

## AGE DISCRIMINATION, WORK ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH AMONG TEACHERS

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This study focused on relationships between work environment and age discrimination, and on relationships between age discrimination and health outcomes and general satisfaction for teachers. It was assumed that sub-optimal work environment may allow age discrimination to occur, and that perceived age discrimination may add to the burden of poor working environments and contribute to increased level of stress, low job & life satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment and workability, as well as ill-health of the individual worker.

Data were collected by a questionnaire sent to Nordic teachers (n=2,653). 1,001 questionnaires were returned (37.7% response rate). For this paper, data were analyzed in three steps.

Concerning age discrimination, respondents were asked to what degree they perceive older workers to be discriminated. Several respondents perceived age discrimination to take place in the following areas: promotion (15.4%), training (8.8%), introduction to new equipment (18.5%), participation in development appraisals (10.2%), wage increase (20.7%), and whether older workers are expected to take part in change processes to the same degree as younger workers (13.9%). A sum score for age discrimination was calculated based on these 6 items (Alpha .84).

In testing the relationship between age discrimination and work environmental factors, moderate and significant correlations (Pearson's R) were found for social interactions, leadership, and organizational culture & climate. Low and significant correlations were found between age discrimination and job demands, role expectations, control and predictability.

Age discrimination also correlated moderately with health and well-being variables, such as work ability, job & life satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Low but significant correlations were found between age discrimination and stress, sickness absence, self-efficacy, and work motivation.

In the third step, the first multiple regression analysis was run with age discrimination as dependent variable. Work environment factors that showed moderate correlations were predictors. This model was significant and explained 22.5 percent of the variance in the age discrimination sum score. Significant values were found for role conflict, predictability in two years, support from co-workers, empowering leadership, and HR primacy.

In the second regression analysis, job & life satisfaction was the dependent variable. Predictors were added stepwise; respectively age discrimination followed by health factors with moderate correlations in step two, explaining respectively 11.6 and 35.6 percent of the variance. Age discrimination was significant for both models. For model 2, role conflict, control of decision-making, predictability in two years, empowering leadership, fair leadership, and social climate were significant predictors of job & life satisfaction.

The last multiple regression analyses showed that perceived age discrimination and health can explain 46 percent of the variance of the dependent variable, organizational commitment. In model one, age discrimination explains 12 percent. Significant predictors of organizational commitment are role conflict, predictability in two years, social climate, innovative climate and HR primacy. The highest Beta values were for age discrimination and social climate.

This study illustrated that there are relations between age discrimination and work environment, and between age discrimination and health outcomes on the other side. Also there are relations between work environment and health outcomes.

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