An examination into the prevalence of ageist beliefs towards older workers as held by recruiters and HR Professionals within a multinational retail organisation located in Ireland.

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims to assess whether recruiters and HR professionals within a multinational retailer located in Ireland, henceforth known as Company X, subscribe to age- related beliefs. Beliefs present either positively or negatively based on literature reviewed. This study will also examine why any beliefs identified through the research may persist within Company X, and where such beliefs originate.

Literature: Literature reviewed displays many reasons that employers may hold age-related beliefs. Literature suggests that most age-related beliefs held by participants of this research are positive beliefs. Literature shows ambiguity exists surrounding the definition of an older worker.

Methodology: Exploratory mixed methods approach, combining an online survey and semi-structured interview was utilized. 64 survey responses were completed and analysed, as well as two semi-structured interviews with HR managers of Company X. Chi-Square and Kendall's tau-b correlation tests were used to analyse survey data while thematic analyses was undertaken to produce findings from the interviews.

Findings: Findings indicate that participants within Company X adhere to positive age-related beliefs, as seen in survey responses to questions 7, 10, 14 and 20. This is again observed through the qualitative themes of productivity, loyalty, and personality perceptions of older workers. Findings also report that only managers of Company X engage in unconscious bias training rather than all staff members. Additionally, organizations who are financially successful appear to provide more opportunities to train older workers and have lower levels of negative age-related beliefs than that of less successful organizations

Contribution to the literature: This thesis has identified that recruiters and HR professionals within Company X hold certain age related beliefs. Literature contributions include examining this research area through an Irish context as well as specifically questioning HR professionals. This thesis has added to the geographic, retail, and ageing population related nature of previously published literature.

Conclusion: Research participants employed by Company X do believe in positive age-related beliefs and require further commitment to implementing unconscious bias training. This must be done in order to acknowledge and combat these beliefs to support older workers and increase inclusivity within the workplace.

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List of Abbreviations:

- HR-Human resources

- WHO-World Health Organisation

- RTE-Radio Telefis Eireann

- CSO-Central Statistics Office

- ESRI-Economic and Social Research Institute

- WAS-Workplace Age Discrimination Scale

- SCM-Stereotype Content Model

- CROW-Centre for Research into the Older Worker

- EEOC-U.S Equal Opportunity Employment Commission

- AARP-American Association of Retired Persons

- UBT-Unconscious Bias Training

- CIPD-Chartered Institute of Personnel Development

- SPSS-Statistical Package for Social Sciences

- GDPR-General Data Protection Regulation

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Ageism, population demographic shifts and older workers.

According to experts, "every second person in the world is believed to hold ageist attitudes" (World Health Organization, 2021). This statement from the World Health Organization (WHO) presents tangible challenges for every aspect of our society. Yet one area in which it is evident that such prejudice may be thriving is within the "Western labour markets", where despite ongoing efforts "ageism is still considered a problematic feature" (Kroon et al., 2016, p. 1). Ageism was first coined by Butler (1969) to describe stereotypical treatment of one age demographic towards another. Regarding this research, this form of ageism is encapsulated by a belief system which may or may not present in recruiters towards older workers and their supposed "uselessness" as well as emulating further findings by Butler that those who are "young and middle aged" (such as the majority of respondents to the subsequent surveys and interviews conducted) possess deep seated beliefs which at their tamest lie in "unease" with the extreme being "revulsion" of the older worker (Butler, 1969, p. 243). While the previous statements may represent a dramatic expression of ageism which was not recorded through the data analysis of this thesis, the rational for this work remains consequential and thus an important area for contemporary research.

Within the world of employment, these mindsets which can be held by recruiters transcribe to stereotypes such as "characteristics of older workers based on their age" (Krings, Sczesny and Kluge, 2010, p, 188). Evidence of this stereotypical attitude is seen through job sites such as Monster.com, who note in their attempt to offer advice for older workers entering the retail profession acknowledge persisting stereotypes of how it is "not exactly news" that older workers are stereotyped as "low on energy and enthusiasm, hard to train and out-of-touch with technology" (Monster, 2014). For the purpose of this research, the three implicit influences encompassed those of warmth, competence, and adaptability, each of which were analysed through both Likert scale surveys and semi-structured interviews. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that although the Employment Equality Act of 1998-2015 outlaws any form of discrimination which falls under the category of ageism within the Irish workforce, evidence

suggests that ageism remains prevalent within the Irish workforce, as reported by The Irish Times in their 2019 article 'Ageism in the workplace is alive and well' (Keogh, 2019). This form of discrimination is additionally seen in the increasing number of high profile cases which have addressed ageism in the workplace, from the "compulsory retirement of an ex-broadcaster" in Ireland's premier public press body Radio Telefis Eireann (RTE), to an academic being bypassed for a promotion due to her age within University College Dublin (A&L Goodbody, 2018).

The mindset of typecasting towards older workers was again seen in a recent report published by William Fry (2019) outlining the beliefs of a cohort of recruiters that 61% of older workers are detrimentally impacted by technological changes in the workplace, as well as 58% of 19 to 34 year olds reporting a sense of difficulty existing in terms of the management of older colleagues by their younger workmates. Causes of this ageing workforce population are due to a demographic shift, brought about by increased life expectancies of previous generations and an escalating pension age .(Sewdas *et al.*, 2017). This is further compounded by the fact that many older workers continue in the workforce past retirement age. (Sewdas *et al.*, 2017). Evidence of this shift is seen by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in their Population and Labour Force projections for 2017-2051, as the largest growth in the labour market is through older demographics (CSO, 2018). The reality of this demographic shift is again compounded by the 2018 report published by The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), which purports a significant population increase of 89% to 94% within the cohort of those aged 80 years or older consistently up to the year of 2030 (ESRI, 2018). Due to this workforce shift, acknowledgement, cause, and cessation of prejudiced age related beliefs is of "increasing importance" (Truxillo et al., 2018).

While there has been much discussion in the literature of older workers, there is little to no consensus regarding a specific age upon which an individual becomes identifiable as an "older worker". The range of definitions of an older worker are extensive and as observed within the technology industry as noted by McMullin (2011), once employees reach 40 they are often considered old within the industry. This is further emphasized by Fraser (cited in McMullin, 2011, p. 9), who notes that many employees are considered "unhireable" once they enter their forties. However, this is contradicted to some extent by

Armstrong-Stassen (2008), who refer to an older worker as any individual between the ages of 50 to 63 years. These latter ages correlate with the overall findings of this thesis, as will be further examined in forthcoming literature and data analysis.

This research has been incidentally aided by the timeframe in which it was conducted; over the course of 2020 and into the beginning of 2021, the coronavirus pandemic has both altered and clarified what society considers to be an "essential worker". A particular area which flourished both from a business and recruitment perspective during this time is the retail industry. Due to increased demand (specifically grocery services in domestic and large multinational retailers, the latter of which is the focus of this thesis, and which shall henceforth be referred to as Company X), recruitment drives for essential workers in these stores became paramount in order to meet consumer needs. Company X experienced "unprecedented customer demand", a demand which was also seen in competitors, such as the retailers Tesco and Lidl which saw hundreds employed (Hamilton, 2020). Due to this recruitment drive caused by the pandemic as well as changing population demographics and individuals working for prolonged periods of time past retirement age, this research will therefore examine whether beliefs surrounding older workers are prevalent in the minds of recruiters and Human Resource (HR) professionals within this research's chosen multinational retail organization, Company X. Further, the question regarding the prevalence of these attitudes supposedly held by recruiters and HR professionals must be investigated in order to acknowledge, address, prevent and provide appropriate solutions to the implications of discrimination and ageism caused by these assumptions. Through the literature reviewed and the methodologies undertaken during this thesis, invaluable observations were achieved which will allow for a formative finding and discussion section of significance.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This literature review will identify current trends responsible for the possible prevalence of ageist beliefs held by recruiters and (HR) professionals within the workplace and how these trends influence a recruiter's overall judgement of an older worker. This literature review will identify a gap present in literature while also examining possible solutions which may quell these empirically unfounded and unsupported beliefs feasibly held by these professionals.

2.2 Defining an older worker.

Prior to the extensive examination of this field of research, this thesis will first analyse literature which infers the approximate age and specifications of who is considered to be an older worker. Through the literature observed, an initial concern arises which is presented in the form of the lack of clarification assigned to the older worker (McCarthy *et al.,* 2014). Kooij *et al*., (2020) have acknowledged this issue and assigned a definition in attempt to combat this ambiguity regarding successful aging at work. This definition involves the "proactive maintenance of, or adaptive recovery (after decline) to, high levels of ability and motivation to continue working among older workers" (Kooij *et al*.,2020, p. 14). The detriment of practice and policy makers failing to act cohesively on what demographic is classed as an older worker will result in the inability to accurately chart the present and future inclinations of the numbers of older workers in the workplace (Gonyea, 2009). Within Ireland, as noted by William Fry's Employment Report, older workers are categorized as those 51 years and over (William Fry, 2016). Yet McCarthy *et al.,* (2014, p. 376) contend that internationally the age of an older worker is categorized as those of 55 years and older as "discussions about the labour force participation of older workers tend to focus on those aged over 55"as observed in the Department of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Further to this Kooij et al., (2008)

asserts the age of 55 is most prevalent, as it is the age at which the majority of countries observe a decrease in participation by older workers within the labour market.

Through the above literature, a question was posed to the research participants regarding their choice of age of an older worker as examined within the data collection methods. Interestingly the majority of respondents selected the age bracket of 55-64 years old, thus correlating with the literature yet contrasting the view of an older worker held by Irish cohorts as identified through the William Fry's Employment Report (William Fry, 2016). In addition, while a collective mindset generally exists regarding the age of an older worker, it is of note that no official chronological age is adhered to throughout the literature reviewed (Finkelstein and Farrell, 2007). Advocating future research in this area would therefore help to avoid ambiguity and discrepancies, such as in the technology industry whereby once employees reach 40 they are considered old and "unhireable", as noted by Fraser (cited in McMullin, 2011, p. 9).

2.3 Factors of organizational workplace ageism:

Ageism is not a new construct as noted by Butler (1969), nor is workplace ageism, as it has been established this form of discrimination can present in three structures within the workplace. These structures include the micro level (Individual beliefs), meso level (Organizational beliefs) and macro level (Societal beliefs) (Naegele, De Tavernier, and Hess, 2018). Each of these three "set the scene for…discriminating behaviour towards older workers" (Naegele *et al.*, 2018, p. 75). The first of these structures through which to consider ageism bias, the micro-level, can be divided into two factions: social psychology and developmental psychology. As humans are social creatures, we subscribe to certain fields of thought which are influenced by our peers, as noted by the social identity theory. Through this theory, positive and negative identifications are created between groups which signal to us which individuals belong and which are outsiders (Tajifel and Turner, 2007). This can be seen in the creation of a hostile environment between inter-generational groups within the workplace who may ostracize those of an age not identifiable with their own. Yet it should be noted that such forms of grouping can operate through disparities in any age cohort, be that younger or older. However, such boundaries between inter-

generational groups differ from other forms of group classifications such as gender or nationality that are deemed permanent, as "the boundaries between different age groups are permeable and temporary" (Ayalon and Tesch-Romer (2018, p. 54). Therefore, although groupings of those of similar ages may occur, ostracizing either younger or older cohorts, this form of grouping is malleable and is subject to alterations.

2.3.1 The stereotype models

Further to the micro levels of discrimination are the stereotype models of content and embodiment. The first of these models, that of the stereotype content model, alludes to the classification of older individuals into the categories of warmth and competence. According to Ayalon and Tesch-Romer (2018, p. 51), older adults are regarded as "incompetent but warm". These themes of warmth and competence were pivotal to the research of Marcus et al.,(2016), who through surveys and interviews, and the combination of the Workplace Age Discrimination Scale (WAS) also incorporated the third theme of adaptability. As acknowledged by Ng and Feldman, (2012) this third theme was also considered the most prevalent uncooperative stereotype for older workers associated with lower levels of competence and high levels of inadaptability. In addition to this above model is the stereotype embodiment theory which argues that stereotypes of ageism originate from within the older workers themselves as a form of self-discrimination, whereby "discrimination against one's own age group in old age is internalised over the life course" Ayalon and Tesch-Romer (2018, p. 5).

2.3.2 The meso form of ageist beliefs

While it has been established that discrimination through the form of ageism can occur through stereotypes and self-discrimination, it also presents through the "meso form", or organizational level. Within an organization this can present as an attitude of workers being "too old to hire", or a generalization of older workers as lacking usefulness once an employee reaches the pension age, as defined by the respective hiring companies (Ayalon and Tesch-Romer, 2018, p. 6). The model of age segregation in the arsenal of meso forms creates an assumption within the retail industry that older workers do not belong in roles which are seen as more suited to younger workers due to the long hours

and physical demands of the role, as well as "the risk of injury and illness" and a perceived higher risk of fatality (Privalko, Russell and Maitre, 2019, p. 9). In addition, the abundance of older workers perceived as having "old, bad habits" further accentuates an aura of age segregation within organisations, negating the potential benefits of employing older workers (Kappel, 2016). A question that has arisen in a recent context arises is whether the coronavirus pandemic has accentuated age segregation in the retail industry by unintentionally forcing workers of all demographics out of the workplace due to fears regarding their health and wellbeing. While such fears were broadcast on a national level in the Irish sector (RTE, 2020), some organisations seem to have combatted such presumptions through the aforementioned recruitment drives and accommodations have also been created by retailers such as Walmart who have allowed for all employees regardless of age "unpaid time off if they feel uncomfortable at work" (Bhattarai, 2020). The importance of combating this age segregation in every demographic is posited by Hagestad and Uhlenberg (2005), who alert the reader to the harbinger of ageist beliefs if social engagement of all workers is not achieved and celebrated.

2.3.3 The macro form of ageist beliefs

The third area of ageist beliefs resides at a societal level through modernization theory. The focus of modernization theory lies in the credence that due to the evolving society we find ourselves in, including numerous advancements in sectors such as technology and medicine, "older adults have lost their social status in modern times" (Ayalon and Tesch-Romer, 2018, p. 7). In addition to this, the stereotype of lower levels of competence again appear as a result of aforementioned technological advancements, whereby "the accumulated knowledge of older adults is often considered obsolete" (Ayalon and Tesch-Romer, 2018, p. 7). This perspective contributes to the alternative hypothesis of this thesis that recruiters and HR professionals do hold ageist beliefs towards older workers. While additional factors affecting this theory such as reduced generational contact (as noted by Cowgill and Holmes, 1972) are salient, it must be argued that ageist beliefs, their implementation and ratification are controlled by the young. Cowgill and Holmes (1972) assert the inevitability of the inclement power and status imbalance presented between younger and older workers, as younger workers are observed as more valuable to their

society in their relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities. This creates a further divide between older and younger workers, allowing for the possibility of ageist beliefs.

2.4 Contributing factors to ageism in the workplace

This subheading will review literature regarding the motives for possible ageist beliefs towards older workers within the workplace. Fogarty (cited in Lister, 1990) argues the prevalent cause of ageist beliefs amongst employers is a prejudged and uninformed mindset which inhibits many employers from incorporating older workers into the workforce. This mindset includes fears amongst recruiters towards older workers in such areas as presumed lower productivity, as well as older employees advocating for a higher wage than younger employees (Breinek, 2018). However, Dostie (2011) states while wage and productivity rates are concave, the rates of productivity after the age of fifty-five decline slower than the wage attached to this age group, thus allowing for a continually productive and economically viable older work cohort. Nonetheless, this attitude of older workers lacking productivity remains a significant factor in the conception of negative attitudes and reluctance of many recruiters to hire older workers.

On the other hand, some negative beliefs held by recruiters and organisations may stem from and be influenced by various studies reporting that older individuals may possess lower cognitive abilities than a younger employee, as although older individuals have greater levels of experience, alteration in their memories and abilities to reason may impact recruiters' inclinations to hire them (Carone et al., 2005). A further causation of ageist attitudes in the recruitment process is the belief held by recruiters that those over a specific age require more training for their roles than those of a younger age, which creates a notable cost to the organisation carrying out the recruiting. This is emphasised by market-based rationales against the hiring of older workers as the cost of training older employees "renders the internal labour market inefficient" (Daniel and Heywood, 2005, p. 36). As maintained by Hutchens (1988), jobs which offer general training over a period of years favour younger workers who can devote time to training for their employer. This may not be viable for the older worker, as a younger employee will have time to regenerate the cost of training provided to them whereby an older employee may not, thus validating a recruiter's negative beliefs. Through the literature reviewed, on the subject of employers' attitudes

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towards training older workers, many negative connotations were observed throughout a variety of academic sources and research. However, no negative connotations were discovered in Company X in the research analysis conducted for this thesis. This will be further investigated during the chapter of data analysis.

2.5 Implicit Belief systems

As prominent current rationales for ageist beliefs have been analysed in the literature above, this research will now examine the ways in which professionals may interpret these beliefs. These interpretations can take the form of either implicit or explicit bias. Implicit bias involves the quantification of the levels of "biased associations of which people may be unaware, and they may not personally endorse" (Gonsalkorale, Sherman and Klauer, 2009, p. 411). Implicit beliefs are subtle and can form from interpretations of a specific group as presented through the media or as compounded through one's own experiences. Examples are found in the themes of the data instruments used in this research such as warmth ('Older workers are kind-hearted'), competence ('Older workers are capable employees') and adaptability ('I believe older workers are suitable for training'). These questions were presented in the Workplace Age Discrimination Scale (WAS) and greatly influenced the instrumentation for this thesis (Marcus *et al*., 2016). The importance of measuring one's implicit bias is practical in order to evaluate bias "independently of motivations to inhibit the expression of biased associations", assuming bias is present in general. (Gonsalkorale, Sherman and Klauer, 2009, p. 411). Nevertheless, implicit bias measurement is not a definitive system of calculation, as even though it is more reliable than purely a self-reporting system "self-regulatory abilities affect task performance" (Gonsalkorale, Sherman and Klauer, 2009, p. 411). While the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz,1998) is a comprehensive tool for measuring implicit bias, this research was seeking to combine both implicit and explicit forms of questions within the data instruments used.

2.5.1. Explicit Belief systems

Forms of explicit beliefs are more direct than those of implicit and are observed through actions such as preferring to only add younger candidates to a prospective job shortlist over older candidates

(Gringart, Helmes and Speelman, 2005). It is of note however that although explicit approaches are more obvious in the forms they take, in the example given above "individuals may not report a clearly more positive evaluation of a certain age group because it is deemed inappropriate" (Kleissner and Jahn, 2020, p. 1). Through the examination of explicit stereotypes in previous studies such as that performed by Van Dalen, Henken and Schippers (2009), positive stereotypes of customer-orientation and reliability were observed. This was further examined by Krings et al., (2010), who identified the prevalence of a warmth explicit bias of 109 business students towards older workers over younger workers. Although extensive research has been carried out regarding students and non-HR professionals' views of ageism such as studies conducted by Gonsalkorale *et al*.,(2009), Krings *et al*., (2010) and Marcus *et al*.,(2016) - the study which validated the scale used by this thesis-, no literature was discovered that undertook similar investigations with responses from HR professionals and recruiters within a retail organization located in Ireland. Instead, previous research has been conducted in such areas of undefined general Statistical Classifications of Economic Activities in the European Community-Listed industry sectors in Ireland, with a primary focus on the opinions of organizational leaders within organisations, as seen in McCarthy *et al*.,(2014). Questions within the survey data collection method were thus created to assess employers' beliefs regarding older workers and the types of jobs they would undertake such as physically demanding roles as well as assessing whether cashier work which is typically perceived as more stationary would be more suitable for the older worker. This was done in order to assess the prevalence, or lack thereof, of any explicit beliefs held by professionals as tailored to the retail industry based on the literature reviewed.

2.5.2. Competence, cognitive ability, and productivity

Through the literature reviewed above, three categories of stereotypes towards the older worker appear in a repetitive fashion: competence, adaptability, and warmth. The following headings will discuss all three and how they influenced the instrumentation within the methods of data collection utilized for this research. Due to the aforementioned studies which focused on the results provided by undergraduate students, "many of us hold inaccurate negative stereotypes about older people" (Farnum and Wiener, 2016, p. 5). Two of these stereotypes present in the form of warmth and competence as aligning with the

Stereotype Content Model (SCM) proposed by Fiske et al.,(2002). As reported in the subsequent study conducted by Fiske et al.,(2002) and following studies since in Cuddy et al.,(2009) however, older people occupy a high warmth but low competence configuration within the model. This content of warmth encourages a want in other demographics to offer aid to older people but may also create unintentionally harmful reactions through the perception of lower levels of competence, as individuals may fail to facilitate older people and fail to acknowledge their value within society (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick, 2008). The stereotype of competence can negatively affect how older workers are perceived by professionals, as it enables the assumption that an older worker may possess lower cognitive abilities than a younger employee. Although older individuals have greater levels of experience, alteration in their memories and abilities to reason may impact recruiters' inclinations to hire them (Carone et al., 2005).

2.5.3.Training

Further questions which arose from the analysis of the literature regarding an older worker's level of competence and how HR professionals and recruiters may interpret this was the area of employee training. This is emphasised by market-based rationales which postulate the benefits of hiring younger workers over older workers as the cost of training older employees "renders the internal labour market inefficient" (Daniel and Heywood, 2005, p. 36). As maintained by Hutchens (1988) jobs which offer general training over a period of years favour younger workers who can devote time to training for their employer. This may not be viable for the older worker, as a younger employee will often have more time within an organisation to regenerate the cost of training provided to them in comparison to an older worker. There is no blame which can be associated with either employer or worker in this regard, however, as both equally present challenges which require overcoming. For example, The Centre for Research Into The Older Worker (CROW) acknowledge that while "employers are less likely to offer training to older workers than younger ones", older workers must also be willing to adapt to change within the workplace rather than relying on past habits which they may be fearful to change, as well as their possible "reluctance to ask for training" for fear of being rejected (CROW, 2018). While various studies have attempted to show a link between chronological age and informal learning - such as those

that found a decline in informal learning with higher age (Van der Heijden et al.,2009), those that found no effect (Schulz and Stamov-Roßnagel, 2010) and those that found positive correlations (Kyndt, Dochy and Nijs, 2009), no conclusive evidence has been found on this issue. The topic of training coincides with competence despite this and has influenced a number of questions for the data collection methods within this research.

2.5.4. Organizational Image and Warmth

The second factor of the SCM involves the perceived stereotype of warmth of an older worker. As mentioned above, while older workers are generally perceived as warm, friendly, kind, and loyal, the contrast to this positive belief system is the "poor performance/ competence stereotype" which although prevailing, has been found to be "an inaccurate reflection of older workers" (Posthuma and Campion, 2007). While warmth perceptions typically focus on a positive belief system, negative warmth stereotypes are still to be considered. Examples of this negative warmth belief are presented by Craft (cited in Krings et al.,2010, p. 189) as a perception that older workers may be too opinionated. The interpretation that this is a negative connotation appears to be subjective however, as Fiske et al.,(2002) notes how a high level of opinions presented by an older worker may translate as a form of self-confidence, arguing that this factor could be more closely aligned with competence over warmth. This question of older workers being perceived as more opinionated has nonetheless been inserted into the questions which will be asked during the interview stage of the data collection as influenced by the literature reviewed. While literature presents the view that older workers possess a warmth stereotype, this stereotype is not segregated from the organisation. This is observed through organisational dimensions. Organisations pride themselves on their public image as seen through the recent importance placed on the aesthetics of an organisation in every area including that of employees who are expected to not only align with the culture and values of the organization, but also "to ensure such values are effectively written on their bodies" (Riach and Kelly, 2013, p. 294). As noted in the literature, through older employees that image takes the form of "worn-out, out-of-date, unfit" aspects of the organisation. Yet this is a clear contradiction to what has been observed within the data analysis of this thesis, as a high respondent of professionals agreed to the statement within

the survey distributed that "I believe older workers make an environment more welcoming". This will be further discussed in the data analysis and discussion section.

2.5.5. Adaptability

Although the SCM only contains the elements of competence and warmth, this thesis believes the addition of the third factor of adaptability regarding the older worker was relevant to the research. This addition and conceptualisation of the questions used during the data collection process were further influenced by the following literature, and the WAS scale as created and validated by Marcus et al.,(2016). Niessen, Swarowsky and Leiz (2010, p. 357) note that while chronological age "accounts for little variance in work performance", once a "relatively stable work context" is present there is plausibility between the two components (Peeters and van Emmerick, 2008). The plausibility of this correlation is further examined by Kanfer and Ackerman (2004), who recognize the correlation between chronological age relating to a negativity in adaptability and the readiness to learn and acquire new skills. Further to this, Salthouse *et* al., (1996) report how employers are aware of this perceived correlation and thus accommodate older workers by often assigning them roles which focus more on pre-established practices rather than tasks which require continuous learning and adaptability. While Peeters and Emmerick (2008, p. 357) do acknowledge the reality that more physically demanding roles will "cause physical health problems for older workers", they also note the duty of care role which is pivotal within the contract of employment shared by employee and employer. Employers must take responsibility for their workers and assist them in areas that are relevant. An example of this is in the scheduling of work shifts for older workers. Kawada (2002) reports that many older employees found difficulty assimilating into non-standard shift patterns when compared to younger workers. Through this literature questions were formulated which cross-examined these beliefs in the data collection instrumentation, revealing compelling answers of note which will be discussed in future sections.

2.6 Possible solutions for professionals

As the population continues to age and workforce demographics continue to shift, the responsibility on employers to engage in age diverse practices to allow for the successful aging and

engagement at work of their employees has become a desirable process for all involved (Zacher and Rudolph, 2017). While factors which may influence certain beliefs regarding older workers have been identified in the literature above, this passage will consider possible solutions which could be utilized to better engage and work with older employees which have been regarded both in studies conducted and their practical applications.

2.6.1 Education

The first of these possible solutions is education. According to Levy (2016), a lack of formal education regarding aging exists, thus perpetuating an air of unfamiliarity and disdain for this demographic of the population. The practical applicability of providing education regarding ageing and ageist beliefs was presented in Wurtele and Maruyama's (2013) research study of undergraduate students. These students were instructed to create a list of what they believed older people enjoyed doing (e.g., watching television). In the following class, accurate information was provided to the students and following this presentation stereotypical beliefs were significantly reduced, thus proving the effectiveness of education to combat these beliefs. The practical applicability of education to resist these age-related stereotypes is again seen in studies conducted by McCleary (2014). McCleary went further than the 2013 study, by to incorporating education and inter-generational connections. Once participants in this study, namely students, viewed a documentary on the topic of aging and spent time with older adults, optimistic beliefs towards aging were reported. Recent studies of this correlation between education and inter-generational conflict were further expanded upon by Burnes et al.,(2019), who through their findings showed the amalgamation of both elements had constructive outcomes on the participants inherent beliefs regarding aging and older populations. Recently, the WHO released the findings of their report titled 'Ageism is a global challenge: UN' and acknowledged that young, uneducated males were more likely to commit ageist acts than those of other cohorts (WHO, 2021). Due to the influence from this report, a demographic question regarding the education levels of participants will be assessed in the data analyses section of this research. From these findings, there are clear benefits in incorporating education and inter-

generational contact within businesses during induction training periods to combat intrinsic beliefs which may be held by their employees.

2.6.2. Diversity and Inclusion

The above solution can be incorporated into the workplace through diversity and inclusion training for all employees at every level. Diversity is defined as the recognition of each individuals' differences, while inclusion revolves around the value placed on people's differences "and used to enable everyone to thrive at work" (Wahab and Green, 2021). Despite this the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) reports that the topic of age is the most commonly overlooked area of diversity and inclusion within workplaces (EEOC, 2018). Organizations who are beginning the journey into age related diversity and inclusion, yet who are unsure of where to begin, can solve this issue by undertaking the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Workforce benchmarking tool as provided free by The Centre on Aging and Work at Boston College (AARP Workforce benchmarking tool, 2015). This tool allows companies to compare their current age-related initiatives against competitors. A toolkit is then created to advise companies on the best course of action to address any failings identified. In addition to this toolkit, as noted by the popular website SHRM (2019), age related diversity and inclusion can be expanded to implement "career counselling and reverse-age mentoring to all employees". This literature review has nonetheless presented the reality that many biases held by recruiters and HR professionals appear in an unconscious form, and while diversity and inclusion can tackle elements of explicit bias, implicit bias must also be considered.

2.6.3. Unconscious bias training

An incorporation of unconscious bias training (UBT) into diversity and inclusion efforts within a workplace will also act as a solution to extracting prejudiced age-related beliefs. UBT involves employees at all levels undertaking online assessments followed by discussion of their results in order to "prevent…negative effects on workplace social interactions and decisions" (Noon, 2017, p. 1). As UBT grows in popularity, government initiatives have begun recommending the implementation of this training to be freely available to all employees in all fields within the United Kingdom as well as more specialized

sessions for senior managerial staff members (McGregor-Smith,2017). Indeed, as of 2016, over 110,00 civil servants within Britain have undergone UBT (Heywood, 2016). Yet it must be questioned whether UBT is actually the "silver bullet to vanquish inequality and discrimination" as presented (Williamson and Foley, 2018, p. 2). The rational for this claim is emphasised by Lenton, Bruder and Sedikides (2009) who report that even when an individual can recognise their predisposition to a bias, non-compulsory repression of this bias is often ineffective. Further to this, forced participation of employees in UBT shows that what is learned is not substantiated due to the obligation on those employees to undertake this training (Dobbin and Kalev, 2016). Despite this, organizations such as Facebook are proactive in their UBT and have even published their training material online for other organizations to model similar programmes from (Facebook, 2021). Due to the myriad of literature available on UBT a question regarding its presence and use in Company X was included within the semi structured interview. The result of this question will be discussed in following chapters.

2.6.4. Workplace policies

The final possible solution to tackling ageism in the workforce is the evaluation of certain workplace policies in place in Ireland, which Company X may implement. The EEOC considers various factors for the abolishment of ageist attitudes within the workplace. These include assessing and examining existing organizational policies which may be ineffective (EEOC, 2018). For example, through the examiner aspect, the question is posed as to whether photos advertising recruitment display an age diverse workforce, which unfortunately in retail is not usually the case (as seen in images exhibited in Appendix A and B, whereby a youthful workforce is presented). This is contrasted however by images presented in the media regarding the retailer B&Q which discusses their age diverse workforce (as seen in Appendix C and D). In addition, the EEOC recommends removing questions discussing the employees age in recruitment applications, as well as ensuring an age diverse panel is present during the interview process (EEOC, 2018). Furthermore, as depicted in a recent report published by Dublin City University, the onus on employers to be aware of and integrate legislation regarding anti ageist behaviours is pivotal

for its eradication in the workplace, such as the Employment Equality Act 1998 within Ireland, which lists age as one of nine protected grounds (Corrigan and Morgan, 2020).

2.7. Conclusion

As observed in this literature review, the reasons for age related beliefs are multifaceted and varied; however, solutions are possible and practically applicable within organizations. Yet this literature review has shown that these beliefs persist nonetheless and thus have influenced the instrumentation used within this researcher's methodology through questions and themes chosen for both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. A gap in the literature presents not only from a lack of examination into the opinions of recruiters and HR professionals themselves, but also in the need to build on the findings that currently exist within an Irish context specifically focusing on a multinational retailer. For example, a study which was conducted in Ireland in the past decade found 40% of retailers regarded the promotion options for those over 50 to be less than for these under 50 (Cantillon and Vasquez del Aguila, 2011). Due to the passing of time, changing of opinions and this researcher's desire to examine three headings of competence, adaptability, and warmth, it is worthy to investigate whether these mindsets remain within recruiters and HR professionals of a multinational retailer located in Ireland.

Chapter 3: Research question and objectives

3.1. Research question

The research question presented by this thesis is to examine whether recruiters and HR professionals within Company X who operate within the retail industry, subscribe to age related beliefs in any capacity. Thus, the null hypothesis of this research is that there are no age related beliefs held by participants towards older workers. The alternative hypothesis, if present, accepts that age related beliefs are held by the participants of Company X. This research acknowledges the relevance of the alternative and null hypothesis will vary based on questions asked and analysed.

3.2. Research objective

The objective of this thesis is to inspect and analyse the opinions provided by recruiters and HR professionals regarding age related beliefs, if any, as held by these individuals within the scope of Company X and the retail industry it involves itself in. Additionally, this research is particularly interested in investigating this field within the realm of three headings: competence, adaptability, and warmth.

According to the exploration of secondary data collected through the aforementioned literature review, this thesis is confident in claiming there are a plethora of factors which can induce and influence age related beliefs as held by professionals. Yet, this literature review has shown that some industries exhibit greater forms of age-related beliefs than others, for example as found through the technology industry as noted by McMullin (2011). However, this thesis can conclude from the literature that age-related beliefs occur due to three factors, the micro, meso and macro stereotype levels as presented by Naegele et al., (2018). The secondary research presented an opportunity for further analyses into three areas following this.

The first of these areas involves the lack of focus on seeking out and analysing the opinions categorically of recruiters and HR professionals, as the majority of studies reviewed involved undergraduate students as participants. The second involves the absence of this form of study within a specific industry such as retail in the Irish context. The third gap which was identified and provided further justification for the rational of this thesis was the excessive gap in time frames between the last

completed appraisal (as conducted by Cantillon and Vasquez del Aguila, 2011) in this field, and the significance for its modernization and expansion into the aforementioned areas of competence, adaptability, and warmth.

3.3. Sub-objective 1: To identify what participants consider an older worker.

While the literature reviewed was extensive, various ages were identified as what is considered an older worker and (as seen above) this differs from industry to industry. A sub-objective of this thesis is thus to question and identify the mean of what participants within Company X regard as the age which identifies an employee as an "older worker" in an effort to examine whether this coincides with the literature reviewed.

3.4. Sub-objective 2: Do recruiters contain reservations regarding employing older workers?

As every industry has different factors which may ostracize older workers from their participation, the second sub objective of this study will be to question through semi structured interviews whether participants hold any reservations regarding the employment of older workers. This will be expanded upon by examining what roles if any, are better suited to older workers as described by the participants during their semi structured interview. To achieve these objectives, the research will be exploratory in nature and will subscribe to the paradigm of pragmatism whereby the focal point is the "practical understandings" of established tangible, relevant affairs (Patton, 2005, p. 153). In summary the research question will combine the literature reviewed to create either an alternative or null hypothesis. The methodology by which this will be achieved is discussed in the following paragraph.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

The following chapter of this thesis will discuss the methodology which was deemed most appropriate for the study in question while also considering alternative approaches. During the literature review and in preparation for the data collection itself, this researcher was inspired by previous methods as seen in the studies mentioned above in order to collect the data in a clear concise and validated manner. This chapter will also analyse the research philosophy which was most applicable in aligning with the ambitions of this study. Finally, this chapter will examine the sample population chosen as well as the means for data collection and data analysis.

4.2. Research philosophies

As noted by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019, p. 130) the concept of research philosophy references "a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge". Prior to the discussion of the research philosophy, which was chosen for this study, an examination of the assumptions which relate to this field will be discussed. As noted by Saunders *et al*.,(2019), three types of assumption are present: ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions. Through the ontological assumptions associated with this research, this researcher had to question whether their pre-existing assumptions regarding HR professionals and age-related beliefs were capable of being challenged as well as acknowledging their own preconceived biases surrounding the subject area. This aligns with Thomas and Hardy (2011) who noted this assumption encourages the challenging of predisposed knowledge rather than the aridification of it. Following ontological assumptions are epistemological assumptions which are defined as the "creation and dissemination of knowledge in a subject area" (Horn, 2009). Questions posed by epistemology included the search for the source of the knowledge in the study as well as determining whether what is being determined by the research can be justified as a true belief (Horn, 2009). The third assumption which was heavily considered in this research due to its delicate nature was that of axiology. The definition of axiology focuses on the "values and ethics" of one's research and can enable clarity on the researcher's value positioning by encouraging them

to question their bias and "help heighten…awareness of value judgements…in drawing conclusions from…data"(Saunders, et al.,2019, p. 134). This was a serious consideration for this researcher which was acknowledged in order to prevent any predispositions to the research questions thereby influencing the research which may invalidate the data collected.

4.3. Interpretivism and pragmatism

As noted by the title of this study, one of the focal points of the hypothesis revolves around the beliefs of HR professionals and recruiters. For this reason, an interpretivist approach was chosen over a positivist one. Interpretivism regards the reality that all humans emerge from different cultural and social backgrounds and possess varied beliefs about a variety of topics, thus counteracting the ability to study these beliefs in a purely scientific form as required for positivism (Saunders, et al., 2019). However, part of this research includes a survey of a quantitative nature which is commonly associated with positivism and allows for the view that knowledge should be undecomposed by the beliefs as held by the researcher (Phillips and Burbules, 2000). Due to the use of a mixed methods approach involving both a survey and semi-structured interviews, the research philosophy of pragmatism was deemed appropriate for this study. According to Feilzer (2009, p. 7) a mixed methods approach "strives for an integration of quantitative and qualitative research strategies", thus failing to fit neatly into the views of either positivism or interpretivism. Therefore, the mixed methods approach thus aligns closest with the field of pragmatism as it centres on "the problem to be researched and the consequences of the research" (Feilzer, 2009, p. 7). A further justification to the use of a mixed methods approach and pragmatic research philosophy is presented by Saunders *et al*.,(2019,p. 151), who note that through this approach it is recognised there are "many different ways of interpreting the world and undertaking research", and that "no single point of view can ever give the entire picture". Finally, this approach was selected as it is the most plausible to provide warranted, credible, and validated data which will enable further future expansion into the research (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008).

4.4. Research approach

During the preparation of this research, both inductive and deductive research approaches were considered. A deductive approach involves the testing of a theory through observation, while an inductive approach aims to expand and generate a new theory (Locke, 2007). Through the research reviewed, it was clear that a hypothesis regarding age-related beliefs being held by certain population demographics was prevalent. A deductive approach will thus be adopted, and this hypothesis was extracted from the literature and developed into the research question for this study. A further justification to the choice of a deductive approach was the realization (as provided by the literature) that a new hypothesis would not need to be generated in order to achieve a novel theory; from the research mentioned in the literature review, this has already been established. Yet due to the utilization of a mixed methods approach within the methodology, this study acknowledges the incorporation of both inductive and deductive perspectives as an opportunity to "undertake theory generation and hypothesis testing in a single study without compromising one for the other" if it is so desired (Jogulu and Pansiri, 2011, p. 688).

4.4.1. Mixed methods

A mixed methods approach is the amalgamation of both qualitative and quantitative forms of data collection and analysis and aligns closely with the research of pragmatism as discussed above (Saunders et al.,2019). Through this approach, this research subscribes to a pluralist view of the research methodology which "believes in flexibility in the selection and use of methods" (Saunders et al.,2019, p. 181). A sequential explanatory research design was utilized for this study as an online survey was distributed followed by two qualitative semi structured interviews. All components of the data were collected from employees within Company X, and the semi structured interviews were conducted with two HR managers engaged in recruitment within the company. Additionally, the construction of the questions created for the data collection adhered to embedded mixed methods research by which questions generated for the survey were then presented to the interviewees during the qualitative aspect of the data collection process (Saunders et al.,2019). The benefit of this form of methodology includes a more focused view of the data and can counteract the placing of dependency wholly on qualitative or

quantitative analysis, while also allowing for "soft core views and experiences" which would not be adequately represented within quantitative methods alone (Jogulu and Pansiri, 2011, p. 689). It must be noted that the use of mixed methods can have its drawbacks, and these can include the reality that not every researcher may be skilled in both qualitative and quantitative methods, thus requiring an abundance of time to learn these new skillsets, as well as the possibility of incurring of additional costs (Regnault, Willgoss and Barbic, 2018). As this researcher believes mixed methods is the most appropriate approach for this study, the following subheadings will discuss how this will be achieved.

4.4.2 Quantitative analysis

The first aspect of the mixed methods research which was considered was that of quantitative analysis. For the purpose of this research, this form of analysis was presented in a five-point Likert scale which was originally influenced from the Work-related age-based stereotypes scale (WAS) as presented in Appendix E. Prior to the conduct of the WAS, variables were identified. These included the independent variable of the recruiters and HR professionals, and the dependent variable of their subscription and levels of measurement of age-related beliefs as presented. Additionally, due to sub-objective 1, the covariate of age of the recruiters and HR professionals was incorporated. Quantitative research designs often align with the positivist research philosophy and, according to Jones, Gwynn, and Teeter (2019) are typically conducted through a method of either surveys or questionnaires whereby data can be analysed statistically. This form of analysis aims to answer questions that present some form of measurement such as how often, how many, and the frequencies of such events (Rasinger, 2013). The justifications for using an online survey to collect data in this way are numerous, as noted by Evans and Mathur (2005). Examples of these strengths include global reach which was beneficial for this thesis as Company X has multiple locations around Ireland, making a nationwide reach applicable (Evans and Mathur, 2005). Further to this positive is low administration cost, or none in the case of this research as the survey was conducted freely (Evans and Mathur, 2005). Google forms was the choice of survey administration due to how questions can be set with the requirement for completion, and this setting was utilized in questioning at what age was an individual deemed an older worker by recruiters and HR professionals in Company X.

This was done in order to fully achieve sub-objective 1 as presented above. However, this research is aware that pre-validated surveys such as the WAS may falsely align individuals into incorrect categories, as a restricted number of questions exist from which participants can select (Libarkin and Kurdziel). While both perspectives of using surveys were considered, it was deemed appropriate by this research to conduct survey research with a pre-validated survey influenced by the WAS as part of this research's mixed methods approach.

4.4.3 Qualitative analysis

The second aspect of this research's mixed methods approach was that of formulating and conducting a semi-structured interview with two HR managers engaged in recruitment within Company X. According to Adams (2015,p.493), semi-structured interviews combine "closed and open ended questions" and are often accompanied by follow up "why or how questions". Questions for the interview were heavily influenced by the WAS as well as the literature mentioned above. This is seen in question 11 of the interview whereby the question of 'Do you believe older workers are more opinionated' was directly influenced by Krings et al., (2010). Further to this, influence in the interview questions was also created by sub-objective 2 through question 4, as seen in Appendix H below. Justification of the semi structured interview for this aspect of the mixed methods approach originated from Jones et al.,(2019) who acknowledged the importance of choosing a research method which will provide meaningful results. As part of this masters and for CIPD accreditation, it is noted that a recommendation section must be incorporated with the research findings, and thus a semi structured interview as well as the survey will allow for such meaningful interpretations of results to enable employers to be able to adopt or rethink certain mindsets regarding age- related beliefs. Additionally, as reported by Adams (2015, p. 494), combining a "standardized survey questionnaire" with a semi-structured interview allows for the discovery that focal questions "cannot be effectively addressed without more open-ended questions and extended probing". This form of interview was thus preferred, along with that of the pre-validated survey instrument to achieve a mixed methods approach.

4.5. Research sample

In order to align with and achieve the objectives of the research question, the target sample population for this research was a combination of both recruiters and HR professionals employed by Company X and located in Ireland. This population was narrowed down to a specific sampling frame which includes but is not limited to, full and part-time recruiters and HR professionals, newly joined recruiters and HR professionals all located in Ireland only. A population of outsourced recruiters and HR professionals or those who are employed within Company X yet not located in Ireland would not be considered for this study. The rationale for this sample was due to the access allowed by contacts of this researcher who are actively employed with Company X and who are currently involved in the recruitment process and day-to-day running's of Company X. This enabled an accurate investigation, as the sample involved actively engage with all demographics of the population including older workers as examined by this thesis. As Company X has multiple locations nationwide within Ireland, a medium sample size of over 50 but under 100 was expected. This is in line with Stutely's (2003) acknowledgement that a sample size of at least 30 will enable a sampling result for the mean that is near the standard diffusion. Yet this research is aware of the law of large numbers, whereby the larger the sample size, the more statistical significance for the research in question (Ross, 2009). As noted by Saunders et al.,(2019, p.301), unfortunately a "100 percent response rate is unlikely", and a larger sample size is required "to ensure sufficient responses for the margin of error you require".

As mentioned in the above paragraphs, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with HR managers of Company X who are engaged with recruitment, and the participant profiles can be viewed in table 1 below. In order to diversify the answers presented by the interviewees, one female and one male participant were selected.

For this research, a non-probability sampling was employed as it is most commonly associated with survey-based research and as noted by Quinlan (2011), population members have an equal opportunity in selection. Nonprobability sampling was further selected in order to represent the opinions of a specific set of people within Company X. Purposeful sampling was key to this study as "the selected

cases are related to the purpose of the study" (Horn, 2009, p. 113). Aspects of purposeful sampling which were applied to this study included snowball sampling by which "one participant recommends the next participant, and so on", and expertise sampling whereby "those displaying certain knowledge and expertise" were actively sought out for the creation of the data collected (Horn, 2009, p. 113). As the conceptualization of this research came about due to the researcher's ability to contact employees of Company X, this research acknowledges that an aspect of convenience sampling was also present whereby the researcher is able to choose the sample for which it is convenient for them to attain access.

Table 1: Semi-structured interview participants description

Participant	Age	Sex	Title	Sector
1	29	M	HR Manager	Company X
2	32	F	HR Manager	Company X

4.6. Data collection method

As a mixed method approach was employed during this research, both quantitative and qualitative techniques were undertaken. The first quantitative technique undertaken involved a 23 question Likert scale survey which ranged in values from strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The survey was created using Google Forms as this platform is free for use and could be easily distributed through emails and by participants sharing the hyperlink of the survey from one to another. Participants were aware of what was being researched and were encouraged to contact the researcher if any issues occurred. Further to this, information was provided detailing the confidentiality of the study as observed in Appendix F. Prior to the commencement of both forms of data collection, a pilot test was undertaken by colleagues and family of the researcher to ensure the phrasing of questions was understandable, and that no ambiguous or ethically inappropriate questions were present (Quinlan, 2011).

4.6.1 Interview style

Regarding the qualitative factor of this research, an 11 question semi-structured interview was conducted with two HR managers from Company X as seen in Table 1 above. The choice of a semi-structured interview over other interview formats was chosen due to the ability of this style to offer "high validity of the linguistic and social categories used by protagonists in order to make sense of their situation" (Mueller *et al.*, 2003, p. 79). This format was also influenced by Zientara (2009) who utilized semi-structured interviews during their research into employers' attitudes towards hiring older workers in Poland.

4.6.2. Interview process

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted remotely through Microsoft Teams. Interviews were conducted over a period of 1 week during the end of May 2021. The use of Microsoft teams for the interview benefitted both the participants and the researcher as the process was conveniently carried out at a designated time with no travel time for either party required. Four days before the interview was due to take place, the researcher emailed an information sheet and consent form to the interviewee to be signed and returned as soon as practicable as seen in Appendix G. On the day of the interview, time was allocated at the beginning to allow for questions to clarify any aspects of the interview if needed from the participants. Confidentiality was also discussed and agreed upon by both parties to the highest of standards, as will be reiterated in the ethical considerations section of this thesis.

4.6.3. Interview schedule:

The interview schedule was created based on the literature reviewed and from questions which generated unexpected answers through the qualitative survey. 11 questions were compiled to further examine what was observed through the foundation of the quantitative survey. Questions asked during the interview are observable in Appendix H.

4.7. Data analysis:

For the quantitative data collected, the first procedure was to transfer, prepare and clean the data from Google forms into an Excel spreadsheet before entering it into the Statistical package for social

sciences (SPSS). Coding was assigned to variables in order for the analysis to take place. Coding was done in order to "create a system to organize…data" as well as to "provide a trail of rationale and evidence for the credibility of the study" (Stuckey, 2015, p. 9). Following this the researcher undertook a scale reliability test to assess the Cronbach Alpha, which according to Saunders et al.,(2019) should be within the range of 0.7 and 1.0. Once the descriptive statistics have been analysed in order to achieve sub-objective 1, a chi-square test will be conducted between the independent variable of the occupation recruiters and HR professionals, and the dependent variable of their subscription and levels of measurement of age-related beliefs as presented. Through a chi-square test as noted by Horn (2009, p.191), the "null hypothesis would normally be rejected if the probability of the results occurring by chance is less than 0.05…expressed as $p<0.05$". This result will determine whether the survey data is statistically significant or insignificant. Additionally, the nonparametric test of Kendall's tau-b will be undertaken to further examine any correlations between variables which may present during the data analysis.

Regarding the qualitative data, interviews were recorded over Microsoft teams allowing for the automatic creation of the interview transcripts. Once these transcripts were updated by the researcher for any missing information, the transcripts were then reviewed to ensure they did not contain any identifiable details regarding the interviewee in question or the identity of Company X. To analyse the data collected from the interviews, a thematic approach will be undertaken. Thematic analysis as noted by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 78) "is a foundational method for qualitative analysis". The rational for using this form of analysis lies in its ability to "minimally organize…your data set in rich detail" (Braun and Clarke, 2006. P. 79). Codes were assigned within the interview transcripts and themes were identified. This form of analysis was again justified due to the variety of themes which were presented during the literature reviewed. Once hard copies of the interviews were created by this researcher, the data was carefully read, and themes identified in line with thematic analysis. As mentioned above a mixed methods approach has the opportunity to shift between inductive and deductive approaches, and thematic analysis enables this. As reported by Saunders et al.,(2019, p. 660), "thematic analysis allows the researcher to move between these approaches", thus enabling a wider "scope of the analysis".

4.8. Ethical considerations

Arifin (2018, p.30) argues the protection of "human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is important in any research study". For both data collection aspects of this study, that being of survey and interview, a consent form and information sheet was provided for each participant to read as well as the contact information for both researcher and the researcher's supervisor should ambiguity occur. Following this, each participant was explicitly made aware of their ability to remove themselves and their provided answers from either survey or interview at any time over the course of the study.

Confidentiality was pivotal to the success of this study as given the scenario where Company X was identifiable in any way, participants would have been hesitant to undertake both survey and interview due to the fear of making themselves identifiable or inadvertently discussing aspects of Company X which may or may not exist, which would tarnish reputations of both Company X and the employees themselves. Further to this, the area of age-related beliefs is deemed by this researcher to be a sensitive topic whereby the "seminal definition is the reciprocity of potential risk for all parties involved" (Fahie, 2014, p. 20).

Anonymity was also of great importance to this researcher and through the survey administering tool of Google Forms no names, personal details, or email addresses which could identify participants were collected. However, for the two interviews conducted, this researcher ensured each participant was treated with the highest level of anonymity. This was done by refraining from using the participants names or name of Company X during the interview. Following this, each participant was allocated a referral number and all information was securely saved using this number. Recordings of the interviews were stored in a password protected file on a password protected laptop and will subsequently be destroyed following a period of two years in accordance with National College Ireland's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Ethical guidelines. Compliance with GDPR was pivotal to the confidentiality of participants personal and professional information through this research as it allowed for "far-reaching protection of individuals' personal data" (Crutzen *et al.*,2019, p. 1347).

Chapter 5: Analysis and Findings

5.1. Introduction

The following chapter will analyse the detailed results as accumulated from both surveys and interviews alike. Additionally, the findings of the analysis will be discussed, and conclusions inferred. Overall, there were 63 respondents who participated in the online survey. In addition, two respondents were interviewed to provide an in depth collection of data to allow for a more holistic interpretation of the findings presented. The findings presented by the data analysis will be represented in correlation with the research objectives as well as the themes which emerged during the interview process.

5.2. Descriptive overview

As observed in the collection of the surveys through Google Forms, the findings in Table 1 show that the majority of the participants were aged between 25 to 34 years of age as evident from 52.9% followed by those aged 18 to 24 who made up 25% - this will be understood as the age covariate. A majority of respondents were female as evident from 63.6% in comparison to males at 31.8%.

Table 2: Descriptive overview

		Frequency	Percent
Age	18-24	17	25
	25-34	36	52.9
	35-44	3	4.4
	45-54	1	1.5
	55-64	5	7.4
	65+	6	8.8
Gender	Male	21	31.8
	Female	42	63.6
	Non-binary	2	3
	Prefer not to say	1	1.5

The findings in Table 2 show that most of the respondents were managers engaged in recruitment as evident from 51.6%. This is followed by recruiters and human resource professionals who accounted for 26.6% and 21.9% respectively. With regard to education, most of the respondents had attained bachelor's degrees as the highest level of education, as evident from 43.9% followed by those with master's degree who made up 27.3%.

Table 3: Descriptive overview

		Frequency	Percent
Occupation	Recruiter	17	26.6
	HR Professional	14	21.9
	Manager engaged in recruitment	33	51.6
Level of qualification	Secondary education	6	9.1
	Higher Level Certificate/Diploma	12	18.2
	Bachelor's degree	29	43.9
	Master's degree	18	27.3
	Prefer not to say	1	1.5

5.3. Reliability test

In order to test the reliability of the hypothesis regarding this study, this researcher selected the test of Cronbach's Alpha to assess the reliability levels. Cronbach's alpha aids in testing the internal consistency of the scale used, that of the WAS and is "concerned with the interrelatedness of a sample of test items" (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011, p. 53). According to Adadan and Savasci (2011, p. 524) Cronbach's alpha values of "0.7 or higher indicate acceptable internal consistency". As observed in Table 3, the reliability of the WAS recorded a high value of internal reliability consistency at alpha coefficient .831.

Table 4: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.831	23

5.4. Sub-objective 1

To achieve the first sub-objective which was posed by this study which questioned the age which recruiters and HR professionals view an employee as an older worker, the following steps were adhered to. As seen in Figure 1, a bar chart was created which demonstrated the frequency of respondents based on the independent variable of occupation. This is observed on the y-axis, along with those who chose the age of what they considered to be an older worker as seen on the x-axis. The highest selection in this category is situated in the age bracket of 55-64 year olds, which slightly deviates from what was reviewed in the literature above. Yet this age bracket and that of the previous 45–54 year-old demographic was selected by both interviewees. The accompanying feedback to the question 1 as seen in Appendix H was recorded:

Participant 1: "I suppose 50 to 55, something like that, anyone coming up to retirement as well really".

Participant 2: "I would think someone is an older worker once they reach their 50's".

The answers provided to this question are seen as deviating from what was reviewed in the literature above and will be discussed in the following chapter.

Figure 1: Age of an older worker
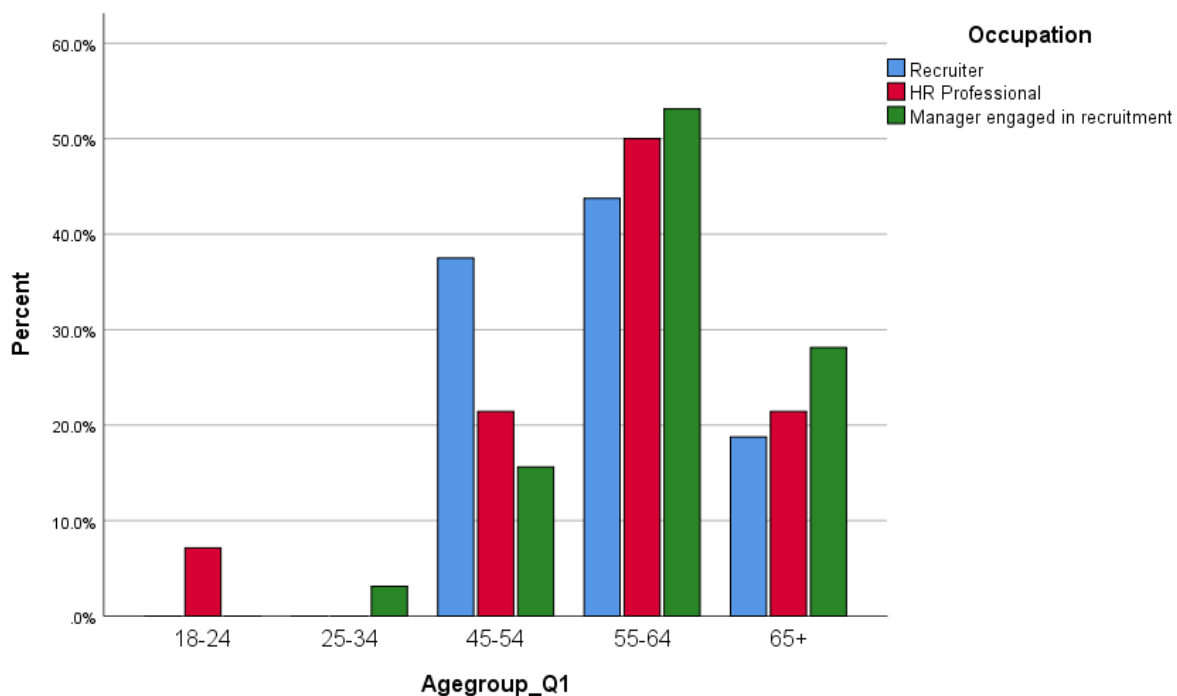
X-Axis: Participants response to Age of an older worker

Figure 2: Age of an older worker responses

Question 1: What age group is defined by you as an older worker?

63 responses

Legend:
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

Pie chart values: 25.4%, 50.8%, 19%
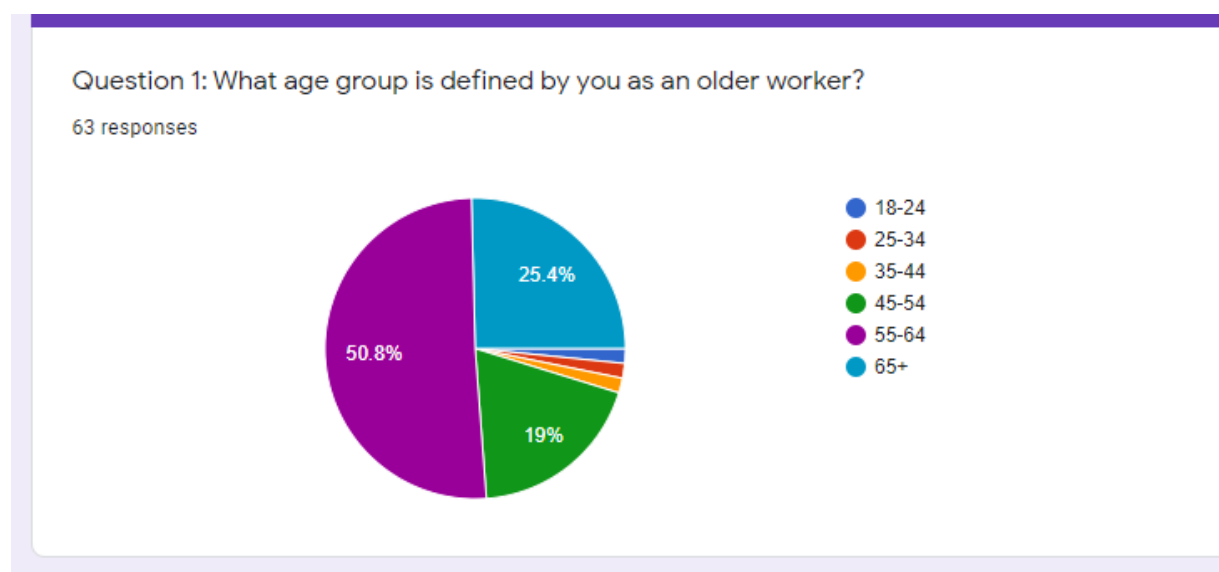
5.5. Sub-objective 2

The second sub-objective this study sought to examine was whether participants were more inclined to favour younger workers in comparison to their older counterparts. This sub-objective was analysed in question 9 of the survey (as seen in Appendix F and question 4 of the interview schedule as seen in Appendix H). Through the bar chart presented in figure 2, it is evident the majority of respondents based on the independent variable of their occupation as inserted on the x-axis (which is labelled was_Q9 in line with the WAS scale and question number), disagree, strongly disagree, or subscribe to the medium or neither agreeing nor disagreeing. No participants selected strongly agree to this question.

Figure 3: Analysis of responses to question 9 of the survey instrument
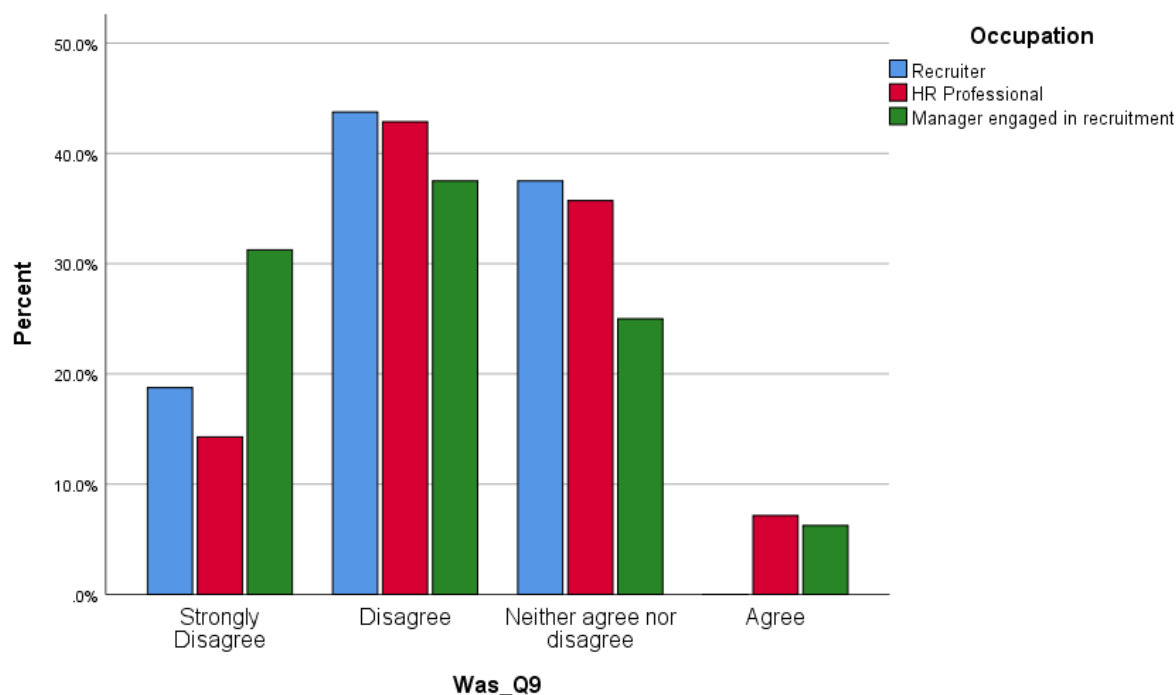
A similar approach to this response was recorded and analysed through the interview transcripts pertaining to question 4, as seen in Appendix H and as noted below:

Participant 1: "*I wouldn't have any, no, I think older workers are very versatile. They also bring a lot of experience and maturity to the job that younger people wouldn't have yet*".

Participant 2: "*I have hired a lot of older workers and have always gotten good feedback from their supervisors. In my opinion, older workers have more experience work just as hard as younger workers, and both learn from each other*".

5.6. Competence

Following the sub-objectives as described above, three dependent variables were assessed through both the survey and interview instruments. These dependent variables of competence, adaptability and warmth as examined in the survey instrument will be assessed using the chi-square test. The chi-square test is a nonparametric test and for the purpose of this research will "test the hypothesis of no association between two…groups, population of criteria" (Singhal and Rana, 2015, p. 69). In the section of competence, the responses which garnered the most interesting results were analysed using the chi square test. This began with question 2, as seen in Appendix F. Although a significant proportion of respondents selected 'agree' to this question (as seen in figure 3), no statistical significance was observed (as seen in table 4, as the p value is high at .763). Thus, the null hypothesis is failed to be rejected.

Table 5: Question 2

Chi-Square Tests 1

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.950[a]	8	.763
Likelihood Ratio	4.571	8	.802
Linear-by-Linear Association	.613	1	.434
N of Valid Cases	62		

a. 10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .23.

Figure 4: Question 2
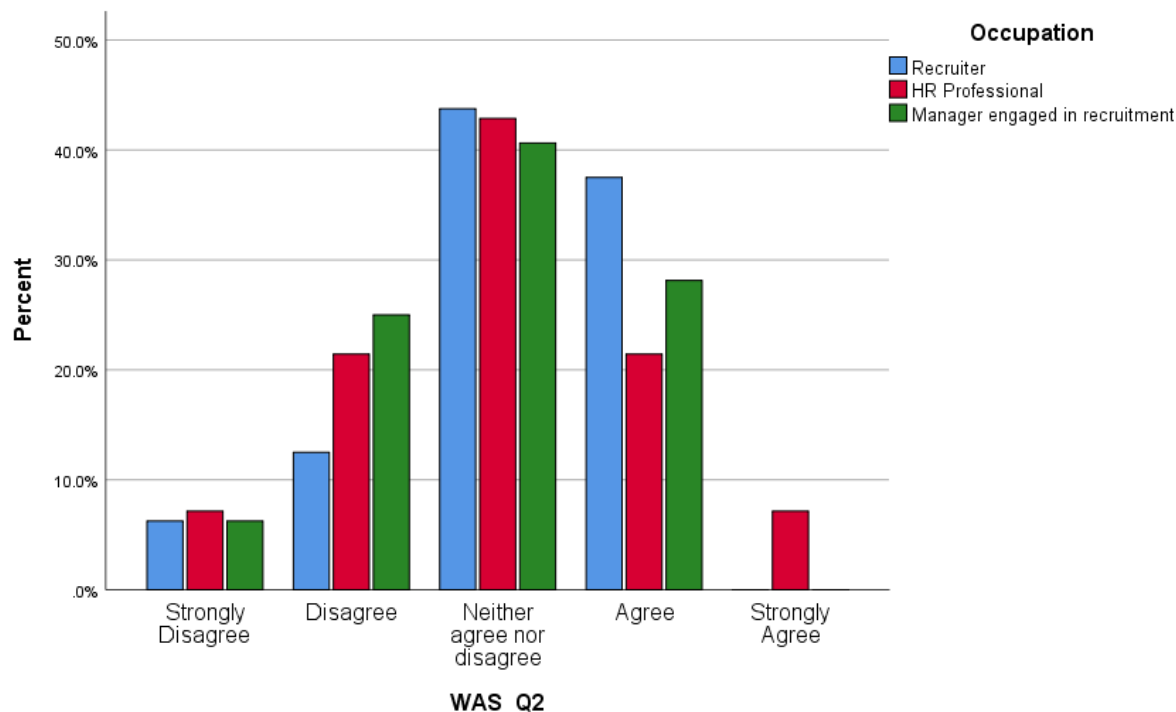
X-Axis: Participant responses to question 2

This high level of agreement was also assessed in the interviews whereby participants responses correlated with what has been observed above, as examined in question 2 of Appendix H:

Participant 1: "*I think they prefer part time hours because they have other responsibilities like grandchildren to look after. I don't think they normally want full time hours*".

Participant 2: "*I'd say part time. In my experience they are just working until they reach the retirement age and are happy enough doing part time*".

Additionally, question 5 of the survey instrument presented interesting results regarding levels of partici-

pant selection of 'agreement' as seen in figure 4. Yet the chi square test was unexpectedly statistically in-

significant, as presented in table 5:

Figure 5: Question 5
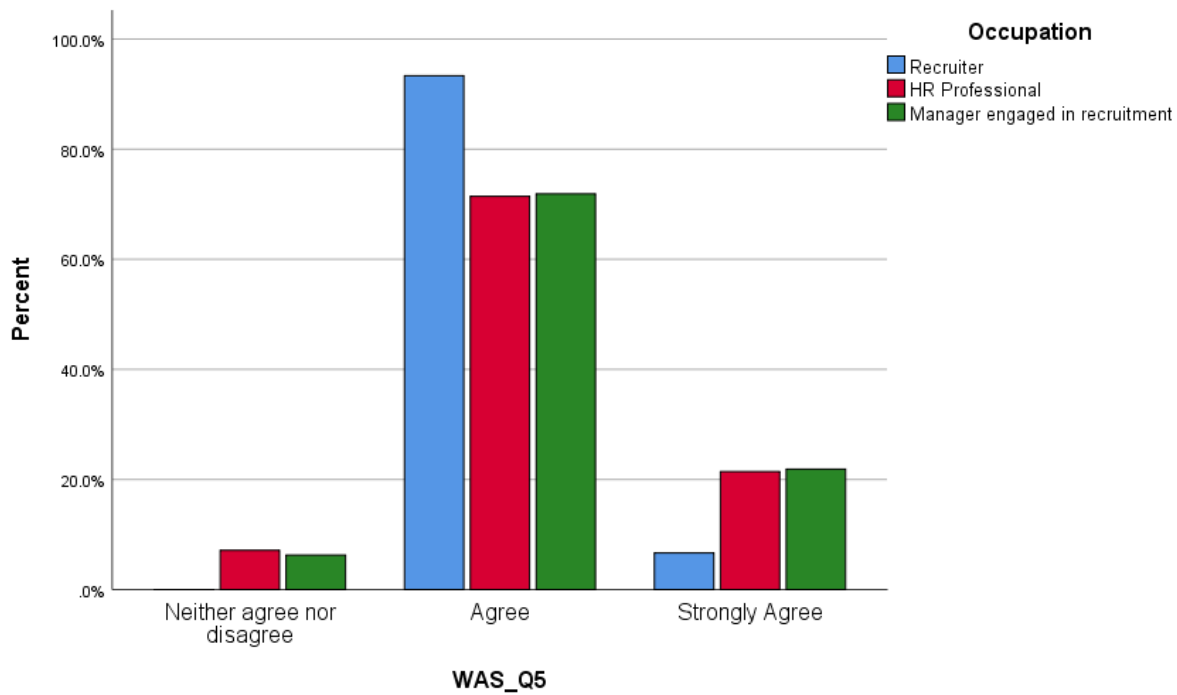
X-Axis: Participant response to question 5

Table 6: Question 5

Chi-Square Tests 2

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.105[a]	4	.540
Likelihood Ratio	4.110	4	.391
Linear-by-Linear Association	.344	1	.558
N of Valid Cases	61		

a. 5 cells (55.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .69.

5.7. Adaptability

The second dependent variable of adaptability yielded significant results in question 10 in particular, as seen in Appendix F and through the chi-square test in table 6. This shows that in relation to question 10, the alternative hypothesis is accepted, as the p value is statistically significant.

Table 7: Question 10

Chi-Square Tests 3

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.791[a]	6	.032
Likelihood Ratio	14.167	6	.028
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.270	1	.071
N of Valid Cases	62		

a. 9 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .45.

As assessed during the interviews in relation to adaptability, the theme of age-related stereotypes and technology became increasingly present. When participants were asked if they believed that technology was a barrier to older workers in Company X as seen in question 9 in Appendix H both respondents provided insightful answers. Both of these answers referred to stereotypes involving technology and older workers:

Participant 1: "*I know there is a stereotype about older people and technology, so we do try and make sure any technology that is used by our employees is extremely user friendly. But I have seen older workers ask for more help than younger workers when using new systems*".

Participant 2: "*I guess changing technology can be a barrier to older workers, but then again I think that could be true for anyone. Older people do get pigeonholed into the idea by employers that they can*

sometimes struggle with new technologies. Whenever we do require our employees to use different systems, we do make sure to train them continuously so that they know exactly what they're doing".

5.8. Warmth

The final dependent variable of warmth failed to provide any statistical significance, as shown through the chi square-test due to a consistent p value of above p. >0.05, no statistical significance is detected. Yet in question 20 a significant p value was recorded at p<.026, showing the correlation between occupation and the perception that older workers do not have cold personalities. This thesis would argue this presents a positive form of bias that will be discussed in the following chapter. Comments of note were recorded in the interviews through question 11 as seen in Appendix F:

Participant 1: "*I honestly think an older employee. I think older customers see themselves in older employees, maybe see them as friendlier and would rather ask them for assistance over a younger one employee".*

Participant 2: "*I'd say older. My own opinion would be that older employees can sometimes be chattier and easier going than younger employees. From what I've seen myself I would say older workers make a big effort to help-out customers".*

Table 8: Question 20

<div align="center">

Chi-Square Tests 4

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.262[a]	12	.026
Likelihood Ratio	23.580	12	.023
Linear-by-Linear Association	.032	1	.857
N of Valid Cases	65		

</div>

a. 15 cells (75.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.

5.9. Kendall's Tau-b correlation test

An additional non-parametric test which this research decided to conduct based on the three categories of competence, adaptability and warmth is Kendall's tau-b correlation test. This test, like that of the chi-square test would allow this researcher to identify whether the independent variable of occupation correlates and is statistically significant against the dependent variables. Within this test, correlation coefficient value of +1 specifies a "high degree of association between the two variables" (Magiya, 2019). This was done in order to further confirm the statistical significance, or lack thereof (as seen in the chi-square tests above).

5.10. Competence

Questions 1 to 9 as seen in Appendix F were analysed, and one area of statistical significance was question 7 which presented an agreement of .114 (as seen in table 10 below). This shows the occupation of those surveyed has a strong alignment with the belief that organizations will be enhanced with the hiring of older workers.

Table 9: Question 7

Correlations 1

			Occupation	WAS_Q 7
Kendall's tau_b	Occupation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.114
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.316
		N	64	62
	WAS_Q7	Correlation Coefficient	.114	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.316	.
		N	62	65

5.11. Adaptability

Questions 10 to 16 as seen in Appendix F were again analysed and produced engaging statistical results. Both questions 10 and question 14 produced strong positive statistically significant results at .154 and .175, respectively. This indicates there is a strong correlation between occupation and positivity in the belief that older workers are suitable for training.

Table 10: Question 10 and 14

Correlations 2

			Occupation	WAS_Q10	WAS_Q14
Kendall's tau_b	Occupation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.154	.175
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.187	.140
		N	64	62	62
	WAS_Q10	Correlation Coefficient	.154	1.000	.532[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.187	.	.000
		N	62	65	65
	WAS_Q14	Correlation Coefficient	.175	.532[**]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.140	.000	.
		N	62	65	65

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The sentiments of question 14 were again produced in question 6 of the interview:

Participant 1: "*I do yeah. Maybe I'm wrong but I feel like older workers know that there are stereotypes against them, and they try to make up for that by working hard. In Company X I've always had older workers ask me questions and are really willing to go on trainings and upskill, so I'd say yeah to that, they are fast learners*".

Participant 2: "*I've never experienced anyone who was a very slow learner in Company X so yes I think they are fast learners. We do a lot of training days in Company X so everyone has a chance to learn more and of course there is on the job learning. When I think of the older workers I work with I would say they ask a lot of questions but once they get the answer they go right to work, So, I definitely would say the older workers I have worked with are fast learners*".

5.12. Warmth

Questions 17 to 23 were examined under this test yet yielded nothing of statistical significance. However, it must be noted that question 20 did provide a statistically significant report under the chi-square test as noted above. The lack of statistical significance in this category may be due to the high frequency of 'neither agree nor disagree' selections as chosen by the participants of the survey. The high percentage of this choice is seen in Table 11. Note that question 20 has a lower frequency percentage at 11.8%, thus enabling for statistical significance.

Table 11: Percentage of 'neither agree nor disagree' choices in the category of warmth.

Warmth Response Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of
		N	Percent	Cases
warmthresponse1[a]	WAS_Q17	38	16.7%	86.4%
	WAS_Q18	36	15.8%	81.8%
	WAS_Q19	33	14.5%	75.0%
	WAS_Q20	27	11.8%	61.4%
	WAS_Q21	37	16.2%	84.1%
	WAS_Q22	29	12.7%	65.9%
	WAS_Q23	28	12.3%	63.6%
Total		228	100.0%	518.2%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 3.

5.13. Conclusion

In summary, this chapter analysed data collected from the mixed methods approach used for this research through both survey and interview instruments. This researcher examined the survey data through the chi-square nonparametric test, as well as the Kendall's tau-b test and can conclude that apart from questions 7,10,14 and 20 of the survey as seen in Appendix H, no significant statistical data was presented, thus, failing to reject the null hypothesis on the remaining questions of the survey. Through the analysis of the interviews in accordance with competence, adaptability and warmth, themes began to present. These included productivity, loyalty, and personality perceptions of older workers, as well as a possible inclination towards a positive form of bias through participant responses. The analysis of this data has created the belief for this researcher that, while certain age-related beliefs may be held by recruiter and HR professionals within Company X, others which were of no statistical significance are not. The results of this chapter will be discussed in the following section.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1. Introduction

This study endeavoured to examine whether recruiters and HR professionals within a chosen company (Company X) exhibited any age-related beliefs, be those positive or negative. The survey and interview questions which were influenced from the literature (as well as the WAS) aided in achieving this objective and allowed for the creation and analyses of insightful data which will be discussed within this chapter.

6.2. Sub-objective 1

The first sub-objective of identifying what age participants regarded someone as an older worker was directly influenced by the literature reviewed yet provided an alternative viewpoint. According to the common consensus, older workers are those aged 50 and above as noted in responses in both data collection instruments. While this corresponds with the international categorization of older workers as noted by McCarthy *et al.*,(2014) it raises the question as to whether different industries align with the mentality that once a certain age is reached, the worker may become obsolete. This was briefly examined during the literature review regarding the technology industry whereby in the event an employee reaches their 40's and above, they are considered outdated (Fraser, cited in McMullin, 2011). Through the examination of this sub-objective and based on the responses provided, this research believes that HR professionals and recruiters of Company X subscribe to the belief of the previously mentioned international age demographic assigned to an older worker. This contrasts with the younger age demographic, which may limit workers from entering into Company X and the retail industry compared to that of the technology industry. Regarding the practical implications of this assertion, it must be noted that the age range of 50 and above is still reasonably young within our aging communal workforce. This poses the question if an inaccurate application of this age range is being applied to workers who do not align with it.

6.3. Sub-objective 2

The second sub-objective considered was whether recruiters and HR professionals of Company X contain reservations regarding employing older workers. This research found that no such apprehensive beliefs exist as held by the participants queried. This null hypothesis challenges the literature reviewed, as a plethora of stereotyped negativities associated with hiring older workers were discovered. These include reduced productivity, excessive cost of hiring older workers, questions regarding one's physical capabilities, and the state of an older worker's health, as well as ineffective "technological competence and adaptability" (Kroon et al.,2016, p. 8). Nonetheless, this question (as posed in both data collection instruments and the answers received) corresponds to beliefs as held by Kumar and Srivastava (2018, p.305) that older workers "possess greater knowledge of the job tasks than their younger colleagues", which enables the contribution of wisdom and experience which allows for a coping "with the challenges of the working environment". A subsection of this objective also involved assessing participants during the semi-structured interview as to whether a belief was held that specific roles, if any, within Company X were better suited to older workers as seen in question 5 of Appendix H. Through the answers provided, no specific roles were identified:

Participant 1: "No, I wouldn't say so…I think Company X is very accommodating for all workers and we place people where they will work best, regardless of age".

Participant 2: "Not from what I've seen in Company X. I see older workers of every age doing the same jobs as younger workers and not struggling with them in any way. Workers in Company X rotate around our floors and do a bit of everything depending on how busy it is".

A general belief was held by both participants that older workers were just as capable and adaptable as younger workers, thus negating the previously mentioned stereotypes as listed in sub-objective 1. This aligns with Jovanovic (1979), who notes that a strong probability exists that older workers will undoubtedly be assigned to a position within the organization that is best suited to them. In

addition to this is Johnson's (1978) affirmation that older workers will accurately correlate their personal job requirements with that of the organization, as interpreted from the participants responses provided. While no negative beliefs are held, this raises the question as to whether participants of this thesis were purposefully presenting a more positive outlook of older workers. This will be further discussed in the following subheadings.

6.4. Beliefs regarding older workers and productivity

As recorded in section 5.10 of the data analyses chapter, question 7 of the survey instrument provided a noteworthy response by participants. This response involved statistical significance in the correlation between participants 'occupation and their belief that the productivity of an organization will be enhanced with the hiring of older workers. Yet the literature surrounding this question argues that the productivity of an older worker does in fact deteriorate with age. These areas of productivity deterioration (according to the literature reviewed) present in the degeneration of an older workers health, both physical and mental as noted by Lallemand and Rycx (2009). Following this the literature again contends the impact an older worker will have on the productivity of an organisation (as noted by Grund and Westgaard-Nielsen (2005)), and advocates that younger workers are more eager and motivated to excel in their employment as they aim inherently to impress their employer. This attribute was not accredited to older workers within the literature reviewed.

This thesis perceives from these findings that productivity in older workers could also be combined with loyalty, as assessed in question 7 of the interview and viewable in Appendix H, which is considered an acknowledged positive stereotype associated with older workers (Chasteen, Schwarz and Park, 2002). This correlation was influenced by Quintin and Stevens (2005, p.1), who note that an older employee's "willingness to invest in future productivity" hinges on the strength of the firm. This validates future research into this topic of age-related beliefs as held by HR professionals as dependent on the financial strength of the organization being researched. This thesis acknowledges the limitation regarding differing results based on the strength of the firm in question. In this case, Company X is highly profitable, and therefore this may influence participants response to question 7:

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Participant 1: "*I would say so generally yes. The stereotype would be with younger workers that they would job hop and move around a lot. But yes, I think older workers like to stay with a company long term*".

Participant 2: "*Yes. My parents' generation really fell into that category of 'a job for life' and I believe that is still true for a lot of older workers. They like to stay with the same company they started with if they can*".

6.5. Attitudes towards training and learning abilities in older workers.

Question 10 and 14 of the survey instruments coupled with question 6 of the interview schedule also produced relevant responses, as seen respectively in Appendix F and H. This again creates statistical significance between the correlation of participants 'occupation and their belief that older workers are suitable for training and capable of learning new things. This thesis believes these two themes complement one another, thus the decision to combine both into a single subheading was made. These questions garnered high levels of agreement from participants and continues with the theme of contradicting existing literature on the negativities regarding the topic of training older workers and their ability to learn new things as reviewed above, versus the benefits. Yet it must be mentioned that participant 1 disagreed on question 6 in contrast to participant 2 during the interview:

Participant 1: *"I think they probably need to understand what exactly is being done and what they need to do"*.

Participant 2: *"Yes, we have very good training for all employees in Company X and make sure everyone is up to speed. I've never seen an older worker find training too difficult"*.

The reality of an organization's success once again influences the rate at which an organization will train older workers. This is reported by Armstrong-Stassen and Cattaneo (2010) who note the less growth an organization experiences, the less likely human resources facilities will be attributed towards the training of older workers. As addressed, Company X is extremely successful not just in Ireland but internationally and continues to grow in both aspects. Thus, aligning with the belief that the financial

success of an organization influences the allocation of training to older workers. Therefore, this financial influence affects the age-related beliefs of the organization's HR professionals and recruiters which regarding Company X, at the time of this study, was a positive attitude towards older workers. However, the limitation of this research must be considered as only those attitudes of workers of Company X within Ireland were analysed. Further exploration of this influence is required in other companies and industries to understand the validity of this claim. This thus raises the question if other HR professionals and recruiters in varying industries and organizations would provide similar or differing responses.

6.6. Older workers and personality perceptions

The final question of statistical significance to discuss is survey question 20. The question regarded the belief as held by participants, whether older workers were perceived as having cold personalities. The overarching response to this question was disagreement with the statement. The reason for this perception as held by the participants may be due to "perceptions of personality in older adults" as reported by Truxillo et al.,(2012, p.2612). This belief encapsulates the idea that "older workers may be perceived more positively than their younger counterparts in terms of characteristics such as stability" (Truxillo et al.,(2012, p.2610). This reiterates the loyalty an older worker possesses for an organization. Further to this are the four stereotype dimensions attributed to Cuddy, Norton, and Fiske, (2005) which include contempt, pity, envy, and admiration. Regarding elderly people as a group, Cuddy *et al*.,(2005) found these demographics accumulated levels of admiration from younger cohorts and additionally this study suggests these beliefs persist in every culture. A practical example of this stereotyped warmth in older people as a benefit to hiring older workers is seen in the article 'The advantages of older workers', whereby an older worker named Terri in Glaser's bake shop "greets all her regular customers by name, knows their families, and gives them samples of their favourites" (Columbia Public Health, 2021).

Finally, Ng and Feldman (2008) report that older workers do exhibit better control over their emotions and are less prone to aggression in the workplace than their younger colleagues. This suggests the rationale for participants to disagree with the statement that older workers have cold personalities. Yet the practical implications of these findings show that Company X must remain cautious in unintentionally

advocating for stereotypes of any kind (as held by their recruiters and HR professionals), be those positive or negative. A solution to this was through question 8 in the interview schedule, whereby participants were questioned about Company X and their subscription to UBT. Both participants were aware of the training's existence within the company. A point of note is that participant 2 mentions the training is only available to managers of Company X. This furthers the practical implication of UBT and will be included in the recommendations for Company X to provide this to all employees.

Participant 1:*"Yeah we have it. It focuses on stereotypes and making sure you're aware of what you're thinking about a person or group of people".*

Participant 2:*"Yes I've done it. It was helpful and we do continuous training in it every year with all of our managers".*

6.7. Limitations

As confidentiality was focal to the successful completion of this study, the first limitation which was encountered was the language which could be used in both methods of data collection. Company X has specific terms for managers in certain roles; however, during the pilot study of both data methods it was deemed too conspicuous by employees of Company X to adopt these legitimate titles. Occupation categories were thus created, which aligned as closely as possible to their legitimate counterparts while retaining anonymity. In addition to this limitation is the member checking technique, whereby "participants may be self-conscious of their own language and want to change the meaning of the data" (Petrova, Dewing and Camilleri, 2014, p. 2).

A second limitation was the lack of diversity between interview participants. While this study was grateful to interview both a female and male HR manager, there was little scope in the range of age diversity. Additionally, the question arises as to whether a response bias was present in either interview participant. The rationale for this question lies in the belief that women are portrayed as more in tune with interpersonal relationships and have a greater capacity for compassion than men (Christov-Moore et al., 2014). Undoubtedly, this may have skewed the answers provided by the female participant, thus creating

a data bias through this limitation. This leads this researcher to encourage the replication of this study through future research with a larger sample of qualitative interview participants. However, this researcher is aware that while this study can be replicated, the frame of the study is relatively limited in its scope. Yet there is no denying this area of research is a focal one for the improvement of inclusion and diversity within the workplace.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research topic, this researcher is aware that response bias aligning with that of positivity bias may have been a factor in creating a limitation in the validity of the data collected. Response bias refers to the over-reporting "of favourable attitudes and the under-report of unfavourable attitudes" which may align with "socially desirable" norms rather than with the participants true opinions (Tellis and Chandrasekaran, 2010, p. 3). This phenomenon is again reported by Tourangeau and Yan (2007), who note participants will simply evade the truth than answer honestly when the topic in question is a sensitive one.

A final limitation which this research feels compelled to mention was a lack of diversity among responders to the survey. As the survey was initially shared amongst younger managers who were close with each other by the original gatekeeper, the largest age bracket recorded in the data set is that of those age 25-34 years old. The majority of respondents were also female, which again creates a lack of diversity and could therefore limit the variance which this study had hoped for.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate whether any form of age-related beliefs, be those positive or negative, existed amongst recruiters and HR professionals based within a multinational retailer (Company X) located in Ireland. This research contained two sub-objectives. The first involved identifying what most respondents deemed the age of an older worker to be. The second endeavoured to address the question whether participants to the study hold reservations regarding the employing of older workers. The directive of this research was achieved using a mixed methods approach of both a quantitative nature through a survey instrument, along with a qualitative one through the use of an interview instrument.

Due to the current and future projected expansion of Company X within the retail sector in Ireland (paired with a workforce overall, that is aging), this researcher was motivated to investigate age-related attitudes within this sector in order to acknowledge and attempt to provide possible solutions should age-related beliefs be present. While preceding research exists within the frame of age-related beliefs as held by employers and organizations, the literature failed to address specific areas such as that of retail. Additionally, the testing of this hypothesis through the literature reviewed failed to account for the opinions of actual recruiters and HR professionals, instead focusing on students and the experiences of older workers themselves which while valuable, are not applicable to this research. Furthermore, this researcher found limited geocentric literature which documented the beliefs as held by recruiters and HR professionals within Ireland. This research was therefore relevant to further developing this area of study as well as enabling up-to-date responses from participants within an Irish context.

Through the data collection methods, notable findings include the statistical significance of multiple questions and the prevalence of several themes: questions 7, 10, 20 and 14 through the survey, and the themes of productivity, loyalty, and personality perceptions of older workers as analysed through the interviews. Interestingly this study has presented the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis through the

aforementioned results. However, this research has also presented a failure to reject the null hypothesis through questions which lacked statistical significance during the process of data analyses. This shows that recruiters and HR professionals within Company X do subscribe to the four following age-related beliefs:

1. The productivity of an organization will be enhanced if one hires older workers.

2. Older workers are suitable for training.

3. Older workers possess the ability to learn new things.

4. Older workers do not have cold personalities.

Regarding the findings of the sub-objectives, sub-objective one found that the age of an older worker (as selected by this study's participants) lies in the range of 50 and above. While sub-objective two focused on whether any reservations were held by participants of Company X regarding employing older workers, no such reservations were found. In summary, this research has examined whether age related beliefs, be those positive or negative, are prevalent as held by recruiters and HR professionals within Company X. This research is confident in acknowledging that age related beliefs do exist within Company X, and while these beliefs are not necessarily negative, they continue to create implications for both employee and employer as will be discussed in the following sub-headings.

7.2. Recommendations for Company X and implications of findings

This section will discuss the recommendations for Company X regarding the implications of the findings which this study has observed. This will follow with key priorities for the company and will consider implications surrounding financial and timescale related components. This study has shown that recruiters and HR professionals of Company X contain positive perceptions regarding older workers. Yet it should be noted that a positive bias exists within Company X which must be accounted for. As mentioned during the interviews by Participant 2, employees of Company X do partake in UBT. This training appears to be reserved for senior staff members such as managers:

Participant 2: *"Yes I've done it. It was helpful and we do continuous training in it every year with all of our managers"*.

This poses the implication that UBT is not freely available to every employee regardless of rank and station within Company X. Due to the current pandemic and the reality that many continue to work from home, various approaches to UBT to incorporate Company X can be considered. The first of these considerations is an online e-course in UBT, whereby employees can undertake this course during a designated time or in their own time. The course in question is also CIPD accredited and is relatively short, at 60 minutes in length. Further to this, each employee would receive a certificate following the successful completion of the course, allowing for accountability, and acting as an incentive. The cost of the course varies depending on the number of staff participating, and contact details are provided on the supplier's website (Legal Island, 2020). Alternatively, a face-to-face course could be considered. An example of this type of course is provided by Equality and Diversity UK which, factoring for Covid-19 safety measures, takes place through Zoom and costs £295 per participant (Equality and Diversity UK, 2021). Yet even with a course, Company X must acknowledge that UBT is not the only solution for age-related bias. Gifford (2020) reports that alternative forms of training such as "perspective taking approaches" which involve "sharing stories" and imagining "walking in someone else's shoes" both focus on the "deep reflection on what the experiences are of minority or disadvantaged groups".

Following the approach of UBT, Company X can also reach out to age-related charities within both Ireland and the UK which was undertaken by this research. Replies from both AgeUK and AgeAction Ireland are presented in Appendix I and J respectively. While this research did not attain pertinent information, the recommendation for Company X to engage with these charities in relation to training older employees remains. Due to the nature of the charities, the financial cost would not be significant for Company X. As the majority of the UBT courses are now being offered virtually, as well as the possible ability to participate in virtual workshops with age related charities, the timescale this could be completed in is relatively short. Considerations should be acknowledged regarding the

implementation of such training. These considerations include timescales required for sourcing the correct organization to provide the training as well as seeking approval. Budgetary approval must be sought in the case of financial resources for training sourced. Finally, the timeline for the rollout of this training will vary depending on Covid-19 restrictions present at the time, including availability of those partaking in the training. While UBT is present in Company X, the rollout of widespread training may coincide with this other initiative. This researcher recommends the creation of a Gantt chart by Company X in order to create an achievable timeline for the rollout of these initiatives. Due to the importance of UBT, this research recommends placing priority on sourcing approval to provide widespread UBT to all employees within the Irish locations of Company X within a timeframe of 1 year. This should be done in order to secure the aspects as discussed above with an overall aim of benefitting the company exponentially regarding future improved training opportunities for all employees.

7.3. Recommendations for future research

Within this section, key points which were identified in this research included the age of an older worker as well as the finding that HR professionals and recruiters within Company X do contain positive age related beliefs. Based on these findings, concepts for future research will be identified and discussed. In summary, this research has analysed whether recruiters and HR professionals within Company X subscribe to age related beliefs, be those positive or negative. While established literature exists, this researcher believes future study should focus into the Irish context. Further to this, beliefs should be collected from HR and recruiting professionals rather than from a convenience sample of students and peers as was found in the literature reviewed. Given the chance to expand on this study, this researcher would incorporate the responses of older workers who fall into that previously specified age bracket of 50 and above. This would be done in order to assess whether older workers believe the beliefs as held by the participants of this research are well founded or fundamentally inaccurate.

From the research conducted, it is clear that recruiters and HR professionals of Company X do hold certain age-related beliefs, yet they are attempting to combat these by undergoing UBT. However,

this training must be accessible to all employees within Company X rather than a select few in managerial positions.

Furthermore, while this research focused on Company X as located within Ireland, a future area of research to be considered is within the global context. Company X is present in multiple continents, and this begs the question as to how Company X mould their UBT based on the culture they are situated in, if at all. While Ireland has a high degree of individualism and therefore are "less compatible with older people", eastern countries such as China where Company X is also located, "promote positive views of aging" and "teaches younger people to respect, obey and care for their elders" (Vauclair *et al*.,2016, p.2) . Thus, future research could replicate this study in various cultures where Company X is situated while comparing and contrasting the findings in order to further understand and tailor the most appropriate forms of UBT for Company X.

Additionally, a point previous research has shown, was the discovery that the provision of training for older workers regarding productivity hinges on the success of the firm. Future research should thus examine varying organizations in differing industries to determine whether age related beliefs are more apparent in firms which may not meet the levels of profitability of Company X. This research has determined the age of an older worker within Company X and therefore, within a multinational retailer located in Ireland is that of 50 and above. Future research which would complement this research topic can focus on other multinational retailers to assess whether they also identify this age bracket as the age of an older worker. In particular, this focal point of the research could assess whether an Irish-owned retailer subscribes to the same or different age bracket to define an older worker.

Personal Learning Statement

Prior to the commencement of this student's masters in HRM, this student was extremely unaware of the multifaceted role of HR professionals within business and organizations. Through the modules this student undertook while completing the masters, a large volume of knowledge which would provide real world applications was gained.

Furthermore, this researcher understood and appreciated research from multiple sources which allowed them to develop critical thinking skills and research abilities. Additionally, a deep understanding of the profession of HR as a core component of an organization, which plays a significant role in every aspect of the business from recruitment to employee engagement and employment law was also acquired .

Through the modules which prepared this student for the undertaking of this thesis, a significant appreciation for resilience, patience and time management was found. This student also gained invaluable skills in the area of reading for academic purposes and the use of statistical software such as SPSS which was a challenge that this student is proud to have overcome.

While this particular topic of research presented challenges in gathering accurate responses, due to its sensitive nature, this enabled this student to develop their critical thinking abilities in how best to approach the topic through both the survey and interviews conducted.

In closing, participating in the masters of HRM has allowed this student to grow both personally and professionally, and has allowed for lifelong skills to be developed as well as an ambition to engage in continuous professional development in the world of HRM.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Lidl (2021) *Our core business areas*. Available at: https://jobs.lidl.ie/ [Accessed 26 May 2021]
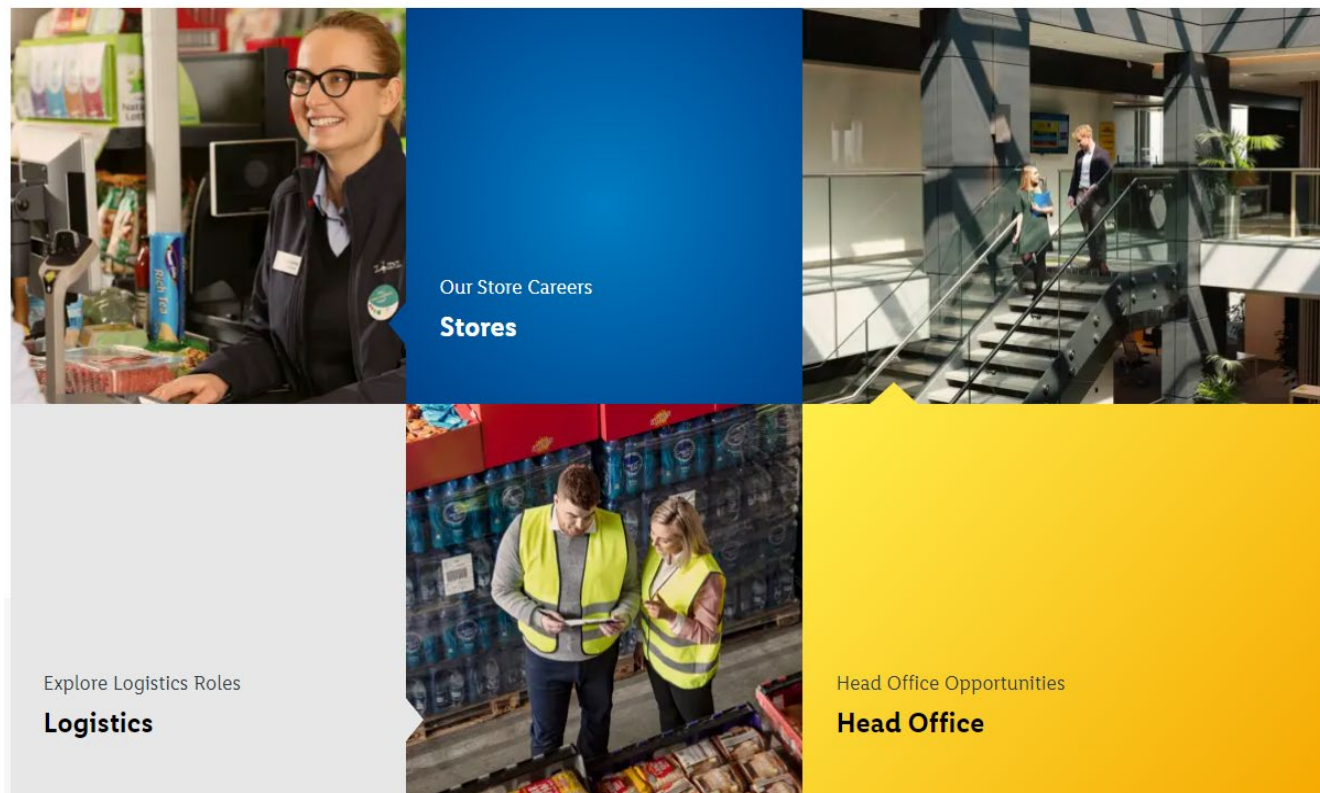
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Appendix E: Work-related age-based stereotypes scale (Marcus *et al.,* 2016, p. 26)

Item wording[b]	Dimension	Factor loading[a] (Sample 1)	Factor loading[a] (Sample 2)	Factor loading[b] (Sample 3)
Older workers will be competent workers	Competence	0.65	0.81	0.75
Older workers are high achievers	Competence	0.61	0.62	0.69
Older workers are capable employees	Competence	0.84	0.79	0.75
Older workers will make top performers in an organization	Competence	0.83	0.77	0.69
The productivity of an organization will be enhanced if one hires older workers	Competence	0.81	0.77	0.76
Older workers are skilled in their jobs	Competence	0.78	0.81	0.68
Older workers generally perform worse than younger workers (R)	Competence	–	–	0.58
Older workers are suitable for training	Adaptability	0.77	0.80	0.90
Older workers possess great potential for development	Adaptability	0.83	0.71	0.64
Older workers are fast learners	Adaptability	0.82	0.73	0.63
Older workers will turn out to be flexible employees	Adaptability	0.73	0.79	0.83
Older workers possess the ability to learn new things	Adaptability	0.72	0.77	0.53
The time I spend training older workers will not be wasted	Adaptability	0.70	0.79	0.74
It is a waste of time and money to train older workers to learn new skills (R)	Adaptability	–	–	0.45
Older workers are warm-hearted	Warmth	0.70	0.79	0.86
I think older workers have warm personalities	Warmth	0.87	0.82	0.81
Older workers are likeable	Warmth	0.89	0.50	0.86
Older workers are cold (R)	Warmth	0.79	0.69	0.54
Older workers are kind	Warmth	0.85	0.77	0.85
Older workers are friendly	Warmth	0.71	0.76	0.87

Notes: [a]All reported factor loadings are for standardized parameter estimates. [b]All items are measured on the following six-point scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very much disagree					Very much agree

Instructions: for each statement, please circle the response that best describes your level of agreement

Appendix F: Quantitative Survey Research Study Title: An examination into the prevalence of ageist beliefs towards older workers as held by recruiters and HR Professionals within a multinational retail organisation located in Ireland.

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide if you would like to participate, please take time to read the following information about the purpose of the research and what it involves on your part.

What is the purpose of the research?

This research is carried out as part of my Master of Arts in Human Resource Management dissertation with the National College of Ireland. The objective of my research is to examine whether the possibility of age related beliefs presents itself as an issue among recruiters and HR professionals within a multinational located in Ireland or not. This research is being undertaken due to the observation that ageing workforce populations are increasingly present in the workplace due to a demographic shift caused by increased life expectations of previous generations as well as an escalating pension age. (Sewdas et al., 2017).

What will taking part involve?

The questionnaire is compiled of three sections of Competence, Adaptability and Warmth. Completing the online questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes and will comprise of 23 questions.

Confidentiality and Voluntarism

This survey is confidential, voluntary, and anonymous. You, as the participant, are free to decide if you would like to participate in the study voluntarily and you have the right to refuse participation, refuse any questions or withdraw at any point and all your information will be discarded. There will be no means of identifying participants. The Participant Consent Form will be kept confidential and will not be used outside of the presented Master research study. Information provided will not be archived for secondary data analysis. The data gathered from this survey will be retained by myself, the researcher, until after my degree has been conferred. In accordance with NCI policy, the data will be stored for a maximum of up to

5 years and then destroyed. Under freedom of information legislation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The results of this research study will only be used for submitting my Master thesis.

What do you have to do?

If you wish to take part in the research, please agree to the consent form below. The survey will begin in the next section if consent is granted.

Contact

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact myself, Laura O'Dwyer, a student at the National College of Ireland, at x18173748@student.ncirl.ie, or my research supervisor Stephen Sands at Stephen.Sands@ncirl.ie. Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.

I hope you will help me to successfully complete my Master Research Study by kindly responding to this survey.

Section 1: Demographic Questions

- Gender:

- Male

- Female

- Non-binary

- Prefer not to say

Age:

- 18-24

- 25-34

- 35-44

- 45-54

- 55-64

- 65+

Level of qualification:

- Secondary education

- Higher level certificate/Diploma

- Bachelor's degree

- Master's degree

- PhD

- Prefer not to say

Occupation:

- Recruiter

- HR professional

- Manager engaged in recruitment.

Section 1: Competence

Question 1: What age group is defined by you as an older worker?

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65+

Question 2: I believe older workers prefer part time hours instead of full time hours.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 3: I believe older workers will be competent workers.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 4: I believe older workers are high achievers.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 5: I believe older workers are capable employees.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 6: I believe older workers will make top performers in an organization.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 7: I believe the productivity of an organization will be enhanced if one hires older workers.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 8: I believe older workers are skilled in their jobs.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 9: I believe older workers generally perform worse than younger workers.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Section 2: Adaptability

Question 10: I believe older workers are suitable for training.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 11: I believe older workers possess great potential for development.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 12: I believe older workers are fast learners.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 13: I believe older workers will turn out to be flexible employees.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 14: I believe older workers possess the ability to learn new things.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 15: I believe the time spent training older workers will not be wasted.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 16: I believe it is a waste of time and money to train older workers to learn new skills.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Section 3: Warmth

Question 17: I believe older workers are warm hearted.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 18: I believe older workers have warm personalities.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 19: I believe older workers are like-able.

1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 20: I believe older workers have cold personalities.

    1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 21: I believe older workers are kind.

    1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 22: I believe older workers make an environment more welcoming.

    1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Question 23: I believe older workers are friendly.

    1- Strongly agree • 2- Agree • 3- Neither agree nor disagree • 4- Disagree • 5- Strongly disagree.

Appendix G: Consent form and information sheet

Agree to partake in research: An examination into the prevalence of ageist beliefs towards older workers as held by recruiters and HR Professionals within a multinational retail organisation located in Ireland.

• I… … willfully consent to take part in this exploration study.

• I comprehend that regardless of whether I consent to take part now, I can pull out at any

time or decline to address any inquiry with no outcomes of any kind.

• I comprehend that I can pull out consent to utilize information from my meeting

inside about fourteen days after the meeting, in which case the material will be erased.

• I have had the reason and nature of the investigation disclosed to me recorded as a hard copy also, I

have had the chance to pose inquiries about the examination.

• I comprehend that I won't profit straightforwardly from taking part in this research.

• I consent to my meeting being audio and sound recorded.

• I comprehend that all data I accommodate this examination will be dealt with privately.

• I comprehend that in any report on the consequences of this exploration my personality

will stay unknown. This will be finished by changing my name and

masking any subtleties of my meeting which may uncover my character or the

character of individuals I talk about.

• I comprehend that hidden concentrates from my meeting might be cited in

the actual thesis and might be utilized in additional distributed papers with my earlier assent.

• I comprehend that in the event that I alert the researcher that myself or another person is in danger of damage they may need to report this to the significant authorities - they will examine this with me first yet might be needed to report with or without my consent.

• I comprehend that the first sound accounts will be interpreted and

held in a safe, secret word secured area until the test board affirms the consequences of the paper so, all in all it will be obliterated safely. I comprehend that the specialist, just as her director will just approach my meeting notes/sound chronicle. These practices will be in accordance with the NCI moral rules and GDPR.

• I comprehend that a record of my meeting where all recognizing data has been eliminated alongside my assent structure will be held for two years after the researcher completes the master's program in agreement with NCI strategy.

• I comprehend that under opportunity of data authorization I am entitled to access the data I have given at any time while it is stored as determined previously.

• I comprehend that I am allowed to contact any individuals engaged with the research to look for additional explanation and data.

--- ----------------

Signature of participant   Date

 I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

 --- ---------------------- Signature of researcher   Date

Information sheet:

Title: An examination into the prevalence of ageist beliefs towards older workers as held by recruiters and HR Professionals within a multinational retail organisation located in Ireland.

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide if you would like to participate, please take time to read the following information about the purpose of the research and what it involves on your part.

What is the purpose of the research?

This research is carried out as part of my Master of Arts in Human Resource Management dissertation with the National College of Ireland. The objective of my research is to examine whether the possibility of age related beliefs presents itself as an issue among recruiters and HR professionals within a multinational located in Ireland or not. This research is being undertaken due to the observation that ageing workforce populations are increasingly present in the workplace due to a demographic shift caused by increased life expectations of previous generations as well as an escalating pension age. (Sewdas et al., 2017).

What will taking part involve?

The interview is compiled of three sections of Competence, Adaptability and Warmth and includes 11 questions.

Confidentiality and Voluntarism

This interview is confidential, voluntary, and anonymous. You, as the participant, are free to decide if you would like to participate in the study voluntarily and you have the right to refuse participation, refuse any questions or withdraw at any point and all your information will be discarded. There will be no means of identifying participants. The Participant Consent Form will be kept confidential and will not be used outside of the presented Master research study. Information provided will not be archived for secondary data analysis. The data gathered from this survey will be retained by myself, the researcher, until after my degree has been conferred. In accordance with NCI policy, the data will be stored for a maximum of up to 5 years and then destroyed. Under freedom of information legislation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The results of this research study will only be used for submitting my Master thesis.

What do you have to do?

If you wish to take part in the research, please agree to the consent form which has been emailed to you by the researcher prior to this interview.

Contact

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact myself, Laura O'Dwyer, a student at the National College of Ireland, at x18173748@student.ncirl.ie, or my research supervisor Stephen Sands at Stephen.Sands@ncirl.ie. Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.

I appreciate your time and for participating in this study.

Appendix H: Interview schedule

An examination into the prevalence of ageist beliefs towards older workers as held by recruiters and HR Professionals within a multinational organisation located in Ireland.

Section 1: Competence:

Question 1: At what age do you consider someone an "older worker"?

Question 2: Do you believe older workers prefer part time or full time hours and why do you think this?

Question 3: Are you aware of any practices or policies in your organisation that would assist older workers? Such as flexible working, shorter working days, part time.

Question 4: What reservations if any would you have in hiring an older candidate over a younger one?

Question 5: Do you believe there are specific roles, if any, which are better suited to an older worker within Company X?

Question 6: Do you believe older workers are fast learners?

Section 2: Adaptability:

Question 7: Do you believe older workers are committed and loyal workers?

Question 8: Does your organization undergo unconscious bias training?

Question 9: Do you believe there are any barriers for older workers in your industry, such as physical demands or technology?

Section 3: Warmth:

Question 10: What is your opinion of employing older workers in relation to customers perceptions.

Question 11: Do you believe customers feel more comfortable approaching a younger employee or an older employee for help?

Question 12: Do you believe older workers are more opinionated.

Appendix I: Information email from Age Action Ireland

Dear Laura,

Thank you for contacting Age action Ireland,

With regards to your query about how employers can be age friendly and diverse in their organizations, not only during recruitment but in all areas, and how organisations can avoid ageism and what they should not do regarding age diversity, I would recommend looking into the publications by research agencies such as Age Friendly Ireland and TILDA who have a wide range of studies relating to ageism and how we should strive to have a more diverse age group in workplaces. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission may also be able to offer information on the subject. I'm sorry that we don't have information to pass on at present in relation to your questions, I would certainly look into the organisations whose links are listed below though to see if they could offer some insight into this area.

https://agefriendlyireland.ie/category/publications/guidelines-toolkits/

https://tilda.tcd.ie/

https://www.ihrec.ie/your-rights/

https://banda.ie/case/age-discrimination-attitudes-older-colleagues/

I hope this information is of help to you! Regards,

Information Officer at Age Action Ireland CLG | 10 Grattan Crescent, Inchicore, Dublin 8

Tel: 01 4756989 | **Email:** helpline@ageaction.ie | **Website:** www.ageaction.ie

Facebook: www.facebook.com/AgeActionIreland | **Twitter:** www.twitter.com/AgeAction

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Join Age Action and support our work with older people

Appendix J: Information email from Age UK

Dear Laura O'Dwyer,

Thank you very much for getting in touch and sharing your thesis with us. We love to hear from supporters who are passionate about raising awareness of the problems faced by older people/helping make the UK a great place to grow older.

Whilst we appreciate that this is a really interesting and insightful piece of work, I'm afraid that we will not be able to offer individual support to your project. We're very honoured to receive so many requests like this from such dedicated supporters, however this sadly means that we are unable to respond to them all with the information that is required. We're sorry if this is disappointing, but we hope you understand.

We would recommend that you visit our website, where we share all our vital work supporting and empowering older people, ensuring that everyone can make the most of later life: here.

We hope this information helps and we wish you all the best for the rest of your masters.

Yours Sincerely,

Age UK Customer Relations

Tel: 0800 169 8787

Email: contact@ageuk.org.uk

Age UK, Linhay House, Linhay Business Park, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7UP

Monday- Friday 8.30-5.30