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# Introduction

Ageing in society, has thus become an important topic in recent years, age-related problems are extremely critical in work places, especially those industries that require specific physical advantages or rapidly changing conditions. The problem related to ageing workforce has been categorised as one of the major issues from 21st century, despite the fact that there is no clear definition of “older” workforces. The intention of this study on attitudes toward to ageing-related problems is to review literature that is enhance our understanding of the reasons behind such attitudes, and more importantly, find the suitable solution to neutralise tensions between different age groups, which have profound impacts on organisation behaviour analysis, strategical workforce planning as well as human resource practices.

However, some unexpected outcomes suggest that some part of this problems are from personal perspective which require more strong community educations during this study. It is undeniable in some specific industry; age diversity is not considering as an advantage and negative age-based meta-stereotypes issues are stronger than others. Ironically, this problem is not only related to senior groups but also younger groups. Following that, the potential solutions will be discussed at the end of this paper in order to achieve better performance by negating the problems about aged-related stereotypes.

# Literature review

## Age diversity in the workplace

It is widely known that the overall workforce population is ageing world widely (Commission N. P., 2015) (Pritchard, 2017), the ageing of the population of most large countries has raised some serious concerns about the overall quality of the workforce. According to the report from Australian bureau of Statistics, the workforce pressures from ageing population are the delays in retirement as well as the higher median age overall in some specific services. For example, people who aged between 55 to 59 tend to start enjoy their retirement, there are around 79% of workers who aged between 55 to 64 retired in 2007, however, only 65% of same group chose to retire in 2014. In general, like the trend exists in society, the ageing problems cannot be easily ignored or negated due the generations were being socially constructed in current situations (Pritchard, 2017). The situation will only become worse after several years from now on due to the decreasing number of new born, this trend became more and more noticeable in the recent years.

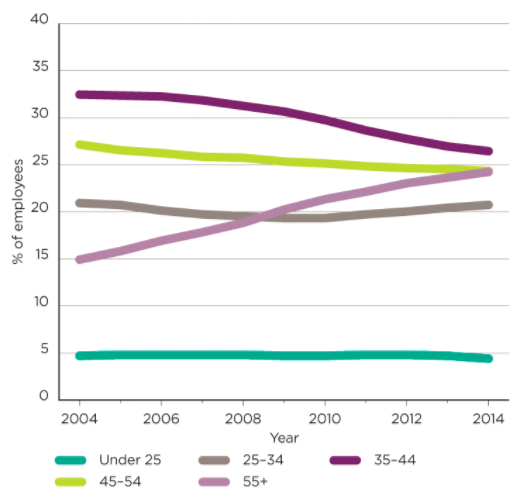


Figure 1 Age population percentage of employees

Even though there is no strong evidence suggest that performance or motivation are related to the ages of employees, the attitudes and behaviours are both affected by the age factor. For example, studies which based on attraction-selection-attrition model has point out very special scenarios: younger or those short-term workers are normally exclude from internal information exchanges, while older workers are usually treaded with less career opportunities (Shore, et al., 2011). However, the mangers who are older than others will actually execute actions equally towards to both younger and older groups, and the result is different if the managers are younger. There were 257,800 workers who aged between 45 to 55 were underemployed, they either worked like part time workers even they are employed on a full-time basis, or simply take reduced hours (Commission A. H., 2010).

## Age-related stereotypes

Stereotypes are generally defined as generalised about one specific group of people (normally with one or more close characteristics) based on personal perception. Our society has been though different kinds of stereotypes in the history, for example, Asian employees are smarter with new technologies, Chinese students are master at mathematics and black people are good at sports and competes (McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2002). Some of them are related to cultural and ethnic misunderstanding, and others are sexuality related.

Due to the delayed retirement and population ageing, age-related stereotypes in the workplace has become a hot topic of debate across different industries and areas. Some preconceived ideas which based on personal beliefs and expectations are purely judged by the age factor only and become biases and negative preconceptions in some extreme scenarios. Generally speaking, the typical stereotypes are poor performance, resistant to change, lower ability to learn, shorter tenure and costly (Posthuma, 2009). For example, young workers tend to believe that senior colleagues cannot concentrate at workload and have low tolerance for changes which lead to overall dissatisfied overall performance. On the other hand, older works tend to believe that young colleagues are less reliable, less cautious and more likely to leave. It is safe to say every stereotypical assumption about each group likely result opposite stereotypical assumption towards to another group (McCarthy & Heraty, 2016).

However, the stereotypes damage the older workers the most because they are giving a negative poor image for the whole group (Davey, 2018). However, the age stereotypes discrimination damages the entire employment relationship which can potentially damage the business due to that those stereotypes may affect decision making progresses on direction and task allocation. In addition, the relationship between different groups which naturally separated has more issues than before, people tend to blame each other with aged-related claims and generate more tension in workplaces. Senior leaders normally can perform objective decisions towards both age groups but they often tend to give higher review on older workers while the young leaders often tend to give higher review on younger workers. Interestingly, the senior leader normally gives opportunities equally for different groups, in contrast, the young leaders give more opportunities to younger workers (Commission A. H., 2010). Therefore, with this current situation, it is safe to say that the older population have major disadvantages over younger generations in workplace under current circumstances.

## What was done

Many employers choose to terminate the contract of employees without satisfied overall performance by compulsory retirement, which was banned in New Zealand back in 1993 (Guest & MacDonald, 2018), this is a direct form of age discrimination based on “older workers have lower performance” stereotype. Also, Australian government has also issued federal Age Discrimination Act in 2004, which targeting the age-related stereotypes in work places, UK government has release the Equality Act 2010 which contains multiple acts and regulations in order to fight against age related stereotypes 6 years later. As the research goes, globally, every large country has one or more Laws or Acts against such worse version of this discrimination problem.

In Australia, there are many age-based community groups, business groups and workforce unions which dedicated to training mature age workers in order to suit emerging market needs, while relevant government departments were initialised lots of government funded programs, which is sending a strong signal that people should be working at least 67 years of age (Commission A. H., 2010). However, the delay of retirement in the old population result less jobs available for younger generations, which also cause more problems for stereotypes on youths, and there is no viable solution for that right now (Chanaz Gargouri, 2017). For example, if someone is aged but fully capable of finish his current job, according to the law the organisation cannot force him to retire, which make this particular position not available for younger generation, even government also provide training programs and career assessment helps for younger generations.

## Current situations

Despite the fact that the federal government’s 2010 Intergenerational Report suggests that there will be 2.4% increasement per year in Australia’s real GPD if the mature age workers actively participate in the operation of daily businesses in the next 40 years (Australia, 2010), the current situation is mature workforce are heavily misjudged due to the age related stereotypes and discrimination. Many people who are working with aged people still hold negative opinions about mature workers, those who does not believe such stereotype statements tend to hide their own opinions because of the anxious about themselves to be next bulling targets since this particular opinion will make themselves look unsociably (Matwijiw, 2011). Often, stereotype threat leads bad workplace attitudes and behaviours. Those who affect by such stereotypes are normally have a negative impression on their current job satisfaction and emotionally detached from their current organisation, which cause them to become less involved in their tasks and have higher intentions to quit even though they still have suitable ability to finish their current jobs.

On the other hand, young adults are also facing the discrimination problems in the labour market today, due to several key stereotypes which are repeatedly advertised by the public medias, which generally make the overall images of young generation look not only disrespectful but also incorporate with society. For example, the stereotypes of young generations are often looked as “hard to train” (disloyalty), “uncommitted to his/her position” (unreliability) and “cheaper than expensive experienced workers” (immaturity) (Chanaz Gargouri, 2017), which leads to more complex social problems such as unemployed young adults may potentially engage in self-destructive behaviours, or even take part in criminal activities (Chanaz Gargouri, 2017). The situation keeps getting worse due to the increasing of elders’ percentage in total population.

# Result

It is undeniable that even the government or society have put their weight on the battle towards age-related stereotypes biases, the real-life situation is still worse than the expected outcomes from both older and younger parties’ perspective. Under such circumstances, not only the senior population are suffering from misjudgement and result underemployed or early compulsory retirements, but the young generation also have to endure the similar situation from different angles. Unlike common expectations, the older workers acutely have a positive impact on overall performances, moreover, many encomiasts and researches have suggested that with the help of older populations keep participant in workforce for the next few decades, the overall GDP of one country increasing constantly, even under the pressure of overall ageing percentage increasement.

For individual work place, this phenomenon actually does more harm to the business due to the fact that unwise decisions are normally based on unfavourable stereotypes. On the hand, the judgements which behind those stereotypes are the major factor for misunderstandings and suspicions towards each other which create disunity as result. There are many challenges and opportunities when managing an age-diverse workforce, it is important to consider who the ageist is so that the organisations’ workforce can initials diversity awareness training in order to educate them about the diversity and provides suitable social activities in order to let the employees learn from each other on how to communicate better. For organisations’ decision makers, it is also a challenge task to ensure decisions are given based on objective factors.

## Performance

Despite the fact that there is no link between ageing workers and overall performance of an organisation, people who have stereotypes still have prejudices towards to senior workforces. According the above study based on several trails from different industries (Commission A. H., 2010), with more experiences than usual workers, the average performance is increasing overtime. In addition, without the need of multiple short-term trainings, it is actually decrease the running cost of organisations.

However, with the prejudice from common older or young stereotypes, the judgement of workforces’ performance beforehand may result the actual deceasing in performance due to the Pygmalion effect (also known as Rosenthal effect) which generally gain performance if the management expected more from employees or lose performance if they expected less (Loftus, 2013). For example, under aged stereotypes scenarios, management layer normally expected less from ageing or younger workforce since they are either “low performance” or “with less experience and hard to train”, which will result an overall low performance for real.

Besides the Pygmalion effect, the subjective judgement in both peer to peer review or strategic decisions also result the lower performance due to the psychologically sense of loss. If people feel unfair in most situation will affect their emotions, which certainly has a downfall of their performance.

In conclusion, the aged-related stereotypes have negative effects on performance in workplace in most situations desired of circumstances.

## Solutions

Importantly, it is necessary for people to understand that the general accusation towards to their group is not true and educate the other employees who have the stereotypes biases about the overall benefits of diversity in a company. For example, almost all of the senior employees have noticeable experiences among other young populations due to the working times they achieved already. However, this education cannot be done fully on organisations’ end, the society has to take part and activity participant in it. It is well known that anti-racism is real challenging task in multicultural countries and current situations are similar to stereotypes, for example, in Australia, relevant government departments have injected the “Anti-racism education” into their education system, and the outcome of such program can be positively expected (Education, 2017), the similar program targeting to educate employees about stereotype problems and the age diversity awareness in workplace.

Secondly, as the employers, it is their roles to initial suitable social interaction opportunities for all the employees to neutralise misunderstanding between different age groups. The stereotypes biases are simply related to the categorical thinking method which just due to the small misunderstandings or lack of knowledge above a certain group of people as the previous researches suggested. For example, when people are not familiar with one specific of group, they are tending to perform an initial guess based on either stereotypes or first impressions. The social activities are not only can solve the communication problems, but also can initialising bonds between groups and individuals, which may get an overall positive result in performance increasing.

And the most importantly, employers also need to ensure every decision-makers in workplace are make judgement based on objective factors like the overall performance of certain individuals rather than which age group they belong in. This part requires education on objective thinking for supervisors who are directly interacting with employees and managers who have the access the access to make important decisions, as well as explanation policy for clearing the misunderstandings when one decision has been made which can easily making sure there is no personal reason behind.

# Conclusion

With the rising of ageing population in today’s society and the percentage of senior workers in workforce nowadays, the age-related stereotypes are one of the most challenging issue which affect both older and younger workers when initialise management in a workplace, the individuals are generally judge other people purely based on either simple categorical opinions or first impression which are not accuracy at all. According many researches done today, older people does not lower the overall performance at work as most of ageists expected, but rather they acutely have a positive effect.

Generally speaking, even though the government has issued many Acts against age-related stereotypes in workplace and many organisations have provided many training programs, this very problem is still around in many organisations, world-widely.

In order to solve this issue, employers can initial diversity awareness trainings in order to educate employees about the diversity awareness and arrange social activities for neutralising the common misunderstanding between each age groups, and more importantly, ensure each decision is issued based on objective reasons rather than personal favourite.

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