

Are All Workers Influenced to Stay by Similar Factors, or Should Different Retention Strategies be Implemented? Comparing Younger and Older Aged-care Workers in Australia

Katrina Radford* and Geoffrey Chapman**

Abstract

The global financial crisis led many older workers to delay retirement or to re-enter the workforce (O'Loughlin, Humpel and Kendig 2010). This has resulted in an increase in age diversity within organisations. This age diversity leads to improved creativity (Crampton and Hodge 2007) and improved productivity (Ilmakunnas and Ilmakunnas 2011). However, for human resource management professionals, age diversity can be challenging. Research comparing younger and older workers' intentions to stay is limited; this study continues that inquiry. To investigate intentions, a cross-sectional questionnaire was distributed to 2118 employees in the aged-care sector; 359 useable questionnaires were analysed. Results revealed similarities and differences between younger and older workers' intentions to stay. Variables such as perceived organisational support (POS), perceived supervisor support (PSS), and job embeddedness are analysed.

1. Literature Review

The increased dependence on skilled staff by modern organisations has resulted in a change of power from the organisation to the employees (Rousseau and Shperling 2003). This has resulted in higher levels of worker mobility, which is the 'opportunity and willingness of an employee to seek employment elsewhere' (Rousseau and Shperling 2003, p. 559). This, therefore, has created significant pressure on organisations to develop appropriate strategies to retain their quality employees. It is particularly the case in aged care, where 48 per cent of residential aged-care employees and 50.1

* Griffith University, Gold Coast, Australia, ** Central Queensland University, Sydney

per cent of community aged-care employees have been working with their current employer for less than five years (King et al. 2012). Additionally, recent evidence has suggested that if the aged-care sector is to avoid shortfalls in staffing of over 100 000 employees, there would need to be significant efforts directed towards increasing rates of employee retention (Buchan et al. 2015).

However, the ability of organisations to develop appropriate human resource management strategies is hampered by the increased age-diversity of employees found in workplaces. This is evidenced by reports that nearly 60 per cent of employment spells in aged and community-care based organisations last for less than two years (Austen et al. 2013). If the aged-care sector is to meet the growing demands of an ageing population, organisations in this industry will need to retain younger workers, and take advantage of the increasing workforce participation of older workers. Contemporary research examining the factors influencing both older and younger employees' intentions to stay is needed. Meeting this need is the purpose of this article.

The Ageing Workforce Challenge

The global financial crisis has led many older workers to delay retirement or to re-enter the workforce due to their financial need to work as a result of lost savings (O'Loughlin, Humpel and Kendig 2010). In fact, the number of older workers re-entering the workforce or delaying retirement is climbing faster in Australia than in many other countries (OECD 2012). This was further emphasised in a recent review of the Australian labour force, which revealed an increase in participation rates between 2002 and 2013 for male workers aged 65 to 74 from 15 per cent to 26 per cent, and from 6 per cent to 13 per cent for females (ABS 2013). This increase in participation rates is expected to continue into the future as the population ages. Consequently, there has been a recent push by the Australian government to increase the retirement age to 70 by the year 2035 (Department of Human Services 2014).

From a societal perspective, the push to increase the participation rate of older people in the workforce is one way—from an economic perspective—of softening the impact of the ageing population (ABS 2012). Yet from a practical perspective, the ability of older people to continue to work is influenced greatly by the working arrangements within organisations to meet the needs of older workers (Conen, van Dalen and Henkens 2012; Frerichs et al. 2012). Such arrangements include how accommodating and supportive an organisation is to retaining older workers, which is often influenced greatly by negative stereotypes of older workers. Some of these stereotypes include decreases in cognitive abilities, higher costs, and increased absenteeism due to illness (Patrickson and Ranzijn 2004; Gellert and Kuipers 2008).

To begin to investigate these stereotypes, Australian research by Brough et al. (2011) examined differences between younger and older workers in Australian organisations. The results of that study found no differences between older and younger employees' cognitive skills. Additionally, no differences were found between older and younger workers' intentions to leave, perceptions of social support, commitment, or satisfaction. Further, research by Gellert and Kuipers (2008) found that teams that included older workers tended to produce better-quality outcomes than younger teams. However, teams with older workers did report more difficulties in keeping up with the fast pace of the work and were less inclined to tolerate high levels of strain (Gellert and Kuipers 2008). Overall, most research finds that older workers do not have a negative influence on organisational productivity.

Despite this, many organisations still shy away from policies that encourage the retention of older workers (Young 2013). However, as less than 20 per cent of the Australian population is comprised of young people, even with migration adding to the number of young adults (ABS 2012), it is becoming increasingly important to develop human resource management policies that encourage the retention of younger and older workers (Mountford 2011). To inform these policies, research is needed to investigate differences between older and younger workers' intentions to stay. This is particularly the case in the aged-care sector, where over 75 per cent of organisations investigated in a recent census of an aged-care workforce reported a skill shortage in at least one care role (King et al. 2012). This article investigates differences between older and younger workers' intentions to stay within the aged-care sector.

The Aged-care Sector and the Aged-care Workforce

The aged-care workforce consists of a direct-care workforce and a non-direct-care workforce. The direct-care workforce consists of occupations that exist only within the health-care sector, such as personal carers and assistants in nursing, enrolled nurses, enrolled endorsed nurses, registered nurses, allied health workers, directors of nursing, and other workers such as those who provide support services such as cooking, cleaning, administration, and maintenance services (Department of Health and Ageing 2010, Productivity Commission 2011). The non-direct-care workforce consists of occupations that are not health-specific, including engineering, project management, research, architecture, marketing, human resource management, information systems, accountancy, and finance. The focus of this article is the direct-care workforce.

Employees within the aged-care sector can work in two different settings: residential aged care or community aged care. Residential aged-care services

provide permanent and temporary accommodation to older people in the form of residential aged-care facilities; community aged-care services are provided for older people to enable them to live independently in their own homes for longer (AIHW 2015). In addition, while positions across residential aged-care and community aged-care service settings are found to be similar in the skills and scope of practice, they differ significantly in their employment status (King et al. 2012). Specifically, the community aged-care setting employs a higher percentage of full-time employees than does the residential aged-care setting (King et al. 2012). While both provide care to clients 24 hours a day on 7 days of the week, the community aged-care setting appears to provide the majority of its services from Monday to Friday within normal business hours, and only a small percentage of its services are provided over the weekend.

These differences are important to note because, on average, the aged-care direct-care workforce is four years older than public and private sector health-care workers (AIHW 2011). In 2012, the median age of an aged-care worker was 47 years in residential-care settings, and 50 years in community-care settings. Additionally, the aged-care census revealed that in 2012 59.9 per cent of residential-care workers and 70 per cent of community-care workers were over the age of 45 (King et al. 2012). Little is known about the differences between the factors influencing younger and older workers' intentions to remain in this sector.

Intentions to Stay

Research examining employees' intentions to stay is still emerging (Shacklock and Brunetto 2011). This research is valuable because while much is known about factors influencing employees' intentions to leave, little is known about their intentions to stay. This was highlighted by Cho, Johanson and Guchait (2009) who argued that examining the factors that influence employees' intentions to stay—rather than just the factors that influence employees' intentions to leave—is important because lower intentions to leave do not necessarily result in lower turnover, but higher intentions to stay significantly increase employee retention. Thus, further studies of intention to stay are needed because employees are more productive and more focused on their roles within a stable workforce (Arnold 2005). Such stability leads to improved quality of work, improved organisational memory, competitive advantage through retaining a more experienced workforce, and reductions in training, advertising, and recruitment costs (Jones and Gates 2007). Additionally, Flavel (2007) suggests that an understanding of the factors influencing turnover would be crucial to managing the potential shortfall in staffing within the aged-care sector. Thus, it is important to

understand the factors that contribute to employee retention through their impact on intentions to stay.

Previous research investigated the influence that demographic factors have on employees' intentions to stay and leave (Boxall, Mackay and Rasmussen 2003; Rosen et al. 2011; Shacklock and Brunetto 2011). Some of the characteristics examined in previous studies include age, and the perceived health of the employee and their family. While previous studies have found that characteristics such as gender and financial circumstances are important influences on employees' intentions to stay and (or) leave (Boxall Mackay and Rasmussen 2003; Shacklock and Brunetto 2011), in this study we chose not to examine these characteristics, as they are well-established in the literature. Additionally, the Australian aged-care sector is female-dominated with males representing less than 7 per cent of employees in the sector (AIHW 2011). Therefore, examining the influence that gender has on aged-care employees' intentions to stay and leave is problematic. Instead, the characteristics chosen—age, and employee health and family health—are those that have not been extensively discussed in the wider literature, and that are feasible to study within the aged-care sector.

Age

Research investigating older and younger workers' intentions to stay has found that older workers (aged >45 years) are more likely to stay in an organisation than are younger workers (aged <45 years) (Letvuck and Buck 2008; Anderson and Hill 2010; Larrabee et al. 2010). Conversely, younger workers were found to leave more frequently than older workers do (Apostolidis and Polifroni 2006; Boxall, Mackay and Rasmussen 2003; Rosen et al. 2011). These findings were mostly conducted using samples within the United States and the United Kingdom; research investigating the significance of age on employees' intentions to stay within the Australian health-care sector yields contradictory findings.

Two studies examining acute-care nurses in Australia found that older workers (aged >60 years) were more likely to leave due to retirement intentions than younger workers (Dockery 2004; Health Workforce Australia 2012), a finding which contrasts with that of US and UK research. However, within the Australian aged-care sector, this relationship does not appear to be replicated. That is, Howe et al. (2012) identified that older aged-care workers were more committed and had greater intentions to stay than younger workers did, which was in line with similar research conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom (Letvuck and Buck 2008; Larrabee et al. 2010).

One explanation for these conflicting results could be the use of different ages to define an older worker. Howe et al. (2012) did not specify what an older worker was in their analysis. The ABS (2013) suggests that an older Australian worker is one aged over 45 years, but others studies use 50 years as the cut-off (Larrabee et al. 2010); some even use 60 years and older as the minimum age for an older worker (Dockery 2004; Health Workforce Australia 2012). These differences in the minimum age may explain the contrasting results within the literature. As this study is conducted in an Australian aged-care setting, an older worker is defined as being 45 years and over, consistent with the ABS (2013) specification.

To examine age-related differences further, this study hypothesises that:

H1a: In comparison to older workers, younger workers will report lower intentions to stay.

H1b: Older (aged >50 years) and younger (age <50 years) employees will be influenced to stay by different factors.

Perceived Health of Self and Family

The influence that the health of employees and their families has on employees' intentions to stay and leave is particularly salient in the context of an ageing workforce. For example Shacklock (2006), AARP (2006), and Patrickson and Ranzijn (2004) found that the health of employees and their families had a significant influence on employees' intentions to stay in their job. Similarly, employees who reported poor health had higher intentions of leaving than did those who reported better health in the Australian acute-care and aged-care settings (Shacklock and Brunetto 2011; Howe et al. 2012). No relationship was found, however, between employees' perceived level of health and their intentions to stay in the aged-care sector (Howe et al. 2012). Additionally, no study has investigated the influence that the health of an aged-care employee's family member has on their intentions to stay. This is important to investigate, as an ageing workforce brings with it added new dimensions of ailing parents and dependent children, and so the influence of the health of family members over employees' intentions to stay becomes important (Patrickson and Ranzijn 2004; Shacklock 2006). This study extends research in this area to aged-care employees by examining the following hypotheses:

H2a: Employees who report better perceived health of self will report higher intentions to stay.

H2b: Employees who report better perceived health of family will report higher intentions to stay.

Organisational Factors

Research has long established direct relationships between each of organisational commitment, psychological contracts, and discretionary behaviours and employees' intentions to stay and leave (Shen, Cox and McBride 2004; Holtom et al. 2008). However, the combined influence of perceived supervisor support, perceived organisational support, and job embeddedness on employees' intentions to stay has not been dealt with in the literature to date. Instead, research has focused on the relationship between one or two of these constructs and other constructs. Therefore, these variables were selected for inclusion in this study.

Perceived Organisational Support

Perceived organisational support (POS) is defined as an employee's 'global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contribution and cares about their wellbeing' (Eisenberger et al. 1986, p. 501). The theory underpinning POS draws on social-exchange theory to explain an employee's commitment to an organisation, and it argues that employees' are motivated to perform and stay at an organisation in return for recognition, social rewards, and material benefits (Johlke, Stamper and Shoemaker 2002; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). In particular, a social exchange is referred to as 'the voluntary action of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others' (Blau 1964, p. 91). If a positive social exchange is perceived, employees develop a high level of POS and are more committed to stay at an organisation; if employees develop a low level of POS, they become less committed to stay at an organisation (Eisenberger et al. 1997; Johlke, Stamper and Shoemaker 2002).

Since its introduction in the late 1980s, this construct has been argued to be the most widespread form of support cited in human resource management. Accordingly, there has been much research examining the relationship between POS and employee retention and turnover (Paille 2009). In fact, a meta-analysis conducted by Riggle, Edmondson and Hansen (2009) reported over 150 studies that examined the relationship between this construct and organisational outcomes such as job satisfaction, career satisfaction, intention to stay, and intention to leave.

When examining the relationship between POS and intentions to stay, a strong positive correlation has consistently been found. That is, as employees' POS increases so too does their intention to stay (Eisenberger et al. 1997; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). A study by Cho, Johanson and Guchait (2009) examining hospitality workers in an Asian setting found that the

effect of POS on employees' intentions to stay is twice as significant as the effect of POS on employees' intention to leave. This indicates that POS is more important in employee retention than in employee turnover. However, the majority of research examining this construct has been carried out in the United States and only an emerging body of research has investigated its impact within Australian workplaces. Of the research that has been conducted in Australia, mixed results have been found. One study found that the social support perceived by employees does not differ between younger and older employees (Brough et al. 2011). However, other research suggests that younger employees are influenced more by the support available within organisations than older workers are (Shacklock and Brunetto 2011). This suggests that additional research is needed to investigate these differences further. This study hypothesises that:

H3: There will be differences between older and younger workers' perceived organisational support.

Perceived Supervisor Support

Research has examined the influence that perceived supervisor support (PSS) has on employees' intentions to leave and to stay. PSS refers to the perceptions that employees have about how much their supervisor cares about their wellbeing and values their contribution to the organisation (Eisenberger et al. 2002). Based on organisational support theory, PSS argues that the support received from employees' supervisors increases their perceived organisational support, resulting in an increased sense of obligation to their supervisor and, as a result, a stronger intention to stay with an organisation (Eisenberger et al. 2002).

Research examining this construct is emerging. One Australian study found employees' satisfaction with their manager plays a role in turnover behaviour (O'Donnell and Hudson 2011), although most studies found no direct relationship between PSS and employees' turnover intentions (Coomber and Barriball 2007; Allen, Bryant and Vardaman 2010). Instead, POS was found to mediate the relationship between PSS and intentions to leave (Cho, Johanson and Guchait 2009). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) argued that this relationship develops as supervisors serve as representatives of their organisations, meaning that how a supervisor treats their employees will affect how an employee generally feels about how much their organisation cares about their wellbeing and values the contributions that they make to the organisation.

Research investigating this construct, however, has mostly been tested within a US context, with limited research in an Australian aged-care context.

Therefore, the present study aims to extend the research on this construct. This study hypothesises that:

H4: There will be differences between younger and older employees' perceived supervisor support.

Job Embeddedness

First introduced by Mitchell et al. (2001), job embeddedness refers to the connection and relationships that employees develop over a period of time with their employer. It aims to capture a more comprehensive view of the employee-employer relationship than other models of turnover and retention do (Mitchell et al. 2001; Anderson and Hill 2010). The development of this construct was influenced by the Lewin (1951) field theory, which argues that each aspect of life is interlinked; this means that a decision to change one aspect of life will have an influence on another aspect. Mitchell et al. (2001) argued that a broad set of influences affect employees' intentions to stay in their job, ranging from factors within an organisation to factors within the broader community where employees live that have psychological, social, and financial implications for employees (Reitz and Anderson 2011; Zhang, Fried and Griffeth 2012). While these influences can vary in strength and size for each employee, overall they influence all employees' intentions to stay (Clinton, Knight and Guest 2012). Job embeddedness examines all of these components.

The strength of connectedness between employees' organisations and the community is proposed to be a function of three components. First, the extent to which an individual perceives themselves as similar to or to fit with their organisation and community; second, the links an individual has to other people and activities within their organisation and community; and third, the ease with which these links could be broken, which is also known as the sacrifices that employees are willing to make (Anderson and Hill 2010; Mitchell et al. 2001; Reitz and Anderson 2011).

Findings to date indicate that job embeddedness plays an influential role in employees' intentions to stay and leave (Anderson and Hill 2010; Jiang et al. 2012). Overall, research examining on-the-job embeddedness has found that employees who have longer organisational tenure have stronger organisational links and, therefore, will be less likely to leave (Holtom et al. 2008). Additionally, the more an employee stands to lose by leaving, the more likely it is that they will stay (Reitz and Anderson 2011).

While research establishing this construct has been predominately contextualised within a health discipline, a significant proportion of the

research conducted is limited to the US context. Of the research that has been conducted outside the United States, some (for example Peltokorpi 2013) question the applicability of the validated scale used to measure the construct in different contexts. Through a qualitative inquiry Peltokorpi (2013) found the construct broadly applied to a Japanese context. In contrast, Mallol, Holtom and Lee (2007) found the scale to be a robust predictor of employee retention across diverse populations within the United States. Additionally, a meta-analysis by Jiang et al. (2012) found support for the construct across cultures, and even more so within female-dominant sectors such as the aged-care sector.

Research results from examining the influence that off-the-job embeddedness has on employees' intentions to stay and leave are mixed; hence, further clarification is needed. Extending this research to other settings is important, because whereas in other countries the community where employees live has been found to have a significant impact upon employees' intentions to stay or leave, in Australia this may not be the case. This may be due to geographical differences, as well as differences in policies, legislation, and norms. Further, as older workers have been found to stay longer than younger workers, this study hypothesises that:

H5: There will be differences between younger and older employees' on-the-job and off-the-job embeddedness.

2. Method

Four Australian aged-care organisations (one very large (more than 4000 employees), one large (fewer than 900 employees), one medium (fewer than 300 employees), and one small (fewer than 80 employees)) participated in this study in 2012. These four organisations were located within two Australian states (Queensland and New South Wales). They provided both community and residential aged-care services to the community, and they did not have any specific policies to retain older workers, at least to the knowledge of the authors. Invitations to participate were sent to 2118 direct-care employees of these organisations. Hard-copy questionnaires were distributed to each site based on the total number of direct-care employees provided by each organisation. Questionnaire packs were then allocated by site management. They were returned to the researchers using the envelope provided or were placed in a sealed box at the site. Once the questionnaires were returned, the responses were entered into SPSS Version 21.0 for analysis.

Measures

The questionnaire contained demographic items regarding the respondent's age, personal health, and family health status. Age was measured using an open-ended question: 'In what year were you born?'. To measure a respondent's and their family's perceived health, two questions were asked: 'How would you rate your overall health?', and 'How would you rate the overall health of your family?' These were rated on a six-point scale (very poor, poor, fair, good, very good, excellent).

POS was measured using a version of the Shortened Perceived Organisational Support Scale. This scale consists of 16 statements that represent opinions that employees may have about their organisation, and were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). This version of the scale was developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) to provide a unidimensional scale measuring supervisors' perceptions of organisational support. The shortened version of the scale has been found to result in sound reliability: $\alpha = 0.83 - 0.95$ in previous studies (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2000; Mallette 2011); and it is used in the majority of studies conducted to examine POS (Wickramasinghe and Wickramasinghe 2011). Research on this construct has only extended the application to supervisors. However, in this article we examine the influence that this construct has on all employees' intentions to stay and to leave.

PSS was measured using an adapted Shortened Perceived Organisational Support Scale. This was adapted by replacing the words 'my organisation' with 'my immediate supervisor', in line with previous research examining PSS (such as Kottke and Sharafinski (1988) and Eisenberger et al. (2002)). Using the measure in this way has been found it to be a reliable ($\alpha = 0.93$) and valid measure of PSS in previous studies (DeConinck and Johnson 2009; Shanock and Eisenberger 2006). A composite score was used in the final analysis by averaging responses to items in this scale. An example of the items used was: 'My immediate supervisor strongly considers my goals and values'. Similar to POS, existing research on this construct only extended the application to supervisors. However, this study will examine the influence that this construct has on all employees' intentions to stay and to leave.

Job embeddedness was measured using the Lee et al. (2004) measure, which consisted of 34 items relating to the fit, links, and sacrifices that employees perceive with their organisation and the broader community. This study examined on-the-job and off-the-job embeddedness by creating a composite score for both scales, as in the previous research of Lee et al. (2004). An example of the organisation (on-the-job) embeddedness items

used is: 'The benefits are good on this job'. An example of the community (off-the-job) embeddedness items used is: 'I really love the place where I live'.

Intention to stay (the dependent variable) refers to an individual's perception of their likelihood to continue their membership of an organisation, and was measured using four items developed by Kim et al. (1996). An example of the items used is: 'I plan to stay at this organisation for as long as possible'.

3. Results

A response rate of 17 per cent was achieved (359 useable responses). Possible reasons for this modest response rate include concerns about the confidentiality of responses from employees; practical problems that may have existed in deploying the questionnaire; or because the national census of Australian aged-care employees was being conducted at the same time as this survey. Of those who did respond, 333 (92.8 per cent) were female and 26 (7.2 per cent) were male; 254 were aged over 45 years (70.8 per cent), ($M = 48.3$ years; $SD = 11.7$ years); 212 participants worked in Queensland (59.1 per cent), 139 participants worked in New South Wales (38.7 per cent), and 12 worked across both states (3.3 per cent). In addition, 176 participants worked in residential-care settings (49 per cent), 175 participants worked in community-care settings (48.7 per cent), and five participants worked in both residential care and community care (1.4 per cent). The remaining participants did not respond to these demographic items.

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics and correlations for all examined variables. This table illustrates that respondents reported moderately low turnover intentions, as indicated by a mean level of intention to stay that was above the scale mid-point. The four main predictors (on-the-job embeddedness, off-the-job embeddedness, PSS, and POS) were significantly correlated (in the expected directions) with intention to stay. Interestingly, age was significantly negatively correlated to intentions to stay, suggesting that younger employees were more likely to stay than were older employees. This was in direct contrast to the hypothesised direction of this relationship and, as such, no support was found for hypothesis 1b. Similarly, health of self and family were unrelated to intentions to stay and, as such, hypotheses 2a and 2b were unsupported in this study. Following a split of the sample by age (< 45 years versus 45 years and older), independent sample t-tests confirmed that there was no significant difference by age group in intention to stay ($t = 1.07$, $df = 0\ 357$, $p = 0.28$).

Further investigation into differences between the factors influencing younger and older employees through independent samples t-tests revealed that the two groups differed for PSS ($t = 0-2.78$, $df = 357$, $p = < 0.01$) and POS ($t = -3.42$, $df = 357$, $p = < 0.001$), but not for on-the-job embeddedness ($t = -1.75$, $df = 357$, $p = 0.08$) or off-the-job embeddedness ($t = 1.73$, $df = 357$, $p = 0.08$). These findings support hypotheses 3 and 4, but they do not support hypothesis 5.

A hierarchical regression was performed to control for the effects of demographic variables in the model. Predictors were entered in three steps: 1. perceived health of self, perceived health of family; 2. PSS, on-the-job embeddedness, and off-the-job embeddedness; and 3. POS. A significant change in R^2 at steps 2 and 3 would indicate that one or more of the predictors differentially influenced intention to stay. This was the case for younger workers only, where the introduction of the variable POS resulted in an additional 3 per cent of the variance being explained. Table 2 contains the results of this analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	48.3	11.7	-	-							
2. Health of Self	5.46	1.17	-	0.01	-						
3. Health of Family	5.38	1.29	-	-0.03	0.63***	-					
4. On-the-job Embeddedness	2.82	0.51	0.86	0.03	0.13*	0.07	-				
5. Off-the-job Embeddedness	3.16	0.48	0.78	-0.08	0.28***	0.26**	0.40***	-			
6. Perceived Supervisor Support	5.03	1.11	0.95	0.11*	0.03	0.02	0.54***	0.20***	-		
7. Perceived Organisational Support	4.66	1.09	0.94	0.14*	0.07	0.02	0.68***	0.21***	0.69***	-	
8. Intention to Stay	3.41	0.97	0.85	-0.12*	0.06	0.02	0.49***	0.26***	0.34***	0.41***	-

^aHealth of self and family were measured on a scale of 1 = very poor to 6 = excellent; the remaining variables were measured using multi-item self-report scales. Details are given in the text.

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Examining Factors Influencing Younger and Older Workers' Intentions to Stay

Step	Predictor Variable	Older (> 45 years) Workers' Intention to Stay (N = 254)				Younger (< 45 years) Workers' Intention to Stay (N = 105)			
		B	SEB	β	R ² (Adj. R2) Change	B	SEB	B	R ² (Adj. R2) Change
1	Perceived Health of Self ^a	.08	.06	.11		-.01	.13	-.02	
	Perceived Health of Family ^a	-.08	.06	-.11	.01 (0.00)	.14	.11	.18	.02 (-.01)
2	Perceived Health of Self ^a	.03	.06	.03		-.05	.11	-.05	
	Perceived Health of Family ^a	-.05	.05	-.06		.02	.11	.02	
	On-the-job Embeddedness	.76	.13	.41***		.84	.24	.40**	
	Off-the-job Embeddedness	.08	.12	.04		.18	.21	.09	
	Perceived Supervisor Support	.08	.05	.09	.24 (.23)***	.18	.11	.17	.33 (.30)***
3	Perceived Health of Self ^a	.03	.06	.03		-.07	.11	-.07	
	Perceived Health of Family ^a	-.05	.05	-.06		.04	.10	.05	
	On-the-job Embeddedness	.68	.15	.37***		.57	.27	.27*	
	Off-the-job Embeddedness	.09	.12	.04		.21	.22	.10	
	Perceived Supervisor Support	.04	.06	.05		.06	.12	.06	
	Perceived Organisational Support	.08	.07	.10	.24 (.22)***	.27	.13	.26*	.36 (.32)***

^a Health of self and family were measured on a scale of 1 = very poor to 6 = excellent; the remaining variables were measured using multi-item self-report scales. Details are given in the text.

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

As can be seen, the model predicting older workers' intentions to stay explained 24 per cent of the variance in this criterion, $p < 0.001$. At step 1, perceived health of self and family predicted 1 per cent of the variance, $p = 0.29$. At step 2, the addition of the organisational variables on-the-job embeddedness, off-the-job embeddedness, and PSS explained an additional 24 per cent of the variance. The addition of POS in this model, at step 3, added no further explanatory power. While collectively all variables contributed to older employees' intentions to stay, on-the-job embeddedness was the only variable to explain uniquely the variance in older workers.

In contrast, the same model was found to explain 36 per cent of the variance in younger workers' intentions to stay. Similarly to older workers, perceived health of self and perceived health of family were found to explain only 2 per cent of the variance at step 1. At step 2, on-the-job embeddedness, off-the-job embeddedness, and PSS accounted for an additional 33 per cent of the variance, with on-the-job embeddedness identified as the significant unique predictor at this step. However, in contrast to the model for older workers' intentions to stay, the introduction of POS increased the explanatory power of the model by 3 per cent ($p < 0.05$) and resulted in both on-the-job embeddedness and POS being unique, significant predictors at this step.

Thus, while both models were found to explain both older and younger workers' intentions to stay, they did so to a different extent. That is, the combination of variables explained significantly more of the variance in younger workers' intentions to stay (36 per cent) than for older workers (24 per cent). This suggests that there are other factors that may influence older workers' intentions to stay, and supports hypothesis 1b, which proposed that younger and (or) older workers would have different factors influencing their intentions to stay.

4. Discussion

This study set out to examine differences between the factors influencing younger and older workers' intentions to stay. It was found that younger and older workers were influenced to stay by similar factors and by different factors. This is in line with previous work by Winkelmann-Gleed (2011), Apostolidis and Polifroni (2006), and Weston (2006). Additionally, this study found that perceived health of self and family, POS, PSS, and job embeddedness influenced younger employees' intentions to stay more than for older workers. This difference may reflect a change in the expectations of employees about organisations as the workforce becomes more diverse. Indeed, previous research has suggested that there is a changing expectation and demand as new generations enter the workforce (Weston 2006). This

study provides further support to suggest that human resource managers may need to invest in and employ different factors to retain their human capital in the future, especially as organisations are now having to manage a workforce with much more age diversity.

Further investigation of the differences between younger and older employees identified that younger employees reported higher PSS, POS, and on-the-job embeddedness than older workers did. This finding is contrary to ideas presented in previous studies conducted in the United States, which suggest that these factors were particularly influential in older workers' intentions to stay (Avery, McKay and Wilson 2007; Wilson et al. 2008). The findings in this study are similar to Australian research by Shacklock and Brunetto (2011), which suggested that relationships with supervisors and attachment to work were the main drivers of intentions to stay for younger hospital employees. The findings here add to the literature by suggesting that younger workers in Australia do in fact perceive these factors differently to older workers. This may reflect differences in the expectations about the employer-employee relationship (Weston 2006), or it may reflect differences in the value of these relationships to younger and older workers in Australia.

Interestingly, the finding that younger workers were more likely to stay than older workers contrasts with previous research (Letvak and Buck 2008; Anderson and Hill 2010; Larrabee et al. 2010), which found that older workers are more likely to stay than younger workers. One possible reason for this could be the Australian aged-care context, whereas those studies were about health-care workers in the United States.

Another surprising finding of this research was the lack of support provided for the relationship between off-the-job embeddedness and intentions to stay. While a significant correlation was identified, this variable was not found to predict uniquely the intentions to stay in either younger or older workers. Similarly, there was no difference found between younger and older workers' reported off-the-job embeddedness. This is surprising, as it differs from previously reported findings from health-care organisations in the United States (Mitchell et al. 2001; Holtom et al. 2008), which suggest that off-the-job embeddedness would have similar predictive power to on-the-job embeddedness with regard to an employee's intentions to stay. This difference could be a result of the cultural context, as Australian workers may not be as influenced by community factors as workers in the United States are. However, as this is a new finding, further research is required to establish whether the national context plays a role in determining the influence that off-the-job embeddedness has on both older and younger workers' intentions to stay within an organisation.

Implications for Practice

This study has significant implications for human resource managers and professionals, as it suggests that whereas the factors influencing older and younger employees' intentions to stay are similar, the variables investigated in this study (perceived health of self and family, POS, PSS, and job embeddedness) were more influential on younger workers' intentions to stay than on the intentions of older workers. Additionally, due to the increasing diversity of the age of aged-care workers in the Asia-Pacific region, the findings in relation to older workers have several important implications for organisations, specifically with regard to how they structure and implement their employee-retention strategies.

The findings suggest that there are differences between younger and older workers in terms of the influence that feeling supported and valued by the organisation and their supervisor has on their intentions to stay. This difference may reflect changes in the expectations of organisations and supervisors by younger and older employees, or it may reflect changes in what is valued by employees. Accordingly, if human resource managers are looking for ways to improve retention rates for younger workers, they may benefit from a focus on the support being provided to these workers by their direct supervisor and by the wider organisation. While there are several means by which this focus could be established, a potential technique is creating or modifying induction processes, and ensuring that they demonstrate the variety and availability of support within the organisation for new workers.

Further, unlike the US context, Australian workers seem to have less reliance on their connection to the community when evaluating their position at work. Where off-the-job embeddedness plays an important role in determining intentions to stay for US workers, this effect has not been found important for the Australian workers. Accordingly, human resources managers looking to increase retention rates within the Australian context should try to focus on improving on-the-job embeddedness factors, such as providing employees with more opportunities to make links and networks within the company, and focusing on maintaining high levels of perceived POS and PSS amongst employees. Again, while there are several methods by which managers could achieve this, the possible strategies include encouraging employees to connect with each other via social networks, and by organising events that enable staff to interact outside the work environment. This research is part of an emerging body of literature, and future research is needed to investigate these contextual differences further.

Strengths and Limitations

This study adds value to the existing field of study in several ways. Most notably, it is the first study to examine the combined influence of the discussed factors on younger and older workers in an Australian setting. Additionally, the participants were gathered from four differently sized organisations, and from two states (Queensland and New South Wales). This scope allows for the findings to be applied in a much wider context than the previous studies that were limited to a single organisational context. Further, this study extends the use of POS and PSS measures to all employees, rather than the traditional practice of surveying only supervisors and the upper managerial positions. This is an important contribution, as the study provides support for the importance of supervisor and (or) organisational support for all employees, and not just middle management and above.

Although this study makes significant contributions to the literature, it is not without limitations. First, the participating organisations were all from the not-for-profit sector and, as such, the findings may not take into account differences that potentially exist in the private sector and that need to be considered in the light of the cost restrictions faced by not-for-profit organisations. Additionally, the scope of the study was set to include only aged-care organisations, which may limit the possibility to generalise the findings to other industries or to non-service-based organisations. Similarly to other studies that have utilised questionnaires as a method for gathering data, the issue of self-reporting bias needs to be considered when interpreting the results. However, the impact of this limitation was minimised here through the design and implementation of the questionnaire, which relied upon valid and reliable tools and which followed a reported successful procedure. Finally, while this study provides a good starting point, the use of POS and PSS scales for all employees still needs further exploration and validation.

5. Conclusion

With the recent push to increase the retirement age to 70, and the expected increase in participation rates of older workers, this research supports the need to deal with the retention strategies required for both the older and younger workforce of the future. Recent studies have started to highlight this need for human resource managers to shift away from a one-size-fits-all approach to employee retention; the results contained in this article support this view. This research suggests that if organisations are to manage an increasingly diverse workforce successfully, the retention strategies for younger and older workers should not follow a one-size-fits-all approach, and instead should be tailored to cater for this diversity, with the aim of achieving the benefits that employee retention brings.

References

- Allen, D. G., Bryant, P. C. and Vardaman, J. M. (2010), 'Retaining Talent: Replacing Misconceptions with Evidence-based Strategies', *Academy of Management Perspectives*, vol. 24, pp. 48-64.
- American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) (2006), *The 50+ Workforce: An AARP Wyoming Survey of Businesses*, AARP, Washington.
- Anderson, M. and Hill, P. D. (2010), 'Job Embeddedness and Nurse Retention', *Nurse Administration Quarterly*, vol. 34, pp. 190-200.
- Apostolidis, B. and Polifroni, E. C. (2006), 'Nurse Work Satisfaction and Generational Differences', *The Journal of Nursing Administration*, vol. 36, pp. 506-509.
- Arnold, E. (2005), 'Managing Human Resources to Improve Employee Retention', *The Health Care Manager*, vol. 24, pp. 132-140.
- Austen, S., McMurray, C., Lewin, G. and Ong, R. (2013), 'Retaining Workers in an Ageing Population: Insights from a Representative Aged and Community Care Organisation', *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, vol. 32, pp. 41-46.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2012) *Australian Social Trends, Australia*, December, cat. 4120.0.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2013), *Gender Indicators, Australia*, January, cat. 4125.0.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2011), *Australia's Welfare 2011, Australia*, November, cat. AUS 142.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2015), *Aged Care in Australia*, retrieved on 11 June 2015 at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/aged-care/residential-and-community-2011-12/aged-care-in-australia/>
- Avery, D. R., McKay, P. F. and Wilson, D. C. (2007), 'Engaging the Ageing Workforce: The Relationship between Perceived Age Similarity, Satisfaction with Co-workers, and Employee Engagement', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 92, pp. 1542-1556.
- Blau, P. M. (1964), *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, Wiley, New York.
- Boxall, P., Mackay, K. and Rasmussen, E. (2003), 'Labour Turnover and Retention in New Zealand: The Causes and Consequences of Leaving and Staying with Employers', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 41, pp. 196-214.
- Brough, P., Johnson, G., Drummond, S., Pennisi, S. and Timms, C. (2011), 'Comparisons of Cognitive Ability and Job Attitudes of Older and Younger Workers', *Equality Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, vol. 30, pp. 105-126.
- Buchan, J., Twigg, D., Dussault, G., Duffield, C. and Stone, P. W. (2015), 'Policies to Sustain the Nursing Workforce: An International Perspective', *International Nursing Review*, vol. 62, pp. 162-170.

- Cho, S., Johanson, M. M. and Guchait, P. (2009), 'Employees' Intent to Leave: A Comparison of Intent to Leave Versus Intent to Stay', *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, vol. 28, pp. 374-381.
- Clinton, M., Knight, T. and Guest, D. (2012), 'Job Embeddedness: A New Attitudinal Measure', *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, vol. 20, pp. 111-117.
- Conen, W. S, van Dalen, H. P. and Henkens, K. (2012), 'Ageing and Employers' Perceptions of Labour Costs and Productivity: A Survey among European Employers', *International Journal of Manpower*, vol. 33, pp. 629-647.
- Coomber, B. and Barriball, L. K. (2007), 'Impact of Job Satisfaction Components on Intent to Leave and Turnover for Hospital-based Nurses: A Review of the Research Literature', *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, vol. 44, pp. 297-314.
- Coyle-Shapiro, J. and Kessler, I. (2000), 'Consequences of the Psychological Contract for the Employment Relationship: A Large Scale Survey', *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 37, pp. 903-930.
- Crampton, S. M. and Hodge, J. W. (2007), 'Generations in the Workplace: Understanding Age Diversity', *The Business Review*, vol. 9, pp. 16-22.
- DeConinck, J. and Johnson, J. (2009), 'The Effects of Perceived Supervisor Support, Perceived Organizational Support, and Organizational Justice on Turnover among Salespeople', *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, vol. 29, pp. 333-351.
- Department of Health and Ageing (2010), *A National Health Hospitals Network: Further Investment in Australia Health*, ISBN: 978-1-74241-196-5, Canberra
- Department of Human Services (2014), Federal Budget 2014-2015, retrieved on 14 May 2014 at <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/corporate/publications-and-resources/budget/1415/measures/older-australians/56-11219>
- Dockery, A. M. (2004), 'Workforce Experience and Retention in Nursing in Australia', *Australian Bulletin of Labour*, vol. 30, pp. 74-101.
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S. and Sowa, D. (1986), 'Perceived Organisational Support', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 71, pp. 500-507.
- Eisenberger, R., Cummings, J., Armeli, S. and Lynch, P. (1997), 'Perceived Organizational Support, Discretionary Treatment, and Job Satisfaction', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 82, pp. 812-820.
- Eisenberger, R., Stinglhamber, F., Vandenberghe, C., Sucharski, I. L. and Rhoades, L. (2002), 'Perceived Supervisor Support: Contributions to Perceived Organisational Support and Employee Retention', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 87, pp. 565-573.
- Flavel, J. (2007), 'The Aged Care Workforce: Methods to Increase Supply to Remedy Possible Shortages', *Australian Bulletin of Labour*, vol. 33, pp. 106-128

- Frerichs, F., Lindley, R., Aleksandrowicz, P., Baldauf, B. and Galloway, S. (2012), 'Active Ageing in Organisations: A Case Study Approach', *International Journal of Manpower*, vol. 33, pp. 666-684.
- Gellert, G. J. and Kuipers, B. S. (2008), 'Short- and Long-term Consequences of Age in Work Teams. An Empirical Exploration of Ageing Teams', *Career Development International*, vol. 13, pp. 132-149.
- Health Workforce Australia (2012), *Health Workforce 2025—Doctors, Nurses, and Midwives—Volume 1*, ISBN: 978-0-9873201-0-0, Canberra.
- Holtom, B. C., Mitchell, T. R., Lee, T. W. and Eberly, M. B. (2008), 'Turnover and Retention Research: A Glance at the Past, a Closer Review of the Present, and a Venture into the Future', *The Academy of Management Annals*, vol. 2, pp. 231-274.
- Howe, A. L., King, D. S., Ellis, J. M., Wells, Y. D., Wei, Z. and Teshuva, K. A. (2012), 'Stabilising the Aged Care Workforce: An Analysis of Worker Retention and Intention', *Australian Health Review*, vol. 36, pp. 83-91.
- Ilmakunnas, P. and Ilmakunnas, S. (2011), 'Diversity at the Workplace: Whom Does it Benefit?', *De Economist*, vol. 159, pp. 223-255.
- Jiang, K., Liu, D., McKay, P., Lee, T. and O'Do, T. (2012), 'When and How is Job Embeddedness Predictive of Turnover? A Meta-analytic Investigation', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 97, pp. 1077-1096.
- Johlke, M. C., Stamper, C. L. and Shoemaker, M. E. (2002), 'Antecedents to Boundary-spanner Perceived Organisational Support', *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, vol. 17, pp. 116-128.
- Jones, C. B. and Gates, M. (2007), 'The Cost and Benefits of Nurse Turnover: A Business Case for Nurse Retention', *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, vol. 12, September.
- Kim, S-W., Price, J. L., Mueller, C.W. and Watson, T. W. (1996), 'The Determinants of Career Intent among Physicians at a US Air Force Hospital', *Human Relations*, vol. 49, pp. 947-976.
- King, D., Mavromaras, K., Wei, Z., He, B., Healy, J., Macaitis, K., Moskos, M. and Smith, L. (2012), *The Aged Care Workforce 2012*, ISBN: 978-1-74241-874-2, Canberra.
- Kottke, J. L., and Sharafinski, C. E. (1988), 'Measuring Perceived Supervisory and Organizational Support', *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, vol. 48, pp. 1075-1079.
- Larrabee, J. H., Wu, Y., Persily, C. A., Simoni, P. S., Johnston, P. A., Marcischak, T. L., Mott, C. L. and Gladden, S. D. (2010), 'Influence of Stress Resiliency on RN Job Satisfaction and Intent to Stay', *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, vol. 32, pp. 81-102.
- Lee, T. W., Mitchell, T. R., Sablinski, C. J., Burton, J. P. and Holtom, B. C. (2004), 'The Effects of Job Embeddedness on Organisational Citizenship, Job Performance, Volitional Absences and Voluntary Turnover', *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 47, pp. 711-722.

- Letvak, S. and Buck, R. (2008), 'Factors Influencing Work Productivity and Intention to Stay in Nursing', *Nursing Economic\$,* vol. 26, pp. 159-165.
- Lewin, K. (1951), *Field Theory in Social Psychology*, Harper, New York.
- Mallette, C. (2011), 'Nurses' Work Patterns: Perceived Organisational Support and Psychological Contract', *Journal of Research in Nursing*, vol. 16, pp. 518-532.
- Mallol, C., Holtom, B. and Lee, T. W. (2007), 'Job Embeddedness in a Culturally Diverse Environment', *Journal of Business and Psychology*, vol. 22, pp. 35-44.
- Mitchell, T. R., Holtom, B. C., Lee, T. W., Sablynski, C. J. and Erez, M. (2001), 'Why People Stay: Using Job Embeddedness to Predict Voluntary Turnover', *The Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 44, pp. 1102-1121.
- Mountford, H. (2011), 'Oh Won't You Stay Just a Little Bit Longer: Changing Employers' Views of Older Workers', *Australian Bulletin of Labour*, vol. 37, pp. 164-190.
- O'Donnell, J. and Hudson, C. (2011), 'Practitioner Introduction Healthcare Reform: Government Pronouncements or Managers Engaging Staff?', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 49, pp. 138-142.
- O'Loughlin, K., Humpel, N. and Kendig, H. (2010), 'Impact of the Global Financial Crisis on Employed Australian Baby Boomers: A National Survey', *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, vol. 29, pp. 88-91.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2012), *LFS by Sex and Age—Indicators' in OECD, StatExtracts.*
- Paille, P. (2009), 'The Relationship between Support, Commitment and Intent to Leave Team: A Social Exchange Perspective', *Team Performance Management*, vol. 15, pp. 49-62.
- Patrickson, M. and Ranzijn, R. (2004), 'Bounded Choices in Work and Retirement in Australia', *Employee Relations*, vol. 26, pp. 422-432.
- Peltokorpi, V. (2013), 'Job Embeddedness in Japanese Organisations', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 24, pp. 1551-1569.
- Productivity Commission (2011), *Care for Older Australians, Productivity Commission, Canberra*, pp. 1-574.
- Reitz, O. E. and Anderson, M. A. (2011), 'An Overview of Job Embeddedness', *Journal of Professional Nursing*, vol. 27, pp. 320-327.
- Rhoades, L. and Eisenberger, R. (2002), 'Perceived Organisational Support: A Review of the Literature', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 87, pp. 698-714.
- Riggle, R. J., Edmondson, D. R. and Hansen, J. D. (2009), 'A Meta-analysis of the Relationship between Perceived Organisational Support and Front-line Employee Job Outcomes: 20 Years of Research', *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 62, pp. 1027-1030.

- Rosen, J., Stiehl, E. M., Mittal, V. and Leana, C. R. (2011), 'Stayers, Leavers, Switchers among Certified Nursing Assistants in Nursing Homes: A Longitudinal Investigation of Turnover Intent, Staff Retention and Turnover', *The Gerontologist*, vol. 51, pp. 597-606.
- Rousseau, D. M. and Shperling, Z. (2003), 'Pieces of the Action: Ownership and the Changing Employment Relationship', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 12, pp. 115-134.
- Shacklock, K. H. (2006), 'Extended Working Lives? The Meaning of Working to Older University Workers in Australia', *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management*, vol. 6, pp. 161-173.
- Shacklock, K. H., and Brunetto, Y. (2011), 'A Model of Older Workers' Intentions to Continue Working', *Personnel Review*, vol. 40, pp. 252-274.
- Shanock, L. R. and Eisenberger, R. (2006), 'When Supervisors Feel Supported: Relationships with Subordinates' Perceived Supervisor Support, Perceived Organisational Support, and Performance', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 91, pp. 689-695
- Shen, J., Cox, A. and McBride, A. (2004), 'Factors Influencing Turnover and Retention of Midwives and Consultants: A Literature Review', *Health Services Management Research*, vol. 17, pp. 249-253.
- Weston, M. J. (2006), 'Integrating Generational Perspectives in Nursing', *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, vol. 11, pp. 1-9.
- Wickramasinghe, D. and Wickramasinghe, V. (2011), 'Perceived Organisational Support, Job Involvement and Turnover Intention in Lean Production in Sri Lanka', *International Journal of Advanced Manufacturing Technology*, vol. 55, pp. 817-830.
- Wilson, B., Squires, M., Widger, K., Cranley, L. and Tourangeau, A. (2008), 'Job Satisfaction among a Multigenerational Nursing Workforce', *Journal of Nursing Management*, vol. 16, pp. 716-723.
- Winkelmann-Gleed, A. (2011), 'Demographic Change and Implications for Workforce Ageing in Europe: Raising Awareness and Improving Practice', *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, vol. 3, pp. 62-81.
- Young, K. (2013), 'Changing Demographics: Are Companies Meeting the Development Needs of an Ageing Workforce?', *Development and Learning in Organizations*, vol. 27, pp. 4-5.
- Zhang, M., Fried, D. D. and Griffeth, R. W. (2012), 'A Review of Job Embeddedness: Conceptual, Measurement Issues, and Directions for Future Research', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 22, pp. 220-231.