

Generation Effect on the Relationship between Work Engagement, Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention among US Hotel Employees

Jeongdoo Park
&

Dogan Gursoy
School of Hospitality Business Management
College of Business
Washington State University

Abstract

This study explores moderating effects of the generation on the relationships between work engagement on employees' job satisfaction and turnover intention among 742 customer contact employees in the hotel industry. A series of hierarchical and interaction plot analyses indicate that the generation is likely to have some pattern of moderating effects on the relationships between proposed work-related constructs. Moderating effects of the generation are particularly noticeable in the relationships between work engagement and turnover intention. Millennials were also found to be a more distinct cohort from Gen Xers and Baby Boomers with regard to the influence of work engagement on job satisfaction and turnover intention. Findings suggest that work engagement is especially important to retain Millennial employees.

Key Words: Generation effect, Moderating role, Work engagement, Hotel employees

Introduction

A growing body of research has examined generational differences in regard to various work-related constructs including work values, attitudes, personality traits, and expectations (e.g., Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Chen & Choi, 2008; Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Despite the prevalent beliefs about the existence of generational differences in the workplace, empirical research has reported somewhat inconsistent results (Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010). Indeed, researchers have still strived to provide more concrete evidence about generational differences around varying work-related constructs by employing more sound methodological approaches to rule out alternative explanations about the generational differences. While mainstream research has probed such similarities and dissimilarities between generations with regard to work-related constructs, a critical question has been left unanswered: are relationships between work-related constructs all invariant, regardless of the generation? What are the implications if employees of a generational cohort are more satisfied with their jobs and loyal to their organizations than those of another generation once they become engaged in their work?

It is crucial to answer these questions for two reasons. First, the answers could assist researchers to shift their focus from a simple comparison of generations in terms of their perceptions of work-related constructs to the generational effects on dynamic relationships among these constructs. Second, identifying different generational effects on the relationships between work-related variables may provide managers with a better understanding of what they have to focus on in order to satisfy and retain employees of different generations.

This study tests a hypothetical model that examines the effect of work engagement on job satisfaction and turnover intention among hotel employees of three generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) and explores the moderating effects of the

generation on the relationships between these important work-related constructs. Considered as antipodes of burnout and a motivational construct, work engagement was used in this study because affective and emotional aspects of its concept are particularly relevant to service employees. More specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Does the influence of work engagement on job satisfaction and turnover intention differ depending on generational cohorts?
2. Does the influence of job satisfaction on turnover intention differ depending on generational cohorts?

Literature Review

Generations

A generation can be defined as a group of individuals of a similar age who share historical experience within the same time period (Ryder, 1965). Members of a generational cohort share important life experiences such as starting school, entering the workforce, and retiring at similar age, and they also experience memorable historical events at a similar developmental stage (Kowske et al., 2010). People perceive and interpret such historical events differently depending on what developmental stages they experience such events (Duncan & Agronick, 1995). Previous research suggests that young adulthood is critically important because events experienced during the stage have relatively stable effects on one's life (Mannheim, 1952; Schuman & Scott, 1989). Shared experience during these formative years guides formation of identifiable generational characteristics, which in turn guide an individual's attitudes and values in regard to various issues and entities in one's social life (Schuman & Scott, 1989).

Generational differences

Baby Boomers (Boomers) (born from 1946 to 1964) are individuals of the largest generational cohort in history, comprising about 78 million workers who have made huge social and economic impacts and are now being replaced by younger generation, Millennials. They grew up in the economic prosperity of the post-World War II, and experienced the most dramatic change in history, including the Civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, Watergate, and assassinations of Kennedy and King (Dries, Pepermans, & De Kerpel, 2008). Boomers tend to value work more than younger generations and see work as being more central to their lives than younger generations (Family and Work Institute, 2006; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Smola and Sutton (2002) found that Boomers perceived work to be a crucial part in one's life more strongly than younger generation. Boomers are also found to be loyal and committed to their organizations, and expect a corresponding reward from their organizations compared to younger generations because they believe hard work pays off (Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Similarly, Boomers are more driven by goals and results in the workplace, showing a higher desire to land positions with greater responsibility than younger generations (Families and Work Institute, 2006).

Generation X (Gen Xers) (born from 1965 to 1980) is currently dominant in the workforce as Boomers are retiring. Generational characteristics of this cohort are shaped by critical political events such as the end of the Cold War and a series of economic recessions in early and late 1970s and early 1980s. They witnessed high unemployment and family relocations caused by such economic instability (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). As a result, Gen Xers are likely to be independent and individualistic, placing more value on their own career over being loyal to organizations (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008). Instead of seeking job security, they pursuit challenging jobs and better opportunities to develop their own career

(Kupperschmidt, 2000). They also value autonomy and freedom from supervision in the workplace (Jurkiewicz, 2000). Although Gen Xers have a stronger desire for rapid job advancement than do Boomers, they are not work-centric and more likely than older generation to value work-life balance (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twenge, 2010). Gen Xers also reported higher external locus of control (Twenge, Zhang, & Im, 2004) and self-esteem (Twenge & Campbell, 2001) than Boomers.

Millennials (Generation Y or GenMe) (born from 1981 to 1999) are the youngest generation cohort, replacing their older generation. Millennial generation has been characterized by economic prosperity, advancement of instant communication technologies through the Internet, social networking, and globalization. Similar to Gen Xers, Millennials value freedom and work-life balance more than Baby Boomers (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twenge, 2010). They also have high leisure work values, preferring a job that provides more vacation time than older generations (Twenge et al., 2010). Despite of their lower work centrality, Millennials have higher expectations about promotions and pay raises in the workplace (Ng et al., 2010). Further, they place a greater value on meaningful and fulfilling work and are not tolerant of less challenging work (Corporate Leadership Council, 2005; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). In spite of prevailing beliefs about Millennials' high expectations about work environment and status, prior research found that Millennials are as satisfied with their job as their older generations, even reporting marginally higher job satisfaction, and are more optimistic about their career development (Kowske et al., 2010). Previous research in personality traits among generations found that Millennials are likely to have distinct personality traits from older generations (Twenge & Campbell, 2001; Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008). Millennials are found to demonstrate higher narcissism, self-esteem, and assertiveness than their older generations (Twenge & Campbell, 2003; Twenge et al., 2008).

Work Engagement, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention

The concept of work engagement emerged as a result of a research shift to the antipodes of burnout. Work engagement was first conceptualized as being situated at the opposite end of the continuum of job burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Later, Schaufeli et al. (2002, p. 74) saw engagement as an independent construct from job burnout, and defined it as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption”. As this definition indicates, work engagement has three dimensions which have been widely validated (e.g., Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005). First, *Vigor* refers to “high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistent even in the face of difficulties” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). *Dedication* is described as having “a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” while *absorption* is defined as “state of being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one’s work, where by time passes quickly, and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). Engaged employees are willing to work hard with a positive state of mind, thereby enabling them to accomplish much in the workplace (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

Previous research found that work engagement is fostered by a variety of job resources, such as an innovative and social climate, skill variety, support from supervisors, and autonomy (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). Personal resources such as self efficacy, organizational-based self-esteem, and optimism are also found to be antecedents of work engagement (Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen, 2007; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). Further, work engagement has shown its

significant effects on work-related attitude and behavioral outcomes such as job satisfaction, turnover intention, and performance through its mediating role between aforementioned antecedents and outcomes. Saks (2006) found that work engagement had a positive relationship with employees' job satisfaction and a negative relationship with turnover intention. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) also demonstrated that work engagement influences turnover intention by mediating the relationship with job resources.

Moderating Role of Generation

Previous research has found disparate generational effects on work-related behavioral measures that are considered to be highly correlated with one another. Twenge (2010) suggests that Millennials tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than older generations, but are similar in turnover intention. Kowske et al (2010) also found significantly different effect sizes for job satisfaction and turnover intention between Millennials and Gen Xers. This implies that the influence of one work-related behavioral measure on another may differ depending on the generation. Given different generational characteristics and work preferences found in previous research, it is possible that certain job characteristics in the hospitality industry, such as frequent human interaction and undesirable working conditions, may have a different impact on emotional wellness and work engagement of employees of different generations, which also in turn may lead to different outcomes. Generational differences in work centrality, work leisure values, or loyalty, for example, may moderate the effects of work engagement on work-related attitudinal outcomes among employees of different generations. It would be expected that when younger employees lose their motivation to be engaged in their work by finding their jobs less meaningful and perceiving unfitting work environments, their low work centrality and weak loyalty would dampen the morale and motivation to stay with their organizations significantly more than older generations. Conversely, when younger employees are engaged in their work, it may be expected that their psychological characteristics, such as self-esteem and optimism, may propel them to go the extra mile, thus leading to stronger satisfaction and lower turnover intention than older generations.

Methods

Sample and Procedure

With the support of a North American branded hotel management company, we invited a total of 29 mid or upscale hotel properties owned or managed by the company to participate in this study. Customer contact employees were asked to participate in this study voluntarily during the staff meetings of each department. A cover letter was attached to guarantee the confidentiality of the responses. Employees voluntarily filled in the questionnaire during work time and returned the completed questionnaire using an attached return envelope. Of the 1,577 survey questionnaires distributed, a total of 742 usable responses were returned, resulting in a 47.1% usable response rate.

Measures

Work engagement was assessed with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002), which has three dimensions: vigor (6 items), dedication (5 items), and absorption (6 items). Examples of the items of each dimension include "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work", "I am enthusiastic about my job", and "When I am working, I forget everything else around me." Job satisfaction was measured using a six-item scale slightly modified from the work of Hartline and Ferrell (1996). Turnover intention was measured with a

three-item scale from Boshoff and Allen (2000). All items were measured on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), to 5 (strongly agree).

Results

Profile of sample

Table 1 presents profile of respondents. Respondents were comprised of 196 Millennials (27.1%), 310 Gen Xers (42.8%), and 218 Baby Boomers (30.1%). They were 241 (32.5%) males and 484 (65.2%) females with a mean age of 37 years. Respondents had been working for an average of 4.5 years in the current hotel. Almost 70% of the respondents had been with the current hotel for less than 5 years.

Table 1
Profile of respondents

	Total (N = 742)	
	N	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Males	241	32.5
Females	484	65.2
No responses	17	2.3
Generation		
Millennials	196	27.1
Generation Xers	310	42.8
Baby Boomers	218	30.1
Age		
20 years old and below	82	11.1
21-30 years old	179	24.1
31-40 years old	173	23.3
41-50 years old	153	20.6
51 years old and above	155	20.9
Tenure		
5 years and below	517	69.7
6-10 years	107	14.4
11-15 years	48	6.5
16 years and above	51	6.9
No responses	19	2.6

Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables

Table 2 reports means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and correlation coefficients for the three constructs and dummy coded generation variables. Cronbach's alphas for the three constructs with sub-dimensions showed a high degree of internal consistency of the scales used in this study. As expected, the three dimensions of work engagement were positively related to job satisfaction ($r = .42, .50, \text{ and } .37, p < .01$, respectively), and negatively associated with turnover intention ($r = -.41, -.47, \text{ and } -.24, p < .01$, respectively). Job satisfaction had a significant negative relationship with turnover intention ($r = -.41, p < .01$). Organizational tenure was positively related to dedication ($r = .13, p < .01$) and absorption ($r = .08, p < .05$), but negatively related to turnover intention ($r = -.08, p < .05$). Gender was revealed to have significant relationships with dedication ($r = -.08, p < .05$) job satisfaction ($r = -.15, p < .01$), and turnover intention ($r = .07, p < .05$), indicating that male employees reported significantly lower score on dedication and job satisfaction, but higher on turnover intention.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and correlations among the variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Vigor	3.58	.67	(.80)						
2. Dedication	2.53	.76	.64**	(.83)					
3. Absorption	3.21	.63	.46**	.56**	(.74)				
4. Job satisfaction	3.61	.64	.42**	.50**	.37**	(.79)			
5. Turnover intention	2.28	.88	-.41**	-.47**	-.24**	-.55**	(.76)		
6. Tenure	4.7	6.14	.04	.13**	.08*	.03	-.08*		
7. Gender ^a	N/A	N/A	-.04	-.08*	-.05	-.15**	.07*	-.02	

Note: Cronbach's alpha coefficients appear on the diagonal in parentheses.

^a Gender was dummy-coded: male=1 and female=0.

* $P < .05$, ** $P < .01$

Hierarchical regression analyses for moderating effects of generation

Table 3 presents the results of hierarchical regression analyses for moderating effects of generation on the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction. In Step 1 of each regression analysis, we entered in organizational tenure and gender as control variables. In Step 2, each of the three sub dimensions of work engagement and the generation variables were included, and interaction terms for sub dimensions of work engagement and the generation variables were entered into Step 3.

As consistent with correlations analyses, all dimensions of engagement had significant effects on job satisfaction across three generation variables after controlling for the effects of organizational tenure and gender. Vigor resulted in a significant positive effect on job satisfaction for Millennials versus Gen Xers ($\beta = .42, p < .001$), for Millennials versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = .37, p < .001$), and for Gen Xers versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = .39, p < .001$) respectively. As seen in Step 3, no interaction effects for vigor and generation variables were found. Dedication also had significant effects on the job satisfaction for Millennials versus Gen Xers ($\beta = .52, p < .01$), for Millennials versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = .45, p < .01$), and for Generation Xers versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = .47, p < .001$) respectively. Entering the interaction terms for dedication and the generation variable for Gen Xers versus Boomers revealed a significant effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = .13, p < .05$) adding .6% to the explained variance. Absorption was reported to have significant effects on job satisfaction across three generation variables ($\beta = .37, p < .01$ for Millennial versus Gen Xers; $\beta = .32, p < .01$ for Millennial versus Baby Boomers; $\beta = .31, p < .01$ for Gen Xers versus Baby Boomers). A significant interaction effect of engagement and the generation variable on job satisfaction was found for Millennials versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = .14, p < .05$) with significant increments in R^2 ($\Delta R^2 = .01, p < .05$).

As seen in Table 4, regression analyses revealed significant main effects of work engagement variables and generation comparisons on turnover intention after controlling the two control variables. First, vigor had significant negative effects on turn over intention for three generation comparison variables (Millennials versus Gen Xers, $\beta = -.39, p < .01$; Millennials versus Baby Boomers, $\beta = -.43, p < .01$; Gen Xers versus Baby Boomers, $\beta = -.39, p < .01$ respectively). There were significant main effects of generation comparisons on turnover intention for Millennials versus Gen Xers ($\beta = .13, p < .01$), for Millennials versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = .25, p < .01$), and for Gen Xers versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = .10, p < .05$) after controlling the effects of tenure, gender, and vigor, indicating that younger generations showed significantly

higher intention to leave the current organizations than older generations. The vigor-generation interaction terms had significant effects on turnover intention for Millennials versus Gen Xers ($\beta = -.12, p < .01$) and for Millennials versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = -.11, p < .05$), adding .9% and .8% to overall explained variance.

Table 3

Summary of hierarchical regression analyses for moderating effect of the generation on the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction

	Engagement								
	Vigor			Dedication			Absorption		
	Millennials versus Gen Xers	Millennials versus Boomers	Gen Xers versus Boomers	Millennials versus Gen Xers	Millennials versus Boomers	Gen Xers versus Boomers	Millennials versus Gen Xers	Millennials versus Boomers	Gen Xers versus Boomers
(Step 1)									
Tenure	-.02	.11**	.04	-.02	.11*	.04	-.02	.11*	.04
Gender ^a	-.20**	-.09*	-.19**	-.20**	-.09*	-.19**	-.20**	-.09*	-.19**
R ²	.04**	.02**	.04**	.04**	.02*	.04**	.04**	.02*	.04**
(Step 2)									
Engagement variables	.42**	.37**	.39**	.52**	.45**	.47**	.37**	.32**	.31**
Generation variables ^b	.03	-.01	-.07	.08	.06	-.04	.04	-.01	-.07
ΔR^2	.18**	.14**	.16**	.25**	.19**	.22**	.13**	.10**	.10**
(Step 3)									
Engagement \times Generation	.03	.09	.10	-.04	.08	.13*	.04	.14*	.10
ΔR^2	0	.005	.004	.001	.003	.006*	.001	.011*	.005
F	26.40**	15.25**	24.93**	39.84**	21.02**	36.39**	19.80**	12.15**	16.75**
Total R ²	.22	.16	.20	.30	.21	.27	.17	.13	.14

Note: Dependent variable = Job satisfaction

Values other than R² and F statistics are standardized regression coefficients

^a Gender was dummy coded: male=1 and female=0

^b Generation variables were dummy coded: Millennials=1 versus Gen Xers=0/ Millennials=1 versus Boomers=0/ Gen Xers=1 versus Boomers=0

* $P < .05$, ** $P < .01$

Dedication also demonstrated significant negative impacts on employees' turnover intention for Millennials versus Gen Xers ($\beta = -.49, p < .01$), for Millennials versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = -.48, p < .01$), and for Gen Xers versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = -.43, p < .01$). Generation comparison variables for Millennials versus Gen Xers ($\beta = .09, p < .05$), and for Millennials versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = .18, p < .01$) revealed significant influences in turnover intention while controlling for the effect of dedication on turnover intention, indicating that Millennials reported significantly higher scores on turnover intention than Gen Xers and Baby Boomers. The effect of dedication on turnover intention was found to be moderated by generation comparison for Millennials versus Baby boomers ($\beta = -.13, p < .05$) with a significant increment in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .008, p < .05$).

Lastly, after controlling for tenure and gender, absorption had significant main effects on turnover intention for the three generation comparisons (Millennials versus Gen Xers, $\beta = -.27, p < .01$; Millennials versus Baby Boomers, $\beta = -.23, p < .01$; Gen Xers versus Baby Boomers, $\beta = -.14, p < .01$ respectively). Consistently, generation comparison also had significant main effects

on turnover intention. Millennials reported significantly higher scores on turnover intention than Gen Xers ($\beta = .13, p < .01$) and Baby Boomers ($\beta = .27, p < .01$). Gen Xers also showed stronger intention to leave the current organization than Baby Boomers ($\beta = .11, p < .05$). Significant interaction effects between absorption and generation comparisons for Millennials versus Gen Xers ($\beta = -.16, p < .01$) and Millennials versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = -.25, p < .01$) were found, adding 2% and 4% to the explained variance respectively.

Table 4

Summary of hierarchical regression analyses for moderating effect of the generation on the relationship between work engagement and turnover intention

	Engagement								
	Vigor			Dedication			Absorption		
	Millennials Versus Gen Xers	Millennials Versus Boomers	Gen Xers Versus Boomers	Millennials Versus Gen Xers	Millennials Versus Boomers	Gen Xers Versus Boomers	Millennials Versus Gen Xers	Millennials Versus Boomers	Gen Xers Versus Boomers
(Step 1)									
Tenure	-.06	-.12*	-.01	-.06	-.12*	-.01	-.06	-.12*	-.01
Gender ^a	.11*	.09	.08	.11*	.09	.08	.11*	.09	.08
R ²	.02*	.02*	.006	.02*	.02*	.006	.02*	.02*	.006
(Step 2)									
Engagement Variables	-.39**	-.43**	-.39**	-.49**	-.48**	-.43**	-.27**	-.23**	-.14**
Generation variables ^b	.13**	.25**	.10*	.09*	.18**	.07	.13**	.27**	.11*
ΔR^2	.18**	.25**	.16**	.25**	.27**	.19**	.09**	.12**	.03*
(Step 3)									
Engagement \times Generation	-.12*	-.11*	.02	-.08	-.13*	-.06	-.16**	-.25**	-.10
ΔR^2	.009*	.008*	0	.003	.008*	.001	.02**	.04**	.004
F	24.39**	30.26**	20.06**	34.94**	34.11**	24.12**	13.62**	17.08**	4.47**
Total R ²	.20	.28	.16	.27	.30	.20	.13	.18	.04

Note: Dependent variable = Turnover intention

Values other than R² and F statistics are standardized regression coefficients

^a Gender was dummy coded: male=1 and female=0

^b Generation variables were dummy coded: Millennials=1 versus Gen Xers=0/ Millennials=1 versus Boomers=0/ Gen Xers=1 versus Boomers=0

* P < .05, ** P < .01

Table 5 reports results of hierarchical analyses for moderating effects of generation on the relationship of job satisfaction with turnover intention. After controlling the effect of tenure and gender, job satisfaction had significant effects on turnover intention for all three generation comparison variables (Millennials versus Gen Xers, $\beta = -.57, p < .01$; Millennials versus Baby Boomers, $\beta = -.45, p < .01$; Gen Xers versus Baby Boomers, $\beta = -.53, p < .01$ respectively). The generation comparison also had a significant effect on turnover intention as found in Table 4. The effect of job satisfaction on turnover intention was found to be significantly moderated by a generation comparison for Millennials versus Baby Boomers ($\beta = -.12, p < .05$) with additional unique variance to the regression models ($\Delta R^2 = .007, p < .05$).

Table 5

Summary of hierarchical regression analyses for moderating effect of the generation on the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention

	Generation		
	Millennials versus Gen Xers	Millennials versus Boomers	Gen Xers versus Boomers
(Step 1)			
Tenure	-.06	-.12*	-.01
Gender ^a	.11*	.09	.08
R ²	.02*	.02*	.01
(Step 2)			
Job satisfaction	-.57**	-.54**	-.53**
Generation variables ^b	.16**	.27**	.08*
Δ R ²	.34**	.35**	.28**
(Step 3)			
Job satisfaction × Generation	-.08	-.12*	-.05
Δ R ²	.004	.007*	.001
F	53.72**	49.33**	41.09**
Total R ²	.35	.38	.28

Note: Dependent variable = Turnover intention

Values other than R² and F statistics are standardized regression coefficients

^a Gender was dummy coded: male=1 and female=0

^b Generation variables were dummy coded: Millennials=1 versus Gen Xers=0/ Millennials=1 versus Boomers=0/ Gen Xers=1 versus Boomers=0

* P < .05, ** P < .01

Discussion

This study focused on the moderating effects of the generation on the relationships between work engagement, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. A series of hierarchical and interaction plot analyses indicate that the generation is likely to have some pattern of moderating effects on the relationships between proposed work-related constructs (due to the pate limitations, interaction plots are available upon request). Notably, moderating effects of the generation are noticeable in the relationships between work engagement and turnover intention. Although vigor positively influences employee retention across generations, it is Millennial employees that feel significantly higher intention to leave their organizations than do older generations when experiencing a lack of vigor and deterioration of mental health in the workplace. Similarly, if Millennial employees lose a sense of significance, enthusiasm, and challenge in their work, their intention to leave significantly increases compared to Boomer employees. Further, results suggest that if Millennial employees are less engrossed in their work, they are more likely to intend to leave their organizations. However, when they find their job fulfilling and meaningful, thereby being deeply engaged, Millennial employees are less likely to leave their organizations than engaged Gen X and Baby Boomer employees. Overall, findings of this study suggest that engaging employees is important to enhance employees' job satisfaction, and this is more instrumental in retaining Millennial employees.

It is also noteworthy that this study found Millennials a more distinct cohort from older generations with regard to the influence of work engagement on job satisfaction and turnover intention. That is, moderating effects of the generation were significant between Millennials versus Gen Xers, and between Millennials versus Boomers. Although we do not report simple mean differences in the constructs of interest because they are not the focus of our study,

Millennial employees not only reported higher turnover intention, they also showed significantly lower vigor, dedication, and absorption than their older generations. These findings are somewhat inconsistent with previous research which suggests that Millennials have more similarities than dissimilarities to Gen Xers. For example, work centrality and leisure values are considered to be similar between the two cohorts (Meriac, Woehr, & Banister, 2010). One of the possible explanations about this is that job characteristics in the hospitality industry is not compatible with work preferences of Millennials such as high pay, and challenging and fulfilling work. Further, Millennials see themselves as being more ambitious, confident, and career-centered (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). Thus, job characteristics in the hospitality industry and Millennials psychological traits together may impel them to leave their current organizations significantly more than older generations when they are less engaged.

Implications

To the best of our knowledge, no generational research has empirically examined the moderating effects of the generation on the relationships between work-related constructs. This study makes an important contribution to the literature by forging a new direction in generational research. Although prior studies have found generational differences in various work-related constructs, they did not take into account how such dissimilarities influence other work-related constructs differently depending on generations. By examining generational differences beyond those resulting from simple comparisons of work values, attitudes, and expectations of different generations, this study demonstrated the possibility of different effects of generation on the relationships between varying work-related constructs.

The findings also suggest that engaging employees is critically important to Millennial employees in order to retain them relative to older employees. Previous research on work engagement has reported a variety of antecedents of work engagement such as personal growth, learning, and career development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Incorporating such antecedents with Millennial employees' work preferences such as meaningful and fulfilling job, hospitality companies can develop efficient retention strategies for Millennial employees. Previous research also suggests that personal resources such as optimism or self-esteem positively affect work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Managers should understand that generational characteristics of Millennials can be a double-edged sword for organizations. Their generational characteristics may be a huge challenge for organizations with poor HR practices. However, if managers foster Millennials' unique psychological characteristics along with improving their work environment and resources, they may be more successful in engaging younger employees in their work. All these efforts that support young employees' engagement at work in turn make an organization more attractive to younger employees.

Limitations

We were able to rule out some career stage effects such as positional change and organizational tenure by limiting our research subjects to customer contact hourly employees and controlling for organizational tenure in our analyses. However, the generational effects in this study may have been confounded by age effects. Although previous research using a longitudinal design found that generation effects on work-related constructs such work values is more salient and greater than age and maturation (e.g., Smola & Sutton, 2002), and this does not make any difference for the implications of our study for managers, future research using a cross-temporal meta-analysis design would provide more concrete evidence for moderating effect of the generation from a methodological stand point.

References

- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3), 309–328.
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2008). Towards a model of work engagement. *Career Development International*, 13(3), 209–223.
- Beutell, N. J., & Wittig-Berman, U. (2008). Work-family conflict and work-family synergy for generation X, baby boomers, and matures. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(5), 507.
- Boshoff, C., & Allen, J. (2000). The influence of selected antecedents on frontline staff's perceptions of service recovery performance. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 11(1), 63–90.
- Cennamo, L., & Gardner, D. (2008). Generational differences in work values, outcomes and person-organisation values fit. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(8), 891–906.
- Chen, P. J., & Choi, Y. (2008). Generational differences in work values: a study of hospitality management. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 20(6), 595.
- Corporate Leadership Council. (2005). HR considerations for engaging Generation Y employees. Washington, DC: Corporate Executive Board.
- Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 499–512.
- Dries, N., Pepermans, R., & De Kerpel, E. (2008). Exploring four generations' beliefs about career: Is “satisfied” the new “successful”? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(8), 907–928.
- Duncan, L. E., & Agronick, G. S. (1995). The intersection of life stage and social events: Personality and life outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(3), 558–568.
- Family and Work Institute. (2006). Generation and gender in the workplace. American Business Collaboration. Retrieved August 29, 2010, from <http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/genandgender.pdf>
- Gursoy, D., Maier, T. A., & Chi, C. G. (2008). Generational differences: An examination of work values and generational gaps in the hospitality workforce. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 27(3), 448–458.
- Hakanen, J. J., Bakker, A. B., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2006). Burnout and work engagement among teachers. *Journal of School Psychology*, 43(6), 495–513.
- Hartline, M. D., & Ferrell, O. C. (1996). The management of customer-contact service employees: an empirical investigation. *The Journal of Marketing*, 60(4), 52–70.
- Hill, R. P. (2002). Managing across generations in the 21st century: important lessons from the ivory trenches. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 11(1), 60.
- Hunt, J. W., & Saul, P. N. (1975). The relationship of age, tenure, and job satisfaction in males and females. *Academy of Management Journal*, 18(4), 690–702.
- Jurkiewicz, C. L. (2000). Generation X and the public employee. *Public Personnel Management*, 29(1), 55–74.
- Kowske, B. J., Rasch, R., & Wiley, J. (2010). Millennials' (lack of) attitude problem: an empirical examination of generational effects on work attitudes. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 265–279.
- Kupperschmidt, B. R. (2000). Multigeneration employees: Strategies for effective management. *The Health Care Manager*, 19(1), 65–hyhen.
- Lancaster, L. C., & Stillman, D. (2002). *When generations collide: Who they are, why they clash, how to solve the generational puzzle at work*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
- Mannheim, K. (1952). *The problem of generations*. In *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (1997). *The truth about burnout: How organizations cause personal stress and what to do about it*. Jossey-Bass San Francisco, CA.

- Mauno, S., Kinnunen, U., & Ruokolainen, M. (2007). Job demands and resources as antecedents of work engagement: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 70*(1), 149–171.
- Meriac, J. P., Woehr, D. J., & Banister, C. (2010). Generational differences in work ethic: an examination of measurement equivalence across three cohorts. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 25*(2), 315–324.
- Mitchel, J. O. (1981). The effect of intentions, tenure, personal, and organizational variables on managerial turnover. *Academy of Management Journal, 24*(4), 742–751.
- Ng, E. S., Schweitzer, L., & Lyons, S. T. (2010). New generation, great expectations: a field study of the millennial generation. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 25*(2), 281–292.
- Ryder, N. B. (1965). The cohort as a concept in the study of social change. *American sociological review, 30*, 843–861.
- Salanova, M., Agut, S., & Peiro, J. M. (2005). Linking organizational resources and work engagement to employee performance and customer loyalty: The mediation of service climate. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*(6), 1217–1227.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: a multi-sample study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 25*(3), 293–315.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-Romá, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 3*(1), 71–92.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Salanova, M. (2007). Work engagement: An emerging psychological concept and its implications for organizations. *Research in social issues in management, 5*, 135–177.
- Schuman, H., & Scott, J. (1989). Generations and collective memories. *American Sociological Review, 54*(3), 359–381.
- Smola, K. W., & Sutton, C. D. (2002). Generational differences: revisiting generational work values for the new millennium. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 23*(4), 363–382.
- Twenge, J. M. (2010). A review of the empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 25*(2), 201–210.
- Twenge, J. M., Campbell, S. M., Hoffman, B. J., & Lance, C. E. (2010). Generational differences in work values: Leisure and extrinsic values increasing, social and intrinsic values decreasing. *Journal of Management, 36*(5), 1117.
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2001). Age and birth cohort differences in self-esteem: A cross-temporal meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 5*(4), 321.
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2003). “Isn’t It Fun to Get the Respect That We’re Going to Deserve?” Narcissism, Social Rejection, and Aggression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*(2), 261.
- Twenge, J. M., Konrath, S., Foster, J. D., Campbell, W. K., & Bushman, B. J. (2008). Egos inflating over time: A cross-temporal meta-analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory. *Journal of Personality, 76*(4), 875–902.
- Twenge, J. M., Zhang, L., & Im, C. (2004). It's beyond my control: A cross-temporal meta-analysis of increasing externality in locus of control, 1960-2002. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 8*(3), 308.
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, S. M. (2008). Generational differences in psychological traits and their impact on the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 23*(8), 862.
- Wong, M., Gardiner, E., Lang, W., & Coulon, L. (2008). Generational differences in personality and motivation. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 23*(8), 878–890.
- Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2007). The role of personal resources in the job demands-resources model. *International Journal of Stress Management, 14*(2), 121.