

Lived Experiences and Perspectives on Work Commitment and Attitudes of Millennial and Gen Z Nurses in Selected Hospitals in Caloocan

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative descriptive study explored and described the work commitment and attitudes of Millennial and Generation Z nurses in selected hospitals in Caloocan City, Philippines, through their firsthand lived experiences. It was guided by the grand tour question of how the two generational cohorts differ in their work commitment and attitudes. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with Millennial and Generation Z registered nurses selected through purposive sampling until data saturation. The participants' responses were organized into qualitative matrices that compared the two cohorts across the dimensions of work commitment, dedication and loyalty, motivation, job satisfaction, workplace challenges, patient care, retention, and generational perspectives, from which initial and final themes were derived and synthesized, and the findings were interpreted through Benner's Novice to Expert, King's Goal Attainment, and Orem's Self-Care Deficit theories. Results showed that Millennial nurses embody a resilient, duty-driven model of nursing grounded in endurance, sacrifice, and oath-bound loyalty, foregrounding financial stability, family responsibility, and systemic reforms, while Generation Z nurses embody a sustainable, adaptive model grounded in communication, balance, and modern approaches, with commitment shaped by supportive environments, mentorship, and mental-health awareness. Both generations converged on patient-centered care, teamwork, and nursing as a vocation, with patient outcomes and gratitude serving as universal motivators. The study is limited to selected hospitals in one city and to self-reported accounts, so findings are not broadly generalizable and invite further comparative and longitudinal inquiry. The study concludes that the two generational models are complementary rather than oppositional and recommends generation-sensitive institutional reforms—fair compensation, adequate resources, and stronger governance for Millennials, and mentorship, work-life balance, and mental-health support for Generation Z—to build a nursing workforce that is both resilient and sustainable.

Keywords: Work commitment, work attitudes, Millennial nurses, Generation Z nurses, generational differences, qualitative descriptive design

INTRODUCTION

The nursing profession is experiencing a dramatic generational shift, as most nurses working in hospitals are now Millennials and Generation Z nurses. Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, joined the field amid globalization and rapid digitalization, while Gen Z nurses (born between 1997 and 2012) started their careers during or after the COVID-19 pandemic and, in doing so, learned what the pressure to perform is, how to cope, and about mental health. Recent research indicates that different generations define job satisfaction, workplace

dedication, and organizational loyalty differently, making generational understanding integral to effective healthcare workforce management (Billett et al., 2023; Cruz et al., 2023).

Around the world, hospitals still face staffing difficulties as younger nurses report burnout, emotional exhaustion, and early turnover intention among their peers because of heavy workloads, limited opportunities for advancement, or a lack of support (Boamah & Laschinger, 2023; Labrague, 2024). Although international literature has examined generational disparities in nursing, qualitative evidence remains limited on how Millennial and Generation Z nurses in the Philippines conceptualize and implement work commitment and attitudes. This study addresses this gap.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to report on Millennial and Generation Z nurses' work commitment and work attitudes in selected hospitals in Caloocan City, based on their firsthand accounts. More specifically, it addressed the grand tour question — How do Millennial and Gen Z nurses differ in their work commitment and attitudes within selected hospitals in Caloocan City?

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on three nursing theories. Benner's (1984) Novice to Expert Theory explains how nurses develop professional identity and competence through accumulated clinical experience. King's (1981) Theory of Goal Attainment emphasizes the interpersonal and organizational systems through which nurses and stakeholders set and pursue shared goals. Orem's (2001) Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory highlights self-care agency and the supportive systems that sustain professionals' well-being. Together, these frameworks illuminate how differing levels of experience, interpersonal dynamics, and self-care shape commitment and attitudes across the two cohorts.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a qualitative descriptive study design that examined how Millennial and Generation Z nurses perceived work dedication and work attitude. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to communicate participants' experiences in their own language, without the need for advanced analytic tools.

Research Design

A qualitative descriptive design was employed to capture participants' experiences in their own words. The study was conducted in local government hospitals in Caloocan City that employ both Millennial and Generation Z nurses.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

A semi-structured interview guide opening with a grand tour question was used; it was reviewed by content and technical experts for clarity and relevance. Following informed consent, interviews were conducted, audio-recorded, and transcribed. Participants were assigned coded identifiers, and data were stored securely in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Data Analysis Methods

Analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis: familiarization, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and reporting. Trustworthiness was supported through prolonged engagement to saturation, retention of verbatim excerpts, and the anchoring of themes to Benner's Novice to Expert Theory, King's Theory of Goal Attainment, and Orem's Self-Care Deficit Nursing Theory. Ethical safeguards included voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Findings are limited to selected hospitals in a single city and rely on self-reported accounts, so they are not broadly generalizable. The study adhered to ethical protocols, securing ethics review board approval and informed consent, ensuring anonymity through coded identifiers (e.g., P7–P27), and safeguarding data in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Commitment and Dedication. Both cohorts enacted commitment through discipline, reliability, and a patient-first orientation, but its durability differed. Millennial commitment was enduring and largely unconditional, while Generation Z commitment, though genuine, was conditional on a supportive environment. *“Despite na underpaid, na overworked, still andito pa rin kasi... I love what I do.”* (M1) *“Once na nakaramdam kami na hindi kami appreciated, aalis na. Mabilis na umalis.”* (G8)

Theme 2: Motivation and Job Satisfaction. Patient recovery and gratitude were the most consistent sources of satisfaction across all participants. Millennials anchored motivation in vocation, family, and faith, treating salary as secondary, whereas Generation Z nurses were more candid about financial motivation and emphasized self-fulfillment and professional growth. G4 admitted, *“Number one ko po yung sahod”* [my top motivation is the salary], while M2 named *“God, family”* and compassion for the poorest patients.

Theme 3: Attitudes Toward Patient Care. A shared value was standards-based, patient-first care—captured by M1's counsel to *“take care of the patient first, not the charts... Tao muna.”* Millennials relied on experience-guided judgment, while Generation Z paired theoretical currency with a readiness to seek guidance: *“Mas updated po kami in terms of book pero mas magaling na po kayo in terms of skills”* (G4).

Theme 4: Patient Care and Teamwork. Both generations converged on patient-centered care as a core value, personalizing care through family metaphors: *“mahal mo sa buhay ang turing mo sa kanila”* (M5). Generation Z emphasized communication, reassurance, and modern techniques, while Millennials emphasized empathy, advocacy, and traditional practices, often framing care as sacrificial and duty-driven. Teamwork was valued by both, but Millennials framed it as obligation, reciprocity, and mutual support, while Generation Z framed it as supportive culture, fairness, and open communication—dynamics that enact King's (1981) emphasis on interpersonal systems and mutual goal-setting.

Theme 5: Generational Interaction and Perceptions. Generational interaction was framed as complementary. Generation Z sought guidance, mentorship, and understanding from seniors—*“kailangan na siguro ng mga Millennials intindihin na ganun yung generation namin”* (G2)—while Millennials saw themselves as mentors responsible for transferring skills: *“mas*

ginagampanan ng mga Millennials yung responsibility na kailangan mong gabayan yung mga Gen Z” (P12). Millennials often perceived Generation Z as more sensitive and reliant on technology, while Generation Z acknowledged these differences but stressed shared goals and standards of care.

SUMMARY

The study explored how Millennial and Generation Z nurses in selected hospitals in Caloocan City differ in their work commitment and attitudes. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the participants’ responses to semi-structured interviews were organized into qualitative matrices comparing the two cohorts and interpreted through Benner’s, King’s, and Orem’s theories. Millennials framed commitment as endurance, sacrifice, and loyalty and were motivated by financial stability, family responsibility, and professional calling, while Generation Z framed commitment as sustainability, adaptability, and balance and was motivated by growth, supportive environments, and relational inspiration. Both cohorts drew their deepest satisfaction from patient recovery and gratitude, faced the shared challenges of workload, understaffing, and resource shortages, and converged on patient-centered care, teamwork, and nursing as a vocation. Generational interaction emerged as complementary, with Millennials serving as mentors and Generation Z contributing adaptability and technological fluency.

CONCLUSIONS

Millennials embody a resilient, duty-driven model of nursing that is deeply rooted in sacrifice, endurance, and systemic perseverance, with commitment framed as loyalty to the profession and an oath-bound duty sustained even under poor conditions. Generation Z nurses embody a sustainable, adaptive model characterized by communication, balance, and modern approaches; their commitment is equally genuine when they are supported and valued, but it is conditioned by supportive environments, mentorship, and mental-health awareness. Despite these differences in emphasis, both generations converge on patient-centered care, teamwork, and nursing as a vocation, with patient outcomes, gratitude, and intrinsic passion serving as shared motivators. These generational differences reflect broader cultural shifts and are not contradictions but complementary strengths that, when integrated, can create a nursing workforce that is both resilient and sustainable.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are offered: Hospital administrators should create generation-sensitive policies that combine Millennials’ mentorship strengths and Gen Z’s digital skills; Address staffing and resource gaps. Provide recognition, fair pay, and clear advancement/education paths to reduce turnover. At the same time, Nurse Managers should use empowering, responsive leadership — give regular feedback, open communication channels, and build a healthy workplace. For the workforce, they should set up structured mentorship for mutual skill-sharing between generations. Millennial and Gen Z nurses should foster understanding and prioritize self-care. And last but not least. Future researchers should expand this inquiry across hospital types using comparative, longitudinal or mixed-method designs.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools assisted with grammar and structural refinement in preparing this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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