

Managing Work Attitudes, Reactions to Work, and Transitions to Retirement

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Work and Aging:
Psychological-Organizational Science
Contributions to the Management of an
Aging and Age-Diverse Workforce

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Overview and Framework: Reactions to Work

- Work Attitudes
- Work Motivation
- Stress Reactions
- Work-Life Concerns
- Retirement Transitions
- Recommendations
 - Practice and policy
 - Research

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Age - Job Satisfaction Relationship

- General satisfaction: +
- Facet satisfaction: Meaningfulness +
- Form of the relationship: U?? X??
- Explanations: *Are older workers better off, or are they just easier to please?*
 - External/situational explanations
 - Internal/developmental explanations
 - Research is needed that disentangles these explanations

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Other Work Attitudes

- Job involvement +
 - But does this apply only to professionals?
- Organizational commitment: Mixed
- Attitudes toward development and job/organizational change –
 - Self-efficacy as a mechanism

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Motivation: How much, what, why?

- Work motivation levels: Mixed
- Motives and values
 - Meaningful relationships +
 - Generativity +
 - Competitive excellence –
 - Generational differences in values
- Motivation processes: ??

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Workplace Stress: Risks and Consequences for Older Workers

- Stress: outcome of a mismatch between the demands of the job and the capabilities and resources of the worker
- Consequences of prolonged stress
- Are older workers *generally* more prone to experience workplace stress? NO
- *When* are older workers most likely to experience occupational stress and strains?

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Stressors of Particular or Unique Significance to Older Workers

- Physical/Task Design Stressors
- Psychosocial/Role Stressors
 - Chronic role overload/role underload
 - Age discrimination
 - Technology and changing task requirements
 - Career plateaus and obsolescence
 - Work-life issues of older workers
 - Retirement

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Reducing the Impact of Stressors

- The direct approach: Redesign of work and work organization
- Coping strategies and support play key roles
- The good news: Older workers have effective coping strategies and support mechanisms
- What else can organizations do?
 - Flexibility and other opportunities for control
 - Organizational and social support
 - "Capability support" to support self-efficacy for development
 - Opportunities to "give back" can combat role underload

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Work-Life Issues for Older Workers

- Do older workers *have* work-life issues?
- The good news: Reports of work-family conflict work-family stress decline with age
 - Q: Why? Fewer stressors? More resources?
- But: New sources of conflict
 - *Before*: Dual careers, childcare, "quality time" top the list
 - *Now*: Coordinating retirement timing, "return to the nest", and elder-care
- Work-life goes beyond work and family
 - Increased attention to other life domains: personal, leisure, profession, community

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Retirement: The Older Worker Prerogative (sometimes)

- The nature of retirement continues to change
- Retirement features: Preference, Decision, Timing, Extent
- What Influences Retirement Decisions & Timing?
 - Health and Wealth: Create opportunities and constraints
 - Looking Beyond Health and Wealth: Retirement from work as a role transition
- *Key issue*: Sufficient control to make decisions about the timing and extent of retirement that are consistent with preferences

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Recommendations: Policy & Practice

- Opportunities to develop and maintain meaningful social relationships
- Regular access to sources of social support
- Opportunities to mentor
- Regular exposure to mastery experiences
- Flexible working arrangements
- Health-supportive practices
- An organizational culture that is welcoming to mature workers

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Recommendations: Research

- Age as a focal variable
- Designs that disentangle age differences and aging effects from contextual age-related effects
- Sound operational definitions of age constructs: chronological, legal, economic, developmental, psychological definitions
- Incorporation of age into theories of work phenomena
- Emphasis on health and well-being as key outcomes, time/experience, & "chronicity" as key variables

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