Chapter 13
Support and Facilitating Conditions to Computer Workers Who Dislike Working with Computers

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ABSTRACT

While the number of employees who primarily use computers to complete their work increases, a significant subset of those employees simply do not enjoy computer work. This dislike has an influence on work-related outcomes like perceived technology overload and job satisfaction. It is important to examine how work-related support from either supervisors or coworkers can minimize/buffer the negative outcomes related to an individual’s disliking computer work. Using a sample of 225 workers from a range of businesses and industries, we investigated the influence of facilitating conditions on liking computer work. The results show that liking computer work is positively related to job satisfaction, and supervisor support helps moderate the relationships between liking computer work and the outcomes of job satisfaction and technology work overload. Implications for research and practice and directions for future research are offered.

INTRODUCTION

Computers seem to be omnipresent in today’s society and the number of employees completing some, or all of their jobs on a computer continues to increase. However, not all individuals enjoy computer work as much as others. When employees who dislike computer work have to complete their jobs on a computer, they are likely to experience negative consequences (Compeau, Higgins, & Huff, 1999; Locke, 1976; Spector, 1997; Yi & Hwang, 2003). Two of these outcomes that we investigate in this study are job satisfaction, defined as a positive emotional state that results...
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from how employees appraise their jobs and/or job experiences (Locke, 1976), and perceived technology work overload, defined as the extent to which perceptions of the technology related job performance required is excessive and feeling that computers have compounded the overall workload (Iverson, Deery, & Erwin, 1995). Not only are these outcomes important in and of themselves, but they have also been shown to be important predictors of other workplace consequences including turnover intentions, actual turnover, job performance, and health-related outcomes (e.g., Edmunds & Morris, 2000; Faragher, Cass, Cooper, 2005; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Thatcher, Stepina, & Boyle, 2002) in a number of different samples including IT workers (e.g., Thatcher et al., 2002).

Although negative outcomes are likely to be associated with the dislike of computer work, there are factors in the workplace that may minimize or buffer (Ganster, Fusilier, & Mayes, 1986; Sala-nova, Peiro, & Schaufeli, 2002) these linkages. In particular, we examined how work-related support received from either the supervisor or an employee’s coworkers will impact job satisfaction and perceived technology work overload. Both of these relationships are of considerable importance to computer workers, thus making the investigation of help received from these sources all the more necessary (e.g., Ferratt, Short, & Agarwal, 1993). Further, based on the social support framework (e.g., House, 1981; Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999) and the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), we expected that the dislike of computer work is related to job satisfaction and perceived technology work overload, and that receiving computer help from either the supervisor or coworkers will minimize these negative outcomes. Additionally, we hoped to determine whose (supervisor’s or coworkers’) support has a greater buffering impact. We explored these notions using a sample of 225 computer workers from a wide range of jobs, thus providing a more stringent test of these relationships across different workplaces and helping to establish the generalizability of our results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has suggested and empirically shown that liking various aspects of one’s work will be related to positive outcomes (e.g., Compeau et al., 1999; Shore, Newton, & Thornton, 2006; Spector, 1997). As is shown in Figure 1, we anticipate this to be especially true for computer workers and their like/dislike of computer work. We define “liking of computer work” as one’s general affect toward all computer work rather than toward just one system (Sabherwal, Jayaraj, & Chowa, 2006). People who like computer work tend to be self-directed learners, seeking out new opportunities to innovate with technology, whereas people who dislike computer work tend not to engage in self-learning, and utilize less complex applications (Shaw, Lee-Partridge, & Ang, 2003). Although the like/dislike of computer work does not seem to directly influence the usage of a specific information system (Venkatesh et al., 2003), if a computer worker enjoys his/her computer work, he/she is likely to be happy with the job and feel that the work he/she is performing is less overwhelming (e.g., Spector, 1997; Yi & Hwang, 2003). On the other hand, if a computer worker dislikes computer work, feelings of decreased job satisfaction and perceptions of computer-related work overload are likely to result (Hobfoll, 1989). We acknowledge that this notion has been tested in a number of different aspects of the work world, but this first set of hypotheses involve computer workers and their dislike of computer work, thus making these predictions unique. Additionally, these hypotheses lay the ground work for further predictions involving moderating factors, which is the more important contribution of this study. Based on all the above information, we predict that: