The Changing Face in the Workplace: The Arrival of the Millennials

Peggy Lee, EdD, MS, RN
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR, USA
Thomas Kippenbrock, EdD, MSN, RN
Nursing, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR, USA
Jan Emory, MSN, PhD, RN, CNE
Eleanor Mann School of Nursing, University of Arkansas - Fayetteville, Fayetteville, AR, USA

The Changing Face in the Workplace: The Arrival of the Millennials

Today's nursing workforce represents the most diverse group of multi-generational workers than any other time in history. This multi-generational diversity has created many opportunities and challenges. These opportunities and challenges arise from the differences found in each generation's worker character traits, styles and preferences working in teams, methods of communication, and organizational commitment.

The three generations representing the majority of the nursing workforce today are baby boomers, generation x, and millennials (also known as gen y, nesters, and echo boomers). During the first quarter of 2015, the Pew Research Center noted that millennials had surpassed generation x as the most represented generation in the workforce in the United States. Since 2015 projections indicate that the number of millennial workers will increase as the baby boomer generation reaches retirement. In 2015 the baby boomers accounted for 75.4 million in the total population in comparison to the millennials who accounted for 83.1 million or one-quarter of the population. So by 2020 the millennials will account for one in three adults. As the millennials graduate from college the number of millennial workers in the workforce will increase. Three-quarters of the workforce in 2025 will be millennials.

In the United States baby boomers, born 1941-1960, are the largest generation in the American history. These individuals experienced the era of rock and roll, the space race, and women's liberation. These events influenced their generational traits, which tends to be optimistic, idealistic and driven. Baby boomers are able to make an impact in the societies they live, making them idealistic and driven. For them, work and personal sacrifice equals financial success.

Generation x (Gen xers) members born 1961-1976, were influenced by very different events. These members were born into a time when both parents were likely in the workforce and the divorce rate doubled. Generation x group is appreciably smaller than the baby boomers generation, mainly due to easier access to birth control that provided parents the opportunity to choose the number of children in the family. These factors lead to the gen xers referred to as the "latch-key kids". During this era, the gen xers witnessed the first round of mass corporate layoffs, which in turn shaped the Gen xers work-related viewpoints. Members of this era are more skeptical, less loyal, and fiercely independent. For them, work-life balance is important.

The latest generation to enter the workforce is the millennials born 1977-1992. This generation is often grouped with the xers or the younger workers. This generation produces great differences in the workforce. The millennials are more socially minded due to the events that took place September 11, 2001. They are confident, team-oriented, and accustom to having order and structure in their lives. Workers in the millennial group are the most confident generation, as they grew up in an American school system that catered to people's self-esteem. This generation was conceived at a time when birth control and abortions were widely available yet many families chose to have fewer children, greater resources, and dedicated time to raising their children. This dedication, was often taken to the limits. Many millennial parent would hover around their children to oversee work and social activities thus the term of "helicopter parents" was created.
Each of the three generations bring value to the workplace. Boomers are the 8 to 6 workers every day. They are not in favor of remote workplaces, telecommuting or virtual office. For the boomers this creates a non-productive work environment. In contrast, the millennials are more concerned with work outcome rather the work process. Millennials struggle with work-life balance and feel that all they do is work. The discovery of PDA and technology supports the millennials work expectation. The younger generation is results-oriented and has little concern about the method used to achieve the results. They often see the boomers as resistant to new technologies and change.

In the workplace communication poses challenges between the generations. Face-to-face communication is valued by the boomers. Millennials and boomers use the most efficient form of communication. In contrast, the younger millennials favor instant messaging, text messaging and emails. They are uncomfortable talking on the phone or engaging in a face-to-face communication.

Another disparity between the generations is expectations regarding feedback. Boomers expect little feedback for a job done well, whereas millennials expect and like constant feedback. They feel more at ease and able to do the job right when given very detail instructions.

By understanding workers from each of the generations, health care organizations can leverage the differences and commonalities for success in the work environment. To prepare and utilize these variations in the nursing workforce, nurse administrators can focus on strategies to integrate these multi-generational differences to create a safe and effective environment for patient care. In addition, recognizing the influx of the millennials in the workplace creates a need to explore student’s perceptions of the workplace. By exploring and using millennials student’s perceptions, the workplace can adapt to understanding and providing a satisfying environment for the population. To meet the challenges and capitalize on opportunities at present and in the future, it is imperative to understand and accommodate the multi-generational workforce.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to analyze perceptions of students who are in the Millennial Generation that are entering the workforce within the next four months. For this study, senior level nursing students at two schools of nursing who are in the Millennial generation will complete two survey inventories, the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale and the Personality Inventory.

Tools

The Minnesota Job Satisfaction Scale will be used to measure intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction components. The survey consists of 20 items that measure intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction. Intrinsic job satisfaction indicators indicate how people feel about the nature of the job task. In contrast, extrinsic job satisfaction indicators signify how people feel about the aspects of the work situation. The Likert scale ranges from 1-5 with 1=not satisfied, 2=somewhat satisfied, 3=satisfied, 4= very satisfied, and 5=extremely satisfied (Buitendach, J.H. & Rothmann, S., 2009). The Big Five Personality Test will be used to gain insight into how the millennials react in different situation. The five traits that are evaluated are: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The test is comprised of 120 statements. A Likert scale is used to access the responses with –strongly disagree, -=disagree, -=neutral, ++=agree, and +++=strongly agree. The data will be analyzed using chi-square test and the ANOVA analysis.

Inquiry Questions:

1. What is the relationship between work and life balance across the generations?

2. Is there a correlation between workers who are open to working in groups and those who think that it is important to work with the social environment?
3. What are the similarities and differences across generations with respect to work, attitudes, and motivation?

4. What are some similarities and differences across generations with respect to goals, values, preferences, and behaviors?

5. What are organizational behaviors, and how do they present themselves in differing generations?

---

**Title:**
The Changing Face in the Workplace: The Arrival of the Millennials

**Keywords:**
job expectations, millennials and workforce

**References:**


Powle, A. & Breda, K. (2014). Teaching the millennial nursing student: Using a “flipping the classroom” model. *Nursing and Health* 2(6), 107-114.


---

**Abstract Summary:**
The learner will discover the impact of the Millennials entering the nursing workforce. Learners will learn to understand and leverage differences and commonalities to promote success in the multi-generational work environment.

Content Outline:
I. Orientation
   A. Nursing Workforce arrival of millennials
   B. Nursing workforce is multi-generational

II. Body
   A. Main Point 1
      1. Three generations represented in the workforce
      2. Composition of the three generations over time
   B. Main Point 2
      1. Impact of the millennials in number to the workforce by 2025
      2. Composition of each of the generations by 2020
   C. Main Point 3
      1. Work characteristics of each of the generations
      2. Behavior characteristics of each of the generations
      3. Workplace communication of each of the generations
      4. Job satisfaction of each of the generations
      5. Student perceptions of the work environment of each of the generations

First Primary Presenting Author

**Primary Presenting Author**
Peggy Lee, EdD, MS, RN
University of Arkansas
Instructor
Fayetteville AR
USA

**Professional Experience:** With 39 years teaching experience in higher education. Majority of teaching has been in the baccalaureate programs for 22 years. Taught pre-nursing to senior level nursing courses Chair of 3 Nursing Programs and Coordinator of RN to BSN Areas of expertise are management/administration, community health. Member of Sigma Theta Tau since 2002; served as Awards Chair, Program Committee, Governance Committee My recent experiences have included
research interest areas in job satisfaction, recruitment and retention of nursing faculty.

**Author Summary:** Dr. Lee is a seasoned educator and administrator for over 35 years. Her background includes teaching in AD and BSN programs. Her research interest area is job satisfaction, recruitment and retention of nursing faculty.

Second Author
Thomas Kippenbrock, EdD, MSN, RN
University of Arkansas
Nursing
professor
Fayetteville AR
USA

**Professional Experience:** Sigma Theta Tau International Hospitality and Hosting Committee, co-chair Biennial Convention Delegate Panel of Visitors and Consultants Finance Committee, member Alpha Chapter Eligibility Committee, member Treasurer Finance Committee, chair Research Committee, chair Lambda Sigma Chapter, member Gamma Pi Chapter 4th Vice President Nomination Committee, chair Eta Theta Chapter President-Elect President

**Author Summary:** He written or co-authored 17 data based research articles published in peer reviewed journals. His employment in nursing higher education extents to 37 years of which 15 years were in administrative roles.

Third Author
Jan Emory, MSN, PhD, RN, CNE
University of Arkansas - Fayetteville
Eleanor Mann School of Nursing
Associate Professor
Fayetteville AR
USA


**Author Summary:** Jan Emory is currently an Associate Professor at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. Jan has served as a nurse educator for over 27 years. Her research surrounds trends and issues important to nursing education. She has a special interest in curriculum, methods of assessment and evaluation. She has presented her work at numerous national and international venues.