

Employment of elderly people in hong kong



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the past decades, the discussion of work and aging has aroused widely public and professional thinking. In this paper, I would begin with the analysis of the current Hong Kong situations and characteristics of older workers, among which I pay most of attention to the low participation rate of elderly workers and try to demonstrate the reason accounting for that. The second part can be seen as a brief summary of the productivity and limitations of old workers in Hong Kong today. Finally, I would come up with several suggestions on how to encourage labor force participation.

Keywords: employment of elderly, productivity, functional limitation, old worker

Employment of elderly people

Situations of the employment of elderly in Hong Kong

With the baby boomer generation's entering into their old years, the employment of older people has brought about wide public concern. According to the sources from Census and Statistics Department, at the middle of 2010, there are more than 1.78 million Hong Kong people over the age of 55, 51.46 percent of whom are age 65 and above, and 25.76 percent of whom are age 75 and above. Many of these people are working or have had work experience and, many of retired persons work at least part time after they leave their permanent job.

Among all the features of older workers in Hong Kong today, we would focus on several main characteristics to help us understand the situation.

Labor force participation rates

<https://assignbuster.com/employment-of-elderly-people-in-hong-kong/>

In Hong Kong 2009, the labor force participation rates, which refer to the proportion of economically active population (that is the labor force) in the total population aged 15 and above was 26.5 percent for the age 55 and above. Among that, we can find that the labor force participation rate for this age group was apparently higher for males (37.6 percent) than for females (15.9 percent). Nevertheless, nearly ten years ago, the labor force participation rates of the age 55 or over was 56 percent, which is almost twice the number of today.

The employed and unemployed population

The unemployment rate of older worker is relatively lower than that of young workers. In 2009, the unemployment rate for age group of 60 or above was 3.1 percent, which substantially lower than its counterpart aged 20-29 group of 7.3 percent. There are a few reasons accounting for that, but the most important one would be that older people can retire as an alternative choice.

On the other hand, people over the age of 50 are still employed for a number of reasons. Thomas Leavitt once mentions that, the majority of people at ages 50-62 would still choose to work mostly because they enjoy the satisfaction and useful feeling brought by working, which followed by the need to make money. However, at the age of 62 or over, the requirement for money becomes their major concern.

Low labor force participation rate among older persons

The downward trend in labor force participation rates among elderly is considered by many people. First of all, many would agree that the current

social security policy carried out by the government is encouraging the increased employment rate for young people by removing the old workers in the labor force. Turner claims that: for any given employee at any given time, the alternative of 'retiring on a pension' is more attractive than to 'keep working for a salary'. (Turner, 1993) The social security and medical care of old people do protect them from low income, but is also reduces the employment rate.

The productivity and functional limitations of older workers

Most of us would agree that productive activity plays a significant role in successful aging and higher self-related happiness. Older people who remain high level of productivity accomplish better physical functioning and are less likely to die six years after self-report. Therefore, we would like to ask: how elderly Hong Kong people will take part in economic and social activities?

The assumption that age and job performance are closely related has been confirmed by a variety of aging researches (McEvoy and Cascio, 1989). On one hand, many reported that older workers are more productive than younger workers for that they tend to be more dependable, careful and responsible. Certainly, no evidence shows that learning capacities will significantly fall with the aging process. Therefore, it is important to find out aged related decline causes so that we can extend work-life for elderly by providing protections, services and benefits.

On investigating the effects of the potential of aging have on the productivity of older worker, I pay attention to the following factors:

Age-related physical changes and limitations

There are many indications imply that the strength of people declines with the aging process. Many people at age of 60 report that physically demanding job is hard and strenuous for them to carry on, so they tend to leave the work that is highly physical in nature. Apart from changes in strength, old people also experience the physical loss of endurance and balance and, an increase of reaction time as a result of peripheral nervous system gradually slows down.

With regard to health and rehabilitation, it is well-accepted that the measures of functional capacity can reflect the extent to which elderly are able to work. However, the functional capacity does not merely mean an absence of disease. There are conditions which are directly related to aging, such as heart disease, cancer and stroke. While for those conditions such as hearing and visual impairment, they are not necessarily the functional limitations preventing people from work.

Annis and colleagues (Annis et al. 1991) also conclude that weight gains are regarded as the fifth decade of life, followed by declines. They mentions in their research on anthropometric changes with age: ' the individual's body dimensions change also, characterized by increases in the size of the stomach and hips.' Moreover, some old workers admit that they have difficulties to perform tasks involving highly repetitive manual actions, the use of small hand tools or using force (Tayyari & Sohrabi, 1990).

Age-related cognitive changes and limitations

The traditional discussion about changes in cognitive ability of old people focuses on intelligence, memory, and learning and so on. According to medical findings, brain loses weight as a result of shrinking neuron size in cerebral cortex and some mental problems such as depression and dementia occur with aging. Yet in order to perceive the complicated relationship between cognitive change and working ability, I refer to some mental models of cognitive sciences to help us understand the situation in which old people gain knowledge, skills and experience through aging while loss perceptual capacity and motor speed.

When assessing the changes in intelligence, major longitudinal studies (Schaie, 1985) claim that most individuals can maintain the stable intellectual level well into their seventies and over and that modifiability in brain function continue well into late adulthood. But findings also suggest that people tend to less efficiently process complex information with increase of age. Overall, there is no obvious evidence show that old people's performance is unsatisfactory under the daily and ordinary job situations. Even if there are changes in problem-solving ability of older people, they can use job experience and extensive skills to 'compensate' age-related slowing performance. Older adults deliver a decline performance on lab-related cognitive task but demonstrate good level performance in real-world job, and there appears to be no significant relationship between age and job capacities.

Warren Buffett, born in 1930 and ranked as the world's second wealthiest person in 2009, is one of the most successful, active and smart investors in the stock and capital market of the world today. He is often called the “
<https://assignbuster.com/employment-of-elderly-people-in-hong-kong/>

legendary investor Warren Buffett” for his precisely judgment of the market and value invest philosophy. But he is not a special case in the expertise, problem solving and decision making condition of old people. Actually, everyday plenty of old adults are making the most important and complicated decisions in the world as executives, politicians, and world leaders. Researches find that cognitive processes appear to be more important in the differentiating the old and young managers. Expertise in a certain field can act as an improvement to cognitive aging. In a research conducted to investigate the relationship between cognitive aging and experience, sociologists find that among experienced players, those who are skilled in bidding strategies could ameliorate the negative influence of cognitive aging until nearly the age of 60.

The highest level of a job description would be the creative thinking. The researches focus on creativity and idea productivity state that originality declines gradually from younger worker to older workers.

Age-related sensory and perceptual changes and limitations

When concern about old people’s visual changes, Fozard (1990) presents four main sensory and perceptual capacities we need to focus most. Firstly, he concludes that excessive extent of illumination can cause elderly workers’ adversely reactions. For example, older workers have shown to be more adversely affected by glare from lights in workplace. Secondly, he also mentions the disability of older adults to detect different visual stimuli, which he calls poor contrast. Old workers require more contrast between the stimuli before distinguishing them. Furthermore, a third age-related change

in visual ability is the useful field of view, in which older workers gain messages from environment. Finally, he also points out that the decrease level of visual activity of older adult bring about the fact that they are not favorable to read printed material (Fozard, 1990).

It is well recognized that many older people experience hearing changes such as difficulties to hear sounds at high frequencies. Sometimes we find older people would speak louder because they cannot hear themselves. What is more, many manifest trouble to understand what they have clearly heard at a given loudness. Suggestion about this can include reduce distracting noise in working place for old people.

When we talk about older people, the most common stereotype of them would be slow to perceive things as an aging deficit. Scientific research findings indicate that it will take nearly 1. 2 times longer for older people to finish cognitive process than their counterpart.

In a conclusion, job performance is closely related to functional ability but deficits with aging can not necessarily prevent most of older workers from being still effective and qualified employees. Older workers have positive effects on labor force productivity and economic growth

Encourage the labor force participation rate of elderly

After talking about all the strength and deficits of older work, I would like to focus on the dealings with means of expanding the opportunities for them to regain active participants in the labor market.

In the first place, empirical evidence that elderly have difficulty integrating information from multiple sources gives us a clue to develop communication and information-handling systems for older workers in workplace. For this reason, the priority for designing the system is to be acceptable by majority of users.

What is more, in order to integrate into the labor force, older worker are longing for training of the new technology or skills in an easy to comprehensive way when they face up the difficulties with computerized work situations. Training and educational programs would be really helpful if we handle them on the right direction. That means we understand that elderly employees have alternative requirements for different position.

Finally, if the government could apply more practical social policy and promote the social perspectives of the whole community, the low labor force participation rate may grow to meet the need of older people in Hong Kong. Even though we understand unemployment, no matter for young or old, is a problem brought about by economic recession, policy can still try to help aging who really need assistance in meeting their daily needs and can live peacefully.