 shared that the job offer promoted him to a higher tier in sales and also would allow him to get to the next level in his career in half the time of his current employer at that time.

Strauss and Howe's (1997) generational cohort theory surmises that each generational cohort will have shared life events, experiences, and commonalities in age. The global pandemic was a new life event in Millennials had never gone through within their lifetime but have experienced this event together. It was not known how Millennial's approached job-hopping during the pandemic. In this way, this research study extended the current research beyond what was studied previously by gaining a deeper understanding of the attitudes and beliefs of Millennials as it relates to job-hopping during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the results of this study further identified that voluntary job-hopping Millennials do not plan on job-hopping as frequently since experiencing the pandemic and seek to find an employer to stay with beyond 2 years that aligns with their values. The participants all agreed that the global pandemic has put things into perspective for them as it concerns job-hopping and further solidified what their needs are in the workplace.

### **Limitations of the Study**

As discussed in Chapter 1, there are limitations to this study. This study focused on the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. As stated previously, other variants of COVID-19 have emerged, and strains of the virus have mutated. Job-hopping Millennials' attitudes and beliefs could have changed since experiencing other variants of the pandemic. However, their attitudes and beliefs after experiencing other strains of COVID-19 would be outside the scope of this study. Another limitation of this study is the generalizability of the study as it concerns early to late Millennials.

As a Millennial, I anticipated potential bias and took deliberate measures to avert this, but I must indicate it as a potential limitation. The results were based strictly on the data collected from participants. An additional limitation of this study is that data were collected from six Millennials, five of whom resided within the state of Georgia, and one within the state of Ohio. Job-hopping Millennials in different states and regions could have potentially different experiences. Other limitations of this study include that five out of six participants were female and all participants were African American. Different ethnic groups and genders could have different attitudes and beliefs as it concerns voluntarily job-hopping during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Recommendations Based on Findings**

Although a high salary cap or high hourly rate would not be sustainable for any organization, employers should evaluate their compensation structure and ensure that it is

competitive and equitable across their industry to retain the Millennial generation and prevent job turnover. Employers should put focus on developing the culture of their workplace, ensuring that it is focused on each person as an individual, creating a safe environment, and implementing a culture where there are opportunities to grow from within the organization. An organization that focuses on work/life balance will appeal more to Millennials.

Employers can create a work/life balance for their employees by hiring the right number of employees to evenly distribute the workload, making a clear distinction between company time and personal time, and making sure their compensation is appealing by being slightly ahead of the market industry in terms of compensation. Employers will benefit from implementing these practices into their work environment by being able to not only attract the Millennial generation, but also being able to retain them. In turn, this will decrease the negative impact turnover has on organizations finances and productivity. Employers will be able to save money on recruiting, onboarding, and training cost.

Family matters is a theme that emerged from this study and is inclusive of Millennials being married with children, non-married Millennials with children, and immediate family members, such as aging or sick parents that need to be cared for as well. Employers can create a culture of family matters by providing benefits to their employees that focus on family. For example, companies can have short- and long-term leave, sick leave, a maternity and paternity benefits package, flexible work environments for nursing women, and hosting events where families can partake in. Often, families

hear of their family members' work, but do not have the opportunity to meet or participate in any work events to allow them to feel involved. Employers who can implement these recommendations based on the findings from this study will be well-suited to attain and retain the Millennials generation in the workforce whether the organization is a large corporation or a small business. When participants were asked if their views on whether they preferred to work with a large corporation or a smaller business had changed since experiencing the pandemic, the responses from participants were mixed. Responses indicated that half of the participants wanted to work for a large corporation and the other half wanted to work for a small business. The participants who preferred to work for a smaller business thought the small businesses had more structure, are easier to maneuver through, have fewer issues than larger corporations, and do not have a lot of demand to follow the status quo as other companies. For example, P4, who preferred working for a smaller corporation stated, "I think that it's easier for the company to hear their employees. It might be easier to move within the company." P5 responded that his views had changed since experiencing the pandemic in that he would prefer to work for a smaller company next because he believes there is less of a risk with a smaller company and more opportunities to grow. The participants who preferred to work for a large corporation thought the large corporation was more financially stable than a small business and provided more structure. P3 believes that larger corporations tend to have a larger budget and can retain more of their employees than a smaller company has the ability to. The findings from this study revealed that organizations have an equal playing field.



### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

The current research study consisted of African American participants living in the state of Georgia and one in the state of Ohio. A comparative phenomenological qualitative study could be completed in other regions of the United States centered on the African American population or a different ethnic group. Each region of the United States houses different cultures, values, and ethnic groups.

Future research might further validate the findings of this research study or provide implications for future research. Future researchers could study a specific subgroup of Millennials (early or late Millennials) as their job history and length in their career could provide different perspectives as it relates to the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. Future research could focus on the job-hopping Millennials who are married with a child or children as a major theme of this study was family matters. Research could also be conducted on job-hopping Millennials who are married with no children, and job-hopping Millennials who are single. A contributing factor to a declination of job-hopping was that family matters for 5 out of 6 participants. There was one single participant, and family was not a contributing factor to a decline in job-hopping. Conducting future research on one or more of the groups of job-hopping Millennials regarding how their lived experiences during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic have changed their attitudes and beliefs towards job-hopping will be vital for employers to understand how to retain the Millennial generation since they will be the predominant generation in the workforce by the year 2025 (Jacobs, 2020).

Future researchers need to conduct a comparative phenomenological qualitative study focused on different ethnic groups such as Caucasians, Indians, Latinos, Chinese, or Asians to identify if their lived experiences are identical to the study of the lived experiences of the African American millennial population in this study. The findings from this future study will help to explore the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the COVID-19 pandemic based on the various ethnic groups. This study will be essential to employers as they focus on attracting and retaining the millennial generation which is inclusive of different ethnic groups.

Future research should extend the scope of the research from the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic to the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the entire pandemic. Extending the research beyond the scope that is provided in this study will give a full view of how the pandemic has shaped the attitudes and beliefs of job-hopping Millennials. Future researchers can also look at this study from the experience of an employer's view.

Future researchers looking to expound on the results of this study need to utilize a quantitative approach focused on the experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the COVID-19 pandemic based on the findings of the eight themes that were derived from this study. It is imperative to utilize a quantitative approach to gain a larger diverse sample size. Future researchers should focus on the quantitative approach to sample a larger population of Millennials and gather the data based on the findings from the current research. A qualitative approach was used in this study to gain a deeper understanding of what those lived experiences were from job-hopping Millennials. At the

time, there was not much research on this topic because the global pandemic had just occurred.

### **Implications**

This study intended to contribute to social change by sharing the knowledge of the Millennials tendency to job-hop in an unstable environment which consists of job insecurity. This study had four main implications for employers:

- Employers need to re-evaluate the culture of the workplace.
- Employers need to ensure that their employee compensation package is equitable.
- Employers need to provide a clear and obtainable path for career growth.
- Employers need to value life in and outside of the workplace.

The main contribution to this study was the voice of the voluntary job-hopping Millennials who shared their lived experiences of the global pandemic that shook the world. Their voice contributes to future research in Industrial - Organizational Psychology as the global pandemic is still being studied and employers are trying to grasp how to retain their employees. The knowledge they shared from their lived experiences showcases what is important to Millennials now, more than ever after experiencing the global pandemic, and certainly provides a roadmap on how to retain the Millennial generation in preparation for them being the largest generation in the workforce by 2025. The results of this study provided employers with a path of direction for retaining the longevity of Millennials in the workforce, deterring job-hopping among

Millennials amidst the global pandemic, and reducing revenue loss due to turnover in the workplace.

### **Conclusion**

The research study was based on the following research question: What are the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic?

This study was intended to address the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the voluntary job-hopping beliefs and attitudes among Millennials who worked entry to early career-level jobs during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. Millennials are on the brink of becoming the largest generation in the workforce, and employers struggle to attract and retain the Millennial generation. The global pandemic that began in 2020 was an unprecedented event that altered the lives of all generations and created a new norm. This study contributed to the body of future research being conducted on the Millennials, also known as the job-hopping generation, by sharing their lived experiences through the pandemic as it relates to job-hopping. Additionally, this study gave a line of sight to the Millennials' future behavior as it relates to job-hopping through the sharing of their attitudes and beliefs after experiencing this life-altering event.

Data were collected from six participants in this study, five female and one male. Several themes emerged regarding the lived experiences of job-hopping Millennials during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. The dominant themes that

emerged from the research question were as follows: (a) employee monetary compensation, (b) declination of job-hopping, (c) valued work environment, (d) multiple streams of income, (e) job-hopping experience during the pandemic, (f) family matters, (g) organizations have an equal playing field, and (h) self-promotion. Participants' responses indicated that Millennials do not intend to job-hop as frequently since experiencing the global pandemic and are looking for employers who align with what they value which is feeling valued by their employer, compensation, a safe and stable environment, and an opportunity for career growth. This study served as a starting point for employers who are seeking to retain the Millennial generation beyond 2 years and for employers seeking to understand how the pandemic has further shaped the needs of the Millennial generation in relation to job-hopping following the global pandemic. By knowing the patterns of the Millennial generation driven by altering life experiences such as the global pandemic, employers can better prepare strategies and implement plans that will be cohesive to the employer and the Millennial generation for future employment.

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## Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Guide

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Hello, my name is Dottie Dancy. I am an Industrial/Organizational Psychology PhD candidate from Walden University. Thank you for your time today. The purpose of this interview is to understand the voluntary job-hopping beliefs and attitudes among Millennials who were working entry to early career level jobs during the 2020–2021 pre-Omicron COVID-19 pandemic. Your participation will contribute to the body of knowledge in this field and aid in future research as it relates to understanding job-hopping among Millennials. This interview is completely voluntary and at any time you feel uncomfortable or would like to discontinue the interview, you may do so. As we proceed with this interview, if you do not feel comfortable with a question that I have asked, please inform me and we can skip that question and move forward to the next interview question. I will be audio recording this interview and taking notes. This interview will take between 45–60 minutes of your time. Your information will remain confidential. Do you have any questions for me before we begin? I will start the audio recording now.

(Start Audio Recording)

Part 1: Background Information

1. Please share your name, age, gender, and race.
2. What is your current employment status?
3. How many years have you been job-hopping?

4. How many jobs have you had in the past six years?

#### Part 2: Semi- structured Interview Questions

1. What influenced you to become a voluntary job-hopper?
2. In your most recent job change, what was your reason for changing jobs?
3. What is your experience as it relates to voluntarily changing jobs during the pandemic?
4. How has your attitude towards job-hopping changed since experiencing the pandemic?
5. How has the pandemic changed your attitudes and beliefs as it concerns job-hopping?
6. What is your outlook on job-hopping now?
7. Will you continue to change jobs as often as you did since experiencing the pandemic?
8. Since experiencing the pandemic, has your view on whether you prefer to work with a large corporation or smaller business changed?
  - a. Why or why not?
9. Since experiencing the pandemic, do you think tenure on the job matters in terms of whether you stay employed or not?
  - a. Why or why not?
10. Since experiencing the pandemic, what will make you want to work for an employer?

11. Since experiencing the pandemic, what will make you want to retain your employment beyond two years with an employer?

Conclusion

This concludes the interview. Thank you for your participation.

(Stop Audio Recording)



## Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

Thank you for making the decision to participate in this doctoral research study. Please complete the demographic questionnaire below and email it to:

[dottie.dancy@waldenu.edu](mailto:dottie.dancy@waldenu.edu)

The below information is confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this research study.

1. My name is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I was born in the year of \_\_\_\_\_ and am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.
3. I am \_\_\_\_female \_\_\_\_\_male.
4. My race is\_\_\_\_\_.
5. I am \_\_\_\_\_currently employed \_\_\_\_\_not currently employed.
6. Over the past 6 years, I have held \_\_\_\_\_2-3 jobs, \_\_\_\_\_4-5 jobs, \_\_\_\_\_6 or more jobs.