Employee Wellness and Burnout: Does Generation Matter?

By

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ABSTRACT

Today’s workforce includes the widest variety of employees ever seen, and for the first time ever, there are five generations working side by side. This study examines the relationships between employee burnout, employee mental health, work-life balance, job and life satisfaction, and whether generational differences have any effect on these variables. Job burnout is a critical issue as stress levels are at an all-time high, especially during Covid-19. Businesses need to understand that everyone will respond differently to certain types of relief, generally due to the qualities they find important, and commonly this is generationally developed.. An online survey was used to collect data from voluntary and qualified online participants. Data was collected using the General Health Questionnaire at work (GHQW), Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure (SMBM), Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) short form, Satisfaction with Life Scale, and the Work Life Balance Measure (WLBM). Data were examined and analyzed to determine if there were a significant relationship between an employee’s generation and levels of burnout, mental health, work-life balance, and job and life satisfaction. Results are discussed considering existing literature; implications for practice, and direction for future research is suggested.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In today’s workforce, individuals are dealing with far more stress than they have in the past (Abramson, 2022; World Health Organization, 2022). This is due to a myriad of reasons including downsizing, layoffs, a less than ideal economy, and a global pandemic throwing all workplace norms into chaos. Increasingly more businesses are reorganizing and restricting their overall structures, resulting in a decrease of opportunities for advancement. Many are working longer hours daily with an increasing number of hours per period, while carrying more intensive workloads overall (Abramson, 2022; Richardson, 2017; Sobrino-de Toro et al., 2019). Adding to these obstacles, the Corona virus has caused abrupt changes in the workplace, essentially obscuring already blurred lines between work and home on a level never seen before (Chi et al., 2021; Kloutsiniotis et al., 2022). As a result, work-life balance is becoming severely unbalanced, and symptoms of burnout are being noticed much more regularly. Before Covid struck, employees were reporting the highest levels of stress and lowest levels of gratification ever (Hsu et al., 2019; Pitt-Catsouphes & Matz-Costa, 2008).

For the first time in history, the current[[1]](#footnote-1) workforce includes five generations working side by side. The five generations in the current workforce include the Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Xers, Millennials, and Gen Z. A few reasons for this are delayed retirement, longer lifespans, and earlier entry into the workforce. As a direct result, there are more potential employees with less available positions, causing interoffice conflicts, more scarce resources, and increased burnout levels. This multi-generational dynamic has its own set of issues on top of intensive workloads. Each generation has its own work values, perspective, ethics, work style, and definition of success (Fraone et al., 2007; Oliveira et al., 2018; Sobrino-de Toro et al., 2019), and these differences can enhance and enrich or diminish and weaken a workplace, depending on how they are harnessed. If left unattended, these differences can cause major repercussions to an organization and its employees, such as a fiscal loss due to low morale and productivity levels and higher turnover rates. One of the most noticeable conflicts of multi-generational workplaces is the struggle over such resources as salaries and available positions, but communication styles and ethics often clash as well (Sobrino-de Toro et al., 2019).

This study aims to extend and strengthen prior research on generational differences in the workplace and the effects on burnout, employee mental health, work-life balance, and job and life satisfaction. A concept map of these relationships is provided in Appendix A.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

*Generational Differences*

With five generations in the workforce, a basic understanding of what makes up a generation is important as it can provide insight on how each generational perspective is developed. Age is the most common predictor of the distinct approaches taken towards the formation of a generation. It tends to be the main indicator of how topics such as communication, leadership style, technology use, work ethic, and feedback expectations are developed, but the formation of a generation goes beyond age itself (Becton et al., 2014; Sobrino-de Toro et al., 2019). A generation is defined as a group of individuals characterized by behaviors, values, and attitudes that have been shaped by events and experiences and have been learned in a specific time and place. This creates a distinct group of individuals with a collective memory and culture (Leuty & Hansen, 2014; Parry & Urwin, 2011). The key to understanding a generation means understanding how each was formed (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Five generations in the workforce:*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Traditionalist | 1922-1945 | 77 to 100 years old |
| Baby Boomer | 1946-1964 | 58 to 76 years old |
| Generation X (Xers) | 1965-1980 | 42 to 57 years old |
| Millennial | 1981-1996 | 26 to 41 years old |
| Generation Z (Gen Z) | 1997-2010 | 25 to 12 years old |

Traditionalists were born between 1922 and 1945 and their most defining characteristics are strong work ethic and loyalty. This generation’s workforce is almost solely male, work-centric, and very loyal to their company (Fraone et al., 2007). In the workplace, they are engaged, rule-following, rarely question authority, and prioritize stability. Traditionalists focus on quality of work rather than quantity and have the mind-set of getting the job done (Berkup, 2014). Due to living through The Great Depression and WWII, a time when jobs were scarce, Traditionalists see having a job as a blessing, a privilege, and an obligation. This encourages great loyalty and plans for longevity, with the belief that they would work for the same company their entire career (Raymer et al., 2017).

Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, are very work centric. Their work is top priority, defines who they are, and provides security which is highly valued (Lu & Gursoy, 2016; Smola & Sutton, 2002). The cold war and civil rights movement are thought to have affected Boomers most. Women also began to enter the workforce in record numbers (Fraone et al., 2007; Raymer et al., 2017). Being perfectionists and workaholics, they believe that hard work will pay off in the long run (Gursoy et al., 2013; Martin & Gentry, 2011). They also believe visibility is very important, and because of this, work-life balance is often non-existent (Berkup, 2014; Kupperschmidt, 2000). Like Traditionalists, Boomers also plan to be with the same organization their entire career (Lu & Gursoy, 2016).

Generation X (also known as Xers) were born between 1965 and 1980, and are characterized as “adaptable, independent, creative, and skeptical” (Lu & Gursoy, 2016, p. 215). This was the first generation to normalize dual-earning couples. A severe increase in divorces and suicides, Watergate, and the financial and economical insecurities of the 70s affected Xers most. These events caused Xers to be motivated by extrinsic rewards such as money (Martin & Gentry, 2011; Raymer et al., 2017). Due to this motivational factor, they have low loyalties to individual organizations (Gursoy et al., 2013; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Twenge et al., 2010). Xers work so they can live how they want, but, unlike Traditionalists and Boomers, work does not define a Xer’s life, it is a means to an end (Fraone et al., 2007).

Millennials were born between 1981 and 1996 and like to define their own work experience. They highly value work-life balance and leisure time, and are more open-minded and driven (Raymer et al., 2017). They have grand expectations of promotions, expect instant feedback, and are confident, collaborative, and more tolerant than previous generations (Gursoy et al., 2013; Martin & Gentry, 2011; Ng et al., 2010). Millennials’ values and beliefs have been shaped by the digital age, advances in technology and communication, social media, and a turbulent economy (Martin & Gentry, 2011; Raymer et al., 2017). They are dedicated to their own career, and as such hold no company loyalties but desire meaningful work (Lu & Gursoy, 2016).

Generation Z (also known as Gen Z) were born after 1997 and have recently entered the workplace in force. Many have begun working earlier than previous generations due to an unstable economy and the need for financial stability (Dolot, 2018). They are thought to be most affected by the War on Terror and the Recession of 2008 (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). They were raised with technology and have never known life without it. Due to this, they are accustomed to instant access to almost any information (Berkup, 2014). They are motivated by security, extrinsic rewards such as money, and are more socially conscious than previous generations. They are more competitive and prefer working independently rather than in teams. They expect immediate recognition of their accomplishments and prefer face-to-face communication.

“Most research studies suggest that differences in current [generations in the workplace] center on values and beliefs about work, communication styles, need for feedback, job commitment, personal gratification for work effort, and internal motivational drivers,” (Fraone et al., 2007, p. 3). Recent research supports that worker motivation is related to generation association (Sobrino-de Toro et al., 2019). For example, Millennials expect quick promotions and rewards and may change jobs quickly due to not receiving these in what they see as a timely

manner, whereas Boomers feel they should earn any rewards and promotions based on hard work and time put into the job (Berkup, 2014). This means that if the correct motivating incentives are identified for each generation in the workforce and applied, then organizations could assist their employees in accomplishing their best work while maintaining high productivity levels (Inceoglu et al., 2012; Kooij et al., 2011; Leuty & Hansen, 2014; Sobrino-de Toro et al., 2019).

*Burnout*

Employee burnout has been intensively studied and has reached an elevated level that is concerning across multiple fields (Abramson, 2022; Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022; Kloutsiniotis et al., 2022). This is especially true with a global pandemic causing massive policy changes to working environments. In this study, I have defined burnout as ‘the feeling of being overextended and depleted of one’s emotional and physical resources.’ Burnout manifests itself in several subtle ways, including depersonalization, emotional fatigue, lack of accomplishment, exhaustion, cognitive weariness, cynicism, and ineffective efforts (Abramson, 2022; Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022; Jawahar, 2012; Lu & Gursoy, 2016; Lundgren-Nilsson et al., 2012; McClafferty & Brown, 2014).

According to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, stress results from three conditions: 1) a threat of resource loss, 2) an actual loss of the resources required to sustain the individual, and 3) the lack of reasonable gain following resource investments (Hobfoll, 1989). Resources are classified as anything perceived by the individual to help them attain their goals (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Therefore, when individuals suffer from high levels of stress and burnout it is considered a threat to their current resources, such as their knowledge, time, and, most especially, their energy (Koutsimani et al., 2019).

Burnout can cause “lower job performance, higher turnover, lower organizational commitment, higher health care costs, and reductions in creativity and innovation,” (Jawahar, 2012). As an organization’s most valued asset, employees can make or break a company. Living and working during and after a global pandemic where stress levels keep elevating, boundaries between work and home are non-existent, and most sources of stress relief are limited or out of reach due to quarantine and safety precautions, has resulted in burnout levels rising to a critical level, and the demand for some form of relief is rising (Dalci & Kosan, 2012; Matheson & Rosen, 2012; Mheidly et al., 2020). Burnout is one of the most significant facets of employees’ well-being since it affects every aspect of their lives, including overall life satisfaction levels (Lu & Gursoy, 2016). Many developments in research are showing the damaging effects of chronic stress, including increased absenteeism, reduced immune system functioning, increased depression, decreased psychological well-being, and overall diminished health and dissatisfaction with life (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Lu & Gursoy, 2016; McClafferty & Brown, 2014; Richardson, 2017; Salvagioni et al., 2017; Severin et al., 2021). Due to burnout costing organizations more each year in healthcare expenditures, reduced productivity, and higher turnover rates, discovering ways to help employees alleviate these stress levels is becoming more important than ever (Jawahar, 2012; Koutsimani et al., 2019; Severin et al., 2021).

*Job Satisfaction*

Job satisfaction refers to individuals and their job situation and concentrates on past and present situations (Macdonald & MacIntyre, 1997). An employee’s job satisfaction level can affect everything from a company’s financial bottom line all the way down to an individual’s home life. An individual’s perception of job satisfaction is a result of how an employee feels their job provides the resources they view as important, including personal satisfaction, security,

and benefits (Carmon et al., 2013). If employees are only working to subsist rather than meeting their intrinsic needs, there are other components that can add or detract from their satisfaction level. Job satisfaction includes employees’ attitudes towards the actual work itself, which can affect the level of satisfaction, even if all the other components are satisfactory (Carmon et al., 2013). The constant psychological state of dissatisfaction can cause inferior work production, poor physical and mental health, and increased turnover intention (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Bakotić, 2016; Gragnano et al., 2020; Ogresta et al., 2008; Oliveira et al., 2018; Salas-Vallina et al., 2020; Scanlan & Still, 2019). Employees that are not satisfied with their current role or company are more likely to leave a company, causing a loss of knowledge and skills, and an expenditure of more money for the training of a new employee (Gragnano et al., 2020; Scanlan, & Still, 2019). Engaged and satisfied employees tend to contribute more and yield superior work. They are also more loyal to their company, resulting in lower turnover rates (Bakotić, 2016). Happy individuals typically appear to be more productive, indicating employers should be investing in their employees’ job satisfaction levels, and, as a side benefit, their happiness (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020).

A variety of characteristics have been shown to be major components of job satisfaction. Effects such as pay, compensation, future opportunities, management, working environment and relationships with co-workers, are some of the components that can affect job satisfaction (Macdonald & MacIntyre, 1997; Oliveira et al., 2018; Scanlan, & Still, 2019). Consistent with COR theory, these different components are also seen as resources to an employee. In addition to affecting job satisfaction, these components can also affect burnout levels, work-life balance, and life satisfaction (Bakker & Costa, 2014).  As previously mentioned, individuals’ perception can also affect their job satisfaction, and often there are differences in how each generation perceives different resources. Therefore, satisfaction can also be seen as something affected by generational association, in addition to the job itself. Although job satisfaction has many components, it will be defined as, ‘the positive emotional state produced from an individual’s work experiences’ (Carmon et al., 2013).

*Work-Life Balance*

Technology today has significantly expanded the possibilities and options for employees to have more flexible work options. It also makes it possible for individuals to manage their work more efficiently. With the Corona virus pandemic, many companies have been forced to implement work from home policies. Due to technology, this has been an excellent solution to keeping many business’ doors open while keeping their employees safe. Albeit there have been both positives and negatives. Even before COVID-19 made working from home the new norm, being available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week made separating work and non-work life increasingly difficult (Nam, 2013). This intrusiveness can make it challenging to set up appropriate boundaries between work and other life roles causing chronic stress for many (Matheson & Rosen, 2012; Nam, 2013). Stress is one of the leading reasons why many people feel unbalanced in their daily lives, and this lack of separation increases stress levels exponentially. If this unbalance continues long enough, it can affect every aspect of an individual’s life, including their physical and mental health, wellness, and professional acumen (Gragnano et al., 2020; Matheson & Rosen, 2012). Sometimes, an imbalance between the personal, social, physical, spiritual, and occupational domains of our lives is inevitable, but when that imbalance becomes a chronic state, burnout is also inevitable (Koutsimani et al., 2019; Ogresta et al., 2008; Oliveira et al., 2018). Healthier individuals are typically happier, and research shows they are more productive (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020). Many policy makers and

major employers have been researching, exploring, and executing strategies and programs that support work-life balance to help alleviate employee burnout. These programs and strategies are meant to help ease role-conflicts that employees may be having by offering such things as flexible work schedules and job-sharing, among other beneficial additions, to help ease stress and burnout levels (Jang et al., 2010; Scanlan & Still, 2019).

Work-life balance is a topic that has received growing attention across many fields in recent years, not only professionally but commercially as well (Bjärntoft et al., 2020). Work-life balance is a phrase that refers to how harmonious an individual’s work role is with other, non-work realms. When individuals indicate elevated levels of work-life balance, it means their work-life and non-work life are generally balanced in a way that feels healthy to them (Grawitch et al., 2013). For the purposes of this study work-life balance will be defined as “the relationship between paid work and the rest of life” (Carmon et al., 2013).

*Employee Mental Health, Wellness, & EAPs*

It has been noted that in recent years mental health illness has increased substantially. Although the warning signs and early indications of burnout may be subtle, it is often accompanied by anxiety and depression (Koutsimani et al., 2019). There are strong associations between burnout and suicidal ideation and, sadly, death by suicide is not uncommon among those with the highest burnout rates (McClafferty & Brown, 2014; Oliveira et al., 2018). Physical wellness, personal and professional relationships, motivation, and life satisfaction are only a few components that can be affected by poor mental health. The results of the Corona virus outbreak forced many workplaces to drastically change. For some, those changes have only increased stress levels and have had a negative influence on many individuals’ mental health status. This increase in mental health issues has not just affected one specific population though; it has been

comparable between many different populations such as men and women, low, middle, and high economic groups, all age groups, and workers in the public and private sectors (Czeisler et al., 2020).

The demands of balancing different role responsibilities strain the health and welfare of many employees, causing many mental health and wellness problems (Jang et al., 2010; Koutsimani et al., 2019). The COVID-19 global pandemic exacerbated this for many workers. There are extensive data showing that an imbalance between work roles and other life roles is linked with an increase in health impairments such as poor overall well-being, sleep disorders, and fatigue; with a rise in anxiety, worry, and increased feelings of dejection (Salvagioni et al., 2017; Wirtz et al., 2011). Realizations of the harmful side effects that chronic stress and role imbalances may take on physical and mental health have encouraged the search for more and better approaches to stress reduction in employees. This includes providing stress management training for leaders and employees alike (Lehmann et al., 2021; McClafferty & Brown, 2014). As a result of the rise of mental health issues, many companies are utilizing Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) to the benefit of both employees and employers. In general, EAPs are employer-sponsored services and resources offered to employees to assist with personal problems and/or work-related problems that may impact their job performance and productivity, physical health, and mental/emotional well-being. They do this by assisting employees with identifying and resolving personal issues that may affect performance. This can be implemented in numerous ways, extending from calculated developments companywide, such as policy changes that affect all employees, down to assisting an individual employee with a personal crisis (“International Employee Assistance,” 2022).Originally designed to assist with work related alcoholism, EAPs have developed into programs that aid an employee with personal or

family problems ranging from mental health and substance abuse issues to marital and parenting problems, health, and wellness aid, sometimes even assistance with financial and legal concerns. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, the percentage of companies offering EAPs in 1988 was 43% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016), and in 2019, 79% of companies offered some form of EAP to their employees (Society for Human Resources Management, 2021). Many organizations are actively incorporating different services and resources to maintain overall employee physical and mental health by broadening EAP services to include more preventative health care and other work/life initiatives.

*Hypotheses*

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between burnout, employee mental health, work-life balance, life satisfaction, and whether generational differences have any effect on these variables. Research up to this point has focused on two to three generations at most in the workplace. Each generation having its own perspective, work style, preferences, and values may affect how each of these variables are perceived. Because of these variances in values and beliefs, it is important to compare all the current working generations to get a better understanding of how these variables can affect and possibly motivate employees to be their best in all aspects.

Based on the literature above, Traditionalists are work-centric, and having a job is seen as a blessing, privilege, and an obligation. Due to this it is thought that:

*H1 – Traditionalists will score the second lowest of all five generations on job and (H1b) life satisfaction.*

Due to EAPs originally being developed to assist with work related alcoholism and only recently encompassing other areas:

*H2 – Traditionalists will be less likely to have utilized their company EAP.*

Boomers’ work describes who they are, and due to them being workaholics and perfectionists:

*H3 – Boomers will score highest of all generations on job satisfaction and (H3b) burnout.*

*H4 – Boomers will score lowest of all generations on work-life balance levels.*

Xers’ work does not define them; it is a means to an end, therefore:

*H5 –* *Xers will score second highest on work-life balance.*

*H6 – Xers will score highest of all generations on life satisfaction.*

*H7 – Xers will score lowest of all generations on burnout levels.*

Millennials highly value work-life balance and leisure time, therefore:

*H8 – Millennials will score highest of all generations on work-life balance.*

*H9 – Millennials will score second highest on life satisfaction levels.*

Millennials are more open-minded, and due to this:

*H10 – Millennials will score highest of all generations on EAP utilization*.

Gen Z have recently entered the workplace in force, and due to this it is thought that:

*H11 – Gen Z will score lowest of all generations on life and (H11b) job satisfaction.*

CHAPTER III

Methodology

*Participants & Procedures*

After receiving approval for the human subject participation in the study from Austin Peay State University’s Institutional Review Board, 357 participants were recruited online. They responded to public participation requests posted in multiple discussion sections of relevant groups on Facebook and Linked-In. These participation request posts contained a brief statement and a link to the survey. Participants were instructed to click on the link and were taken to an informed consent page. All participants had to provide consent to participate. Participants also had to confirm they were over 18 and currently employed. Once informed consent, legal age, and current employment status were confirmed, participants were taken to the survey. Upon completion, participants clicked submit and were directed to a thank you screen.

Survey data collection took place over a 10-week period from October 3, 2019, to December 8, 2019. Survey data was collected online using Qualtrics through APSU, in accordance with the APSU Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (http://www.apsu.edu/ire).

Participants were administered an online, anonymous, self-report survey. Optional demographic questions such as gender, employment, education level, and family status were included at the beginning of the survey (see Appendix B). Year born was the only non-optional question, due to the necessity of that information. Figure 1 displays the percentages of each generation to respond to the survey, with 64% of participants being Millennials. Figure 2 displays that 75% of participants were female. Figure 3 displays the education level of study participants, with 65% of participants holding a 4-year degree or higher.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

*Measures*

Participants were administered an online, anonymous, self-report survey that included measures of burnout, satisfaction with life, job satisfaction, work-life balance, and basic mental health at work.

The measure for employee burnout is the Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure (SMBM) (Shirom & Melamed, 2006). The SMBM includes 14 items over three subscales: Physical Fatigue (P), Emotional Exhaustion (E), and Cognitive Weariness (C). Participants were asked to rate each on a scale from 1-7; 1 being ‘Never or almost never’ and 7 being ‘Always or almost always’. The reliability for this measure is α=.92.

The measure for satisfaction with life is from Diener et al.’s (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale. The scale includes 5 items that evaluate the overall satisfaction the individuals have for their life. Participants were asked to rate each statement on a scale from 1-7; 1 being ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 being ‘strongly agree’. The reliability for this measure is α = .87.

The measure for job satisfaction is the short version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) by Weiss et al.. (1967). The scale consists of 20 items based on an employee’s feelings or reactions towards aspects of their jobs. Participants were asked to rate each item on a scale of 1 – 5; 1 being ‘very dissatisfied’ and 5 being ‘very satisfied’. The reliability for this measure is α= .91.

The measure for work-life balance is from Brough et al.’s, (2014) Work-Life Balance Measure (WLBM). This scale consists of 4 items about work-life balance. Participants were asked to indicate how often they have felt a particular way in the past three months using a 5-point Likert scale; 1 being ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 being ‘strongly agree’. The reliability value for this measure is α=.91.

The measure for basic mental health at work is the General Health Questionnaire at Work (GHQW) (Lesage et al., 2011). Goldberg and Williams’ General Health Questionnaire–12 (1988) is a well-known instrument used to measure minor psychological distress. Lesage et al. (2011) have modified and adapted the General Health Questionnaire – 12, to a work-related context. Participants were asked to compare their recent state at work for the last 3 months with their usual state at work and rate each question on a 4-point Likert scale; 1 being ‘not at all’ and 4 being ‘much more than usual’. The reliability for this measure is α = .94.

All scale items included in this study can be found in Appendix C.

CHAPER IV

Results

*Data and Analysis*

Following the data collection period, raw data from the 357 survey participants were downloaded from Qualtrics into Microsoft Excel 2016. In Excel, the original 357 participant responses were screened to eliminate responses with missing data, resulting in 277 participant responses being used. The data was then uploaded to IBM SPSS for further analysis.

Descriptive statistics were performed on the following variables: burnout, employee mental health, work-life balance, life satisfaction, and generation. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for each variable.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| Generation | 277 | 2 | 5 | 3.73 | .758 |
| Burnout Total | 277 | 1 | 2 | 1.56 | .498 |
| Work Life Balance Total | 277 | 1 | 2 | 1.45 | .499 |
| Job Satisfaction Total | 277 | 1 | 2 | 1.20 | .402 |
| Satisfaction with Life Total | 277 | 1 | 7 | 4.27 | 2.370 |
| Mental Health at Work Total | 277 | 1 | 2 | 1.22 | .413 |

Due to having no Traditionalist participants, I was unable to ascertain the results needed to answer H1, H1b or H2.

A reliability measure was run on each variable, and they are as follows: The reliability for burnout is α=.93; for work-life balance is α=.93; for job satisfaction is α=.90; for satisfaction with life is α=.89; and for mental health is α=.85, indicating that all variables had good reliability.

To look at the relationships between the generations and different variables to test our other hypotheses, several statistical tests were performed.

Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted to examine the relationships between participants’ gender, education level, marital status, family status, and burnout, work-life balance, job satisfaction, satisfaction with life, and mental health. Burnouthas a strong negative correlation with satisfaction with life *r*(275) = -.4, *p* <.001, meaning that as the burnout score increases, satisfaction with life decreases. Work-life balance and mental health had a strong relationship, *r*(275) = .21, *p* <.001(see Figure 5). Job satisfaction and satisfaction with life also had a strong positive correlation *r*(275) = .31, *p* <.001 (see Figure 6). In summary, lower burnout levels were strongly associated with healthy work-life balance, job satisfaction, satisfaction with life, and mental health. A complete list of correlations is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Correlations*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Work-Life Balance | Job Satisfaction | Satisfaction with Life | Health at Work |
| Burnout | -.343\*\* | -.328\*\* | -.400\*\* | -.130\* |
| Work-Life Balance |  | .266\*\* | .342\*\* | .210\*\* |
| Job Satisfaction |  |  | .308\*\* | .128\* |
| Satisfaction with Life |  |  |  | .089 |
| N equal 277 for all  \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).  \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | |

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare average scores among the four generation groups for the five outcome variables: mental health at work, satisfaction with life, job satisfaction, work life balance and burnout. Box’s Test of Equality failed to reject the null hypothesis of homogeneity of covariance (p = 0.41). Controlling for

covariance of outcomes, statistically significant differences exist among generational average responses (multivariate F=1.03; df=45;p = 0.04). Between-subjects analyses revealed statistically significant differences among inter-generational average scores only for Work Life Balance (univariate F=2.9; df=3;p = 0.04). Table 4 displays the means (with standard deviations) for each dependent variable with each generation group.

**Table 4**

*Means (with Standard Deviations)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Boomer | Xer | Millennial | Centennial | P-Value | df | F |
| Burnout | 1.73 (.45) | 1.65 (.48) | 1.51 (.50) | 1.50 (.51) | 0.08 | 3 | .92 |
| Work Life Balance | 1.23 (.43) | 1.55 (.50) | 1.47 (.50) | 1.35 (.49) | 0.04 | 3 | 2.90 |
| Job Satisfaction | 1.08 (.27) | 1.22 (.42) | 1.23 (.42) | 1.08 (.27) | 0.10 | 3 | 2.10 |
| Satisfaction with Life | 3.35 (2.12) | 4.20 (2.34) | 4.34 (2.38) | 4.81 (2.5) | 0.14 | 3 | 1.85 |
| Mental Health at Work | 1.19 (.40) | 1.18 (.39) | 1.24 (.43) | 1.12 (.33) | 0.43 | 3 | .92 |

Several independent-sample t-test were conducted to compare different generations and the total scores for each outcome variable. Boomers scored lower than Xers in Work-Life Balance (Boomers M=1.23, SD=.430; Xers M=49, SD=.503; t(58.431)=2.893, p=.005), meaning that Xers report better work-life balance. Centennials report better satisfaction with life than boomers (Boomers M=3.35, SD=2.116; Centennials M=4.81, SD=2.498); t(50)=-2.276, p=.027). Millennials were more satisfied with their job than Centennials (Millennials M=1.23, SD=.424; Centennials M=1.08, SD=.272); t(45.368)=2.511, p=.016).

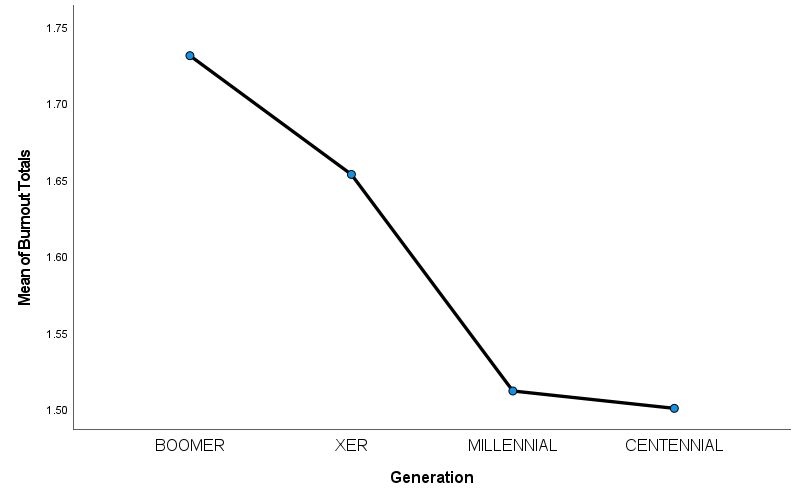
There was a significant difference in all scores but one between Boomers and Millennials, they are as follows:

* Work-Life Balance
  + Boomers (M=1.23, SD=.430)
  + Millennials (M=1.47, SD=.501)
    - t(35.827)= -2.608, p=.013
* Satisfaction with Life
  + Boomers (M=3.35, SD=2.116)
  + Millennials (M=4.34, SD=2.378)
    - t(35.029)= -2.201, p=.034
* Job Satisfaction
  + Boomers (M=1.08, SD=.272)
  + Millennials (M=1.23, SD=.424)
    - t(45.368)= -2.511, p =.016
* Burnout
  + Boomers (M=1.73, SD=.452)
  + Millennials (M=1.51, SD=.501)
    - t(34.731)=2.275, p=.029

Overall Millennials report better work-life balance, satisfaction with life, and job satisfaction than Boomers.

Looking at the Burnout means plot (Figure 4), H3b predicted Boomers would score highest, while H7 predicted Xers would be lowest. H3b was not rejected while H7 was rejected.

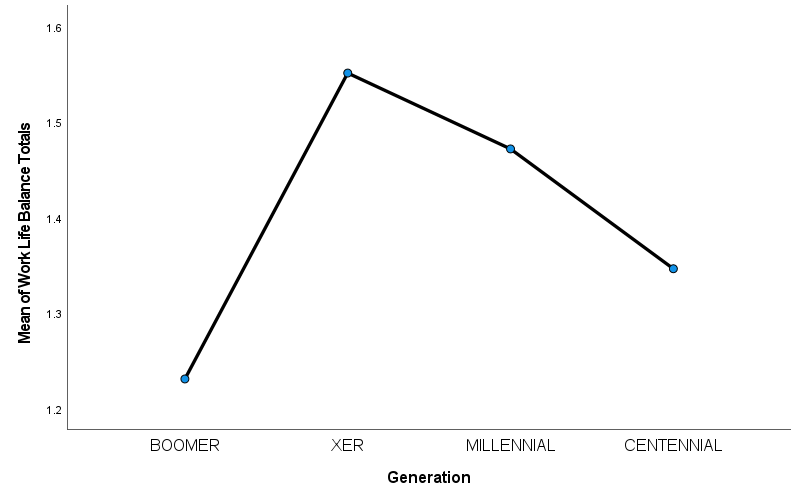
**Figure 4**



Looking at Figure 5, H4 predicted Boomers to be lowest, H5 for Xers to be second highest, and H8 for Millennials to score highest on Work-Life balance. Boomers were in fact the lowest

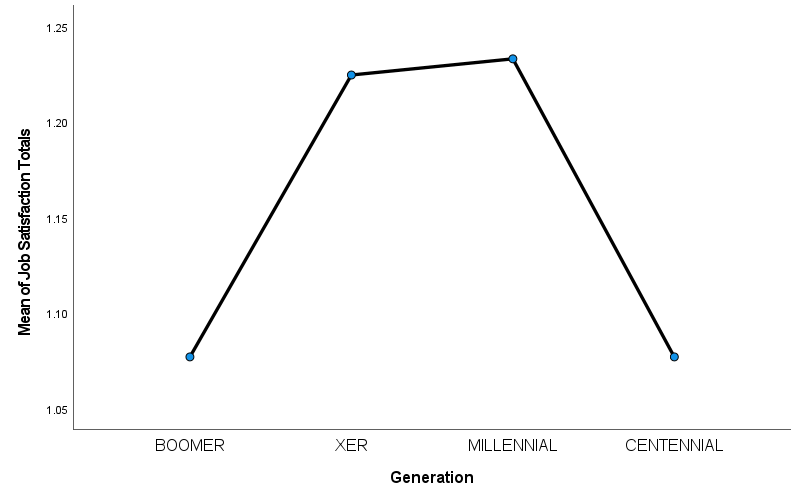
scored, whereas Xers and Millennials were reversed from our predictions, with Xers scoring highest on Work-Life balance levels. This means that H5 and H8 were rejected, while H4 was not rejected.

**Figure 5**



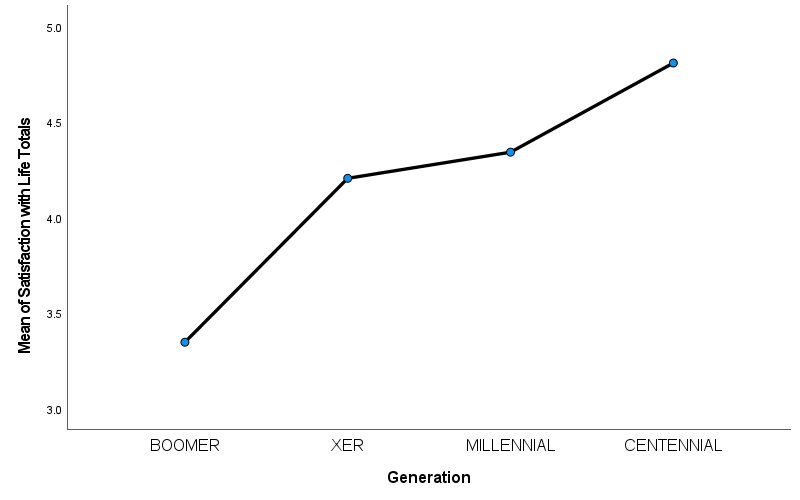
Looking at Figure 6, the mean plot for Job satisfaction, H3 predicted Boomers to score highest, and H11b for Centennials to score lowest. Boomers and Centennials in fact had the same mean for Job Satisfaction, therefore H3 was rejected but H11b was not rejected.

**Figure 6**



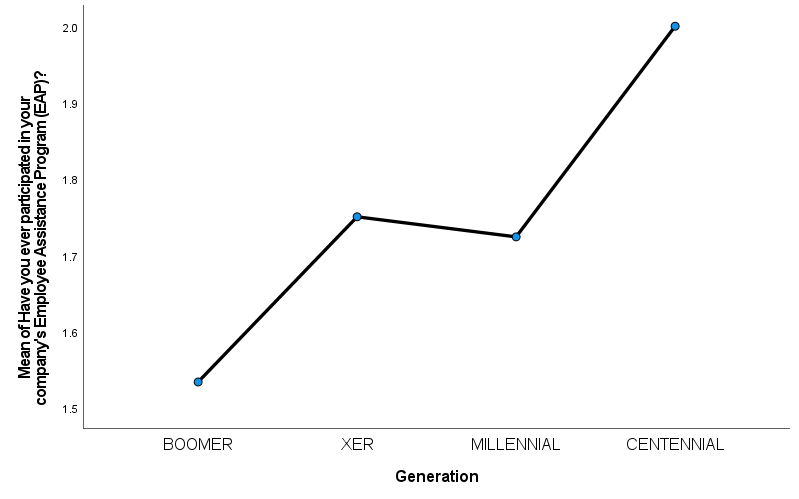
The mean plot for Satisfaction with Life is in Figure 7. It shows Centennials scoring highest and Boomers lowest, meaning H6 and H11 were rejected. H9 predicted Millennials scoring second highest, which was not rejected.

**Figure 7**



H10,Millennials will score highest on EAP utilization, was rejected after regarding Figure 8. Centennials, in fact, utilized their company’s EAPs at the highest rate.

**Figure 8**



CHAPTER V

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that although generational differences may affect employee wellness to some smaller extent, other factors, and relationships such as education level and family status, would need to be investigated more closely. This study found that younger generations appear to be more satisfied with life and work than older generations, although more research is needed to determine the drivers behind this. By focusing on the relationship between multiple variables that affect employee wellness and generation, this study deviates from most existing generational differences research. Overall, these findings suggest companies should not implement HR strategies solely based on generational factors but instead need to look at the employee, to keep employee wellness at a positive level. This study found that looking at generational differences appears to be a promising approach for improving the employee experience, but more research is needed to pinpoint specific policies and recommendations that could be implemented.

*Limitations and Future Research*

This study employed self-report survey measures to look at the relationship between employee wellness and generation. The use of these survey measures made it difficult to control against the potential of non-response bias. Future research could explore these relationships using methods other than self-report surveys to potentially reduce this problem.

One group was excluded from the study analysis due to insufficient number of participant responses. The excluded group was the Traditionalist generation. Although this group exclusion did not seem to affect the significance of the findings, future research could include more tactics to involve this population, which could cause a difference in the analysis.

An additional limitation of this study was lack of diversity in gender and generation level. Despite the collection of data from multiple sources, the results showed most of the respondents were female millennials. The present results are meaningful, but future research could target more diverse populations to generate a more complete picture.

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**APPENDIX A**

**Concept Map**

LIFE

SATISFACTION

**APPENDIX B**

**Demographic Questions**

1. **What is your gender?**

Male

Female

Other

1. **What year where you born? (YYYY)**
2. **What is your race?**

White

Black or African American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Hispanic or Latino

Other

1. **What is your sexual orientation?**

Heterosexual

Homosexual

Bisexual

Other

Prefer not to say

1. **What is your education level?**

Some high school

High school graduate/GED

Some college

2-year degree/Technical certificate

4-year degree

Graduate degree

Doctorate

1. **What is your marital status?**

Married or domestic partnership

Widowed

Divorced

Separated

Never married/Single

1. **What is your family status?**

0 Children

1-2 Children

3-4 Children

5+ Children

1. **What is your employment status?**

Temporary\*

Employed part time\*

Employed full time

Self Employed

Other

\*(If “Temporary” or “Employed part time” are selected question 8a will be presented.)

**8a. How many hours do you work in a typical week?**

1-5

6-10

11-15

16-20

21-25

25-30

30+

1. **How many years of work experience do you have?**

1-2

3-5

6-10

11-15

16+

1. **How many years have you been employed in your current position?**

0-2

3-5

6-10

11-15

16+

1. **Does your company offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?**

Yes\*

No

I don’t know

\*If “Yes” is selected questions 11a and 11b will be presented.

**11a. Have you ever participated in your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?**

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

**11b. What programs does your company’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offer?**

Therapy and Counseling

Alcohol and Drug Assistance

Health and Wellness

Childcare Programs

Other (Please list)

I don’t know

**APPENDIX C**

**Survey Measure Questions**

**Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure -** (Shirom & Melamed, 2006)

**How do you feel at work?** *Below are a number of statements that describe different feelings that you may feel at work.  Please indicate how often, in the past 30 workdays, you have felt each of the following feelings: 1 Never or almost never, 2 Very infrequently, 3 Quite infrequently, 4 Sometimes, 5 Quite Frequently, 6 Very frequently, 7 Always or almost always.*

12. (P) I feel tired

13. (P) I have no energy for going to work in the morning

14. (P) I feel physically drained

15. (P)I feel fed up

16. (P) I feel like my “batteries” are “dead”

17. (P) I feel burned out

18. (C) My thinking process is slow

19. (C) I have difficulty concentrating

20. (C) I feel I'm not thinking clearly

21. (C) I feel I'm not focused in   my thinking

22. (C) I have difficulty thinking about complex things

23. (E) I feel I am unable to be sensitive to the needs of coworkers and customers

24. (E) I feel I am not capable of investing emotionally in coworkers and customers

25. (E) I feel I am not capable of being sympathetic to co-workers and customers

**Satisfaction with Life Scale –** (Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985)

*Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale, indicate your agreement with each item by selecting the appropriate response.*

*1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Slightly disagree, 4 Neither agree nor disagree, 5 Slightly agree, 6 Agree, 7 Strongly Agree.*

26. In most ways my life is close to my ideal

27. The conditions of my life are excellent

28. I am satisfied with my life

29. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life

30. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing

**Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire –** (Weiss, Dawis, & England, 1967)

*Below you will find statements about your present job. Read each statement carefully; decide how satisfied you are about the aspect of your current job described by the statement. Then check the box that corresponds to your level of satisfaction with that aspect of your job. 1*

*Very Dissatisfied, 2 Dissatisfied, 3 Neither, 4 Satisfied, 5 Very Satisfied.*

30. Being able to keep busy all the time

31. The chance to work alone on the job

32. The chance to do different things from time to time

33. The chance to be “somebody” in the community

34. The way my boss handles his/her workers

35. The competence of my supervisor in making decisions

36. Being able to do things that don’t go against my conscience

37. The way my job provides for steady employment

38. The chance to do things for other people

39. The chance to tell people what to do

40. The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities

41. The way company policies are put into practice

42. My pay and the amount of work I do

43. The chances for advancement on this job

44. The freedom to use my own judgement

45. The chance to try my own methods doing the job

46. The working conditions

47. The way my co-workers get along with each other

48. The praise I get for doing a good job

49. The feeling of accomplishment I get form the job

**Work-Life Balance Measure –** (Brough, Timms, O’Driscoll, Kalliath, Siu, Sit, & Lo, 2014)

*When I reflect over my work and non-work activities (your regular activities outside of work such as family, friends, sports, study, etc.), over the past three months, I conclude that: 1*

*Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree.*

50. I currently have a good balance between the time I spend at work and the time I have available for non-work activities

51. I have difficulty balancing my work and non-work activities\*

52. I feel that the balance between my work demands and non-work activities is currently about right

53. Overall, I believe that my work and non-work life are balanced

**General Health Questionnaire at Work – (**Lesage, Matens-Resende, Deschamps, & Berjot, 2011)

*Please compare your recent psychological state at work with your usual state at work;1 Not at all, 2 No more than usual, 3 Rather more than usual, 4 Much more than usual.*

54. Able to concentrate\*

55. Lost sleep over worry

56. Play useful part in things\*

57. Capable of making decisions\*

58. Felt constantly under strain

59. Could not overcome difficulties

60. Enjoy day-to-day activities\*

61. Able to face problems\*

62. Feeling unhappy and depressed

63. Losing confidence

64. Thinking of self as worthless

65. Reasonably happy\*

1. The time frame the workforce was being viewed for this study is 2014 – 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)