

## Workplace Intergenerational Climate and Job Satisfaction: Sequential Mediation of Trust and Knowledge Exchange\*

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It is known that a cooperative climate between diverse generations is positively correlated with job satisfaction among employees. However, there is limited research on the process that explains how and why intergenerational climate is related to job satisfaction. Thus, based on intergroup contact theory and social exchange theory, this study examined the effect of intergenerational climate on job satisfaction and the mediating effects of trust and knowledge exchange. We analyzed data from 592 employees in South Korea by using structural equation modeling. The results showed that intergenerational climate was positively related to job satisfaction. Knowledge exchange mediated the positive relationship between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction. Lastly, trust and knowledge exchange sequentially mediated the positive relationship between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction. This study contributes to the literature on intergenerational climate and knowledge exchange by identifying the mechanism between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction and discovering a new antecedent of knowledge exchange. The findings also have practical implications for human resource practitioners in organizations.

*Key words* : *Intergenerational climate, Trust, Knowledge exchange, Job satisfaction*

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\* This paper is a revised and enhanced version of the first author's master's thesis, Study 2 (Supervisor: corresponding author). The data in this paper partially overlap with those utilized in another publication, which is the first author's master's thesis, Study 1.

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Due to the recent dramatic demographic changes especially in the developed countries (Nagarajan et al., 2019), employees from various generations now work together in the same organizations (Wegge & Meyer, 2020). While older workers are staying in the organization longer due to the increased average life expectancy and extension of retirement age (Wang & Shultz, 2010), younger workers from new generations are beginning to join the organization. The situation in South Korea is the same, thus the significance of intergenerational cooperation is becoming more pronounced within organizations (Choi & Han, 2022).

However, distinct characteristics of employees from each generation are an obstacle to enhancing cooperative climate in organizations. Since generations have been formulated based on collective early adulthood experience (Schuman & Scott, 1989), the situation in South Korea has been particularly challenging due to its rapid economic growth and various political events (Ho et al., 2023). For example, older generations who hold values based on Confucianism and collectivism (Sung & Kim, 2003) are more inclined to dedicate themselves to the achievement of their team or company (Park & Park, 2018). In addition, they tend to adhere to the organizations' established rules and show deference to their leaders (Park & Kim, 2001). On the contrary, younger employees who have grown up under circumstances that emphasize

personal rights and freedom (Park & Park, 2018) desire to be assessed and rewarded based on their individual ability and perceive this as fair (Kim, 2021). They also consider work-life balance (Kim et al., 2022) and personal growth (Kim, 2021) important. This value incongruity caused conflicts between generations and it led to many negative outcomes such as increased turnover intention (Lee, 2021), decreased productivity (Korean Chamber Commerce and Industry, 2020), and less frequent communication between generations (Chung et al., 2022). In this regard, investigating intergenerational cooperation and its positive outcomes is a timely issue.

Based on the above discussion, this study aimed to examine the positive outcomes of workplace intergenerational climate and its mechanism. Firstly, we hypothesized that workplace intergenerational climate would have a positive effect on employees' job satisfaction based on previous studies (e.g., Griffin et al., 2016; King & Bryant, 2017; Macdonald & Levy, 2016). Secondly, using the intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), we predicted that intergenerational climate would be positively related to knowledge exchange through trust, which subsequently enhances employees' job satisfaction. The research model of the study is presented in Figure 1.

In this study, we neither categorize participants based on generation (e.g., older/

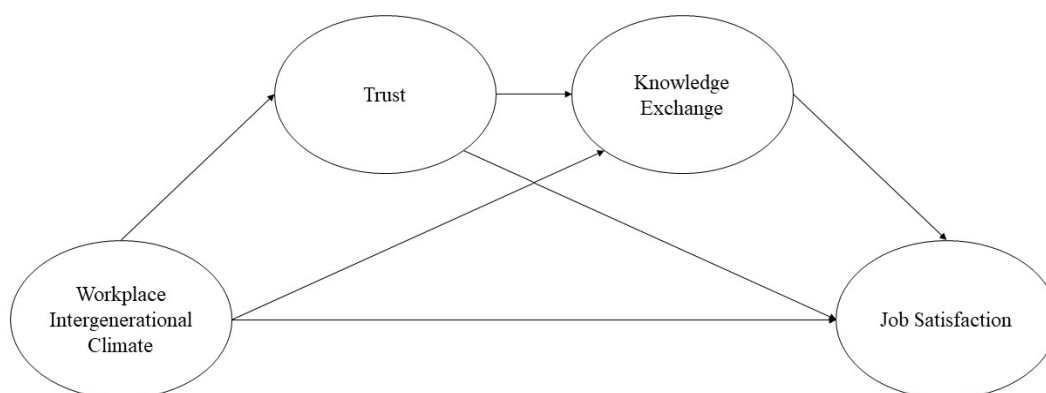


Figure 1. Research Model

younger workers) nor specify the direction of intergenerational communication. The first reason for this is that dividing participants into older/younger groups is inevitably arbitrary, given that there is no agreement on the criterion for classifying older/younger generations (Truxillo et al., 2015). Second, as workplace intergenerational climate does not refer to collaboration solely between younger and older workers but rather involves cooperation with coworkers from outside of one's generation altogether, it is sometimes possible to interact with both younger and older workers for someone in middle age. Thus, we thought that we could not fully capture the intergenerational dynamic if we categorize participants based on their age. Moreover, while there is a common perception that older workers are typically regarded as the ones who share knowledge and younger workers as those who receive it, every employee can engage in both knowledge donating and collecting regardless of their age because they have distinct but

complementary experiences (Burmeister et al., 2018). Therefore, this study was conducted by using the data from full-time employees working with colleagues of various ages without considering the specific direction of interaction.

This study makes a theoretical contribution since it not only confirms the positive relationship between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction but also uncovers the specific mechanism by examining the sequential mediation effect of trust and knowledge exchange. Considering that practitioners, for successful human resource management, put significant effort into dealing with generational conflicts, these results can be broadly applied in organizations.

### Workplace Intergenerational Climate and Job Satisfaction

Organizational climate is defined as “the shared perception of and the meaning attached

to the policies, practices, and procedures employees experience and the behaviors they observe getting rewarded and that are supported and expected” (Schneider et al., 2013, p. 362). Each type of climate reflects perceptions of particular features of the work environment. Thus, workplace intergenerational climate refers to the perceptions of practices relating to intergenerational cooperation in organizations. Since King and Bryant (2017), who initially developed the scale of intergenerational climate, found a positive relationship between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction, subsequent empirical studies have supported the relationship (e.g., Firzly et al., 2021; Lagacé et al., 2019). A positive relationship can also be expected based on other studies.

Job satisfaction is an “overall positive emotional” response (Moorman, 1993, p.761) and “can be considered as a global feeling about a job” (Spector, 1997, p.2). Social relationships significantly impact people’s happiness (Sun et al., 2020), and workplace connections also have an important influence on employees’ job satisfaction. For instance, good relationships with coworkers (Simon et al., 2010) and leaders (Volmer et al., 2011) are positively related to job satisfaction, whereas negative interactions with others (e.g., interpersonal conflicts) degrade job satisfaction (Frone, 2000). Negative age stereotypes may result in actual discriminatory behaviors (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018), and age discrimination is associated with a lower

quality of social interaction at work (Furunes & Mykletun, 2010). Considering that the quality of interaction with coworkers plays a critical role in determining employees’ job satisfaction (Lin & Lin, 2011), employees might be dissatisfied with their job if negative stereotypes and discrimination are prevalent in the workplace. In contrast, when the atmosphere of organizations is cooperative between the generations, employees interact with coworkers from distinct generations more frequently (i.e., intergenerational contact), and they enjoy and feel comfortable with these interactions (i.e., positive intergenerational affect) without negative stereotypes (i.e., lack of generational stereotypes). Therefore, employees are satisfied with their job when they perceive an intergenerational climate.

Furthermore, employees experience job satisfaction in inclusive organizational environments. Empirical research has revealed that employees are satisfied with their job when they feel a sense of belonging to the organization (Brimhall & Mor Barak, 2018; Brimhall et al., 2014; Hwang & Hopkins, 2012). In addition, job satisfaction is enhanced when organizations acknowledge and respect diversity. Employees are satisfied with their job when the organization expresses positive attitudes toward diversity by encouraging organizational justice and belongingness (Brimhall et al., 2014; Madera et al., 2016). Accordingly, job satisfaction might be enhanced in a diverse, inclusive climate (i.e., workplace generational

inclusiveness, workplace intergenerational retention). Thus, we predicted a positive association between workplace intergenerational climate and job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 1* Workplace intergenerational climate is positively related to job satisfaction

### Mediating Effect of Trust in the Relationship between Intergenerational Climate and Job Satisfaction

While researchers have consistently shown a positive relationship between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction (e.g., Firzly et al., 2021; King & Bryant, 2017; Lagacé et al., 2019), few studies have identified the mechanism explaining why a cooperative and inclusive climate affects employees' work attitudes, such as job satisfaction (Madera et al., 2016). To address this limitation, this study explores a potential mediator based on the previous research and selects trust as a mediator. According to the framework of interpersonal trust proposed by McAllister (1995), having frequent interactions and maintaining close relationships, which are characteristics of intergenerational climate, were found to form trust, and trust significantly influenced employee's work attitudes. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of trust as a mediator to uncover the underlying mechanism between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction.

Interpersonal trust refers to the positive perception toward coworkers' competence and performance (cognition-based trust) and emotional connectedness and proximity (affective-based trust) to their coworkers (McAllister, 1995). As trust is determined by the trustor's perception of the trustee, we measured trust by asking participants (i.e., trustor) who work with colleagues both older and younger than themselves to assess how much they trust their colleagues from various generations (i.e., trustee) overall, rather than considering specific generations.

Trust starts to develop when trustors believe that trustees have positive characteristics, such as solving problems, caring for others, and being consistent (Mayer et al., 1995). In this regard, the presence of negative stereotypes, such as that older workers are less competent and dependable or that younger workers are less faithful or honest (Posthuma & Campion, 2009; Toomey & Rudolph, 2015; Truxillo et al., 2012), might be barriers to developing trust. Thus, an intergenerational climate, with a lack of negative stereotypes, might facilitate trust building. Additionally, intergroup contact effectively reduces prejudice (e.g., intergroup contact theory; Allport, 1954). Furthermore, the positive effects of intergroup contact are realized when everyone perceives that they are treated equally and shares common goals in a cooperative atmosphere (Pettigrew, 1998). Thus, it was predicted that intergenerational climate is

positively related to trust since employees frequently communicate with one another while sharing common goals in an inclusive atmosphere.

Next, we predicted that trust would have a positive effect on job satisfaction. Since the majority of tasks within an organization are performed through cooperation with multiple members, employees spend a significant amount of time working with their colleagues. Thus, relationship with coworkers is the significant factor that determines employees' job satisfaction (Lin & Lin, 2011). In particular, when employees trust their colleagues, job satisfaction increases since they are less likely to experience job stress (Guinot et al., 2014). Furthermore, numerous empirical research supports the positive relationship between trust and job satisfaction (e.g., Fareed et al., 2022; Güçer & Şerif, 2014; Leat & El Kot, 2009). Based on the above discussions, we established Hypothesis 2.

*Hypothesis 2* The relationship between workplace intergenerational climate and job satisfaction is mediated by trust.

#### Mediating Effect of Knowledge Exchange in the Relationship between Intergenerational Climate and Job Satisfaction

Knowledge exchange refers to donating, collecting, and using knowledge in organizations. It differs from knowledge sharing, which denotes

providing knowledge to others, in that it comprises both sharing and receiving knowledge (Wang & Noe, 2010). While it might seem convincing that older workers are knowledge senders and younger workers are knowledge recipients, this one-directional perspective fails to fully capture the knowledge dynamics in organizations (Burmeister et al., 2018). Thus, this study focused on knowledge exchange for comprehensive understanding.

All employees in organizations possess valuable knowledge, regardless of age (Burmeister et al., 2018), and are prone to exchange their knowledge when there is a shared understanding of goals among all team members (Chow & Chan, 2008). In this situation, relationships between employees are the primary channels for knowledge flows (Chen et al., 2009) and frequent interactions are positively related to the quality and quantity of knowledge sharing (Suh & Shin, 2010). Employees regularly communicate with coworkers from other generations in an intergenerational cooperative context, and it encourages them to believe that they share common interests across generations. Thus, intergenerational climate would be positively related to knowledge exchange.

Moreover, people define themselves based on their membership or roles in their social groups (Tajfel, 1974). Since age can be an important factor in determining who they are (Gowland, 2006), people have formulated their identity based on their age and interpretation of

circumstances in organizations (Desmette & Gaillard, 2008). Therefore, people might develop a poor self-image when they experience discrimination (Fasbender & Gerpott, 2021; Han & Richardson, 2015), whereas an inclusive climate contributes to people's positive self-image and confidence. Additionally, employees proactively try to share their knowledge when they believe their behavior will be accepted (Chen et al., 2009). Organizations with intergenerational climates provide all employees with safe and inclusive environments free of discrimination and opportunities to communicate freely with one another. Thus, it was hypothesized that workplace intergenerational climate is positively associated with knowledge exchange.

Furthermore, we predicted that knowledge exchange is positively related to job satisfaction. People desire to feel effective, connected, and have a sense of volition (e.g., self-determination theory; Deci & Ryan, 1985). These basic needs might be fulfilled by engaging in knowledge exchange. Employees consider themselves competent when they share the knowledge they have (Trivellas et al., 2015) and become confident by learning new skills through knowledge exchange (Malik & Kanwal, 2018). They also experience psychological freedom from voluntarily exchanging knowledge (Burmeister et al., 2020). Lastly, people deepen their relationships through exchanging advice and making suggestions, which are great

opportunities to enhance social relationships (Feeney & Bozeman, 2008; Hezlett & Gibson, 2007). Considering the well-established positive relationship between needs fulfillment and well-being (Van den Broeck et al., 2016), it is expected that knowledge exchange would have a positive association with job satisfaction.

Exchanging knowledge might be regarded as a job resource (e.g., job resource-demand model; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), defined as "those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may do any of the following: (a) be functional in achieving work goals, (b) reduce job demands at the associated physiological and psychological costs, (c) stimulate personal growth and development" (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). Employees might believe their coworkers support them when they exchange knowledge because knowledge helps them accomplish tasks successfully (Kim & Yun, 2015). Furthermore, employees can develop themselves by seeking advice from their coworkers (Ellinger et al., 2003). These experiences function as job resources (Schaufeli, 2017) and, as a result, increase job satisfaction (Harris et al., 2007; Scanlan & Still, 2019).

*Hypothesis 3* The relationship between workplace intergenerational climate and job satisfaction is mediated by knowledge exchange.

Sequential Mediating Effect of Trust and

## Knowledge Exchange in the Relationship between Intergenerational Climate and Job Satisfaction

To enhance knowledge exchange, the role of environmental factors such as organizational climate and personal psychological factors are both important (Wang & Noe, 2010). Specifically, researchers have emphasized the importance of trust as a personal psychological factor in promoting knowledge exchange (Witherspoon et al., 2013; meta-analysis), which is facilitated by the expectation of reciprocity (e.g., social exchange theory; Blau, 1964). In this regard, this study aimed to examine the positive relationship between intergenerational climate and knowledge exchange through trust, which in turn increases employees' job satisfaction by investigating the sequential mediation effect of trust and knowledge exchange.

According to the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), people who perceive trust are willing to share their knowledge because they believe their coworkers also share their knowledge reciprocally (Witherspoon et al., 2013). Moreover, many empirical studies (Kuo, 2013; Sankowska, 2013; Shehab et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2009) have found a positive relationship between trust and knowledge exchange. The effect of trust on knowledge exchange was also revealed in a scenario-based experimental study (Rutten et al., 2016). Thus, this study hypothesized that trust

and knowledge exchange sequentially mediate the relationship between workplace intergenerational climate and job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 4* The relationship between workplace intergenerational climate and job satisfaction is sequentially mediated by trust and knowledge exchange.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were collected through an online survey company in South Korea. We screened out participants who were not fully employed, worked remotely, or worked alone without coworkers who were older or younger than them (Appendix I). The reason why we set these criteria was to reflect overall intergenerational dynamics in organizations. A total of 592 responses were collected and participants received points which could be exchanged for cash as a reward. The average age of the sample was 43.67 ( $SD = 12.81$ ), ranging from 22 to 69 years. 51.4% ( $n = 304$ ) were male and 49.6% ( $n = 288$ ) were female. In terms of education level, 13% ( $n = 77$ ) graduated high school, 14.2% ( $n = 84$ ) graduated college, 60.1% ( $n = 356$ ) graduated university, and 12.7% ( $n = 75$ ) had master's or PhD degree. Regarding participants' job position, 38.3% ( $n = 227$ )



were staffs, 15.4% ( $n = 91$ ) were assistant managers, 14.5% ( $n = 86$ ) were managers, 8.3% ( $n = 49$ ) were senior managers, 10.8% ( $n = 64$ ) were executive managers, 6.9% ( $n = 41$ ) were executives or above, and 5.7% ( $n = 34$ ) had other kinds of positions. Additionally, participants worked in diverse occupations including manufacture (20.3%), science and technology service (18.1%), education (11.5%), construction (8.6%), wholesales or retail (7.8%), information and communication (6.9%), finance and insurance (3.5%), art and sports (1.9%), rental business (1.0%), and others (20.4%).

## Measures

### Workplace Intergenerational Climate

Korean version of the Workplace Intergenerational Climate Scale (K-WICS), developed by King and Bryant (2017) and validated by Jeong et al. (2023), was utilized (Appendix II). The WICS includes five subdimensions: Lack of Generational Stereotypes (LGS; four items, e.g., “Co-workers outside my generation are not interested in making friends outside their generation.”), Positive Intergenerational Affect (PIA; four items, e.g., “I feel comfortable when co-workers outside my generation try to make conversation with me.”), Workplace Generational Inclusiveness (WGI; three items, e.g., “Workers of all ages are respected in my workplace.”), Workplace Intergenerational Retention (WIR; three items,

e.g., “My co-workers make older workers feel they should retire”) and Intergenerational Contact (IC; three items, e.g., “How often do you have conversations with co-workers outside your generation?”). LGS, PIA, WGI, and WIR subscales was evaluated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*), while the other items from IC were evaluated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *never* to 4 = *very often*). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the overall scale was .85 in King and Bryant (2017)’s study. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for each factor were .73 (LGS), .78 (PIA), .68 (WGI), .87 (WIR), and .85 (IC) in this study.

### Trust

We used an 11-item scale developed by McAllister (1995) and translated by Kim (2010). The scale comprises two subfactors: cognition-based trust (six items, e.g., “My colleague approaches his/her job with professionalism and dedication”) and affect-based trust (five items, e.g., “If I shared my problems with my colleague, I know (s)he would respond constructively and caringly”). To assess trust toward coworkers from various age groups, we instructed participants to consider all their coworkers and answer the question (Appendix III). 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), was adopted. This scale was revealed to have good reliability in the original (McAllister, 1995) and present study (.91 and .88 for cognition-based trust, and .89

and .89 for affect-based trust, respectively). The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient in this study was .92.

### Knowledge Exchange

Knowledge exchange was measured by the 8-item scale developed by De Vries et al. (2006) and translated by Hyun (2019). This scale includes two subfactors: knowledge donating (four items, e.g., "When I've learned something new, I tell my colleagues about it") and knowledge collecting (four items, e.g., "When a colleague is good at something, I ask them to teach me how to do it"). We provided instruction for participants to think about all colleagues from diverse age groups when they responded to the questions (Appendix IV). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This scale was confirmed as reliable in the original study (De Vries et al., 2006) and the present study, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .75 and .83 for knowledge collecting, respectively, and .84 and .83 for knowledge donating, respectively. The overall internal consistency reliability for this study was .88.

### Job Satisfaction

To measure job satisfaction, the Brief Index of Affective Job Satisfaction (BIAJS) developed by Thompson and Phua (2012) was adopted (Appendix V). The scale consists of four items, and the sample item is "I like my job better

than the average person." Each item was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .81 in Thompson and Phua (2012) and .91 in this study.

### Demographic Informations

We collected sex, age, working hours, remote working hours, tenure, educational level, job position, and category of business as demographic information.

## Results

### Preliminary Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

Before testing the model, this study checked basic statistical assumptions by performing a preliminary analysis using SPSS 25.0. There was no multicollinearity in the data, according to Kline (2016). The data also satisfied the normality assumption because the absolute values of skewness and kurtosis did not exceed 2 (Garson, 2012). Descriptive statistics for the study variables are presented in Table 1.

### Measurement Model Analysis

We conducted CFA to test measurement model using the R 4.1.2 version of the Lavaan package. Each scale item was used as an

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Study Variables

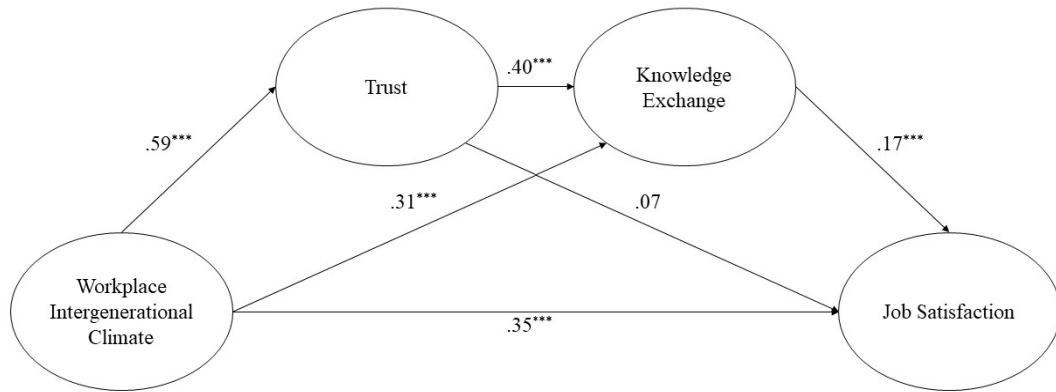
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 WIC	-										
2 Trust	.46 <sup>***</sup>	-									
3 KE	.45 <sup>***</sup>	.54 <sup>***</sup>	-								
4 JS	.34 <sup>***</sup>	.37 <sup>***</sup>	.38 <sup>***</sup>	-							
5 Sex	.00	-.07	-.02	-.04	-						
6 Age	.01	.10 <sup>*</sup>	.04	.00	.01	-					
7 WH	-.05	-.10 <sup>*</sup>	-.02	-.09 <sup>*</sup>	-.14 <sup>**</sup>	-.06	-				
8 RWH	-.01	.05	-.03	.01	-.04	-.03	-.02	-			
9 Tenure	-.02	.10 <sup>*</sup>	.06	.22 <sup>***</sup>	-.18 <sup>***</sup>	.86 <sup>***</sup>	-.03	-.02	-		
10 EL	-.01	.02	.01	.03	-.04	-.01	.06	.07	-.03	-	
11 JP	-.03	.07	.05	.11 <sup>**</sup>	-.25 <sup>**</sup>	.36	.06	.06	.44 <sup>***</sup>	.18 <sup>***</sup>	-
12 CB	.10 <sup>*</sup>	.02	.11 <sup>**</sup>	.02	.26 <sup>***</sup>	-.02	-.10 <sup>*</sup>	-.04	-.06	.07	-.06
<i>Mean</i>	2.77	4.64	3.72	3.30	0.49	43.67	8.21	2.87	200.60	2.72	2.82
<i>SD</i>	0.35	0.81	0.54	0.82	0.50	12.81	1.08	7.37	138.67	0.85	1.93

Note.  $N = 592$ ; \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; WIC = Workplace intergenerational climate; KE = Knowledge exchange; JS = Job satisfaction; WH = Working hours; RWH = Remote working hours; EL = Education level; JP = Job position; CB = Category of business. In the case of sex, 0 = male, 1 = female. Tenure was measured in months.

observed indicator of the job satisfaction latent variable. For workplace intergenerational climate, this study used the subdimensions as observed indicators according to the recommendation of Weston and Gore (2006). However, the trust and knowledge exchange measures consist of only two subfactors. Because constructing a latent variable with three or more indicators is recommended, item parceling was conducted based on the meaning of the items rather than on the subdimension (Lee & Kim, 2016).

The results indicate that the measurement

model demonstrated an acceptable fit,  $\chi^2(98) = 452.38$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = .92, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .06. In contrast, the single-factor model, in which all the variables were loaded on one latent factor, did not fit the data well,  $\chi^2(104) = 2145.26$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = .56, TLI = .49, RMSEA = .18, SRMR = .12. The four-factor measurement model demonstrated better fit indices than the single-factor model that combined all variables into one latent factor.



Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Figure 2. Structural Model with Standardized Path Coefficient

### Structural Model Analysis

With the confirmation that the measurement model's fit was acceptable, the hypothesized structural model was tested after controlling for tenure using the R 4.1.2 version of the Lavaan package. The model showed an acceptable fit,  $\chi^2(113) = 486.97, p < .001, CFI = .92, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .06$ . The total effect of workplace intergenerational climate on job satisfaction was significant ( $b = 1.67, \beta = .68, p < .001$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. However, unlike we expected, the mediating path from intergenerational climate to job satisfaction through trust was not statistically significant ( $b = 0.11, \beta = .04, p = .31$ ). Hence, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Intergenerational climate had a significant indirect relationship on job satisfaction through knowledge exchange,  $b = 0.15, \beta = .05, p < .05$ , bootstrap 10000 samples, 95% CI [.03,

.31], as well as through trust and knowledge exchange sequentially,  $b = 0.12, \beta = .04, p < .05$ , bootstrap 10000 samples, 95% CI [.03, .22]. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4 were both supported.

### Discussion

This study investigated the sequential mediation effect of trust and knowledge exchange in the relationship between workplace intergenerational climate and job satisfaction. Firstly, intergenerational climate was positively related to job satisfaction. It implies that an inclusive and cooperative climate can enhance job satisfaction and is aligned with previous studies that empirically revealed the positive relationship between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction (Firzly et al., 2021; King & Bryant, 2017; Lagacé et al., 2019). Secondly, the

indirect paths from intergenerational climate to job satisfaction through knowledge exchange and sequentially through trust and knowledge exchange were found to be significant. However, unlike our hypothesis, the indirect path from intergenerational climate to job satisfaction through trust was not statistically significant. This suggests that knowledge exchange is the crucial mediator in the relationship between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction since the influence of intergenerational climate on trust increases job satisfaction only when trust promotes knowledge exchange. In addition, the sequential mediation effect of trust and knowledge exchange implies that organizational factors (i.e., intergenerational climate) facilitate knowledge exchange by impacting the personal psychological factor (i.e., trust), ultimately leading to enhanced job satisfaction. The theoretical and practical implications of the study are discussed below.

### Theoretical Implication

This study identified the effect of intergenerational climate on job satisfaction. Because the relationship between these two variables was empirically revealed in King and Bryant's (2017) original scale development study, researchers have explored the role of intergenerational climate in promoting employee well-being. For example, successful aging at work (Lagacé, et al., 2019) and work

engagement (Burmeister et al., 2021) were revealed to have positive associations with intergenerational climate. Based on previous research, this study not only corroborated the positive association between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction but also found a specific mechanism for this relationship by demonstrating the mediating effects of trust and knowledge exchange. Supporting the results of previous studies and deepening the understanding of why the intergenerational climate is related to employee well-being both enrich the literature.

The findings of this study offer empirical evidence not only for intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) but also for social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). By revealing the positive relationship between workplace intergenerational climate and trust, this study reaffirmed the significance of interaction with others while sharing common goals and perceiving equal status, as Allport (1954) proposed. In addition, the sequential mediating effect of trust and knowledge exchange emphasized the importance of the expectation of reciprocity, which is consistent with social exchange theory (Blau, 1964).

The results of this study also contributed to research on knowledge exchange. Only a few studies (e.g., Lagacé et al., 2019) have investigated the effect of intergenerational climate on knowledge exchange, as intergenerational climate is a newly introduced concept. Intergenerational climate was revealed as a new

variable that is related to knowledge exchange based on intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Furthermore, this study demonstrated a positive relationship between knowledge exchange and job satisfaction. Considering that many studies have concentrated on the role of knowledge exchange in enhancing performance and productivity (Ahmad & Karim, 2019), the findings of this study extend the knowledge exchange literature by revealing an antecedent and outcome of knowledge exchange and providing empirical evidence that supports two well-established theories.

### Practical Implication

Given that researchers put a lot of effort into designing successful employee management practices in diverse age groups (Urbancová & Fejfarova, 2017; Wainwright et al., 2019), the findings of this study are expected to be useful for organizations. According to the survey, more than 40% of participants responded that they are dissatisfied with their current job (Lee, 2023). It often leads to challenges for companies in managing and retaining their employees (Lee, 2021). In this context, this study provides valuable guidance on how organizations can improve employees' job satisfaction by promoting an intergenerational climate and offering knowledge exchange opportunities.

To foster an intergenerational climate, it is

recommended that companies invest in training or education for a better understanding among employees from different generations. Donizzetti (2019) demonstrated that understanding the characteristics of aged people such as changes in physical or cognitive abilities can decrease negative stereotypes and discriminatory behaviors toward old people. In this regard, organizations can benefit from providing educations that familiarize employees with the unique characteristics of each generation. For instance, if older employees learned that younger generations tend to put more emphasis on their personal rights (Park & Park, 2018), they can understand younger generations' behaviors relatively easily rather than considering them as rude. Similarly, younger employees can build rapport with older leaders by adjusting their behaviors to align with their leaders who believe it is essential to respect a person in a higher position (Park & Kim, 2001). This collaborative approach is anticipated to foster cooperation between generations and contribute to overall employees' job satisfaction.

In addition to cultivating an intergenerational climate, practitioners should introduce new systems or create regular opportunities for knowledge exchange to improve employees' job satisfaction. Some companies have implemented new digital platforms to facilitate effective knowledge exchange among employees (Kang, 2023). Hosting annual conferences can provide a chance for employees to share experiences and expertise together (Lim, 2023). As

knowledge exchange has been identified as a mediator in the relationship between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction, companies are encouraged to actively promote and enhance knowledge exchange to improve overall employee satisfaction.

### Limitations and Future Research

Despite its theoretical and practical contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the results cannot confirm the causal relationship between the study variables due to the limitation of the cross-sectional design. Even though we carefully established the hypotheses based on well-established theories and previous research, causal relationships cannot be determined. For example, we examined the sequential mediating effect of trust and knowledge exchange in this study since we predicted that trust can foster knowledge exchange through the expectation of reciprocal interaction based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). However, it is also possible that knowledge exchange can promote trust among members because they can have the expectation of reciprocity while exchanging their knowledge with others. Therefore, we conducted further data analysis to test whether the reverse path (i.e., Workplace intergenerational climate - Knowledge exchange - Trust - Job satisfaction) is significant. The alternative sequential mediation path was not statistically significant,  $b$

$= 0.04$ ,  $\beta = .01$ ,  $p = .32$ , bootstrap 10000 samples, 95% CI  $[-.03, .12]$ . This result provided evidence that our research hypothesis is theoretically plausible. Nevertheless, further longitudinal studies are needed to clarify the relationship between the variables since this study cannot guarantee causality due to its cross-sectional nature.

Second, the risk of common method bias might exist because only a self-report survey was adopted to measure the study variables. However, the result of the single-factor test (Harman, 1976) indicated that the risk was not severe since the explained variance of the largest factor was less than 50%. However, data should be collected from various sources for future research to decrease the risk of common method bias.

Future research should explore other mediators between intergenerational climate and job satisfaction or other outcomes of knowledge exchange. Since workplace intergenerational climate is a newly introduced concept, it is recommended that more research on this topic be conducted. It will be valuable to conduct further research on the relationships between other variables. For instance, prior research (Newman et al., 2017; meta-analysis) revealed a positive relationship between psychological safety and knowledge sharing. Employees who believe their team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking may be more likely to actively participate in knowledge exchange (Siemsen et al., 2009).

Hence, this may function as an alternative mediator. Exploring whether intergenerational climate influences other variables such as work engagement and intention to remain is also meaningful. Burmeister et al. (2021) revealed that intergenerational contact, which is a subdimension of the WICS, enhanced work engagement through belongingness. Thus, studying the relationship between intergenerational climate and other variables will deepen the understanding of employee well-being.

Although some studies have investigated the effects of the subdimensions of the WICS (e.g., Burmeister et al., 2021; McConatha et al., 2022), further research investigating the discriminant effects of the subfactors is needed. Since each subdimension of the K-WICS might have distinct characteristics, it might be possible that the subfactors of the K-WICS might have distinctive effects on outcome variables. Therefore, it should be explored in future studies.

Lastly, examining the effect of interaction between older and younger groups might lead to valuable results. This study primarily aimed to explore the overall interaction among employees rather than focusing on an interaction between specific generations. However, depending on the situation, practitioners might specifically desire to explore the interaction between certain groups such as their older leaders and younger team members. Therefore, it is suggested that future research should classify participants into groups

based on a particular criterion such as older leaders and younger team members for its specific purpose.

Despite certain limitations, this study has made a contribution to the literature by elucidating a detailed mechanism that explains how intergenerational climate promotes job satisfaction through trust and knowledge exchange. Moreover, considering that intergenerational cooperation currently stands as a major challenge in organizations, it is expected that this study will provide a practical insight into meeting the organizational challenge.

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## 세대친화적 조직문화와 직무만족: 신뢰와 지식교환행동의 순차 매개 모형

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세대 간 협력적인 조직문화는 구성원의 직무만족과 정적인 관련성을 갖고 있는 것으로 알려져 있다. 그러나, 세대친화적 조직문화 (Workplace intergenerational climate)가 어떠한 과정을 통해 직무만족을 향상시키는지 밝힌 연구는 부족한 편이다. 본 연구는 집단 간 접촉 이론 (Intergroup contact theory)과 사회적 교환 이론 (Social exchange theory)에 근거하여, 세대친화적 조직문화가 직무만족에 영향을 미치는 메커니즘에서 신뢰와 지식교환행동의 매개 효과를 탐구하였다. 구조 방정식 모형을 사용하여 한국 정규직 근로자 592명의 데이터를 분석하였다. 그 결과, 세대친화적 조직문화는 직무만족과 정적인 상관관계를 보였다. 또 지식교환행동은 세대친화적 조직문화와 직무만족의 관계를 매개하였다. 마지막으로 신뢰와 지식교환행동은 세대친화적 조직문화와 직무만족의 관계를 순차적으로 매개하였다. 이러한 결과는 구성원들이 세대 간 친화적 조직문화를 인식할수록, 신뢰를 형성하게 되고, 적극적으로 지식을 주고 받으며 직무에 만족하게 될 수 있음을 시사한다는 점에서 학문적 의의를 갖는다. 또한, 조직의 HR 담당자들을 위한 실무적 함의도 제공한다.

주요어 : 세대친화적 조직문화, 신뢰, 지식교환행동, 직무만족

## Appendix I

### Items for Screening Participants Out

귀하의 직업은 무엇입니까?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 학생</li> <li>2. <b>직장인</b></li> <li>3. 자영업자</li> <li>4. 프리랜서</li> <li>5. 기타/무직</li> </ol>
재택근무 여부를 선택해주세요	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 전면 재택근무</li> <li>2. <b>재택 근무 + 오프라인 근무</b></li> <li>3. <b>전면 오프라인 근무</b></li> </ol>
부서 내 구성원 비율에 관한 질문에 응답해주세요	
나보다 나이가 적은 직원과 함께 일한다	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>그렇다</b></li> <li>2. 아니다</li> </ol>
나와 나이가 같은 직원과 함께 일한다	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>그렇다</b></li> <li>2. 아니다</li> </ol>
나보다 나이가 많은 직원과 함께 일한다	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>그렇다</b></li> <li>2. 아니다</li> </ol>
주당 평균 근무 시간을 입력해주세요	( _____ 시간)

*Note.* Only respondents who selected the bolded options and whose working hours are between 40 to 107 can participate in this survey

## Appendix II

### Items of Workplace Intergenerational Climate

다음은 귀하의 직장 내 환경에 대한 질문입니다. 가장 유사한 번호에 체크해주시기 바랍니다.

	전혀 그렇지 않다	그렇지 않다	그렇다	매우 그렇다
1 나의 동료들은 세대가 다른 구성원과 친하게 지내려고 하지 않는다.	①	②	③	④
2 나와 세대가 다른 구성원은 나와 비슷한 연령대의 직원들보다 불평불만이 많다.	①	②	③	④
3 나와 세대가 다른 구성원은 내가 관심이 없는 주제에 대해서만 이야기 한다.	①	②	③	④
4 나와 세대가 다른 구성원은 나와 업무 방식이 다르다.	①	②	③	④
5 나는 세대가 다른 구성원들과 대화하는 것이 편하다.	①	②	③	④
6 나는 세대가 다른 구성원들과 교류하는 것이 즐겁다.	①	②	③	④
7 나와 세대가 다른 구성원들은 재미있고 개성있는 사람들이다.	①	②	③	④
8 동료들은 세대가 다른 구성원들과 함께 일할 때, 가장 즐겁게 일한다.	①	②	③	④
9 나는 회사가 모든 연령대의 구성원에게 쾌적한 업무 환경을 갖추고 있다고 생각한다.	①	②	③	④
10 회사에서는 모든 연령대의 구성원이 존중받는다.	①	②	③	④
11 다양한 연령대의 구성원들과 일하는 것은 직장생활의 질을 향상시킨다.	①	②	③	④
12 내 동료들은 나이가 많은 구성원들에게 퇴직을 압박하는 경향이 있다.	①	②	③	④
13 회사에서 젊은 구성원들에게 퇴직을 강요하는 경향이 있다.	①	②	③	④
14 회사에서 나이가 많은 구성원들에게 퇴직을 강요하는 경향이 있다.	①	②	③	④
	전혀 하지 않는다	가끔 한다	자주 한다	매우 자주 한다
15 세대가 다른 구성원과 얼마나 자주 대화하나요?	①	②	③	④
16 세대가 다른 구성원과 업무 외적인 주제에 대해서 얼마나 자주 대화를 나누나요?	①	②	③	④
17 세대가 다른 구성원과 개인적인 일상에 대해서 얼마나 자주 대화를 나누나요?	①	②	③	④

*Note.* Lack of Generational Stereotypes = 1,2,3,4; Positive Intergenerational Affect = 5,6,7,8; Workplace Generational Inclusiveness = 9,10,11; Workplace Intergenerational Retention = 12,13,14; Intergenerational Contact = 15,16,17.

### Appendix III

#### Items of Trust

다음은 귀하의 직장 동료들에 대해 가지고 있는 태도에 관한 문항입니다. 모든 연령대의 동료들을 생각하며, 귀하의 생각과 가장 유사한 번호에 체크해주시기 바랍니다.

		전혀 그렇지 않다	거의 그렇지 않다	별로 그렇지 않다	보통이 다	약간 그렇다	상당히 그렇다	매우 그렇다
1	나의 동료는 전문적이고 헌신적인 태도로 업무에 임한다.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
2	나의 동료의 과거 경력으로 볼 때, 나는 동료의 능력과 직무에 대한 준비성을 의심하지 않는다.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
3	나는 나의 동료가 업무를 부주의하게 처리해, 내 업무를 어렵게 만들지는 않을 것이라고 믿는다.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
4	나의 동료와 개인적으로 가까운 사람이 아니더라도, 동료들 아는 대부분의 회사 사람들은 나의 동료를 신뢰하고 존경할 것이다.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
5	업무상 교류하는 사람들도 나의 동료가 신뢰할 만하다고 생각한다.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
6	나의 동료의 배경이나 경험은 훌륭한 편이어서 회사 내 사람들은 그의 성과를 주시할 것이다.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
7	나와 나의 동료는 자유롭게 서로의 아이디어, 감정, 바램을 주고받을 수 있는 관계이다.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
8	나의 직장에서의 애로사항에 대하여 동료에게 허심탄회하게 말할 수 있으며, 동료도 나의 말을 경청할 것이다.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
9	만일 나의 동료와 나 둘 중 한 명이 부서를 옮겨 더 이상 함께 일할 수 없다면, 우리는 정서적 상실감을 느낄 것이다.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
10	나의 문제를 나의 동료와 의논한다면, 나의 동료는 내 문제를 진심으로 대하고 건설적이고 사려 깊은 조언을 해줄 것이다.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
11	나와 나의 동료는 서로 좋은 인간관계를 형성하기 위해 감정적인 노력을 많이 기울여 왔다.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦

*Note.* Cognitive Trust = 1,2,3,4,5,6; Affective Trust = 7,8,9,10,11

## Appendix IV

### Items of Knowledge Exchange

다음은 직장 내에서 동료 등과 정보, 노하우와 같은 지식을 교환하는 행동(Knowledge exchange)에 관련된 질문입니다. 모든 연령대의 동료들을 생각하며, 귀하의 행동과 가장 유사한 번호에 체크해주시기 바랍니다.

		전혀 그렇지 않다	그렇지 않다	보통 이다	그렇다	매우 그렇다
1	나는 새로운 것을 배우면 동료들에게 알려준다.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2	나는 동료들과 정보를 공유한다.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3	나는 내가 하는 일을 동료들이 아는 것이 중요하다고 생각한다.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4	나는 내가 하고 있는 일을 동료들에게 정기적으로 말한다.	①	②	③	④	⑤
5	나는 특정 정보가 필요할 때 동료들에게 물어본다.	①	②	③	④	⑤
6	나는 동료들이 알고 있는 것을 배우고 싶다.	①	②	③	④	⑤
7	나는 뭔가를 배워야 할 때, 동료들에게 물어본다.	①	②	③	④	⑤
8	나는 동료들이 무언가를 능숙하게 잘 하면, 그 일을 어떻게 하는지 가르쳐 달라고 한다.	①	②	③	④	⑤

*Note.* Knowledge Donating = 1,2,3,4; Knowledge Collecting = 5,6,7,8

## Appendix V

### Items of Job Satisfaction

다음은 귀하의 일에 대한 생각에 관한 문항입니다. 가장 유사한 번호에 체크해주시기 바랍니다.

		전혀 그렇지 않다	그렇지 않다	보통이다	그렇다	매우 그렇다
1	나는 내 일에서 진정한 즐거움을 느낀다.	①	②	③	④	⑤
2	나는 내 일을 일반적인 사람들이 자신의 일을 좋아하는 것보다 더 좋아한다.	①	②	③	④	⑤
3	거의 항상 나는 내 일에 대하여 열정적이다.	①	②	③	④	⑤
4	나는 나의 일에 꽤나 만족감을 느낀다.	①	②	③	④	⑤