

Age differences in physical and mental health conditions

W-Y. YEH. *Age differences in physical and mental health conditions and workplace health promotion needs among workers: An example of accommodation and catering industry employees.* *Gerontechnology* 2014;13(2):313; doi:10.4017/gt.2014.13.02.393.00 **Purpose** Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) has been indicated not only beneficial for occupational disease and injury prevention but increase health productivity; however, WHP needs among workers may significantly vary by age¹⁻³. Therefore, this study examines age differences in WHP needs to provide empirical evidence for future trend of aging workforce in Taiwan. **Method** During July 2013, by conducting a self-administered questionnaire survey in a company of accommodation and catering industry in Taipei, a total of 310 effective questionnaires from employees aged from 20 to 65 were collected (return rate 90%). Subjects were asked to provide information regarding demographic/work background, physical/mental health conditions and lifestyle behaviors, occupational injury and burnout occurrence, workplace stressors, and stress-related presenteeism. In addition, 4 young/senior employees and supervisors were invited to participate in in-depth interviews. **Results & Discussion** As shown in *Table 1*, compared with younger workers, seniors reported higher percentage of cardiovascular discomfort but more positive health behaviors such as fewer smoking, more regular exercise and dietary. Younger workers experienced more occupational injuries, burnout, mental disturbance and presenteeism, but better adaptability to new information systems or technology importation. After adjustment for gender and employment grades, the above patterns remain similar (*Table 2*). Results from qualitative interviews showed that design of WHP programs should be tailored to respond to the needs of the respective individuals. This study suggests that elder

workers need to make appropriate work arrangements to control or improve physical symptoms, management strategies to tackle difficulties of learning computer application are also needed.

*Table 1. Age differences in life style behavior, work stressor and occupational injury over the past year (significant items only); ***= p<0.001 (Chi-square test)*

Parameter	Younger	Middle-aged	Senior	p
Age, years	20-35	35-50	50-65	
n (%)	81 (26.1)	101(32.6)	128 (41.3)	
Smoking	32.1	21.8	16.4	***
Regular exercise	58.0	67.0	81.3	***
Irregular diet	87.7	82.2	59.8	***
Stressed about new-tech importation	31.3	59.2	57.1	***
High-low temperature contact	17.3	20.0	8.7	***
Cut/chop/abrasion	37.0	31.0	15.7	***

On the contrary, younger workers need more assistance and guidance to maintain positive life styles. This study has practical implications for management⁴ and WHP practitioners³.

References

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*Table 2. Age differences in perceived health conditions over the past month (significant items only) with adjustment for gender and employment grade; ^aMultiple linear regression; ^bLack of performance of a present employee due to overload work; ^cMultiple logistic regression; ^dBSRS-5 score ≥ 6; **=p<0.01; ***=p<0.001; ns: non-significant*

Age group	Work-related burnout ^a		Presenteeism ^{a, b}		Cardiovascular symptoms ^c		Mental disturbance ^{c, d}	
	β	p	β	p	e ^β (OR)	p	e ^β (OR)	p
Younger (20-35 yrs)	0 (ref)	-	0 (ref)	-	1 (ref)	-	1 (ref)	-
Middle-aged (35-50 yrs)	-0.036	ns	-0.370	ns	1.648	ns	0.556	ns
Senior (50-65 yrs)	-1.293	**	-1.580	**	3.224	***	0.282	***