Abstract

Past studies showed that older workers maintained a high level of job performance despite declines in physical and cognitive abilities. The present research project aimed at examining the impacts of emotion regulatory and SOC (selection, optimization, and compensation) strategies in explaining how older workers manage to maintain a high level of job performance. Two studies were conducted to assess Chinese insurance sales workers' global and momentary employment of emotion regulatory and SOC strategies at work, and to compare the effectiveness of emotion regulatory and SOC strategies in predicting job performance for younger and older workers. This research project consisted of two studies. Study 1 was a cross-sectional survey study and consisted of 355 insurance sales workers. Results showed that older adults reported higher employment of elective selection and optimization than did younger workers. Older workers' employment of elective selection and compensation, as well as suppression, was associated with higher job performance, however such association was not found among younger workers. Study 2 was a five-day experience sampling study. It consisted of 87 participants who carried a handheld computer that recorded their momentary employment of emotion regulatory and SOC strategies during their work. Results of the multilevel analyses revealed that older and younger workers varied in their use of cognitive reappraisal, elective selection, and loss-based selection across work-related situations with different levels of task difficulty. Older workers' greater use of the four SOC strategies and suppression in the sampling period was predictive of the post-sampling increase in sales commission. Among these strategies, elective selection contributed the most to the increase in insurance sales among older workers even after accounting for the impact of other strategies.

Findings from this research project contribute to the understanding of Chinese workers' psychological adaptation in the face of age-related declines in cognitive abilities. They also

revealed cultural differences in the effectiveness of emotion regulatory strategies in predicting

job performance of older and younger workers. Moreover, these findings shed light on the types

of recommendations that should be given to employers for modifying organizational policies and

implementing appropriate training and development programs, to meet with the needs of the

aging workforce.