

INTRODUCTION

What happens when a woman, besides facing gender discrimination in her workplace, becomes a senior worker and therefore also runs into age discrimination? In the literature there are still few answers to this question. Some studies in the stereotype threat literature have examined identity processes as mediators of the relationship between stereotype threat and underperformance. When facing stereotype threat, individuals experience a sense of threat to their relevant identity, which may lead them to resort to identity separation as a coping mechanism—e.g., separating one’s stereotyped identity from the identity as an employee (Spencer et al., 2016; von Hippel, Walsh and Zouroudis, 2011).

In this study we test the hypothesis that gender and age-based stereotype threat are associated with a lack of integration of age, gender and work identities, and this, in turn, has a negative effect on individual’s work and personal adjustment.

METHOD

Procedure: The theoretical model was tested through a path analysis using the R (R Development Core Team, 2012) package lavaan (Rosseel, 2012), utilizing a single observed score for each construct tested. Path coefficients were estimated using the maximum likelihood method, and the non-parametric bootstrapping method (based on 2000 replications) was used to calculate standard errors and confidence intervals of indirect effects (Cheung & Lau, 2008; Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

Participants: 4962 working women aged between 50 and 69 years ($M = 56.4$, $SD = 3.4$). Participants are representative of the entire population of over-50 working women in Italy.

Measure

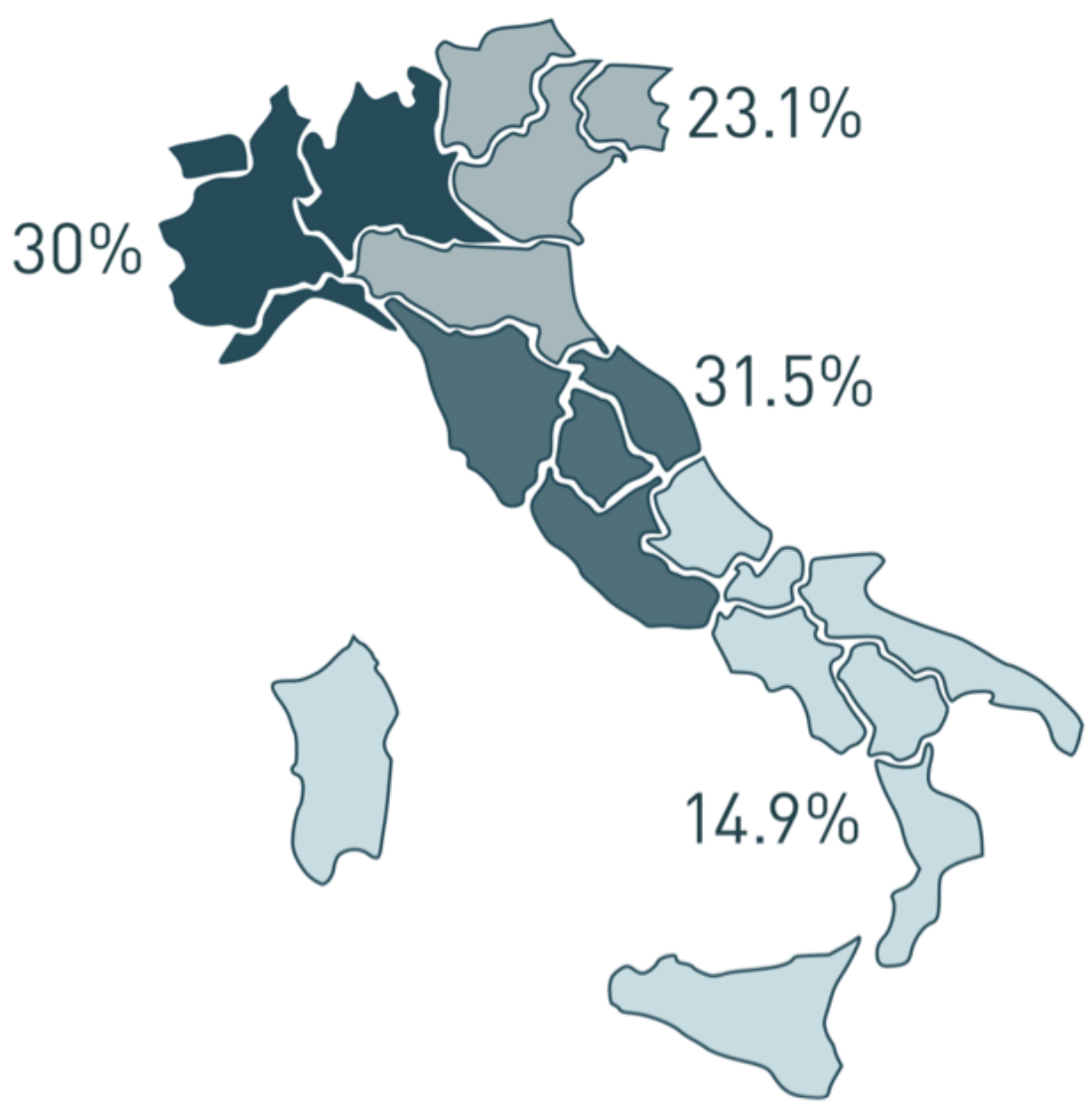
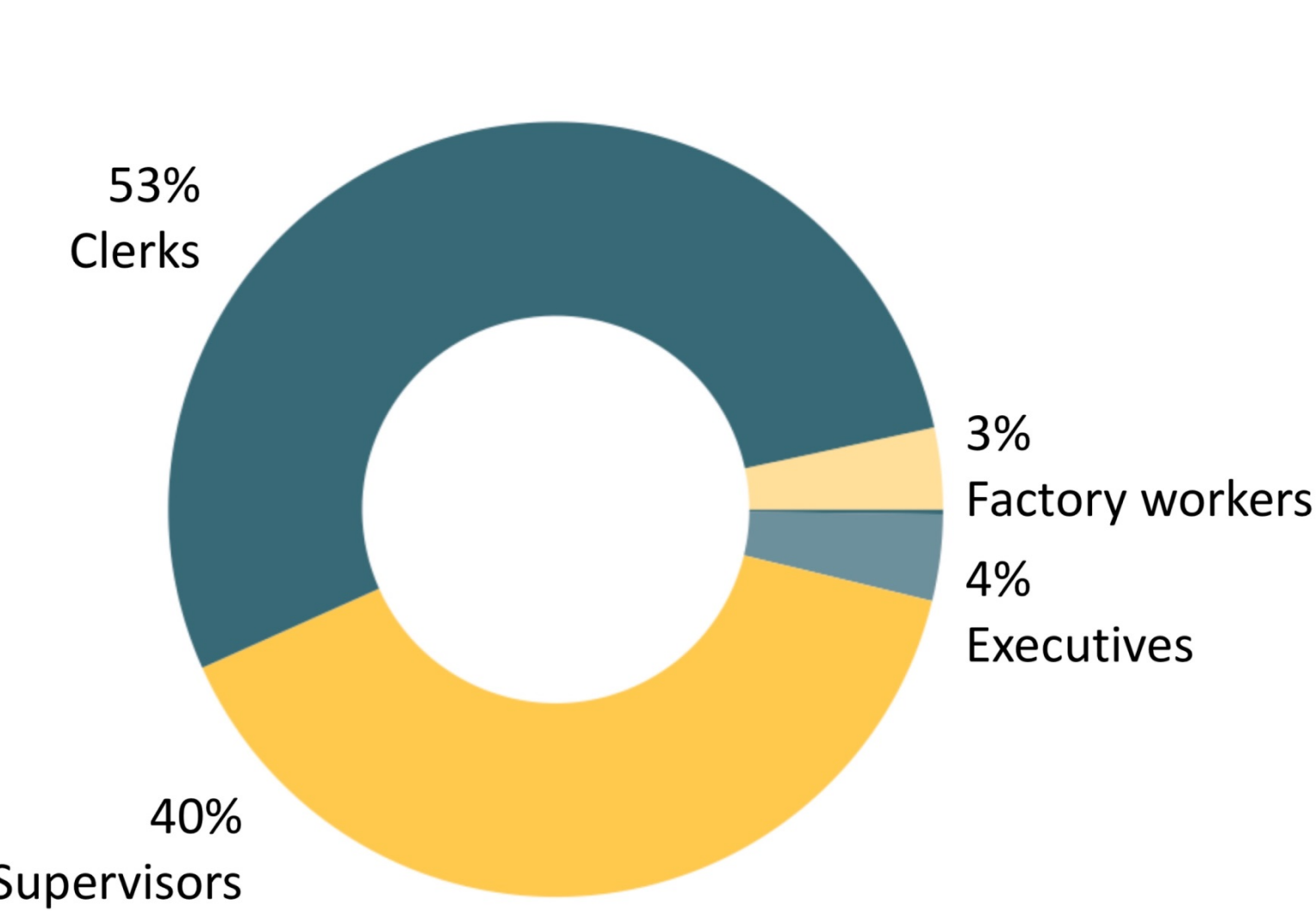
Age discrimination: perceptions of age discrimination in the workplace were assessed with von Hippel, Kalokerinos and Henry (2013) measure. $\alpha = .79$

Gender Discrimination: perceptions of gender discrimination in the workplace were assessed with von Hippel, Issa, Ma, and Stokes (2011) measure. $\alpha = .85$

Identity integration: work-age and work-gender identity integration were measured with a new 8-item scale adapted from the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale–Version 1 (BIIS-1; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). $\alpha_{\text{work-gender}} = .83$, $\alpha_{\text{work-age}} = .81$

Organizational involvement: to measure organizational involvement we used the Organizational Involvement subscale of the Organizational Commitment Scale (Cook & Wall, 1980). $\alpha = .73$

Psychological well-being: the 8-item Flourishing Scale developed by Diener et al. (2010) was used to measure psychological well-being and optimal human functioning. $\alpha = .88$

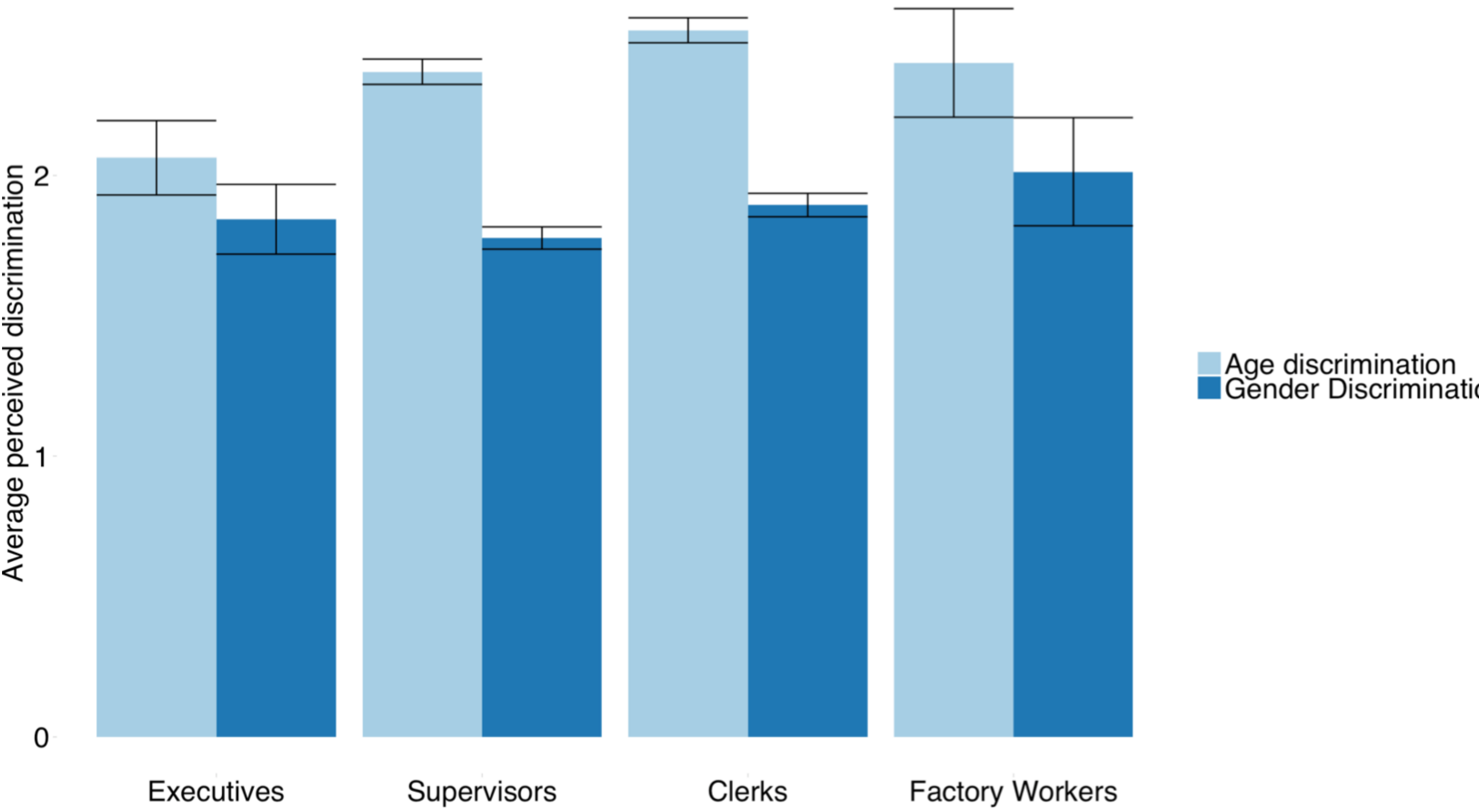


RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations among study variables for the total sample are shown in the following table.

VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5	6	M(SD)
1. AGE DISCRIMINATION	-	.52**	-.22**	-.30**	-.25**	-.23**	2.43(.91)
2. GENDER DISCRIMINATION		-	-.21**	-.21**	-.14**	-.14**	1.84(.83)
3. WORK-AGE IDENTITY INTEGRATION			-	.55**	.24**	.18**	5.14(3.3)
4. WORK-GENDER IDENTITY INTEGRATION				-	.24**	.20**	4.44(2.8)
5. ORGANIZATIONAL INVOLVEMENT					-	.27**	4.03(.83)
6. FLOURISHING						-	5.62(.82)

Differences among employment status on age and gender discrimination were tested with two ANOVAs. The ANOVA conducted on perceived age discrimination revealed a statistically significant employment effect $F(3, 3389) = 15.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. No differences between groups were found for perceived gender discrimination.



Finally we tested our theoretical model. Standardized path coefficients and R-squares are shown in the next figure.

CONCLUSION

Results show that the psychological effects of age and gender discrimination in the workplace are very real. Our findings show that employees threatened by age and gender based stereotypes concerning work performance are less able to commit to their current job, and also less adjusted psychologically. This study goes beyond a replication of the detrimental effect that discrimination has on employees’ work and personal adjustment by showing that identity dynamics also play a key role in these processes. It’s shown that the negative impact of discrimination on employees’ engagement with work and wellbeing happens also indirectly through the effect that these stereotypes have on individuals’ ability to integrate their age and organizational identities. Specifically, perceived discrimination instigates the perception that one’s age, gender and work identities are not compatible (i.e., work-age identity conflict and separation), and this, in turn, has a negative effect on individual’s work and personal adjustment.

RESULTS

