



## Review Article

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# Ageism and Intergenerational Dynamics in the Workplace: A Scoping Review with Implications for Gender and Sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM)

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**Abstract:** This scoping review explores the complex dynamics of ageism and intergenerational relations within workplace settings, providing insights into how these phenomena shape organizational culture, employee engagement, and workplace inclusivity. Using a systematic search across five databases, we identified 25 studies that examine various aspects of age-based discrimination and generational interactions in the workplace. Key findings suggest that an inclusive intergenerational climate can buffer against ageism, enhance job satisfaction, and improve retention across age groups. The review highlights the compounded challenges faced by older workers, especially older women, suggesting a need for research on gendered ageism and its impact on older female workers. The findings underscore the importance of human resource management (HRM) practices that foster knowledge sharing and mutual respect across generations, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to gender equality, decent work, and reduced inequalities. Additionally, this review emphasizes the potential of sustainable HRM strategies to dismantle stereotypes, support gender-sensitive policies, and foster a socially responsible workplace that values contributions across all ages. Future research should address regional differences, particularly in Asian and Global South contexts, to better understand how socio-economic factors such as education, job type, and citizenship status influence ageism in diverse workplace settings.

**Keywords:** ageism; intergenerational dynamics; gender; sustainable HRM; knowledge transfer; inclusive workplace

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# 1 Introduction

As global populations age, workforce demographics are changing dramatically. Therefore, diversity in the workforce today not only pertains to gender, ethnicity and culture but also to age (Kapoor and Solomon 2011). In many countries, older workers are being mandated or encouraged to extend their working lives due to pension shortfalls, increasing life expectancy, and government policy aimed at alleviating economic pressures on public pension systems (Carta, D'Amuri, and von Wachter 2021). This trend has resulted in workplaces where younger and older employees are working side by side for longer periods than ever before. Hanks and Icenogle (2001) mention that there will be intergenerational conflicts since younger and older workers often have different values and work styles. But other studies argue that older workers can bring valuable experience and skills, benefiting overall productivity of employees in all ages (Sobrino-De Toro, Labrador-Fernández, and De Nicolás 2019), and Moore, Everly and Bauer (2016) believe that intergenerational collaboration can enhance organizational performance. Consequently, understanding the dynamics between different generations in the workplace is becoming increasingly critical for organizational success and employee well-being.

Intergenerational relations in the workplace, including the interaction between older and younger employees, are shaped by complex factors such as age-related stereotypes (Wang and Shi 2024), communication patterns (Drury and Fasbender 2024), and workplace cultures (Manongcarang and Guimba 2024). According to Peng et al. (2024), ageism, or prejudice against individuals based on their age, diminishes older workers' voice behaviour (such as sharing ideas, suggestions and/or opinions that are intended to benefit the organization) and limits their engagement in the workplace. This not only impacts the career progression and mental well-being of older employees but also impedes the development of inclusive, dynamic work environments. The study of Takeuhi and Katagiri (2024) found that in Japan 75 % of older workers experiencing ageism in the workplace reported diminished self-perception and subjective well-being. Hegde and Kumar (2024) reveal that in the Indian IT industry ageist attitudes create barriers to intergenerational collaborative and dynamic workplaces. Ageism can manifest in various forms through subtle biases in hiring, promotions, or even interpersonal relationships between workers of different ages (Dennis and Thomas 2007). In addition, gendered ageism at work cannot be ignored. Older women in the workplace and labor market often face more discrimination than older men, for example, being perceived as less competent (McConatha et al. 2023). The intersection of age and gender in stereotypes and discrimination create a toxic work environment that affects well-being of older female workers (McConatha et al. 2023).

Intergenerational dynamics in the workplace refer to the interactions and collaborations among employees from different age groups. Positive intergenerational relations are linked to knowledge sharing, mentorship, and mutual respect (Moore, Everly, and Bauer 2016), while negative interactions can lead to conflict, miscommunication, and entrenched stereotypes (Meshel and McGlynn 2004). Given these evolving dynamics, human resource management (HRM) practices are being scrutinized for their roles in either perpetuating or combating ageism in the workplace (Dennis and Thomas 2007). A sustainable HRM approach focusing on the long-term well-being and development of all employees, irrespective of age, can play a vital role in fostering inclusive work environments (Peng et al. 2024). Based on Kramar (2014), sustainable HRM is defined as the utilization of human resource policies and practices to promote the long-term health and well-being of both the organization and its employees and meanwhile it takes into count the organization's role within society and its impact on the environment. Sustainable HRM policies and practices that promote continuous learning and knowledge transfer across generations can mitigate ageism and facilitate positive intergenerational interactions (Minbaeva 2007).

This scoping review aims to systematically explore and document the breadth of international literature on ageism and intergenerational relations in the workplace. By investigating existing research, this review seeks to deepen the understanding of how ageist attitudes and intergenerational dynamics shape workplace experiences. Furthermore, it aims to offer strategies for HRM sustainability to promote a more inclusive, multi-generational workforce. The following research questions were posed at the outset of the literature review. First, what does ageism 'look' like in the workplace? Second, what patterns are evident in intergenerational relations within workplace settings? And finally, what strategies and practices, particularly from a sustainable HRM and gender perspective, can be employed to combat ageism and improve positive intergenerational dynamics in the workplace?

## 2 Methodology

To understand the range and nature of research conducted to date on ageism and intergenerational relations in the workplace, a scoping review of the current literature was performed guided by the information retrieval guidelines of the Campbell Collaboration (Kugley et al. 2016). Scoping reviews are a method used to map the existing literature on a broad topic with diverse study designs (Arksey and O'Malley 2005). This approach helps uncover sources, concepts and findings that can inform future research. This scoping review, therefore, followed the five stages of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) scoping study framework: 1) identifying the research questions; 2) finding relevant studies; 3) selecting studies; 4) charting data; and

5) collating, summarizing and reporting the results. A comprehensive and replicable search was conducted. Details about the search strategy, study screening and selection, data extraction, coding, and analysis are provided in the following sections.

## 2.1 Inclusion Criteria

The selected articles had to meet the following inclusion criteria: 1) published in peer-reviewed journals; 2) written in English; 3) published between 2007 and 2023; 4) empirical research, reviews or opinion articles (excluding gray literature). To ensure transparency and rigor in the study selection process, the PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines (Tricco et al. 2018) were followed.

## 2.2 Search Strategy

There were four steps in the search strategy. To commence, an initial exploratory search, informed by the research teams own existing knowledge of the topic, identified published journal articles within the research area. These articles were then reviewed to identify key concepts and phrases in the literature to inform the development of a comprehensive keyword search string using Boolean operators (Harter 1986) to focus search results. Thirdly, the keyword search string was used to query article titles and abstracts contained in relevant electronic databases. Finally, following screening, the reference lists of included studies were reviewed to locate any additional studies for inclusion.

The terms used were (“worker\*” OR “employee” OR “workforce” OR “employment” OR “labor market” OR “labour” OR “job\*” OR “work” OR “workplace” OR “work environment”) AND (“ageing” OR “aging” OR “old\*” OR “mature” OR “ageism” OR “ageist” OR “age discrimination”) AND (“intergenerational” OR “multigenerational” OR “generational” OR “age diversity” OR “age-diverse” OR “interpersonal” OR “younger worker\*” OR “generation\*” OR “friendship\*” OR “interaction\*” OR “interpersonal” “behaviour” OR “behavior” OR “solidarity” OR “dynamic\*” OR “conflict” OR “relations” OR “mentor\*” OR “difference\*” OR “collaboration” OR “gap” OR “exchange”).

Five databases were searched: Web of Science (177 results), ProQuest Social Science Collection (151 results), Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts (ASSIA) (95 results), PsycINFO (85 results), and Scopus (9 results).

## 2.3 Screening and Study Selection

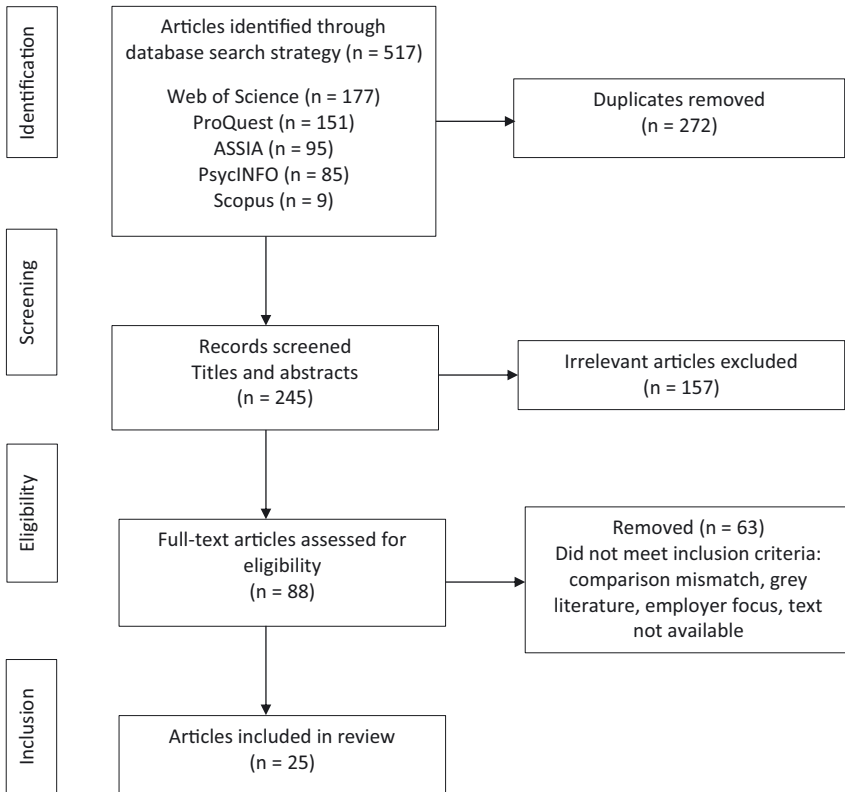
In total, 517 articles were identified following the search strategy steps as detailed and were imported into Covidence screening and data extraction manager (Veritas Health Innovation 2023). Duplicates were automatically removed, yielding a total of 245 articles for screening. Following the guidance by Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010), a transparent and reproducible screening process to assess eligibility for full text evaluation was undertaken. Firstly, titles and abstracts were reviewed for adherence to the inclusion criteria. 157 further studies were deemed as not fully complying with the inclusion criteria and were excluded, resulting in 88 studies for full text review. The full text of these potential articles were retrieved and assessed and 28 were selected for extraction and further analysis. Finally, the reference lists of these included studies were scrutinised for additional articles and a further 22 articles were identified for inclusion. Reasons for exclusion varied, including not relating specifically to older workers, intergenerational relations or ageism. Following further review and scrutiny, the screening and study selection process yielded a total of 25 studies for inclusion in the review and is reported and presented in a PRISMA-ScR flow diagram (see Figure 1).

## 2.4 Data Extraction

The finalised 25 included articles were examined for compliance with the objectives of the scoping review by the research team. To chart the data and record characteristics and key information, a systematic record of the following was extracted and compiled into a data extraction table: author(s), year, region, title, publication, study aims, population and methods. In doing so, the researchers were able to characterise the research conducted to date and identify any potential research gaps. The extraction is presented in Table 1.

## 2.5 Study and Population Characteristics

The selected articles comprised of 18 quantitative studies (Burmeister, Wang, and Hirschi 2020; Claes and Bart Van de Ven 2008; Desmette and Gaillard 2008; Fasbender, Burmeister, and Wang 2023; Firzly, Van de Beeck, and Lagacé 2021; Hanrahan, Thomas, and Finkelstein 2023; Iweins et al. 2013; Jelenko 2020; Lagacé, Van de Beeck, and Firzly 2019; Lagacé et al. 2022; Lagacé et al. 2023; Lavoie-Tremblay et al. 2010; McCann and Keaton 2013; McConatha, Kumar, and Magnarelli 2022; Moriarity, Brown, and Schultz 2014; Tybjerg-Jepesen et al. 2023; von Humboldt et al. 2023;



**Figure 1:** PRISMA-ScR flow diagram of study selection process.

Yeung et al. 2021), two qualitative studies (Lyons and Schweitzer 2017; Patel, Tinker, and Corna 2018), two review articles (Dencker, Joshi, and Martocchio 2007; Finkelstein, King, and Voyles 2015) and three opinion articles (Barabaschi 2015; Sudheimer 2009; Weingarten 2009). Of these, six studies explored not only ageism but also age discrimination with an intersectional gender perspective (Burmeister, Wang, and Hirschi 2020; Desmette and Gaillard 2008; Firzly, Van de Beeck, and Lagacé 2021; Lyons and Schweitzer 2017; Moriarity, Brown, and Schultz 2014; von Humboldt et al. 2023).

Geographically, 14 studies were conducted in the US and Canada, 10 in Europe and one study was located in Asia. The articles investigated workers aged 16 and older, focusing on diverse questions related to ageism and intergenerational relationships in the workplace, particularly between younger and older workers. The definitions of younger and older workers varied significantly across the studies,

Table 1: Ageism and intergenerational relations in the workplace.

ID	Author	Year	Region	Title	Publication	Study aims	Population	Methods
1	Barabaschi	2015	Europe	Intergenerational solidarity in the workplace: Can it solve Europe's labor market and social welfare crises?	Journal of Workplace Rights	Discusses solidarity between generations in the workplace	Four case countries (Belgium, France, Italy and Poland)	Opinion
2	Burmeister, Wang, and Hirschi	2020	Switzerland	Understanding the motivational benefits of knowledge transfer for older and younger workers in age-diverse coworker dyads: An actors partner interdependence model	Journal of Applied Psychology	Investigates the motivations, benefits and consequences of knowledge transfer in age-diverse workforces	173 age-diverse co-worker dyads in diverse industries (younger mean age: 28.12 and older mean age: 54.73)	Quantitative
3	Claes and van de ven	2008	Belgium and Sweden	Determinants of older and younger workers' job satisfaction and organisational commitment in the contrasting labour markets of Belgium and Sweden	Ageing & Society	Explores the factors that keep older workers satisfied and committed at work by contrasting older and younger workers in favourable (Sweden) and unfavourable labour markets (Belgium)	209 workers aged 16 to 25 and 235 workers aged 50 to 66	Quantitative
4	Dencker, Joshi, and Martocchio	2007	US	Employee benefits as context for intergenerational conflict	Human Resource Management Review	Discusses how employee benefits practices detract from job motivation across different age groups	US census data	Review
5	Desmette and Gaillard	2008	Belgium	When a "worker" becomes an "older worker": The effects of age-related social identity on attitudes towards retirement and work	Career Development International	Investigates the relationship between perceived social identity as an older worker and attitudes towards early retirement and commitment to work	352 French-speaking workers aged 50 to 59 working in private organizations	Quantitative

Table 1: (continued)

ID	Author	Year	Region	Title	Publication	Study aims	Population	Methods
6	Fasbender, Burmeister, and Wang	2023	UK	Managing the risks and side effects of workplace friendships: The moderating role of workplace friendship self-efficacy	Journal of Vocational Behaviour	Investigates the risks and side effects of workplace friendships for co-workers	950 employees across two studies aged over 18	Quantitative
7	Finkelstein, King, and Voyles	2015	US	Age meta-stereotyping and cross-age workplace interactions: A meta view of age stereotypes at work	Work, Aging and Retirement	Establishes a framework to understand dynamics of age meta-stereotypes in the workplace		Review
8	Firzly, van de Beeck, and Lagacé	2021	Canada	Let's work together: Assessing the impact of intergenerational dynamics on young workers' ageism awareness and job satisfaction	Canadian Journal on Aging	Aims to assess if intergroup contact has a positive effect on perceptions of ageism amongst canadian younger workers	612 student workers aged under 45	Quantitative
9	Hanrahan, Thomas, and Finkelstein	2023	US	You're too old for that! ageism and prescriptive stereotypes in the workplace	Work, Aging and Retirement	Explores what happens when a worker violates prescriptive age identity stereotypes (i.e., does not act in ways that align with cultural expectations for people in their age group)	664 workers aged 18 to 75	Quantitative
10	Iweins et al.	2013	Belgium	Ageism at work: The impact of intergenerational contact and organizational multi-age perspective	European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology	Examines attitudes towards and contextual factors impacting age diversity and intergenerational relationships at work	316 Belgian employees aged under 50 across 2 studies	Quantitative



Table 1: (continued)

ID	Author	Year	Region	Title	Publication	Study aims	Population	Methods
11	Jelenko	2020	Slovenia	The role of intergenerational differentiation in perception of employee engagement and job satisfaction among older and younger employees in Slovenia	Changing Societies & Personalities	Investigates influence of age discrimination on job satisfaction and employee engagement between age cohorts	755 younger workers aged 18 to 35 and 750 older workers aged over 55	Quantitative
12	Lagacé, van de Beeck, and Firzly	2019	Canada	Building on intergenerational climate to counter ageism in the workplace? A cross-organizational study.	Journal of Intergenerational Relationships	Explores factors to counter negative outcomes of ageism in the workplace	415 workers aged over 45 in public and private sectors	Quantitative
13	Lagacé et al.	2022	Canada	Testing the shielding effect of intergenerational contact against ageism in the workplace: A Canadian study	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	How cross generational contacts in the workplace and knowledge sharing practices reduce ageist attitudes, increasing work engagement levels and intentions to remain	603 workers aged 18 to 68	Quantitative
14	Lagacé et al.	2023	Canada	Fostering positive views about older workers and reducing age discrimination: A retest of the workplace intergenerational contact and knowledge sharing model	Journal of Applied Gerontology	Aims to understand psychosocial mechanisms that may counteract age discrimination and help retain workers	500 workers aged 19 to 73	Quantitative

Table 1: (continued)

ID	Author	Year	Region	Title	Publication	Study aims	Population	Methods
15	Lavoie-Tremblay	2010	Canada	Retaining nurses and other hospital workers: An intergenerational perspective of the work climate	Journal of Nursing Scholarship	Describes and compares work climate perceptions and intentions to quit amongst hospital workers	1,324 healthcare workers aged 18 to 63	Quantitative
16	Lyons and Schweitzer	2017	Canada	A qualitative exploration of generational identity: Making sense of young and old in the context of today's workplace	Work, Aging and Retirement	Investigates individuals' generational identities in the workplace. How and why people identify with generational groups (or not), and whether there are age-related patterns in generational identification.	105 workers, 57 women (54 %) and 48 men (46 %), average age of 39 years	Qualitative
17	McCann and Keaton	2013	US and Thailand	A cross cultural investigation of age stereotypes and communication perceptions of older and younger workers in the USA and Thailand	Educational Gerontology	Younger workers' perceptions of older and same age worker stereotypes and communication	142 American students and 125 Thai students aged 18 to 33	Quantitative
18	McConatha, Kumar, and Magnarelli	2022	US	Ageism, job engagement, negative stereotypes, intergenerational climate, and life satisfaction among middle-aged and older employees in a university setting	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	How experiences of ageism, work climate and job engagement impact life satisfaction	115 university staff aged 50 to 79	Quantitative

Table 1: (continued)

ID	Author	Year	Region	Title	Publication	Study aims	Population	Methods
19	Moriarty, Brown, and Schultz	2014	US	We have much in common: The similar inter-generational work preferences and career satisfaction among practicing radiologists	Journal of the American College of Radiology	Assesses generational differences in workplace satisfaction	1,577 radiologists aged 30 to 68	Quantitative
20	Patel, Tinker, and Coma	2018	UK	Younger workers' attitudes and perceptions towards older colleagues	Working with Older People	Investigates younger workers' views on intergenerational relationships within the workplace	Ten employees aged under 35 in a multi-generational workplace	Qualitative
21	Sudheimer	2009	US	Stories appreciating both sides of the generation gap: Baby boomer and generation X nurses working together	Nursing Forum	Discusses differences in work ethics and values between age groups		Opinion
22	Tybjerg-Jepsen et al.	2023	Denmark	Is a positive intergenerational workplace climate associated with better self-perceived aging and workplace outcomes? A cross-sectional study of a representative sample of the Danish working population	Journal of Applied Gerontology	Examines association between intergenerational workplace climate and self-perceived aging, work engagement and intentions to quit	1,571 workers aged 18 to 74	Quantitative
23	Von Humboldt et al.	2023	Portugal	Is age an issue? Psychosocial differences in perceived older workers' work (un)adaptability, effectiveness, and workplace age discrimination	Educational Gerontology	Perceptions about older workers	453 workers aged 18 to 65	Quantitative

Table 1: (continued)

ID	Author	Year	Region	Title	Publication	Study aims	Population	Methods
24	Weingarten	2009	US	Four generations, one workplace: A gen X-Y staff nurse's view of team building in the emergency department	Journal of Emergency Nursing	Opinions of four generations at work together		Opinion
25	Yeung et al.	2021	Hong Kong	Age differences in visual attention and responses to intergenerational and non-intergenerational workplace conflicts	Frontiers in Psychology	Investigates if levels of visual attention, emotional responses and conflict strategies will be moderated by the age group of workers, conflict type, and their interaction	48 younger workers aged 20 to 34 and 46 older workers aged 40 to 68	Quantitative

influenced by cultural and policy contexts. Younger workers are often defined as individuals aged 15–24, with some policies extending this to 29 years (Haar Ter and Rönmar 2014) and older workers as those aged 55–64 (Steiber 2014). Among our selected articles, the Slovenian study (Jelenko 2020) defined the younger workers as 18–35 years old and older workers as 55 years and above. In the UK study (Patel, Tinker, and Corna 2018), younger workers were those below 35 years old and older workers were individuals above 50 years old. The Danish study by Tybjerg-Jepesen et al. (2023) considered younger workers as those aged 18 to 30 and older workers as those 50 years and above. However, in the Hong Kong study (Yeung et al. 2021), younger workers were people aged 20–34 while older workers were those aged 40–68 years old, and the Canadian study defined the group of older workers as employees aged 45 years and above (Lagacé, Van de Beeck, and Firzly 2019).

## 2.6 Data Coding and Analysis

Following the thematic analysis guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021), patterns within the data were identified and analysed to capture the spectrum of concepts across the literature. This was achieved by reading and noting features in a systematic way. The codes were grouped into four overarching themes with associated sub-themes and are now discussed. The themes and examples extracted from the literature are presented in Table 2 (The codebook with detailed examples from the literature is available upon request from the authors).

## 3 Results and Discussion

This review aims to synthesis and present evidence on a range of issues relating to ageism and intergenerational relations in the workplace. Four overarching themes were identified and are now presented: ageism and gender in workplace discrimination, generational identity and stereotyping in the workplace, intergenerational dynamics and knowledge transfer in the workplace, and organisational fairness, workplace climate and generational work experiences.

### 3.1 Ageism and Gender in Workplace Discrimination

Age discrimination affects job satisfaction and engagement across all age groups, and it can influence broader socio-economic outcomes, such as social cohesion, economic growth and the sustainability of healthcare and retirement systems

**Table 2:** Themes and examples extracted from the literature.

<b>Core theme</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Example in literature</b>
Ageism and gender in workplace discrimination	Ageism	An inclusive intergenerational workplace is the most effective buffer against ageism [12]
	Sustainability	Age discrimination impacts on job satisfaction and employee engagement across older and younger, which will play a deciding role in the broader socio-economic context via the future job market, providing higher economic growth, a sustainable healthcare and retirement system, etc. [11]
Generational identity and stereotyping in the workplace	Gender	Older female actors derived less motivational benefits from partner knowledge receiving. Dyadic gender difference had sizeable effects on older workers' competence need fulfillment and their intention to remain [2]
	Generational identity	Misconceptions exist about every generation [24]
	Generational grouping	Workers tend to interact with individuals in their own age group [20]
	Perceptions of older workers	Older workers seen as more uncomfortable with new technology, less flexible, more cautious at work and more loyal to their employer [17]
	Perceptions of younger workers	Young people adaptive and responsive to change [16]
	Age stereotypes	Older workers more likely to be associated with negative work-related stereotypes [23]
	Intergroup contact	Intergroup contacts prevent development of negative stereotypes [13]
	Working in a multigenerational workplace	A positive intergenerational climate at work enhances job satisfaction and retention [8]
	Communication between generations	Cultural differences in communications remind us that experiences of aging and working are not universal [17]
	Intergenerational dynamics and knowledge transfer in the workplace	

Table 2: (continued)

<b>Core theme</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Example in literature</b>
	Intergenerational tension	Older and younger workers respond differently to conflict at work [25]
	Knowledge transfer	The employment of younger and older workers can be rendered more complementary by promoting knowledge transfers across generations within firms, allowing more sustainable and likely permanence at work and ensuring transmission of knowledge and skills within the company [1]
Workplace climate and generational work experiences	Workplace climate	Positive intergenerational workplace climate related to more positive experiences of aging [22]
	Generational work experiences	Employee benefits can contribute to intergenerational conflict [4]
	Organizational fairness	Fairness in organisation procedures a mediator for positive attitudes towards older workers [10]
	Loyalty to employer	Older people value long tenure with employer, shows evidence of loyalty and perseverance [16]
	Job satisfaction	Skill discretion and organisational fairness predicts job satisfaction and commitment to employer [3]

(Jelenko 2020). Ageist attitudes are not limited to any one age group, and both young and older workers who experience ageism at work report decreased work engagement and a reduced intention to stay in their jobs (Lagacé et al. 2023). Interestingly, von Humboldt et al. (2023) found that as people age, their perception of experiencing age discrimination tends to increase. Ageist stereotypes towards older workers can harm both organizations and individuals. When older workers leave, organizations may suffer lose valuable knowledge, which affects the sustainability of institutional memory (Lagacé, Van de Beeck, and Firzly 2019). At an individual level, older workers who report age-related discrimination often experience lower life satisfaction (McConatha et al. 2022).

Gender can influence generational differences in workplace settings (Moriarity, Brown, and Schultz 2014). For older women, employment experiences are often shaped by the intersection of age-based discrimination and gendered roles. For example, Burmeister, Wang, and Hirschi (2020) found that gender can significantly impact older workers' sense of competence and their intentions to remain in the workforce. Older female workers are often less motivated by receiving knowledge from their colleagues (Burmeister, Wang, and Hirschi 2020), which can affect their job satisfaction and decision about continuing employment (McConatha et al. 2023). Technology also poses unique challenges. Albinowski and Lewandowski (2024) found that advancements in ICT and robots have reduced the sectoral employment opportunities and wage shares of European women aged 60 and above. In blue-collar jobs, older female applicants experience greater age discrimination during hiring compared to older men (Drydakakis et al. 2017). In some industries, older women face compounded challenges. For instance, in the IT sector, they are underrepresented and often part of a vulnerable group (Brooke 2009). Similarly, Fitzpatrick and O'Neill (2023) highlighted that older women in the film industry encounter significant ageism, with stark underrepresentation in leadership roles.

Besides gender, such factors as life-cycle stage and work culture also can interact with age to influence how workers define their social identity and generational affiliations (Lyons and Schweitzer 2017). For instance, social roles tied to family responsibilities, like caregiving, often lead women (but not men) to retire early to meet family needs (Wu, Li, and Waern 2022), while men may seek ways to stay active in the workforce as they age (Desmette and Gaillard 2008). Furthermore, research by Firzly, Van de Beeck, and Lagacé (2021) suggests that age can moderate the negative impact of gender on ageist practices toward older workers, which indicates the need for more detailed research into how factors like gender, education level, and profession interact and influence age-related stereotypes and discrimination in the workplace (von Humboldt et al. 2023).



### 3.2 Generational Identity and Stereotyping in the Workplace

Identifying with a generational group is a way for individuals to make sense of the workplace social context, providing a basis for both social and individual identity within an organisation (Lyons and Schweitzer 2017). Across the literature, age-related patterns in workers' identification with generational groups highlight how people view themselves, understand workplace group dynamics and relate to organisational culture (Lyons and Schweitzer 2017). Workers often prefer interacting with colleagues of their own age group (Patel, Tinker, and Corna 2018), however, recognizing similarities between age groups has been found to mediate negative stereotypes about other groups and foster positive relationships (Iweins et al. 2013).

Workplaces with distinct generational groupings tend to develop more positive attitudes toward older workers. Yet, when older workers identify closely with age-related peers, they often hold more negative attitudes toward their work and express a stronger desire to retire early (Desmette and Gaillard 2008). Generational identity at work can influence perceptions with the group and, in the case of older workers, it may lead to disadvantages compared to younger age groups (von Humboldt et al. 2023). Younger workers, on the other hand, may be shielded from awareness of negative stereotypes about older workers due to their generational identity (Firzly, Van de Beeck, and Lagacé 2021). While misconceptions exist for every generation (Weingarten 2009), Patel, Tinker, and Corna (2018) found that the tendency for workers to form groups based on age can intensify conflicts and add complexity to the work environment, which is in line with the findings of Weingarten (2009).

Perceptions of other generational groups reveal how generational identity can shape workplace stereotypes. Younger workers often view older colleagues as reliable, hardworking, experienced, and willing to share knowledge, contributing to better decision making and a positive work environment (Patel, Tinker, and Corna 2018). These positive views about older workers have been linked to increased work engagement for all employees (Lagacé et al. 2022). However, when younger workers tend to have neutral or mixed perceptions about the cognitive abilities of their older colleagues (McCann and Keaton 2013), they may also perceive older colleagues as resistant to change or less adaptable (Lyons and Schweitzer 2017; McCann and Keaton 2013; Patel, Tinker, and Corna 2018; von Humboldt et al. 2023).

Contradictions arise in perceptions of older workers. They are often seen as loyal to their employer (McCann and Keaton 2013) but may be viewed as prioritizing responsibilities outside of work, such as caregiving (Patel, Tinker, and Corna 2018). A study by Van Dalen and colleagues (2010) involving 10 Dutch companies found that both employers and employees across all age groups view older workers as loyal to

employers and highly committed to organization. Older workers are sometimes perceived as less uncomfortable with new technology (McCann and Keaton 2013), which can reinforce generational stereotypes (Lyons and Schweitzer 2017). As to younger workers, there is a general perception that they lack a strong work ethic and are more self-centred (Lyons and Schweitzer 2017) and are less likely to do additional shifts at work (Sudheimer 2009).

Stereotypes about generational groups shape workplace perceptions across the literature, with younger workers more often holding different views about both their own and other generations (McCann and Keaton 2013). Age meta-stereotyping refers to the process by which one group perceives how they believe another group views them (Vauclair et al. 2016), and it adds an additional layer of complexity to age-diverse interactions (Finkelstein, King and Voyles 2015). Negative stereotypes about older workers, for instance, viewing them as inflexible or outdated, are often deeply entrenched (von Humboldt et al. 2023). Violating age-related expectations, such as an older worker ‘acting young’, can lead to negative judgments about their stability (Hanrahan, Thomas, and Finkelstein 2023).

Positive intergroup contact can improve perceptions across generational lines, in particular, toward older workers and has been associated with increased work engagement (Lagacé et al. 2022). Encouraging open communication and understanding (Weingarten 2009), and promoting intergroup interactions, can help reduce stereotypes and foster a more inclusive workplace environment (Lagacé et al. 2022).

### **3.3 Intergenerational Dynamics and Knowledge Transfer in the Workplace**

A positive intergenerational climate at work has been shown to enhance job satisfaction and employee retention (Fitzly, Van de Beeck, and Lagacé 2021). The prevailing findings of the study by Patel, Tinker, and Corna (2018) revealed that many workers appreciate a generational mix in the workplace, as different age groups often bring complementary skills. For instance, older workers tend to excel in customer service and social skills, while younger workers often perform better with technical skills (Van Dalen, Henkens, and Schippers 2010). Additionally, research by Frerichs et al. (2012) indicates that knowledge transfer between younger and older workers is an effective practice for active ageing. This exchange of knowledge and skills not only promotes the retention of older employees but also helps organizations address the challenges of an ageing workforce (Frerichs et al. 2012).

In general, younger workers who interact frequently with older colleagues hold more positive attitudes toward them (Patel, Tinker, and Corna 2018). However,

motivations for social interactions at work differ between age groups. Older workers see these interactions as a measure of personal success and a way to boost productivity, while younger workers view them as opportunities for mentorship and network-building (Moriarty, Brown, and Schultz 2014). Younger workers generally respect their older colleagues, though this respect often leads to more formal communication with them (Patel, Tinker, and Corna 2018). Older workers reported that their work domain was devalued when their social identity as an older worker did not translate into meaningful relationships at work (Desmette and Gaillard 2008), and younger workers found that older colleagues could be intimidating, resulting in a hesitation to ask questions for fear of being judged (Patel, Tinker, and Corna 2018). When the boundaries between older and younger groups are rigid, it can lead to disengagement (Desmette and Gaillard 2008).

Intergenerational tensions are often rooted in differing approaches to work and can be exacerbated when generational groups become insular (Patel, Tinker, and Corna 2018). A lack of understanding about generational cultures, styles, and backgrounds could lead to conflict in the workplace (Weingarten 2009). Generational differences in workplace friendships have also been linked to role conflicts and incivility toward colleagues of other generations (Fasbender, Burmeister, and Wang 2023), and these generational differences can negatively impact on job satisfaction (Jelenko 2020). Older workers in poor health or in physically demanding roles are more likely to engage in intergenerational competition (Desmette and Gaillard 2008), while younger workers may feel competitive when they perceive that older workers are staying in higher positions longer than expected (Sudheimer 2009). Remarkably, older workers tend to manage emotional reactions to workplace conflict more effectively than younger employees (Yeung et al. 2021).

Knowledge transfer across generations in the workplace is widely recognized as mutually fulfilling and beneficial. According to Barabaschi (2015), the French government introduced a labour market policy in 2013 aimed at supporting the entry of young people into the workforce and retaining older workers. This initiative promotes sustainable employment and the transfer of knowledge and skills by pairing young employees with experienced senior workers (Barabaschi 2015).

Mentorship opportunities also provide motivational benefits for all age groups and contribute to staff retention (Burmeister, Wang, and Hirschi 2020). Research by Wikström and colleagues (2023) highlights the importance of trust and a sense of community in mentorship relationships. These factors enhance socialization, leading to increased social capital through learning and retaining employees (Wikström et al. 2023). However, younger workers are often in the role of receiving knowledge without reciprocating, due to organizational age norms and their own goal priorities (Burmeister et al. 2024). They may also hesitate to ask questions or be vulnerable (Patel, Tinker, and Corna 2018; Wikström et al. 2023). Meanwhile, older workers may

feel that participating in intergenerational knowledge sharing does not always lead to a sense of inclusion or value (Lagacé, Van de Beeck, and Firzly 2019). Therefore, organizational support, along with a culture that promotes knowledge-sharing, should be prioritized (Burmeister et al. 2024).

Additionally, bi-directional knowledge sharing practices between younger and older workers is crucial for fostering positive attitudes toward ageing (Lagacé et al. 2023), as it increases younger workers' awareness of ageist behaviours in the workplace (Firzly, Van de Beeck, and Lagacé 2021). Moreover, continual, trustful interactions between mentors and mentees are essential for building strong, mutually beneficial relationships (Wikström et al. 2023).

### 3.4 Workplace Climate and Generational Work Experiences

Older workers often place greater value on organisational structures and processes compared to younger workers (Lavoie-Tremblay et al. 2010). Benefits such as pensions and medical care are more important to older workers, while younger workers tend to focus on wage levels to meet higher housing and child-rearing costs (Dencker, Joshi, and Martocchio 2007). These differences in priorities can sometimes lead to intergenerational conflict, as younger workers may view older employees as having more favourable work conditions (Lyons and Schweitzer 2017). Generational differences also emerge in attitudes toward job loyalty and job insecurity tends to have a more negative impact on older workers (Claes and Van de Ven 2008), since they often value long tenures as a sign of loyalty and perseverance; in contrast, younger workers often prefer flexibility and are less inclined to commit to a single employer long-term (Lyons and Schweitzer 2017).

An inclusive intergenerational workplace is one of the most effective defences against ageism (Barabaschi 2015; Lagacé, Van de Beeck, and Firzly 2019), as it reduces feelings of discrimination among older workers and fosters a sense of belonging for all employees (Lagacé, Van de Beeck, and Firzly 2019). Positive intergenerational collaborations can also raise younger workers' awareness of ageist practices, promoting mutual respect across age groups (Firzly, Van de Beeck, and Lagacé 2021). From human resource management (HRM) perspective, organisational performance is closely linked to HR activities in recruitment, development and employee management, therefore, effective HR practices can boost employee commitment and drive greater effort (Dastmalchian et al. 2015).

A positive workplace climate contributes to more favourable perceptions of ageing, as it is associated with better self-perceived ageing, increased work engagement and lower turnover intentions (Tybjerg-Jeppesen et al. 2023).

A supportive and friendly work environment benefits employees of all generations in the workplace (Lavoie-Tremblay et al. 2010) by enhancing job satisfaction (Lagacé, Van de Beeck, and Firzly 2019). A study by Biswas, Boyle and Bhardwaj (2021), involving 182 human resource managers in Bangladeshi companies, concluded that supportive HR practices foster a positive organisational climate, promoting equal opportunity for everyone to grow and succeed irrespective of their background and identity. This inclusive climate enables organisations to take advantage of creativity and innovation offered by their diverse talents, which is a critical factor for the organisation to thrive in a dynamic market (Biswas, Boyle, and Bhardwaj 2021). Furthermore, organisational fairness, particularly when combined with opportunities for skill discretion, has been found to predict job satisfaction and commitment to the employer (Claes and Bart Van de Ven 2008). Fairness in organisational procedures also help improve attitudes toward older workers (Iweins et al. 2013), and employers play a critical role by facilitating mentoring and age-diverse learning opportunities (Burmeister, Wang, and Hirschi 2020).

## 4 Limitations

This scoping review has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, our inclusion criteria were restricted to articles published in peer-reviewed journals and written in English. While this approach simplifies the review process, it introduces potential biases, such as publication bias, where studies with positive findings are more likely to be published. Additionally, unlike some reviews that incorporate gray literature and use translation tools to include non-English studies, our review lacks this comprehensiveness.

Second, we excluded dissertations, theses, books, and book chapters from our selection criteria. This exclusion could lead to selection bias by omitting potentially valuable contributions from these sources.

Lastly, as a scoping review, this study differs from systematic reviews in its objectives and methodologies. While systematic reviews focus on synthesizing specific outcomes, often through techniques like meta-analysis, this scoping review provides a broad overview of the existing literature. Although it does not offer detailed data synthesis, it serves as a foundation for future research. Specifically, it can guide quality assessments of related studies and support in-depth synthesis through systematic literature reviews in the future (Armstrong et al. 2011).

## 5 Conclusions

This scoping review synthesized a broad range of literature on ageism and intergenerational dynamics in the workplace, offering valuable insights into how these phenomena shape workplace culture, employee engagement, and organizational effectiveness. The findings demonstrate that ageist attitudes negatively impact workers of all ages, with older workers often facing marginalization and younger workers experiencing disengagement in non-inclusive environments.

A key take-away is that an inclusive intergenerational workplace climate not only helps buffer against ageism but also enhances job satisfaction and retention of all employees. Effective management of generational diversity and a climate of intergenerational cooperation can foster successful organizational performances and promote workplace harmony (Macovei and Martinescu-Bădălan 2022). The review underscores the compounded discrimination faced by older women, pointing to the need for future research on gendered ageism and its impact on opportunities for older workers, especially women. As traditional Human Resource Management (HRM) practices may overlook these intersecting factors, potentially leading to ineffective age management strategies (Aaltio, Salminen, and Koponen 2014), a holistic understanding of age and gender is crucial.

To address these challenges, organizations should adopt holistic HRM strategies that incorporate sustainability and gender perspectives. By aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), sustainable HRM practices can play a pivotal role in fostering a sustainable, equitable, and inclusive workforce. Sustainable HRM is essential for effectively managing workplace dynamics, as it explicitly recognizes the need to mitigate the negative impacts of traditional HRM practices on all employees (Kramar 2014). By implementing sustainable HRM policies that leverage the skills and competencies of all age groups, organizations can actively combat ageism (McGuire and Robertson 2007). Examples include age-diverse recruitment practices, continuous training, knowledge sharing, and development opportunities for older workers to recognize and promote their expertise and value (Franz 2023, p. 109, p. 119). Moreover, continuous accountability in executing fair employment policies ensures that older workers, especially women, are not overlooked or undervalued (Franz 2023, p. 116, p. 121). A European study by Visser, Lössbroek, and van der Lippe (2021) found that while traditional HR practices (e.g. demotion) harm older workers' well-being and job satisfaction, effective HR policies, such as training, phased retirement options (e.g. reduced workloads, additional leave, semi-retirement), positively contribute to their well-being, directly aligning with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

To promote inclusivity, organizations should implement Older Worker-Oriented HR Practices (OW-HRPs), such as training managers to address unconscious bias, establishing age-awareness programs, and creating flexible work arrangements like part-time work, job sharing, and telecommuting (Farr-Wharton et al. 2023). These initiatives are particularly crucial for older female workers who may have caregiving responsibilities and therefore can benefit from work-life balance support (Earl and Taylor 2015; Wu, Li, and Waern 2022; Farr-Wharton et al. 2023). Such practices align with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Supporting these HR initiatives and practices dismantle stereotypes, build social capital, and enhance organisational performance (McGuire and Robertson 2007).

Taken together, this review highlights the complexity of ageism and intergenerational dynamics in contemporary workplaces, and suggests that organizations adopt effective and inclusive HR policies and practices, such as training, phased retirement, flexible work arrangements, and targeted age management strategies. Beyond gender and sustainability perspectives, further research, for example, longitudinal quantitative studies, comparative qualitative studies, or mixed-methods approaches, is needed to examine regional and cultural differences, particularly in Asian and Global South contexts, and to explore how factors like education, job type, and citizenship status influence experiences of ageism and intergenerational interactions in workplace settings.

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