



A mixed-method approach to post-retirement career planning



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ABSTRACT

In times of rising longevity and shortage of skilled workers, post-retirement work has become increasingly prevalent in many countries. However, not much is known about the expectations and facilitating factors associated with work-related activities after retirement. In two studies we draw on the social cognitive career theory and investigated the role of outcome expectations and facilitating factors in post-retirement career planning. First, we interviewed 22 older employees and subject matter experts in a German aerospace company to learn more about expectations of post-retirement work and its facilitating factors to build a theoretical model. Second, to test our theoretical model, 212 employees of the same company aged 50 to 65 completed a web-based survey. Results showed that outcome expectations and the facilitating factors identified in the interview study were significantly related to post-retirement career intention. Further, the facilitating factor social approval moderated the relationship between outcome expectations and post-retirement career intention. We discuss implications of our findings in terms of how they inform retirement counselors, organizations, and society to help increase engagement in work-related activities after retirement.

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1. Introduction

Demographic change poses challenges on society, organizations, and individuals in many countries. For example in Germany, due to increasing life expectancy and low birth rate, a third (33.1%) of the population will be aged 65 or older in 2050 while this was true for every fifth person (20.6%) in 2010 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013). Consequences are overstrained pension systems, shortage of skilled workers, and insecurity with regard to individuals' financial situation after retirement from the career job (e.g., Dubois & Anderson, 2012; Gramke et al., 2010). One option to face these challenges is post-retirement work. In Germany, the percentage of working individuals aged 65 to 69 years has risen from 6.5% in 2005 to 10% in 2010 (Dubois & Anderson, 2012). Post-retirement work has the potential to support society and organizations, especially if retirees continue to be active in their professional field. This can also help structure the daily activities for retirees and allow them to pursue their interests. Moreover, post-retirement work in the professional field is related to better physical and mental health (e.g., Wang, 2007; Zhan, Wang, Liu, & Shultz, 2009), which in turn is related to retirement satisfaction (e.g., van Solinge & Henkens, 2008). Against the background of demographic change, it will be increasingly important for organizations to convince more individuals to still contribute their manpower and know-how before entering full retirement. Thus, knowledge about the antecedents and facilitating factors of post-retirement work planning could help to provide more retirees with post-retirement career opportunities. The aim of the present studies was therefore to examine antecedents of post-retirement career intention.

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2. Social cognitive career theory

A well-established career planning theory is the social cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), which is based on the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). This theory holds that certain cognitive and contextual variables help individuals to guide their career (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). The theory was recently extended into the social cognitive model of career self-management (Lent & Brown, 2013) which explicitly emphasizes process (vs. content) aspects of career development over the life span, such as preparing for retirement and post-retirement work. Our current research directly draws on this new extension. In particular, a central assumption made by SCCT is that self-efficacy and outcome expectations influence career goals or in other words behavioral intentions regarding one's career. Self-efficacy reflects the conviction that one is capable of accomplishing one's goal (Bandura, 1986). It has already been applied to the retirement context to some extent (e.g., Dendinger, Adams, & Jacobson, 2005; Hershey & Mowen, 2000; Kim, Kwon, & Anderson, 2005; Taylor-Carter, Cook, & Weinberg, 1997; Wöhrmann, Deller, & Wang, 2013a). We will therefore not focus on this component in the current paper. Outcome expectations are beliefs about consequences or outcomes of actions. According to the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) actions are influenced by the expectation of the consequences of executing this behavior. Outcome expectations therefore play a major role in forming behavioral intentions. Research has shown that outcome expectations in fact predict intentions or goals in different behavioral and occupational domains, such as persistence in study major (Lent, Lopez, Lopez, & Sheu, 2008), occupational preferences (Lent, Paixão, Silva, & Leitão, 2010), assuming elite leadership (Yeagley, Subich, & Tokar, 2010), and engagement in post-retirement work (Wöhrmann, Deller, & Wang, 2013b).

The SCCT framework also includes environmental factors, such as contextual support and barriers (Lent et al., 2000). These facilitating and impeding factors can also influence an individual's career decision making processes. Amongst others, it is assumed that beneficial environmental conditions directly increase the likelihood of the formation of a behavioral intention because they can enhance volitional control in the process (Lent & Brown, 1996; Lent et al., 1994). For example, Dahling and Thompson (2010) found information about supportiveness of the social environment, financial status, and job market outlook to affect career decisions. Also, environmental factors can moderate the relations of certain cognitive factors included in SCCT and therefore affect career-relevant choice processes (Lent et al., 2000).

3. The present studies

The aim of the present study was to apply variables and mechanisms of SCCT to the field of post-retirement work with a focus on paid and unpaid post-retirement activities related to the former professional field. In particular, we investigated relationships between post-retirement career intention and both post-retirement career outcome expectations and environmental factors. We focused on positive outcome expectations and facilitating factors because during the qualitative analysis, it appeared that it was difficult to separate barrier/downside related narratives from facilitation-related narratives. They appear to hinge on the same continuum, which can be characterized as the degree of materialized facilitation. As previous research has neither identified the positive expectations older workers have with regard to post-retirement work nor its facilitating factors, we aimed at extending our knowledge on these aspects in the first phase of our research. This is especially important because the authors of SCCT have repeatedly pointed out that all included constructs have to correspond to the specific behavioral domain of interest (Lent & Brown, 2006; Lent et al., 1994). The same is true for facilitating factors. Different types of facilitating factors specific to the behavioral domain of interest have to be considered (Lent & Brown, 2006) as they are more likely to enhance career behavior than general facilitating factors and can be used as starting points for interventions. After outcome expectations (i.e., expected benefits) and facilitators of post-retirement work were identified through the qualitative study, we tested their roles in post-retirement career planning at the second phase of our research. Specifically, the qualitative interview results were used as basis for developing measures of post-retirement career outcome expectations and facilitating factors. This mixed-method approach (i.e., a qualitative exploratory interview study with open-ended questions followed by a web-based survey) helped us identify outcome expectations and facilitating factors older workers have with regard to post-retirement work and quantitatively evaluate the relationships between the variables on the basis of SCCT.

4. Qualitative study

Over recent years, reasons for the desire to work in groups of older workers and retirees have been investigated. For example, Deller, Liedtke, and Maxin (2009) reported several reasons for post-retirement activities based on results of interviews with working retirees. The working retirees' reasons included having something to do, pursuing joy/fun/interest, staying fit/development, fulfilling social responsibility/passing on knowledge, maintaining contacts, and financial reasons. These reasons may constitute important components of older workers' positive outcome expectations regarding post-retirement work. To find out more about the positive outcome expectations or benefits older workers expect regarding post-retirement activities, our first research question was:

Research question 1: What are the expected benefits of post-retirement work?

Contextual support plays an important role in SCCT and the associated facilitating factors can be intrapersonal and environmental (Lent et al., 2000). Knowledge of facilitating factors with regard to post-retirement career planning will be important to recognize areas of intervention. Research on post-retirement work has identified several influencing factors on the

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