Perceived Organizational Membership And The Retention Of Older Workers

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

According to the United Nations, almost one-third of the working-age population in developed countries will be aged 50 or over by 2050. Therefore, the aging of labor forces in developed countries around the world means that older workers will play a more prominent role in the workforce in the not-too-distant future. As a consequence of workforce aging, employers will need to retain and nurture their older workers. Despite the projections of labor shortages and the need to retain older workers, few employers are actively seeking to retain their older employees – one reason being cited for this being simply that they do not yet understand how to do so effectively.

The focus of this study is on organizational membership and the intention of older workers to remain a member of their organization. The researchers proposed that human resource practices tailored to the needs, preferences, and desires of older employees (need fulfillment), older workers’ perception that they are making a significant contribution toward the achievement of organizational goals (mattering), and the perception that they have insider status within the organization (belonging) are important determinants of the decision of older workers to maintain their membership with their organization.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

Francine Schlosser and Marjorie Armstrong-Stassen from the Odette School of Business at the University of Windsor conducted two studies to test their hypothesized model that human resource practices targeted to older workers would be related to perceived insider status through how older workers perceived their supervisor managed these practices. The researchers also hypothesized that perceived insider status would mediate the relationship between perceived contribution and intention to remain.

In order to do this, the researchers conducted a study. Study 1 featured 236 participants who were a diverse group of older workers. These workers participated in a web-based questionnaire. Study 2 featured 420 participants who were older registered nurses and were given a mailed questionnaire. The questionnaires focused on human resource policies in their organizations, levels of perceived justice, perceived contributions, perceived insider status, and the intention to remain. Study 1 participants were more general, with study 2 focusing on hospital-specific practices. The researchers analyzed the resulting data to make conclusive findings.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

The researchers found the following:

- Perceived procedural justice and perceived interpersonal justice associated with the way supervisors manage human resource practices targeted to older employees are important in fostering perceptions of insider status among older workers.
• Being treated with respect and dignity by one’s immediate supervisor is more important in fostering belonging among nurses than older workers in general. This suggests that a sense of inclusion and belonging is especially important to the retention of older nurses.
• To retain their older employees, organizations should be engaging in human resource practices tailored to the needs of older workers; and supervisors should be administering them fairly.
• There is importance in creating conditions that optimize older workers’ perceptions of making a meaningful contribution to the organization. For example, by providing older employees with mentoring opportunities that give the opportunity to pass along their knowledge and skills.

In summary, older workers were more likely to perceive themselves as belonging and, in turn, intend to remain with their organization when their organization was perceived to be providing human resource practices tailored to the needs of older employees, when their supervisor was perceived to be managing human resource practices fairly and when older workers perceived that they were making a meaningful contribution to their organization’s goals.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

This research may be used by business strategists, as the need to retain older workers is increasing in importance. The findings from this study demonstrate to managers how to retain older workers in the organization, which can be incorporated into business practices and human resource planning. Additionally, since this research emphasizes the need for supervisor fairness, not only should organizations invest in educating supervisors on the importance of applying human resource practices targeting older employees in a fair manner and treating older employees with respect and dignity, but also making supervisors aware of the needs and preferences of older workers.

Academics can also build on this research, as future study is needed to further test the conceptual model and to refine linkages among the key variables.

CITATION


KEYWORDS

Organizational Membership, Retention, Older Workers, Nurses, Human Resources Practices, Fairness, Belonging, Labour

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
Older workers will want to remain with an organization that creates a sense of belonging by providing human resource practices that meet their needs, ensuring supervisors implement these practices fairly, and making older workers feel that their contribution is valued.