Quantitative Integrative Review of Work-Related Generational Differences Among Nurses From Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials

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Background

- The current American registered nurse workforce is comprised of around 8% Veterans, 38.7% Baby Boomers, 41.9% Generation X, and 19.4% Millennials (Budden, Moulton, Harper, Brunell, & Smiley, 2016).
- Generational differences in work-related values, attitudes, and ethic among nurses can:
  - influence workplace relationships and lead to workplace incivility and conflicts.
  - lead to counterproductive behaviors and decreased job satisfaction and commitment.
  - disrupt patient care and jeopardize patient safety, negatively affect the physical and psychological well-being of nurses, lead to burnout and turnover, and increase unnecessary costs to the organization.

Statement of the problem

Generational diversity in the workplace brings unique experiences and insights to the table in work teams. However, if not addressed adequately, this diversity may create challenges in the workplace and lead to conflicts.

Purpose

To examine and analyze the available results of quantitative research relevant to the work-related generational differences among nurses, specifically studies that included the three nursing generations of Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials.

Methods

3,037 Records identified through database searching
  PubMed (n = 59)
  CINAHL (n = 67)
  MEDLINE (n = 84)
  ProQuest Nursing and Allied Health Source (n = 2,827)

Search terms:
  • "generational differences AND nurses."
  • "multigenerational AND nursing."

Records after duplicates removed and titles, abstracts, and methods sections were screened for inclusion and exclusion criteria (n = 18)

Additional records identified through ancestry search within the reference lists of the articles (n = 2)

Studies included in quantitative IR (n = 20)

Flow chart of Quantitative Research IR on Generational Differences Among Nurses

Results

Summary of Reported Generational Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High commitment</td>
<td>High commitment</td>
<td>Mixed results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low value for challenges</td>
<td>High value for challenges</td>
<td>High value for challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low interest in multiple skill and expertise</td>
<td>High interest in multiple skill and expertise</td>
<td>High interest in multiple skill and expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High value for the centrality of work and proper use of time at work</td>
<td>High value for self-reliance and leisure activities</td>
<td>High value for leisure activities, hard work, and delay of gratification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High job satisfaction</td>
<td>High job satisfaction</td>
<td>Low job satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low perceived stress and burnout</td>
<td>Low perceived stress and burnout</td>
<td>High perceived stress and burnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low turnover intention</td>
<td>Low turnover intention</td>
<td>High turnover intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divergent learners (concrete experience and reflective observations)</td>
<td>Divergent learners (concrete experience and reflective observations)</td>
<td>Assimilator learners (reflective observations and abstract concepts)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implications for nursing

- Understanding the variations in work-related values, attitudes, and needs among nurses from different generations can assist nursing educators, leaders, and policy makers in developing practical strategies to enhance work engagement, improve job satisfaction, reduce turnover, and enhance the quality of care and patient safety and outcomes.
- To better understand the generational variances further research is needed with larger samples of nurses from all relevant cohorts representing nurses from different settings and different geographical locations.
- Future studies are also warranted to examine the relationship between the generational differences among nurses and patient outcomes.

Conclusion

This integrative review provided a reflection of the quantitative empirical evidence about the existing work-related generational differences among nurses.

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