

*Does A Positive Age Environment
Successfully Influence Negative Age
Stereotypes from an Employee Perspective?*

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Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

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Abstract

The study considered if there were benefits accrued to an organisation operating a positive age environment in the workplace that were reflected in the attitudes and perceptions of the employees and as a by-product addressed several identified negative age stereotypes.

Previous investigations have operated quantitative approaches or focused on managerial or human resource management perspectives. This study sought to gain an insight from the employee perspective, establishing that a qualitative review, utilising the one-to-one interview method would generate the personalised perspective of participants.

An initial pilot of the specially designed interview instrument was carried out which generated a timeline and some minor adjustments to the style or wording of some of the questions. The research was primarily conducted in a single office which matched the criteria for a positive age environment, employing and promoting staff across a range of age profiles. The research was carried out with eighteen employees representing varying age ranges (between eighteen and sixty-four) and lengths of service (one to forty-one years).

The study established that a positive age environment does successfully address the negative age stereotypes selected for this review while highlighting the persistence of ageist perceptions between the younger and older cohorts who participated in the study.

Declaration

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

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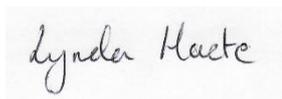
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List of Abbreviations

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CPO – Chief Procurement Officer

CIPD – Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation

HMRC – HM Revenue and Customs

HR – Human Resources

HRM – Human Resource Management

NCI – National College of Ireland

OECD – The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

WADS - Workplace Age Discrimination Scale

WDQ – Work Design Questionnaire

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Introduction

As a mature student returning to education with the intention of re-entering the workforce the shifting focus on the value and merit of age management policies is intriguing. Research to date has focused on what is considered the mid- and late-career cohorts with several organisations taking active steps to confront and adapt to the challenges presented by an aging / shifting demographic, over the past decade, toward a more mature population of both workers and customer base with clear implications for society, workforce and businesses (Fabisiak and Prokurat, 2012) while Sakdiyakorn and Wattanacharoensil (2017) allude to the growing requirement to match and / or enhance the customer experience with the composition of the attendant workforce

This shift is influenced by declining birth-rates, less physically demanding work, increasing rates of third level attendance, drive for work-life balance, statutory amendments to retirement age criteria, business driven objectives to achieve competitive advantage and recognising that people are living longer and healthier lives (Mountford 2011; Alcover and Topa 2018). According to Groom (2015) employment rates for individuals in their fifties and sixties have grown, more than any other age group, over the past twenty years. This category reflects workers who are seeking a new direction or career opportunity, individuals who are selecting not to choose retirement options or alternatively those who are returning to the workforce after an absence.

This also presents challenges for businesses in relation to both recruitment and retention with the CEO of an established Irish fast food chain recognising there are benefits of long serving, mature staff members offset with the challenges of both retention of same combined with recruitment within a talent pool which reflects a scarcity of resources, influenced by decreasing unemployment rates and a different attitude to work by millennials (McDonagh, Today with Sean O'Rourke, 2018).

This study will initially consider the scope or determination for an 'older worker' from several sources while also explaining the concept of age management. It will further consider an underlying feature of effective age management strategies which are age related stereotypes, specifically considering some negative stereotypes primarily associated with older workers (Ng and Feldman, 2012). To date other studies have considered this phenomenon from a commercial and managerial perspective, primarily based on empirical / quantitative measures. This thesis will aim to consider the potential impact of proactive age management policies relative to negative age stereotypes from an individual employee perspective (representative of a collective workforce) via qualitative research utilising the one-to-one interview method.

Literature Review

In the late 1980s, following a time of recession and a shift in demographics – which is once again relevant in our economy – a well-known hardware store, based in the United Kingdom, made a tactical decision to open a new store staffed only by older workers (Hogarth and Barth, 1991). It became its most commercially successful outlet and prompted a rollout of positive age management policies across its network. Many other institutions now actively pursue age management strategies, policies or ethos (CIPD, 2015) however determinants of success are commercially based with both quantitative and qualitative studies garnering input from management and senior staff without considering the effects at an individual level for workers.

Growth in multi-generational employment configurations are reflective of changing demographics, legislation and the desire, or needs, of individuals to work longer. This represents positive and negative elements for both the organisation and employees, as a collective and as individuals. Srinivasan (2012) and Backes-Gellner and Veen (2012) highlight challenges in areas such as communication and socialisation with Srinivasan (2012) further pinpointing rate of change, combining

age diverse employees, trust, teamwork, management structures and differences in work values / ethics. There are many advantages to getting and maintaining the right balance with Tsai et al. (2018) finding “generational diversity is positively associated with decision-making” (p. 57) while Backes-Gellner and Veen (2012) emphasise the positive implications for productivity associated with the interaction of employees with different age ranges, particularly in innovative or creative contexts. The changing age demographic will be reflected in a less homogenous organisation which will require greater diversity management and models of work in addition to the adaptation of human resource policies to cater for differing perspectives, wants and needs of multi-generational workforces (Joniaková and Blšťáková, 2015).

Age Management:

Age management indicates the specific management of ageing human resources based on an all-inclusive, multigenerational and life-stage orientation (Eguides.osha.europa.eu, 2016). Proactive age management policies address concerns re equality, competitiveness, productivity, managing an aging workforce and prolonging working life while combating barriers to and promoting diversity in relation to age (Naegele and Walker, 2006). Appendix 1: Elements of Age Management.

In 2015 Ciutienė and Railaitė used an empirical, statistics based study to evaluate the effects of age management practices in areas such as recruitment, learning, knowledge transfer, attitudes, flexible work practices, health management and workplace environment (Naegele and Walker, 2006), and their implications for changing attitudes towards older workers, effective line management, knowledge transfer and competitive advantage, as per the GlaxoSmithKline program aimed at older workers (Roundtree, 2011). Supporting an individual to productively remain in the workplace is a key focus for line management and HRM practitioners. Effective implementation will see overlap in some areas while, for example, “decreasing working age population” (Ciutienė and Railaitė, 2015, p. 392) requires more informed focus on end to end processes incorporating

recruitment, training, retention, cultural awareness and the active inclusion of older workers. This study gathers material and information from other sources and indicates a requirement to consider individual level changes in requirements and ideals while identifying flexibility and initiatives conducive to health, well-being and productivity of staff as key elements. Ciutienė and Railaitė (2015) and Naegele and Walker (2006) further conclude that active age management results in improved productivity, knowledge retention, trust levels and competitiveness while decreasing labour costs and stress and supporting work-life balance.

A 2012 study by Fabisiak and Prokurat reviews and considers the effectiveness of the age management strategies that have been employed to date i.e. increased awareness and flexibility combined with best practices influenced by culture, government policy and legislation (Naegele and Walker, 2006). The findings identify negative “age bias” (Fabisiak and Prokurat, 2012, p. 88) policies such as assuming a ‘young’ worker is unsuitable for a senior role or reducing the responsibilities / encouraging early retirement of an older worker counteracted by wide-ranging and successful age management activities linked to competitive advantage despite changes in population configurations (Fabisiak and Prokurat, 2012) based on assessment at individual, organisational and macroeconomic levels. Their paper, based on previous studies, considers the perspective of both younger and older workers while highlighting the necessity for specific measurement tools for and value of young workers going forward (Fabisiak and Prokurat, 2012).

Fabisiak and Prokurat (2012) advocate the development of age management policies to value the unique facets of both young and older workers with benefits in areas of motivation, employability, job satisfaction, work-life balance, the talent pool, and brand management (Naegele and Walker 2006; Eguides.osha.europa.eu 2016) plus achievement of synergies, avoiding fatigue and “horizontal and vertical mobility” (Fabisiak and Prokurat, 2012, p. 89). They advocate an all-encompassing age-related approach to recruitment, flexibility, well-being and environment and for retirement / transition to retirement assistance explaining that the ‘Work

Ability Index' (Tuomi et al. 1998 cited in Fabisiak and Prokurat 2012) specifies those who present a flight risk and therefore require attention. Naegele and Walker (2006) also advocate communication, age awareness activities, an organisational audit and ongoing evaluation as critical success factors with Fabisiak and Prokurat (2012) outlining the benefits of comprehensive age management policies as

“higher productivity in middle-aged workers, a larger share for the company of a growing labour participation of older employees and a competitive edge in the competition for ever-scarcer young talent” (p. 94).

These benefits are influenced by

“risk factors at the workplace, job satisfaction, access to job opportunities, workplace autonomy, work intensity, probability of vertical and horizontal mobility and even a worker’s loyalty” (Fabisiak and Prokurat, 2012, p. 94).

In addition, Thomas (2016) maintains that customers of a multi-national fast food chain prefer multigenerational workforces and that they expected and received better service, based on a survey of 1000 regular customers. Further, a review of employees at 32,000 UK locations identified that those working within a multi-generational configuration were ten percent happier (Thomas, 2016).

Research indicates there is commercial benefit to incorporating older staff into the business with the CPO of McDonalds outlining a twenty percent sales increase linked to having at least two ‘older’ people at front of house (Byrant, 2019) which was supported by a study commissioned by the organisation which identified employees in the sixty+ age category positively impacting their bottom line with sixty-six percent connecting well with customers and forty-four percent actively mentoring younger staff (Lancaster.ac.uk, 2019). However, this is tempered by a 2016 survey which found forty two percent of employers maintained there is an upper age limit in relation to customer facing roles (William Fry, 2016).

Retaining and actively managing ageing staff require changes to both organisational culture and human resource management in developing and creating ideas and solutions which are married with effective communication (Joniaková and Blštáková, 2015). However, findings suggest only approximately twenty percent of European organisations actively engage in positive age management policies with the majority continuing to focus resources and efforts on 'young' employees (Joniaková and Blštáková, 2015).

Age Range:

A variety of the studies consider different baselines as the determinant of an older worker. Although Ng and Feldman (2012) use age forty as their baseline other, more recent, studies suggest forty-five as the basis for measurement (Brooke 2003; Mountford 2011; Alcover and Topa 2018) with Naegele and Walker (2006) selecting fifty. A behaviour and attitudes survey which directly polled employers found they regarded workers over fifty-one as 'older' (William Fry, 2016).

Ng and Feldman (2012) also note the increasing rates of employment for those in the forty-five+ age bracket supported by Groom (2015) reporting similar growth for those in the fifty- and sixty-year age brackets over the past twenty years, especially relative to other age brackets. These workers are associated with merits of proficiency and capability (Groom, 2015).

The OECD measure employment rates for specified age groups

“as the number of employed people of a given age as a percentage of the total number of people in that same age group” (theOECD, 2018).

There are three distinct groups tracked: 15-24, 25-54 and 55-64 with Ireland showing 60.4% for the 55-64 age bracket (theOECD, 2018). Appendix 2: OECD Employment Rates.

Stereotypes:

Stereotypes operate within all aspects of social and working life reflecting indiscriminate attitudes about an individual or group which may or may not be

realistic (Kehoe, 2013). Negative age stereotypes abound in society which in turn are reflected in the economy, in legislation and in organisational policy.

Ng and Feldman (2012) have undertaken an extensive study in the area of stereotypes producing a meta-analysis i.e. an assessment of combined data from multiple studies of the same subject to identify and / or explain trends (Meta-analysis.com, 2019) based on “418 empirical studies” (Ng and Feldman, 2012, p. 821) which aimed to challenge negative stereotypes in relation to older workers. Empirical studies are based on data gathered via “observation, experience or experiment” (Quinlan, 2011, p. 12). Ng and Feldman (2012) evaluate six specific negative age stereotypes associated with older workers (not an exhaustive list) which examined if older workers were

“(a) less motivated, (b) generally less willing to participate in training and career development, (c) more resistant and less willing to change, (d) less trusting, (e) less healthy, and (f) more vulnerable to work-family imbalance” (Ng and Feldman, 2012, p. 821).

These negative stereotypes can directly influence HR related functions with legal implications and potential impacts to decision making, reward distribution, retention and promotion (Perry and Finkelstein, 1999). William Fry (2016) also maintain age is an influencing factor in relation to employment, advancement, consideration for projects and so on, with over fifty percent of candidates of the opinion that age is a determining factor directly in relation to employment and over eighty-five percent viewing candidates who were over the age of fifty-five as less likely to be considered for promotion.

This comprehensive study by Ng and Feldman, which took steps to identify and mitigate influencing factors, only found weak support for the stereotype assessing reduced willingness regarding training and career development (Ng and Feldman, 2012) however, this contrasts with the B&Q study which showed that the level of reluctance toward change / new technology was shared by all workers and that the same training approach was applicable for all age ranges (Hogarth and Barth,

1991). Interestingly, over seventy percent of all those surveyed in a behaviour and attitude survey considered technology as a critical factor (William Fry, 2016) highlighting the need for ongoing training and support for all age ranges.

There was no evidence to support the remaining stereotypes, challenging commonly held views by management, assessed as part of this study which was corroborated by the inclusion of some longitudinal surveys (Ng and Feldman, 2012). In 2018, Alcover and Topa took a survey-based approach, via SPSS data handling, to consider the characteristics, motivations, work ability and job intentions of older workers. While they highlighted the relevance of a longitudinal approach and the need for tools to measure emotive factors, they successfully identified that knowledge characteristics and personal mastery were key variables for older workers (Alcover and Topa, 2018) which directly challenges the Ng and Feldman stereotype regarding lack of interest in training or the desire to learn in relation to career development. However, individual perception and evaluations support Ng and Feldman's linking of autonomy to performance. In addition, further research to differentiate between lifespan and functional, organisational and psychological age and a suggestion to enhance WDQ i.e. Work Design Questionnaire by Morgeson and Humphrey (2006), with motivation criteria could enhance knowledge in this area.

The Alcover and Topa (2018) study identified strong Cronbach alpha measures and Pearson's correlations supported the findings while acknowledging the need for multi-occupational studies as this focused on Spanish workers in the forty-five to sixty-five age bracket in public and private sectors elements of "healthcare, financial services and consulting sectors" (Alcover and Topa, 2018, p. 7).

Ng and Feldman (2012) focus on 'real-world' scenarios while including a diverse list of thirty-nine variables which are related or connected to each other and build on two previous papers by these authors. A more accurate meta-analysis technique was used which permitted the combination of different types of sample-based data plus corrected and uncorrected correlations and corrections

for error variance in sampling and measurements (Raju et al., 1991) utilizing control factors such as organisational tenure and focused on findings with 95% confidence intervals (Ng and Feldman, 2012). As part of their findings Ng and Feldman (2012) encourage assessment of

“coping mechanisms that older employees use to compensate for exaggerated negative stereotypes against them” (p. 849)

and a focus on workers in the sixty+ age bracket.

Age and employment generate conflicting views and perceptions with a 2016 behaviour and attitudes survey (William Fry, 2016) considering the perspectives of employers, employees and unemployed people. Negative stereotypes were endorsed by the survey, with over sixty percent of employers maintaining older workers are opposed to change while loyalty, validated by fifty percent of employers, interpersonal skills and dependability were highly rated in the older cohort.

Another area of concern relates to age and productivity with van Ours and Stoeldraijer (2011) identifying little evidence to support the view that there is a gap between pay and productivity linked to age, based on a worker-firm dataset and a review of previous studies utilising cross-sectional and panel data. The authors discussed common stereotypes in relation to older workers regarding training, productivity, healthcare costs and so on with individuals aggregated to a formal level as part of an empirical analysis. The authors utilised “Cobb-Douglas production function” (van Ours and Stoeldraijer, 2011, p. 122) plus detailed methodology and parameter estimates with the main findings suggesting there is no business need not to retain older workers which challenges the age versus productivity stereotype applied to medium / long serving employees. Garibaldi, Oliveira-Martins and Ours (2010) maintain the following factors influence the causal relationship between age and productivity i.e. complexity of productivity, changes to the age / productivity profile over time, the influence of external elements and difficulty in aggregating individual profiles.

Age Diversity:

Hogarth and Barth (1991) undertook a study to examine a radical business decision by the hardware company B&Q to operate a new store, based in Macclesfield, solely staffed by older workers, i.e. over fifty. This decision was driven by a changing labour demographic, a requirement to reduce turnover, an enhanced recruitment objective, improvement of staff product knowledge and improvement of customer care standards. The HR directive was to improve the link between employees and the company and recruit more part-time workers identifying a reliance on store managers and the need for organisational adaptability and flexibility. The premise was a success with almost eleven applicants for each available role and a subsequent national recruitment campaign generated “7,500 enquiries” (Hogarth and Barth, 1991, p.9). The study compared data with five other B&Q stores with a similar breakdown to Macclesfield with the caveat that findings are “indicative rather than definitive” (Hogarth and Barth, 1991, p. 11) reflecting the influence of individual store managers. However, across the assessed areas the Macclesfield store consistently returned better statistics with direct and indirect labour turnover costs five times lower, comparative productivity levels and profit was eighteen percent above “the average of the 5 comparison stores” (Hogarth and Barth, 1991, p. 12). An initial doubling of training time was unwarranted and higher pay and benefit costs reflected full employment levels and profit-sharing initiatives while statistically the evidence did not demonstrate a link between absentee levels and older workers with the qualitative view suggesting “older workers were less likely to be absent” (Hogarth and Barth, 1991, p. 14). In addition, low leakage was attributed to attentive staff while low shrinkage was attributed to labour turnover levels due to older workers operating flexible working conditions reflective of their work-life balance needs (Hogarth and Barth, 1991). Shortages in professions or sectors will require organisations to actively create supportive human resource policies which support work-life balance and link to employer brand (Joniaková and Blšťáková, 2015).

The study is based on company statistics and anecdotal input from managers which was supported by an in-store market research survey, however it did not consider the workers perspective. Following the success of the Macclesfield implementation, and to mark its 10-year anniversary, further B&Q initiatives were launched including “no automatic retirement age”, options to reduce hours or change role, no age restriction for graduate programs, and a “disability awareness promotion, especially relating to impairment caused by the onset of age” (Personnel Today, 2000).

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2014) it is legislation rather than talent pipeline management which is driving age diversity and although negative age stereotypes are starting to change, the benefits of age diverse teams seem to be more apparent to individuals than to HR. Businesses are acknowledging the age diversity of their customer base with Santander and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) identifying fifty percent and thirty five percent, respectively, of their customer base in the fifty+ age bracket. While acknowledging potential management implications, issues re knowledge sharing, retirement challenges and cultural / practical concerns the companies strive to reflect this demographic within their workforce with Santander linking tenure with better customer service (CIPD, 2014) corresponding with anecdotal evidence regarding maturity from the B&Q study (Hogarth and Barth, 1991) and a finding by the McDonalds corporation “that levels of customer service were 20% higher in restaurants with staff aged 60+” (CIPD, 2015, p. 18). However, this is at odds with Luoh and Tsaur (2011) who found older workers received lower customer satisfaction ratings. HMRC coordinated an Age Summit to consider all aspects of age and challenge common myths highlighting partial retirement, mentoring and coaching as options to enhance the talent pipeline and be an employer of choice and identified the requirement to support line managers in being innovative within the workforce (CIPD, 2014).

Recognising the challenges facing business in relation to the “changing landscape of the jobs market” (CIPD, 2015, p.10) and the management of an age-diverse

workforce the CIPD conducted a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews with senior HR from multiple industry types focused on two age groups in two distinct locations (CIPD, 2015). The report identified benefits of age-diversity including improved customer satisfaction, competitive advantage and “knowledge-sharing” supported / encouraged by “mentoring and shared learning” and “flexible working options and job-sharing” (CIPD, 2015, p. 4) for those nearing retirement based on respect, cultural climate, life stage and shared interests / values. All organisations highlighted the need for training and support for line managers operating “diversity and inclusion training to all its managers” (CIPD, 2015, p. 19) and devising specific policies, reflective of life stages, in relation to recruitment to reflect their customer base as per Santander, HMRC and McDonalds, knowledge retention via internal promotions, continuous learning and development, succession, flexible working with the aim to prolong work life, health and well-being (CIPD, 2015). The report also identified the need to “develop commercial awareness” and that “focusing on life stages rather than generational stereotypes is a more effective, progressive and inclusive approach” (CIPD, 2015, p. 21). Once again, this study did not consider the workers perspective and ‘tested’ for a different age category in the specified locations.

Performance is a key consideration in relation to proactive age diversity as deliberated by Sturman (2003) who considered “three variables, job experience, organizational tenure, and age” (p. 609) in relation to performance. Based on meta-analysis he identified that experience, garnered over time, was the predictive element of job performance in highly complex roles and as experience can ensue from multiple sources this counters the reliance on tenure and age as predictors of success. The variables were considered on an individual basis and only in relation to job complexity with a recommendation to reflect the “covariates simultaneously” (Sturman, 2003, p. 627) and in relation to task, citizenship and counterproductive performance.

Ilmakunnas and Ilmakunnas (2011) express concern for the impact to businesses if they don’t proactively pre-empt the exodus of similarly grouped staff, such as

baby boomers, which creates a reliance on the “transfer of tacit knowledge” (Ilmakunnas and ILMakunnas, 2011, p.224). ILMakunnas and ILMakunnas (2011) considers the labour economics of age diversity suggesting benefits at plant level. The authors used employer – employee linked datasets generally related to firm level and reflecting group diversity whereas typically diversity has only been considered in relation to the employer or the individual in previous empirical studies. The ILMakunnas and ILMakunnas (2011) models assessed value add, labour input, plant, time and capital along with work force characteristics such as age, gender and education based on the effect of the plant, reflecting standard deviations for age and education and age groups incorporating “the Blau index” (p. 234) and referencing “the Herfindahl concentration index” (p. 234) and using individual wage equations.

The ILMakunnas and ILMakunnas (2011) paper used a random sampled Finnish employer - employee group dataset with inclusion of corresponding business sector data for each randomly selected participant with a focus on industrial plants and finds positive correlation between productivity and age diversity however, they question the cause and effect element of the findings and suggest an external distinction for employee demographics as a means of supporting their findings (Ilmakunnas and ILMakunnas, 2011). The report also supports previous HRM based findings indicating beneficial aspects to younger and older employees operating together, thereby justifying age diversity policies (Ilmakunnas and ILMakunnas, 2011).

Ilmakunnas and ILMakunnas (2011) also identify that similarity facilitates coalitions where

“relational demography is defined as the extent to which a particular member is different (dissimilar) from other members within the same work unit” (p. 226)

as in HRM studies whereby “group diversity and relational demography may have different effects” (Ilmakunnas and ILMakunnas, 2011, p. 251).

Conclusion

Based on the above literature it is evident that age management policies have not been explored from the employee's perspective and assessed for their effectiveness in addressing negative age stereotypes. The aim of this study is to gather suitable research to determine the effectiveness of age management policies to date in addressing negative age stereotypes which could indicate a strategy / blueprint that can be adopted by other organisations for workers operating at all functional levels especially in light of a cross generational survey of 5000 people which found older and younger people were keen to work with people of all ages (Thomas, 2016).

Reflecting previous studies, particularly the recent work by Marchiondo, Gonzales and Ran (2016), William Fry (2016) and the original article by Hogarth and Barth (1991) the age of fifty will denote an older worker for this study.

Research Question

A research question should consider the what, how or why (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017) of a situation and facilitates closer contact with one or more persons directly affected by the scenario (Bryman and Bell, 2011). It should be well-defined, focused, capable of research with relevant literature and enhance existing understanding (Bryman and Bell, 2011), mapping the approach and implementation to facilitate a flexible nature and iterative aspect of the design and final implementation of the specific instrument (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017).

The research process should:

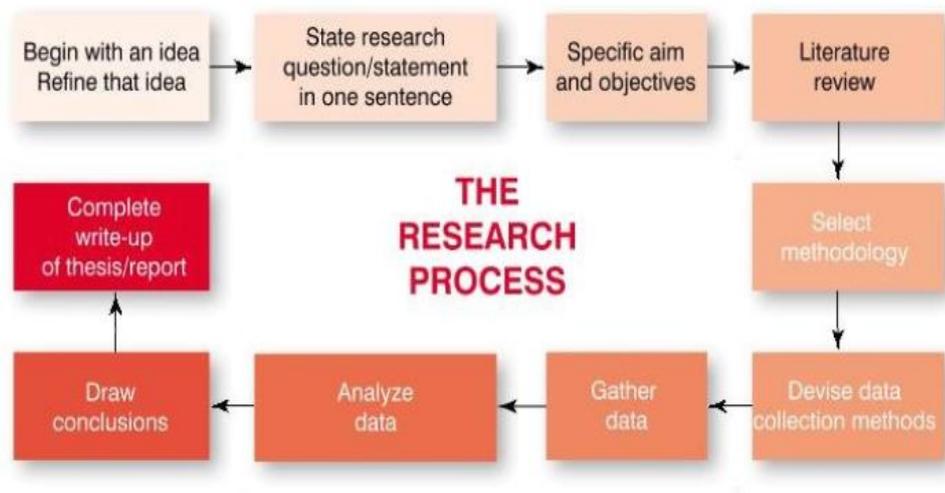


Figure 1: Qualitative Research Process (Quinlan, 2011, p. 126)

The main aim of this study is to determine if the proactive use of age management policies or ethos within an organisation positively impacts on six specified negative age stereotypes. The study will consider the positive or negative level of influence on specified age stereotypes from the perspective of individuals working within a nominated organisation(s) known to pursue age management policies or actively engage a positive age ethos reflected in its recruitment, training and promotional activities.

Quinlan (2011) outlines a four-framework model for research which encompasses the: Conceptual or “one sentence research question” (Quinlan, 2011, p. 6) which comprises the core ideas, Theoretical or comprehensive literature review then Methodological which details the how the research was / will be conducted and finally the Analytical framework reflecting the detail of analysis undertaken for the project.

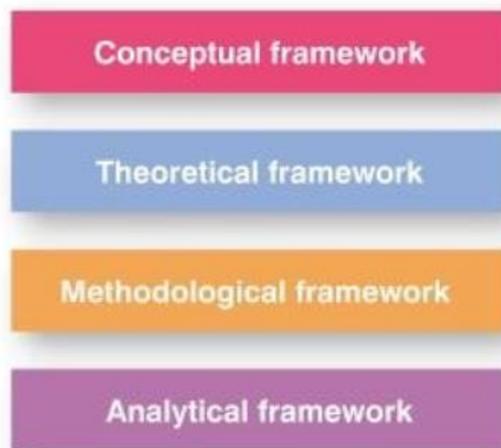


Figure 2: The Four Framework Model for Research (Quinlan, 2011, p. 6)

Research Questions:

The purpose of the research questions is to act as prompts, or catalysts, for the generation and gathering of the data required to investigate and explore the area of focus (Bryman and Bell, 2011). They assist in the definition of the research objective and thereby influence the style and approach required to undertake the research (University Libraries, 2019). Proposed research questions:

1. Do Age Management Policies Have A Positive Impact on known Age Stereotypes?
2. Does an intergenerational workforce influence an employee's perception regarding age?
3. Are there organisational benefits to reducing age stereotypes amongst employees?

Having considered the above research questions, deliberated on the styles and methodologies available to conduct this study and taking into consideration the methods identified in the articles considered in the literature review I have determined that it is important to gather the personal thoughts, observations and experiences of employees operating within an environment which matches the criteria for positive age management and compare that output to the negative age

stereotype findings which have previously been considered from a managerial or human resources perspective.

Research Method

Research methods are typically qualitative i.e. based on words or quantitative i.e. numerical in focus or a mixture of both (Quinlan, 2011). Fundamentally the difference is descriptive data versus numerical data (Pediaa.Com, 2018) with qualitative facilitating interpretation without numerics and focused on inner meanings and gaining insight (Zikmund, 2010). Research in the area of age management and age related stereotypes has primarily been conducted utilising empirical or quantitative methods based on controlled criteria as per Alcover and Topa (2018), Ciutienė and Railaitė (2015) and Sturman (2003) or qualitative studies which focused on senior / management or corporate perspectives as per Byrant (2019), CIPD (2015), Fabisiak and Prokurat (2012) and Hogarth and Barth (1991). Although Alcover and Topa (2018) canvassed workers it was from the perspective of motivation and values while the CIPD (2015) review was based on different age ranges in separate locations.

In addition, Watson (1994) outlines that determining a research approach, be it qualitative, quantitative or a combined format, involves utilising a model of “what, why and how” (Watson, 1994, p. 77) questions which will determine the approach and skills required to undertake the project. Appendix 3: Framework for Crafting Research. Bryman and Bell (2011) also detail how research questions should be determined in conjunction with literature review and a desire to pinpoint or clarify an aspect or topic highlighted during this review. The questions should link together and ‘drill down’ to a specific question or query. Quantitative research is deductive and has objectivism ontological orientation while qualitative is inductive and relies more on interpretivism in epistemological orientation (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

The methodology for the study reflects the philosophy for data gathering (Killam, 2015) and the epistemology, or methods / rules for generating candid information, reflect the basis of the information, the methods of investigation and the obligations re verification which ultimately denote the research method utilised (Peace, 2013).

This study proposes to determine if six negative age stereotypes, as identified by Ng and Feldman (2012), hold from an employee's perspective operating within an environment conducting positive age management policies or ethos. It will consider the employees perception of their value to the organisation and relative to their colleagues utilising a qualitative research approach based on semi-structured, one-to-one in-depth interviews.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research tends to be a more flexible and representative approach with less data manipulation and intrusion (Walle, 2015) focusing on thoughts and feelings, reflecting the contributor's viewpoint rather than presenting information via pure statistics (Bryman and Bell 2011; Quinlan 2011). It is influenced by the phenomena under review rather than a rote set of activities, reflecting assumptions, knowledge to date, the context and process of acquiring knowledge for the study (Morgan and Smircich, 1980).

It takes a "naturalist" (Byram and Bell, 2011, p. 44) approach which gathers informed descriptions and interactions from people in their usual environment (Walle, 2015) based on social and subjective elements relying on individual discernment and assessment (Byram and Bell 2011; Walle, 2015). Typical methods include

“(a) surveys, (b) focus groups, (c) in-depth interviews, (d) participant observation, (e) ethnography, and (f) ethnology” (Walle, 2015, p. 15).

Bryman and Bell (2011) highlight some key principles for gauging qualitative research which pertain to honesty, reliability, sincerity, degree of certainty and

veracity while also cautioning re the potential for subjectivity, replication issues, generalisations and lack of clarity.

Main steps of qualitative research:

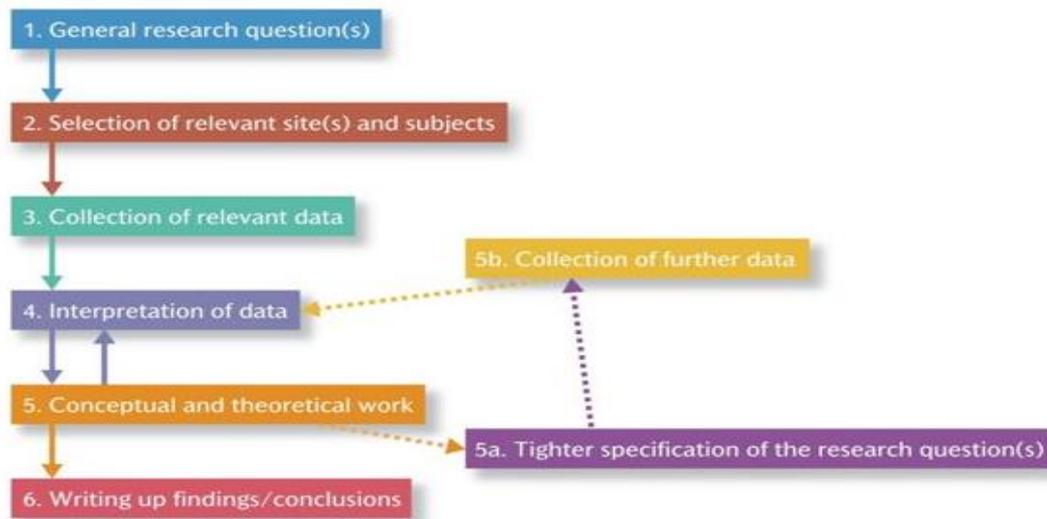


Figure 3: Stages of Qualitative Research (Byram and Bell, 2015, p. 390)

Qualitative data is beneficial for in-depth reviews and is useful in specific contexts or situations. It can be flexible with the narrative facilitating a descriptive element although it should be noted that it tends to be specific in nature and can be time consuming and / or resource intensive with the potential for the results to be influenced by a researchers biases (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The data collection for qualitative research involves the use of language to investigate and grasp encounters via methods which facilitate talking, listening and observation with the aim of crafting, via comparison, general accounts and transcribing them for collective consumption. The purpose is to make sense of the world around us by investigating, observing and interpreting an aspect within it in its natural setting (Flick, 2018). Appendix 4: Qualitative versus Quantitative Data

This is intended to be an interpretivist study i.e. based on “the study of the social world” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 16) aiming to recognise and assess the differing reactions and interpretations of people to the world around them, also known as “phenomenology” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 18) or lived circumstances (Killam,

2015) which is credited to Alfred Schutz and involves the challenge of trying to see something from another person’s viewpoint, to reflect their thinking or feeling in relation to something (Peace, 2013), based on sensory insight (Priya, 2017). Priya (2017) further outlines, based on Schutz findings, that how people operate is based on learned rules and regulations which allows them to decipher the social world around them.

This is an ‘emic,’ or outside in assessment, where the researcher does not influence the scenario or the subjects and has a basis in realism (Killam, 2015). This reflects the position of Max Weber and his focus on the ‘causal explanation’ based on the analysis of social action (Weber and Henderson, 2012). As meaning is applied to an experience it denotes a constructivist ontology (Peace, 2013) which reflects how “social phenomena and categories” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 22) are generated via social interface and are in a constant state of modification reflecting what we believe to be true (Killam, 2015). Qualitative studies typically use smaller sample sizes and thematic evaluation (Killam, 2015).

This is an Inductive process, which Killam (2015) and Bryman and Bell (2011) have likened to climbing a hill whereby you start with a question which through gathering of observation / data and analysis permits the drawing of conclusions or ‘hypothesises’ and the generation of theories and findings. A good theory can then be used to make precise forecasts about outcomes of further observations (Hawking, 1992).

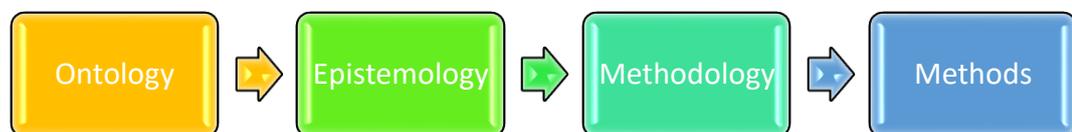


Figure 4: Phases of Research Process (Killam, 2015)

Finally, Tuval-Mashiach (2017) and Hiles and Cermak (2007) outline the necessity for transparency regarding qualitative research which should be evident in all

stages of the process from the setting, methodology, data collection and interpretation, evaluation and communication (Hiles and Cermak, 2007).

In-Depth Interviews

This study proposes utilising the In-depth Interview method based on a set of tailored questions which allows scope for flexible and detailed answers (Walle, 2015) suitable for a consolidated sample and reflects considerations of logistics such as space, time and scheduling (Namey et al., 2016) while Flick (2018) also advises considering external elements such as time, sourcing contributors and ethical requirements when determining the number of interviews conducted.

A one-to-one in-depth interview allows the interviewer to develop a connection with the interviewee while requiring “confidential, formal, open and honest communication between” (Quinlan, 2011, p. 290) them which facilitates elaboration of answers. A semi-structured interview is a guide based on a list of questions which provides flexibility in how the interviewee provides answers (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The interviewer must be a good listener and empathic with a capacity to ask probing questions without influencing the answers (Quinlan, 2011) although this method can limit further exploration of areas not previously considered (Walle, 2015). Although interviews take longer than other methods, such as focus groups, they are ultimately more cost effective (Namey et al., 2016). Furthermore, as age can be a sensitive topic a focus group may hinder levels of honesty and restrict the interviewer’s ability to gain clarification or further explore a comment or observation offered by an individual (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In addition, the audio can be compromised while there can be significant challenges in gathering together a group of individuals at the same time and in the same location (Bryman and Bell, 2011) while also wishing to avoid a negative group dynamic created by strong personalities (Quinlan, 2011).

Krueger and Casey (2015) highlight the benefit of in-depth interviews relative to sensitive topics, such as the subject of age as considered in this review, and the attainment of more in-depth individual reflections which is an established

underlying requirement for this study, while Namey et al., (2016) also maintain that in-depth interviews “are more efficient on a concept-per-person basis” (p. 426). Further, Christie and Fleischer (2010) pinpoint interviews as the most common evaluative method for qualitative studies, based on an analysis of content for one hundred and seventeen studies over a three year period, while stressing the need for consistency in execution which supports the emphasis of Namey et al., (2016) on getting the best return from the method selected. The development and use of tailored Interview Instruments support a consistent and balanced interaction with each of the interviewees.

The work by Namey et al. (2016) established that eighty percent thematic saturation is reached with eight interviews while ninety percent saturation can be achieved with sixteen interviews based on an “inductive thematic analysis” (p. 425) of forty interviews supported by a “bootstrap simulation” (Namey et al., 2016, p. 425). Saturation in relation to themes, identified during the analysis phase of the qualitative research process, is the point whereby little or no more new information occurs via the data collection (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012) or “the main variations of the phenomenon have been identified and incorporated into the emerging theory” (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006, p. 65) with practically all themes identified in the first twelve interviews and over seventy percent identified in the initial six with code frequency stabilisation verified with a Cronbach alpha measure above the industry recognised level of 0.7. Guest et al., (2006) outline that higher levels of saturation are linked to the level of homogeneous elements of the selected group however, they also caution that the number of interviews should also reflect data quality, area of inquiry, selective sampling and variation or correlation objectives. Reflecting these considerations and based on limitations in relation to the primary research location this study analyses eighteen one-to-one in-depth interviews with employees comprising a variety of roles and positions and across all age ranges from eighteen to sixty-four.

Interview Instrument

This study will utilise a semi-structured interview approach which relies on a set of questions which act as a guide for the process and facilitates moving from a general to a specific focus (Bryman and Bell, 2011). It will incorporate an interview guide which can take the form of visual reminders relating to a topic or written word (Bryman and Bell, 2011) as in this study, for example, prompts such as *'thoughts, experience, explain, impact'*. Bryman and Bell (2011) also caution that research questions are not so specific that they close off other avenues of investigation and to ensure a flow of questions, covering key areas of enquiry, with no leading questions while describing how general and specific 'face sheet' data (name, age, years employed and position) helps put answers into context. There are many considerations highlighted by numerous authors in relation to running interviews from listening, empathy, the right amount of talking / interaction combined with structure, interpretive skills and the ability to allow the process to flow while keeping a focus on the objectives (Kvale 2008; Quinlan 2011; Bryman and Bell 2011; Peace 2013) with Bryman and Bell (2011) also recommending securing a quiet, comfortable space to conduct the interviews where interruptions are minimal. This was achieved by subdividing a large conference room into a smaller area and arranging the seats in an informal manner. At the start of each interview the participants were asked to verbally confirm their agreement to contribute to the study and for the use of pertinent attributable quotes.

The initial interview instrument for this study was devised based on industry standard question formats, cognisant of the requirement to map to specific negative age stereotypes. The main sources for the format and structure of the interview instrument were the Workplace Age Discrimination Scale (WADS) devised by Marchiondo et al., (2016) and a study by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2015. The WADS was devised to reflect apparent and concealed discrimination and applied across a range of age profiles based on "a deductive approach, a qualitative study and two quantitative surveys" (Marchiondo et al., 2016, p. 493) which initially reflected the experiences of older workers and was

then validated and compared to findings with workers in the youth to mid-range ages ultimately highlighting nine distinct questions based on “60.8% of variance” (Marchiondo et al., 2016 p. 502). In addition, the scale also reflected job satisfaction and turnover intentions as per the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al. 1983 cited in Marchiondo et al. 2016) and turnover intentions identified by Balfour and Wechsler (1996) and Porter et al. 1976 cited in Marchiondo et al. 2016).

The WADS study ratified covert discrimination and suggests utilisation to support influential interventions by organisations (Marchiondo et al., 2016) as Hedge and Borman (2012) have identified negative stereotypes influence both hiring and promotional prospects for older workers while the Employment Equality Legislation Act 1998 (Faulkner, 2018) bans direct and indirect discrimination on nine distinct grounds, including age.

Marchiondo et al., (2016) identified that previous research had not considered the impact to or perspective of the older employee and in addition to the covert nature of discrimination initiated the creation of the scale. Their review also highlighted shortcomings in research to date which included: limited validation of measures, not an accurate reflection of experiences, some measures reflect a combination of experience and perception, not bound by a defined timeframe, respondents differing interpretation of age discrimination. Marchiondo et al., (2016) also highlight that the focus to date has been on overt acts whereas negative age stereotypes can result in covert discrimination. The study utilised established measures and anonymity while mistreatment measures were reflected later in the study to ensure they did not influence earlier responses, scale formats were varied to reduce “anchor and end-point biases” (Marchiondo et al., 2016, p. 497) while using a large sample across multiple organisations to validate the scale. The WADS study determined fifty+ as an ‘older worker’, garnered agreement on constituents of age discrimination, combining overt and covert, finding evidence of “differential workplace treatment based on age, which impairs

fairness of treatment or opportunity” (Marchiondo et al., 2016, p. 498). Appendix 5: Interview Instrument Template.

Materials

The Interview Instrument Template was constructed based on the above studies and with the aim of mapping to the six negative age stereotypes outlined by Ng and Feldman (2012) in order to facilitate the testing of their findings when considered from the perspective of an employee. Appendix 6: Map of Negative Age Stereotypes and Interview Instrument Questions.

Easterby-Smith and Malina (1999) describe reflexivity as the active consideration of the impacts, in addition to making sense, of what has been discerned. This can apply to method, researcher - participant interaction and the findings (Easterby-Smith and Malina, 1999) and is the primary objective of this approach and study.

Planned Approach

Having determined a research question / scenario and decided on a qualitative study the next phase is to design a suitable interview instrument, run a pilot and review the instrument and identify a suitable source / location for conducting the interviews. Following completion of the interviews the data will be compiled and analysed with a view to identifying themes and determining if the negative age stereotypes identified by Ng and Feldman (2012) are evidenced in an organisation where a positive age management ethos exists.

A pilot of the interview instrument will be conducted with a staff member of a well-known hardware store which has been known to operate positive age management policies. This pilot will generate an interview timeline / flow and determine the suitability / clarity of questions (Bryman and Bell, 2011) to gather detailed and informative feedback.

Participants

Identifying organisations pursuing active age management policies who were willing to have their staff participate in this review initially proved challenging with

approaches via the management / human resources departments proving unsuccessful. Upon reflection it was determined to initiate contact directly with employees via their trade union representation. In addition, the search was broadened to include organisations who operate a positive age management ethos evidenced by their recruitment and promotional activities across all age ranges and positive staff management activities.

Drawing on familial connections to the trade of electricians and engineers an initial approach was made to the *Connect* Trade Union with a view to identifying an organisation with active age management policies or positive age management evidenced through its recruitment and staff handling policies. Having outlined the requirements for the study with the office manager it became apparent that the employees of the union itself met these criteria with age profiles ranging from sixteen to sixty plus. Approval to proceed was granted by the General Secretary, Mr. P. Kavanagh, and in conjunction with the office manager, we agreed the suitability of the qualitative approach and that the office manager would contact the members of the office via email to outline the objectives of the study and request their participation. Having received positive feedback from both administrative staff and union officials it was agreed to conduct the interviews on Wednesday 19th June at the *Connect* trade union office on 6 Garnier Row, Rotunda, Dublin 1.

The *Connect* trade union represents

“every craft and skilled worker employed in Technical, Engineering, Electrical and Construction occupations across all sectors of the Irish economy” (Connect Union, 2018a)

offering many services and benefits to their members. The main Dublin office comprises twenty-four full time union officials, administration and support staff (Connect Union, 2018c) with representatives across several departments each agreeing to participate in the study. The union itself can trace its origins to 1920 and owes its current configuration to an amalgamation of electrical and

engineering unions in 1992 reflecting strong member focus and control. The ethos, reputation and success of the union reflects the “conduct, commitment and sense of responsibility” of each member (Connect Union, 2018b) and was evidenced by the enthusiasm and willingness to participate in this research study.

The interviews were conducted throughout the day with each participant given an overview of the purpose of the study and asked for their agreement to participate, to have the meeting recorded and that pertinent quotes could be used in the results / findings of the study. In order to meet the criteria outlined by Namey et al. (2016) regarding thematic saturation the above interviews were supplemented by an additional three interviews with colleagues from the same organization as the interviewee who participated in the pilot process. Appendix 7: Proposed Interview Approach.

Data Management

As per recommendations from several sources it was decided to record the interviews (Bryman and Bell 2011; Quinlan 2011) using the Voice Memo app on an iPhone and the voice record option on a windows laptop. This ensured that the interviewer was focused on the interviewee and had the ability to listen, read body language and ask more probative questions where required.

All participants provided informed consent to the recordings and agreed to the inclusion of names and details as required, however as an additional measure pertaining to confidentiality an alias was assigned to each interviewee. Further, participants received assurances that the recorded information would be transcribed for analysis purposes only and then deleted upon completion of the study. All data will be managed as per NCI / GDPR guidelines.

According to Quinlan (2011) there are four stages of data analysis “Description, Interpretation, Conclusions and Theorizations” (p. 422) involving multiple reviews of data, identifying themes and performing “abstraction” (Quinlan, 2011, p. 425) i.e. cluster / condense themes, grouping, coding and collating information,

drawing inferences and conclusions. This is a deductive process which results in rich and detailed data which underpins the overall study (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Analysis

According to Mortensen (2019) strong analysis underpins the validity of results and minimises the potential for researcher bias while thematic analysis facilitates flexibility but is combined with honesty and respect for the data. Further, themes are more extensive than codes reflecting active analysis of the codes and data (Mortensen, 2019). Clarke and Braun (2018) explain that a theme is not a summary of contributor responses but unites seemingly incongruent data and while themes should be cohesive, they should also be distinctive (Clarke and Braun, 2013). Thematic analysis facilitates the description, summary and interpretation of collected data based on theories chosen by the researcher (Clarke and Braun, 2018) and purports to recognise patterns of themes within the data (Easterby-Smith and Malina, 1999).

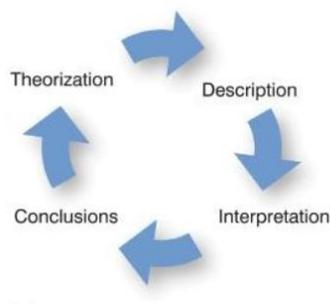


Figure 5: Stages of Thematic Analysis (Quinlan, 2011, p. 422)

As a process Clarke and Braun (2013) recommend reviewing and getting familiar with data, generating / assigning codes and searching for patterns / themes within the data. Further they advocate the review and definition of themes, reflecting an iterative process of searching and reviewing, with the intent of presenting findings (Clarke and Braun, 2013).

Pilot

The interview instrument pilot was conducted on 10th June 2019 with a fifty-nine-year-old male, who works for a hardware company based in North Dublin known

to have utilised positive age management policies. The pilot resulted in the initial baseline material for the study in addition to generating some amendments and clarification regarding wording and prompts to several of the questions. Follow-up questions were included for questions eight and fourteen to facilitate the interviewee in providing supplementary detail or clarification relative to the impact of a certain event or treatment. Furthermore, an additional question was added with the aim of providing extra clarification in relation to the trust stereotype. This pilot activity also generated timings, validated the selected recording process and facilitated fine tuning of questions, format, layout and interview technique.

Results

Quinlan (2011) explains that the purpose of qualitative data analysis is to develop a rich and complete understanding of the phenomena under review which attempts to interpret and understand the experiences and perceptions of study participants. The data is determined through the lens of the researcher conducting the analysis with an onus on them to outline their role within the process (Quinlan, 2011) and follow an established process to identify themes / codes within all data. This involves open coding, beginning to group or distinguish connections, i.e. axial coding, then establishing the core category and finally linking the categories accordingly i.e. selective coding.

Discussion

While the employee interviews generated an array of information, and certain views or observations may seem more impactful at the time, it is important to distil the information and analyse the individual and collective contributions. As such, each age range was assessed and analysed in isolation, the age ranges were

then collectively assessed, analysed, coded and collated per themes and finally the collective information, gathered within a positive age managed environment, was assessed in relation to the six negative age stereotypes identified by Ng and Feldman (2012). Appendix 8: Combined Age Range Output

Concept of Age

The concept of an older employee generated a wide variety of responses within the age ranges with all the 18-29 year olds selecting the 50-64 range while the other employees were more contemplative reflecting their own position regarding age and in conjunction with their length of service, giving a mixture of answers ranging from fifty upwards and generating the following comments: “your own perspective changes as you grow older” Robbie, 50-64, short service, Full Time Official and that demographics are changing which is reflected in an improved recognition of the value of people in their sixties. Eoin, 50-64, short service, Regional Secretary wouldn’t consider someone fifty+ to be old, this is more appropriate to someone in their seventies and eighties, while Alice, 50-64, long service, Personal Assistant states “age doesn’t come into my mind, we are all employees doing a job” and from her perspective people “don’t think about age” in the context of this workplace. Further, Emma, 50-64, long service, Personal Assistant maintains she does not consider age but prefers to “go on personality” as “some young people can be very old, and some old people can be very young at heart”.

These groups felt the concept or definition of an older employee needed to change to reflect a shift in demographics, especially as people are living longer and with new legislation may opt to remain in the workplace past the traditional retirement age.

Opportunities Based on Age

Across the age ranges the majority of interviewees agreed that experience, ability, skill and qualifications were the key determinants in relation to the assignment of tasks or roles and that age was not a factor with Emma, 50-64, long service,

Personal Assistant stating, “it should go on the person’s ability to carry out the work”. However, this was qualified in relation to physically demanding roles or modern technology-based activities where exceptions might be made.

All interviewees agreed that age was not a factor in relation to the availability or allocation of training with Robbie, 50-64, short service, Full Time Official explaining that he has done more courses in the past five years with this employer than in the preceding thirty years with a previous company.

However, employment or promotional opportunities may well be influenced by both positive and negative age-related and personality biases whereby life experience or maturity are viewed as assets or assumptions are made in relation to experience levels. In addition, those with longer service suggested that the personal bias of a recruiter or trainer may be the influencing factor. Some felt there were more opportunities available for younger candidates reinforced by the sense that it is harder for an older person to get employment when “people 50+ can’t get jobs, can’t even get interviews” according to Karen, 50-64, long service, Bookkeeper, especially in a craft or physically demanding role. The long serving 50-64-year olds also suggested that those in the sixty+ age range may be reluctant to train or not as interested in promotional prospects.

All those below the age of fifty agreed that age is not a consideration in relation to training opportunities, unless it is specifically linked to retirement preparation or perhaps is an expensive course where the return on investment for the company - highlighted across the age ranges - might be a consideration. However, there is a sense that some older people are “a bit afraid” or “think they are not able” according to June, 30-49, Clerical Officer.

Those in the 50-64 age range had a mixed response to age and training opportunities with some maintaining age is not a factor while others, particularly those with short service, maintained age was a key factor citing both the return on investment element at one end of the spectrum countered by a sense that “younger people don’t have the same loyalty to employment” Robbie, 50-64, short

service, Full Time Official and can use the training to advance elsewhere. This is countered by Mary, 50-64, short service, Administrator who maintains “why train someone that is possibly getting ready to retire” versus a 30-year-old who could be a long-term employee. Those with longer service in the 50-64 age range felt there was a bias towards younger employees who were offered tech-based training and perhaps an unconscious bias in the relation to return on investment, either from those allocating the training or the company itself, towards employees in the fifty+ category. These comments suggest an interest / willingness to train or adapt across the age ranges which reflects individual preferences as opposed to being age related.

Treatment Related to Age

Interestingly it was the employees in the 18-29 age range who indicated that they had been treated less favourably due to their age maintaining they felt overlooked, not as trusted or were not given the same level of responsibility as an older employee in the same role. Also, an individual in the 30-49 age range, who was the youngest of that group with the shortest service, felt being younger was reflected in a lack of confidence in his ability despite results or achievements to the contrary. This was countered by interviewees in the 50-64 age range with short service who felt any difference in treatment was linked to additional responsibility, an expectation regarding ability and that work would be completed to a certain level which directly corresponded to their motivation and enthusiasm for the role.

Within the 18-29 age profile some employees tended to accept this treatment due to the hierarchal nature of their organisation, but one individual outlined how it affected their motivation and engagement prompting consideration of alternative employment. An employee in the 30-49 age range highlighted and challenged the treatment until some progress was made on a personal level describing a direct impact in relation to mental health thereby highlighting the correlation between perception and implications for the organisation.

Further, those in the 18-29 age range also indicated an unease in relation to feeling their contributions are not as valued with Ellen, 18-29, General Assistant stating,

“sometimes my contributions were not even asked for”. At the other end of the spectrum the majority of those in the 50-64 age range with long service history felt being older meant their inputs and experience were not as valued and they were viewed as ‘set in your ways’, which Karen, 50-64, long service, Bookkeeper feels “takes away enthusiasm for your work” directly affecting motivation and means people are reluctant to offer suggestions the next time. Maturity is undervalued with Emma, 50-64, long service, Personal Assistant explaining that “it influences your career and the decisions you make and even how you handle people” and that there is a ‘life experience’ factor which is itself valuable. However, this was countered by Tina, 50-64, long service, Supervisor who disagreed maintaining older people “are more valued, have experience and know the background” and as such feels age works to your advantage. However, she cautions that as older people remain in employment it may limit opportunities for young people to progress. The 30-49 age range maintain their experience is what is valued with the caveat that perhaps both old and new styles / approaches need to be respected with Shane, 30-49, short service, National Official, who was the youngest of the group with the shortest service, feeling not listened to or valued which adds to stress which can also impact home life. These views reflect a challenge for the organisation, across all age ranges, to ensure an ongoing sense of involvement and value for their employees.

The majority of the age ranges agreed that older employees are not typically assigned blame in the event of an issue with Nicole, 30-49, Assistant Executive Secretary stating, “age wouldn’t come into it”, those in the 18-29 age range maintain that older people are in decision-making roles and as such blame resides with them. However, the 50-64 age range felt that in the event of a problem an older employee may take some of the responsibility for the resolution as a support for a younger person. They are more inclined to step up and take responsibility and there may even be a heightened expectation with an experienced employee as their “experience means they are quicker to speak out rather than brush something under the carpet” according to Andrea, 30-49, Office Manager, who

feels a younger employee is less inclined to take responsibility for an error. This was further endorsed by Emma, 50-64, long service, Personal Assistant who surmises that the “older generation will admit when they’ve done wrong”. A mature employee can offer leadership, support, protection and advice in relation to the handling or resolution of an issue. In fact, there may be more of a tendency to highlight the issue when it’s a younger employee as a ‘learning’ opportunity for others.

While there are no formal appraisals carried out in this organisation it is experience, knowledge and performance, not age, that are valued and have an influence. The 30-49 age profile agreed that age was not a factor in how they were perceived or judged and felt experience is the primary consideration in relation to promotion or responsibilities as “experience can bring knowledge in how to deal with things” June, 30-49, Clerical Officer combined with a sense that lack of experience is associated with being younger as demonstrated via feedback received by Shane, 30-49, National Official: “you’re a little bit too green and too brave”.

In general, the majority of interviewees across the age ranges felt that older employees do not have concerns or issues in relation to taking instruction from a younger supervisor or manager with June, 30-49, Clerical Officer of the opinion that you “can’t treat someone differently because of their age” and generally people respect expertise, the role or the position held and do not consider the age of a person. However, Joe, 50-64, short service, General Maintenance occasionally “can see them flinch” as a younger supervisor gives an instruction which may reflect the sentiment expressed by Robbie, 50-64, short service, Full Time Official that “there’s a confidence in young people now that wasn’t there when I was their age”. It was felt that an older employee might be more inclined to query an instruction that seemed unusual or not consistent with general operational procedure or simply may not like taking advice offered by a younger administration staff member. In some instances, a younger supervisor or manager may not get the same level of respect afforded to an older employee who may

carry an air of authority reflecting both their personal and life experience. In general, a person achieves a role of supervisor or manager based on merit and not age and there is an underlying prerequisite of two-way respect.

Attitudes to Change

There were mixed responses for this section although the phrase 'set in their ways' was a constant refrain across all age ranges with the majority feeling this applied to older employees. Eoin, 50-64, Full Time Official maintains that if you're settled in your ways, it is harder to come to grips with change whereas younger people are eager and willing to try new things and are more innovative. However, there was also a sense that it depended on the individual employee and "what they feel they are capable of" June, 30-49, Clerical Officer or that people are comfortable with their role or may not recognise the need for change and as such are vocal in their objections with an "it's their way or no way" attitude according to Tina, 50-64, long service, Supervisor. Perspectives varied with descriptions of an individual nearing retirement who may only want to do what is required versus another with a strong work ethic who may do even more than their role requires and actively supports colleagues, particularly younger employees.

There is also a need for clear communication to improve awareness of any potential impacts associated with or necessitating change and Emma, 50-64, long service, Personal Assistant feels it depends on personality stating "I don't mind change, I don't mind embracing change but I don't really like it!" and clarifying that change is happening all the time and "sometimes older people feel insecure with change" which is interpreted as reluctance. Most interviewees agreed that the rate of change in society today, for example with social media, can seem daunting for everyone and that younger employees can be even more reluctant to change or adapt while an older person will at least consider new enhancements and work with others while giving consideration to potential consequences of the change. However, a view was expressed among the short service 50-64 age range that older employees may be reluctant to embrace new technology although this was

qualified with a consensus that there is less reluctance where training relates to an area of interest.

In some organisations with multi-skilling they operate a grandfather clause whereby an older employee is not required to do additional training but also is not adversely impacted in relation to associated benefits and is protected from penalisation. This can directly influence in-house training schedules.

Commitment to the Role / Organisation

Both the 18-29 and 30-49 age ranges disagreed with the statement regarding increased or more frequent health considerations for older employees however, the 50-64 age profile articulated a belief that health changes over time with Eoin, 50-64, short service, Full Time Official stating “the older you get the more likely it is that you will have problems” and Robbie, 50-64, short service, Full Time Official maintaining “I have issues now that I didn’t have when I was thirty” while Alice, 50-64, long service, Personal Assistant maintains “when I turned 50 everything started going wrong!” however she further clarified this statement explaining the “brain hasn’t slowed down that much, but the body has slowed down”. Several interviewees also highlighted that an individual’s attitude to their personal care or the physicality of a role were also relevant factors while this organisation has a tailored health screening facility now available to all employees over fifty.

Interestingly, Tina, 50-64, long service, Supervisor maintains age is not a factor in relation to health considerations asserting that “young people get sick as much as an older person, maybe more”. It was acknowledged that while there can be physical challenges for older employees there was a sense that there are more mental health / stress considerations for younger employees. The 30-49 age range felt that health considerations balance out across all age ranges for varied reasons with young employees influenced by their social life, mid-range staff impacted due to commitments to young families and older employees caring for elderly parents. It was noted by Andrea, 30-49, Office Manager that although older employees may have more serious health considerations once they are addressed there is less

potential for the type of ad hoc sick leave associated with younger employees or those with young children.

Additionally, all interviewees disagreed with the position that older employees have higher rates of absenteeism. James, 30-49, Assistant General Secretary stated that absenteeism “related to people of all ages” and tends to reflect individual circumstances while Andrea, 30-49, Office Manager maintains that while older employees “may occasionally have more serious health issues absentee rates would definitely balance out with people in other life stages” and Emma, 50-64, long service, Personal Assistant has no sense that older employees are ill or absent more often claiming you “can have a 20-year-old that’s always sick”. The perception of the senior interviewees is that older employees have a stronger work ethic and sense of responsibility with Alice, 50-64, long service, Personal Assistant stating, “we were reared that if you can walk you go to work”. There was also a sense that an older employee appreciates the impact to others if they do not do their work and as such an older employee is less likely to take time off on a whim the way a younger person might with Declan, 50-64, short service, General Operative of the opinion that “mature people will act maturely, whereas the kids will take the easy way out”.

The subject of work-life balance priorities also generated a diverse selection of responses with the 18-29 age range explaining that in most cases it depends on the individual although the majority felt that younger people were typically more ambitious while those nearing retirement had less passion and had more of a focus outside the workplace. This was countered by the other age ranges where there was a consensus that although older people valued their family life, they did not prioritise it over their work life. In all cases individual circumstances were pertinent however it was felt that those in the mid age range were more likely to prioritise family life over work life requesting different work patterns to facilitate responsibilities of young children.

In the 30-49 age range respondents were split with half saying family is valued ahead of their work maintaining that “as I get older, I realise spending time with family is very important” June, 30-49, Clerical Officer who actively tries to get a better balance explaining “it’s good to work but it’s great to spend time with your family” and that while she would “give 150% to the job but inside you know your family is the most important”. An interesting note reveals older staff recommend that others actively balance work and family life according to James, 30-49, Assistant General Secretary which was upheld by Eoin, 50-64, short service, Regional Secretary who advocates that “younger people with family commitments should do shorter hours and be conscious of their work-life balance” and Mary, 50-64, short service, Administrator stating “it is important to have a balanced family work life”.

An additional factor for those in the 50-64 age range is a strong social aspect linked to working with people over a long period of time, who in effect become like family. Perspectives change relevant to life stage and older people want the balance to do things they like as well as their work, as such, adapting their work life to better accommodate family / personal commitments. There is a sense that an older employee will try to find a good balance while a younger person will live life to the full and not be as concerned about impacts to their work ability. Emma, 50-64, long service, Personal Assistant maintains that people in the fifty+ age bracket “start to realise there’s more to life than work”, that time itself is of value and as such they are prepared to sacrifice work / career to get the balance right, “there’s a time for work and then there’s a time to relax and for family”.

This section generated sizable discussion and divergent positions with some strong views in relation to commitment, work ethic and overall loyalty to the organisation and to colleagues. The positions regarding absenteeism seems to reflect known stereotypes towards younger employees and although there was strong support and appreciation for work-life balance there is no evidence within this office that employees in the fifty+ age range have altered their work patterns to facilitate

personal / family objectives and it was more likely those in the 30-49 age profile requesting parental leave, shorter hours and so on.

Limitations

There were several limitations encountered in the course of this research study with the primary difficulty relating to access to suitable and willing candidates. This resulted in approaches to several organisations and a widening of parameters to include organisations operating a positive age environment evidenced via recruitment, employment and promotional practices.

Having identified a suitable and willing group for research the size of the target office and the number of people available or willing to participate dictated the capacity of the study. As such it was necessary to supplement the numbers with a small number of additional interviews with employees of a well-known hardware store which has been known to operate positive age management policies

New legislation in Ireland regarding changes to retirement age have yet to apply to the staff in this office and as such there were no candidates in the sixty-five plus category.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the study supports the findings of Ng and Feldman (2012) in relation to five of the six identified negative age stereotypes while undermining the position regarding the assumption that older employees are less willing in relation

to training and career development so supporting the position that a positive age environment influences employee motivation, engagement, enthusiasm and addresses known negative age stereotypes relative to older employees from the employee perspective.

The study confirms that negative age stereotypes are addressed as a by-product of a positive age environment, however, interestingly it does identify that ageism persists. While negative age stereotypes are addressed and challenged across all age ranges there is still a dichotomy between the age ranges regarding some negative perceptions between the younger and older age ranges themselves, particularly towards those within the younger age bracket.

Overall, the study found that the younger age range were negatively evaluated while the mature, or older employee, are positively evaluated within the collective. The overarching focus related to the commitment, dedication and passion of all the employees operating within this environment with a recognition of the importance of a balance between work and personal commitments.

As the author, my personal perspective is reflected by observations from the research study supporting the value of experience, maturity and a sense of calm that an older employee can bring to a role or organisation. However, employees across all age ranges want to feel valued and part of the team and note that everyone has something to offer. The generalisations / negative stereotypes based on age are significantly addressed within an organisation which uses positive age management policies and values the service and experience of their staff. However, there is more to do in relation to stereotypes experienced by younger team members and in addressing how employees at different stages of the age spectrum view their counterparts.

CIPD Requirements

Recommendations

1. The *Connect* Trade Union office, through the operation of a positive age environment, have successfully addressed the six negative age stereotypes investigated by this study. As such, the initial recommendation would be for the office to continue, and where possible, further develop this environment taking a more proactive approach in ratifying their procedures.
2. Introducing performance management appraisals to set clear goals and objectives for all employees would provide clear career paths and ensure regular feedback while also providing a forum to voice aspirations or issues. This should be supported by an open-door policy by management and supervisors. Adopting such a system will help to address concerns expressed by those in the 18-29 age range regarding their treatment, prospects and worth within their organisation. This could be enhanced by an informal skills transfer programme between employees across all the age ranges
3. Several opinions expressed during the interviews supported generic stereotypes regarding the reliability of those in the younger age profile, particularly relating to absenteeism. I would recommend further investigation of these perceptions, initially within this office, with a view to challenging these perceptions with statistics. An online 'fun facts' flyer or newsletter could be generated and circulated to all staff.
4. Finally, a wellness programme should be developed and implemented to further enhance the positive aspects within this office environment, to support staff across all age ranges in personal and professional capacities and provide industry standard guidance for workload and stress management.

Timeline

1. Ratifying the positive age environment procedures and the education regarding reliability of younger employees can be addressed in the short-term over the next six months, carried out by the in-house administrative team under the supervision of the office manager.
2. In the medium-term the organisation can develop and rollout a performance appraisal system. This is a significant undertaking incorporating the development of job specifications, role profiles, career paths mapped to salary ranges, setting of objectives, regular review meetings and so on. This activity should run in tandem with the development of a wellness programme aimed at supporting employees in both their personal and professional capacities. This body of work may take between one and three years.
3. In the long-term, five plus years, the study should be repeated to take account of changes in legislation for an age profile beyond sixty-four, economic conditions and assess the impact of the above recommendations.

Costings

According to the CIPD it is important to carry out benchmarking prior to conducting training to facilitate the evaluation of both internally or externally provided learning and development activities. This includes direct and indirect costs, such as employee participation, and tracking the benefits and returns of the anticipated outcomes. In addition, any learning intercessions should be aligned with corporate strategy / policy (Hayden, 2019a).

Costs are influenced by the per unit amount per employee from an external provider versus a more complex assessment where the learning is provided in-house. Costs are linked to delivery, materials, technology requirements and so on with CIPD calculating the individual learners' costs per day as their salary divided by the number of working days, given as 228 per annum, plus any associated overheads which are evaluated at thirty to fifty percent of salary costs (Hayden,

2019a). The learning method selected should be the most suitable instrument to support employees and the organisation in achieving business objectives, be it formal, informal, external, internal, digital or face-to-face (Hayden, 2019b).

Ratifying the positive age environment procedures is an in-house task carried out by the administration staff and office manager as part of general duties and should not incur a financial liability.

There is significant best practice data available online, from professional bodies and academically for the development of performance appraisal and wellness schemes. This information can be leveraged with the practical internal knowledge and expertise available within the trade union office. If required, this exercise can be ratified / supported by a HR Advisor on a one-year fixed term contract commanding a salary between forty-five and fifty-five thousand per annum (McCarron, 2019) or alternatively with a HR consultant who typically operate (on average) an hourly rate of between thirty-five and fifty euro (Payscale.com, 2019; IrishJobs.ie, 2019).

It is worth noting that free online instruments such as “animation, infographics, video, word clouds and self-authored e-learning” (Hayden, 2019b) are available which facilitate the creation of learning themes by any member of an organisation. This tool may be suitable for the ‘fun facts’ newsletter and would facilitate the quick and easy dissemination of updates regarding the development and launch of performance appraisal and wellness schemes.

Personal Learning

On a very practical level I was required to build on my Word skills and hone the ‘tips and tricks’ I developed in preparing and writing previous assignments. In addition, I specifically researched the practical aspects of one-to-one interviews drawing on academic literature and online tutorials, in conjunction with skills developed via role play activities for our mediation and conflict management module.

Although I have achieved good results in relation to the financial and statistic based modules undertaken over the past number of years a primary objective of undertaking this postgraduate programme is return to the workplace and as such I felt it was important to develop and enhance my people skills, particularly interacting with others in a professional environment. As such, opting for a qualitative and one-to-one interview approach was fundamental in achieving that goal.

Having completed a personality profiling model as part of a leading and managing module it revealed that I have an 'Inspector' personality profile indicating a preference for structure, order and factual detail along with tangible and measurable results. As such I felt it was important to challenge several of those 'Inspector' traits and while a quantitative study would provide the structure, order and absolute results I am more comfortable with I deemed undertaking a qualitative study was important to encourage a more open and understanding aspect of my nature and to ensure I listened carefully and actively endeavoured to interpret and understand the thoughts, experiences and views of others.

An interesting take away of interacting directly with individuals via the one-to-one interview process was the insight garnered relating to the perceptions each person brings to an organisation, of those created or perpetuated by the organisation itself and how the environment is also a key component of the equation. Employees within all the age ranges were influenced by each of these elements. While there are inter-learning or practical skills transfer opportunities across all the age ranges of the study participants the highlight for me is the realisation of the possibilities that exist for greater understanding and appreciation of people of any age whom we may only meet or interact with in a workplace setting.

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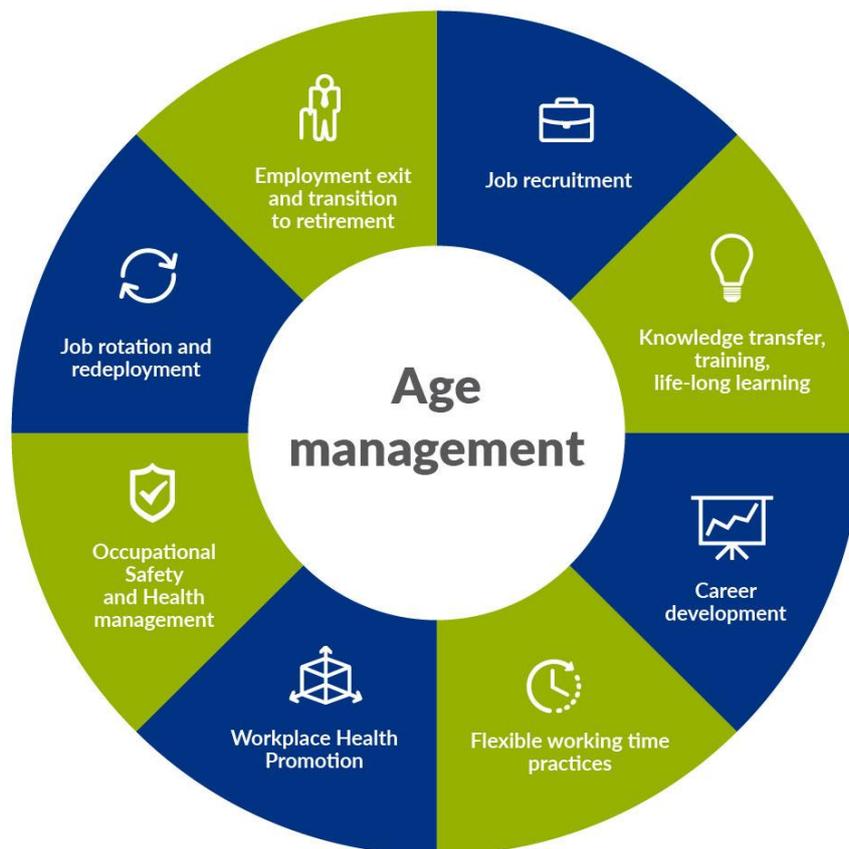
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Elements of Age Management



(Eguides.osha.europa.eu, 2016)

Appendix 2: OECD Employment Rates by Age Range for Q3 2018

The OECD measure employment rates for specified age groups

“as the number of employed people of a given age as a percentage of the total number of people in that same age group” (theOECD, 2018).

Ireland has 60.4% for the 55-64 age bracket. Note: Ireland is highlighted in Blue.

There are three distinct groups tracked:

15 to 24 (just entering labour market after education);

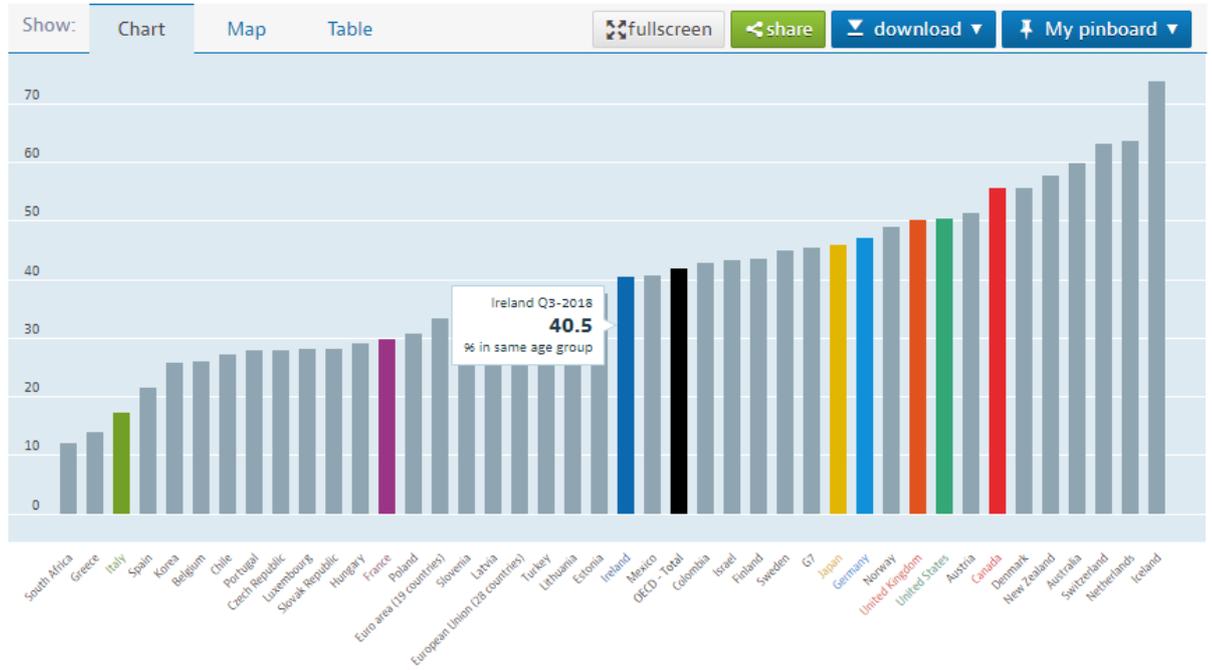
25 to 54 (in their prime working lives);

55 to 64 (passing the peak of career, approaching retirement)

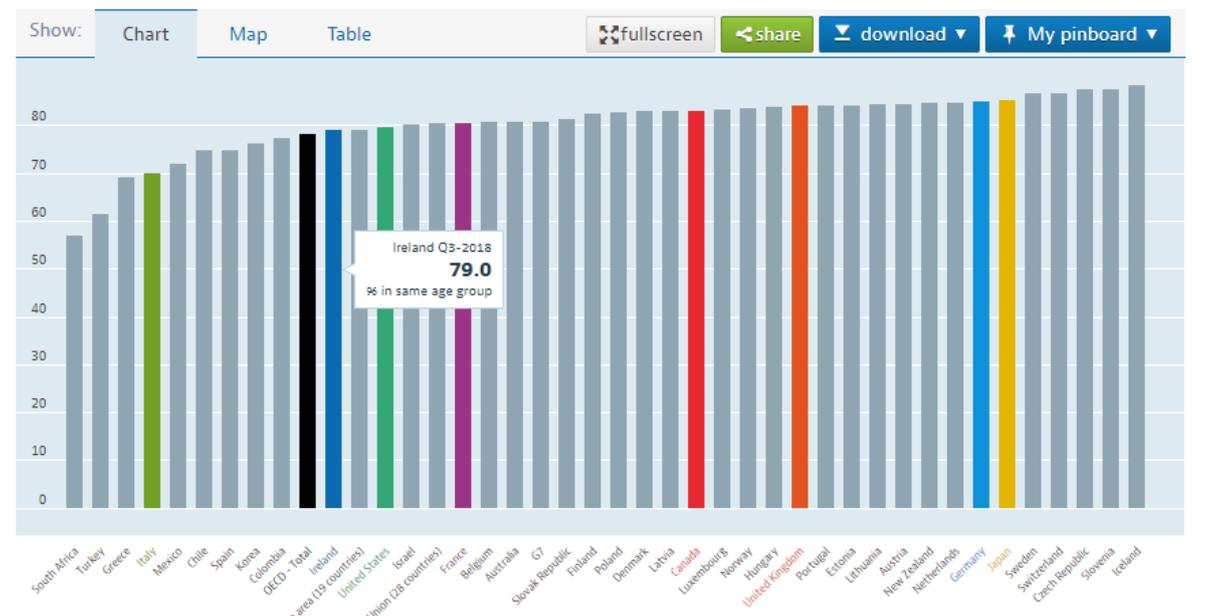
Age 55-64



Age 15-24



Age 25 – 54



(theOECD, 2018)

Appendix 3: Framework for Crafting Research

What?	Why?
What puzzles/intrigues me! What do I want to know more about/ understand better? What are my key research questions?	Why will this be of enough interest to others to be published as a thesis, book, paper, guide to practitioners or policy makers? Can the research be justified as a 'contribution to knowledge'?
How – conceptually?	How – practically?
What models, concepts and theories can I draw on/develop to answer my research questions! How can these be brought together into a basic conceptual framework to guide my investigation?	What investigative styles and techniques shall I use to apply my conceptual framework (both to gather material and analyse it)? How shall I gain and maintain access to information sources?

(Watson, 1994, p. 80)

Appendix 4: Qualitative versus Quantitative Data

**QUALITATIVE DATA
VERSUS
QUANTITATIVE DATA**

QUALITATIVE DATA	QUANTITATIVE DATA
Data type that consists of descriptive statements	Data type that can be measured and expressed numerically
Text-based	Number-based
Statistical analysis is harder	Statistical analysis is easier
Collected using interviews, written documents, observations	Collected using surveys, observations, experiments, and interviews

(Pediaa.com, 2018)

Quantitative & Qualitative Research

Differences between Quantitative and Qualitative research strategies

Research Aspect	Quantitative	Qualitative
Common Purpose	Test Hypotheses or Specific Research Questions	Discover Ideas, used in Exploratory Research with General Research Objects
Approach	Measure and Test	Observe and Interpret
Data Collection Approach	Structured Response Categories Provided	Unstructure, Free-Form
Research Independence	Researcher Uninvolved Observer. Results Are Objective.	Researcher Is Intimately Involved. Results Are Subjective.
Samples	Large Samples to Produce Generalizable Results	Small Samples – Often in Natural Settings
Most Often Used	Descriptive and Causal Research Designs	Exploratory Research Designs

(Zikmund, 2010)

Appendix 5: Interview Instrument Template

Positive Age environment and Age Stereotype Interview Instrument

Set the scene: there are several ideas / stereotypes associated with the people we work with. The purpose of this interview is to gather your thoughts, perspective and /or experiences in the workplace in relation to some of the scenarios outlined below.

1. How long have you worked for the organisation?
2. What is your role / position / grade within the organisation?
3. Which of the following age ranges apply to you?

18-29 30-49 50-64 65+

4. Based on the age ranges above, at what age would you consider someone an 'older employee'?

Note: for the purpose of this review (based on previous research) an older employee is an individual in the 50+ age range.

5. In your opinion is the assignment of work roles / tasks influenced by someone's age?

Thoughts / Experience

6. Do you feel that there are limited employment / training / promotion opportunities based on age?

Thoughts / Experience / Perspective

7. Would you think a person's age is considered in relation to training opportunities?

Any experiences?

8. Have you been treated less favourably than someone in a similar position / situation due to your age? *Explain.*
9. *If Yes:* Can you outline how were you were affected / impacted by this treatment?
(Accept, Object, Highlight)
10. Do you feel your contributions (such as suggestions or recommendations) are not as valued due to your age?
Explain / Impact

Reminder: keeping in mind that for the purpose of this review (based on previous research) an older employee is an individual in the 50+ age range please consider the following:

11. Is there a tendency to assign blame to older employees in the event of a problem?
12. Do you think / feel that older employees are less willing to change or adapt?
13. Do you think / feel your appraisals / evaluations been influenced due to your age?
14. Do you think / feel there are there increased, or more frequent, health considerations related to older employees?
15. *If Yes:* In your opinion is this reflected in higher rates of absenteeism?
16. In your opinion, do older employees have, or demonstrate, concerns in relation to taking instruction from a supervisor / manager?
17. Do you think / feel that older employees value family over work life?

Appendix 6: Map of Negative Age Stereotypes and Interview Instrument Questions

<i>Stereotypes re Older Workers</i>	<i>Assigned code</i>	<i>Instrument Questions</i>	<i>Relates to Stereotype Code</i>
Less Motivated	1	5. In your opinion is the assignment of work roles / tasks influenced by someone's age?	1, 2, 3
Less willing to re training / career development	2	6. Do you feel that there are limited employment / training / promotion opportunities based on age?	1, 2, 4
Resistant to change	3	7. Would you think a person's age is considered in relation to training opportunities?	2, 3
Less trusting	4	8. Have you been treated less favourably than someone in a similar position / situation due to your age?	1, 3, 4
Less healthy / absence	5	9. <i>If Yes:</i> Can you outline how were you were affected / impacted by this treatment?	1, 3, 4
Vulnerable to work / family balance	6	10. Do you feel your contributions (such as suggestions or recommendations) are not as valued due to your age?	1, 4
		11. Is there a tendency to assign blame to older employees in the event of a problem?	3, 4
		12. Do you think / feel that older employees are less willing to change or adapt?	1, 2, 3
		13. Do you think / feel your appraisals / evaluations been influenced due to your age?	1, 4
		14. Do you think / feel there are there increased, or more frequent, health considerations related to older employees.	5
		15. <i>If Yes:</i> In your opinion is this reflected in higher rates of absenteeism?	5
		16. In your opinion, do older employees have, or demonstrate, concerns in relation to taking instruction from a supervisor / manager?	3, 4
		17. Do you think / feel that older employees value family over work life?	6

Appendix 7: Proposed Approach to conducting Interviews

1. Decide on interview method
2. Formulate interview schedule
3. Select interviewees
4. Contact interviewees and invite them to participate
5. Provide interviewees with details of research proposition
6. Schedule interviews and explain content and approach
7. Conduct one-to-one interviews
8. Conclude interview and express appreciation
9. Manage data

(Quinlan, 2011, p. 293-296)

Appendix 8: Combined Age Range Output

4	All agree 50-64 is range for an older employee	Half considered 50-64 as an older employee while the remainder considered 60+.	Range of responses from 50+, 60+, 65+, Robbie, 50-64, Full Time Official maintaining “your own perspective changes as you grow older” and that demographics are changing and there is more recognition of the value of people in their 60s. Eoin, 50-64, Regional Secretary wouldn’t consider someone 50+ to be old, more in their 70s and 80s. Definition should shift as per demographics, especially as people are living longer	This Q generate a mixed response, ranging from 50-64, 65+, Alice, 50-64, Personal Assistant, Don’t look at colleagues as ‘older’, “age doesn’t come into my mind, we are all employees doing a job”, “don’t think about age” and Emma, 50-64, Personal Assistant, Don’t really consider age, “go on personality, I don’t go on age”, “some young people can be very old, and some old people can be very young at heart”. Don’t look at the number
5	All agree assignment of tasks is based on experience, qualifications and skill and while not linked to age was associated with an older person having those traits	The majority felt age was not a factor in the assignment of roles or tasks, however one person felt that an older employee i.e. 50+ was more likely to be assigned more high-profile tasks	Most agreed that age is a factor especially if it’s a physically demanding role which is more likely to go to a younger employee on the basis that an older employee has ‘done their time’. Reflects physical fitness and ability, experience. Some may prefer to slow down as they near retirement When queried they all said ability not age was the key factor – maybe age-related bias?	Response was evenly split. 50% said Yes – older people have more responsible positions and age may determine suitability for a task such as a young person updating Twitter. 50% said No – it’s based on experience or knowledge with Emma, 50-64, Personal Assistant stating, “it should go on the person’s ability to carry out the work”.

6	Training available to all but promotional opportunities are limited, perhaps due to lack of experience	All agreed age was not a factor in relation to training opportunities however promotion opportunities are now more available to younger employees	In general, they said no. Training available to and encouraged for all, maybe reflects aptitude & ability, with Robbie, 50-64, Full Time Official saying he has done more courses in the past 5 years than previous 30 years in a different company and the same promotion criteria applies to all, regardless of age, with life experience / maturity regarded as an asset. Harder for older person to get employment in craft or physical role. Personal bias of recruiter, trainer etc may be the influencing factor	All agreed age is not a factor in relation to training although those in their 60s may be reluctant to train and not interested in promotion. However, age and personality maybe considered in relation to promotion with others stating its merit based not age related in relation to training & promotion
7	All agree age is not considered in relation to training within their employment environment	All agreed age is not considered in relation to training unless it is specifically for retirement or where an organisation funded training, such as a degree, is requested by someone nearing retirement as there is a limited return on investment for the company. However, June, 30-49, Clerical Officer maintains that some older people are “a bit afraid” or “think they are not able”.	Some said no but others felt it might be a factor. Training offered to all and some roles such as electrician needs constant education to stay up to date and informed (not like carpenter). GDPR, Safe pass training is not age related. Can be a consideration where someone is nearing retirement – the return on investment factor but alternatively “younger people don’t have the same loyalty to employment” and can use training to advance elsewhere Robbie, 50-64, Full Time Official. This is supported by Mary, 50-64, Administrator “why train someone that is possibly getting	50% said No. 50% felt it was a consideration with younger people offered the tech-based training and there can be an unconscious bias in relation to return on investment with employees 50+.

			ready to retire” versus a 30-year-old which could be a long-term employee	
8	The majority in this category felt they had been treated less favourably – overlooked, not as trusted or given same level of responsibility as an older employee in the same role	Majority were not treated less favourably due to age however one person (youngest of group and shortest service) felt being younger was reflected in a lack of confidence in his ability despite results or achievements	Majority said No, ability and motivation were primary considerations although gender may be considered for physically demanding tasks. One person said yes and linked it to additional responsibility	All said No although Emma, 50-64, Personal Assistant qualified it by stating “but I never act me age!”.
9	While some accept the situation due to the hierarchal nature of their organisation for another it affected motivation and engagement	The treatment was highlighted and challenged until some progress was made. Impact to mental health so try to deal with the treatment and move on	Accepts additional responsibility, company knows tasks will be done efficiently and effectively	N/A
10	All agreed input was taken on board however, Ellen, 18-29,	Majority disagreed with statement that suggestions not as valued due to age and maintain experience is what is valued. However, one	All disagreed with this statement, life experience is a key asset along with knowledge and experience,	Majority felt being older meant inputs and experience not as valued, viewed as ‘set in your ways’ and Karen, 50-64,

	General Assistant stated, "but sometimes my contributions were not even asked for".	person (youngest of group and shortest service) felt old and new styles / approaches need to be respected, feels not listened to or valued which adds to stress and can then impact home life	suggestions valued. Autonomy and responsibility linked with role	Bookkeeper feels it "Takes away enthusiasm for your work", affects motivation and you are reluctant to offer suggestions the next time. Maturity is undervalued with Emma, 50-64, Personal Assistant explaining "it influences your career and the decisions you make and even how you handle people", you have a 'life experience' factor. People are more individual in focus now. Tina, 50-64, Supervisor disagreed maintaining "No, they are more valued, I have experience and know the background", and feels age works to your advantage but cautions that as older people stay on it limits the opportunities for young people to progress
11	The majority felt older people were in the decision-making roles and therefore blame resided with	All disagreed that there is a tendency to assign blame to older people with Nicole, 30-49, Assistant Executive Secretary stating, "age wouldn't come into it". Take responsibility regardless of age although there may be	All disagreed with the statement, blame lies with relevant party. Felt senior person may take role in resolution and people with more knowledge and experience have more to offer	All disagreed, older person may offer leadership / advice for resolution may try to protect a younger staff member and have sympathy for them in a difficult situation, individuals take responsibility for an error while

	them in the event of an issue	heightened expectations of someone with experience or service. In fact, there may be a tendency to highlight the issue when it's a younger person as a 'learning' opportunity for others. Older person may take some of the responsibility as a support for a younger person as they are more inclined to step up and take responsibility as their "experience means they are quicker to speak out rather than brush something under the carpet", Andrea, 30-49, Office Manager, with a younger person less inclined to take responsibility for an error.		Emma, 50-64, Personal Assistant reckons "older generation will admit when they've done wrong"
12	The majority felt older people were more set in their ways and less willing to change or adapt	There were mixed responses in relation to the change or adapt question, some felt it depended on the person and "what they feel they are capable of" June, 30-49, Clerical Officer or that people are comfortable with their role or maybe 'set in their ways' and may	Most said Yes, only a person who started a new role at 59 disagreed. Older people are 'set in their ways', reluctant to embrace new technology, less reluctance where training was on something of interest. Can depend on the individual as someone nearing retirement only	Responses were split. 50% said Yes, they are set in their ways, feel tried and tested methods work and there is no need to change, "it's their way or no way" according to Tina, 50-64, Supervisor. Alice, 50-64, Personal Assistant states she is willing to

		not recognise the need for change and are vocal in their objections. Another stated that younger people can be even more reluctant while an older person will at least consider new enhancements and work with others. Rate of change, social media etc., can seem daunting	want to do what is required whereas others have a strong work ethic and do even more than their role require and support younger employees. However, some organisations with multi-skilling have a grandfather clause so that the older employee isn't required to do the additional training but also is not adversely impacted in relation to associated benefits and is protected from penalisation. Eoin, 50-64, Full Time Official maintains that if your settled in your ways, it's harder to come to grips with change whereas younger people are eager and willing to try new things, more innovative	adapt and try new things but think about consequences. However, 50% said No but to consider some reluctance, caution and the need for clear communication to improve awareness of any potential impacts and Emma, 50-64 Personal Assistant feels it depends on personality and she states "I don't mind change, I don't mind embracing change but I don't really like it!" and clarifying that change is happening all the time and "sometimes older people feel insecure with change" which is interpreted as reluctance
13	Appraisals not typically carried out in this organisation	Although this organisation does not hold formal appraisals / evaluations all felt their age was not a factor in how they were perceived / judged with experience being the primary consideration in relation to promotion or responsibilities as "Experience can bring knowledge in how to deal with things" June, 30-49, Clerical Officer. Lack of	All said No and agreed it was performance based with Eoin, 50-64, Full Time Official saying age doesn't influence how he's perceived in the organisation that its linked to his performance and Declan, 50-64, General Operative describing a daily diary of positive / negative events and associated solutions – used for appraisals and as a learning tool	No formal appraisals here but its experience and knowledge not age that are valued and has an influence

		experience is associated with being younger as expressed via feedback received by Shane, 30-49, National Official: “you’re a little bit too green and too brave”		
14	All disagreed with the statement re increased health considerations for older employees	All disagreed with the statement that there were increased health considerations with older employees however they acknowledged there can be “wear and tear” James, 30-49, Assistant General Secretary, which can combine with stress. Physical for older people but more mental health / stress considerations for younger people. Health considerations balances out across all age ranges for different reasons with young people impacted due to their social life, mid-range people impacted due to commitments to young families and older people impacted in relation to care for elderly parents. Older peoples may have more serious health considerations but once they are addressed there is less potential for ad hoc sick leave associated with young people or those with young children	Majority agreed with the statement and acknowledged that “The older you get the more likely it is that you will have problems” Eoin, 50-64, Full Time Official and can reflect individual care or physicality of a role while Robbie, 50-64, Full Time Official says “I have issues now that I didn’t have when I was 30”. Organisation provides health screening for over 50s	Majority acknowledged that there are more health considerations after 50 with Alice, 50-64, Personal Assistant stating “when I turned 50 everything started going wrong”, “brain hasn’t slowed down that much but the body has slowed down” and there is a tailored health screening for over 50s although Tina, 50-64, Supervisor maintains age is not a factor and “young people get sick as much as an older person, maybe more”.

<p>15</p>	<p>All disagreed with the statement re higher rates of absenteeism for older employees</p>	<p>All disagreed with the statement that this resulted in higher absenteeism with absentee rates “related to people of all ages” James, 30-49, Assistant General Secretary or depends on the person. “Even though they may occasionally have more serious health issues it would definitely balance out with people in other life stages” Andrea, 30-49, Office Manager</p>	<p>All disagreed with the statement, can be influenced by the nature of the industry but absentee rates not related to age or specific age range. Older employees have a stronger work ethic, sense of responsibility and know the impact to other if they do not do their work. They are less likely to take time on a whim the way a younger person would. “Mature people will act maturely whereas the kids will take the easy way out” Declan, 50-64, General Operative</p>	<p>All disagreed with statement, however had a sense that younger people were more inclined to take time for minor ailments and that older people have a stronger work ethic Alice, 50-64, Personal Assistant stating “we were reared that if you can walk you go to work” while Emma maintains there is no sense that older employees are ill or absent more often claiming you “can have a 20-year-old that’s always sick”.</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>While all agreed they had not witnessed any issues with older employees taking instruction from a younger manager / supervisor there was a view that older employees were more likely to query an</p>	<p>The majority felt that taking instruction from a younger manager was not an issue with June, 30-49, Clerical Officer of the opinion that you “can’t treat someone differently because of their age”. People respect experience / role / position held and don’t consider the age of the person. Exception; Andrea, 30-49, Office Manager - Older official but with less experience may not like taking advice offered by a younger</p>	<p>Majority said No, age is not a factor but reflects more an authoritative or aggressive approach. “There’s a confidence in young people now that wasn’t there when I was their age” according to Robbie, 50-64, Full Time Official. However, Joe, 50-64, General Maintenance “can see them flinch” as a younger person gives an instruction</p>	<p>All feel there is no issue, Emma, 50-64, Personal Assistant says “I don’t think its age related” but more likely personality or individual concerns. Person has a position based on merit not age, two-way respect is a key feature</p>

	instruction that seemed out of the ordinary	admin staff member. Older people carry an air of authority, so people find it easier to take instruction from them, younger person doesn't get the same level of respect		
17	While there was some recognition that it depends on the individual the majority felt that younger people were more ambitious while those nearing retirement had less passion and had more of a focus outside the workplace	Respondents were split on this question with half saying Yes that "as I get older, I realise spending time with family is very important" June, 30-49, Clerical Officer and actively tries to get a better balance maintaining "It's good to work but it's great to spend time with your family". "Give 150% to job but inside you know your family is the most important". Older people recommend balancing work and family life according to James although a request for short work hours more likely from younger person with young family with the office staff tending to cover for / help each other e.g. for parental leave. Officials tend to be more involved as they near retirement while the office staff are more structured and embrace the change. Others maintain those with a young family	Majority tended to agree that perspective and priorities change over time and as near retirement. Reflect on the time spent away from young family with Eoin, 50-64, Regional Secretary advocating that "younger people with family commitments should do shorter hours and be conscious of their work-life balance" and Mary, 50-64, Administrator saying "it is important to have a balanced family work life". However, Robbie, 50-64, Full Time Official described a strong social aspect linked to have worked with people over a long period of time, in effect they become like family and that perspective changes as per life stage, older people want the balance to do things they like as well as work. Adapt work life to better accommodate family / personal commitments. Consider personal mental health which then positively	Majority said No, its 50-50 split, personal commitments don't interfere with or impact work life, younger people with children more inclined to want more time at home. This was contradicted by Emma, 50-64, Personal Assistant who although she agrees that priorities shift when children are part of the equation maintains people in the 50+ age bracket "start to realise there's more to life than this, there's more to life than work", time itself is of value and they are prepared to sacrifice work / career to get the balance right, "there's a time for work and then there's a time to relax and for family". People expected to be available 24/7 but they need downtime. The caring for children tends to impact women & their career more.

		tend to have more of a family focus with a blurring of the lines between work and family or are more categoric maintaining Andrea, 30-49, Office Manager maintaining people with young children are more inclined to want different work patterns, older people are not as distracted as their children are reared, older people not as pulled by family responsibilities	benefits family. Older employee will try to find the balance while a younger person will live life to the full and not be as concerned about impacts to work ability	
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