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LAWRENCE S. BLOOMBERG
FACULTY OF NURSING
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Does job satisfaction among nurses differ based on age?

What is this research about?

Globally there is an increasing shortage of registered nurses (RNs). The problem is complicated by the increasing age of nurses, a large proportion of nurses planning to retire before age of 65, and a decreased number of admission seats in nursing programs. In addition, 20% of new graduates are likely of leave the profession within 3 years of graduating. As a result, it is important that employers develop effective strategies to retain nurses.

Existing research has found that job satisfaction influences the desire of nurses to remain at their current job. There are three generations of nurses in Ontario who have different values, perceptions and attitudes: Generation Y, Generation X and Baby Boomers. A fourth generation, Veterans, have all surpassed the normal age of retirement of 65 years.

The purpose of this study was to explore differences in job satisfaction between generations. Understanding generational differences in job satisfaction will assist

employers in developing retention strategies targeted to different age groups.

What you need to know:

Job satisfaction varies by generation. This study found that younger generations of nurses in acute care environments are less satisfied with their work than older generations. In order to promote retention of younger generations, employers and nurse leaders must consider strategies tailored to specific generations in order to increase job satisfaction.

What did the researchers do?

The researchers analyzed data from the 2003 Ontario Nurse Survey on 6,541 RNs in acute care hospitals. Participants were categorized as Baby Boomers, Generation X or Generation Y based on birth year. This study does not include the veteran cohort because this group is preparing for retirement. Job satisfaction was



Research

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measured using the McCloskey Mueller Satisfaction Scale (MMSS). Statistical analysis was used to explore generational differences for overall and specific satisfaction components.

What did the researchers find?

The researchers found statistically significant differences across generations for overall job satisfaction and five specific job satisfaction components.

- Baby Boomers reported higher rates of overall job satisfaction than younger generations.
- Baby Boomers also reported higher rates of satisfaction with pay and benefits and with scheduling than younger generations.
- Baby Boomers were more satisfied than Generation X nurses with professional opportunities, praise and recognition, and control and responsibility.
- There were no significant differences between Generation X and Generation Y nurses for overall job satisfaction or for any component of job satisfaction.

These findings indicate that acute care organizations may face challenges retaining younger nurses. Employers should try to improve job satisfaction for younger nurses to promote retention.

How can you use this research?

Employers and nurse leaders may use a range of strategies to increase job satisfaction among younger nurses such as:

- Providing younger nurses the opportunity to self-schedule hours within collective agreement terms;

- Promoting job sharing;
- Providing and supporting educational or career-development opportunities;
- Establishing formal recognition programs that promote praise and recognition of nurses' work, such as awards, staff appreciation events and scholarships;
- Providing opportunities for younger generations of nurses to participate in decision-making. This could involve the creation of a shared governance model to increase nurses' sense of control and empowerment.

Original Article:

To learn more about this study, we invite you to read the original research article:

Wilson, R., Squires, M., Widger, K., Cranley, L, & Tourangeau, A. (2008). Job satisfaction among a multigenerational nursing workforce. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 16, 716-723.

About the Researcher

Ann Tourangeau is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Toronto, and an adjunct scientist at ICES. tourangeau.research@utoronto.ca

Keywords

Generation, job satisfaction, nurse, nursing management, survey, work environment
