

Chapter 3

Leveraging Aging Workforce and Age Diversity to Achieve Organizational Goals: A Human Resource Management Perspective



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3.1 Introduction

As fertility rates decrease and life expectancy increases (OECD, 2018), developed countries all over the world currently experience shifts in the age of their workforce, so that the integration of seniors into society and work has been emphasized as one of the major challenges of the twenty-first century (Shultz & Adams, 2007). With the numerous workers comprising the baby-boomer generation (i.e., those born between 1946 and 1964), late careers are of concern to an increasing number of workers (over the age of 55; Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2009; Wang & Wanberg, 2017), and have thus become an important area of research. In addition, age diversity is likely to increase in today's workforce due to changes in retirement support and higher education that lead employees to work longer and hence to an older age, and increase the presence of younger workers entrants in the workplace (Burke, 2015). Given this aging trend in the labor force, reaching a better understanding of how human resource management (HRM) practices can support the age-diverse workforce and facilitate the maintenance of their collective job performance is becoming crucial (von Bonsdorff et al., 2018).

Such understanding is especially important given that previous research reported that employers are often lukewarm about hiring and retaining older workers, as they assume a gap between the costs related to these employees and their productivity (Henkens et al., 2018). Such doubts about hiring older employees can be explained by the numerous stereotypes related to age that exist in the

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workplace and that tend to generalize both positive and negative attributes (Rudolph, Toomey, & Baltes, 2017). For instance, stereotypical ideas include that older workers are more resistant to change, are more costly, encounter more difficulties to learn, and are poor performers (Posthuma & Campion, 2009). However, research evidence has mostly failed to confirm such stereotypes. Indeed, almost 20 years ago, Greller and Simpson (1999) already recognized that aging, in addition to implying significant inter-individual differences, could be better understood as a process of several discrete transformations rather than a continuous decline; that cognitive decline related to age was not sufficient to influence job performance; and that distinguishing older workers' specific strengths could lead to increased productivity. More recently, in a meta-analysis, Ng and Feldman (2012) evaluated six common stereotypes about older workers (less willing to participate in training and career development, less motivated, more resistant to/less willing to change, less healthy, less trusting, and more vulnerable to work-family conflict) and only found evidence (and a small effect) consistent with the stereotype that older workers are less willing to participate in training and career development, but not for the other stereotypes.

In contrast to the aforementioned detrimental role of not hiring older workers due to stereotypes, HRM practitioners can develop formal company practices that enhance a more age-diverse workplace by influencing employees' job tasks (Rudolph et al., 2017). Indeed, HRM practices have been linked to organizational performance in a multilevel perspective (Jiang, Takeuchi, & Lepak, 2013). Put differently, "organization-level HRM systems impact organization-level outcomes by influencing individual-level employees' idiosyncratic HRM experience and reactions" (Li, Wang, van Jaarsveld, Lee, & Ma, 2018, p. 6). For instance, providing training and development was observed to increase employees' perceived work capacity (Ilmarinen & Tuomi, 2004). This thus represents a top-down perspective in which HRM practices are responsible for shaping individuals' attitudes and behaviors.

Accordingly, in this chapter we build on previous research to address a recent call made by Henkens et al. (2018) to examine successful and unsuccessful HRM practices for an aging workforce. In particular, we propose an HRM perspective to examine how organizations can leverage an aging workforce and age diversity to achieve strategic goals (see Fig. 3.1). Having broadly described the HRM perspective, we then explore how the aging workforce and the increasing trend of age diversity may impact organizational achievement in terms of performance. Then, having summarized the general age-specific HRM practices existing in previous literature, we expand these practices using a broader lifespan view on age that considers how age-neutral HRM practices can be important at all career stages (e.g., Rudolph et al., 2017). In sum, we examine how HRM practices can address firms' strategies and environmental constraints in a way that meets the needs of employees at various career stages (i.e., early, mid, and late careers; Wang, Olson, & Shultz, 2013).

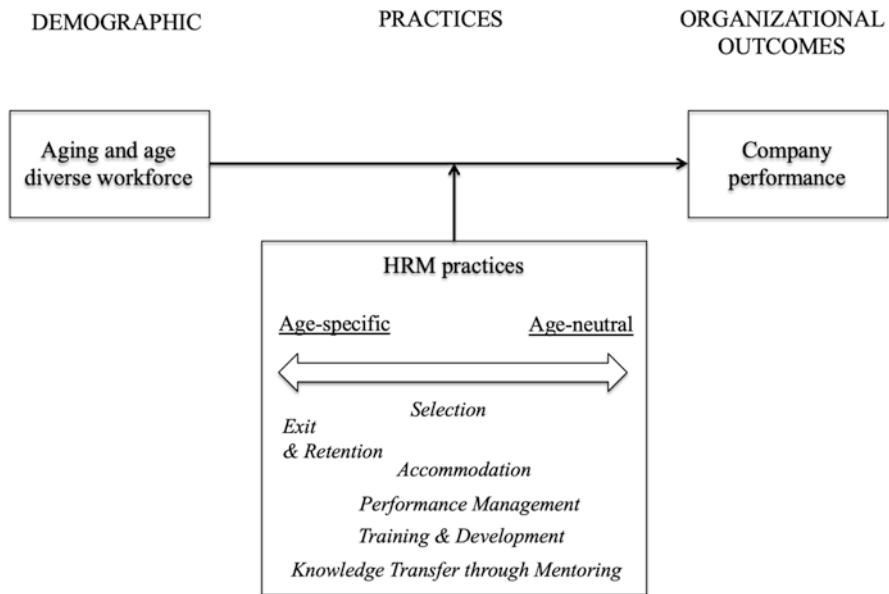


Fig. 3.1 A Human Resource Management perspective on the relationship between age diversity and company performance. The typical HRM practices are placed on the continuum between age-specific and age-neutral practices: while selection, accommodation, performance management, training and development, and knowledge transfer through mentoring can be translated into both; exit and retention only relate to age-specific HRM practices (Adapted from Deller et al., 2018)

3.2 A Human Resource Management Perspective

Human Resource Management (HRM) encompasses “the policies, practices and systems that influence employees’ behavior, attitudes, and performance” (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2017, p. 4). These practices have also been referred to as *people practices* because when managed effectively, they can accumulate human capital resources in an organization. In particular, human capital resources are created from the collection of individuals’ knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs; Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011). The more KSAOs each individual employee brings into the organization, the greater the accumulation of human capital within an organization. Moreover, by the process of interpersonal communication, information, and resource exchanges (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), individuals’ raw KSAOs are combined, and thereby the company’s overall human capital resource expands.

The HRM practices that organizations typically implement include recruiting, selection, training and development, compensation, and performance management. Ideally, each specific practice is formulated and implemented with the company’s goals and objectives in mind. When the strategic need that drives these practices is best fulfilled, organizational performance can improve as a result. For instance, at

Tesla Motors, HRM recruitment practices emphasized finding the most talented employees who are on the same page about a fast-paced culture as Elon Musk, the former CEO. As such, their training guidelines meet both company and employee needs via meaningful, short, and just-in-time learning (Noe et al., 2017). By implementing such recruitment and training HRM practices, the organization can continue with the employee quality it needs without wasting unnecessary time or effort on these essential components of the organization. Taken together, strategically chosen HRM practices can help a company create and maintain a competitive advantage in the market. This position is possible due to the parallelism between the company's goals and objectives and those of the HRM perspective.

Concretely, HRM practices often stem from public policies, as employers need to abide by the laws enforced by agencies such as the Equal Enforcement Opportunity Center (EEOC). In the United States, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) of 1967 prohibits discrimination in employment against individuals 40 years of age and older for organizations with 15 or more employees. As such, organizations' HRM practices need to reflect their adherence to this Act in order to avoid unnecessary legal battles. Taken together, ADEA and public policy highlight the importance of considering both legal and socioeconomic perspectives that may affect older workers' decisions to remain in the workforce. For instance, if employers make layoff decisions despite workers' ages, as ADEA suggests, older workers may be more inclined to remain in the same environment. Therefore, for all workers, and in particular for older workers, employers must take into account the "public policies affecting different aspects, such as flexibility and adaptation of the labor market, discrimination practices, and the level of skill of older workers" prior to developing their HRM practices (Peiró, Tordera, & Potočnik, 2013, p. 525). Such public policies not only help maintain a "workable" (i.e., feasible) environment for older workers but also simultaneously allow organizations to have knowledge regarding the level of accommodation that other organizations are implementing, which allow them to remain competitive.

Finally, HRM practices are often used by organizations to signal to their employees what they value in terms of attitudes and behaviors. Aligned with organizations' strategic values and goals, their HRM systems can be targeted to impact employee attitudes and behaviors that promote their business strategies (Jackson, Schuler, & Rivero, 1989; Wright, Smart, & McMahan, 1995). This capability is particularly important because organizations have distinct business goals and objectives, and it is their employees—managed by the HRM practices—who differentiate organizations from each other in the market. For instance, HRM practices specifically targeted at older or younger workers can be strategically used to create and later foster an age-diverse friendly organizational culture. Promoting the inclusion of all workers in the aforementioned typical HRM practices (e.g., training and development opportunities) can signal to all employees the value of the mature and entrant workforce in the organizations' operations aimed at achieving goals and objectives (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008a). In particular, implementing specific HRM practices signals that the employer not only understands, but also cares, about the different needs, assets, and inclusion of subgroups of employees (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008b).

3.3 The Impact of an Aging Workforce on Company's Performance

Maintaining work performance represents a significant concern when managing an aging and age-diverse workforce (Wang et al., 2013), especially given the possibility of culture change, as well as the loss of knowledge (e.g., leadership), talent, abilities and skills, personal contacts, and relationships (Burke, 2015). Before developing performance at the company level, we briefly review existing knowledge on job performance at the individual and team levels.

3.3.1 *Individual Job Performance*

Previous studies examining the impact of age on job performance have primarily focused on the individual level and have reported mixed findings. Taken together, objective measures of performance (i.e., higher levels of production) suggest that older workers perform better than their younger colleagues, while subjective evaluations from supervisors suggest that older workers perform worse than their younger colleagues (Wang et al., 2013). In addition, in a meta-analysis including ten factors of employees' performance in terms of actions and behaviors, Ng and Feldman (2008) reported that age was not related to core task performance, creativity, and performance in training programs, but was indeed positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors such as helping colleagues in need and not engaging in negative behaviors at work (e.g., complaining). Finally, in extensive reviews, it was skills level and health status (Posthuma & Campion, 2009), and age-related biases and discrimination (Beier & Kanfer, 2013), which best predicted individual job performance rather than age.

A key question relates to the potential influence of HRM practices on the relationship between the aging workforce and performance. Very recently, Taneva and Arnold (2018) addressed this issue at the individual level. They found that HRM practices (e.g., training, financial incentives to remain in the workforce) were indirectly related to individual job performance through the use of selection (i.e., disengaging from unattainable goals and prioritizing goals), compensation (i.e., resources development to attain goals), and optimization (i.e., replace loss resources by new ones): SOC strategies. Indeed, HRM practices focusing on accommodation and development (e.g., constructive feedback from managers) can increase the use of SOC strategies. In addition, Taneva and Arnold (2018) found an indirect effect of thriving at work (i.e., vitality and learning) on the relationship between available HRM practices and individual job performance in terms of task proactivity, in-role and extra-role performance; as well as an indirect effect of surviving at work (i.e., meeting job demands and maintaining the status quo) on the relationship between available HRM practices and individual job performance in terms of extra-role performance. Indeed, HRM practices—by providing employees with an access to chal-

lenging and interesting jobs, and with additional skills—can boost energy and learning (i.e., thriving at work) and reduce the tendency to avoid challenge and change (i.e., surviving at work); in turn, individual job performance is reduced by surviving at work, and increased by thriving at work, respectively.

3.3.2 Teamwork Performance

Kunze and Boehm (2013) recently reviewed the relationship between age and performance at the team level. They concluded that age was not related to work team innovation, turnover, and absenteeism among team members; and inconsistent findings were reported regarding top-management teams, communication, and conflict. Further, age diversity has been negatively associated with team performance (Boehm, Baumgaertner, Dwertmann, & Kunze, 2011). Concretely, in line with their previous study (Wegge et al., 2012) and current findings among more than 700 age-diverse German teams in three occupational sectors, Ries et al. (2013) proposed seven recommendations for an effective use of age-diverse teams: provide complex team tasks without high time pressure, reduce age diversity salience in teams, establish a positive team climate, promote high appreciation of age diversity in teams, reduce age stereotypes and age discrimination from supervisors, promote the use of age-differentiated leadership, and improve the ergonomic design of workplaces within teams.

3.3.3 Company Performance

As emphasized by Henkens et al. (2018), to date not much is known about the extent to which HRM practices influence overall organizational performance, that is, using a multilevel perspective focusing on the employees' aggregated job performance at the company level. Thus, currently companies lack knowledge on how age diversity may affect their performance, and how to manage a multi-generational and age-diverse workplace (Henkens et al., 2018). According to Burke (2015), generational differences may positively affect organizational performance because they may bring more diverse ideas, better decision-making, more creative problem solving, and a better reflection of companies' clients to the organization. However, age diversity may also negatively affect organizational performance because of higher levels of tensions or conflicts, different approaches or preferences in terms of leadership, valuing different rewards, and different views on change and use of new technologies.

Recent research has explored the relationship between company age diversity and firm-level performance. For instance, besides finding no significant direct relationship between age diversity and organizational performance, Choi and Rainey (2010) observed that in companies with high results-oriented cultures, higher age

diversity increased organizational performance. In addition, Kunze, Boehm, and Bruch (2011) observed that increased age diversity was related to higher levels of age discrimination climate, which reduced affective commitment and thus company performance. Very recently, von Bonsdorff et al. (2018) addressed this issue by exploring the mediating role of company work ability of the joint impact of company average age, average use of SOC strategies, and high-involvement work HRM practices—which aim to increase employees’ levels of motivation, knowledge, and information about job performance (Guthrie, 2001)—on company performance evaluated by CEOs compared to their competitors. These authors define “company work ability” as an aspect of organizations’ human capital (i.e., collective knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics, or KSAOs), which emerges from the work ability of individual employees. Indeed, focusing on work ability at the company level allows capturing the contextual influence of HRM practices at the same level.

Specifically, first von Bonsdorff et al. (2018) argued and found that higher company average age diminished company average work ability because a higher average aged company has more resource loss (e.g., physical resources, certain types of cognitive resources) to perform work-related tasks, than gain (e.g., expertise), among its employees. Second, it was argued and found that employees’ average use of SOC strategies buffers the negative relationship between company average age and company work ability; however, such use was not directly related to company work ability. This result is because the use of SOC strategies allows for better coping with job demands and/or resource loss; for instance, refocusing energy may ensure that employees successfully meet their job requirements. Third, von Bonsdorff et al. (2018) argued and found that high-involvement work HRM practices increased company work ability, but found no evidence of such practices moderating the negative relationship between company average age and company work ability. The direct negative effect can be explained by the fact that these HRM practices enhance job autonomy, which allow employees to decide on the best strategies to successfully mobilize their resources to fit job demands. Fourth, these authors argued and found that company work ability increased company performance because of a reduced likelihood of experiencing health problems and thus of being absent from work, and also because of an increased likelihood of learning more from working with their colleagues and from dealing with non-routine tasks and challenges. Finally, von Bonsdorff et al. (2018) reported that the negative relationship between company average age and company performance was mediated by company work ability.

3.4 Human Resource Management Practices

We now turn to HRM practices that aim to increase company performance in the context of an aging and age-diverse workforce. Specifically, we describe age-related HRM practices, defined as “the organization HRM dimensions employed to manage

human resources with an explicit focus on the demands of an ageing workforce” (Boehm, Schröder, & Kunze, 2013, p. 216), which can be both (1) *age-specific* and (2) *age-neutral*. These two categories of HRM practices reflect two different models of HRM practices related to workers and their aging processes (Yeatts, Folts, & Knapp, 1999). On the one hand, the *depreciation model* posits that an employee’s highest value rests at the beginning of his/her career, and thus, their value depreciates with time, eventually dropping to zero at the time of retirement. As such, workers, and in particular older workers, are seen as costs. From this perspective, age-specific HRM practices are developed to counterbalance such traditional and stereotypical negative views on older workers. On the other hand, with the *maintenance model*, employers consider all workers regardless of age as assets to their organization. These assets should be well trained, educated, and managed, and if they are not, it is worth the investment of developing them. For instance, the award of the Age Smart Employer (2014) has been recently created to recognize New York City businesses and non-profit organizations that have implemented HRM policies to hire, retain, and engage four generations of workers. We now develop (1) age-specific and (2) age-neutral HRM practices, which we categorize in terms of the aforementioned typical HRM practices. As illustrated in Fig. 3.1, most can be translated into both age-specific and age-neutral practices, and are thus positioned in the middle of their continuum (i.e., selection, accommodation, performance management, training and development, and knowledge transfer and mentoring), whereas one only relates to age-specific practices and is thus placed towards this end of the continuum (i.e., exit and retention).

3.4.1 Age-Specific Practices Focusing on Older Workers

3.4.1.1 Selection

Selection refers to “the process by which an organization attempts to identify applicants with the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that will help it achieve its goals” (Noe et al., 2017, p. 224). Despite laws that prohibit it, age discrimination continues to be prevalent in many industrialized countries (Lahey, 2010), which can be observed in organizations’ HRM selection practices (Truxillo, Finkelstein, Pytlovany, & Jenkins, 2015). In particular, previous research has demonstrated that older interviewees may be given shorter interviews and receive fewer job offers than younger interviewees (Bendick, Brown, & Wall, 1999)—thus providing evidence of age discrimination. Furthermore, Oude Mulders, Henkens, and Schippers (2017) reported that while top managers’ beliefs on equal treatment regardless of age (i.e., age equality norms) affected HRM practices targeted to older workers *before* normal retirement age (i.e., recruitment of older workers from outside the organization before normal retirement age, and encouraging retention of older workers until retirement), top managers’ beliefs about when older workers are expected to retire (i.e., retirement-age norms) seemed to affect HRM

practices targeted to older workers *after* they have been through the normal retirement age (i.e., encouraging retention of older workers beyond normal retirement age, and rehiring formal employees who retired).

Moreover, in an attempt to explain the unfair treatment of older workers (i.e., age discrimination) in hiring practices, Fasbender and Wang (2017b) built on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to posit that negative attitudes towards older workers leads to avoidance of hiring them, which in turn is negatively related to the likelihood of selecting the oldest equally qualified applicant. However, these authors found that when the decision-maker had high core self-evaluations (e.g., high self-esteem), he or she was less susceptible to the threat of an older worker and thus less likely to discriminate against them, which resulted in less biased decisions. Indeed, these negative attitudes were suggested to be due to the threat that younger workers feel towards older workers' knowledge and seniority, as it may remind them of aging and death (Nelson, 2011). In turn, these negative attitudes may result in depletion of cognitive resources; thus, people may be more likely to try to avoid situations in which they expect to work with older workers (Fasbender & Wang, 2017a). In addition, similar to the desensitization phenomenon in psychology, intergroup contact has been proposed as one of the most promising solutions for these anxiety-provoking situations (Allport, 1954). Specifically, Fasbender and Wang (2017a) found evidence supporting the notion that quality of intergroup contact (i.e., the "actual face-to-face interaction between members of clearly defined and distinguishable groups"; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, p. 754) may alleviate the negative feelings associated with hiring and working with older workers. Such results are in line with previous findings showing that intergenerational contact may create a shared identity and facilitate positive views towards older workers as outgroup members (Henry, Zacher, & Desmette, 2015; Iweins, Desmette, Yzerbyt, & Stinglhamber, 2013).

Thus, in practice, organizations may address the issue of existing negative attitudes or norms towards hiring older worker through developing different HRM practices. First, if the organization aims to bring in novel and experienced workers (i.e., recruit older workers from outside the organization *before* retirement age), it should utilize top managers who value equal treatment across age-diverse workers, and not necessarily those who have strong beliefs about when older workers should retire (Oude Mulders et al., 2017). Second, companies may offer opportunities for high quality exchanges between decision-makers and workers of different ages (Fasbender & Wang, 2017a). Third, HRM practices may target the negative attitudes towards older workers that impede their selection (Fasbender & Wang, 2017b). Notably, such practices may promote an age-friendly organizational culture that may combat the negative stereotypes associated with older workers, and even foster positive attitudes towards them. Finally, as recruitment involves finding appropriate applicants both in the internal and in the external labor markets, whenever a position opens up that could be targeted for older workers already employed in the organization or older retirees, employers should be aware of the opportunity to place mature employees who already carry a wealth of knowledge (Rudolph et al., 2017). In the

end, this strategy may save the organization money in recruitment and training efforts.

To conclude, at the national level, some countries have developed governmental policies that support the selection of older workers and thus the development of age-specific HRM policies towards selection. For instance, in Singapore, the Retirement and Re-employment (Amendment) Bill 2016 introduced an option to allow certain older employees to be re-employed by another organization, with the aim of increasing labor market flexibility and alleviating responsibility for organizations (Ministry of Manpower Singapore Government, 2017).

3.4.1.2 Exit and Retention

Overall, the aging workforce and increased life expectancy at 65 years old (OECD, 2018) require the development of specific HRM practices to retain older employees. While attracting the best workers is an important component of organizational success, it is important for organizations to be able to retain talent. Notably, by preventing unwanted turnover, organizations can avoid unnecessary recruitment and its associated costs. In fact, key positions in organizations such as managers, supervisors, and executives are typically filled by older workers with vital organizational knowledge (United States General Accounting Office, 2001). Therefore, organizations should strive to retain the talents of these kinds of employees to avoid losing important human capital, especially knowledge. Therefore, succession planning as part of retention represents an important HRM practice that helps organizations plan smooth transitions for individual positions by considering potential individuals who may develop and replace those who may be leaving (Rau & Adams, 2013). This method is especially useful for anticipating the exit and replacement of valuable employees near retirement, as it allows employers to maximize the time before older workers exit while minimizing knowledge loss by encouraging interaction, collaboration, and mentorship to younger workers (Erdheim & Lodato, 2013).

Continuing to work at older ages is indeed not only beneficial to companies but also follows the wishes of an increasing number of workers. In fact, approximately 80% of US employees 50 years old and above show interest in staying in the workforce past their retirement age (Jackson, Schuler, & Werner, 2018). According to continuity theory, it is indeed beneficial for the individual to ease into retirement gradually (Kim & Feldman, 2000), that is, progressively withdraw from work, or withdraw and then return part-time (De Vaus, Wells, Kendig, & Quine, 2007). In particular, this path to retirement allows individuals to supplement their income while maintaining a sense of purpose in life by continuing with their work roles and potentially experience a positive change in health (Calvo, Haverstick, & Sass, 2009; De Vaus et al., 2007).

Despite employers' perceptions of older workers as more conscientious, less neurotic, and higher in organizational citizenship behaviors than their younger counterparts (Bertolino, Truxillo, & Fraccaroli, 2013; Truxillo, McCune, Bertolino,

& Fraccaroli, 2012), employers are not typically proactive in their methods of retaining older workers. In particular, Armstrong-Stassen (2008a) suggested that the lack of employers' proactivity can be explained by the fact that employers often hold negative attitudes towards older workers, and that these stereotypical views tend to result in discriminatory behaviors such as laying off older workers near retirement (e.g., Fasbender & Wang, 2017b). Indeed, several factors have been identified in previous research as driving organizations to implement HRM practices to retain older workers. According to Walker and Taylor (1999), first, labor shortages represent a leading cause for organizations to consider maintaining their current human capital, including the talent provided by older workers. Second, changes in public policies have dictated changes in practices aimed at mature workers. For instance, a reduction of early exit subsidies can motivate organizations to offer partial rather than full early retirement to their employees. Third, a culture of *good practice*, that is, "providing an environment in which each individual is able to achieve his or her potential without being disadvantaged by their age" (Walker & Taylor, 1999, p. 64) creates a standard that managers can follow for future decisions.

Thus, in practice, organizations may address the issue of retaining older employees through developing different HRM practices. First, phased retirement allows current employees to continue working at a reduced workload (Rau & Adams, 2013). Instead of working a full-time job, retirement-age employees typically work 20–29 h per week (Erdheim & Lodato, 2013). Indeed, such practice can be particularly effective in retaining older workers given that previous research has shown that long working hours may be an important factor in older workers' decisions to retire (Peiró et al., 2013). Second, contingent work arrangements differ in that workers are fully retired before they are "rehired" as independent contractors or temporary workers (Rau & Adams, 2013). Third, comprehensive benefits packages (e.g., health care options), job flexibility (discussed in the Sect. 3.4.1.3 below), and professional growth and development (discussed in the Sect. 3.4.1.4 below) represent additional strategies to attract and retain older workers (Cleveland & Maneotis, 2013). Fourth, HRM age-inclusive practices can create an age-friendly culture that combats age barriers and encourages parallelism between its policies, practices, and day-to-day operations (Walker & Taylor, 1999). Finally, as employees' preferred practices change throughout their careers, older workers may not be attracted (i.e., retained) by the same benefits as younger workers. In particular, while younger workers may be more motivated by benefits such as compensation and status, older workers tend to prefer non-monetary benefits such as job security, schedule flexibility, and opportunities to mentor (Rau & Adams, 2013). Thus, such practices signal a high level of value and respect towards older workers and have thus been reported to be the most consequential in individuals' decisions to remain with the current organization (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008a). For instance, succession planning may indicate that the individual holds a key position within the organization and allows them to mentor the younger generations as they prepare to exit.

3.4.1.3 Accommodation

Accommodation refers to “workplace measures that compensate for the possible fall in the physical and cognitive capacities that accompany the process of aging” (van Dalen, Henkens, & Wang, 2015, p. 816). Accommodation HRM practices can affect older workers directly by improving their physical and cognitive well-being, as well as indirectly by demonstrating an organizational climate that cares for the safety and health of its workers (Newnam, Griffin, & Mason, 2008). In particular, HRM practices aimed at accommodating older workers can not only make employees more efficient and effective while at work, but also encourage them to stay working longer (Rau & Adams, 2013). Overall, accommodation measures are worth implementing given that they are free of cost for employers, and that the alternative might be to lose human capital.

There are several ways that an employer can make accommodations for their older workers through HRM practices (Di Pierro, Villosio, & Alberto, 2009). The general idea is that older workers need more flexibility to take care of aging-related needs (e.g., attending one’s or other’s doctor’s appointments). Concretely, autonomy of place and time is not the only kind of freedom being offered to older workers. Job autonomy—the freedom to perform work roles—can signal value and support from the organization to older workers (Cleveland & Maneotis, 2013). Job crafting, characterized by individuals modifying their tasks at work in order to improve their person-job fit (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012), represents another form of accommodation. Indeed, previous research reported that such modifications may result in successful aging at work by allowing older workers to continuously adjust their jobs (Kooij, Tims, & Kanfer, 2015).

Examples of job crafting-accommodation practices first entail older workers mentoring younger employees within the organization. Second, based on the biological approach to job design (Noe et al., 2017), HRM practices can involve ergonomic changes in the workplace that can alleviate the physical decline, especially for those working in physically demanding jobs. Some of these changes may include better equipment such as larger or higher quality computer screens, or adjustments to the job design to minimize physical strain on the worker, including rearranging the physical space to reduce repetitive movements. Third, another option often offered to older workers is teleworking (i.e., telecommuting), which allows individuals to work from home with the help of the internet. Allowing older workers to work *where* and *when* is most convenient for them gives them the freedom they need to continue working and postpone retirement (Peiró et al., 2013). Lastly, employers can accommodate older workers’ needs by considering job reassignment on an as-needed basis. Job reassignment refers to the reassignment of older workers to less demanding jobs if preferred or needed (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011). One example of job reassignment related to scheduling work hours requires employers to switch older workers from night shifts to day shifts.

3.4.1.4 Performance Management

Performance management refers to “the means through which managers ensure that employees’ activities and outputs are congruent with the organization’s goals” (Noe et al., 2017, p. 321). Here as well, unfortunately, the negative stereotypes referenced above influence managers’ perceptions of older workers’ productivity, reliability, and adaptability (Peiró et al., 2013). Another part of the problem may arise from the distinct motivators for the employees of different age groups (Wang, Burlacu, Truxillo, James, & Yao, 2015). While higher compensation packages may motivate younger employees to perform better, this same technique may not work well with older workers (Rau & Adams, 2013). Finally, as highlighted by Wang et al. (2013), a specific issue lies in the fact that older workers are increasingly likely to have younger supervisors. It is thus necessary that older workers remain open to feedback when they discuss their performance with a younger supervisor, rather than assuming that their years of work experience (e.g., higher job tenure) may automatically lead them to the correct answer to a problem. In this context, a trusted and reliable relationship between managers and employees may thus be particularly advantageous.

Thus, in practice, organizations may address the issue of older employees’ performance management through developing different HRM practices. First, it is desirable that organizations develop HRM practices that motivate older workers to contribute to organizational performance. Such practices could be based on (1) cognitive evaluation theory (Deci & Ryan, 1991), which suggests that high autonomy, self-efficacy, and relatedness all have a positive impact on older workers’ motivation; and (2) goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990), which argues that older workers are motivated when they are given clear goals that are simultaneously challenging and time-related. Second, older workers with responsibilities regarding mentoring others, passing along their knowledge, and receiving recognition for these efforts may result in highly motivated employees (Rau & Adams, 2013).

3.4.1.5 Training and Development

Training (i.e., the “planned effort to facilitate the learning of job-related knowledge, skills, and behavior by employees”; Noe et al., 2017, p. 265) and development (i.e., “the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that improve an employee’s ability to meet changes in job requirements and in client and customer demands”; Noe et al., 2017, p. 379) HRM practices are those aimed at increasing employees’ abilities. For older workers in particular, training and development are essential in today’s technologically driven workforce. The fast-paced changes in technology at work may leave older workers’ capabilities behind, as they are less able to learn by themselves as younger employees may be. Thus, older workers’ skills may be rendered obsolete when they cannot keep up with changing environments. Since employees’ KSAOs are combined to create an organization’s human capital, it is important that organizations play a key role in the development of older workers.

Indeed, these workers require special attention, especially but not limited to the technology-related developments at work.

Unfortunately, training for older workers is not typical for most organizations, as only a small number of employees aged 45 and over receive training from their employers (Peiró et al., 2013). More specifically, younger employees (25–49 years old) are twice more likely to receive training than those 50 years old or more (Dibden & Hibbett, 1993). Previous literature provides recommendations for organizations to design age-specific training and development HRM practices. According to França, Rosinha, Mafra, and Seidl (2017), first, to better target older workers' needs in terms of development, employers should at least offer equal access to training for all employees. Second, in addition to encouraging all employees to participate, employers should maintain a certain level of monitoring to ensure that learning is happening for employees of all ages. Third, whenever applicable, employers should allow older workers to take on the role of trainers, as they surely have knowledge that younger employees may not. Fourth, according to Wang et al. (2013), to attract older workers, learning content should be designed as being practically relevant to their work, and older workers should be given sufficient time to practice the new skills so that the implementation to their tasks could be done more easily. Indeed, these aspects need to be given emphasis not only during the training but also when the training is advertised.

3.4.1.6 Knowledge Transfer Through Mentoring

There are several types of knowledge that an employee may possess within an organization: explicit (i.e., easily expressed knowledge), tacit (e.g., known by an individual but difficult to express), intellectual (focused on information, facts, and concepts), and social (focused on interpersonal relationships and access to social networks; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Peterson & Spiker, 2005). Despite these different types of knowledge, likely some amount of accumulated knowledge will be lost when an employee leaves the organization, and in particular, when an older worker retires (DeLong, 2004). Therefore, transferring knowledge across generations represents a major concern for organizations. Indeed, in a recent survey by MetLife (2009), 71% of US employers surveyed reported that loss of knowledge due to retirees was a main concern.

The most efficient method for an organization to keep track of knowledge presence and potential transfer situations is via a knowledge transfer process. According to Rau and Adams (2013), not all positions within an organization need HRM involvement as part of a knowledge transfer processes. Put differently, only the key positions having the potential to impact organizational performance should be considered for the knowledge transfer process, and these may not all need to be managed simultaneously. Moreover, the decision of where the knowledge transfer is most needed within an organization is dependent on different factors, such as the knowledge level of the individual in the position and his/her demographics, and the presence of a successor and his/her demographics.

In particular, employers can provide knowledge transfer tools to help the process. First, documenting processes are helpful for task-based jobs requiring explicit knowledge. The knowledge transfer for these jobs can include written descriptions that hold the knowledge (e.g., procedure manuals) for future employees to learn from. Second, interpersonal processes are more appropriate for jobs that require tacit and/or social knowledge. These processes focus on knowledge transfer via interpersonal interactions between employees who have, and those who need, the knowledge (e.g., who to ask for advice at work). Third, the organization can foster the knowledge transfer process by facilitating an organizational culture that values communication and collaboration across employees from different generations. Indeed, the three key elements of an organizational culture that fosters knowledge transfer include valuing older workers' knowledge accumulation, fostering respect among the generations, and emphasizing the importance of learning and development at work (Slagter, 2007).

Based on such culture, it is likely that older workers will create roles for themselves as mentors of younger, less-experienced employees (i.e., job crafting). This kind of interaction would encourage knowledge transfer, while creating meaning and providing a sense of purpose at work for the older worker (Calvo et al., 2009; De Vaus et al., 2007). Indeed, to be given the opportunity to mentor and transfer knowledge emerged as one out of nine desired forms of organizational support in a recent qualitative study among older workers (Taneva, Arnold, & Nicolson, 2016). As a result of intergenerational exchanges of information, younger employees may feel less prejudice against the idea of aging and working with the older workers (França et al., 2017). These kinds of exchanges of information would prompt a positive cycle of knowledge transfer, where older workers share their experiences with younger workers, leading to more positive associations across the two groups and more intergenerational contact at work, thus culminating in more knowledge transfer.

3.4.2 Age-Neutral Practices

Overall, age-specific HRM practices reflect the traditional view on age management, which consists of applying positive discrimination practices towards older workers (see previous section) to counterbalance youth-centric practices (i.e., the “direct and indirect discrimination of older workers in recruitment, training, and career development”; Schroder, Flynn, & Muller-Camen, 2011, p. 103). As recently advocated by Rudolph et al. (2017), it becomes increasingly necessary to adopt a broader work-lifespan view about age management, including practices targeted at employees from early- to late-career stages. As explained by Schroder et al. (2011), age-neutral HRM practices are holistic and intergenerational, and target the productivity, well-being, and employability of the entire workforce over the lifespan. Indeed, employees at different career stages bring unique opportunities for company effectiveness and performance: while older

workers have experiences and networks (e.g., clients), younger workers having just graduated possess up-to-date knowledge (e.g., the most recent evidence-based best management practices).

In addition, adopting more age-neutral HRM practices is critical because age norms in organizations (e.g., an age for promotion or retirement) have been suggested to impact the development of discriminatory practices in terms of negative attitudes towards specific age groups (Peiró et al., 2013). Notably, in their study, Hennekam and Herrbach (2015) reported that a significant part of older workers perceived age-specific HRM practices as “a stamp” recognizing their belonging to a devalued social group, thus leading to stigmatization and discrimination. Specifically, older workers explained that while they wanted employers to accommodate their needs, they also wished they did so without them and others perceiving that they needed special attention as a group.

Consequently, Oliveira (2018) has suggested general strategies to diminish the risk that age-specific HRM practices towards older workers lead to stigma for this age group. First, HRM practices should emphasize positive social identities shared by older workers and their colleagues, rather than proposing a special treatment for them. For instance, positive social identities can be related to the work-related identity and to individuals' specific occupation or the firm, notably in terms of the company's mission and values. Second, HRM practices should be based on the equal treatment of all age groups, which would provide older workers with the “identity safety” of being integrated with others and their full potential being developed. As such, age-awareness HRM practices should be replaced by general age-neutral HRM practices available to all employees, with no age limitation to guarantee their access. In other words, the organizational culture should include an equality of opportunity so that conditions should be the same for employees regardless of age, for instance in case of downsizing or access to training (Deller, Finkelstein, Wilckens, Wöhrmann, & Adams, 2018).

Thus, adopting age-management strategies within a lifespan view (i.e., a continuum from early to late careers) allows avoiding the tricks of adopting a comparison mindset (i.e., between early- and late-career workers), which has been shown to be particularly detrimental when comparing two groups (compared to three, four, and so on; Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004). In contrast, such a view promotes an understanding of aging as an individual change process in terms of motivation, values, competencies, and behavior (Deller et al., 2018). Age-neutral practices further address the concern raised by previous findings, according to which employers' positive attitudes towards older workers regarding their commitment, flexibility, and work motivation was often to the detriment of younger workers (Loretto & White, 2006). Indeed, in a recent qualitative study among HR managers and older workers aimed at identifying HRM practices that contributed to successful aging in the workplace, both age-specific and age-neutral practices emerged in the findings (Taneva & Arnold, 2018). Key findings included age-specific practices such as the recognition of the significant role older employ-

ees can play, financial incentives to remain in the workforce instead of retiring, and opportunities to work past retirement on the one hand, and age-neutral practices such as training to learn new skills, training to update current job skills, challenging and meaningful tasks, useful feedback from managers, and unpaid additional leave on the other hand. We now describe these non-age-specific practices in greater detail.

3.4.2.1 Selection

Selection can be used to target an age-diverse workforce, as organizations need to think about increasing age diversity by recruiting both younger and older workers in addition to mid-career workers. Indeed, to address worker shortages, organizations are increasingly hiring both younger and older workers (Burke, 2015). In a national study, Pitt-Catsouphes, Smyer, Matz-Costa, and Kane (2007) reported that around 62% of US organizations had taken steps towards the selection of an age-diverse workforce. Indeed, recent research reported that such choice is based upon the business strategy of companies, notably benchmarking (i.e., comparing one's set of policies with peers') and compliance (i.e., laws and regulations) strategies (Ollier-Malaterre, McNamara, Matz-Costa, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Valcour, 2013).

Recently, Rudolph et al. (2017) suggested a different selection of HRM practices aiming at increasing age diversity among employees. First, an age diversity audit needs to be conducted, which aims to collect information about the current climate regarding age in the company in order to better define the recruitment strategy. Notably, surveys or interviews can focus on perceptions of how the organization supports employees across the work lifespan. Second, recruitment should be done with a specific awareness as to which messages are conveyed in the job postings, so that these contain information that highlights the strengths and need for both younger and older applicants, rather than discouraging older or younger (e.g., emphasis on accumulated work experience) applicants. Concretely, job postings may convey a sense that non-work experiences (e.g., volunteerism, internships) are valued by the employer, that support is provided by training and development opportunities, and that mentoring programs are in place to emphasize how younger workers can gain knowledge while at the same time emphasizing the accumulated experience from older workers.

Third, selection of an age-diverse workforce can be done through age-conscious job analysis with specific attention to job-relevant experience in terms of work and non-work experiences, education, and training, which benefits both older and younger workers (Rudolph et al., 2017). Notably, experience-based interviews, training and experiences evaluations, and biographical data can be used as selection tools with the awareness of exploring applicants' previous experience not only in terms of quantity (e.g., number of previously held occupations and associated tenure) but also quality (e.g., personal attitudes, personality, and interests, and involving not only past actions and results but also critical analysis of hypothetical situations).

3.4.2.2 Accommodation

While accommodation HRM practices have been traditionally been focused towards older workers with declining physical capabilities, those practices can also be applied to employees across the lifespan, notably with health promotion and illness prevention focuses. The index for active aging in organizations (Deller et al., 2018) suggests two pillars related to accommodation. First, work design HRM practices should include flexible work-time arrangement (e.g., switch to part-time, possibility of unpaid leaves), flexible workplaces (e.g., working from home), work according to capabilities, and ergonomic working conditions (e.g., using a specific mouse that relieves muscular pain in the wrist). Second, health management HRM practices should involve the availability of physical exercise (e.g., bike-to-work initiatives, special agreements including reductions for employees at partnered gyms) and nutrition opportunities (e.g., labels and associated menus guaranteeing a balanced diet at the company's canteen), workplace medical treatment (e.g., wellness programs including yoga classes during lunch breaks), and health promotion (e.g., information campaign on burnout, encouraging a sustainable work-life balance). As illustrated by these various examples, these practices can and should (Deller et al., 2018; Oliveira, 2018) be addressed to employees across the work lifespan. Notably, flexible work-time arrangements allow a better integration of the work and family domains and can be useful to employees over the life span, from caring young fathers and mothers to caring for a spouse, parent, and grandchildren in mid and later life.

3.4.2.3 Performance Management

Overall, performance review practices should feature age-neutral performance appraisals (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011; Kooij, De Lange, Jansen, & Dijkers, 2008). In particular, while the characteristics of effective performance management processes are the same regardless of employee age, a risk of inequality exists in their use (Wang et al., 2013). According to these authors, individuals of all ages need to possess a clear understanding of their goals; their needs in training and coaching should be equally provided, and their performance fairly evaluated across the work lifespan. As the effectiveness of the performance management process has been reported to be directly related to the relationship between managers and employees (Daniels, 1999), concretely age-neutral HRM practices may imply the optimization of this relationship through managers' training. Specifically, relying on Wang et al. (2013), such training may involve enhancing behaviors from managers towards employees that help (1) understand their managers' precise expectations towards their work and how their performance will be evaluated, (2) contribute to employees' success by helping them solve problems and have access to key resources, (3) develop an understanding of their employees' talents so that they can assign them with work tasks matching these specific strengths and thus improve their performance, (4) provide feedback that focuses on what goes well and

concrete suggestions for improvement, and (5) ensure the organization of regular meetings allowing meaningful and constructive feedback.

In addition, according to Deller et al. (2018), leaders are responsible for promoting the potential of employees of all ages, which can be done through considering employees' strengths in terms of an accrued responsiveness to individuality (e.g., work space wishes, individual life circumstances), and appreciation for their talents and contributions. These aspects need to be explicitly recognized through increased job autonomy and responsibility as well as milestones celebration. Such a perspective is in line with talent-based performance management processes, which aim to optimize individual performance through using specific talents to achieve specific goals (Wang et al., 2013). Such an approach implies more autonomy for the employee; that is, while the manager assigns the task, the employee decides how to accomplish it, according to his or her personal talents. Concretely, age-neutral HRM talent-based performance management practices may imply that managers conduct discussions that allow them to fully understand their employees' talents and career aspirations, and that encourage employees to share their best practices at solving a specific task that may help other employees to successfully solve them as well (Wang et al., 2013).

3.4.2.4 Training and Development

Overall, age-neutral training and development HRM practices aim to avoid dequalification through life-long learning (Schroder et al., 2011). Indeed, being provided with equal access to learning and development opportunities emerged as one of nine desired forms of organizational support in a recent qualitative study among older workers (Taneva et al., 2016). It is thus particularly important that companies avoid differentiated access to training based on age, as support for training and development has been reported to decline rapidly with worker age, and is associated with minimal investments in those approaching retirement (Burke, 2015). As most organizations offer training available to all their employees to improve their performance such as socialization and information towards new employees, skills update training, leadership skills training, computer-based training applications, or sexual harassment and workplace bullying (Wang et al., 2013), additional training could be provided specifically on age awareness and diversity, and cross-generational relationships (Boehm et al., 2011; Burke, 2015). Indeed, such age-awareness trainings may not only diminish potentially negative views about specific age groups from the organizational culture and climate but also reduce tensions and conflict (Burke, 2015). This kind of training would be especially beneficial given that previous research has demonstrated a positive relationship between age diversity and increased age discrimination climate (Beier & Kanfer, 2013).

In the development of an index for active aging in organizations, Deller et al. (2018) suggested that individual development HRM practices should include continuous development planning, appropriate solutions for training and development, and enabling development steps and job changes. Specifically, these authors

emphasized that development planning should be done at all ages and stages of the work life, and could be concretely undertaken by individual meetings between employees and managers as well as through professional workshops enhancing self-reflection on abilities, competencies, and goals. Further, they suggested that appropriate training may include internships, conferences, and continuous education for workers of all ages, with support from the organization in terms of tuition reimbursement. Finally, regarding job changes, these authors highlighted that employees may change positions to better reflect their evolving specific competencies and development interests, for instance in terms of responsibilities, inclusion in new projects, and positions in other departments.

3.4.2.5 Knowledge Transfer Through Mentoring

Besides the aforementioned HRM practices targeting knowledge transfer from older to younger workers through mentoring, considering these practices in an age-neutral perspective broadens the reflection towards inter-generative collaboration in terms of global knowledge management. Indeed, Deller et al. (2018) suggested that knowledge management represents one of the pillars of the index for active aging in organizations. Specifically, inter-generative collaboration implies that companies should focus on mutual knowledge transfer between generations, thus highlighting the two directions it may take; that is, both young-to-old and old-to-young. In other words, in today's work environments and sustainable careers (De Vos & van der Heijden, 2015), it is no longer possible to assume that roles of mentor and protégé are defined by chronological age (Wang et al., 2013). Concretely, while organizations can implement formal practices of mentorship or leaders can select an age-mixed team for a project, such interactions can also take place in a more informal environment in terms of intergenerational pairs of workers exchanging ideas about a specific task (Deller et al., 2018).

Indeed, the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship has been observed to depend on mutual learning (Wang et al., 2013). According to these authors, key ingredients for mentoring effectiveness between generations involve an optimal matching between late and early career colleagues so that both believe that they have something to learn and to teach in the relationship. For instance, while the younger colleague may teach current technical knowledge to their older counterpart, he or she may learn from the older worker the political nuances behind organizational decisions and how communication about them is made, both explicitly and implicitly. Another key ingredient relies on clarifying the roles and communicating expectations as a general framework (i.e., form) guiding the sharing of content-related knowledge, which aims to avoid situations where colleagues "tell others what to do" (p. 139) and/or imply that their strategies are inadequate. Finally, strong support from supervisors of both the early and mid- or late-career employees is necessary, in terms of regular checks to ensure that mentoring is actually working (Wang et al., 2013).

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we developed a Human Resource Management perspective on the relationship between an aging and age-diverse workforce, and company performance. As illustrated in Fig. 3.1, HRM practices may moderate the relationship between an aging and age-diverse workforce and company performance. As argued by Henkens et al. (2018), there is a need to advance HRM research and practice through offering evidence-based guidelines as to how to best deal with an aging and diverse workforce. We have answered this call by reviewing which age-specific and age-neutral HRM practices can successfully directly and indirectly impact company performance. In accordance with recent work (Loretto & White, 2006; Oliveira, 2018; Rudolph et al., 2017; Schroder et al., 2011), we advocate for a more systematic use of age-neutral HRM practices.

Overall, further research is needed to test our general perspective. As reviewed by Kunze and Boehm (2013), current research findings regarding a moderation effect of HRM practices on the relationship between age diversity and company performance remain inconsistent. Indeed, while Choi and Rainey (2010) found that when employees perceived their supervisor as being engaged in pro-diversity initiatives, the relationship between age diversity and performance became significant, other studies found non-significant moderation effects for general group diversity (e.g., Jehn & Bezrukova, 2004). Furthermore, future research efforts need to take into account the fact that, in addition to specific sectorial contexts, cross-national differences lead to nationally distinct HRM practices in terms of institutional context (Schroder et al., 2011). Finally, distinctions between the effects of age-friendly (i.e., age-specific HRM practices) and age-neutral practices on company performance constitute an interesting avenue for future research. As suggested by Rudolph et al. (2017), workplace communication regarding these practices may represent a mechanism mediating this relationship. Another interesting mechanism could be the maximization of psychological forces (e.g., mentoring opportunities) and removing of environmental constraints (e.g., work time arrangements).

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