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Intergenerational climate in university contexts: validation of a scale



Increasing life expectancy and policies to delay retirement pose new challenges for organizations, with up to three generations living together in the same workspace. A recent UAB study, published *in Frontiers in Education*, adapts the WICS scale to measure intergenerational climate in Spanish universities. This instrument helps to improve labor relations and promote intergenerational learning.

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The increase in life expectancy, together with government policies aimed at delaying the retirement age, is creating a new challenge for our organisations and is awakening interest in the interactions that occur between different generations in the same workplace. Currently, we can find up to three different generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, or Millennials) coexisting in the same workplace, sharing workspaces, with different experiences, ways of acting, thinking, and understanding working life.

In these multigenerational contexts, it is vital to know the relationships that are established between people of different generations to ensure not only a good working climate but also to facilitate the personal and professional development of the members of the organisation and to take advantage of the learning and knowledge exchange that can take place between colleagues from different generations (intergenerational learning, IGL).

One of the instruments that most comprehensively measures intergenerational relationships in the workplace is “The Workplace Intergenerational Climate Scale” (WICS) developed by

King and Bryant (2017). This instrument consisting of five related subscales (i.e., absence of stereotyping, interaction, inclusion, retention, and intergenerational contact) allows for an accurate measurement of the intergenerational climate of organisations through the eyes of the people who make up the organisation.

The purpose of our study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Education* (Rodríguez Gómez, González-Ramírez and Armengol, 2024), and developed as part of the PRUNAI project “University and Intergenerational Learning”, coordinated by Diego Castro and David Rodríguez-Gómez, is to test the psychometric properties, after adapting the questionnaire to the work specificities of our context, in terms of structural validity and internal consistency, of the Spanish version of WICS, when applied in Spanish universities.

The practical implications of the instrument are manifold in a university context such as the current one, which is forced to adjust internally not only to the socio-demographic evolution of the teaching staff but also to the aging and lack of replacement that most Spanish universities are experiencing. Thus, for example, if an organisation scores low on the intergenerational retention subscale in the workplace, management can devote resources to highlighting how promotions are based on merit and how each employee's contributions are valued, regardless of how long they have been working there or how close they are to retirement.

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