

Jane Eton Research Report

Age differences in work motivation and job satisfaction, and the influence of job characteristics

Abstract

While research has previously examined age-related differences in work motivation and job satisfaction, these differences have not been considered from a Self-Determination Theory (SDT) perspective. The current study extended this research to examine these differences according to SDT, as well as investigating the influence of different job characteristics on these variables. As hypothesised, age was found to be positively related to intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, and negatively related to controlled motivation. Higher levels of job characteristics that provided autonomy, social interaction, and demonstration of competence were positively associated with higher levels of autonomous motivation in all workers. These characteristics were unrelated to controlled motivation. Predicted differences in motivation and job satisfaction between older (55 and over) and younger (under 55) workers were not found. The presence of autonomy and social characteristics did not result in higher intrinsic motivation in older workers, as had been hypothesised, and in fact the relationship between intrinsic motivation and social characteristics was higher for younger workers. The overall findings emphasise the importance of job characteristics as influences over work motivation and job satisfaction in employees of all ages.