



Job Demands, Time Use and Retirement: Results from a Pilot Survey

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Our study titled “Job Demands, Time Use, and Retirement: Results from a Pilot Survey” investigates the feasibility and validity of using an innovative data collection method known as ecological momentary assessment (EMA) to understand how mental, physical, and social demands, as well as positive and negative affects, vary across individuals and by working and nonworking activities. These demands could potentially influence retirement decisions. Conducted through the Understanding America Study (UAS), this pilot survey collected real-time data from 150 respondents to analyze perceived demands alongside their emotional states during work-related and nonwork-related activities.

Objective

The primary objective of this study is to explore how different perceived demands and individuals’ feelings and

well-being vary throughout the day and for different types of working and nonworking activities. By understanding these dynamics, the research aims to provide valuable insights that can inform workplace policies and strategies to improve working conditions, enhance well-being, and potentially delay retirement.

Methodology

To achieve this objective, the study employed EMA, a method that captures real-time data on individuals’ experiences. Participants reported their activities and emotional states at four random times each day over three days, including two weekdays and one weekend day. This real-time data collection was complemented by a traditional time diary approach using the daily reconstruction method, which helped validate the EMA data.

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Key findings

- ▶ Our EMA approach proved to be highly reliable, with high response rates and a significant overlap between work activities reported in EMA and time diary surveys. Consistency in reporting work activities increased with the level of education.
- ▶ Participants given more time to respond (one-hour versus 30-minute window) had higher response rates but also longer delays, potentially introducing recall bias. Less educated individuals had lower response rates but benefitted from more time to respond.
- ▶ Work-related activities were perceived as more mentally and socially demanding than nonwork-related activities, particularly among currently working individuals. There were no significant differences in perceived physical demands between work-related and nonwork-related activities, regardless of labor force status.
- ▶ Work-related activities were associated with higher levels of stress, frustration, and boredom, and lower levels of happiness compared to nonwork-related activities, especially among working individuals.
- ▶ Insights into job demands and emotional states can inform workplace policies to reduce stress and improve well-being. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing strategies to delay retirement and enhance work conditions. Future research expanding this methodology to larger samples would refine findings and inform policy aimed at improving labor supply decisions and retirement outcomes. ❖

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