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Examining Generational Differences across Organizational Factors that Relate to Turnover

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By

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Turnover continues to pose a problem for all organizations across industries. This study examines the complex nature of turnover, by examining the relationship of turnover intentions with perceptions of distributive justice, procedural justice, growth opportunities, and recognition across age groups. Age groups will be used as a proxy for generational cohort membership. Results of the study confirm previous research that generational differences do exist; however, those differences are fairly small. Perceptions of distributive justice, procedural justice, growth opportunities, and recognition were found to be significant predictors of turnover intentions regardless of the age group.

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Introduction

Turnover continues to be a disruptive and expensive problem, both directly and indirectly, across organizations. Within the nursing industry, concerns about turnover are intensified by threats of future nursing shortages, highlighting its associated costs (Jones & Gates, 2007). Direct costs are often described as tangible or observable costs, such as recruitment and advertising, while indirect costs, such as organizational intelligence or productivity losses, are often hidden (Jones & Gates, 2007). Therefore, controlling turnover costs is essential to the success of the organization (Jones & Gates, 2007; O'Connell & Kung, 2007).

Researchers have examined a number of organizational factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, withdrawal behavior, and turnover intentions that may affect turnover (Cavanagh & Coffin, 1992; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Tett & Meyer, 1993). In addition, a growing trend in the nursing literature explores the multigenerational workforce and how generational differences may relate to many of those organizational factors affecting turnover. Currently, four generational cohorts comprise the nursing population: Traditionalists (Silent), Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials (Generation Y) (Boychuk Duchscher & Cowin, 2004). Popular press and conventional wisdom suggest that each generational cohort values certain organizational factors differently from other cohorts (e.g. climate, leadership, and processes and procedures). For example, Baby Boomers are all about "work, work, work", whereas Generation X are "work, work, I want some more, but let's talk about it", while Millennials are "work, work, you want me to work even more?" (Kowske & Rasch, 2011). However, empirical research on generational differences in the workforce shows

inconsistent findings (Parry & Urwin, 2011). The purpose of the current study is to explore how organizational factors, such as procedural justice, distributive justice, growth opportunities, and recognition, are valued by members of each generational cohort, and if these factors are valued differently. Because the data identifies participants by age groups rather than birth years, age group will be used as a proxy for membership of generational cohort. By identifying these differences, organizations may be better equipped to develop more effective recruitment and retention strategies as a means to alleviate the threat of a nursing shortage.

Turnover

The complex nature of turnover is illustrated by the number of different antecedents linked to the outcome. According to Griffeth et al.'s (2000) meta-analysis, the best predictors of job turnover are proximal factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job search, comparison of alternatives, withdrawal cognitions, and quit intentions. The study also indicates small to moderate effects of distal factors such as work environment, distributive justice, promotional opportunities, and alternative job opportunities (Griffeth et al., 2000). To reduce the likelihood of turnover amongst employees, organizations should be aware of the different factors affecting turnover intentions, and whether there is a difference in value across generational cohorts. According to popular literature on generational differences, each generational cohort differently values certain organizational factors. Because of these said differences, it becomes necessary to determine how generations value them differently and how it affects the organization. Research on turnover indicates that there exists a relationship with these organizational factors: distributive justice, procedural

justice, growth opportunities, and recognition. The present study will examine the importance of these factors with each generational cohort.

Turnover is a time-based process that takes into account distal determinants, intermediate attitudinal causes, and quit intentions (Hom, Mitchelle, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012), and can be described using a combination of two factors: voluntary and involuntary turnover, and internal and external turnover (O'Connell & Kung, 2007). Employees who leave the organization or switch roles on their own accord are said to voluntarily turnover, whereas employees who are asked by the organization to leave the position and/or organization due to poor performance or failure to comply with policy are said to involuntarily turnover (O'Connell & Kung, 2007). Additionally, leaving the organization refers to external turnover, while changing jobs and/or department or unit within the organization refers to internal turnover (International Center for Human Resources in Nursing, 2010). The present paper will focus on voluntary turnover since the specific item used for the dependent variable measures turnover intention.

Turnover costs have been widely researched across all industries. Consequences of turnover include direct financial costs, specifically recruiting and training costs that can range from 90% to 200% of annual salary (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010). Waldman, Kelly, Arora, and Smith (2010) conclude that the annual cost of turnover was 3.4 to 5.8 percent of the annual operating budget for an academic medical center, with the loss and replacement of nursing staff as the largest driver of cost. In addition to direct financial costs, other indirect, non-quantifiable consequences of turnover occur, such as a decrease in morale of remaining employees, additional administrative time, disruption of

the organizational culture and structure, loss of productivity, and loss of organizational knowledge (Jones & Gates, 2007; Waldman et al., 2010).

Turnover Intentions

Turnover intention is described as an employee's conscious decision to leave the organization. The relationship of turnover intentions and turnover has been widely documented in literature (Griffeth et al., 2000; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). Identified as one of the strongest predictors of actual turnover, turnover intention accounts for 10-15% of turnover variance (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hendrix, Robbins, Miller, & Summers, 1998; Tett & Meyer, 1993), and is the last step taken before actually leaving (Mobley, 1977; Mobley et al., 1979). Using a concept analysis, Takase (2010) describes turnover intention as a "multi-stage process consisting of psychological, cognitive, and behavioral components." The process begins with the employee's psychological response to the negative aspects of the job and/or the organization, followed by the cognitive component of deciding to leave, and performing withdrawal behaviors from the job (Takase, 2010). Nursing literature reports that the factors affecting nurse turnover are similar to the factors affecting other industries, with the intention to leave as a predictor of actual turnover (Krausz, Koslowsky, Shalom, & Elyakim, 1995).

Nursing and Turnover

Reports of turnover costs in the nursing industry vary due to the inconsistency and variability in the conceptualization and measurement of turnover (Li & Jones, 2012). For example, in their review of the literature, Li and Jones (2012) report that turnover costs, costs categories, types of turnover, types of nursing personnel, and timing of nursing personnel departure varied in the studies reviewed, making the comparison of costs and

the consequences of turnover difficult across studies. However, the issue of nurse turnover continues to be a serious challenge facing the health care industry today, as the consequences of turnover may directly affect the quality of patient care (International Council of Nurses, 2006). For example, studies found that the low senior-to-new hire nurse ratio, and high patient-to-nurse ratio, can jeopardize the quality of patient care (Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, Sochalski, & Silber, 2002; Clarke & Aiken, 2003). Furthermore, high unit turnover rates can increase the likelihood of medical errors (O'Brien-Pallas, Tomblin Murphy, Shamian, Li, & Hayes, 2010). Although there have only been a few studies that focus on the relationship of turnover and nurse well-being (Hayes et al., 2006), research indicates that high unit turnover rates can threaten a nurse's mental health status and level of job satisfaction (O'Brien-Pallas et al., 2010). Additionally, research suggests that "as hours of care per patient day increased, so did the overtime nurses were asked to work and the incidence of missed shifts due to illness" (O'Brien-Pallas, Thomson, Alksnis, & Bruce, 2001 as cited in Hayes et al., 2006, pg. 245), supporting studies that link high rates of absenteeism to lower job satisfaction. Furthermore, indirect effects of turnover include effects on the levels of morale and productivity of the remaining nurses as new hires go through orientation (Li & Jones, 2002).

Factors affecting turnover

As discussed in the preceding sections, there are several factors that have some form of relationship with turnover. The present study will only focus on the relationships of the following factors with turnover: justice perceptions (distributive justice and procedural justice), growth opportunities, and recognition.

Organizational justice. Justice is the perception of fairness. Research indicates that justice can be classified into three different types: distributive, procedural, and interactional (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). However, this paper will only focus on two justice perceptions, distributive justice and procedural justice, since items that pertain to interpersonal justice were not identified in the survey.

Distributive justice. Based on Adams (1965) (as cited in Colquitt et al., 2001) equity theory, distributive justice is defined as the individual's perception of the fairness of outcome, such as pay or promotions. According to equity theory, the individual perceives fairness by comparing his or her own input (e.g., effort) and outcomes (e.g., rewards) ratio to another individual's ratio (Adams, 1965). Individuals tend to be more sensitive to the comparison when the individual feels he or she did not receive as much as the other individual, rather than vice versa (Sweeney, McFarlin, & Inderrieden, 1990).

Procedural justice. Procedural justice is defined as the individual's perception of fairness of the process that determines the outcomes. In other words, *how* the decision was made. According to Leventhal (1980) (as cited in Colquitt et al., 2001), in order to be perceived as fair, there are six criteria the procedure should meet: accuracy, representativeness, bias suppression, consistency, ethicality, and correctability.

Several studies have established the relationship of justice to turnover intentions and/or turnover. Hendrix et al.'s (1998) study suggests both an indirect and direct relationship of justice with turnover intentions and turnover. The study indicates an indirect relationship with turnover, such that positive perceptions of distributive and procedural justice were associated with higher levels of intrinsic job satisfaction and commitment, which affects the desire to remain with the organization (Hendrix et al.,

1998). A direct relationship to turnover intention was established with distributive justice, which "might be explained by the individuals' anticipation that various types of injustice will change in the future", such that turnover intentions are affected by both the perception of current and expectations of future outcomes (Hendrix et al., 1998, pg. 626). Furthermore, Daileyl and Kirk (1992) indicate that both types of justice appear to be stronger predictors of turnover intentions than work attitudes, possibly due to employees externalizing the causality of their decision to quit. The study provides support to the importance of employee participation in changes to organizational rewards or appraisals systems (Daileyl & Kirk, 1992). There is also a negative relationship between distributive and procedural justice with turnover intentions, such that employees are less likely to be motivated to leave if the organization's distributions and procedures are perceived as fair (Cohen-Charash, & Spector, 2001).

Growth opportunities. Employee growth opportunities and development take many forms, such as training courses, formal-on-the-job training, and tuition-reimbursement programs. Findings across studies linking growth opportunities, turnover intentions and turnover are complicated. Several studies report that growth opportunities are related to decreases in turnover intentions and turnover. For example, Benson (2006) reports that employees from a large manufacturing firm who participated in on-the-job development and gained specific skills, reported lower intentions to turnover and higher organizational commitment. However, for employees who participated in a tuition-reimbursement program that provided more general and marketable skills, turnover intentions increased if the employee did not receive a promotion afterwards.

Similar results were reported in Kraimer, Siebert, Wayne, Lided, and Bravo's (2011) study, which suggests that when employees perceive many career opportunities within the organization, "organizational support for development (OSD) translates into higher job performance and lower incidence of turnover" (pg. 495). However, when employees perceive fewer career opportunities in the organization, development support actually increases turnover (Kraimer et al., 2011). Therefore, in order to increase performance and lower turnover, organizations must ensure that both organizational support for development and available career opportunities are perceived highly by employees. In the nursing industry, similar results are apparent. Growth opportunities and learning activities are essential for retention and provision of quality care, with the perception of little promotional opportunity as a predictor of turnover intention (Davidson, Folcarelli, Crawford, Duprat, & Clifford, 1997). Finally, the perception of the organization's interest in employee development can lead to feelings of being valued by the employee, which can influence the employee's intent to stay (Yoder, 1995). Research on generational differences in the value of growth opportunities is imperative in order to aid in developing employee retention programs.

Recognition. Recognition is a form of positive feedback about an employee's behavior or accomplishment of a goal or task (Mone, Eisinger, Guggenheim, Price, & Stine, 2011). Additionally, recognition is seen as a motivating factor (Herzberg, 1966) that can affect an employee's intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1980 as cited in Mone et al., 2011). The importance of recognition in the workplace is evident from Paré and Tremblay's (2007) study on the relationship of Human Resource practices such as nonmonetary recognition, competency development, and organizational rewards, with

turnover intentions. Results from their IT professional participants indicate that nonmonetary recognition has a direct and negative relationship with turnover intention. Additionally, recognition and rewards are said to be important for engagement, such that a lack of recognition can lead to feelings of inefficacy, devaluing of work, and eventually burnout (Maslach, Schaufelil, & Leiter, 2001). We can expect that employees who perceive appropriate amounts of recognition are more likely to engage in their work and stay with the organization.

Each of these organizational factors (justice perceptions, growth opportunities, and recognition) may be perceived and/or valued differently by individuals. It is important to examine these factors across generational lines as the importance of these values may shift as the as younger generations assume the responsibilities of the exiting older generations.

Generational research

The American workforce continues to evolve as a reflection of its heterogeneous population. Thanks to popular press and media, the influx of Millennials into the workforce has been a focal point for dealing with organizational changes. Organizations are currently preparing for a major shift in their employee demographic, as older employees prepare to retire, while younger employees prepare to assume greater responsibility. Because of the current state of the workforce and an increase in attention from press releases, media, magazines, and books, organizations are taking an interest in potential generational differences and their effects on the success of the organization. Several organizational factors, such as job satisfaction and turnover intentions, are linked to turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000). Because of the changing workforce demographic,

generational differences are another factor being considered to help explain the complex nature of turnover intentions and turnover.

According to popular press articles, generational differences are often reported as a certain set of characteristics unique to a specific generation that can cause conflicts and misunderstandings. It is these differences that the popular press emphasizes and encourages organizations to pay attention to. Unfortunately, many of the proposed generational differences are found in the popular press and stem from observations or anecdotal evidence from interviews. Academic research on generational differences has revealed mixed findings, with a number of definitional, conceptual, and methodological issues contributing to its limitations. The purpose of this study is to add to the existing literature on generational differences, by clarifying their implications on organizational outcomes and focusing on a specific occupation and industry.

Defining generations. A generation can be defined as a cohort of individuals who are similar in age, and who experience and are influenced by the same historical events (Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt, & Gade, 2012; Mannheim, 1952; Ryder, 1965). However, as Costanza et al. (2012) point out, this definition limits the generalizability of the generational research across cultures, as significant events vary depending on the location. However, the current study focuses on generational definitions within the U.S. The most common typology of generational cohorts comes from Strauss and Howe (1991), who used historical data to define generations in the U.S. Four cohorts are currently present in the workforce: Traditionalists (Silent), Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millennial (Generation Y). Although generational labels are for the most part agreed upon, the same cannot be said about the actual start and end dates of membership for

each generational cohort (Smola & Sutton, 2002). This is one of the key criticisms that research continues to face, as the inconsistency may limit the "conceptual definition, their operationalization, and the assessment of their impact on outcomes" (Costanza et al., 2012, pg. 377). However, the purpose of this study is not to provide answers for this discrepancy, but rather to provide a better understanding about potential differences in work values across generational cohorts. Furthermore, this study will examine age groups as a proxy for generational cohorts, but will reference the common generational taxonomy provided by Strauss and Howe (1991) to help interpret results. Previous research examining age and turnover, such as Griffeth et al.'s meta-analysis (2000) and more recently, Ng and Feldman's meta-analysis (2009) found a negative relationship. Ng and Feldman (2009) focused specifically on voluntary turnover and reports a stronger relationship between age and voluntary turnover than previous research. Table 1 provides their birth years for each generational cohort as well as a summary of theoretical descriptors from Strauss and Howe's (1991) taxonomy. Additionally, the table also includes the age groups identified in the archival data that pertain to each generational cohort.

Table 1

Descriptions of generational cohorts

Generation	Age group	Theoretical descriptors
Silent/Traditionalist (1925 – 1942)	60 and older	Preferring job security over entrepreneurship, cautious, unimaginative, unadventurous, unoriginal, facilitators, and helpmates, arbiters but not leaders, causeless, without outward turmoil, inward-focused, sandwiched in between the GI and Baby Boomer generations
Baby Boomers (1943 – 1960)	60 and older 40 to 59	Much heralded but failing to meet expectations, smug, self-absorbed, intellectually arrogant, socially mature, culturally wise, critical thinkers, spiritual, religious, having an inner fervor, radical, controversial, non-conformist, self-confident, self-indulgent
Generation X (1961 – 1981)	40 to 59 25 to 39	Cynical, distrusting, bearing the weight of the world, fearful, lost, wasted, incorrigible, in-your-face, frenetic, shocking, uneducated, shallow, uncivil, mature for their age, pragmatic, apathetic and disengaged politically, independent, self-reliant, fatalistic, mocking, under-achieving
Millennials/ Generation Y (1982 – 2003)	25 to 39 24 and under	Optimists, cooperative, team players, trusting, accepting of authority, rule-followers, smart, civic-minded, special, sheltered, confident, achieving, pressured, conventional

Notes: Table reproduced from Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley (2010) but based on descriptors from Strauss and Howe (1991) and Howe and Strauss (2000)

Generational differences

Empirical research on generational differences is mixed. Some studies indicate that there are differences in work attitudes and values amongst generational cohorts. A review of the literature on generational differences by Twenge (2010) provides several studies, both time-lag and cross-sectional studies, identifying how generations differ from one another. For example, Smola and Sutton's (2002) time-lag study looks at work values across generations, comparing their 1999 data to a previous study in 1974. Their study reports a significant difference in work values between Generation X and Baby Boomers, such that Generation X was "less loyal to the company and more 'me' oriented" than

Baby Boomers (pg. 378). Additionally, Kowske, Rasch, and Wiley (2010) report statistically significant differences, although small effect sizes, in work attitudes regarding satisfaction with work, satisfaction with pay, and turnover intentions. The implications of their study, although acknowledging the presence of generational differences, does not endorse implementing specialty programs specifically for Millennials, as the costs of program implementation might outweigh the end benefits. Other studies outside of the United States also suggest generational differences across organizational variables. Benson and Brown (2011) looked at the differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X Australian public sector research employees in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and willingness to quit. Their results suggest that Baby Boomers have significantly higher job satisfaction and lower willingness to quit than Generation X. Additionally, Benson and Brown (2011) identified different antecedents for job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and willingness to quit, between the two cohorts that support the common stereotypes seen in popular press. Specifically, their study reports that "supervisor support was important to Boomers, while a lack of co-worker support was related to a higher willingness to quit of GenXers" (Benson & Brown, 2011, pg. 1858).

Generational differences in nursing population

There are four generational cohorts working in the nursing industry: Traditionalists (Silent), Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials (Generation Y) (Boychuk Duchscher and Cowin, 2004). The nursing literature suggests that there are differences amongst generational cohorts in terms of thoughts, behaviors, and work approach. In addition to reporting differences, these articles also provide some sort of

guidance for dealing with potential areas of conflict, recruitment, and retention strategies for hospitals (e.g. Boychuk Duchscher and Cowin, 2004). Boychuk Duchscher and Cowin (2004) provides a thorough description of each generational cohort, citing potential problem areas for hospitals, as well as differences in work values and needs. However, much of the information used in the article pulls from sources that use anecdotal evidence to support claims. There continues to be a lack of empirical research on generational differences in the nursing industry.

Researchers outside of the United States report generational differences in the nursing industry across several organizational factors. For example, Leiter, Jackson, and Shaughnessy (2009) report that Canadian Generation X nurses experience their work life as less consistent with their personal values and therefore, experience more distress than their Baby Boomer counterparts. A follow up study supports these results, indicating that Generation X nurses experience greater distress and incivility than Baby Boomers (Leiter, Price, & Spence Lashinger, 2010). Additionally, Wilson, Squires, Widger, Cranley, and Tourangeau (2008) report significant differences in job satisfaction and components of job satisfaction between Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials (Generation Y) Canadian nurses. Baby Boomers report higher levels of overall job satisfaction than Generation X and Y nurses, as well as higher levels of job satisfaction in terms of pay and benefits, scheduling, professional opportunities, praise and recognition, and control and responsibility (Wilson et al., 2008). In regards to work climate, Farag, Tullai-McGuinness, and Anthony (2009) suggests that perceptions of unit climate in regards to warmth and belonging, and administrative support, were lower for Generation X nurses than Baby Boomers. Much of the research on generational differences examines

Baby Boomers and Generation X, often citing the lack of number of participation from Traditionalists and Millennials.

Rejection of generational differences

However, there is also reason to be skeptical about the presence of generational differences. A meta-analysis concludes that "meaningful differences among generations probably do not exist on work-related variables" and that the differences that are reported in studies are "likely attributable to factors other than generational membership", such as age and/or period effects (Costanza et al., 2010, pg. 375). Parry and Urwin's (2011) review of the literature criticizes previous studies that support generational differences, arguing that these studies lack credibility due to inconsistencies in methodologies, and conceptualizations of generations and generational differences. For example, Parry and Urwin (2011) highlight the limitations of the use of cross-sectional research designs for generational differences, as these studies make it impossible to distinguish whether the findings are due to age or maturation effects. Additionally, the authors argue that conclusions about generational differences from cross-sectional studies are mixed, and/or contradict popular stereotypes. Supporting previous empirical reviews, Parry and Urwin (2011) call for the use of time-lag and longitudinal studies in order to fully understand whether generational differences are due to age or generational cohort. Therefore, conclusions deriving from existing research on generational differences are at best, ambiguous.

Current study

The idea underlying generational differences states that shared experiences at key developmental points influences the unique characteristics, such as the values and

attitudes, associated with each generational cohort (Mannheim, 1952; Ryder, 1965). Much of the recent research on generational differences focuses on Baby Boomers and Generation X. This stems from the data limitations regarding Traditionalists and Millennials. With the surge of Millennials entering the workforce today, data is beginning to be more readily available for this group. Furthermore, much of the information provided through popular press and media are based on anecdotal or subjective data. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the empirical literature on generational differences, by examining whether differences in the values placed on certain organizational factors exist across generational cohorts. Furthermore, this study will contribute information about Millennials entering the workforce, as previous generational research focused more so on Baby Boomers and Generation X. We will examine whether the relative importance of organizational justice, growth opportunities, and recognition in predicting turnover intentions differ between generational cohorts. By examining these differences, hospitals will be able to determine if specific recruitment and retention strategies are necessary to develop for each generational cohort.

As the research indicates, findings on generational differences are mixed, and there are also a limited number of empirical studies available.

Hypothesis 1. Distributive justice, procedural justice, growth opportunities, and recognition are significant predictors of turnover intention.

Hypothesis 2. There are age group differences across each organizational factor.

Research question 1. What is the relative importance of each organizational factor for each age group?

Method

Participants and Procedure. 6720 employees from one healthcare system within a large healthcare organization in the United States completed an online employee opinion survey in the spring of 2011. The survey included nine items addressing perceptions of distributive justice, procedural justice, growth opportunities, and recognition. Employees who self-identified as a Registered Nurse-Direct Patient Care, either full-time or part-time job status, were included in the final sample. The final sample included 1667 employees. Women made up 92.5% of the sample. Information of age groups and tenure are provided in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2

Composition of age group

Age group	Generational cohort	N	Percent of sample
24 and under	Millennials	119	7.1
25 to 39	Millennials & Generation X	721	43.3
40 to 59	Generation X & Baby Boomers	739	44.3
60 and older	Baby Boomers & Traditionalists	67	4.0

Table 3

Composition of tenure

Tenure	N	Percent of sample
Less than 1 year	216	13.0
1 to less than 3 years	212	12.7
3 to less than 5 years	204	12.2
5 to less than 9 years	341	20.5
9 to less than 20 years	414	25.0
20 years or more	272	16.3

Measures

Demographics. Participants were asked to complete demographic questions assessing age, gender, job title, tenure, and race.

Organizational Justice

Distributive Justice. Two items assessing distributive justice were completed by employees: "I am paid fairly for the work I do" and "Compared to similar organizations in the community, I am satisfied with my benefit package."

Procedural Justice. Three items assessing procedural justice were completed by employees: "There is reasonable consistency between departments in how Human Resources/Personnel policies are administered/followed", "Senior management responds to my problems in a fair manner", and "Job promotions in this organization are fair and objective."

Recognition. Two items assessing recognition were completed by employees: "My supervisor lets associates know when they have done a good job" and "Associates here receive recognition for a job well done."

Growth Opportunities. Two items assessing growth opportunities were completed by employees. Items were: "This organization provides me the opportunity to improve my professional knowledge and job skills" and "My job gives me an opportunity to do the things I do best."

Turnover intention. One item assessing turnover intention was completed by employees. The item states: "I have thought of resigning in the last six months."

All items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5(Strongly agree).

Reasons for turnover intentions. One item assessing reasons for turnover intentions was completed by employees. The item states: "The following best describes

the reason why I have thought of resigning." Response options for this item were: My

supervisor/manager, Pay, Benefits, Career advancement, and Other reason.

      Age group and generational cohort. Age group was used as a proxy for

generational cohort membership. Data to determine membership of generational cohort

(i.e. birth years of participants) was not available. However, Strauss and Howe's (1991)

generational taxonomy will be used to help interpret results.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Principal components analysis. A principal components analysis using varimax rotation on the survey items identified as components of the main study variables revealed four significant factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00. However, two of the original items in question did not load onto a factor. The first factor included three items, which represented perceptions of procedural justice. The second factor included two items that reflected perceptions of recognition. The third factor included two items, which represented perceptions of distributive justice. The fourth factor included two items that reflected perceptions of growth opportunities. See Table 4 for factor loadings and item breakdown.

Table 4

Factor loadings based on a principal components analysis with a varimax rotation for nine items from the employee opinion survey

	1	2	3	4
There is reasonable consistency between departments in how Human Resources/Personnel policies are administered/followed.	0.82			
Senior management responds to my problems in a fair manner.	0.74			
Job promotions in this organization are fair and objective.	0.67			
My supervisor lets associates know when they have done a good job.		0.89		
Associates here receive recognition for a job well done.		0.85		
I am paid fairly for the work I do.			0.86	
Compared to similar organizations in the community, I am satisfied with my benefit package.			0.80	
This organization provides me the opportunity to improve my professional knowledge and job skills.				0.85
My job gives me an opportunity to do the things I do best.				0.70

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and ranges) for the main study variables are provided in Table 4. Reliabilities of each subscale range from 0.66 to 0.90 and are also provided in Table 5. Overall, employees reported moderate levels of recognition (*M*=3.65), procedural justice (*M*=3.38), and distributive justice (*M*=3.16), and fairly higher levels of growth opportunities (*M*=3.98). Additionally, relatively low levels of turnover intentions (*M*=2.62) were reported. Correlations between the main study variables are in Table 6.

Table 5

Descriptive statistics for main study variables

	M	SD	Alpha	Range
Recognition	3.65	1.03	0.90	1.00 – 5.00
Growth Opportunities	3.98	0.72	0.66	1.00 – 5.00
Procedural Justice	3.38	0.76	0.77	1.00 – 5.00
Distributive Justice	3.16	0.94	0.67	1.00 – 5.00
Turnover Intention (Q9)	2.62	1.37	1 item	1.00 – 5.00

Table 6

Intercorrelations between main study variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Recognition	1	0.54*	0.61*	0.33*	-0.46*
2. Growth Opportunities		1	0.57*	0.39*	-0.43*
3. Procedural Justice			1	0.45*	-0.43*
4. Distributive Justice				1	-0.29*
5. Turnover Intention					1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis that recognition, growth opportunities, procedural justice, and distributive justice are significant predictors of turnover intention. The overall model was significant, $R^2=.28$, $F(4,1612)=155.95$, $p<.001$. Results indicated that recognition ($\beta = -0.25$, $p<.001$), growth opportunities ($\beta = -0.19$, $p<.001$), procedural justice ($\beta = -0.14$, $p<.001$), and distributive justice ($\beta = -0.08$, $p<.01$) significantly predicted turnover intentions.

Additionally, Table 7 provides the relative weights of each predictor in the model to turnover intentions. Relative weights provide each of the predictor's contribution to the model's total variance, or how much of the model's variance is explained by each predictor. The analysis allows the partitioning of shared variance among the predictors (Tonidandel, LeBreton, & Johnson, 2009) and thus, useful when considering the practicality of each predictor (Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2011). Results indicate that

perceptions of recognition account for 35.4% of the model's variance, growth

opportunities account for 28.4%, procedural justice for 25.3%, and distributive justice for

11.0%. See Table 6 for raw weights.

Table 7

Relative importance of organizational factors to turnover intentions

| | Turnover intentions | |
	RW	RW%
Recognition	0.10	35.4
Growth opportunities	0.08	28.4
Procedural Justice	0.07	25.3
Distributive Justice	0.03	11.0
R^2	0.28	100

Hypothesis 1a. Multiple regression analyses were conducted for each age group

to determine the relationship of the proposed predictors and turnover intentions.

24 and under group. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the

hypothesis that recognition, growth opportunities, procedural justice, and distributive

justice are significant predictors of turnover intention. The final model was significant,

R^2=0.25, $F(1,116) = 38.33$, $p<.001$. Results indicated that recognition ($\beta = -0.50$, $p<.001$)

was the only significant predictor of turnover intentions.

25 to 39 age group. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the

hypothesis that recognition, growth opportunities, procedural justice, and distributive

justice are significant predictors of turnover intention. The overall model was significant,

R^2=0.28, $F(4,697) = 66.70$, $p<.001$. Results indicated that recognition ($\beta = -0.27$,

$p<.001$), growth opportunities ($\beta = -0.18$, $p<.001$), procedural justice ($\beta = -0.09$, $p<.05$),

and distributive justice ($\beta = -0.11$, $p<.01$) were significant predictors of turnover

intentions for nurses in this age group.

40 to 59 age group. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the hypothesis that recognition, growth opportunities, procedural justice, and distributive justice are significant predictors of turnover intention. The final model was significant R^2 = 0.27, $F(3,710)$ = 86.85, $p<.001$. Results indicated that growth opportunities (β = -0.22, $p<.001$), recognition (β = -0.19, $p<.001$), and procedural justice (β = -0.19, $p<.001$) were significant predictors of turnover intentions for nurses in this age group.

60 and older age group. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the hypothesis that recognition, growth opportunities, procedural justice, and distributive justice are significant predictors of turnover intention. The final model was significant, R^2 = 0.44, $F(1,64)$ = 50.77, $p<.001$. Results indicated that recognition (β = -0.67, $p<.001$) was the only significant predictor of turnover intention for nurses in this age group.

Hypothesis 2. One-way ANOVAs were conducted to test whether there were differences in perceptions of recognition, growth opportunities, procedural justice, and distributive justice across age groups.

Recognition. There was no significant age group differences in perceptions of recognition, $F(3,1639)$ = 0.57, $p = n.s.$

Growth opportunities. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated; therefore, the Welch *F*-ration is reported. There was a significant age group difference in perceptions of growth opportunities, $F(3,233.10)$ = 6.18, $p<.001$. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 8. Post hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell test revealed that perceptions of growth opportunities for nurses in the 24 and under age group were significantly higher than for nurses in the 25 to 29 age group and the 40 to 59 age group, but not for nurses in the 60 and older age group.

Procedural Justice. There was a significant age group difference in perceptions of procedural justice, $F(3,1602) = 8.61$, $p<.001$. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 8. Post hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell test revealed that perceptions of procedural justice for nurses in the 40 to 59 age group were significantly lower than for nurses in the 24 and under age group and for the 25 to 39 age group, but not from the 60 and older age group.

Distributive Justice. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated; therefore, the Welch *F*-ratio is reported. There was a significant age group difference in perceptions of distributive justice, $F(3, 230.57) = 25.64$, $p<.001$. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 8. Post hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell test revealed that perceptions of distributive justice were significantly lower for nurses in the 25 to 39 age group than the other three age groups. Additionally, perceptions of distributive justice were significantly lower for nurses in the 40 to 59 age group compared to the 24 and under age group the 60 and older age group.

Table 8

Predictors of turnover intentions across age groups

Predictors	Age group				
	24 and under	25 to 39	40 to 59	60 and older	*F*
Recognition	3.55	3.66	3.65	3.74	0.55
	(1.01)	(1.02)	(1.04)	(1.05)	
Growth Opportunities	4.20	3.99	3.95	3.95	6.18*
	(0.56)	(0.68)	(0.77)	(0.69)	
Procedural Justice	3.62	3.43	3.29	3.51	8.61*
	(0.72)	(0.72)	(0.78)	(0.80)	
Distributive Justicce	3.49	2.97	3.25	3.66	25.64*
	(0.85)	(0.96)	(0.90)	(0.81)	

*Significant at 0.001 level

Hypothesis 3. Relative weights analyses were conducted for the 25 to 39 age group, and the 40 to 59 age group to test the relative importance of organizational factors

to turnover intentions. Relative weights analysis was not conducted for the 24 and under and 60 and older age groups as there was only one significant predictor of turnover intentions. Table 9 provides the relative weights of the significant predictors of turnover intentions for the 25 to 39 age group. Table 10 provides the relative weights of the significant predictors of turnover intentions for the 40 to 59 age group. For the 25 to 39 age group, perceptions of recognition contributed 37.9% of the model's variance, growth opportunities contributed 26.9%, procedural justice contributed 20.7%, and distributive justice contributed the least with 14.5%. However, for the 40 to 59 age group, growth opportunities contributed the most to the model's variance with 35.0%, while procedural justice and recognition explained fairly similar variance of the model.

Table 9

Relative importance of organizational factors to turnover intentions

	25 to 39 age group	
	RW	RW%
Recognition	0.11	37.9
Growth opportunities	0.07	26.9
Procedural Justice	0.06	20.7
Distributive Justice	0.04	14.5
R^2	0.28	100

Table 10

Relative importance of organizational factors to turnover intentions

	40 to 59 age group	
	RW	RW%
Recognition	0.09	32.2
Growth opportunities	0.09	35.0
Procedural Justice	0.09	32.7
R^2	0.27	100

Additional analyses

To further analyze turnover intention, this study also examined the reasons for turnover intentions. A chi square test was performed to determine if reasons for turnover

intentions were distributed differently across age groups. The 60 and older age group was

excluded from this analysis due to the small sample size of the group. Additionally, the

fifth response option for reasons for turnover intentions, "Other reason" was removed to

determine the significance of the distribution of the specific reasons with age groups. The

test indicated a significant difference, $\chi^2(6, N=329)=37.29$, $p<.001$, such that nurses 24

and under and 40 to 59 cited the supervisor/manager as the primary reason for turnover

intentions, while nurses 25 to 39 cited pay.

Table 11

Crosstabulation of age group and reasons for turnover intention

	My supervisor/manager	Pay	Benefits	Career Advancement	Total
24 and under	9 40.9%	5 22.7%	0 0.0%	8 36.4%	22 100.0%
25 – 39	34 20.7%	68 41.5%	15 9.1%	47 28.7%	164 100.0%
40 -59	66 46.2%	41 28.7%	20 14.0%	16 11.2%	143 100.0%
Total	109 33.1%	114 34.7%	35 10.6%	71 21.6%	329 100.0%

2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.34.

Furthermore, one-way ANOVAs were conducted to test whether there were

differences in reasons for turnover intention across perceptions of recognition, growth

opportunities, procedural justice, and distributive justice. See Table 12 for means and

standard deviations.

Recognition. There was a significant difference in reasons for turnover intentions

for perceptions of recognition, $F(4, 695) = 28.94$, $p<.001$. Post hoc comparisons using the

Games-Howell test revealed that perceptions of recognition were significantly lower for

nurses who indicated that the supervisor/manager was the reason for turnover intentions

compared to the other four reasons.

Growth opportunities. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated; therefore, the Welch *F*-ratio is reported. There was a significant effect of reasons for turnover intentions on perceptions of growth opportunities, $F(4, 164.74) = 6.10$, $p<.001$. Post hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell test revealed that perceptions of growth opportunities were significantly lower for nurses who indicated that the supervisor/manager was the reason for turnover intentions compared to pay, career advancement, and other reasons, but not significantly lower for benefits.

Procedural Justice. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated; therefore, the Welch *F*-ratio is reported. There was a significant effect of reasons for turnover intentions on perceptions of procedural justice, $F(4, 157.53) = 13.25$, $p<.001$. Post hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell test revealed that perceptions of procedural justice were significantly lower for nurses who indicated that the supervisor/manager was the reason for turnover intentions compared to the other four reasons.

Distributive Justice. There was a significant effect of reasons for turnover intentions on perceptions of distributive justice, $F(4, 696) = 30.77$, $p<.001$. Post hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell test revealed that perceptions of distributive justice were significantly lower for nurses who indicated that pay was the reason for turnover intentions compared to the other reasons (supervisor/manager, career advancement, and other); it was not significantly different from benefits). Additionally, perceptions of distributive justice was significantly lower for nurses who indicated that benefits was the reason for turnover intentions compared to supervisor/manager, career advancement, and other; it was not significantly different from pay.

Table 12

Reasons for turnover intentions across organizational factors

Predictors	Reasons for turnover intentions					*F*
	My supervisor/manager	Pay	Benefits	Career advancement	Other reason	
Recognition	2.28	3.36	3.42	3.35	3.34	28.94*
	(1.01)	(1.07)	(0.82)	(0.95)	(0.94)	
Growth Opportunities	3.35	3.65	3.74	3.82	3.71	6.10*
	(0.80)	(0.76)	(0.79)	(0.59)	(0.73)	
Procedural Justice	2.58	3.06	3.10	3.24	3.15	13.25*
	(0.79)	(0.79)	(0.60)	(0.70)	(0.64)	
Distributive Justice	2.89	2.22	2.19	3.00	3.14	30.77*
	(0.93)	(0.78)	(0.68)	(0.88)	(0.90)	

*Significant at the 0.001 level

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the literature on generational differences as they relate to turnover intentions. Specifically, this study examined whether proposed generational differences exist in perceptions of distributive justice, procedural justice, growth opportunities, and recognition and whether there are different models for predicting turnover intentions across generations. Our results indicate that statistically, there are significant differences across these perceptions; however, these differences are quite small, suggesting that generations are more similar than different.

Summary of Findings

Previous studies on generational differences acknowledge that there are statistically significant differences across generations regarding work attitudes and values (e.g Benson & Brown, 2011; Kowske et al., 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002). However, these studies also report small effect sizes. Our findings provide support to these previous studies, and acknowledge that there are some statistically significant differences in predictors of turnover intention and in perceptions of these organizational factors across generations. Furthermore, our results also indicate that there are differences in the importance/value of each organizational factor within generational cohorts. Nonetheless, these differences are quite small. These significant differences in this study may be attributed in part to the large sample size, and may overstate the practical significance of the relationships.

Our results indicate that recognition, growth opportunities, procedural justice, and distributive justice are significant predictors of turnover intentions across generations. This is consistent with previous studies that illustrate a negative relationship of these

antecedents to turnover intentions (e.g. Daileyl & Kirk, 1992; Davidson et al., 1997; Hendrix et al., 1998; Paré & Tremblay, 2007). We can expect nurses who receive more recognition and growth opportunities, and perceive fairness in terms of how decisions are made, to have lower intentions to turnover. Additionally, it appears that distributive justice does not account for much of the variance in the model, which implies that it does not hold much practical value for predicting turnover intentions. Perception of distributive justice may stem from the fact that employees of this particular organization receive a standardized benefits package, and have the option to tailor the benefits package to their needs. Perhaps the standardization of the benefits package, the availability of the package to employees, and the choice to tailor the package conveys fairness in the outcome. The organization will likely benefit from focusing on improving perceptions of recognition, growth opportunities, and procedural justice, as these factors hold more value to turnover intentions. Further implications on the value of these factors are discussed later.

In the current study, age group served as a proxy for generational membership. Using Strauss and Howe's (1991) generational taxonomy, the 24 and under group would represent Millennials. The 25 to 39 group was a combination of Millennials and Generation Xers; however, we assume that there are more Generation Xers than Millennials in this group because of the larger range of birth years attributed to Generation Xers, and therefore, would drive the results. The 40 to 59 age group was a combination of Generation Xers and Baby Boomers; it would be difficult to determine which of these two generational cohorts would be the driver of the results observed from this group, as the range of birth years are fairly close to one another (Generation Xers

have a 10 year range; Baby Boomers have an 8 year range). Finally, the 60 and older age group would represent Baby Boomers and Traditionalists.

When examining the significant predictors of turnover intentions for each generational cohort, it appears that there are differences across generations. For Millennials, perceptions of recognition were the only significant predictor, and therefore these perceptions appear to be more valued by that cohort than growth opportunities, procedural justice, and distributive justice. This is consistent with popular beliefs regarding how much Millennials value recognition at work (Hill, 2002 as cited in Boychuk et al., 2004).

All four organizational factors are significant predictors of turnover intentions for the mixed Millennial/Generation X cohort. This mixed cohort also appears to value recognition more than the other factors. However, the differences in value between recognition, growth opportunities, and procedural justice are fairly small.

Perceptions of growth opportunities, recognition, and procedural justice were significant predictors of turnover intentions for the 40 to 59 age group, comprised of both Generation Xers and Baby Boomers. Additionally, the relative value of the three predictors were the same. The lack of differences in value of these predictors for Generation Xers and Baby Boomers may be explained by the fairly high positive correlations of the recognition and growth opportunities subscales to the procedural justice subscale. This implies that as perceptions of procedural justice (fairness of the process) increases, perceptions of recognition and growth opportunities also increase, such that the process of recognizing employees and providing opportunities for growth are perceived as fair. These results are consistent with Benson and Brown's (2011) study,

which identified similar antecedents for willingness to quit between Generation Xers and Baby Boomers. Benson and Brown (2011) identified pay level satisfaction, promotional opportunities, role conflict, and supervisor support as important predictors of willingness to quit for both Generation X and Baby Boomers, while co-worker support as an additional important predictor for Generation X..

Additionally, our results also indicate that there are statistically significant differences of perceptions of recognition, growth opportunities, procedural justice, and distributive justices across generations. However, these differences are small, and may not warrant practical significance. These results are consistent with Finegold, Mohrman, and Spreitzer's (2002) study on age group differences across attitudinal commitment and willingness to change organizations, as well as Kowske et al.'s (2010) study on generational differences across work attitudes. Both studies found statistically significant differences across groups, but relatively small effect sizes, which questions the practicality of the results. In terms of the current results, perceptions of growth opportunities were rated fairly high across all four groups, with Millennials providing the highest mean. This may be explained by the notion that Millinnials are just beginning their nursing career, and are provided with different responsibilities and tasks that inherently promote growth. Moderate levels of procedural justice were reported across groups. However, the difference in the means across groups is fairly small, with Generation Xers and Baby Boomers providing the lower means. Furthermore, Generation Xers and Baby Boomers also provided lower ratings for distributive justice, with Generation Xers providing the lowest rating.

Our additional analyses on turnover intentions indicate that much is unknown about reasons for turnover intentions. Approximately half of those who indicated they were thinking about leaving the organization cited the reason "other" instead of one of the reasons provided on the survey (supervisor/manager, pay, benefits, and career advancement). In order to gain a better insight on reasons for turnover intention, the organization should provide additional response options or an open-ended response. Furthermore, it appears that perceptions of recognition, growth opportunities, and procedural justice are rated lower when the supervisor/manager is provided as the reason for turnover intention. This highlights the importance of a supervisor/manager's relationship with the employee, such that if the employee does not receive recognition or support for growth opportunities, or perceives injustice, the supervisor/manager is believed to be at fault. Not surprisingly, if nurses have a low perception of distributive justice, pay and benefits will be cited as the reason for turnover intentions, because these two dimensions are closely associated to distributive justice.

The overall pattern of results suggests that even though there are statistically significant differences across generations, the small effect size does not warrant practical significance. It appears that generations are more similar than different. Therefore, rather than tailoring programs specifically to generations, it would be best for the organization to provide similar opportunities across groups.

Limitations and future directions

There are several limitations to this study. The first limitation stems from the assumptions made about generations using age groups. The study did not have an accurate representation of each generational cohort, which made it challenging to

interpret results. Furthermore, because we do not know the true composition of each generational group sample, results from the study should be interpreted with caution. Similar to previous generational studies in the nursing industry (i.e. Leiter et al., 2009; Farag et al., 2009), the sample for this study is predominately female. This is representative of the gender composition in the nursing/patient care occupations. Additionally, two of the subscales, growth opportunities and distributed justice, have reliabilities below 0.7, and may be questionable, especially given that both subscales only contain two items. To improve the reliability of the subscales, additional items that measure the factors should be included. Furthermore, recognition and growth opportunities correlated with procedural justice, which may indicate that the scales may measure a common underlying factor. Lastly, in terms of the measurements of this study, turnover intentions also served as a proxy for measuring turnover. Previous studies on turnover suggest that turnover intentions is one of the strongest predictors of actual turnover and accounts for $10 - 15\%$ of the variance (i.e. Griffeth et al, 2000; Hendrix et al., 1998). Future studies should utilize actual turnover data in order to gain a better understanding of the generational differences.

The cross-sectional design of the study places limits on the interpretation of our results. One of the major issues with using a cross-sectional design for generational and age effects studies, is the difficulty in identifying which dimension accounts for our results. Therefore, a longitudinal study would be best for these types of research, and can resolve this issue, allowing the researcher to control for one of the dimensions. This study also has limited generalizability due to our U.S. sample. Generational research cautions

extending results to other countries or cultures, as those countries or cultures define generations differently as well as experience different events.

Our findings indicate small but significant differences between generations. Future studies on generations and age should strive for study designs that control for one of the dimensions, such that long-term data collection is planned. Additionally, other organizational variables, and items should be added to existing subscales to enhance their measurement properties.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the literature on generational research and provide a better understanding of the proposed generational differences. This study provides support to previous research that claims small but significant generational differences. The small effect size of these differences do not warrant programs tailored specifically for each generational cohort, as the cost of development and implement of these types of programs may exceed the actual benefits. Although, similar to other generational research, this study fails to distinguish whether the differences stem from generational membership or age effect.

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