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Generational Differences and Registered Nurses' Intention to Leave an Organization

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Mutabazi Sekimonyo

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Generational Differences and Registered Nurses' Intention to Leave an Organization

by

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MA, University of South Florida, 2013

BS, University of South Florida, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

As baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z converge in healthcare settings, their distinct values and work styles influence organizational culture, communication, and collaboration, ultimately affecting patient care outcomes. This study was conducted to explore the impact of generational differences on registered nurses' intentions to leave their organizations or the nursing profession. By examining how these generational differences shape nurses' intentions to leave their organizations, the study can help to identify challenges and opportunities for healthcare leadership. Through an analysis of generational expectations and workforce dynamics, this research aimed to inform strategies for supporting retention, enhancing job satisfaction, and fostering a resilient nursing workforce amid the evolving demands of modern healthcare, which can have implications for positive social change.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The modern healthcare landscape faces significant challenges in managing a multigenerational nursing workforce (Choi et al., 2022). As baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z converge, their varying values and expectations reshape workforce dynamics, impacting communication, collaboration, and patient care outcomes (Gupta & Misra, 2023). Understanding how these generational differences influence nurses' ITL their organizations is crucial for addressing turnover and fostering organizational resilience (McClain et al., 2022).

Each generation brings distinct qualities: Baby boomers value hierarchical structures, millennials prioritize work-life balance, and Generation Z emphasizes professional growth (Lee & Lee, 2022). These differences can either strengthen or challenge team dynamics, making it essential for healthcare leaders to implement inclusive management strategies to improve retention and optimize care outcomes (Becker et al., 2022).

This study explored the impact of generational differences on registered nurses' ITL their organizations or the nursing profession, as well as their anxiety and obsession related to the coronavirus, providing insights into job satisfaction and retention strategies. By addressing these challenges, it offered actionable solutions to enhance workforce stability and resilience, ensuring a cohesive nursing workforce amid the complex demands of modern healthcare (Niskala et al., 2020).

Background of the Study

Nurse retention had been a topic of considerable research, but significant gaps remained regarding the role of generational differences in RNs' ITL their organizations. While many studies focused on ITL among nurses as a homogenous group, fewer had explored how factors influencing ITL varied across generational cohorts such as baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z. Koehler and Olds (2022) reported that 21% of U.S. hospital nurses intended to leave their jobs, with ITL decreasing by 1.5% for each additional year of job experience. Despite these findings, the generational dimensions of ITL, particularly within a multigenerational workforce, remained underexplored (Woodward & Willgerodt, 2022).

A key factor compounding this issue was the national nursing shortage, which had been exacerbated by an aging workforce and the slow replacement of retiring nurses. According to Smiley et al. (2023), the average age of RNs in the United States had risen to 52 years, with retirements outpacing the entry of new nurses into the profession. Compounding this, a shortage of nursing faculty limited nursing school enrollments, reduced the production of new nurses, and worsened the staffing crisis (Boamah et al., 2021). These challenges underscored the critical need for effective retention strategies, as organizations struggled to meet increasing patient care demands with a diminishing workforce (Xie et al., 2024).

Existing literature highlighted a strong correlation between nurse turnover and factors such as job satisfaction, psychological stress, and burnout (Martin et al., 2023). High job burnout had been identified as a major predictor of ITL, as had an increased

workload (LeClaire et al., 2022). While these studies provided valuable insights into ITL at large, they often neglected how these factors differed across generational lines. For instance, insufficient staffing, lack of organizational support, and limited professional development opportunities were commonly cited reasons for turnover (Labrague et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated retention issues, placing unprecedented stress on the nursing profession (Burrowes et al., 2023). Studies showed that the pandemic accelerated ITL among nurses due to increased burnout, psychological strain, and resource shortages (Morgantini et al., 2020). Christianson et al. (2023) found a sharp rise in nurse burnout and ITL during the pandemic. However, there was still limited understanding of how the pandemic impacted different generational cohorts, indicating the need for further research (Auerbach et al., 2024; Buerhaus et al., 2022).

Generational differences in the workforce were well-documented, with each generation bringing unique values, expectations, and working styles to their roles. Baby boomers, for example, valued job stability and loyalty to their organization, while Generation X was known for adaptability and independence (Tang & Martins, 2021). Millennials prioritized work-life balance and meaningful engagement in their jobs, whereas Generation Z nurses emphasized digital fluency and rapid professional growth (Emory et al., 2022). These generational distinctions were essential for developing retention strategies that addressed the diverse needs of a multigenerational workforce (Cvenkel, 2020).

Despite increasing awareness of generational differences, limited research examined how these variations impacted RNs' ITL. Healthcare organizations required a deeper understanding of how generational factors influenced nurses' decisions to stay or leave their roles. Such knowledge was essential for developing targeted interventions aimed at reducing turnover and enhancing job satisfaction across different generational cohorts (Koehler & Olds, 2022).

Problem Statement

The ongoing nursing shortage is critically affecting healthcare delivery across the United States, emphasizing the role of nurses as the largest segment of the healthcare workforce (Smiley et al., 2023).

While much research has been devoted to nurse turnover, the problem is the limited understanding of how generational differences impact RNs' ITL their organizations or the profession, particularly in the context of anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic. With baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z working side by side, it is vital to identify the unique factors driving each generation to consider leaving the profession (Mahmoud et al., 2021). Understanding these generational differences is key to developing effective retention strategies tailored to the needs of a multigenerational workforce (Cvenkel, 2020). Addressing these concerns is essential for healthcare organizations to retain talent and maintain high-quality patient care.

Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this quantitative study was to investigate the multigenerational differences in RNs' ITL their organizations or the nursing profession, particularly considering the challenges introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the unprecedented strain on the healthcare workforce, it was essential to understand how these pressures have influenced nurses across various generational cohorts, specifically baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z. By examining the dependent variables ITL, coronavirus anxiety and obsession in relation to the independent variable of generational cohort, the study sought to uncover the distinct motivations, values, and experiences that shape departure intentions within each group. This exploration was crucial for contextualizing the impact of the pandemic, enhancing targeted retention strategies, and informing organizational practices aimed at creating supportive work environments.

Research Question(s) and Hypotheses

This study was centered on the primary research question: How do RNs' age (generational cohort) affect their ITL their organization or the nursing profession? The aim was to understand the complex relationship between generational differences and RNs' intention to stay in or leave their current organizations or roles. This question sought to explore how distinct generational factors, such as motivations, work values, and experiences, play a role in shaping a RN's decision to remain in their organization or the nursing profession. Given the increasing pressure on healthcare systems to retain skilled

staff, addressing these factors becomes particularly important for developing effective retention strategies that cater to the specific needs of a multigenerational workforce.

Understanding this dynamic is crucial for healthcare organizations, especially as they grapple with high turnover rates, burnout, and the evolving expectations of a diverse workforce. Baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z RNs may each have different reasons for contemplating departure, and gaining insight into these reasons is necessary for creating targeted interventions. This exploration helps to develop strategies that are not only responsive to the current workforce climate but also adaptable to future changes in the healthcare sector.

To systematically investigate this, the following hypotheses were proposed:

*H*₀ (Null Hypothesis): Based on objective ratings by RNs, there are no statistically significant differences by generational cohort on their ITL their organization or the nursing profession. This hypothesis implies that generational cohort does not significantly influence RNs' ITL, meaning that factors influencing RNs' decisions to leave or stay are consistent across age groups. If supported, this would suggest that retention strategies could be generalized across the workforce without needing to address specific generational differences.

*H*₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): Based on objective ratings by RNs, there are statistically significant differences by generational cohort on their ITL their organization or the nursing profession. This hypothesis posits that different generational cohorts exhibit varying levels of ITL, driven by distinct motivations, work values, and personal experiences unique to their generational identities. The outcome of this hypothesis would

suggest that age and generational factors are critical in shaping RNs' turnover intentions and that retention strategies need to be specifically tailored to address the diverse needs of each generational group.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study was anchored in multiple key theories that collectively inform the exploration of RNs' ITL their organizations or the nursing profession, particularly in a multigenerational workforce. A central component was Strauss and Howe's theory of generational cohorts, which suggests that individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and values are deeply shaped by the social and historical events during their formative years (van Twist & Newcombe, 2021). This theory was crucial for understanding how different generations, baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z, may exhibit varying responses to workplace dynamics, which in turn can influence their ITL their organization or the nursing profession.

In addition to generational theory, the organizational commitment model (Liou, 2009) was employed to examine the psychological and emotional factors contributing to nurses' decisions to stay or leave. This model posits that an employee's commitment to their organization is a key factor in determining retention. By integrating this theory, the study explored how generational differences in organizational commitment might affect ITL, shedding light on the diverse expectations and motivations of each generational cohort.

The study also drew on the job demands-resources (JD-R) framework (Moloney et al., 2018) to examine burnout, a known precursor to increased turnover intentions. The

JD-R framework posits that excessive job demands, such as heavy workloads and emotional stress, contribute to burnout, while job resources, like social support and professional development, can counteract these negative effects. Applying this model helped assess how the balance of job demands and resources affects nurses' well-being and ITL their organization or the nursing profession.

Together, these theoretical perspectives provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interactions between RNs' generational differences, organizational commitment, and burnout.

Nature of the Study

This quantitative study employed a cross-sectional survey design to examine RNs' ITL their organizations or the nursing profession across various healthcare settings, with a focus on generational differences. This approach allowed for the collection of a wide range of data at a single point in time, offering insights into how ITL varies among generational cohorts such as baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z. By using a survey-based methodology, the study aimed to understand the underlying perceptions, motivations, and factors influencing RNs' decisions to leave, providing healthcare organizations with data that can inform effective retention strategies.

The survey instrument was modeled after Kim et al. (1996), utilizing a 7-point Likert scale to measure ITL in addition to the Coronavirus Anxiety Survey (CAS) and the Obsession with Coronavirus Scale (OCS) both by Lee (2020b). These scales enabled respondents to indicate varying levels of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding job satisfaction, workplace conditions, and career intentions. Such scales are

advantageous for capturing nuanced attitudes toward ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession, offering valuable quantitative data that can be analyzed to identify RNs patterns across generational cohorts.

I conducted descriptive statistical analyses of the collected data to identify trends, correlations, and differences in ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession across generations. These analyses offered insights into how factors like job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and burnout interact with generational characteristics to influence RNs' ITL their organizations.

Definitions

Independent Variable

Generational cohort served as the independent variable in this study, categorizing RNs into specific groups based on their birth years: baby boomers (1946–1964), Generation X (1965–1980), millennials (1981–1996), and Generation Z (1997–2012). These groups are shaped by distinct social, historical, and cultural experiences, which influence their values, attitudes toward work, and career aspirations. According to Strauss and Howe's generational theory, these life experiences mold each generation's responses to workplace dynamics and challenges, potentially affecting their ITL the profession (van Twist & Newcombe, 2021).

Dependent Variables

In this study *ITL* refers to the self-reported likelihood of RNs leaving their current positions or exiting the nursing profession within a defined timeframe. ITL is typically measured through survey tools that capture respondents' perceptions of job satisfaction,

working conditions, and career intentions. Significant predictors of ITL include factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and burnout (Liou, 2009).

Coronavirus anxiety is defined as the self-reported experience of anxiety, fear, and stress specifically associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. It was measured using survey instruments that evaluate respondents' emotional reactions, perceived risks, and coping behaviors related to the virus. Major predictors of coronavirus anxiety include perceived threat, media exposure, and social isolation (Lee, 2020a).

Coronavirus obsession in this study was characterized by the self-reported frequency of intrusive and uncontrollable thoughts about COVID-19. It was assessed through survey tools that measured respondents' cognitive preoccupation with the virus, which includes behaviors such as compulsive monitoring of pandemic-related news, persistent fears of infection, and excessive information-seeking. Key predictors of coronavirus obsession include anxiety sensitivity, perceived vulnerability, and media consumption (Lee, 2020b).

Key Terms

Job satisfaction refers to how positively or negatively individuals feel about their jobs, influenced by aspects such as work environment, compensation, and opportunities for professional development. High job satisfaction is correlated with lower turnover intentions and stronger organizational commitment among healthcare professionals (Callado et al., 2023).

Socioeconomic status is defined as an individual's or group's social and economic standing relative to others, determined by factors such as income, education, and

occupation. In the healthcare setting, SES influences access to resources and job satisfaction, which can impact a nurse's intention to leave their organization (Lee et al., 2021).

Assumptions

This study posited that various generational cohorts, specifically baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z, exhibit unique values, preferences, and attitudes toward work. These characteristics influence their reasons for job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, and ITL. It is assumed that these generational traits are shaped by the distinct social, economic, and technological contexts experienced during their formative years, leading to different workplace behaviors and expectations.

This study assumed that the ITL an organization or profession and the coronavirus anxiety and obsession are quantifiable and can be systematically compared across generational cohorts. It relied on the premise that RNs from diverse generational backgrounds understood and interpreted survey questions regarding their ITL their organization or the nursing profession and coronavirus anxiety and obsession in a consistent manner, thereby enabling meaningful comparisons among groups.

The study assumed that employing a cross-sectional design was adequate for capturing the generational differences in ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession at a specific point in time. It was based on the belief that generational differences remain relatively stable over time, thus allowing findings from a single time point to reflect broader, enduring trends rather than transient variations.

While the primary focus was on generational differences, the study assumed that other critical factors, such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, and compensation, exert influence across all generational cohorts, albeit to varying extents. This assumption recognizes that while these factors may affect ITL and the coronavirus anxiety and obsession, they do not detract from the central thesis concerning the significance of generational differences.

The study assumed that the sample of RNs, drawn from different generational backgrounds, accurately represents the broader population of nurses within the profession. This assumption is crucial for ensuring that the findings are generalizable to the nursing workforce, underlining the importance of a representative sample that reflects the distribution of generations present in the field.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focused on examining generational differences in ITL among RNs working in various healthcare settings. Given the ongoing nursing shortage exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Hemler et al., 2021), it is critical for healthcare organizations to understand the factors driving nurses to consider leaving their jobs. The study was grounded in the premise that different generational cohorts, baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z, possess unique values, expectations, and attitudes toward work that influence their job satisfaction and retention.

The scope of the study was limited to RNs within the United States. This group was chosen because RNs make up the largest segment of the healthcare workforce and play a crucial role in healthcare delivery (Godsey et al., 2020). The study excluded

licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and other healthcare professionals, as their roles and experiences may differ significantly from those of RNs. By narrowing the focus to RNs, the study aimed to generate insights specific to this critical workforce group.

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Strauss and Howe's generational cohort theory, the organizational commitment model, and the JD-R framework, all of which offer a clear perspective on how generational characteristics and workplace dynamics shape ITL. Other relevant theories, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, were excluded to streamline the focus on generational differences and job-related factors influencing nurses' decisions to leave.

A cross-sectional survey design was employed to gather data at a single point in time, enabling an analysis of how ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession vary across different generational cohorts. While this design provides valuable insights into current generational dynamics, it may limit the external validity of the findings, as the results may not reflect changes over time or apply to other countries with different healthcare systems or cultural contexts. Furthermore, the generalizability of the study's results may be influenced by factors such as the geographical distribution of the sample and organizational differences within healthcare settings.

Limitations

This study faced several limitations related to its methodology and the selected survey instrument, which, while accessible and cost-effective, introduced potential challenges that could affect the reliability and validity of the findings.

One key limitation identified prior to conducting the study was the risk of low response rates from the RN population. Due to the demands placed on RNs, their participation in surveys may have been limited, leading to a nonrepresentative sample. A low response rate could negatively affect the generalizability of the study's findings (Menon & Muraleedharan, 2020). This risk was especially significant in a study targeting multiple generational cohorts; if certain cohorts are underrepresented, the resulting data may not accurately reflect the experiences of the broader RN workforce. Employing stratified sampling techniques could address this limitation by ensuring that the sample includes proportional representation across all generations (Hossan et al., 2023).

Additionally, high variability in responses between generational cohorts may complicate the analysis. Differences in work experiences and perspectives among baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z RNs could introduce noise into the data, making it harder to identify clear trends or patterns (Koehler & Olds, 2022). Although this variability offers rich qualitative insights, it may affect the precision of quantitative analysis and hinder the detection of meaningful associations between generation and intention to leave (Khan et al., 2019).

Another important limitation is self-reporting bias. As the study relied on survey responses, participants may have been influenced by the Hawthorne effect, where they alter their responses based on perceived expectations rather than providing candid answers (Rezk et al., 2021). This was particularly relevant in a professional context like RN, where participants may feel compelled to answer in ways that reflect positively on their profession or minimize their ITL their organization or the nursing profession. Such

biases can distort the data, undermining the internal validity of the study (Xu et al., 2024). Ensuring participant anonymity and emphasizing the confidentiality of responses helped mitigate these effects, but the risk of bias remains.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant relevance in the current healthcare landscape, where RNs constitute the largest segment of the healthcare workforce and are pivotal in delivering inpatient and long-term care (Godsey et al., 2020). By examining the generational differences in the ITL and the coronavirus anxiety and obsession among RNs, this research addresses a critical gap in the literature regarding the diverse motivations influencing nurses' decisions to remain in or depart from their roles. Understanding these multigenerational dynamics is essential, as the factors driving nurses to leave their organizations can be deeply intertwined with both individual and organizational issues (Niskala et al., 2020; Tadesse et al., 2023).

The implications of this research extends beyond the nursing profession and into the broader healthcare system, affecting patient outcomes, organizational culture, and healthcare policy. A deeper understanding of the specific needs and motivations of different generational cohorts can inform targeted retention strategies, thereby helping healthcare organizations to foster a more supportive work environment that enhances nurse satisfaction and engagement (Moloney et al., 2020).

The nursing workforce is currently facing unprecedented challenges, including a national shortage exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Auerbach et al., 2024; Buerhaus et al., 2022). Addressing this shortage is not merely a logistical issue; it is

fundamentally tied to patient care quality and outcomes. The findings of this study provided valuable insights into the specific factors influencing ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession across various generational cohorts, allowing healthcare leaders to develop tailored retention strategies that cater to the unique needs of each group. For instance, understanding that millennials prioritize work-life balance and meaningful engagement can drive organizations to implement flexible scheduling and professional development opportunities (Davis & Needham, 2023), while recognizing that baby boomers may value stability and a clear organizational hierarchy can influence mentoring and leadership development initiatives (Nabawanuka & Ekmekcioglu, 2022). By aligning organizational practices with generational preferences, healthcare facilities can enhance job satisfaction and reduce turnover rates, ultimately improving the overall quality of care provided to patients.

The retention of qualified nurses is closely linked to positive patient health outcomes, as continuity of care and the establishment of trust between patients and healthcare providers are essential for effective treatment (Drennan & Ross, 2019). High turnover rates among nursing staff can lead to increased workloads for remaining nurses, which in turn can result in burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and ultimately, lower quality of care (Labrague et al., 2020). This study's findings will contribute to the growing body of evidence suggesting that addressing nurses' ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession can have a direct impact on patient safety, satisfaction, and health outcomes (Khan et al., 2019). By focusing on retaining a diverse nursing workforce, healthcare organizations can ensure a more stable and experienced staff, thereby

enhancing the quality of care provided to patients and improving healthcare system efficacy.

Significance to Theory

This study is poised to make significant theoretical contributions that advance the understanding of nursing workforce dynamics, particularly in the context of generational differences in ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession. By integrating established theories and frameworks, this research illuminated the intricate relationships between generational characteristics, workplace behaviors, and turnover intentions among RNs.

One of the primary theoretical contributions of this study is the extension of Strauss and Howe's generational cohort theory within the nursing context. By examining how generational cohorts, specifically baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z, differ in their attitudes toward work and intention to leave, this research will provide empirical evidence supporting the notion that these cohorts are not monolithic. Each group's distinct formative experiences, values, and preferences was elucidated, contributing to a nuanced understanding of how generational differences can influence organizational behaviors and career decisions (Rauvola et al., 2019). This theoretical advancement can inform future research into workforce dynamics across various sectors, providing a framework for examining how generational diversity impacts employee engagement and retention.

The study will also contribute to the organizational commitment model by exploring how generational differences affect nurses' commitment to their organizations. Understanding the interplay between generational values and organizational commitment

can yield valuable insights into retention strategies that address the specific needs and motivations of each cohort. This theoretical insight will help bridge gaps in existing literature, as current research has largely overlooked the implications of generational diversity on organizational commitment in nursing. The findings may prompt further investigation into how targeted interventions can enhance commitment levels among different generational cohorts, ultimately improving workforce stability and performance (Liou, 2009).

Additionally, the study's incorporation of the JD-R framework will enrich the understanding of how job demands and resources differentially impact turnover intentions across generational cohorts (Moloney et al., 2018). By analyzing the relationships between job-related stressors, available resources, and nurses' ITL, this research will elucidate how generational characteristics influence the perception and management of job demands and resources. This contribution will not only enhance theoretical discourse within nursing but will also provide a framework applicable to other fields grappling with workforce retention challenges.

Significance to Practice

This study's examination of generational differences in RNs' ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession have the potential to significantly influence nursing practice and policy. By providing empirical evidence on how diverse generational cohorts experience and respond to workplace dynamics, this research can lead to actionable insights for healthcare organizations, nursing leadership, and policy-makers.

One of the primary contributions to practice is to inform the development of targeted retention strategies that consider the unique values, motivations, and preferences of each generational cohort. Understanding how baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z perceive their roles within the nursing profession can enable healthcare organizations to tailor their retention efforts effectively (McClain et al., 2021). By aligning organizational policies and practices with the specific needs of each generation, healthcare leaders can improve nurse satisfaction and decrease turnover rates, ultimately ensuring a stable workforce that is better equipped to deliver quality patient care.

This study can also contribute to enhancing organizational culture within healthcare settings. By acknowledging and addressing the diverse needs of a multigenerational workforce, healthcare organizations can cultivate an inclusive and supportive environment that promotes collaboration and mutual respect among nurses of different ages. Implementing training programs that foster intergenerational teamwork and understanding can help mitigate conflicts and misunderstandings that arise from generational differences (Tang & Martins, 2021). As a result, a positive organizational culture can emerge, characterized by improved communication, increased job satisfaction, and better patient care outcomes.

The findings of this study will also have implications for nursing education and workforce planning. As the nursing workforce continues to age and retire, understanding the generational dynamics at play will inform educational institutions about the types of training and support that may be needed for new entrants to the profession (Goulart et al.,

2022). Additionally, healthcare policymakers can use the insights gained from this research to develop policies that address the specific challenges and needs of a multigenerational nursing workforce.

Furthermore, this research can inform leadership development programs within healthcare organizations. By equipping nursing leaders with an understanding of generational differences and their impact on workforce dynamics, these programs can better prepare leaders to manage and motivate a diverse nursing staff. Leaders who are adept at recognizing and valuing generational diversity will be better positioned to foster an environment of engagement and retention, leading to improved overall performance within their teams (Hapsari et al., 2019).

Significance to Social Change

The findings of this study on generational differences in RNs ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession carry substantial implications for positive social change within healthcare and the broader community. As RNs are a critical component of the healthcare system, addressing the challenges related to RN retention not only impacts the profession but also enhances patient care, community health outcomes, and the overall quality of life for individuals relying on healthcare services (Drennan & Ross, 2019).

By understanding the factors influencing ITL across generational cohorts, healthcare organizations can implement tailored strategies to enhance job satisfaction and retention. Research shows that a stable and experienced nursing workforce is linked to better patient outcomes, as long-serving nurses develop expertise and patient relationships that positively impact care (Hamid et al., 2023). Retaining nurses also

supports the continuity of care, which is particularly vital in underserved populations, improving health equity and community health outcomes (Aiken et al., 2021).

The research findings can also contribute to building a more resilient nursing workforce, particularly essential in responding to public health crises and other high-stress situations. By recognizing the diverse needs of different generational cohorts, healthcare leaders can create environments that reduce burnout and promote mental health, making the workforce more adaptable to stressors (Labrague et al., 2020). Resilient nurses are better equipped to provide consistent, high-quality care, improving the system's overall capacity to handle emergencies (Luke et al., 2023).

Addressing the distinct needs of a multigenerational nursing workforce fosters equity and inclusion in healthcare settings (Wakefield et al., 2021). Implementing policies that account for generational differences helps create inclusive environments where all nurses feel valued, regardless of their age or background (Burton et al., 2019). This commitment to diversity can extend beyond the workplace, as inclusive healthcare organizations are better positioned to serve diverse patient populations effectively (White et al., 2022). This not only improves RN retention but also aligns with broader societal goals of equitable access to healthcare services.

Summary and Transition

This study on generational differences in RNs' ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession has significant theoretical, practical, and social implications. First, it enriches theoretical understanding by integrating Strauss and Howe's generational cohort theory and the Organizational Commitment Model to explore how distinct generational cohorts,

baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z, engage with their work environments. This research fills a critical gap in the literature by examining how generational traits impact job satisfaction, loyalty, and turnover intentions. This adds depth to workforce dynamics theory, offering a more nuanced perspective on how generational factors influence engagement and retention.

On a practical level, the study provides actionable insights for healthcare management. By identifying the specific factors driving ITL and the coronavirus anxiety and obsession among different generational cohorts, healthcare organizations can develop targeted retention strategies that align with the values and expectations of each group. This approach not only mitigates high turnover rates but also fosters job satisfaction and stability in the workforce, leading to enhanced productivity and mental well-being among nurses. Improved retention will also positively influence patient care quality, as a more satisfied and stable workforce directly contributes to better patient outcomes and stronger nurse-patient relationships.

The broader implications for social change are significant. A stable nursing workforce is essential for delivering high-quality care and building strong patient relationships, which directly impact health outcomes. By addressing the unique needs of a multigenerational workforce, this research promotes inclusivity and equity in healthcare settings, ensuring that the diverse perspectives of nurses are respected and valued. Furthermore, improving nurse retention helps alleviate the ongoing nursing shortage, enhancing the overall resilience of the healthcare system and contributing to better public health outcomes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The current study builds on previous research by employing a similar methodological approach to investigate how generational differences impact RNs' ITL their organizations or the nursing profession. By leveraging insights from existing literature and applying proven theoretical frameworks, the study aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of generational dynamics in nursing and inform strategies for improving nurse retention.

Recent literature highlights the growing concern regarding nurse retention, with studies consistently reporting alarmingly high turnover rates. Healthcare institutions worldwide are struggling to retain their nursing staff, which has been further exacerbated by the stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic (Poon et al., 2022). The pandemic's impact on healthcare workers' mental health, coupled with increased workloads, has pushed many to consider leaving their roles, further straining already burdened healthcare systems (Labrague et al., 2020). Similar findings have been observed in critical care environments, where nurses reporting poorer quality of life and greater sleep disturbance were more likely to express an intention to leave their positions. These relationships may also be influenced by complex interactions among personal and occupational factors (Petrosino et al., 2024).

A crucial theme emerging from the literature is the role of generational differences in shaping RNs' intentions to stay or leave their organizations or the nursing profession. Distinct generational cohorts, namely baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z, display varying work values, expectations, and

motivations, all of which significantly influence their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to leave (Francis et al., 2020).

This exploration of the relevant literature on generational differences in RNs' ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession focus on how these differences shape turnover intentions and how this knowledge can inform evidence-based management practices. By synthesizing insights from current studies, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how healthcare organizations can better manage a multigenerational nursing workforce, reduce turnover, and ensure quality patient care, especially in a post-pandemic context.

Literature Search Strategy

The key search terms employed in the literature search focused on exploring generational differences and their impact on RNs' ITL and COVID-19 anxiety and obsession. The following primary and related terms was used: Generational differences, RNs, Intention to leave, COVID-19 anxiety and obsession, and Turnover.

Related Keywords

Workforce dynamics, Job satisfaction, Employee retention, Organizational commitment, and Cohort analysis.

Boolean operators helped refine search queries to locate studies that meet the research objectives:

(Generational differences OR generational cohorts) AND (registered nurses OR nursing workforce) AND (intention to leave OR turnover intention) AND (cross-sectional study).

Databases Searched

PubMed, CINAHL, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, and Scopus.

Part of Journals Searched

Nursing management, healthcare workforce, and organizational behavior.

Years of Search

Studies published in the last 5 years (2019–2024). This timeframe allows for the incorporation of recent data and insights into nursing retention and workforce dynamics, especially as healthcare evolves in response to new challenges, including the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Language

Only articles written in English is included in the review.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies published between 2019 and 2024. Peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses to ensure credible and reliable findings. Research focused on the U.S. healthcare system or comparable international settings for applicability to the target population. Studies that specifically explore generational cohorts and their impact on nursing retention, ITL, or coronavirus anxiety and obsession.

Exclusion Criteria

Articles that do not specifically focus on nursing or healthcare workforce issues. Sources that are non-peer-reviewed, including opinion pieces and editorials lacking empirical evidence.

Theoretical Foundation

Strauss and Howe's theory of generation cohort (van Twist & Newcombe, 2021) and organizational commitment model (Liou, 2009) encompass both the boundaries of ITL and multigenerational workforce precepts. Moloney et al.'s (2018) JD-R framework will guide the identification of factors associated with burnout; a phenomenon associated with workers to ITL

Generational cohort theory, as explained by van Twist and Newcombe (2021), posits that each generation is influenced by the social, historical, and economic conditions they experience during their formative years, resulting in distinct attitudes toward work and career expectations. This theory is particularly useful in analyzing differences in job satisfaction and ITL across generations. Research in nursing has found that baby boomers often value job stability and loyalty, while millennials prioritize work-life balance and career development (Francis et al., 2020). These generational distinctions are crucial for developing tailored retention strategies.

The organizational commitment model (Liou, 2009) further explores how employees' emotional attachment to their organization influences their likelihood of staying or leaving. In this context, affective commitment refers to an individual's emotional attachment to their job, continuance commitment pertains to the perceived cost of leaving the job, and normative commitment relates to a sense of obligation to remain with the employer. Studies show that millennials tend to exhibit lower affective commitment compared to older generations, as they are more likely to prioritize career mobility and personal fulfillment (Labrague & De los Santos, 2020). This model

highlights the importance of aligning organizational policies with the values of different generational cohorts to reduce turnover intentions.

The JD-R framework is another essential model used in understanding burnout and ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession in nursing. This framework posits that job demands, such as workload and emotional strain, coupled with a lack of resources, such as support and career development opportunities, can lead to burnout and increased turnover (Moloney et al., 2018). McClain et al. (2022) found that millennials and Generation Z nurses are more prone to burnout due to their higher expectations for work-life balance and a more fulfilling work environment. Offering resources such as professional development and emotional support can mitigate burnout and improve nurse retention.

Recent studies continue to explore the interaction between these theoretical frameworks and generational differences. Labrague et al. (2020) applied the JD-R framework in their research on nurse burnout and job satisfaction, showing that younger nurses are more likely to experience burnout due to unmet expectations regarding job flexibility and career progression. Similarly, Davis and Needham (2023) investigated the role of generational differences in shaping organizational commitment and turnover intentions, finding that millennials prioritize flexibility and professional growth, while baby boomers value job security and long-term employment. These findings underscore the need for customized retention strategies that cater to the distinct needs of each generational cohort.

Emory and al. (2019) used a cross-sectional design to assess how generational cohorts impact job satisfaction and turnover intentions in the healthcare setting. Their findings indicated that generational differences significantly influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment levels, with millennials and Generation Z demonstrating lower levels of commitment compared to older generations. The methodology employed by Emory and al., including the use of stratified sampling and validated instruments to measure job commitment and job satisfaction, will inform the current study's approach to data collection and analysis.

Tan & Chin (2023) explored work values and career expectations among nurses from different generational cohorts. Their study highlighted that millennials and Generation Z prioritize career development and work-life balance more than their older counterparts, which significantly influences their job satisfaction and intention to leave. These findings suggest that healthcare organizations should focus on providing career advancement opportunities and flexible work arrangements to retain younger nurses.

In addition, Labrague et al. (2020) investigated the influence of job stress and burnout on nurses' intention to leave, finding that millennials are more likely to experience burnout due to their expectations of job flexibility and personal fulfillment. This supports the need for healthcare organizations to implement resilience-building programs and offer support systems tailored to the unique needs of each generational cohort.

Literature Review

Despite an increasing focus on nurse turnover, significant gaps remain in understanding how generational differences ITL and coronavirus-related anxiety and obsession. Much of the existing literature predominantly addresses baby boomers, Generation X, and millennials, leaving Generation Z, who are rapidly entering the workforce, under-researched (Acheampong, 2021). Generation Z nurses are distinct in their career priorities, including a stronger emphasis on mental health, technological adaptation, and finding purpose in their roles, which differ from the motivations of earlier generations (Han et al., 2024). These unique characteristics call for more comprehensive studies to address the evolving needs of this cohort.

As Generation Z's presence in healthcare grows, it is imperative for organizations to develop targeted retention strategies. Research is needed to explore the specific factors contributing to ITL in this group, particularly the role of work-life balance, professional development, and mental health support. Tailored interventions that reflect Generation Z's values are crucial for retaining this emerging workforce, ensuring long-term organizational stability, and mitigating the negative effects of high turnover in healthcare settings (Tolksdorf et al., 2022). Understanding these factors will better inform strategies to enhance nurse retention and reduce turnover rates in healthcare.

Nurse turnover is a critical issue for healthcare organizations, as it disrupts the continuity of care, reduces the quality of services, and incurs significant costs related to recruitment and training (Bae, 2022). The impact of turnover on healthcare systems is well-documented, particularly regarding the decline in operational efficiency and

increased risks to patient safety. High turnover rates not only diminish the morale of remaining staff but also jeopardize patient outcomes, leading to increased complications, longer hospital stays, and higher rates of readmission (Jun et al., 2021).

Examining nurses' ITL is crucial because it serves as a key predictor of actual turnover (Stewart et al., 2020). Understanding ITL allows healthcare leaders to implement more effective retention strategies, which is essential in a sector where the demand for nursing care continues to rise (Hörberg et al., 2023). Studies have shown that various factors influence ITL, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work environment (Keith et al., 2021). By understanding the nuances of these factors, organizations can enhance job satisfaction and mitigate the likelihood of turnover.

However, a notable gap exists in the literature concerning multigenerational differences, especially among Generation Z nurses, who have recently entered the workforce. Most studies focus on previous generations, baby boomers, Generation X, and millennials, leaving a void in understanding the motivations and behaviors of younger nurses in relation to the profession (Acheampong, 2021). Generation Z is characterized by unique values and expectations shaped by technology, social consciousness, and diverse experiences. Understanding these differences is crucial for healthcare organizations striving to retain young talent, particularly as this generation represents the future of the nursing workforce (Gerard, 2019).

Gaining insights into these generational differences can aid in developing targeted retention policies tailored to each group's unique needs. For example, while baby boomers may prioritize job stability and organizational loyalty, millennials and

Generation Z nurses might seek opportunities for professional development, work-life balance, and a supportive work environment (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019). By examining the specific intentions and motivations of each generational cohort, healthcare leaders can implement strategies that resonate with the diverse workforce, thereby enhancing retention rates and improving overall organizational performance.

Theoretical Frameworks

Generational Cohort Theory (Strauss & Howe, 2021)

Generational cohort theory provides a lens through which workforce dynamics can be better understood, particularly in relation to how different generations behave and interact in the workplace. This theory defines generational cohorts as groups of individuals born within specific time periods who share similar life experiences, values, and attitudes. The primary cohorts include baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z, each exhibiting unique characteristics shaped by historical and social contexts (Koehler & Olds, 2022).

When applied to nurses' work experiences, generational cohort theory helps explain variations in attitudes toward work, career progression, and ITL. For instance, older generations may prioritize job security and stability, while younger cohorts, such as Generation Z, may seek flexibility, work-life balance, and personal fulfillment. This theory is particularly suitable for examining ITL in the context of multigenerational nursing staff, as it sheds light on how generational differences influence turnover behaviors and retention strategies within healthcare settings.

Research indicates that understanding generational differences in values and expectations can aid in the development of tailored retention strategies, ensuring that the specific needs of each cohort are addressed. By leveraging the insights from generational cohort theory, healthcare organizations can create environments that align with the motivations of their diverse nursing workforce (Campbell & Patrician, 2020).

Organizational Commitment Model (Liou, 2009)

The organizational commitment model explores the extent to which employees are emotionally attached to, involved in, and identify with their organization. This model is directly related to ITL, as higher levels of organizational commitment often result in lower turnover intentions. Commitment is shaped by various factors, including job satisfaction, alignment with organizational values, and perceived opportunities for professional growth (Afshari, 2020).

This model suggests that organizational commitment can vary significantly across generational cohorts. Baby boomers may exhibit stronger long-term commitment due to traditional views on loyalty, while millennials and Generation Z may be more transient, seeking faster career advancement or more meaningful roles (Emory et al., 2022). In the context of nursing, understanding these generational differences is crucial for developing retention strategies that cater to the diverse needs of the workforce (McClain et al., 2022). The organizational commitment model, therefore, informs the present study by highlighting how varying degrees of commitment influence nurses' ITL across generations.

Job Demands-Resources Framework

Moloney et al.'s (2018) JD-R framework focuses on the balance between job demands (e.g., workload, emotional strain) and resources (e.g., support, opportunities for development). This model emphasizes how excessive job demands can lead to burnout, which is strongly associated with nurses' ITL. High job demands, coupled with insufficient resources, can increase stress and dissatisfaction, pushing nurses toward leaving their organizations (Senek et al., 2020).

Burnout, a critical issue in nursing, directly impacts ITL, and the JD-R Framework provides a useful tool for understanding this relationship (Lee et al., 2021). The JD-R Framework highlights the importance of organizational support and resources in mitigating the negative effects of job demands (Radic et al., 2020). By fostering a supportive work environment that provides resources such as mentorship programs and opportunities for professional development, healthcare organizations can enhance nurses' resilience against burnout, thereby reducing turnover intentions across all generational cohorts. Understanding these dynamics is essential for creating a sustainable nursing workforce capable of meeting the evolving demands of healthcare.

Generational Differences in the Workforce

Generational Characteristics and Workplace Preferences

The literature on generational cohorts in the workforce identifies clear distinctions in values, work preferences, and expectations among baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z. Baby boomers (1946–1964) are often characterized by a strong emphasis on job security, loyalty, and a strong work ethic. They typically reflect a

traditional view of employment relationships, prioritizing long-term commitment to organizations and valuing stability in their careers (Davis & Needham, 2023). Many baby boomers have spent decades within the same organization, contributing to their deep-rooted sense of loyalty and duty toward their employers and colleagues.

In contrast, Generation X (1965–1980) tends to emphasize work-life balance, autonomy, and a results-oriented approach. They seek flexibility in their work environments, often preferring jobs that allow for remote work or flexible scheduling (Davis & Needham, 2023). Generation X is also known for its adaptability and resourcefulness, having navigated economic challenges, such as the dot-com bubble and the Great Recession, which has influenced their approach to job security and career advancement (Davis & Needham, 2023).

Millennials (1981–1996), also referred to as Generation Y, prioritize meaningful work, opportunities for growth, and collaborative work environments. They expect rapid feedback, professional development, and a sense of purpose in their careers (Arora & Dhole, 2019). This generation is particularly driven by a desire for work that aligns with their personal values, leading to a higher propensity for job hopping if their needs for engagement and fulfillment are not met (Vui-Yee & Paggy, 2020). The unique challenges faced by millennials, such as the rising cost of education and student debt, further complicate their career trajectories and job expectations.

Generation Z (1997–2012), the youngest cohort entering the workforce, is characterized by digital fluency, a preference for flexible work arrangements, and a strong focus on mental health and well-being (Koehler & Olds, 2022). As digital natives,

they are adept at using technology to enhance their work experiences and expect organizations to provide innovative tools and resources. Generation Z also values mental health support and work-life integration, often prioritizing jobs that foster a healthy balance between personal and professional life (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019).

In the nursing workforce, these generational characteristics manifest in unique challenges and motivators for each cohort (Rollan Oliveira & Siles González, 2021). Baby boomers in nursing may value long-term stability and are less likely to transition out of the profession due to their commitment to patient care and institutional loyalty (Davis & Needham, 2023). Generation X nurses often seek roles that allow for greater control over their schedules, potentially favoring part-time or flexible positions to accommodate their family responsibilities (O'Hara, 2019). Millennials, while initially attracted to nursing for its perceived opportunities for growth and service, exhibit higher ITL due to factors such as burnout, insufficient support, and lack of advancement opportunities within rigid work structures (Keith et al., 2021). Generation Z nurses, being relatively new to the profession, prioritize innovation, technological integration, and flexible working conditions, placing importance on organizations that support their mental well-being and personal development (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019).

Intention to Leave and Generational Cohorts

Research on ITL highlights significant generational differences in healthcare, reflecting broader trends across industries. Generational cohorts, baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z, approach their careers with distinct values,

priorities, and factors influencing their decisions to stay or leave their roles (Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

Baby boomers (born 1946–1964) generally demonstrate lower ITL due to their strong sense of loyalty and commitment to their organizations. Their professional identity is often tied to a deep sense of purpose, viewing their roles as part of their self-concept and approaching retirement as the culmination of their careers (Davis & Needham, 2023). In the healthcare field, particularly nursing, baby boomers have long demonstrated resilience and dedication, often staying in their roles due to their commitment to patient care (Davis & Needham, 2023).

Generation X (born 1965–1980) seeks work-life balance and autonomy, and their ITL is more sensitive to workplace conditions that threaten these values. As middle-aged professionals, Generation X employees often prioritize family commitments and personal well-being, making them more likely to leave jobs that disrupt this balance. In nursing, high-stress environments and rigid structures can push Generation X nurses toward roles offering greater flexibility (Davis & Needham, 2023). This cohort tends to evaluate their work through the lens of personal circumstances, and dissatisfaction with workplace policies can drive turnover.

Millennials (born 1981–1996) exhibit higher ITL, largely driven by their pursuit of rapid career progression and dissatisfaction with hierarchical or inflexible work environments. Known for valuing professional development and feedback, millennials often move between jobs when they perceive a lack of growth opportunities (Davis & Needham, 2023). In nursing, the demanding workload, emotional exhaustion, and rigid

organizational structures frequently contribute to high turnover rates among millennial nurses (Keith et al., 2021). Furthermore, millennials' emphasis on work-life balance, coupled with inadequate support systems in healthcare settings, often exacerbates their ITL (Keith et al., 2021).

Generation Z (born after 1997) is the newest cohort entering the workforce and is beginning to reshape discussions around ITL in healthcare. Early research suggests that Generation Z prioritizes mental health, technological adaptation, and aligning their careers with personal values (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019). Their fluid approach to career choices may lead to higher turnover if they feel their roles do not meet their expectations or offer sufficient purpose. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of mental health and work culture, both of which are critical to Generation Z's job satisfaction and long-term retention in the healthcare sector (Anggapradja et al., 2024).

In the nursing profession, these generational differences are especially pronounced. Baby boomers often exhibit lower ITL, driven by their strong sense of duty and responsibility toward patient care (Keith et al., 2021). On the other hand, Generation X nurses may be more likely to leave if their needs for flexibility or autonomy are unmet, especially in high-pressure environments such as hospitals (Davis & Needham, 2023). Millennial nurses, who initially enter the profession with enthusiasm, often report burnout, dissatisfaction with hierarchical systems, and limited career advancement opportunities as key reasons for leaving their roles (Harris, 2021). Meanwhile, Generation Z nurses remain under-researched, but early evidence suggests they may be

more inclined to explore new career paths if their job fails to align with their values or desired work-life balance (Hampton & Welsh, 2019).

Burnout and Job Demands in Nursing

Burnout as a Predictor of ITL

Burnout is increasingly recognized as a critical predictor of nurses' ITL. Defined by Dall'Ora et al. (2020) as a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment, burnout significantly impacts turnover in the nursing profession. Research consistently demonstrates that nurses experiencing burnout are more likely to express ITL due to the chronic stress associated with their job demands (Christianson et al., 2023). This relationship has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has intensified the challenging conditions faced by healthcare professionals, leading to increased patient acuity, staffing shortages, and heightened performance pressure.

Job demands, encompassing long hours, emotional strain, and substantial physical workloads, serve as significant contributors to burnout within nursing (Gribben & Semple, 2021). When combined with inadequate resources, such as insufficient support systems and limited opportunities for professional development, these demands can create an overwhelming environment for nurses. Recent studies highlight that nurses experiencing high levels of burnout often disengage from their work, lose motivation, and seek exit strategies, whether through leaving their current positions or abandoning the profession altogether (Eder & Meyer, 2022).

Furthermore, burnout experiences can vary across generational cohorts in nursing, with each group demonstrating distinct responses to job demands and associated stressors. For instance, baby boomers may demonstrate more resilience due to established coping mechanisms and long-term commitment to the profession. Conversely, millennials are often more susceptible to burnout because of their desire for rapid career progression and heightened sensitivity to work-life balance issues (Davis & Needham, 2023). Generation Z nurses, who are still acclimating to the profession, may encounter significant burnout as they adapt to the high-pressure healthcare environment, particularly when their expectations for flexibility and technological integration are unmet (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019).

Generational Differences in Job Demands and Resources

The perception and response to job demands and resources significantly vary across generational cohorts, impacting levels of burnout and ITL. Baby boomers, raised in a more hierarchical work environment, often regard high job demands as an inherent aspect of their profession and may be more inclined to remain in their roles despite experiencing stress, valuing job security and long-term employment (Davis & Needham, 2023). However, as they approach retirement, the cumulative physical and emotional demands of nursing may lead to increased ITL if adequate support systems are not implemented (Davis & Needham, 2023).

In contrast, Generation X nurses prioritize work-life balance and autonomy, viewing excessive job demands as detrimental to their personal and professional satisfaction. This generation is particularly sensitive to a lack of resources, such as

flexible scheduling and professional development opportunities, which can accelerate burnout and lead to higher ITL rates (Davis & Needham, 2023). When faced with overwhelming demands and insufficient organizational support, Generation X nurses are more likely to leave their organizations.

Millennials are characterized by their pursuit of rapid feedback and career advancement (Liu et al., 2019). They may face significant burnout if they perceive their work environments as rigid or lacking growth opportunities. This cohort is especially vulnerable to emotional exhaustion, particularly when job demands exceed the resources available to manage stress effectively (Waljee et al., 2020). Their desire for mentorship and collaborative work environments can help mitigate burnout; however, in the absence of these supports, ITL rates among millennials can increase substantially.

Generation Z, the newest cohort to enter the workforce, comes equipped with high expectations for innovation, technology integration, and workplace flexibility (Davis & Needham, 2023). While they may adapt well to technological changes within healthcare, they are also at risk of experiencing burnout if their work environments fail to align with their values surrounding work-life balance and mental health support (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019). This cohort's heightened sensitivity to stress and demand for meaningful, flexible work underscores the necessity of understanding their job demands to develop effective retention strategies.

As healthcare systems continue to evolve in response to demographic shifts and changing workforce dynamics, the interplay between burnout, job demands, and generational differences is critical in understanding ITL within the nursing profession.

Addressing these challenges through targeted interventions, such as enhanced support systems and resources tailored to the unique needs of each cohort, is essential for improving nurse retention and overall workforce stability (Efendi et al., 2019).

Nurse Retention Strategies: A Generational Perspective

Retention Strategies Tailored to Generational Cohorts

To effectively address nurses' ITL, a myriad of retention strategies have been implemented across healthcare settings. However, the efficacy of these strategies is contingent upon their alignment with the unique needs and preferences of different generational cohorts (Berge, 2022). Research indicates that customizing retention approaches to meet these generational needs can significantly reduce turnover rates and enhance job satisfaction.

Baby Boomers (1946–1964). For baby boomers, retention strategies that emphasize stability, recognition, and phased retirement plans have proven particularly effective. This generation tends to value long-term employment and loyalty to their organization, so ensuring they feel valued and secure is key to encouraging them to stay (Davis & Needham, 2023). Phased retirement plans are an excellent tool for retaining baby boomers, allowing them to reduce their working hours gradually while still contributing their extensive experience and skills (Wainwright et al., 2019). Furthermore, mentorship opportunities are crucial for this cohort, as they often possess deep knowledge that can be passed on to younger nurses. This opportunity for knowledge transfer can also give baby boomers a sense of purpose as they approach retirement.

Recognition programs that celebrate baby boomers' service and achievements are also important for fostering a sense of belonging and loyalty. Research shows that when baby boomers feel appreciated for their years of dedication, they are more likely to remain committed to their roles (Waltz et al., 2020). Creating a supportive environment that values the expertise of baby boomers is crucial for maintaining a stable workforce as this generation transitions toward retirement.

Generation X (1965–1980). Generation X nurses are known for valuing work-life balance and flexibility, making these elements critical in retention strategies (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019). Unlike baby boomers, who typically exhibit greater loyalty to their roles, Generation X seeks roles that allow them to manage both their professional responsibilities and personal lives effectively (Mahmoud et al., 2021). Offering flexible scheduling options is one of the most impactful strategies for retaining Generation X nurses, as it allows them to maintain control over their time and juggle familial and professional commitments (Davis & Needham, 2023).

In addition to flexibility, autonomy in decision-making is another critical factor for this cohort. Generation X nurses tend to value independence and seek roles where they can make decisions and take ownership of their work (Pressley & Garside, 2023). Retention strategies that provide opportunities for them to exercise this autonomy, such as participative management models or shared governance systems, can lead to increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Additionally, investing in continued education, leadership development, and certifications aligned with their goals increases their likelihood of staying with their

current employer. Studies show that Generation X nurses are particularly loyal when they feel their professional development is supported and that they have opportunities for upward mobility within the organization (Coventry & Hays, 2021). When healthcare organizations create a culture that values lifelong learning and personal growth, Generation X nurses are more engaged, satisfied, and committed to staying in their roles (Waltz et al., 2020).

Millennials (1981–1996). Millennials, characterized by their focus on personal and professional growth, require retention strategies that cater to their desire for rapid career progression, continuous feedback, and opportunities for collaboration in the workplace (Boyle, 2022). For this generation, structured programs that promote professional development and advancement are particularly effective in reducing their ITL their organization or the nursing profession. Mentorship programs, where experienced professionals guide younger employees, are often successful in fostering engagement and long-term commitment. This cohort thrives in environments where they feel their contributions are valued and they have the potential for upward mobility (Labrague & De los Santos, 2020).

In addition to career growth, addressing burnout is crucial for millennial nurses, as they are particularly vulnerable to workplace stress and fatigue (Harris, 2021). This generation tends to seek environments that support a healthy work-life balance and prioritize mental health. High workloads without sufficient support or recognition can significantly increase turnover rates within this group. Therefore, fostering a supportive, team-based culture that actively addresses emotional well-being is essential. Recent

studies show that organizations which implement initiatives targeting mental health, such as wellness programs, counseling services, and flexible scheduling, see higher job satisfaction and reduced turnover among millennial nurses (Nabawanuka & Ekmekcioglu, 2022). Millennials also appreciate work environments where their contributions are recognized, and where they receive consistent feedback on their performance, helping them to grow professionally while feeling valued within the organization.

Moreover, millennials are known for their tech-savviness and appreciation for innovation in the workplace (George et al., 2024). Offering tools and resources that streamline their workflow and enhance productivity, such as advanced health technologies, can further increase their satisfaction and reduce ITL (Keith et al., 2021). These tools can help millennials feel they are contributing to modern, forward-thinking healthcare environments, aligning with their career aspirations and personal values. As such, retention strategies for millennial nurses should focus on creating pathways for career advancement, fostering a supportive work environment that prioritizes work-life balance, and integrating technologies that improve their day-to-day roles. These factors collectively contribute to increased job satisfaction and long-term retention of millennial nurses.

Generation Z (1997–2012). Generation Z, the youngest cohort in the workforce, presents unique challenges and opportunities for retention strategies. This group values flexibility, technological integration, and mental health support in the workplace (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019). As digital natives, Generation Z nurses expect their

work environments to incorporate technological advancements that streamline their responsibilities and enhance patient care. They also prioritize mental well-being and work-life balance, necessitating retention strategies that adapt to their preferences. However, current retention approaches often overlook the needs of Generation Z, which could result in higher turnover rates if not adequately addressed. For instance, offering tailored onboarding experiences that introduce them to digital tools and promote a supportive work culture can significantly impact their retention (Mosca & Merkle, 2024). Research highlights the necessity for healthcare organizations to develop specific strategies that engage Generation Z nurses, ensuring they feel valued and integrated within their teams (Shorey et al., 2021).

Critique of Existing Literature and Research Gaps

Limited Research on Multigenerational Differences in RNs ITL and Coronavirus

Anxiety and Obsession

While a significant body of research addresses RNs ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession, studies that explore generational differences within the nursing workforce are relatively scarce. Much of the existing literature focuses on baby boomers, Generation X, and millennials, leaving a gap in understanding the experiences and expectations of Generation Z nurses, who are rapidly becoming a larger presence in the profession. This cohort, born between 1997 and 2012, brings unique characteristics shaped by their upbringing in a technologically advanced and socially conscious world. To better manage and retain Generation Z nurses, it is crucial to explore their distinct motivations, workplace expectations, and challenges (McClain et al., 2022).

As Generation Z enters the nursing profession in greater numbers, their retention becomes a priority for healthcare organizations facing persistent staffing shortages. Early research indicates that Generation Z values mental health support, work-life balance, and meaningful work experiences, which differ from the priorities of previous generations. Addressing these needs through tailored strategies can help reduce turnover rates and ensure long-term retention of this cohort. To date, however, there remains a notable lack of comprehensive studies focusing on Generation Z nurses, highlighting the urgent need for further research in this area to inform effective retention strategies (McClain et al., 2022).

This gap in literature poses a significant concern, particularly as Generation Z's distinct preferences for technology integration, work-life balance, and mental health support may differ markedly from those of previous generations (Schroth, 2019). Current studies often overlook the impact of these generational differences on burnout and ITL, particularly regarding how younger nurses navigate job demands and emotional stressors in high-pressure healthcare environments (Hisel, 2020).

Recent studies have continued to highlight the burnout risks facing millennials in nursing, particularly due to inadequate support and high job demands. However, research into Generation Z's experiences with burnout and job-related stress remains underdeveloped. This lack of focus on Generation Z's coping mechanisms and their ITL their organization or the nursing profession is a critical gap, as understanding these factors is crucial for developing retention strategies that meet the needs of this emerging workforce (Han et al., 2024). As Generation Z becomes a more prominent part of the

nursing workforce, research into their unique challenges, such as their prioritization of mental health, work-life balance, and the desire for meaningful work, becomes increasingly essential to prevent early career attrition.

Existing literature also falls short in fully addressing how generational differences shape responses to burnout and job dissatisfaction. For example, baby boomers, with their extensive experience, may exhibit greater resilience when facing job pressures. In contrast, millennials and Generation Z, often seeking environments that foster collaboration and offer professional development opportunities, may struggle more with feelings of inadequacy and burnout in rigid or unsupportive work environments (Tan & Chin, 2023). Recognizing these generational nuances is essential for healthcare organizations to develop effective, targeted strategies to retain nurses and promote their well-being.

Need for Data-Driven Retention Approaches

The increasing acknowledgment of the need for generation-tailored, evidence-based retention strategies is crucial to effectively address ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession among RNs. Current research highlights the importance of understanding the unique needs and preferences of each generational cohort to enhance job satisfaction and retention rates (Yawson & Yamoah, 2020). However, many healthcare organizations still rely on one-size-fits-all retention strategies, which do not adequately accommodate the diverse expectations of a multigenerational workforce (George et al., 2024).

For instance, while baby boomers may appreciate stability and mentorship opportunities, Generation X values autonomy and work-life balance, and millennials

prioritize rapid career advancement and continuous feedback. In contrast, Generation Z seeks flexibility and mental health support (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019). The disconnect between organizational strategies and generational expectations can exacerbate ITL, highlighting the necessity for data-driven approaches that consider the unique characteristics of each cohort (Carra et al., 2020).

Despite the proven effectiveness of tailored retention strategies, there remains a lack of empirical data guiding these approaches in nursing. Many studies are anecdotal or focus on specific regions or institutions, limiting the generalizability of their findings (George et al., 2024). The present study aims to fill this critical gap by investigating how ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession behaviors differ among generational cohorts, particularly focusing on Generation Z. By generating new data on this under-researched group, this study will contribute to the development of more effective, tailored retention strategies.

Moreover, the need for ongoing research into the specific retention needs of Generation Z RNs cannot be overstated. As this cohort is marked by a different set of expectations and values, understanding their ITL their organization or the nursing profession behaviors and the factors influencing their retention will be crucial for healthcare organizations seeking to maintain a stable nursing workforce (Exclusivity, 2019). Evidence-based approaches to RN retention will not only enhance understanding of generational differences in ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession but also provide practical insights for healthcare organizations striving to improve RN retention in an increasingly diverse and dynamic workforce.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature review indicated that, despite a growing emphasis on nurse turnover, substantial gaps persisted in understanding the impact of generational differences on ITL and anxiety related to the coronavirus. The key findings from the literature review provided a framework for the research design of this study, particularly in developing strategies to explore how generational differences impacted RNs' ITL and coronavirus-related anxiety and obsession.

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional approach to gather data on how burnout, job demands, and resources varied across generational cohorts. A cross-sectional design was particularly suited to capturing a snapshot of these dynamics among baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z nurses at a specific point in time.

The quantitative method facilitated a deeper analysis of how theoretical models, generational cohort theory, the organizational commitment model, and the JD-R framework, intersected with ITL behaviors. By focusing on how these models manifested in RNs' work experiences, this study addressed critical research gaps, particularly regarding the underexplored Generation Z cohort. The quantitative approach ensured that data collection was conducted systematically and comprehensively, enabling the generation of insights that informed the development of targeted retention strategies for each generational cohort.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The primary aim of this quantitative study was to investigate the multigenerational differences in RNs ITL their organizations or the nursing profession, particularly considering the challenges introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the unprecedented strain on the healthcare workforce, it is essential to understand how these pressures have influenced nurses across various generational cohorts, specifically baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z (Moore et al., 2022). By examining the dependent variables intention to leave, coronavirus anxiety and obsession in relation to the independent variable of generational cohort, the study seeks to uncover the distinct motivations, values, and experiences that shape departure intentions within each group. This exploration is crucial for contextualizing the impact of the pandemic, enhancing targeted retention strategies, and informing organizational practices aimed at creating supportive work environments.

Research Design and Rationale

I utilized a cross-sectional design to investigate generational differences and their relationship to RNs' ITL their organizations or the nursing profession. Data were collected at a single point in time from a diverse sample of RNs across various generational cohorts, specifically baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z. Participants were invited to complete structured surveys that assess their ITL their organization or the nursing profession, alongside measures of their coronavirus anxiety and obsession.

The generational cohort was categorized based on established birth year ranges, allowing for a clear distinction between the groups. The primary objective of this study was to identify potential differences in ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession among these generational cohorts, thus offering insights into how each group's experiences and perceptions may influence their decisions to remain in or leave their organization or the nursing profession.

The cross-sectional design was particularly appropriate for this research for several reasons. First, it allows for the simultaneous examination of multiple generations within the workforce, offering a snapshot of the current state of RN retention challenges. This approach is cost-effective, facilitating the collection of substantial data in a relatively short time frame, which is crucial given the urgent nature of nursing shortages exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Hemler et al., 2021).

Moreover, employing a survey-based method for data collection enables efficient access to a large and diverse sample of RNs, thus providing insights that are more generalizable to the broader nursing population. This is essential for developing evidence-based strategies that can be implemented across various healthcare settings to enhance nurse retention (Patton et al., 2022).

The design also aligns with the study's goal of identifying correlations between generational identity, the ITL their organization or the nursing profession, and the coronavirus anxiety and obsession. By capturing current attitudes and ITL, the research can inform targeted interventions designed to address the unique needs and concerns of each generational cohort (Rattanapon et al., 2023). This focus on present-day experiences

eliminates the necessity for a longitudinal approach, which would require tracking changes over time and may not yield immediate solutions to the pressing issue of nurse attrition.

Methodology

Population

This study targeted RNs employed in various healthcare settings, including hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities across the United States. The focus was on capturing data from RNs representing different generational cohorts: Baby boomers (born 1946–1964), Generation X (born 1965–1980), millennials (born 1981–1996), and Generation Z (born 1997–present). By examining these distinct generational groups, the research aimed to gain insights into how their experiences, values, and perceptions influenced their ITL their organization or the nursing profession following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The target population for this study comprised RNs working across a variety of healthcare environments. By including RNs from diverse settings, the research sought to reflect the complexities and variations within the nursing workforce, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation from each generational cohort within the RN population. This method involved dividing the population into distinct strata and randomly selecting participants from each group.

This approach helped capture a diverse sample and ensured that each generational group was proportionately represented, allowing for meaningful comparisons across cohorts.

The inclusion criteria were RNs currently employed in healthcare settings such as hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities across the United States. Participants were required to have birth years between 1946 and 1997 to ensure representation of the specified generational cohorts.

The exclusion criteria were nurses who were either unregistered or did not possess a valid nursing license. Individuals born before 1946 or after 1997 were excluded, as they fell outside the defined generational cohorts.

The sample size for this study was set at 300 participants, as recommended by Clark and Watson (2016) for conducting factor analyses. This sample size had been utilized in multiple studies and was considered appropriate for cross-sectional research examining generational cohorts and RNs' ITL, coronavirus anxiety, and coronavirus obsession. With this size, the study aimed to achieve a statistical power of 0.80 at a 5% significance level, ensuring the ability to detect medium-sized effects. The final sample size was adjusted based on actual response rates and practical considerations to ensure that the participant pool remained representative of the broader RN population across generational lines.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection (Primary Data)

Participants were recruited through multiple channels to ensure a broad and diverse sample of RNs. Outreach was made through nursing associations and professional

networks to distribute the survey widely among RNs. Collaborating with established organizations enhanced credibility and encouraged participation.

Invitations to participate were sent to RNs via internal communication systems within healthcare organizations, such as email newsletters or bulletin boards. This direct approach facilitated higher engagement from employees. The survey was also shared on relevant social media platforms and online forums where RNs actively engaged, providing an informal yet effective way to reach potential participants.

The first step involved defining the generational cohorts based on established birth years, categorizing RNs into baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z. From each stratum, a random sample was drawn, using random selection methods from lists provided by professional organizations or healthcare facilities to ensure proportional representation from each cohort.

Potential participants received an invitation to participate that included an overview of the research objectives, a link to the online survey, and an informed consent form outlining participants' rights and the study's purpose. Upon providing consent, participants completed the survey online. Data collection was monitored to ensure adequate response rates across all generational cohorts, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of differences in turnover intentions.

Response rates were tracked continuously, and additional recruitment efforts were implemented as necessary to meet sample size requirements and ensure balanced representation across generational cohorts. This structured sampling and recruitment plan ensured a representative and diverse sample of RNs, providing a comprehensive analysis

of generational differences in relation to turnover intentions. By implementing rigorous recruitment and data collection procedures, this study contributed valuable insights into the factors affecting nurse retention in the current healthcare landscape.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

For In this study, three primary instruments were used: the ITL scale by Kim et al. (1996), the CAS by Lee (2020a), and the OCS by Lee (2020a). Each instrument was selected based on its appropriateness for the constructs being measured, including turnover intention and coronavirus-related anxiety.

The ITL scale developed by Kim et al. (1996) utilizes a 7-point Likert scale to assess an individual's likelihood of leaving their current job. This scale has been widely adopted in workforce studies, particularly in healthcare, due to its proven reliability and validity. The reliability of the ITL scale has been established through internal consistency measures, with a Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.86, indicating strong reliability. This high alpha value suggests that the scale consistently measures the construct of turnover intention across different populations. The scale's validity has been well-documented in prior research, including studies by Brewer et al. (2012) which explored new nurses' intent to stay in their roles.

Permission to use the ITL scale was sought from the original developers, and the approval letter was included in the appendix to ensure compliance with research standards and intellectual property rights.

The CAS, developed by Lee (2020a), employs a Likert scale to measure the severity of anxiety symptoms specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This scale

has been widely used in various populations, particularly among healthcare professionals, due to its ability to capture the unique psychological impact of the pandemic. The CAS has demonstrated excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.93, indicating high internal consistency and robustness across different samples. This suggests that the CAS consistently measures coronavirus-related anxiety in diverse populations.

The validity of the CAS has been confirmed through multiple studies, including those conducted by Lee (2020), Satici et al. (2020), and Evren et al. (2022), which utilized confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and other statistical methods to establish the scale's construct and predictive validity. These studies have shown that the CAS is effective in assessing pandemic-specific anxiety, making it a valuable tool for understanding how coronavirus anxiety influences mental health, particularly among frontline healthcare workers like nurses. The scale's proven utility in different settings supports its appropriateness for this study on the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on RNs.

Similarly, the OCS, developed by Lee (2020a), uses a Likert scale to assess the frequency and intensity of obsessive thoughts about the coronavirus. The OCS has demonstrated strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha (α) of 0.92, indicating its consistency in measuring obsessional thoughts across various populations. The scale has been validated in studies such as Chen et al. (2021), Kurt et al. (2021) and Pires et al. (2024), which confirmed its construct validity through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and highlighted its effectiveness in predicting obsessional behaviors related to the pandemic.

Both the CAS and OCS have been shown to effectively measure critical psychological outcomes associated with COVID-19. Permission to use these instruments was sought from Dr. Lee, with the approval letters included in the study's appendix to ensure compliance with ethical research standards.

The selected instruments are sufficient to address the research questions, as they are well-established, valid, and reliable tools for measuring ITL, coronavirus-related anxiety, and obsessional thoughts. By using instruments that have been validated in similar populations, this study will ensure accurate measurement of the constructs necessary for understanding the impact of the pandemic on RNs' work-related decisions and mental health. These tools will allow the study to explore how pandemic-related anxiety and obsession influence RNs' ITL their organization or the nursing profession, thus addressing the core research questions.

Data Analysis Plan

In this study, data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and R. These software programs are widely used for statistical analysis, offering robust tools for managing data sets, computing descriptive statistics, and performing regression analyses. Their capacity to handle large data sets made them suitable for this cross-sectional study, particularly when examining relationships between generational cohorts and RNs' ITL. The data cleaning process involved reviewing all survey responses to ensure accuracy and eligibility. Entries with inaccurate responses, such as participants indicating they were not RNs, were removed from the data set. Outliers were identified through visual inspection.

Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize demographic characteristics and study variables. Generational cohort was coded in ordinal progression from Generation Z (1) to baby boomers (4). The ITL variables were recoded as binary outcomes, with *Disagree*, *Strongly Disagree*, or *Neutral* coded as 0, and *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* coded as 1. The CAS and the OCS variables were recoded from categorical frequency responses to a 1–5 scale.

A series of linear regression analyses were conducted to examine the predictive relationships between independent variables (generational cohort, practice setting, job satisfaction subscales [job enthusiasm, job centrality], and COVID-19–related psychological distress [CAS and OCS scores]) and ITL for both the current organization and the nursing profession. Each predictor was entered in separate models to determine its unique contribution to variance in ITL outcomes. Model significance was evaluated using *F*-tests from the ANOVA tables generated as part of the regression output.

For each model, unstandardized (B) and standardized (β) coefficients, R^2 values, and associated *p*-values were reported. The statistical significance threshold was set at $p < .05$, with Bonferroni corrections applied to adjust for multiple comparisons across the models. This adjustment involved dividing the alpha level by the number of statistical tests conducted to reduce the likelihood of Type I error.

The results were interpreted in terms of the strength, direction, and statistical significance of each predictor's association with ITL. Where significant relationships were found, the findings were discussed in the context of their effect sizes and practical relevance to nurse retention strategies.

Threats to Validity

External Validity

Nurses may alter their responses on surveys related to their ITL based on perceived expectations or social desirability (Hallaran et al., 2021). This bias can distort the study's findings, as the data collected may not accurately reflect participants' true sentiments. To mitigate testing reactivity, the survey emphasized anonymity and confidentiality, reassuring participants that their responses were private and were not tied to their personal identities. Additionally, clear instructions conveyed that the study's purpose was to understand nurse experiences rather than evaluate performance.

Generational cohorts may exhibit different responses due to external factors such as regional differences in healthcare systems or variations in organizational culture (Burton et al., 2019). For example, a nurse from Generation X working in a large urban hospital may have a different experience of workplace stress than a Generation X nurse in a rural setting (Burton et al., 2019). These interaction effects could limit the generalizability of the findings. Utilizing stratified random sampling to ensure that participants were drawn from various healthcare settings and regions, capturing a diverse range of experiences (Renjith et al., 2021). By including demographic information and conducting subgroup analyses, the study clarified how external factors may influence the relationship between generational cohort and ITL, increasing the generalizability of the findings.

Focusing solely on generational cohort as the primary independent variable may overlook other influential factors, such as individual personality traits or external socioeconomic conditions that also affect a nurse's intention to leave (Lee & Lee, 2022).

Economic pressures or personal life circumstances could play a significant role in turnover decisions, irrespective of generational identity. To mitigate this threat, the study controlled for confounding variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work environment. This broader approach helped isolate the effect of generational cohort on ITL while acknowledging the potential influence of other factors.

Reactive effects of experimental arrangements can also pose a threat to external validity. In this study, if nurses complete the survey in a work environment where they feel pressure or discomfort in expressing their true thoughts about leaving their job, their responses may be biased (Hawkins et al., 2023). For instance, if a nurse feels that their supervisor could access the data, they may underreport dissatisfaction or turnover intentions. To mitigate this threat, the survey was distributed electronically, allowing participants to complete it at a time and place of their choosing, such as from home, in a private and relaxed setting.

In healthcare settings, nurses may be exposed to multiple simultaneous changes, such as new management, policy updates, or workplace reforms, which could confound the effects of generational cohort on turnover intentions (Duffy, 2022). To address this threat, the study was collected data at a single point in time, capturing participants' current attitudes and reducing the impact of external, concurrent changes. While this cross-sectional design limits the ability to examine changes over time, it offers a clearer snapshot of the relationship between generational identity and ITL.

Internal Validity

If a significant policy change, such as new staffing regulations or organizational restructuring, occurs during data collection, it could affect nurses' intention to leave, confounding the generational differences being examined. To minimize the impact of history effects, data collection was conducted in as short a time frame as possible to reduce the likelihood of external events influencing participants' responses (Muñoz et al., 2020).

Maturation is particularly relevant in the healthcare context, where job burnout may increase over time (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022). Because this study is cross-sectional and data were collected at a single point in time, maturation effects are less of a concern than they would be in a longitudinal study. However, acknowledging this limitation is important, and future studies could track ITL over time to account for maturation.

RNs with extremely high job dissatisfaction may report slightly less dissatisfaction upon subsequent measurements, regardless of generational cohort (Climek et al., 2024). This could affect the interpretation of generational differences. To mitigate this, outliers were identified during data cleaning, and appropriate transformations or removal of extreme data points considered if they unduly affect the results (Acito, 2023). In a cross-sectional study where participants complete the survey once, attrition is less of a concern (Muszyńska-Spielauer & Spielauer, 2022). However, nonresponse could be an issue if certain generational cohorts are underrepresented in the final data set. To address this, efforts were made to maximize participation rates across all generational cohorts

through targeted recruitment, reminders, and incentives, ensuring a representative sample.

Older nurses might experience more job fatigue, which could affect their ITL more strongly than younger nurses (Hampton & Welsh, 2019; Han et al. , 2024)

This interaction could confound the relationship between RNs generational cohort and ITL, as well as the coronavirus anxiety and obsession. To address this, the study controlled for potential covariates such as years of nursing experience, workload, and job satisfaction, helping isolate the specific effect of RNs generational cohort on ITL and coronavirus anxiety and obsession.

Construct Validity

In this cross-sectional study, the constructs included the intention to leave, measured by the ITL scale, the coronavirus anxiety, measured by the CAS, and the obsession with coronavirus, measured by the OCS. A potential threat to construct validity arises if these instruments fail to capture the true underlying constructs they are supposed to measure. To mitigate this threat, validated instruments with established reliability and previous use in healthcare settings were employed. Construct validity for each instrument was supported by prior research demonstrating expected correlations with related constructs in healthcare populations.

Another potential threat to construct validity could be mono-method bias, where reliance on self-reported surveys could limit the study's ability to capture the full picture of RNs' ITL. To address this, triangulation through multiple data sources, such as

interviews or organizational data on actual turnover rates, could be considered in future research (Mozaffari, 2023).

Ethical Procedures

Several key steps were taken to ensure ethical treatment of human participants. These steps included obtaining institutional permissions, addressing ethical concerns related to recruitment and data collection, and ensuring proper handling and protection of participant data. To ensure compliance with ethical standards, Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained before participant recruitment and data collection. Recruitment for this study involved reaching out to RNs across different generational cohorts, a process that raises several ethical considerations. It was essential to ensure that recruitment materials such as emails, flyers, or digital postings were free from coercion and clearly outline the voluntary nature of participation. The materials emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time without facing any penalties. Participants were also informed about the purpose of the study, potential risks, benefits, and how their data would be handled. All recruitment materials were submitted to the IRB for approval before use, ensuring that they meet ethical guidelines for clarity, transparency, and non-coercion.

During data collection, participants could choose to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any time. If a participant withdrew, their data were excluded from the final analysis to honor their decision to leave the study. The data were anonymized. The survey was conducted in a way that minimizes potential discomfort, and no participants were asked to provide any data beyond what is necessary for the

research. The study involved minimal risk. However, participants could have still felt discomfort when discussing their intention to leave their job. To address this, participants were reminded during the consent phase that they might skip any questions they find uncomfortable and that their responses were entirely confidential.

All data collected in this study, including survey responses and any demographic information, were handled with the highest level of care to protect participants' privacy. The study explicitly stated whether the data were anonymous and confidential. The data were confidentially collected. Identifying information such as names or email addresses was not collected, and participants' identities was not be linked to their responses in any public dissemination of results. Data were stored securely, with password protection on all electronic files. The data will be retained for a period specified by institutional guidelines after which it will be securely destroyed, either through shredding physical documents or permanently deleting electronic records. Participants were informed of these data storage procedures in the informed consent process.

Summary

This cross-sectional study was designed to investigate generational differences as they related to RNs' ITL their organizations or the nursing profession, as well as coronavirus-related anxiety and obsession. The study employed a quantitative methodology using validated instruments to collect data from RNs across different generational cohorts, specifically baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z.

The primary instruments used were the ITL scale developed by Kim et al. (1996), the CAS by Lee (2020a), and the OCS by Lee (2020b). These instruments were selected for their demonstrated reliability and relevance in measuring turnover intention and pandemic-related anxiety among healthcare workers.

Participants were recruited online through various healthcare-related Facebook groups to ensure a diverse sample representing multiple generational cohorts. Data were collected via electronic surveys, allowing participants to respond anonymously in a setting of their choosing. This approach helped minimize social desirability bias and encouraged honest participation.

The data were analyzed using SPSS and R statistical software. Descriptive statistics, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and multiple regression models were employed to examine the relationships among generational identity, coronavirus-related anxiety, and ITL. Post hoc analyses were conducted when appropriate to identify differences between specific generational cohorts.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine whether generational cohort influences RNs' ITL their organizations or the nursing profession, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study investigates the relationship between generational cohort (baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z) as the independent variable and ITL, coronavirus-related anxiety, and obsession as the dependent variables. This chapter presents the findings of the study, provides an analysis of the collected data, and includes an overview of the participant demographics.

Data Collection

Data were collected over an 8-week period from RNs currently employed in healthcare settings across the United States using the Survey Planet website. The survey was completed by 325 participants. The data set was downloaded as an Excel file from the Survey Planet website, securely saved on a password-protected hard drive.

Generational cohort was coded in ordinal progression from Generation Z (1) to baby boomers (4). The ITL variables were recoded as a binary outcome *disagree/strongly disagree/neutral* = 0 and *agree/strongly agree* = 1. The Coronavirus anxiety and obsession variables, originally measured by frequency categories (*not at all, rare, less than a day or 2, several days, more than 7 days, nearly every day over the last 2 weeks*), was recoded from categorical to a 1–5 scale.

No discrepancies were identified during data cleaning, and no responses were removed. A sample size of 300 participants was estimated in Chapter 3 to ensure

sufficient statistical power; the final sample of 325 exceeded this target. The sample was predominantly female, with 293 participants identifying as female, 22 as male, 9 preferring not to disclose their gender, and 1 identifying as nonbinary. Participants' years of experience as RNs ranged from less than 2 years to more than 12 years, with the majority (92.6%) reporting over 12 years of experience. Of the 325 RNs surveyed, 123 (37.8%) indicated an intention to leave their current organization. Among those, 96 (78.0%) also reported an intention to leave the nursing profession entirely. Table 1 shows the participants' demographic information.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Female	293	90.2%
Male	22	6.8%
Nonbinary	1	0.3%
Prefer not to say	9	2.8%
Generational cohort		
Baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964)	238	73.2%
Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980)	73	22.5%
Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012)	4	1.2%
Millennials/Generation Y (born between 1981 and 1996)	10	3.1%
Years of RN experience		
0–2 years	3	0.9%
3–5 years	2	0.6%
6–8 years	8	2.5%
9–11 years	11	3.4%
12+ years	301	92.6%
Practice setting		
Hospitals	154	47.4%
Clinics and physician offices	38	11.7%
Other	38	11.7%
Long-term care and rehabilitation facilities	26	8.0%
Home healthcare	25	7.7%
Academia and research	16	4.9%
Public health and community health centers	11	3.4%
Telehealth and remote nursing	6	1.8%
Military and government services	5	1.5%
Travel nursing	5	1.5%
Occupational health and corporate settings	1	0.3%

Results

Generational Cohort and Intent to Leave

The primary hypothesis of this study proposed that generational cohort would predict an employee's ITL both their current organization and the nursing profession, with the assumption that a linear relationship exists between generational cohort and turnover intention. Two separate linear regression analyses were conducted.

In the first model, generational cohort was coded as an ordinal predictor ranging from Generation Z (1) to baby boomers (4), and ITL the profession was coded as a binary outcome. Results revealed a small negative association ($B = -.015$), indicating that older nurses were slightly less likely to report an intention to leave the profession. The model predicting ITL the profession from generational cohort was statistically significant, $F(1, 323) = 9.634$, $p = .002$, and remained significant after applying the Bonferroni correction. However, the model explained only 3.2% of the variance in professional turnover intention ($R^2 = .032$), suggesting that additional factors may play a more influential role in nurses' decisions to leave the profession.

In the second model, the same predictor variable was used to examine ITL the current organization. The analysis showed a small positive relationship ($B = -.184$), suggesting that older nurses were more likely to consider leaving their organization. This model was also statistically significant, $F(1, 323) = 10.628$, $p = .001$, and retained significance following Bonferroni adjustment. Nonetheless, the variance explained was minimal ($R^2 = .029$), again indicating that generational cohort alone offers limited predictive power for organizational turnover intention.

Table 2*Generational Cohort and Intention to Leave*

Model summary						
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate		
1	.178 ^a	.032	.029	.49225		
a. Predictors: (Constant), generation_cohort						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.575	1	2.575	10.628	.001 ^b
	Residual	78.268	323	.242		
	Total	80.843	324			
a. Dependent variable: leave_organization						
b. Predictors: (constant), generation_cohort						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.015	.171		-.086	.932
	generation_cohort	.150	.046	.178	3.260	.001
a. Dependent Variable: leave_organization						
Model summary						
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate		
1	.170 ^a	.029	.026	.45095		
a. Predictors: (constant), generation_cohort						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.959	1	1.959	9.634	.002 ^b
	Residual	65.684	323	.203		
	Total	67.643	324			
a. Dependent variable: leave_profession						
b. Predictors: (constant), generation_cohort						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.184	.157		-1.178	.240
	generation_cohort	.130	.042	.170	3.104	.002
a. Dependent variable: leave_profession						

Beyond generational effects, this study examined whether specific job satisfaction subscales, job enthusiasm and job centrality, were linearly associated with turnover intentions.

For organizational turnover, the regression model predicting ITL the organization from job enthusiasm (“Most days, I am enthusiastic about my job”) was statistically significant, $F(1, 323) = 30.304$, $p < .001$, and remained significant after applying the Bonferroni correction. Job enthusiasm demonstrated a modest positive association ($B = 0.681$) and explained 8.6% of the variance ($R^2 = .086$) in organizational turnover intention. In contrast, the regression model examining job centrality (“My job is central to my existence”) as a predictor of organizational turnover intention was not statistically significant, $F(1, 323) = 1.391$, $p = .239$, did not meet the Bonferroni-adjusted threshold, and accounted for only 0.4% of the variance ($R^2 = .004$; $B = 0.559$).

For professional turnover, the regression model predicting ITL the profession from job enthusiasm was statistically significant, $F(1, 323) = 45.024$, $p < .001$, and retained significance after Bonferroni adjustment. This model explained 12.2% of the variance ($R^2 = .122$) with a positive regression coefficient ($B = 0.454$). The regression model for job centrality predicting professional turnover was also statistically significant, $F(1, 323) = 10.728$, $p = .001$, and remained significant after Bonferroni correction, explaining 3.2% of the variance ($R^2 = .032$; $B = 0.358$).

These findings indicate that while both job enthusiasm and job centrality contribute to predicting turnover intentions, job enthusiasm consistently explained a greater proportion of the variance across both organizational and professional outcomes.

Notably, job centrality had more explanatory power for professional turnover than for organizational turnover. The modest effect sizes observed suggest that job satisfaction factors, although relevant, may operate in conjunction with nonlinear effects or interact with other influences, such as workplace environment or external stressors, to more fully explain turnover intentions.

Table 3*Job Satisfaction and Intention to Leave*

Model summary						
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate		
1	.293a	.086	.083	.47836		
a. Predictors: (constant), enthusiastic_job						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.932	1	6.932	30.294	<.001b
	Residual	73.911	323	.229		
	Total	80.843	324			
a. Dependent variable: leave_organization						
b. Predictors: (constant), enthusiastic_job						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.681	.037		18.175	<.001
	enthusiastic_job	-.292	.053	-.293	-5.504	<.001
a. Dependent variable: leave_organization						
Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.349a	.122	.119	.42890		
a. Predictors: (Constant), enthusiastic_job						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.226	1	8.226	44.717	<.001b
	Residual	59.417	323	.184		
	Total	67.643	324			
a. Dependent variable: leave_profession						
b. Predictors: (constant), enthusiastic_job						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.454	.034		13.514	<.001
	enthusiastic_job	-.318	.048	-.349	-6.687	<.001
a. Dependent variable: leave_profession						

Model Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.061a	.004	.001	.49936

a. Predictors: (constant), central_existence

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.301	1	.301	1.207	.273b
	Residual	80.542	323	.249		
	Total	80.843	324			

a. Dependent variable: leave_organization

b. Predictors: (constant), central_existence

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.559	.035		15.984	<.001
	central_existence	-.063	.057	-.061	-1.099	.273

a. Dependent variable: leave_organization

Model summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.178a	.032	.029	.45034

a. Predictors: (constant), central_existence

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.138	1	2.138	10.540	.001b
	Residual	65.506	323	.203		
	Total	67.643	324			

a. Dependent variable: leave_profession

b. Predictors: (constant), central_existence

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.358	.032		11.349	<.001
	central_existence	-.168	.052	-.178	-3.247	.001

a. Dependent variable: leave_profession

Generational Cohort and Coronavirus Anxiety and Obsession

When COVID-19–related psychological distress was examined as a potential predictor of turnover intentions, the results indicated weak and inconsistent associations.

For organizational turnover, the regression model predicting ITL the organization from COVID-related anxiety (“I felt dizzy, lightheaded, or faint when I read or listened to news about the coronavirus”) was not statistically significant, $F(1, 323) = 2.178, p = .141$, and did not meet the Bonferroni-adjusted significance threshold. The model accounted for only 0.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .007$) with a positive regression coefficient ($B = 0.463$). Similarly, the regression model predicting organizational turnover intention from COVID-related obsession (“I had disturbing thoughts that I may have caught the coronavirus”) was not statistically significant, $F(1, 323) = 1.527, p = .218$, failed to meet the Bonferroni-adjusted criterion, and explained only 0.5% of the variance ($R^2 = .005; B = 0.474$). These results suggest negligible predictive value for both anxiety and obsession in explaining organizational turnover intention.

For professional turnover, the regression model predicting ITL the profession from COVID-related anxiety was statistically significant at the unadjusted level, $F(1, 323) = 8.227, p = .004$, explaining 2.5% of the variance ($R^2 = .025; B = 0.171$). However, this finding did not remain statistically significant after applying the Bonferroni correction. Similarly, the regression model predicting professional turnover intention from COVID-related obsession was statistically significant at the unadjusted level, $F(1, 323) = 8.609, p = .004$, but did not survive the Bonferroni adjustment, accounting for only 2.6% of the variance ($R^2 = .026; B = 0.163$).

Collectively, these findings indicate that COVID-related psychological distress, whether manifested as anxiety or obsession, offered minimal explanatory power for predicting either organizational or professional turnover intentions. Even where statistical significance was observed prior to correction, effect sizes remained small, suggesting that these variables may have only limited relevance in understanding turnover behavior compared to other factors such as generational cohort or job satisfaction.

Table 4*Coronavirus Anxiety and Obsession and Intention to Leave*

Model summary						
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate		
1	.084a	.007	.004	.49853		
a. Predictors: (constant), coronavirus_news						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.568	1	.568	2.284	.132b
	Residual	80.275	323	.249		
	Total	80.843	324			
a. Dependent variable: leave_organization						
b. Predictors: (constant), coronavirus_news						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.463	.055		8.382	<.001
	coronavirus_news	.053	.035	.084	1.511	.132
a. Dependent variable: leave_organization						
Variables entered/removed ^a						
Model	Variables entered		Variables removed		Method	
1	coronavirus_newsb		.		Enter	
a. Dependent variable: leave_profession						
b. All requested variables entered.						
Model summary						
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate		
1	.158a	.025	.022	.45187		
a. Predictors: (constant), coronavirus_news						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.690	1	1.690	8.277	.004b
	Residual	65.953	323	.204		
	Total	67.643	324			
a. Dependent variable: leave_profession						
b. Predictors: (constant), coronavirus_news						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.171	.050		3.408	<.001
	coronavirus_news	.091	.032	.158	2.877	.004
a. Dependent variable: leave_profession						
Variables entered/removed ^a						
Model	Variables entered		Variables removed		Method	

1	coronavirus thoughtsb	.	Enter
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a. Dependent variable: leave_organization

b. All requested variables entered.

Model summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.068a	.005	.002	.49914

a. Predictors: (constant), coronavirus_thoughts

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.372	1	.372	1.493	.223b
	Residual	80.471	323	.249		
	Total	80.843	324			

a. Dependent variable: leave_organization

b. Predictors: (constant), coronavirus_thoughts

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.474	.057		8.262	<.001
	coronavirus thoughts	.046	.038	.068	1.222	.223

a. Dependent variable: leave_organization

Variables entered/removed^a

Model	Variables entered	Variables removed	Method
1	coronavirus thoughtsb	.	Enter

a. Dependent variable: leave_profession

b. All requested variables entered.

Model summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.160a	.026	.023	.45172

a. Predictors: (constant), coronavirus_thoughts

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.734	1	1.734	8.498	.004b
	Residual	65.909	323	.204		
	Total	67.643	324			

a. Dependent variable: leave_profession

b. Predictors: (constant), coronavirus_thoughts

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.163	.052		3.136	.002
	coronavirus thoughts	.099	.034	.160	2.915	.004

a. Dependent variable: leave_profession

Turnover Intention and Practice Setting

To identify which variables most effectively predict nurses' turnover intentions, linear regression models were conducted with generational cohort and practice setting entered separately as independent variables. Turnover intention was assessed across two outcomes: ITL the current organization and ITL the nursing profession.

For organizational turnover intention, the regression model predicting ITL the organization from practice setting was not statistically significant, $F(1, 323) = 2.869$, $p = .091$, and did not meet the Bonferroni-adjusted significance threshold. In comparison, the regression model with generational cohort as the predictor explained 3.2% of the variance ($R^2 = .032$; $B = -0.015$), whereas practice setting accounted for only 0.9% ($R^2 = .009$; $B = 0.581$). These results indicate that generational cohort was the stronger predictor of ITL the organization, although the effect size was small.

For professional turnover intention, the regression model predicting ITL the profession from practice setting was also not statistically significant, $F(1, 323) = 5.544$, $p = .019$, and did not survive the Bonferroni correction. Generational cohort explained 2.9% of the variance ($R^2 = .029$; $B = -0.184$), compared to 1.7% explained by practice setting ($R^2 = .017$; $B = 0.357$). This again suggests that generational cohort demonstrated a slightly greater predictive strength than practice setting in this sample.

Overall, these findings suggest that while generational differences exert a somewhat stronger influence than practice setting in predicting turnover intentions, the explanatory power of both variables is limited. This reinforces the need to consider

additional individual, organizational, and contextual factors when modeling nurses' decisions to leave their organization or the profession.

Table 5

Practice Setting and Intention to Leave

Model summary				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.093a	.009	.006	.49821

a. Predictors: (constant), practice setting

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.702	1	.702	2.826	.094b
	Residual	79.925	322	.248		
	Total	80.627	323			

a. Dependent variable: leave_organization

b. Predictors: (constant), practice setting

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.581	.039		14.778	<.001
	practice setting	-.013	.008	-.093	-1.681	.094

a. Dependent variable: leave_organization

Model summary				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	.131a	.017	.014	.45409

a. Predictors: (constant), practice setting

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.161	1	1.161	5.630	.018b
	Residual	66.395	322	.206		
	Total	67.556	323			

a. Dependent variable: leave_profession

b. Predictors: (constant), practice setting

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.357	.036		9.955	<.001
	practice setting	-.017	.007	-.131	-2.373	.018

a. Dependent variable: leave_profession

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the results and analysis of the statistical tests conducted to address the research questions for this study. These analyses examined whether generational cohort, practice setting, job satisfaction subscales, and COVID-19–related psychological distress predicted nurses' ITL their current organization and the nursing profession.

Following the application of the Bonferroni correction to control for Type I error, generational cohort remained a statistically significant predictor for both organizational and professional turnover intentions, although the effect sizes were small. Practice setting did not retain significance after correction and accounted for a minimal proportion of the variance in turnover intentions. Among the job satisfaction subscales, job enthusiasm consistently demonstrated the strongest associations with turnover intentions and remained significant after adjustment, while job centrality was significant for professional turnover but not for organizational turnover. COVID-19–related anxiety and obsession did not retain significance following Bonferroni correction, indicating limited predictive utility.

Overall, generational differences displayed slightly greater predictive strength than practice setting or COVID-related psychological distress, though none of the predictors accounted for a large proportion of variance in turnover intentions. Job satisfaction variables, particularly job enthusiasm, contributed more meaningfully to prediction models, but their explanatory power was still modest.

Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the study's purpose, a detailed discussion and interpretation of the results, and an examination of the limitations, recommendations, and implications for nursing practice and workforce policy, followed by a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This quantitative study examined the relationship between generational cohort, job satisfaction, practice setting, and COVID-19 related psychological distress in predicting nurses' ITL both their organization and the nursing profession. The study is unique to the nursing workforce literature as it integrates generational differences with workplace factors and external stressors, offering a more comprehensive view of turnover intention. Previous research has often examined these factors in isolation, but this study considers their combined influence, adding new insights that may inform retention strategies and workforce planning in nursing. The target population for this study was RNs currently employed in healthcare settings across the United States.

The focus of this study was to identify and address the degree to which generational cohort and workplace variables contribute to turnover intention, thereby informing healthcare leaders on interventions that can be implemented to support retention efforts. Another focus was to examine whether COVID-19–related psychological distress, specifically anxiety and obsession, was associated with turnover intention, given the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic. Additionally, the study sought to determine whether practice setting differences influence turnover intention in ways that are distinct from generational effects.

The primary hypothesis was that generational cohort would significantly predict nurses' ITL their organization and the profession. The results indicated that generational cohort was a consistent but modest predictor of turnover intentions, with older

generations showing slightly different patterns depending on whether organizational or professional turnover was examined. The secondary analyses tested whether job satisfaction subscales and COVID-19 related psychological distress predicted turnover intentions. The findings showed mixed results, with job enthusiasm and job centrality demonstrating modest associations, and COVID-related anxiety and obsession showing weak relationships that did not meet assumptions for strong predictive use. Finally, comparisons of generational cohort and practice setting as predictors indicated that generational differences had a slightly greater influence, although both explained only a small proportion of variance.

Interpretation of the Findings

This section includes an interpretation of the results from the linear regression analyses used to test the study's hypotheses. The results contribute to the current knowledge regarding turnover intentions among RNs, specifically examining the influence of generational cohort, job satisfaction, practice setting, and COVID-19 related psychological distress.

Generational Cohort Association With Intent to Leave

The primary hypothesis of this study, that generational cohort would predict nurses' ITL their current organization and the nursing profession, was partially supported. The results revealed small but statistically measurable associations between generational cohort and turnover intentions, with differences depending on the outcome. For professional turnover, older nurses were slightly less likely to report an intention to leave the profession ($B = -0.015$; $R^2 = .032$). In contrast, for organizational turnover,

older nurses were slightly more likely to report an intention to leave their organization ($B = -0.184$; $R^2 = .029$).

Although the effect sizes were modest, these findings align with previous literature suggesting that generational differences may influence turnover decisions but are not the sole determinant. Other variables, such as workplace culture, career stage, and external stressors, likely play more substantial roles in shaping nurses' decisions to stay or leave.

Job Satisfaction Association With Intent to Leave

Secondary analyses examined whether job satisfaction subscales, specifically job enthusiasm and job centrality, were associated with turnover intentions. Job enthusiasm demonstrated a modest association with both organizational turnover ($R^2 = .086$; $B = 0.681$) and professional turnover ($R^2 = .122$; $B = 0.454$), suggesting that nurses who feel consistently enthusiastic about their work are less likely to leave. Job centrality showed weaker associations, explaining only 0.4% of the variance for organizational turnover ($B = 0.559$) and 3.2% for professional turnover ($B = 0.358$).

These results reinforce prior research indicating that while job satisfaction is related to turnover intention, it rarely accounts for a large portion of the variance on its own. The modest predictive strength suggests that nonlinear relationships or interaction effects may exist, requiring more advanced modeling in future research.

COVID-19–Related Psychological Distress and Intent to Leave

When pandemic-related anxiety and obsession were examined, the results indicated weak associations with turnover intentions. For organizational turnover, anxiety

explained 0.7% of the variance ($B = 0.463$) and obsession explained 0.5% ($B = 0.474$).

For professional turnover, the variance explained was slightly higher, 2.5% for anxiety ($B = 0.171$) and 2.6% for obsession ($B = 0.163$), but still weak overall.

These findings suggest that, while COVID-19–related psychological distress may have influenced nurses' daily experiences and stress levels, it was not a strong linear predictor of their decision to leave. This aligns with emerging studies indicating that while the pandemic exacerbated workplace pressures, its impact on turnover intentions is intertwined with preexisting job satisfaction and organizational issues (Auerbach et al., 2024)

Practice Setting as a Predictor

Comparisons between generational cohort and practice setting revealed that generational cohort was the stronger predictor for both organizational and professional turnover, though both variables explained only a small proportion of the variance (organizational: 3.2% vs. 0.9%; professional: 2.9% vs. 1.7%). This suggests that while workplace context may contribute to turnover intention, personal and generational characteristics exert slightly more influence in this sample.

Overall, the findings indicate that nurse turnover intentions are shaped by a complex interplay of demographic factors, individual attitudes, and contextual workplace elements. The modest explanatory power of any single variable highlights the need for multifactorial approaches, both in research and in retention strategies, to effectively address the nursing workforce crisis.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to RNs currently employed in healthcare settings across the United States who completed the online survey through SurveyPlanet.com over an 8-week period. The final data set consisted of 325 participants and was downloaded as an Excel file from the Survey Planet website, then securely stored on a password-protected hard drive. While the findings provide valuable insight into generational cohort differences, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions, they may not be fully generalizable to all nurses in the United States or to nurses in other countries with differing healthcare systems and workplace structures.

The sample was predominantly female, with 293 participants identifying as female, 22 as male, 9 preferring not to disclose their gender, and 1 identifying as nonbinary. Participants' years of experience as RNs ranged from less than 2 years to more than 12 years, with the majority (92.6%) reporting over 12 years of experience. While this high level of experience provides valuable perspectives from seasoned nurses, it may limit the applicability of findings to early-career nurses whose turnover intentions and job satisfaction patterns could differ substantially.

Generational cohort representation in this study was based on the number of respondents in each category. Smaller sample sizes in some groups, particularly Generation Z and certain practice settings, may have reduced statistical power and limited the ability to detect meaningful differences. As with other generational diversity research, the definitions of generational cohorts used in this study involved overlapping birth year ranges, which reflects the broader scholarly debate regarding the absence of

universally agreed-upon boundaries and the notion that generational identity is not solely defined by chronological age.

The use of self-reported survey data introduces the possibility of response bias, including recall bias and social desirability bias. Additionally, the online format required participants to have internet access and basic computer literacy, which may have excluded certain segments of the nursing workforce and affected the representativeness of the sample.

Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to draw causal inferences or assess changes in turnover intentions over time. Future research using longitudinal or time-series data could account for generational shifts and changes in job satisfaction and retention patterns as nurses progress through different career stages.

Recommendations

This study focused on generational cohort differences in relation to job satisfaction, practice setting, and COVID-19 related psychological distress, and how each of these variables impacted nurses' ITL their organization and the profession. Based on the study findings, further qualitative research is needed to provide deeper insights into the specific needs, values, and workplace expectations of nurses from different generational cohorts, particularly as they relate to professional retention. Such research could help leaders develop more effective, targeted retention strategies that reflect the realities of a multigenerational nursing workforce.

Given the relatively small representation of Generation Z in this sample, future research should include a larger and more robust representation of this cohort.

Understanding Gen Z's motivations, career priorities, and retention drivers will be critical as they increasingly enter the nursing workforce. Additional studies could also examine the perceptions of nursing students and new graduates regarding job satisfaction and long-term career intentions, providing insights that may inform early retention efforts before nurses enter the workforce.

Expanding the study to examine differences by specific practice settings, specialties, or care delivery models could provide actionable data for targeted retention strategies. For example, the turnover intentions of nurses in acute care hospitals may differ substantially from those in community health, long-term care, or military/government healthcare and these distinctions were not fully explored in the present study.

Finally, future research should consider the influence of other demographic and workplace factors, such as supervisor-employee age differences, gender dynamics, or racial and cultural diversity, on job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Understanding how these variables intersect with generational identity could inform evidence-based policymaking and guide healthcare leaders in designing work environments that better meet the needs of a generationally diverse nursing workforce. A thorough understanding of these preferences will enable human resources and nursing leadership to tailor workplace policies and retention initiatives to motivate and support nurses across all generational groups.

Implications

The implications of this study include gaining a deeper understanding of generational cohorts in the nursing workforce and their relationship to turnover intentions. The results can be used to inform workforce planning and retention strategies within healthcare organizations, professional nursing associations, and academic institutions. Specifically, the findings may guide efforts to design targeted interventions that address generational differences, ensuring that retention approaches reflect the unique needs and motivations of each cohort.

For older cohorts, who in this study showed slightly higher ITL, initiatives might focus on flexible work arrangements, phased retirement pathways, and opportunities to share expertise through mentorship. For younger cohorts, retention strategies may emphasize professional growth, job satisfaction, and fostering a strong sense of organizational belonging.

The limited predictive value of job satisfaction subscales and practice setting highlights that retention policies must account for multiple factors beyond demographics alone. Integrating these findings into human capital policies may support a sustainable nursing workforce capable of meeting diverse and evolving healthcare needs.

Conclusion

The evidence from this study provided partial support for the hypothesis that generational cohort influences nurses' turnover intentions at both the organizational and professional levels. While generational differences emerged as a statistically significant

predictor, the amount of variance explained was modest, suggesting that other factors play a more substantial role in shaping turnover decisions.

The study found that nurses with higher job enthusiasm and job centrality generally reported lower turnover intentions, regardless of generational cohort, although the predictive strength of these job satisfaction variables was limited. COVID-19 related anxiety and obsession were weakly associated with turnover intentions and did not meet the assumptions for strong predictive modeling. Furthermore, practice setting was a less influential predictor than generational cohort, though it still contributed to explaining variance in professional turnover intentions.

These findings highlight that nurse retention is shaped by a combination of generational, motivational, and contextual workplace factors rather than generational differences alone.

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Appendix: Research Design Alignment Table

Research Problem, Purpose, and Framework	<u>Research</u> Question(s), Method, & Design	<u>Types</u> of Data to be Collected and Data Collection <u>Instruments</u>	<u>Data Sources</u>	<u>Data Analysis</u>
<p><u>Problem:</u> Surveyed registered nurses express an increased intention to leave direct patient care. Little is known about multigenerational differences in intention to leave among registered nurses in the workforce. In the efforts to increase retention, it is important to understand the reasons why nurses intend leave their employment or the profession.</p> <p><u>Purpose:</u> Examine multi-generational age differences on the registered nurse's intention to leave. The dependent variables are the registered nurse's intention to leave, coronavirus anxiety and obsession and the independent variable is the generational cohort.</p>	<p>RQ1: How do registered nurses' age (generational cohort) affect their Intention To Leave (ITL) their organization or the nursing profession? Method: Quantitative Design: Correlation.</p>	<p>Intention to Leave by Kim et al., 1996; coronavirus Anxiety Survey by Lee (2020a) and Obsession with Coronavirus Scale by Lee (2020b).</p>	<p>Independent variable is generational cohort and dependent variable is ITL, coronavirus anxiety, and obsession with coronavirus.</p>	<p>Descriptive statistics: correlational design will use either, correlation or regression analysis; possible odds ratios to compare direction & if significant differences exist between generational cohorts on ITL.</p>
	<p>RQ2: Replace text with response. Method: Quantitative Design: Correlation.</p>	<p>Intention to Leave by Kim et al., 1996; coronavirus Anxiety Survey by Lee (2020a) and Obsession with Coronavirus Scale by Lee (2020b).</p>	<p>Independent variable is generational cohort and dependent variable is ITL, coronavirus anxiety, and obsession with coronavirus.</p>	<p>Descriptive statistics: correlational design will use either, correlation or regression analysis; possible odds ratios to compare direction & if significant differences exist between generational cohorts on ITL.</p>
	<p>RQ3: Replace text with response. Method: Quantitative Design: Correlation.</p>	<p>Intention to Leave by Kim et al., 1996; coronavirus Anxiety Survey by Lee (2020a) and Obsession with Coronavirus Scale by Lee (2020b).</p>	<p>Independent variable is generational cohort and dependent variable is ITL, coronavirus anxiety, and</p>	<p>Descriptive statistics: correlational design will use either, correlation or regression analysis;</p>

<p><u>Framework:</u> Strauss and Howe's theory of generation cohort (van Twist & Newcombe, 2021) and organizational commitment model (Liou,2009) encompass both the boundaries of intention to leave (ITL) and multigenerational workforce precepts. Moloney et al (2018) Job demands-resources framework will guide the identification of factors associated with burnout; a phenomenon associated with workers to ITL.</p>			<p>obsession with coronavirus.</p>	<p>possible odds ratios to compare direction & if significant differences exist between generational cohorts on ITL.</p>
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Note. The information in the first column must align with all rows, and each individual RQ row must show alignment across the columns for that row.