



Outcome expectations and work design characteristics in post-retirement work planning

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ABSTRACT

Today, a growing number of individuals decide to work beyond normal retirement age (Eurofound, 2012). Research has revealed influencing factors for post-retirement work at the individual, job and organizational, family, and socioeconomic levels. However, not much is known about post-retirement work planning and its antecedents. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of outcome expectations regarding post-retirement work and two work design characteristics (i.e., physical demands and social support at work) on post-retirement work planning by applying the framework of social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Data from 1065 employees of a German logistics company were used in this study. Results provide support for SCCT to be a suitable theoretical framework for understanding post-retirement career planning and thereby expand the application of SCCT to a new field. Furthermore, multilevel analysis revealed that physical demands were negatively related to the intention to continue to work for the pre-retirement employer after retirement entry, whereas social support at work strengthened the relationship between outcome expectations and same-employer-post-retirement work intention. Organizations who want their retired employees to continue to work in retirement should develop interventions to strengthen post-retirement work outcome expectations. An increase in social support at work as well as a reduction in physical demands may also contribute to increased participation in continued work with the same employer in retirement.

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1. Introduction

Work and retirement are mutually exclusive for many individuals as they define retirement as the total cessation from any work-related activity. However, today many individuals who have retired from their career job decide to take up some kind of work activity for manifold reasons (e.g., Eurofound, 2012). Some retirees are intrinsically motivated as they perceive working as a joy-providing and fulfilling activity. Others want to maintain contact with other people or stay mentally and physically active. Yet some others feel the pressure to work in retirement for financial reasons (AARP, 2003). The phenomenon of work after retirement is often referred to as post-retirement work (e.g., Armstrong-Stassen, 2008; Griffin & Hesketh, 2008). Post-retirement work can take on different forms such as work in the original occupation or in a different field. Also, while some retirees continue to work for their pre-retirement employer, others work for other employers or become self-employed.

Post-retirement work can help counter challenges due to demographic changes such as aging societies and shrinking labor forces. For example, post-retirement work can be beneficial in supporting social security systems and it can help organizations to address labor shortage and talent loss. Already today, many organizations rely on their retirees to serve as consultants or in the

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labor force in times of increased demands. For those companies, it will be important to know not only what to do to encourage their employees to work after formal retirement but also which individuals they should focus on in their retiree-recruitment practice. As such, in this paper we address two phenomena: general post-retirement work including all types of paid work activities as well as the more specific same-employer-post-retirement work that only refers to the continued work for the pre-retirement employer.

Over recent years the phenomenon of post-retirement work has grown and gained increasing attention in scientific research. Wang and Shultz (2010) pointed out that retirement can be conceptualized as a career development stage. They developed a generic model of the retirement process, including post-retirement work and its antecedents such as individual, job and organizational, family, and socio-economic factors. Research has identified several individual and family attributes as well as situational factors that contribute to explain the engagement in post-retirement work (e.g., Gobeski & Beehr, 2009; Wang & Shultz, 2010; Wang, Zhan, Liu, & Shultz, 2008). However, aspects of individual planning of post-retirement work have not been studied thoroughly. Although the important role of work design characteristics in post-retirement work planning has been theorized (e. g., Wang & Shultz, 2010), it has not been studied empirically. Their role therefore remains unclear.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to add to the literature on post-retirement work planning. In line with a suggestion by Adams and Rau (2011), we draw on the social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994) to examine how expectations about post-retirement work influence post-retirement work planning. In particular, we propose two possible mechanisms based on SCCT: Firstly, outcome expectations with regard to post-retirement work in general are related to planning activity for post-retirement work in general. Secondly, with a more context specific mechanism we investigate the role of the intention to work with the same employer after retirement (i.e., same-employer-post-retirement work intention) in this process. We apply a multilevel approach to account for the potential effects of job context in post-retirement work planning. Drawing on work design characteristics (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006), we investigate the moderating roles of two meso-level work design aspects that are most relevant for older workers: physical demands and social support at work. The hypothesized model is shown in Fig. 1.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Post-retirement work planning

Retirement planning and the engagement in post-retirement work are related to quality of life during retirement in terms of better life satisfaction and less mental and physical illness (e.g., Adams & Rau, 2011; Topa, Moriano, Depolo, Alcover, & Morales, 2009). Topa et al. (2009) reported that retirement planning is a crucial predictor of engagement in post-retirement work. Maestas (2010) found that taking up work-related activities in retirement was usually a decision before retirement and not a sudden reaction to financial miscalculations or shocks. Furthermore, individuals who are more engaged and proactive in retirement planning in general are more likely to plan for post-retirement work (Griffin & Hesketh, 2008). However, Adams and Rau (2011) have noted that studies on post-retirement work planning per se are scarce, with most of the studies operationalizing post-retirement work planning as post-retirement work intention or thoughts on post-retirement work (e.g., Griffin & Hesketh, 2008; Wang et al., 2008). Indeed, very few studies have focused on post-retirement work planning activities (e.g., Petkoska & Earl, 2009). Further, although studies on post-retirement work planning have examined demographics (e.g., gender, education, and

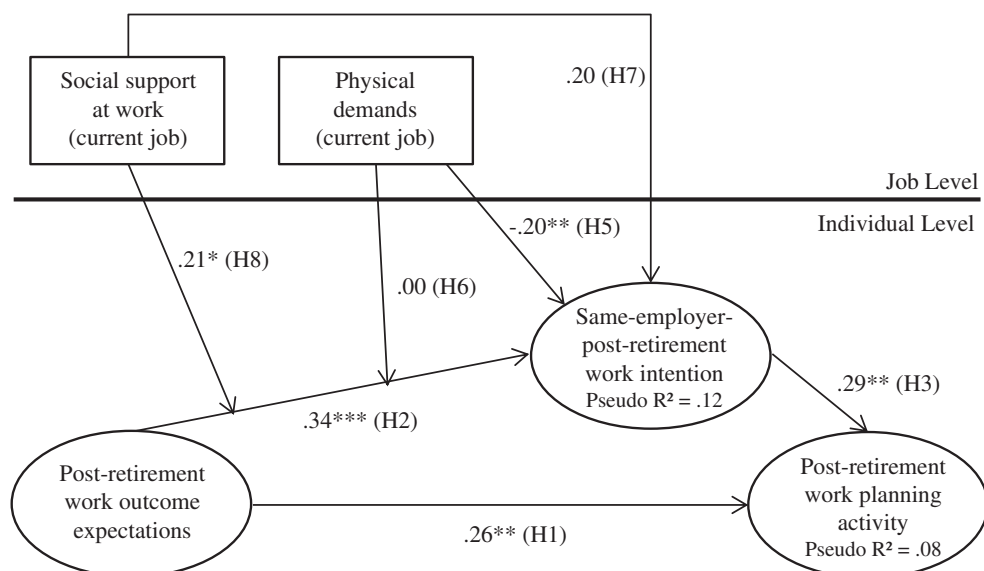


Fig. 1. Results of latent variable structural equation modeling for the hypothesized post-retirement work planning model. Standardized estimates and hypothesis numbers (H).

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