Prospectus

Job Satisfaction in Law Enforcement Officers According to Generational Cohorts

[Student Name]

Doctor of Philosophy-Psychology Program – Forensic Psychology

Walden University
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Problem Statement

Our society is experiencing the first occurrence of four generations laboring within the workplace together (Hansen & Leuty, 2012). These generations consist of the Silent Generation (1900-1945), Baby Boomers (1946-1962), Generation X (1962-1979/80), and the Millennials (1980/81-2000) (Black-Beth, 2006; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Researcher have attempted to understand the makeup and distinctions of each of these generations and have shown different expectations, satisfactions, and outlooks distinct to each generation such as higher organizational commitment in the Baby Boomer Generation, lower organizational commitment in the Millennial Generation, and differing values of job characteristics between these generations (Bright, 2010; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Zopiatis, Krambia-Kapardis, & Varnavas, 2012).

Having these distinct and defined generations in the workforce has led to interest in how to handle each generation, both separately and collectively. Cennamo and Gardner (2008) stated such interest has sprung from the assumption that each generation differs significantly in their goals, expectations, and work values.

What we do know about these different generations besides their unique birthdates and cohort groups is there are distinct difference between these cohorts in their job expectations and motivations (Cogin, 2012). Also due to this mass of generations in the workforce now, we know businesses, human resources, and administrators are now looking for understanding of what attracts, engages, and retains working members of each of these generational cohorts (Cogin, 2012). We also have seen a large percentage of federal employees retiring with a rate of over 52,000 per year (Bright, 2010), thus changing the face of the workplace. As our population
grows older and with increased life expectancies, workers are staying in the workplace longer and there is also the possibility of older workers reporting to younger superiors (managers) (Bright, 2010). What does exist in the literature is an agreed defining of cultural and social differences between generational cohorts (Bright, 2010; Parry & Urwin, 2011; Wilson, 2012; Zopiatis et al., 2012). Each generation experiences factors such as personal, financial, and social changes that help to create and mold them making them unique (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Parry & Urwin, 2011). Several researchers bring forth the concern over organizational commitment in younger generations (Generation X, Millennials), and these generations showing favoritism toward having a larger number of jobs within their lifetimes, as well as more importance is being placed on their individual wants and desires differing from older generations who possess higher organizational commitment (Brunetto et al., 2012; Johnson, 2012; Wilson, 2012).

Knowing these aspects and focusing now on the job field of law enforcement we can look towards bridging the gap between law enforcement officers’ generational cohorts and if this moderates the relationships between organizational support, job related duties, and co-worker satisfaction and overall job satisfaction. A number of studies looking at job satisfaction in law enforcement personnel have identified age and years of service as key indicators of job satisfaction (Abdulla, Djebarni, & Mellahi, 2011; Brunetto, Farr-Wharton, Shacklock, & Teo, 2012; Carlan, 2007; Hassell, Archbold, & Stichman, 2011; Wilson, 2012). Of concern with the available literature is that those who have studied generational differences within the workplace have not studied generational cohorts within law enforcement and have given mixed results at best with some noting differences (Bright, 2010; Zopiatis, et al., 2012), while others claim little
to no difference between generational cohorts within the workplace (Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Parry & Urwin 2011).

Current literature of law enforcement job satisfaction generally looks at factors such as gender differences (Brough & Frame, 2004), officer’s demographics such as age, race, and education, job tasks, and organizational characteristics (Carlan, 2007; Johnson, 2012; Wilson, 2012). While a majority of research available looks at specific characteristics of policing such as tasks assigned to, social aspects of the job, supervisory aspects, organizational support, and peer cohesion, from my reviews there is a distinct lack of research available tying all of these characteristics to generational cohorts. Knowing these specific variables affect officer’s job satisfaction and organizational commitment, it would seem obvious that research would look into what these factors were directly related to. The question then arises regarding if generational cohorts are the moderating factor for these differences in organizational support, differing duties assigned to, as well as co-worker and supervisor satisfaction as it relates to overall job satisfaction.

Another missing aspect of existing research is with the emergence of Millennials within the workplace. Researchers to this point have focused on Generation X, Baby Boomers, and the Silent Generation as the focal point of research with an exclusion of Millennials, as their new position within the workplace remains understudied (Bright, 2010; Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Also considered within this same aspect is the aging population in the Silent and Baby Boomer generations, thus bringing forth a demand to move past these generations as their positions within the workforce are and will soon be smaller in proportion. Wilson (2012) focuses on this issue and states a mass exodus of Baby Boomer generation officers are leaving departments and
administrations are now questioning how they will replace these officers as well as how to retain some portion of them while the search for their replacements is ongoing.

The purpose of my study is to see if job satisfaction differs in law enforcement officers across different generations. Knowing there is and will be a continued massive change within the workforce of policing in the current and oncoming years brings about the need to better understand the multitude of generations we have in the workplace. Having shown age and years of service as major influences and predictors of job satisfaction in numerous studies, this also shows the need for understanding and researching job satisfaction according to generational cohorts. Lastly, the dearth of research on job satisfaction of police officers according to generational cohorts also adds to the great need to study this under-researched area.

**Background**

Selected articles relating to both generational cohorts and job satisfaction in law enforcement officers are described below:

1. Cennamo and Gardner (2008) researched Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennial workers and their differences in the workplace which included job satisfaction, work values, and organizational commitment using a cross-sectional study with self-reporting data. 504 workers from various businesses ranging from law firms to the construction industry in New Zealand participated in this study. Generations X and Millennials were shown to place more importance on status and freedom work values while Baby Boomers were found to have more person-organizational values fit with extrinsic values compared to the other generations. Similarities amongst the generations were shown when there
were poor individual and organizational values fit then lower job satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, and higher turnover occurred.

2. Hansen and Leuty (2012) looked at work values across generational cohorts. This study was longitudinal in nature comprised of data spanning 30 years with almost an equal percent of participants being female (44.8) compared to males (55.2). These participants were clients of a vocational assessment clinic and were administered the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire. Differences found to be significant were within generations as related to gender as well as for comfort within the job, status, and autonomy. The Silent Generation was shown to place more importance on status and autonomy than Baby Boomers and Generation X. The Baby Boomers and Generation X were shown to place more importance on coworkers, compensation, and working conditions. The authors noted their surprise that there was not a greater amount of values found to be different between the generations.

3. Zopiatis, Krambria-Kapardis, and Varnavas (2012) took a quantitative approach when researching generational cohorts in the workplace and asked members of each said generation to respond to a questionnaire on their thoughts on what defined their group and then compared differences and similarities. 310 participants were included in this study out of an administered 1,000 questionnaires covering 75 different employers from within Cyprus. Some of the differences found were that Millennial employees who questioned authorities more, were more skeptical, and were more loyal to themselves than to the organization. Similarities across the generations included career aspirations, multitasking, and work benefits. It was found that the most differences existed between
the Millennial employees and Baby Boomer employees. Zopiatis et al. suggested that the differences between the generations cause generational conflict and thus affect the workplace.

4. Carlan (2007) studied job satisfaction of law enforcement officers but took this as an overarching approach and did not look directly at the variable of generational cohorts. This study looked at over 1,000 police officers spread across sixteen different jurisdictions from the state of Alabama. Carlan (2007) utilized the police job satisfaction scale and collected data using a quantitative design. The purpose of the study was to look at job satisfaction and concluded this satisfaction came from the six variables of social contribution, pay, adventure/excitement, autonomy, peer respect, and job security. Other variables such as age, race, gender, experience, rank, education, and work environment were also reviewed to show their individual effects on job satisfaction. Carlan (2007) stated work environment expectations were the highest factor effecting job satisfaction.

5. Brough and Frame (2004) conducted research along the lines of several other studies on police work and officer’s perceptions and satisfaction with the job but it specifically looked at female officers and organizational strategies in retention of these officers. 400 male and female officers from New Zealand were invited to complete two questionnaire surveys in this longitudinal study. Brough and Frame (2004) showed that aspects such as rank, gender, and marital status did not affect job satisfaction levels. In the first wave of responses tenure was noted as being a significant indicator of turnover intentions while the amount of leave taken and opportunity of job advancement had negative associations with job satisfaction. Supervisor support was noted as strong predictor of job satisfaction.
6. Bright (2010) studied differences between generational cohorts in the workplace and found factors such as access to desirable work opportunities and socialization experiences played major factors in the generational differences. Bright studied nearly 350 workers from a large county jurisdiction in Oregon and compared survey responses of the worker’s differences. Bright stated the differences between generations are markedly obvious due to older and younger persons not having the same access to certain opportunities either due to experience, physical limitations, education, and socialization within workplaces that is defined as how a new employee is broken in or accepted into that workplace’s culture. Age was noted as a strong predictor of work preferences where younger generations (e.g., Generation X, Millennials) preferred recognition, career advancement, and monetary rewards while this decreased significantly as age increased with the older generations (e.g., Baby Boomers).

7. Wilson (2012) researched the ongoing problem of recruiting new police officers to replace current and retiring officers and why generational difference may be the explanation for this problem. Using more than 150 sources such as Lexis Nexis, the RAND Corporation, Bureau of Justice Statistics, and other references, Wilson explored police recruitment and retention and focused on the factors that may be influencing both. It is believed that possible explanations for the difficulty in recruiting new officers as well as retaining officers stems from Baby Boomer generation officers retiring as well as from changing generational expectations of careers. The roles of police officers have changed and now there is a demand for officers to do more with less as well as with fewer officers. This author notes how the ever rising costs of replacing officers either
from attrition or through new hiring numbers in the hundreds of thousands each year.

Looking at the Baby Boomer generation of officers, many departments such as New York Police Department are offering these older officers staying incentives to avoid a mass exodus of these officers at the same time. It was also noted that departments like Chicago Police Department would see an increase in retirement eligible officers increasing from 500 to 900 officers. Looking at generational changes in job expectations this author notes younger generations change jobs more often than older generations thus creating an evolving attrition and recruitment predicament. It was also noted that younger generations are not producing qualified applicants for police work due to aspects such as prior and current drug use, increasing obesity, and also poor credit and debt problems that may disqualify applicants.

Theoretical Framework

The study will be based off of Karl Mannheim’s theory of generations. Mannheim’s theory is generally regarded as one of the foremost leaders in the defining of, and explanation of generations within a society regarding how they function and how they interact and affect each other (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014; Joshi, Dencker, & Franz, 2011; Miegel & Olsson, 2012; Parry & Urwin, 2012; Zopiatis et al., 2012). Key to Mannheim’s theory are the critical components that define a generation which includes people who live within the same general historical, social, and chronological context (Zopiatis et al., 2012). Although age plays a factor in these generations, more importance is placed on sociological factors that lead generations to be agents of social change (Joshi et al., 2011). These can be persons who are part of a social class that have shared experiences such as historically relevant actions (Miegel & Olsson, 2012). Others have
noted that Mannheim’s theory helps to explain social and intellectual movements (Parry & Urwin, 2012).

Relating this framework to the proposed study allows this researcher to better define the participants in the study, as well as help give a better understanding to the unique generational makeup of each cohort that will lead to the hypothesized differences of the participants. When looking at law enforcement officers divided by generational cohorts one can better see that younger generations are perceived to challenge the status quo while the older generations are looked at as holding onto and preserving traditions (Joshi et al., 2011). Joshi et al. (2011) furthers that Mannheim’s theory explains that new generations attempt to fit into existing traditions and social patterns and that from these actions the uniqueness of the generation is formed. Relating this to law enforcement officers we can see the huge strides made in the application of the law and actions taken by officers throughout the years and thus a uniqueness from these changes appears and needs to be studied. Mannheim’s theory has been thoroughly studied and applied in a great amount of research thus adding to its credibility, reliability, and validity.

Regarding job satisfaction, Herzberg’s two-factor theory of motivation will be used as the framework. Herzberg’s theory states there are two factors, motivational and hygiene, which determine an employee’s attitudes and work performance (Herzberg, 1964; Ghazi, Shahzada, & Khan, 2013). Motivation factors are viewed as intrinsic and increase job satisfaction while hygiene factors are viewed as extrinsic and prevent job dissatisfaction. Herzberg’s theory identifies key sources of job satisfaction in the work environment as the responsibilities one has at work, the importance of the work, and lastly, recognition received from work (Zhao, Thurman, & He, 1999). Zhao et al. (1999) applied Herzberg’s theory to job satisfaction in police officers to
see what environmental factors were sources of job satisfaction. Herzberg’s theory is similar to Maslow’s hierarch of needs whereas Herzberg states lower level needs must be met to address the higher level needs and that people are striving towards the higher levels and not complacent with only satisfying the lower motivations. This theory can be related to my proposed study as it helps to identify the factors associated with job satisfaction and how they can affect levels of satisfaction and also what type of factors the proposed study will fall under.

**Significance**

This research is unique because it addresses the under-researched area of generational cohorts within law enforcement and focuses directly on the issue of job satisfaction. The results of this study will provide much needed insight into the different generations working within the law enforcement community. With the understanding that even though all officers are technically conducting the same job, their attitudes, approaches, satisfactions, dissatisfactions, and other variables can vary greatly. This researcher intends for all law enforcement officers to benefit from the findings of this research and for law enforcement administrators to gain a better understanding of their subordinates. Due to the fact the demographics in the workforce (including law enforcement) are at a key changing point where a vast majority of Baby Boomers are retiring (due to varying reasons), there is a definite need to assess the hypothesized generational differences within the workplace. There is a major outcry from the workplace to help administrators comprehend what is unique to each of these generations and what needs to be done to create an environment that allows for the potential of all cohorts to be maximized while maintaining equilibrium between the generations.
Research Questions and Associated Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses are intended to examine the effect(s) of generational cohorts on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction through overall and specific variables related to job satisfaction.

RQ1 - Do generational cohorts have a differential impact on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction?

H₀₁: Generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) do not have a differential impact on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction as assessed by the Job Descriptive Index.

H₁: Generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) have a differential impact on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction as assessed by the Job Descriptive Index.

RQ2 - Does a relationship exist between generational cohorts and different policing tasks on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction?

H₀₂: There is no relationship between generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) and different policing tasks (e.g., traffic patrol, investigative, clerical or “desk” duties) on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction as assessed by the Job Descriptive Index.

H₂: There is a relationship between generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) and different policing tasks (e.g., traffic patrol, investigative, clerical or “desk” duties) on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction as assessed by the Job Descriptive Index.
RQ3- Does a relationship between generational cohorts and organizational commitment on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction?

H₀₃: There is no relationship between generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) and organizational commitment as assessed by responses given to the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction as assessed by the Job Descriptive Index.

Hₐ₃: There is a relationship between generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) and organizational commitment as assessed by responses given to the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction as assessed by the Job Descriptive Index.

RQ4- Does a relationship between generational cohorts and co-worker satisfaction on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction?

H₀₄: There is no relationship between generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) and co-worker satisfaction as assessed by the Job Descriptive Index on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction as assessed by Job Descriptive Index.

Hₐ₄: There is a relationship between generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) and co-worker satisfaction as assessed by the Job Descriptive Index on law enforcement officer’s job satisfaction as assessed by the Job Descriptive Index.

Nature of the Study

The proposed study is quantitative, which is common for job satisfaction studies and provide a means of measuring job satisfaction to allow for group comparison (Abdulla et al., 2011; Brunetto et al., 2012; Carlan, 2007; Hassell, et al., 2011; Wilson, 2012). Thompson and
Phua (2012) researched job satisfaction studies and found out of a total of 929 studies on job satisfaction, 901 of these studies utilized a quantitative method. The dependent variable (DV) for this study will be job satisfaction scores from the Job Descriptive Index (JDI). The independent variables (IV) will be the generational cohorts, different policing duties, organizational commitment, and co-worker satisfaction. Generational cohorts will be defined as Baby Boomers (1946-1962), Generation X (1962-1979/80), and the Millennials (1980/81-2000) (Black-Beth, 2006; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Different policing tasks/duties will be defined as patrolling, investigating, and clerical or “desk” work.

Having been extensively researched and utilized in a number of studies (Donovan, Drasgow, & Probst, 2000; Kinicki, McKee-Ryan, Schriesheim, & Carson 2002; Roznowski, 1989) the JDI as a job satisfaction instrument would be more than adequate for the proposed study. Published in 1969 by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin, in their book *The Measurement of Satisfaction in Work and Retirement* (www.bgsu.edu), the JDI looks at different facets of a job and the employee’s satisfaction with facets such as coworkers, the work itself, supervisors, and other work related variables. The variables in the proposed study will be measured by the JDI, through self-response answers of the participants regarding age to categorize them into the different generational cohorts. The covariate for this study will also be measured through self-reported answers given by the participants.

Organizational commitment will be measured using the Organization Commitment Questionnaire (ACQ). This instrument is noted as being one of the most commonly utilized instruments to measure organizational commitment (Azeem, 2010). The ACQ consists of 15 different statements where respondent uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to
strongly disagree (Azeem, 2010). Within this instrument the questions gauge respondents’ acceptance of the organization’s goals and values, the employee’s (respondent) desire to remain a member of the organization and their willingness to exert effort for the organization (Azeem, 2010).

The proposed study will utilize a correlation design. This type of design will be used to explore the extent of varying job satisfaction levels and their possible correspondence with officer’s generational cohorts. Scores from the JDI will be used to measure this correlation as well as scores from the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. This design bests suits the proposed study as officers will not be randomly assigned to certain groups and no variables will be manipulated. An ANOVA will also be incorporated into the design to compare the means gathered from officer’s responses regarding policing tasks. The ANOVA will help to clarify measurements in the policing tasks areas as it will be comparing means from three identified policing tasks areas (patrolling, investigating, and clerical or “desk” duties).

Possible Sources and Types of Information or Data

1. Literature concerning generational cohorts as well as literature concerning job satisfaction in general and in law enforcement.
2. Active and retired law enforcement officers who fall within one of the three generational cohorts. These officers will be collected from a large Midwestern police department.
3. Participant rank, education level, and gender will be collected through voluntary demographic information filled out on the instrument utilized for the study.
4. Job satisfaction will be measured through responses given on the JDI.
References


