Adapting to a Multi-Generational Nursing Workforce

Today's nursing workforce represents the most diverse group of multi-generational workers than any other time in U.S. 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 personality traits, job satisfaction attributes and organizational commitment.

Four generations represent the multi-generational nursing workforce today. These groups include the baby boomers, generation x, generation y-millennials, and generation z. During the first quarter of 2015, the Pew Research Center noted that generation y-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 generation y-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. To further the diverse workforce, projections indicate that generation z will be the largest and most diverse workforce in future years in the U.S.

In the U.S. baby boomers, born 1941–1960, have been the largest generation in American history. Baby boomers make up 27% of the U.S. workforce and they are retiring at a rate of 10,000 per day. 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 capable 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 boomer’s 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.

Generation y-millennials were born between 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, andaccustomed 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 parents would hover around their children to oversee work and social activities thus the term of ‘helicopter parents” was created.

Generation z members are the generation who are currently in high school. This generation is predicted to be the largest generation in the workforce. This generation will be comprised of a demographic shift as the Hispanics represent a greater number in the U.S. population. This diverse group has yet to establish a clear picture of their perceptions in the work environment. This generation is more unique in that they began use of cells phones and digital technology at a very early age. For this generation, many of the traditional toys diminished as toys with technology soared. This group has a large network but not much job experience. They like to communicate by smartphone/emails and are likely to use Twitter to locate job openings.

Each of the four 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.

Title:
Adapting to a Multi-Generational Nursing Workforce

Keywords:
job satisfaction attributes, multi-generational workforce and organizational commitment

References:
Abstract Summary:
Today’s nursing workforce represents the most diverse group of multi-generational workers. These differences are noted in personality traits, commitment to organization, and job satisfaction. By understanding workers from each of the generations, healthcare leaders can leverage the differences and commonalities to establish a successful work environment.

Content Outline:
I. Introduction
   A. Impact of Multi-generational Workforce
   B. Purpose of this study
II. Generational Characteristics
   A. Generational Personality Traits
      1. Baby-boomers
      2. Generation X
      3. Generation Y-millenials
      4. Generation Z
III. Generational Characteristics
   A. Generational Job Satisfaction Attributes
      1. Baby-boomers
      2. Generation X
      3. Generation Y-millenials
      4. Generation Z
IV. Generational Characteristics
   A. Generational Organizational Commitment
      1. Baby-boomers
      2. Generation X
      3. Generation Y-millenials
      4. Generation Z
V. Conclusion
   A. Methods
   B. Results

First Primary Presenting Author

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

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

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

Teri Boyd, EdD, RN
Barnes Jewish College
Goldfarb School of Nursing
Assistant Professor
St. Louis MO
USA

Author Summary: Dr. Teri Boyd has been nursing faculty in higher education since 2000. Her areas of research interest are transition to nursing practice, student success, and QSEN.

Fourth Author

Jan Emory, PhD, MSN, 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.

Fifth Author

Ling Chen, PhD, MSPH
Washington University St. Louis
Assistant Professor
Author Summary: Dr. Chen is an Assistant Professor of Biostatistics at Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine. She joined the Division of Biostatistics in 2009. She is currently providing support and collaboration for a wide range of study design, data analysis and manuscript preparation for the Institute of Clinical and Translational Sciences (ICTS). She has been actively involved in research related to physical therapy, occupational therapy and nursing.