



Chapter IX

The Changing Demographics: The Diminishing Role of Age and Gender in Computer Usage

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Abstract

As the changing demographics of the workplace influence how organizations operate, the need to reexamine relationships between these demographic variables and their effect on the organization continues. This study provides an empirical examination of the effect of two demographic variables, age and gender, and any moderating impact anxiety, enjoyment, and/or peer pressure may have on computer usage. Based on our analysis of 292 knowledge workers, we identified no significant difference between men and women and/or young and old regarding their computer usage in the workplace. Therefore, the findings from this study do not seem to support

earlier research regarding age and gender, which indicated that these variables did impact computer usage. However, the moderating construct (anxiety) did appear to be significant in the employees' computer usage.

Introduction

The use of information technology within an organization can have a dramatic effect not only on the success or failure of the organization, but also on the overall work life of its employees. There are at least two issues associated with organizations investing in information technology. The first issue is whether employees will accept the technology. The second issue is whether employees will be more productive with the new technology. While many studies have examined technology acceptance (Davis, 1989; Gefen & Straub, 1997; Szajna, 1996) and have attempted to focus on how particular variables impact technology acceptance, few have looked at the implications concerning the changing demographics (i.e., age, gender, education level, position, organizational training, and organizational pressure to use technology) in the U.S. workforce.

As the workforce has changed over the past decade, so has the use of computers (Igbaria, Parasuraman, & Baroudi, 1996) and the level of sophistication embedded in their software applications. However, only limited research has been conducted to examine how the changing demographics of the workforce have affected computer usage within the organization. As the number of women in the workforce has increased and the average age of workers has also increased (Census, 2000; Greco, 1998), earlier studies may no longer accurately reflect the current dynamics within the modern organization. With the proliferation of computers into the home, older employees may have become more comfortable with basic software packages (White, McConnell, Clipp, & Bynum, 1999). Therefore, by looking at the changes that have occurred in the workforce demographics and the current usage of information technology in the workplace, we should be able to develop a better understanding of what is currently affecting the usage of information technology within the modern organization.

The following study examines data collected using multiple validated instruments, compares the results to current literature, then attempts to show the effect of age and gender on the usage of technology and the modifying effect of perceived pressure and enjoyment. The perceived pressure to use technology may be best explained, from Compeau, Higgins, and Huff's (1999) work, as the social influences of encouragement by others, others' use of IT, organizational support, and personal anxiety.

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