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**What are Turnover decision making factors?  
- A comparative study between Generation Y and  
Generation X in Sweden on how different factors weigh in the  
decision to stay or resign from a workplace.**

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## **Abstract**

This study was conducted in Sweden with the motivation to provide a new perspective on the topic of turnover, specifically how different factors may affect turnover decision making. With this aim, the study examined the six factors salary and benefits, environment, career opportunities, collegial aspects, meaningfulness, and work/life balance, that have been regarded as some of the most influential when making that decision to resign or remain at a workplace. It also examined potential differences and similarities between Generation X, born 1960-1978 and Generation Y, born 1979-1995. The study was conducted using a quantitative survey with hypothetical statements, which was sent out to participants through social media and email. There were a total of 104 participants in the study. Independent t-tests as well as Mann-Whitney's U-test were conducted in order to compare the levels of each factor between the two generations.

Results showed that though there were no major differences in how each generation valued each factor, or how they weighed it in with how they would decide turnover, it still showed that these factors are highly considered among both generations. These findings are discussed as the results suggest a combination of all or some factors that leads to the dealbreaking decision.

*Keywords:* Generation X, Generation Y, millennials, generational turnover, workplace.

## Sammanfattning

Denna studie genomfördes i Sverige med syftet att erbjuda ett nytt perspektiv på ämnet turnover och hur olika faktorer påverkar beslutet att säga upp sig från jobbet eller stanna kvar. Med detta syfte undersökte studien de sex faktorerna lön och förmåner, miljö, karriärmöjligheter, kollegiala aspekter, meningsfullhet och balans mellan arbete och privatliv, som har ansetts vara några av de mest inflytelserika när man fattade det beslutet att lämna eller stanna kvar på en arbetsplats. Vidare undersöktes eventuella skillnader och likheter mellan Generation X, födda 1960-1978, och Generation Y, födda 1979-1995. Studien genomfördes med hjälp av en kvantitativ enkät med hypotetiska uttalanden, som skickades ut till deltagarna via sociala medier och e-post. Totalt bestod studien av 104 deltagare. Oberoende t-tester samt Mann-Whitneys U-test genomfördes för att jämföra nivåerna av varje faktor mellan de två generationerna.

Resultaten visade att även om det inte fanns några stora skillnader i hur de två generationerna värderade varje faktor eller hur de vägde in dem i beslutet att säga upp sig eller inte, så visade det ändå att dessa faktorer är mycket viktiga för båda generationerna. Dessa fynd diskuteras eftersom resultaten tyder på att en möjlig kombination av alla eller några faktorer leder till beslutet att lämna arbetsplatsen.

*Nyckelord:* Generation X, Generation Y, millennials, generationsomsättning, arbetsplats

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## **What are Turnover decision making factors? - A comparative study between Generation Y and Generation X in Sweden on how different factors weigh in the decision to stay or resign from a workplace.**

Generational turnover in the workplace is an ongoing issue, as statistics continuously show that "Millennials" or "Generation Y" have a higher turnover rate compared to other generations (George & Wallio, 2017). This phenomenon has also been described as millennial turnover, since Millennials are the generation that is considered to be a job-hopping generation (Ngotngamwong, 2019). Therefore, organizations' main concern is to prevent such high turnover rates in order to retain their employees, which requires immediate adaptation from the organizational context. The current study responds to such concern with an aim of investigating what might lie behind factors that influence the turnover decision making of Generation Y and Generation X in Sweden.

In order to understand the underlying factors that may influence Generation Y's reconsideration of staying at the workplace, the current study investigates six factors that employees may consider. They are salary and benefits, environment, career opportunities, collegial aspects, meaningfulness, and work/life balance. These factors were derived from four relevant theories and aimed to investigate the turnover decision-making process of individuals.

The study was conducted in Sweden with the motivation to provide a new perspective on the topic, which had previously been investigated in Asia, the USA, and Eastern Europe. These studies concluded that Millennials do show a higher turnover rate, however some studies stated that the factors affecting their turnover decisions did not differ significantly between Millennials and older generations. At the same time, other studies have identified the factors that have a significant impact on Millennials' perception of the job which can consequently affect their turnover decision.

For the purpose of understanding the generational difference in turnover decision-making in the workplace in Sweden, this study compared Generation X (born between 1960-1978) and Generation Y (born between 1979-1995), hypothesizing that Generation Y would have a higher intention to leave the workplace across five of the chosen factors.

## **Theoretical background**

The following section described four theories that served as a base for the six factors that are measured in this study. The salary and benefits factor was derived from Social Exchange Theory since this theory describes the economic outcomes and needs of the parties. Collegial aspects, career opportunities and meaningfulness were derived from Self-determination theory since it has described individual goals such as Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness which are applicable for these factors. The Model of Safety Climate and Performance theory was chosen in order to emphasize the importance of physical work environment safety of the employees. Hence, the environment factor was derived from this theory. The factor of work/life balance was derived from the Boundary Theory since it has described both integration and segmentation of work and home areas of the individuals. Lastly, this section has also described some generational differences between Generation X and Generation Y in order to understand the generational impact on the turnover decision making factors of the individuals.

### ***Social Exchange Theory (SET)***

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a collective name for theories that explain social interaction of two parties. This theory derives from theories from several behavioral sociologists. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) had described social interaction as a form of social exchange which consists of positive components (rewards) and negative components (costs). The reward component refers to the pleasures, satisfactions and gratifications that the parties enjoy. On the other hand, costs are factors that can inhibit or deter the performance of a sequence behavior.

This theory is relevant for studying workplace behavior since employee performance can be affected by such exchange components. According to SET, if one part supplies a benefit, the receiving party should respond in explored sequences (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). For example, if an employee receives a pay raise, it is expected that employee will remain loyal to the workplace.

Social Exchange Theory has emphasized the concept of economic outcomes of the parties (Foa & Foa, 1974, 1980). Economic outcomes are the ones addressing the financial needs of the party. This can be applied to a workplace since an employee is receiving a financial reward from the organization. In case of the reward being unsatisfying, such as low salary or lack of benefits,

the employee may reevaluate staying at the workplace. Hence, it is important to measure how the salary and benefits factor can affect the turnover decision-making process of the individuals.

### ***Model of Safety Climate***

Model of safety performance was proposed by Neal and Griffin (2000) which assesses employee perceptions of safety in the workplace. This model highlights the importance of Safety Climate, which suggests that employees can evaluate specific features of their environment in the workplace in terms of their personal values and how these features can affect their well-being. Employees can assess whether the environment is personally beneficial versus personally detrimental, for example damaging or painful to their well-being. If employees perceive that the workplace environment is personally detrimental, they may become dissatisfied with the workplace which may increase their willingness to leave the workplace.

This theory was utilized in order to emphasize the importance of physical work environment and safety. The Safety Climate aspect of the workplace is highly important since if a safe work environment is not maintained, the workplace may be perceived as damaging and unsafe by the employees. This can affect their turnover decision negatively. By this means, the study assessed the environment factor's effect on the individuals' turnover decisions.

### ***Self-Determination Theory (SDT)***

Another theory that is relevant for the study is Self-Determination theory which was founded by Deci and Ryan (1985). This theory rests upon three fundamental self-fulfilling goals such as Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness. Autonomy is defined as a need of individuals to feel that they are masters of their destiny and that they hold some control over their own lives; foremost, people have an innate need to feel in control of their behavior. Competence is a need pertaining to our achievements, knowledge, and skills; people feel an internal urge to build and gain competence, to master different personally gratifying tasks. Relatedness indicates that people need to feel a sense of connection with others and a need to belong. It also states that each of us have an unsaturated need for a social connection.

The goals of Autonomy and Competence illustrate that individuals have a need to fulfill their personal ambitions and feel that their skills can contribute to the workplace. If there is a lack of possibilities of self-fulfillment and self-development, an employee may feel that their job

is meaningless and as a result become unmotivated. Hence, these goals were considered applicable for the factors of meaningfulness and career development.

The goal of Relatedness indicates the importance of a worker's social needs, therefore accentuating collegial aspects of the workplace. As a result, the goal of Relatedness in this theory served as a base for the factor of collegial aspects.

### ***Boundary Theory***

Boundary theory was first applied to the work/personal life interface by Nippert-Eng (1996a). Nippert-Eng constructed the concept of integration/segmentation continuum between *home* and *work* areas of individuals' lives (Nippert-Eng, 1996b). Within the integration sector, the areas of home and work are the same since they are one giant category of social existence. There is also no distinction between what belongs to home and what belongs to work. However, within the segmentation sector of this continuum, the aspects of social existence are conceived and experienced as separate worlds. Hence, home and work are separated by a mental boundary of an individual. Nippert-eng further suggests that the construction of a boundary that allows for segmentation or integration depends on various factors such as occupation type, coworkers, family members or individual preference. In clarification, this means that individuals tend to independently choose whether to set boundaries and segment the areas of home and work, or to make them integrate with each other.

The Boundary theory explains how home and work areas can exist on a spectrum of integration and segmentation which may depend on the specific work or individual factors. These factors may or may not allow the individual's work-life to interfere with their personal life. It is therefore important to measure individuals' preferences within the study population. This will be done in order to understand whether they feel a need to separate these areas and whether the conflict between work/life impacts their turnover decision-making process in the workplace.

### ***Differences between Generation Y and Generation X***

In order to understand the generational turnover decision making factors, it can be beneficial to consider the underlying generational differences between Generation Y and Generation X. The responses from Generation Y and Generation X could be affected by certain



personality traits that are associated with these generations. These personality traits may have been obtained in the environment they were raised in. Certain historical events could also influence the generations and therefore explain the assumed differences between them. These generational differences may explain the different perceptions and judgment of the six decision-making factors investigated in the current study.

Generation Y was raised during the development of internet and mobile phones (Sagituly & Guo, 2023). They are more involved in digital technologies and they do not see work as their primary purpose of living. Sagituly and Guo have also mentioned that Generation Y is considered to be educated, ambitious as well as more individualistic and are therefore more focused on their personal needs rather than their corporate lives. This aspect may explain why they are more inclined towards job hopping in comparison to Generation X. Furthermore, the study mentioned that Millennials are also sometimes labeled as “lazy” and “irresponsible” by previous generations. When it comes to Generation X, they are considered to be more committed to the work itself, rather than the organization (Sagituly & Guo, 2023).

Generation Y has also been identified as less aversive than Generation X which means they are more inclined to take risks (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009). This can explain their job-hopping tendencies and the turnover rates. Further, Reinsenwirz and Iyer acknowledge that the loyalty aspect is also implied to be affected by Millennials’ will to achieve their full potential. This has drawn an assumption that Millennials have a constant need for searching for the ultimate job position that will bring them satisfaction in most aspects of the job.

Generation Y tends to have a higher need for mentoring and may need more contact with their supervisor (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009). This means that Generation Y is considered to be less independent than Generation X and requires more thorough guidance from their supervisors, which the previous studies have also confirmed (Weerarathne, 2022). This can also explain a higher job dissatisfaction of the Generation Y since they may feel that the workplace is adapted to Generation X, the older generation, which is more independent and prefers to work autonomously.

## **Previous research**

This section describes the results of six relevant studies related to the topic of generational turnover. The studies were performed in the USA, Serbia, China, Thailand and

Sri-Lanka. In these studies, various factors that might underlie the generational turnover have been investigated.

Some of the relevant studies have been conducted in the U.S. federal service (Ertas, 2015) and the U.S. hospitality industry (Brown et al., 2015). Ertas (2015) has confirmed the higher turnover rates for millennial employees in comparison to older generations. However, predictors of turnover intention did not differ significantly between older and younger employees in the federal service. Factors such as job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, creativity, professional development, promotion based on merit, and having a good work group were found to have a substantial impact on the turnover intentions of all federal employees, regardless of age.

The study in the U.S. hospitality industry by Brown et al. (2015), have concluded that a challenging and motivating job is highly important for millennial employees. Factors such as low pay compensation combined with excessive working hours are the most common responses as to why millennial employees would resign from their jobs.

Another relevant study brings a European perspective on the topic since it has been conducted in Serbia (Ivanovic & Ivancevic, 2018). This study has examined Millennials' intention to resign from their current job and compared them to previous generations'. It has also examined the relation between Millennials' turnover intention and their job satisfaction. The study concluded that Millennials do show a higher turnover rate and has also confirmed that turnover intention increases with job dissatisfaction.

Other previous studies from Asia include countries such as China, Thailand and Sri-Lanka (Ngotngamwong, 2019; Su & Hahn, 2022; Weerarathne, 2022). These studies have confirmed that Millennials do show a higher turnover rate. Ngotngamwong (2019) has also indicated the most influential factors that affect Millennials' willingness to leave their current job position. These factors were the job itself, a need for higher compensation, no career growth opportunities or unfavorable organizational culture. The study by Su and Hahn (2022) has focused on the factor of ethical climate within the workplace and how it affects Millennials' well-being at the workplace. The results showed that ethical climate was a positive predictor of millennial employees' organizational behavior and affective well-being. The study by Weerarathne (2022) was based on Erving Goffman's frame analysis theory (1986) which consists of three factors such as the nature of working styles, social values and the personal values. While confirming the higher turnover rate of Generation Y, it has also been confirmed that Generation

Y is more affected by a change in personal values such as a change in leadership or mentoring aspects. Generation X has shown being more affected by the factors of respect and community within the workplace. The researchers have also found that the nature of working styles of both generations can have a substantial influence on their workplace behavior.

It is apparent that this topic is highly prevalent in the research field and that previous research has made some significant contributions. Millennials' turnover rates and possible underlying factors have been investigated by numerous studies, however, the Scandinavian perspective on the field remains relatively unknown. Therefore, it can be beneficial to study Swedish Millennials, (in this study specified as Generation Y) and Generation X in order to test if the findings from the previous studies are generalizable to Sweden. Thus, the current study attempts to fill this gap, and possibly provide yet another perspective as to what may be the biggest motivator for generational turnover rates.

This study builds upon previous research by incorporating factors that have been investigated before. Factors such as salary and benefits, career opportunities, meaningfulness, work/life balance and collegial aspects have already been investigated in other studies (Brown et al. 2015; Ertas, 2015; Ngotngamwong, 2019; Weerarathne, 2022). However, this study goes beyond individual investigations and integrates all of these factors into a comprehensive analysis. Moreover, it introduces two relatively novel and seemingly unexplored factors such as work/life balance and the environment factor, with an emphasis on the physical environment of the workplace.

This study distinguishes itself by examining six distinct factors and their potential significance for each generation. By analyzing these factors in combination and comparing them with one another, this study aims to address the existing gap more accurately, specifically regarding generational turnover.

### **Aim of the Thesis**

Previous studies that were mentioned above have made some significant contributions to the field, however, most of them have only focused on only a few underlying factors on turnover rates of Generation Y. This study aims to examine six turnover decision-making factors of the two generation employees, such as salary and benefits, environment, career opportunities, collegial aspects, meaningfulness and work/life balance. The motivation for investigating these factors is to provide a broader perspective on the workplace-related decision-making processes

of the generations. Furthermore, the study aims to clarify the factors that generations place higher when making the decision to stay at the current workplace.

In order to understand the generational effect on workplace turnover behavior, this study compares Generation Y with Generation X. This comparison between the workplace-related factors may also confirm the turnover phenomenon for Swedish employees. Providing that the results may come out similar to the previous studies that confirmed the higher turnover rates, the research into generational turnover decision making factors will acquire confirmation in a Scandinavian context and may gain more generalizability globally.

### **Population**

The aim of this study was to compare factors that may explain the turnover decision making of Generation X, born 1960-1978, with those of Generation Y, born 1979-1995, as the established cut-off. The reason for the chosen generation cut-off was based on previous studies where they identified the different generations as having experienced the same socio-cultural and historical contexts, but all studies had varied definitions of these generations ranging from Generation X being 1959-1978, 1965-1980 and Generation Y being 1981-1995, 1981-1997 (Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Weerathne, 2022). Recent research has also defined millennials as born between 1985-2000, something which is still up for debate (Ngotngamwong, 2019).

The motivation to choose the range for Generation Y as people born 1979-1995, was driven by the fact that this age span does make up for a large percentage of the current employee market. They have also been part of the societal workforce for a relatively long time, which is why most of this age group could be considered senior experienced at a workplace. Because of this, they would provide a larger, more suitable population to research. The motivation to choose Generation X as people born 1960-1978 was decided based on a better comparison of between group and population sizes.

### **Hypothesis**

Firstly, it can be speculated that Millennials will place the aspect of meaningfulness higher than Generation X (H1). This speculation is based on previous studies that have stated that the job itself is highly influential on the Millennials intentions to remain at the workplace (Brown et al., 2015; Ngotngamwong, 2019;). Additionally, the studies have mentioned that Millennials crave a challenging and motivating job that may bring the feeling of meaningfulness

and development at the workplace. Hence, the meaningfulness factor is expected to be valued to a greater extent by the members of Generation Y.

Some of the previous studies have pointed out that salary has a substantial impact on employee's job satisfaction, regardless of age (Brown et al. 2015; Ertas, 2015;). This leads to an assumption that both Generation Y and Generation X's turnover decision will be influenced by this factor to a large extent. This renders it as the sole factor that is not presumed to exhibit a higher score for Generation Y in comparison to Generation X. Therefore the second hypothesis is that the factor of salary and benefits will come out being somewhat equally important to both generations when deciding to leave/stay at the workplace (H2).

This study also has an exploratory motive, meaning that the results of the remaining four factors are not primarily hypothesized. Therefore, it remains to be determined whether the remaining factors show a significant result considering their effect on the turnover decision-making process, and any differences between the generations. However, since previous studies have confirmed a higher turnover rate for Millennial employees (Brown et al., 2015; Ertas, 2015; Ivanovic & Ivancevic, 2018; Ngotngamwong, 2019; Su & Hahn, 2022; Weerarathnee, 2022), it is generally expected that Millennials, labeled in this study as Generation Y, would be more likely to be influenced by the factors, and therefore score higher than Generation X (H3).

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The final number of participants counted 104 respondents. Out of the 104 respondents, 79 were Generation Y, and 25 were Generation X. Participants were recruited using convenience and snowball sampling methods. The convenience of using publically available and accessible information such as distribution via email, with sought permission from the HR-departments to send the survey out to everyone at the company. The snowball selection process consisted of distributing the link to the survey questionnaire to personal contacts, through facebook groups and other types of social media platforms.

## **Design**

This study was conducted using a quantitative approach. With the underlying rational assumption being that the turnover effect comes as a direct side-effect of job satisfaction levels, the intention to measure turnover-decision making factors, using a quantitative approach was the most relevant to achieve the aim.

The survey consisted of one stem question, with items made up of hypothetical work-related scenarios which the participant would then evaluate. In total, five items were used for each of the six factors, measuring the level of influence each item would have on the participants' interest to remain or resign from a workplace. Using different scales for each factor was the most suited way to research the factors that lie behind and motivate a final decision to remain or resign. This was based on previous research that already highlighted some of the major factors (Weerathne, 2022), but was missing key items that were needed to measure the factors of environment and work/life balance. The choice was made to focus on the aspects of decision making factors as the major variable. The advantage of using a quantitative approach is that it measures levels of effect in a more objective, and replicable way. By using standardized methods and well established scales as a means of gathering data it may strengthen the replicability of the research in a way that's easier to generalize (Spector, 1985).

Previous research (Weerathne, 2022) into the matter further suggested that there might be generational differences in what the biggest influencing factors are and how the effects of each factor is prioritized.

## **Research Instruments**

Three already well established scales of measurements were employed. The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) was mainly used as the overall data collection measurement, as it measures employees' job satisfaction levels (Spector 1985). The Safe Climate Scale (SCS) in combination with JSS were used to measure the environment factor. The chosen statements from SCS and JSS were considered suitable for the measuring of the physical environment factor since they focused on the overall safety climate within the workplace (Ghahramani & Khalkhali, 2015). The Work Family Conflict Scale (WFC), was used to measure work/life balance, as it measures the extent to which work and family demands are in conflict (Netemeyer et al., 1996). From these three scales, relevant items were chosen for each factor and adapted for the purpose of the survey (to be detailed below). For the all six factors below, the participants were asked a

stem question of: “How much would it affect your interest in staying/leaving the workplace, if...”. To this question, the participants provided their response to each item on the 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not at all), 2 (very little), 3 (a little bit), 4 (moderately), 5 (quite a lot), 6 (a lot) and 7 (completely). All items within the survey were written in Swedish (The full list of items will be available in the Appendix).

### ***Salary and Benefits***

The factor salary and benefits was measured using the five items from the JSS (Spector, 1985). The example item of this factor includes: “If benefits I receive are as good as most other organizations offer.”; “If salary increases are too low and there is a long time between them”. The Cronbach's alpha for this factor from the study sample was .77.

### ***Collegial aspects***

The JSS (Spector, 1985) was used to measure all five items of how the collegial factors may influence turnover decision making process. Items included in the factor were: “If I feel that I don't fit in with my colleagues at work”; “If I feel that my colleagues do not show respect for me as a person”. The Cronbach's alpha for this factor from the study sample was .84.

### ***Career and development opportunities***

In order to measure career & development opportunities and the impact this factor has on the turnover decision making process, the JSS (Spector, 1985) was employed for all five of the items, one question used was: “If I feel that my colleagues do not show respect for me as a person.”. The Cronbach's alpha for this factor from the study sample was .89.

### ***Environment***

The scales used to measure how much the environment would affect any turnover decision making process consisted of JSS-scale for the first two questions based on the general content (Spector, 1985), and the remaining three were from the SCS-scale (Ghahramani & Khalkhali, 2015). This combination of scales has been done because of the lack of physical environment-related questions in the JSS. Hence, some items from SCS were chosen in order to fill the gap. Most of the questions from SCS were considered unsuitable for measuring the

Environment factor in this study, since they focused on management communication of the safety related problems and the discussions of them by the colleagues, for example: “Changes in working procedures and environment and their effects on safety are effectively communicated to workers” (Ghahramani & Khalkhali, 2015). This factor however, was concentrated on describing possible physical environment-related scenarios, such as: “If there are not enough people available to get the job done safely.”, which was included in the SCS scale. This statement was therefore considered to be relevant for measuring this factor. The Cronbach's alpha for this factor from the study sample was .80.

### ***Work/Life Balance***

To measure work/life balance the WFC-scale (Netemeyer et al. 1996) was employed. The reason for utilizing this scale was because of the lack of questions in JSS that touched this category. Scale provided included items, such as: “If my personal life affects my responsibilities at work and results in me not being able to complete my work on time.”. The Cronbach's alpha for this factor from the study sample was .85.

### ***Meaningfulness***

For the factor of meaningfulness, the JSS scale (Spector, 1985) was used for the entirety of the questions. The example of one item from this factor is: “If I will be able to fulfill my personal goals in working life”. Chronbach’s alpha test for this factor was .82.

### ***Age***

Age demographics was divided into four sections; 1960-1968, 1969-1978, 1979-1988, 1989-1995. The first two of them were categorized into Generation X and the last two of them were categorized into Generation Y.

### **Procedure**

The survey itself was designed in Sunet applications and divided into six sections and one demographics, with five factor-targeted questions for each factor. Because this study aimed to measure how much a hypothetical scenario regarding the investigated six factors would impact the participants' consideration of leaving/staying the job, the questions were slightly altered in



order to meet the survey's intentions. This was done because the items from the original questionnaire were designed to measure the current satisfaction level on these factors.

By adding a stem question of the survey, such as: "How much would it affect your interest to stay/leave the workplace if-", it became necessary to slightly alter the questions in order to support the above statement. This was done by altering the items from a definitive statement such as: "I feel that my colleagues do not show respect for me as a person", to a hypothetical scenario such as: "If I feel that my colleagues do not show respect for me as a person". The reason for this change was because the survey never intended to be reflective of the respondents current work situation.

After extensive research on potential companies for participation, the survey could be distributed to a total of 438 people who were eligible to participate, excluding those born before 1960, or after 1995. To broaden the participant pool, the survey was also shared among the researchers' personal connections and various social media platforms, including Facebook, Reddit, among others.

### **Data analysis**

The initial step of the analysis involved exporting the response statistics from the Sunet Survey to Jamovi. Afterwards, the ages of the respondents were divided into two groups based on the established age spans of Generation X and Generation Y respectively, resulting in the creation of a new variable called "Generation". For each factor, a mean value of the five questions was calculated and used for analysis.

First, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were computed by the generation in order to observe if any of the factors showed higher/lower values than other factors. Subsequently, a series of independent t-tests were performed with the purpose of comparing the six decision-making factors between the generations. Prior to the execution of the independent t-tests, two assumptions to meet were checked using the Shapiro-Wilk normality test and Levene's homogeneity of variance test. In case any violation was detected, Mann-Whitney U-test was performed instead.

The effect size was measured using Cohen's d statistics for the Student's t-test. Rank biserial correlation was utilized to present the effect size of the difference between the generations with the Mann-Whitney U-test.

## **Ethical principles and considerations**

Participation in the survey was voluntary and every participant was duly informed about the contents of the survey, as well as what the data would be used for. This was done in accordance with all research ethics requirements. The survey was designed in such a way that every participant's anonymity would be granted as the only demographic information that they were required to respond to was the age category. Therefore, in order for the respondents who will participate in the survey to be able to feel comfortable in answering the survey, they were informed about their anonymity throughout the study. All of this information was given with full disclosure on the very preset page, as per the principle of transparency, also giving participants the possibility to opt out of the survey at any given moment at which point any already given answers would not be logged.

The individual protection requirement within research studies consists of four different requirements, which are: the confidentiality, usage, information and consent requirement. The current study followed all these research ethical principle requirements, as they are the fundamental ethical principles in research (God Forskningsset, 2018).

## **Results**

Descriptive statistics in Table 1 showed the mean scores of Generation X that ranged from 4.38 to 5.12 while mean scores of Generation Y ranged from 4.42 to 5.10 therefore results point to both generations having very similar answers.

### **Table 1**

*Descriptive data for the responses of the generations based on factors*

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Salary and benefits Mean	1	25	4.59	4.40	0.890	0.178
	2	79	4.51	4.60	1.00	0.113
Environment Mean	1	25	4.99	5.00	0.946	0.189
	2	79	4.80	5.00	1.06	0.119
Work/life Balance Mean	1	25	5.12	5.00	1.036	0.207
	2	79	5.10	5.40	1.22	0.137
Collegial aspects Mean	1	25	5.05	5.20	1.117	0.223
	2	79	5.09	5.40	1.12	0.126
Career opportunities Mean	1	25	4.38	4.40	0.959	0.192
	2	79	4.42	4.40	1.30	0.146
Meaningfulness Mean	1	25	5.08	5.40	1.150	0.230
	2	79	4.97	5.20	1.10	0.124

*Note. "1" refers to Generation X while "2" refers to Generation Y.*

Factors such as salary and benefits, along with career opportunities, were rated as ranging from 4 (moderately) to 5 (quite a lot) in the survey. The four remaining factors were scored around 5 (quite a lot). This implies that the statements would affect their decision to stay/leave the workplace. Each generation showed a low standard deviation which means that the data is clustered around the mean.

The Shapiro-Wilk Normality test (see Table 2) has shown an abnormal normality for factors of environment, work/life balance, collegial aspects, career opportunities and meaningfulness since the p-values were smaller than .05, which led to the decision to perform a Mann-Whitney U for these factors.

## **Table 2**

*Shapiro-Wilk Normality test*

	W	p
Salary and benefits Mean	0.987	0.404
Environment Mean	0.916	<.001
Work/life Balance Mean	0.945	<.001
Collegial aspects Mean	0.877	<.001
Career opportunities Mean	0.971	0.021
Meaningfulness Mean	0.915	<.001

Table 2 has also shown the p-value for salary and benefits in the normality test, which indicates a normal distribution of the data for this factor. The salary and benefits factor was therefore analyzed with the Student's t-test while other ones were analyzed with Mann-Whitney U-test. The results from Levene's Homogeneity of variances test indicate that homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Levene's Homogeneity of Variances test*

	F	df	df2	p
Salary and benefits Mean	0.27747	1	102	0.600
Environment Mean	0.00659	1	102	0.935
Work/life Balance Mean	1.16310	1	102	0.283
Collegial aspects Mean	0.11932	1	102	0.730
Career opportunities Mean	2.37000	1	102	0.127
Meaningfulness Mean	0.03424	1	102	0.854

Results of the Student's Independent t-test in Table 4 showed no significant difference in the factor of salary and benefits between the two generations, since the p-value for this factor was greater than .05. This implies that the second hypothesis (H2) can be accepted.

**Table 4**

*Student's and Mann-Whitney U Independent Samples t-tests*

		Statistic	df	p		Effect Size
Salary and benefits Mean	Student's t	0.3821	102	0.648	Cohen's d	0.0877
	Mann-Whitney U	977		0.533	Rank biserial correlation	0.0106
Environment Mean	Student's t	0.8211	102	0.793	Cohen's d	0.1884
	Mann-Whitney U	907		0.732	Rank biserial correlation	0.0815
Work/life Balance Mean	Student's t	0.0598	102	0.524	Cohen's d	0.0137
	Mann-Whitney U	957		0.408	Rank biserial correlation	0.0314
Collegial aspects Mean	Student's t	-0.1775	102	0.430	Cohen's d	-0.0407
	Mann-Whitney U	974		0.459	Rank biserial correlation	0.0142
Career opportunities Mean	Student's t	-0.1375	102	0.445	Cohen's d	-0.0316
	Mann-Whitney U	949		0.385	Rank biserial correlation	0.0395
Meaningfulness Mean	Student's t	0.4411	102	0.670	Cohen's d	0.1012
	Mann-Whitney U	898		0.754	Rank biserial correlation	0.0906

In Table 4, the Cohen's d effect size of the salary and benefits factor of Student's t-test was .09 which indicates a small effect size.

Mann-Whitney U-test also indicated that there were no significant differences between generations for the factors of environment, work/life balance, collegial aspects and meaningfulness since the p-values for each of these factors are higher than .05. These results indicate that the first (H1) and the third (H3) of the study's hypotheses can be rejected. Table 4 also showed rank biserial correlations of factors environment, work/life balance, collegial aspects, career opportunities and meaningfulness which were .08, .03, .01, .04 and .09 which implies a small effect size for these factors.

**Discussion**

The study aimed to investigate the differences in the turnover decision-making process between Generation X and Generation Y. The main focus was laid on investigating the impact of six measured factors on their decision-making regarding turnover.

The results show that there were no significant differences between generations and that the answers were rather similar. Hence, the study's hypotheses (H1, H3) are not supported while the second hypothesis (H2) is supported.

## **The Relevance of the Six Factors**

Regarding the factor of work/life balance, the findings show that it was the most prominent factor considered for both generational groups when making the decision to resign or remain at their jobs. This highlights the importance of the research found in the Boundary theory (Nippert-Eng, 1996a, 1996b). Given the lack of previous studies, there are numerous variables within this factor that remain unknown. Hence, because this study showed substantial indicators that both generations prefer a clear separation between work and home spheres, these findings also underline that there is a need for much more substantial research into this factor.

Previous studies have shown that salary has a great impact on job satisfaction for employees, regardless of age (Brown et al., 2015; Ertas, 2015;). Therefore, in this study it was hypothesized that salary and benefits would heavily influence the turnover decision of both Generation Y and X. It is noteworthy that this study of Sweden's generations echoed previous results on salary and benefits, slightly comparing Ertas' findings and supporting the initial hypothesis (H2). This study found contouring outcomes to those previously documented on salary, while also indicating a potential for the combined factors of salary and benefits to impact decision-making, rather than seeing them as independent contributors. Similarly, another study (Ngotngamwong, 2022) found no significant differences in salary predictors for the two generations though salary was suggested as a motivator, it suggests there might be a hidden contribution from varying factors, such as benefits and others in the turnover decision-making among Generation Y.

The results also indicate that both generations considered the environmental factor to be important, in support of the Model of Safety Climate and Performance theory. It is nevertheless noteworthy that there was not a very noticeable difference in the scores between generations in Sweden. Specifically, a difference of .18 points as Generation X rated this factor higher than Generation Y. This may be attributed to Generation Y's tendency towards a more risk-taking behavior, which has been identified as one of the distinguishing characteristics between the two generations. However, as previously mentioned, the results yield insignificant findings. Due to this, it is recommended that future studies explore this factor further in order to enhance the understanding of its impact on decision-making among Generation X and Y employees.

There are still factors that were not taken into account in this study. Certain factors may indicate the disparities that contribute to the extensive research demonstrating higher turnover

rates among Generation Y (George & Wallio, 2017; Ivanovic & Ivancevic, 2018; Su & Hahn, 2022). While this study explored a relatively good number of factors, including two previously unexplored ones such as environment and work/life balance, it also did not include some factors that could potentially indicate the source of generational differences. Factors such as resilience, job satisfaction, organizational justice, durability, and overall endurance were not included within this study.

In a minor conclusion, this study is nevertheless inclined to support the theories in its own way, and is reciprocally leaning into them regarding to what extent each factor influences the turnover decision-making process for each generation. But it does not support the theory that Generation Y have any distinctive differences that define their turnover decision-making compared to Generation X. Consequently, the findings suggest that the characteristics of generations, which may influence their perspectives on workplace behavior, exhibit significant variation in the factors which have not been examined within this specific study. Moreover, the findings imply that the stereotypes associated with different generations are not universally applicable, and it is incorrect to draw conclusions about individuals and their workplace behavior based solely on their age. It underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of factors beyond generational categorization when analyzing workplace dynamics, and suggests that a much deeper analysis is needed for future research, possibly within multiple types of research methods, combined.

### **Comparing Generation X and Generation Y**

In line with the findings from the previous studies (Brown et al., 2015; Ertas, 2015; Ivancevic, 2018; Weerarathne, 2022) the study showed that each generation values most of the factors on an equally high level. Moreover, although the difference was not significant, there was a descriptive tendency that showed that Generation X valued collegial aspects slightly higher than Generation Y. The presence of various factors contributing to this can be attributed to reasons beyond those specified in this study, as indicated by the Social Exchange Theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). These theories also suggest that while other factors may significantly motivate turnover decisions, the ultimate decision may hinge on a potential shift in any of the other factors, such as personal rewards and other benefits, which may vary between generations.

The evidence from this study suggests that both socio-emotional and compensational

values impact Generation Y and Generation X in a similar way. Though the implications of this study suggest that even if all these factors are highly valued in terms of their impact on decision-making, as supported by previous studies (Ngotngamwong, 2022; Weerathne, 2022), there is little to no difference between generations.

While this study initially intended to compare generational gaps to focus on differences, the data showed more similarities than differences, and there was not a considerable difference between the workplace values of the Swedish generations within this study. This is something which is comparable with previous research in terms of how highly each generation values the organizational culture and social interactions in the workplace, as well as the implications of career and development opportunities being valued higher within both generations (Ngotngamwong, 2019). Consequently, this has practical implications for organizations in Sweden. It underlines the need to adapt and enhance these factors, and the previously unexplored factors of environment and work/life balance within the workplace. This adaptation should be done in order to foster employee well-being and increase the likelihood of long-term retention.

### **Theoretical implications**

Theoretical implications of this study highlight the significance of all six selected turnover decision-making factors to the respondents, irrespective of their generational affiliation. The findings substantiate the relevance of the theories outlined in the theoretical background (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Foa & Foa, 1974, Foa & Foa, 1980). It also highlights the importance of environmental features and how these factors affect both generations, supporting the theories of Model Safety (Neal & Griffin, 2000). The data also show how both generations value the importance of work/life separation, which is supported by the Boundary theory (Nippert-Eng, 1996a; Nippert-Eng, 1996b). Lastly, results have shown how both generations value collegial aspects and social benefits to a similar extent, which is supported by the Social Exchange Theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). What these findings underscore, is the influence that each factor has on an individual's turnover decision making. This further supports the notion that Sweden's Generation Y and Generation X share similar results to what has previously been shown in studies from other countries (Ertas, 2015; Ngotnamwong, 2019; Weerathne, 2022).



## **Limitations**

The present study faced limitations in terms of external validity, which is a common concern in research. These limitations can be attributed to several factors, including the timeframe and the restricted scope of where the survey was employed. The study specifically targeted participants within certain age groups, and although the overall number of potential participants was considerable, there remained a risk of insufficient eligible participants within the selected companies. The resulting number of participants of each age-group was skewed, with a majority of participants being from Generation Y. But there was also an uneven number of participants in the first demographics of the four age demographic items, which consisted of the senior Generation X. This made it impossible to compare the older and younger of each generation, which could have been a potential consideration for comparison had the numbers been more balanced.

A second limitation of this study pertained to the data collection process, particularly during the later stages where a snowball sampling approach was utilized. This method involved distributing the survey to any individuals willing to participate, based on their availability. Consequently, there was a potential risk that respondents may have exhibited a bias towards providing answers that aligned with the research objectives, rather than responding truthfully.

A third limitation in this study was the time constraint. Insufficient time and resources to gather an extensive participants pool may have compromised the external validity and significance of the thesis.

A fourth limitation of the study could be related to the combination of the scales that were utilized in the study. This study originally intended to investigate two factors that have not been previously explored. However, due to the substantial time commitment required for their examination, it would require a more comprehensive approach to data analysis. The limitations of time rendered the idea of developing an entirely new scale to measure the data unfeasible. The factor of Environment has utilized two scales such as JSS and SCS in order to formulate five questions for measuring the factor. The study's validity, accuracy and reliability could have been improved by using only one well-established scale per the measured factor, or creating an entirely new scale for the purpose. This limitation could have led to a confusion and ambiguity in interpreting the scores for the factor since the scales were based on different theoretical frameworks and conceptualizations.

An additional limitation is that the scale questionnaire could direct the respondents towards answering in a certain way. The questionnaire utilized in the study contained statements that encompassed both positive and negative connotations. This approach may have influenced the respondents to provide similar answers, as the survey questions potentially guided them toward a particular response. As a result, it is highly likely that the validity of the study was affected because of this.

Further limitations include the decision to exclude demographic questions such as gender and profession, which were made to further guarantee the anonymity of each participant, hence it prevented the opportunity for a more nuanced picture. It has also slightly narrowed the study's potential comparison field from an international perspective. The suggestion is therefore that any future research should apply this demographics question and possibly compare it to other studies where gender and work/field questions had been used.

The implications of using already established scales means the data is more comparable to other regions. This was the biggest motivator for the choice to focus on Sweden's generational differences. There was a possibility to highlight Scandinavian aspects of job satisfaction vs turnover decision making factors, which had not been as traversed or investigated. However, the skewed number of participants in each generation may have contributed to the results being insignificant, which implies that a larger scale study with a more even distribution of participants might actually show completely different results, even in Scandinavia.

### **Suggestion for further research**

Opting to compare Generation X and Generation Y, in favor of comparing Generation Y & Generation Z, was because Generation Z signifies the youngest workplace generation. They are relatively fresh to the job market, where their goals and motivation would not necessarily be adequate to compare with the more seasoned workforce. By actively choosing not to compare Generation Z, we excluded a big part of the youngest workforce population. People who may be coming into the workplace environment with a whole new set of eyes and ideals for what may be the best approach to minimize turnover.

Future studies can also focus on generating and using more neutral scales, without directing the respondents to answer in a certain way. If this is considered, it may prove that there are differences in generations that could explain the higher turnover rates.

Another suggestion for future studies is to take a qualitative approach to the topic. The qualitative approach can provide a more in-depth perspective on the individuals' turnover decision-making factors and could possibly offer unique insights into the field. Qualitative research can also contribute to a broader understanding of the social, historical, and cultural factors that may have influenced the viewpoints of participants from Generation Y and Generation X. If this approach is conducted through interviews, it could provide a better perspective on the factors individuals prioritize when considering leaving or staying in the workplace.

## **Conclusion**

Although the study did not succeed in identifying the factors that can explain generational turnover, it has possibly made some contributions to the Swedish perspective on the turnover decision-making factors for Generation X and Generation Y. This may open possibilities for more research conducted in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries in order to make a comparison with other countries and continents. The study has also described some relevant theories and measured several factors that can influence the turnover, which may be taken into consideration while improving workplaces and organizational aspects.

Lastly, it is highly essential to consider all of the limitations of the study since they could have a significant impact on the study's outcomes and validity. Because of the limited resources, it has been difficult to conduct this study while considering all of the recommended requirements for the number of participants, controlling questions in order to provide a broader perspective on the topic etc.

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## Appendix

### Survey items

This appendix highlights the items used for each one of the six factors, as well as the demographics. The survey included one stem question and each item was a hypothetical statement. Factors include 1 collegial aspects, 2 salary and benefits, 3 environment, 4 career opportunities, 5 work/life balance, and 6 meaningfulness. The text also specifies the demographic year of birth. Items are listed in Swedish, as they were in the survey.

### Jag är född mellan

- 1960-1968
- 1969-1978
- 1979-1987
- 1988-1995

### 1 Kollegiala aspekter (Collegial aspects factor) from Spector (1985)

Hur mycket skulle det påverka ditt intresse att stanna/lämna arbetsplatsen...

1. Om jag känner att mina kollegor inte visar respekt för mig som person.
2. Om det är för mycket osämja/bråk mellan kollegorna.
3. Om jag känner att jag inte passar in med mina kollegor på arbetet.
4. Om min chef inte bryr sig om sina anställda.
5. Om min chef är orättvis mot mig.

### 2 Lön och förmåner (Salary factor) from Spector (1985)

Hur mycket skulle det påverka ditt intresse att stanna/lämna arbetsplatsen...

1. Om jag känner att min lön inte motsvarar lönen som jag anser att jag förtjänar.
2. Om förmåner jag får är lika bra som de flesta andra organisationer erbjuder.
3. Om jag känner mig missnöjd med de förmåner jag får.
4. Om förmånspaketet vi har är rättvist.
5. Om löneökningar är för låga och det är lång tid emellan dem.

### 3 Arbetsmiljö (Environment factor) from Spector (1985) and Ghahramani and Khalkhali (2015)

Hur mycket skulle det påverka ditt intresse att stanna/lämna arbetsplatsen...

1. Om det finns för många begränsande regler som gör mitt arbete svårare att utföra.
2. Om jag upplever en dålig arbetsmiljö på mitt nuvarande jobb.
3. Om jag anser att min arbetsplats har rutiner som förhindrar mig att effektivt utföra mitt arbete.
4. Om det inte finns tillräckligt många tillgängliga för att få jobbet gjort på ett säkert sätt.
5. Om min arbetsbelastning inte är balanserad.

#### **4 Karriärmöjligheter och professionell utveckling (Career opportunities factor) from Spector (1985)**

Hur mycket skulle det påverka ditt intresse att stanna/lämna arbetsplatsen...

1. Om jag inte ser någon utvecklingsmöjlighet på min nuvarande arbetsplats.
2. Om de som gör det bra på jobbet har en rimlig chans att bli beförtrade.
3. Om jag är nöjd med mina chanser till befordran.
4. Om jag känner att jag kan möta mina personliga karriärmål på arbetsplatsen.
5. Om jag inte får någon möjlighet till befordran från den nuvarande yrkesrollen.

#### **5 Work/life balance factor from Netemeyer et al. (1996)**

Hur mycket skulle det påverka ditt intresse att stanna/lämna arbetsplatsen...

1. Om arbetet tar upp för mycket av min tid och det kommer i vägen för min fritid.
2. Om mitt privatliv påverkar mina ansvarsuppgifter på arbetet och leder till att jag inte kan slutföra mitt arbete i tid.
3. Om de saker som jag vill göra hemma inte blir gjorda på grund av kraven som ställs på mig från min arbetsplats.
4. Om mitt arbete skapar ansträngningar som gör det svårt att klara av privata ansvar.
5. Om arbetsrelaterade förpliktelser gör att jag måste ändra på privata planer och engagemang.

#### **6 Meningsfullhet (Meaningfulness factor) from Spector (1985)**

Hur mycket skulle det påverka ditt intresse att stanna/lämna arbetsplatsen...

1. Om jag känner att det jag gör är betydelsefullt.
2. Om jag inte kan känna mig stolt över det arbete jag gör.
3. Om jag kommer att kunna uppfylla mina personliga mål i arbetslivet.
4. Om jag ibland känner att mitt jobb är betydelselöst.
5. Om jag gillar det jag gör på mitt jobb.