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77 - DIGITALISATION, AGEING AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN ACADEMIA: A CROSS-NATIONAL EUROPEAN STUDY

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Resumen

Background/Objectives: The simultaneous ageing of the workforce and rapid digitalisation pose emerging challenges for occupational health. Older academic workers may be particularly exposed to digital-related workload, psychosocial strain and health inequalities. However, quantitative evidence in academic settings remains scarce. This study aimed to analyse perceptions of digitalisation and its occupational health implications among academic staff aged 55 years and over across five European countries.

Methods: A cross-sectional online survey was conducted between July and October 2024 among academic staff aged ≥ 55 years from six public universities in Portugal, Türkiye, Croatia, Serbia and Romania. Of 1,294 eligible academics, 205 participated (response rate: 15.8%). The questionnaire assessed digital satisfaction, institutional support, digital inequality, intergenerational relations and perceived impacts on workload, work-life balance and health using a 5-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics were calculated. Gender distribution was analysed using chi-square tests, and years of employment were compared using the Kruskal-Wallis test.

Results: Women represented 53.2% of the sample, with significant gender differences across institutions ($\chi^2(5) = 20.85$, $p < 0.001$). Mean length of employment was 26.1 years (SD = 7.8), varying significantly across universities ($\chi^2(5) = 71.74$, $p < 0.001$). Satisfaction with digitalisation ranged from 80.0% in Croatia and 58.1% in Portugal to 22.2% and 32.6% in the two Turkish universities. Perceived institutional support for

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digital skills exceeded 80% in Croatia but remained below 50% in Portugal and Romania. High self-perceived digital adaptation was reported in Romania (90.0%) despite limited institutional support. Intergenerational dialogue was perceived as reducing the digital divide among Serbian respondents. Perceived negative impacts on workload and work-life balance were reported by over half of participants in Portugal and Serbia, while musculoskeletal health complaints reached 65.1% in Serbia.

Conclusions/Recommendations: Digitalisation represents a significant occupational health concern for ageing academic workers. The observed health-related impacts are unevenly distributed and associated with institutional and organisational context. Universities should integrate age-sensitive digital training, intergenerational collaboration and ergonomic and psychosocial risk prevention into digitalisation strategies to reduce health inequalities and promote sustainable working lives.

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