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# Age Differences in Walden Faculty's Satisfaction and Commitment

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# Age Differences in Walden Faculty's Satisfaction and Commitment

Lee Stadtlander, Ph.D.; Amy Sickel, Ph.D.; Lori La Civita, Ph.D.; and Martha Giles, Ph.D.

## Abstract

Very little is known about online faculty and their work habits. This survey study examined the effect of work habits and demographics on job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. The results indicate that faculty over 70 years of age are more satisfied and committed to Walden than faculty 30-49 years.

## Problem

Very little is known about how online faculty work at home and whether their work habits affect job satisfaction or commitment to the organization. Given the large age range of Walden faculty (30-70+; Malone, 2013), it is not known how age influences the variables of satisfaction and commitment.

## Purpose

This quantitative study examined through a survey, Walden University faculty's work habits, job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and differences by age of the faculty.

## Relevant Literature

Research on telecommuting (i.e., those individuals who work virtually for an outside organization from within their own homes) has examined aspects of the virtual worker's environment such as physical characteristics (see Belanger et al., 2012) and psychological perceptions of job control and work/home boundaries (Kossek et al., 2006).

There is a considerable literature on faculty working at in-person institutions and their work habits (e.g., Dollard & Bakker, 2010; Gornall & Salisbury, 2012; Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2011). However, there is very little research on online faculty home/ work habits.

Our previous preliminary research in the area of online faculty (with 236 online faculty from many colleges/universities around the US; Stadtlander et al., 2014) found that some faculty (particularly young and part time) did not have a separate workspace for their online work. Rather, they tended to work around their home on laptops.

## Relevant Literature, Cont'd

A recent qualitative study (Stadtlander et al., in review) provided evidence of the separation the participants had established between home and work and the centrality of their work technology. Of particular interest, was that older faculty anecdotally appeared to be more satisfied with their work experience. There has been very little research with faculty over traditional retirement age (Kadefors et al., 2016). In the present study, we conducted a survey exploring the issue of home work habits and explored job satisfaction and affective commitment, as a follow-up to the qualitative study.

## Research Questions

RQ 1: How do work habits relate to demographics?

RQ 2: Are there age differences in job satisfaction and commitment to the organization?

## Procedures

Following approvals from Walden University's IRB and Office of Institutional Research, ads were placed in the Center for Faculty Excellence's monthly newsletter for five months (December 2015- May 2016). Interested individuals followed a link to the survey in Survey Monkey. After agreeing in an initial consent form, inclusion criterion of working only online was confirmed.

A total of 132 Walden faculty offered to participate, only 123 faculty met the inclusion criterion of working only online. Of the 123 participants, 96 were females (78%) and 25 males (20.3%), two declined to answer. Ages of the participants ranged from 31 to 80 years, with a mean of 56.28.

Participants were predominately married ( $n = 88$  [71.5%]; 8 [6.5%] were never married, 23 [18.7%] divorced, 3 [2.4%] widowed). 28 (22.8%) reported having children at home. 70 (56.9%) indicated they were part-time and 52 (42.3%) were fulltime.

Participants indicated working at one (Walden) to 7 colleges or universities ( $M = 1.95$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ).

## Procedures, Cont'd

### Dependent Variables:

*Affective Commitment to the Organization Scale* (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This 8 item scale examines affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in the organization. Responses were made on a seven-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). In the present study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .914$ . The scores ranged from 10-56 with a  $M = 39.09$  ( $SD = 11.18$ ).

*Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire* (MSQ) Short Form (Weiss et al., 1967). The MSQ- short form has 20 items on a 5 point scale (very dissatisfied to very satisfied) and has 3 subscales: intrinsic satisfaction with organization (12 items; range 12-60), extrinsic satisfaction (6 items; range 6-30), and general satisfaction (20 items; range 20-100). In the present study, the intrinsic scale's Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ , with scores ranging from 21-60 ( $M = 46$ ;  $SD = 7.9$ ). The extrinsic scale's Cronbach's  $\alpha = .86$ , with scores ranging from 7-30 ( $M = 21.1$ ;  $SD = 5.25$ ). The general scale's Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ , with scores ranging from 33-100 ( $M = 74.86$ ;  $SD = 13.5$ ).

## Findings

**RQ 1:** Older faculty's families tended to be more supportive of their online work than younger faculty's ( $\chi^2(114) = 15.3$ ,  $p < .02$ ). Older faculty tend to report working in the same location every day ( $r(115) = -.290$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and were more likely to indicate they want their books available while working ( $r(114) = -.204$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Older faculty were also more likely to mention wanting a door that could close ( $r(116) = .191$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and wanting an open and spacious workspace ( $r(116) = .224$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Younger faculty were less likely to answer the door during the day when they are working than older faculty ( $r(107) = -.262$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Younger are more likely to send children to school or have a babysitter while working ( $r(106) = -.527$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and mention wanting to be able to watch their children while working ( $r(116) = -.251$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Younger faculty were likely to work at more colleges and universities than older faculty ( $r(71) = -.307$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

## Findings, Cont'd

**RQ 2:** Older (70-80 yrs.) faculty showed more intrinsic satisfaction with their work than the youngest faculty ( $F(2,108) = 5.83$ ,  $p = .004$ ; 30-49 yrs.  $M = 43.2$ ; 50-69 yrs. old  $M = 45.8$ ; 70-80 yrs.  $M = 50.7$ ). No significant difference for extrinsic satisfaction.

Older (70-80 yrs.) faculty showed more general satisfaction with their work than the youngest faculty ( $F(2,108) = 4.82$ ,  $p = .01$ ; 30-49 yrs.  $M = 70.1$ ; 50-69 yrs. old  $M = 74.8$ ; 70-80 yrs.  $M = 87.7$ ).

Older (70-80 yrs.) faculty showed more affective commitment to Walden than the youngest faculty ( $F(2,109) = 5.05$ ,  $p = .008$ ; 30-49 yr  $M = 35.0$ ; 50-69 yr old  $M = 39.5$ ; 70-80 yr  $M = 45.0$ ).

## Limitations

This study was conducted at a large online university; faculty volunteered based upon an ad in the faculty newsletter. Because of this recruitment method, the sample tended to be older and was predominately female and married. Presumably, only those individuals very interested in the topic chose to complete the survey.

## Conclusions

. Younger participants tended to work at more colleges and universities than did the older group, they also appear to have more distractions in their workday. Older faculty may view their work as a choice they have made as opposed to the younger group, more research is needed in this area. There were consistent differences between participants over 70 years of age as compared to the youngest group aged 30-49, regarding job satisfaction and commitment

## Social Change Implications

With an aging population in the US, more faculty may be choosing to work longer and are more satisfied and have greater commitment as a result of that choice. Online colleges and universities can use this information to better serve their current faculty members.