
Ageism in Organizations: Intergenerational Dynamics, Inclusion Practices, and Healthy Longevity

Ageísmo nas Organizações: Dinâmicas Intergeracionais, Práticas de Inclusão e Longevidade Saudável

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ABSTRACT

This study explores ageism, intergenerational dynamics, and organizational practices in the workplace, with a focus on their impact on employees' well-being, career trajectories, and healthy longevity. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals from different generational cohorts within a multinational technology company in São Paulo, Brazil. The findings reveal the prevalence of ageism in organizational contexts, driven by stereotypes and biases that affect hiring, career advancement, and professional development. The research highlights the importance of inclusive policies, intergenerational mentorship, and flexible work arrangements to combat ageism and promote an age-diverse and collaborative workplace. Future research should explore the intersectionality of ageism with other forms of discrimination and assess the long-term effectiveness of age-inclusive organizational strategies.

Keywords: Ageism; Intergenerational Dynamics; Workplace Inclusion; Healthy Longevity; Organizational Practices.

RESUMO

Este estudo investiga o ageísmo, as dinâmicas intergeracionais e as práticas organizacionais no ambiente de trabalho, com foco em seus impactos no bem-estar, nas trajetórias de carreira e na longevidade saudável dos colaboradores. Utilizando uma abordagem qualitativa, foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas com profissionais de diferentes coortes geracionais em uma empresa multinacional de tecnologia localizada em São Paulo, Brasil. Os resultados revelam a prevalência do ageísmo nos contextos organizacionais, impulsionado por estereótipos e vieses que afetam a contratação, o avanço profissional e o desenvolvimento de competências. A pesquisa destaca a importância de políticas inclusivas, mentorias intergeracionais e arranjos de trabalho flexíveis para combater o ageísmo e promover um ambiente de trabalho colaborativo e diverso em termos etários. Estudos futuros devem explorar a interseccionalidade do ageísmo com outras formas de discriminação e avaliar a eficácia de estratégias inclusivas a longo prazo.

Palavras-chave: Ageísmo; Dinâmicas Intergeracionais; Inclusão no Trabalho; Longevidade Saudável; Práticas Organizacionais.

1 INTRODUCTION

The increase in life expectancy is a global trend resulting from improvements in public health, advances in medicine, greater access to food and potable water, and better living conditions (Bloom et al., 2015; Lee, 2011). This phenomenon allows individuals to enjoy more years of healthy and productive life, also enabling them to spend more time with their families and friends (Beard, Officer, & Cassels, 2016). However, the rise in life expectancy also brings challenges, such as the need for additional resources for healthcare and social support for the elderly (World Health Organization, 2021), as well as the need for adjustments in government structures and programs to meet the needs of an aging population (United Nations, 2019; Harper, 2014).

From a psychological perspective, the increase in life expectancy can bring both challenges and opportunities (Baltes & Smith, 2003). On the one hand, the prospect of living longer can lead to greater motivation to set long-term goals and seek a sense of purpose and meaning in life (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 2011). Additionally, the possibility of more time with family and friends can bring greater satisfaction and personal fulfillment (Ryff, 2014). On the other hand, aging can be accompanied by psychological challenges such as the loss of loved ones, dealing with chronic diseases, and social isolation (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010; Steptoe, Shankar, Demakakos, & Wardle, 2013).

At the organizational level, the aging workforce presents a critical challenge for organizations (OECD, 2020). As older employees may face age-related discrimination, it becomes imperative to understand the underlying factors contributing to ageism in the workplace. Ageism can manifest in various forms, including prejudiced attitudes, limited opportunities for professional development, and exclusion from decision-making processes (Nelson, 2005; Charness & Czaja, 2006). These practices negatively affect the well-being and career prospects of older workers, making it essential to implement policies that promote inclusion and value age diversity (Cox & Blake, 1991; Rabl, Triana, Byun, & Bosch, 2014).

It is important to highlight that ageism is not limited to older adults. Although most studies emphasize age-related prejudice against older workers, evidence suggests that younger professionals also experience discrimination based on age-related stereotypes, such as lack of maturity, insufficient experience, or limited commitment. Therefore, ageism must be understood as a multidirectional and multidimensional phenomenon that affects individuals across different age groups, influenced by social norms, cultural narratives, and organizational expectations. This study contributes to addressing this theoretical and empirical gap by examining ageism from multiple generational perspectives within a single organizational setting.

The study of ageism is not only pertinent to understanding workplace dynamics but also crucial for developing effective human resource management strategies that cater to an aging workforce (Collins, Smith, & Stevens, 2009; Parry & Tyson, 2011). As the demographic shift towards an older population continues, organizations must adapt their practices to harness the potential of an age-diverse workforce (Thijssen & Walter, 2006). This involves creating environments where employees of all ages can thrive, contribute, and feel valued.

Beyond examining the general manifestations of ageism, this study stands out by exploring the phenomenon through an intergenerational lens, considering the perceptions and experiences of employees from distinct generational cohorts within the same organizational context. This approach is still scarce in both national and international literature. While previous studies have examined age-related prejudice in organizational settings, few have addressed the

relational dynamics between generations and their impact on healthy longevity at work. Thus, this research seeks to fill critical gaps by integrating perspectives on age inclusion, workplace well-being, and human resource management practices. Theoretically, it advances the field by proposing a multidirectional and multidimensional understanding of ageism. Practically, it offers valuable insights for designing inclusive organizational policies, retention strategies, and practices that foster collaborative, productive, and age-diverse environments.

Given the importance and breadth of this topic, this paper aims to investigate the factors that contribute to ageism and affect healthy longevity in organizations from the perspective of different generational groups. By exploring the experiences and perceptions of employees from various age cohorts, this research seeks to provide insights into how organizations can foster more inclusive and supportive work environments that promote the well-being and productivity of all employees, regardless of age (Kulik, Ryan, Harper, & George, 2014; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018).

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 *Healthy Longevity in Organizations*

Longevity refers to the duration of an individual's life, typically measured in terms of years lived (Vaupel, 2010). Over the past century, there has been a significant increase in life expectancy worldwide, driven by advancements in medicine, improvements in sanitary conditions, better access to nutritious food, and education (Mathers, Stevens, & Mascarenhas, 2015; Oeppen & Vaupel, 2002). This rise in life expectancy reflects not only longer lives but also improved quality of those added years (Rowe & Kahn, 1997; Beard, Officer, & Cassels, 2016).

Healthy longevity is an approach that aims to extend not only the number of years lived but also the quality of those years (World Health Organization, 2020; Chang et al., 2020). It emphasizes physical, mental, and social well-being throughout the life course to ensure that people can remain engaged, productive, and fulfilled as they age (World Health Organization, 2020; Marques et al., 2020). The World Health Organization defines healthy aging as the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age (World Health Organization, 2020). This includes a combination of physical health, mental health, social engagement, and the ability to manage and recover from health challenges (Kuper & Marmot, 2003).

Several key aspects contribute to healthy longevity. First, adopting a healthy lifestyle, which includes a balanced diet, regular physical activity, avoiding smoking, and moderating alcohol consumption, has been shown to significantly influence life expectancy and quality of life (Fries, 2002; World Health Organization, 2023). Empirical evidence confirms that lifestyle choices are central to determining health outcomes in later life (Fries, 2002; Rizzuto & Fratiglioni, 2014). For instance, regular exercise helps maintain cardiovascular health, muscular strength, and mental acuity, reducing the risk of chronic diseases and promoting overall well-being (Bauman et al., 2016).

Second, preventive medical care remains essential for ensuring healthy longevity (Macinko & Harris, 2015). Updated evidence reinforces the importance of early screening, health education, and continuous access to quality healthcare services (GBD 2020; Risk Factors Collaborators, 2022; WHO, 2023). Preventive care helps identify risk factors and conditions before they become serious health problems, enabling timely interventions that can improve quality of life and longevity (Lee, Mehrotra, & Linetsky, 2013; Walker, Whincup, Shaper, &

Lennon, 2007). Access to healthcare services and health education is critical in empowering individuals to take proactive steps toward maintaining their health (Kickbusch, Pelikan, Apfel, & Tsouros, 2013; Marmot, 2015).

Third, promoting emotional and mental well-being is fundamental for healthy longevity (Gonçalves, Moleiro, & Marques, 2011; Prince et al., 2015). Recent studies confirm that depression, anxiety, and loneliness are major threats to the quality of life in older age (Beekman et al., 1999; Steptoe & Fancourt, 2020). Mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline can significantly impact the quality of life in older age (Beekman et al., 1999; Blazer, 2003). Access to mental health services, social support, and activities that promote mental stimulation and emotional resilience are important for maintaining mental health (Steptoe, Shankar, Demakakos, & Wardle, 2013). Engaging in hobbies, learning new skills, and participating in community activities can also contribute to a positive mental outlook (Cattan et al., 2005; Salthouse, 2006).

Fourth, maintaining social connections and being involved in community activities are crucial for a fulfilling and healthy life (Berkman et al., 2000; Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010; Leigh-Hunt et al., 2021). Strong social ties and active participation in social networks are associated with lower mortality rates, improved mental health, and better physical health outcomes (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010; Umberson & Montez, 2010). Social engagement helps prevent feelings of loneliness and isolation, which are risk factors for a range of health issues, including cardiovascular disease and mental health problems (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2014; Pantell et al., 2013).

Moreover, managing stress effectively is essential for maintaining health and longevity (McEwen, 2007; Chrousos, 2009). Chronic stress can have detrimental effects on both physical and mental health (Cohen et al., 2007). Developing strategies for stress management, such as practicing mindfulness, engaging in relaxation techniques, and balancing work and leisure activities, can significantly enhance overall well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Creswell et al., 2014).

Continuous learning and cognitive stimulation are also vital. Keeping the brain active through lifelong learning, pursuing new challenges, and engaging in intellectually stimulating activities can help maintain cognitive function and reduce the risk of cognitive decline (Hultsch, Hertzog, Small, & Dixon, 1999; Hertzog, Kramer, Wilson, & Lindenberger, 2009).

In organizational settings, promoting healthy longevity involves creating an environment that supports the physical, mental, and social well-being of employees (Brough, Drummond, & Biggs, 2009; Kooij, Jansen, Dijkers, & Lange, 2010; Zacher & Rudolph, 2021; King & Bryant, 2022). Organizations can implement policies that promote work-life balance, provide access to health and wellness programs, and foster a culture of inclusivity and respect for all employees, regardless of age (Zacher & Kooij, 2017; Rabl, Triana, Byun, & Bosch, 2014). Such practices not only strengthen workforce well-being but also allow organizations to capitalize on the diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives that employees of different ages bring (Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018; Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011).

2.2 Ageism

On the other hand, ageism refers to discrimination and prejudice against individuals based on their age, typically directed at older adults (Butler, 1969; Nelson, 2005). The term was first coined by Butler (1969), that defined it as a process of stereotyping and discriminating against people because of their age. Butler identified three main components that define ageism: prejudicial attitudes towards older people and the aging process, discriminatory practices

against older individuals, and institutional policies and practices that perpetuate harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about people over the age of 60 (Butler, 1980; Palmore, 2001). More recent literature has reinforced that ageism is not exclusively directed toward older adults; it may also affect younger professionals, who are perceived as inexperienced or uncommitted (Zacher & Rudolph, 2021; North & Fiske, 2023). Thus, ageism should be understood as a multidirectional and multidimensional phenomenon, shaped by sociocultural norms and organizational structures that affect people across different stages of life.

Ageism can manifest in various forms, including negative stereotypes, workplace discrimination, and limited access to healthcare services, significantly impacting the quality of life of older adults (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018; North & Fiske, 2012). In organizational contexts, ageism can result in practices such as the refusal to hire or promote older candidates, unjustified dismissals, and the stereotyping of older employees as less capable or adaptable (King & Bryant, 2022; Posthuma & Campion, 2009).

The workplace is a critical area where ageism is prevalent (Rabl, Triana, Byun, & Bosch, 2014). Older employees may face barriers to employment, career advancement, and professional development due to biases regarding their skills and potential (Boehm et al., 2014; Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011). These prejudices often stem from misconceptions that older workers are less productive, resistant to change, or technologically inept (Ng & Feldman, 2012). Such stereotypes are not only unfounded but also detrimental to both individuals and organizations, leading to a loss of valuable experience and expertise (Kulik, Ryan, Harper, & George, 2014). Studies from the last five years also show that younger employees often face reverse ageism, including being overlooked for leadership roles due to perceived immaturity or lack of experience (Zacher & Rudolph, 2021; Chang et al., 2020). This adds further evidence that ageism affects intergenerational dynamics across the age spectrum.

Ageism in the workplace can be subtle or overt, affecting the experiences and opportunities available to older workers (Cuddy, Norton, & Fiske, 2005). Common manifestations include discriminatory hiring practices where older candidates may be overlooked in favor of younger applicants based on assumptions about their ability to fit into the company culture or keep up with the demands of the job (North & Hershfield, 2014; Rabl & Triana, 2013).

In terms of promotion and advancement, older employees might find fewer opportunities for career progression as employers may prefer to invest in younger workers who are perceived to have longer potential tenure with the company (Maurer, Barbeite, Weiss, & Lippstreu, 2008). Training and development opportunities may also be limited for older workers due to the false belief that they are less likely to benefit from or apply new skills (Ng & Feldman, 2012; Posthuma & Campion, 2009). Additionally, workplace cultures that prioritize youth and innovation can marginalize older workers, creating environments where they feel undervalued and excluded (Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011; Rabl, Triana, Byun, & Bosch, 2014).

The consequences of ageism extend beyond individual employees to affect the entire organization (Nelson, 2005). When older workers are marginalized, organizations miss out on their wealth of knowledge, experience, and unique perspectives (Levy & Banaji, 2002; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018). This loss can hinder problem-solving, mentorship, and the transfer of institutional knowledge to younger employees (Ng & Feldman, 2010).

Moreover, ageism can contribute to a toxic work environment, lowering morale and engagement across the workforce. Employees who witness or experience age discrimination may become demotivated, reducing their productivity and increasing turnover rates (Rabl, Triana, Byun, & Bosch, 2014; Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011). This not only affects the well-

being of the workers but also has financial implications for the organization (Marques et al., 2020; Posthuma & Campion, 2009;).

To combat ageism and foster a more inclusive workplace, organizations can implement several strategies (AARP, 2019; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018). Education and awareness programs are essential for providing training on ageism and its effects, helping employees recognize and challenge their biases (Nelson, 2005; Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018). By educating the workforce about the value of age diversity, organizations can promote a more inclusive culture (Boehm, Kunze, & Bruch, 2011; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018). According to King & Bryant (2022), age-inclusive HR practices - such as continuous training, equitable evaluations, and mixed-age team collaboration - are essential components for building sustainable diversity strategies.

Developing inclusive policies that support age diversity, such as flexible working arrangements and phased retirement options, can accommodate the needs of older workers and help them remain productive (Hedge, Borman, & Lammlein, 2006; Maurer, Barbeite, Weiss, & Lippstreu, 2008).

Encouraging mentorship and reverse mentorship programs can also facilitate knowledge transfer between generations, helping to bridge gaps and foster mutual respect (Calo, 2008; Helyer & Lee, 2012). Ensuring that hiring, promotion, and training practices are based on merit rather than age can help older workers access the same opportunities as their younger counterparts (Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018; Rabl, Triana, Byun, & Bosch, 2014).

Addressing ageism requires a comprehensive approach that involves changing attitudes, implementing supportive policies, and fostering a culture of inclusion (Ng & Feldman, 2012; Kulik, Ryan, Harper, & George, 2014). By valuing and leveraging the contributions of workers of all ages, organizations can create more dynamic, innovative, and resilient workplaces (Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018; Rabl, Triana, Byun, & Bosch, 2014).

3 METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a qualitative methodological approach, developed through a case study method, which is well-suited for exploring complex social phenomena within their real-life context (Yin, 2014; Stake, 1995). The case study was conducted via semi-structured and in-depth interviews with representatives of a large American multinational technology company, headquartered in São Paulo, Brazil. This method allowed for the collection of rich, descriptive data that captures the participants' experiences and perceptions in depth (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

3.1 Research Design

The core of this study lies in investigating the predominant factors in promoting healthy longevity, with a specific focus on the variety of perspectives from different generational groups within the organizational context. The decision to utilize a case study approach was motivated by the need to capture the complexity and diversity of experiences related to ageism, encompassing life trajectories, academic, and professional experiences among the investigated age groups (Yin, 2014; Stake, 1995).

A case study was selected to explore the phenomenon of ageism comprehensively. This approach is particularly well-suited for examining complex, real-world issues within their specific context, enabling the exploration of how ageism manifests across different generations within the same organizational environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

By providing a holistic and in-depth analysis, case studies allow researchers to analyze individual perspectives while identifying patterns and nuances that contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2014; Flyvbjerg, 2011).

3.2 Research Subjects

The participants of this study included eight professionals from the target organization, who, after being duly invited, consented to participate actively in the study. The primary criterion for participant inclusion was age, resulting in categorization into four distinct groups: the first group, consisting of individuals aged 59 to 65 years, identified as Baby Boomers; the second group, including those aged 43 to 58 years, representing Generation X; the third group encompassing participants aged 27 to 42 years, characterizing Generation Y or Millennials; and the fourth group integrating professionals aged 16 to 26 years, corresponding to Generation Z, as illustrated in Table 1.

TABLE 1 - Sociodemographic Profile of Interviewees

Respondent	Sex	Generational Group	Academic Background	Education Level	Position	Tenure
01	F	Generation Z	Advertising and Propaganda	Pursuing Undergraduate	Intern	1 year and 11 months
02	M	Generation Z	Systems Analysis and Development	Undergraduate	Pre-sales Consultant	1 year and 7 months
03	F	Generation Y or Millennials	Advertising and Marketing	Project Management	Postgraduate (MBA)	Marketing Consultant
04	M	Generation Y or Millennials	Computer Science	Master's Degree	Pre-sales Consultant	9 years
05	F	Generation X	Social Communication	Public Policies	Doctorate	Marketing Manager
06	M	Generation X	Chemical Engineering	Postgraduate (MBA)	Business Consultant	7 years
07	F	Baby Boomer	Mathematics	Information Technology	Master's Degree	Customer Success Manager
08	M	Baby Boomer	Electrical Engineering	Information Technology	Undergraduate	Customer Partner

Source: Research data.

3.3 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, which provided an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions (Galletta, 2013; Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research because they allow for flexibility while maintaining a focus on specific topics (King, 2004). The interviews were administered either in-person or virtually, depending on the participants' preferences, ensuring accessibility and adaptability to their circumstances (Opdenakker, 2006; Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014). The average duration of each interview was 45 minutes, a common time frame for balancing detail with participant engagement (Bryman, 2016).

Following the interviews, the collected data were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and to capture the nuances of participants' narratives (Poland, 1995; Braun & Clarke,

2006). The transcriptions were then subjected to categorical content analysis, a method that allows for the systematic identification and interpretation of themes within qualitative data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This approach is particularly suited for exploring patterns in participants' responses and identifying core themes related to their lived experiences (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

The analysis yielded five central themes that captured the key elements of the respondents' life trajectories, academic and professional experiences: 1. Impact of age on career (Riach, 2007; Kooij, Jansen, Dijkers, & Lange, 2010); 2. Facing prejudices and stereotypes related to age (Posthuma & Campion, 2009; North & Fiske, 2012); 3. Formal education and understanding of aging (Phillipson, 2013; Timmons, Hall, Fesko, & Migliore, 2011); 4. Inclusion and age equity in the workplace (Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018); 5. Intergenerational dynamics and professional future (Parry & Tyson, 2011; Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

This systematic approach to data collection and analysis strengthens both the reliability and the interpretive depth of the findings while capturing the complexity of age-related experiences in the organizational context (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002).

Lastly, participants were identified through purposive sampling, focusing on ensuring generational diversity within the organization. The Human Resources department assisted in identifying potential participants who met the age criteria and were willing to share their experiences. Initial contact was made via institutional email, and all participants voluntarily agreed to participate after receiving information about the research objectives and confidentiality. During data collection, challenges included scheduling interviews across time zones and availability constraints, particularly with senior professionals. Interviews averaged 45 minutes, a timeframe that balanced depth with participant engagement and were conducted virtually or in person according to participant preferences, thereby ensuring both accessibility and adaptability to individual circumstances.

3.4 Data Analysis

The categorical content analysis technique was employed to explore and understand the essential data related to the participants' life trajectories, organizational implications, and factors intervening in ageism (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis systematically organizes qualitative data into categories, facilitating the identification and categorization of significant patterns in participants' narratives (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Mayring, 2000).

By applying this approach, the research aimed to provide a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of the participants' experiences. This method highlights nuances in the narratives, such as the impact of life trajectories on career progression, the consequences of ageism, and the organizational factors shaping these experiences (Krippendorff, 2013; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Iterative coding and analytical rigor revealed themes that captured both personal experiences and systemic dimensions (Patton, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The thematic categories were developed through an inductive approach based on the principles of grounded theory and qualitative content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). While some initial sensitizing concepts were drawn from existing literature, such as "age stereotypes" and "intergenerational dynamics", the categories primarily emerged from the participants' narratives during the coding process. The coding was conducted manually and iteratively,

allowing for themes to be grouped and refined as patterns became evident across interviews. This process ensured conceptual fidelity to the data while preserving analytical nuance.

This methodological approach enhances the validity and relevance of the findings by ensuring systematic, transparent, and replicable analysis (Creswell, 2013; Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). It also provides a strong foundation for constructing a significant body of knowledge about ageism in organizational settings, particularly as it relates to intergenerational dynamics and workplace policies (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). By identifying these recurring patterns, the study contributes to a more nuanced and evidence-based understanding of how ageism manifests and how it can be addressed within organizations.

3.5 Research Unit

The research unit selected for this study is a prominent global technology company renowned for its pioneering role in the field of analytical software solutions. This organization provides comprehensive solutions that empower businesses across more than 90 countries to make precise and informed decisions, driving enhanced growth, profitability, and customer satisfaction. Founded in 1956 in the United States, the company has maintained its innovative edge by consistently introducing technologies that revolutionize how organizations approach data analysis and decision-making processes.

The company's mission centers on leveraging human expertise combined with artificial intelligence to enable clients to make critical, real-time decisions at scale. One of the company's notable milestones was the introduction of credit scoring solutions, which not only facilitated access to credit in the United States but also had a profound global impact. Over the years, the company has expanded its suite of technologies to include predictive analytics, business rule management, and optimization, becoming a leader in decision management technologies.

With a presence in Brazil for over 20 years, the company has its headquarters in São Paulo, employing 156 local professionals. The Brazilian branch has been instrumental in adapting the company's global strategies to meet the unique demands of the local market. This local adaptation involves "tropicalizing" its operations to align with the specific needs and conditions of Brazilian businesses and consumers.

The organizational culture of the company is characterized by a strong emphasis on collaboration. This collaborative culture is underpinned by the belief that the company's greatest asset is its people. As such, the organization invests heavily in the development of its employees, fostering a work environment that values teamwork, consensus, and participation. The management style within the company is marked by trust and knowledge sharing, which helps align the strategic objectives with the day-to-day operations, ensuring that the organizational goals are met efficiently.

Innovation is a cornerstone of the company's culture. The company promotes a dynamic and entrepreneurial environment where employees are encouraged to take risks and explore new ideas. This innovative culture is evident in the company's approach to problem-solving and its commitment to continuous improvement. The focus on long-term planning and sustainable growth further emphasizes the company's commitment to creating value through strategic and thoughtful innovation.

In early 2024, the company was recognized with an international award as one of the "Best Workplaces for Diversity". This award was based on a comprehensive study conducted by Plant-A Insights, which involved interviews with over 223,000 employees in the United States and the collection of more than 1.5 million comprehensive evaluations of companies.

This recognition is the latest in a series of accolades, including being listed among Forbes' Best Employers for Women in 2023 and receiving acknowledgments from the Great Place to Work Institute in Brazil, as well as BCIB and DivHERsity awards in India.

These recognitions highlight the company's commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace where diversity is not only accepted but celebrated. The company's diversity and inclusion initiatives are designed to create a work environment where all employees, regardless of age, gender, race, or background, can thrive. These initiatives include diversity training programs, equitable promotion and hiring practices, and flexible work arrangements that cater to the needs of a diverse workforce.

Technological innovation remains at the heart of the company's strategy. The organization continuously develops and deploys cutting-edge technologies that address the evolving needs of its clients. By focusing on real-time decision-making capabilities, the company helps businesses navigate the complexities of modern markets, enhance operational efficiencies, and drive sustainable growth.

The Brazilian branch has been particularly successful in localizing the company's global solutions to meet the specific demands of the Brazilian market. This involves customizing software solutions to align with local regulatory requirements, market conditions, and consumer behaviors. The ability to adapt and innovate locally has enabled the company to maintain a competitive edge and deliver significant value to its clients in Brazil.

The company's strategic focus is on being at the forefront of digital transformation, helping clients break down organizational silos and expand access to critical resources such as credit. By combining human expertise with advanced artificial intelligence, the company aims to facilitate crucial decisions that enhance client performance in real-time.

Looking ahead, the company plans to continue its investment in innovative technologies and strategic initiatives that support its mission of enabling precise, scalable decision-making. This includes expanding its suite of predictive analytics and decision management solutions, enhancing its AI capabilities, and deepening its commitment to diversity and inclusion.

In summary, the research unit exemplifies a leading global technology company that combines innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity to drive its success. Its commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace, coupled with its strategic focus on technological innovation, positions the company as a model organization in the field of analytical software solutions. The insights gained from studying this organization provide valuable lessons on managing age diversity, promoting healthy longevity, and fostering an inclusive work environment that leverages the strengths of employees across different generational cohorts.

4 FINDINGS

The thematic analysis of the findings from this study revealed several themes related to ageism, career trajectories, and organizational practices. These themes were identified through a comprehensive analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted with employees from different generational cohorts within the research unit. The central themes that emerged from the data include the impact of age on career, experiences of age-related prejudice, formal education and understanding of aging, inclusion and equity in the workplace, and intergenerational dynamics and future professional aspirations.

4.1 Impact of Age on Career

One of the prominent themes that emerged was the significant impact of age on the career trajectories of the respondents. Many participants highlighted how their age influenced their professional opportunities and career progression. For instance, a respondent from Generation Y (Millennials) noted: *“During my early career, I felt that my age was often seen as a barrier. I had to work twice as hard to prove my capabilities because people often assumed I lacked experience due to my youth”* (Respondent 04, Generation Y).

Conversely, older employees also faced challenges related to age, particularly in terms of career advancement and staying relevant in a rapidly changing technological landscape. A Baby Boomer respondent expressed: *“As I got older, I noticed fewer opportunities for advancement. There is a perception that older employees are less adaptable to new technologies, which is not always true. This has affected my career growth significantly”* (Respondent 07, Baby Boomer).

4.1.1 Experiences of Age-Related Prejudice

Age-related prejudice was another recurring theme, with respondents from different generational groups reporting instances of discrimination and biased attitudes. These prejudices were not limited to older employees but also affected younger workers, who often felt undervalued due to their perceived lack of experience. A Generation Z respondent shared: *“I have experienced situations where my opinions were dismissed because I was seen as too young and inexperienced. It feels like I constantly have to prove myself to be taken seriously”* (Respondent 02, Generation Z). Women, in particular, faced a dual burden of age and gender-related prejudice. One female respondent from Generation X highlighted: *“When I became pregnant, I felt the prejudice even more. There was an assumption that I would be less committed to my job, which affected my opportunities for advancement. It is challenging to navigate these biases as a woman and as an older employee”* (Respondent 05, Generation X).

4.1.2 Formal Education and Understanding of Aging

The role of formal education in shaping respondents' understanding of aging and its implications in the workplace was another significant theme. Education helped some participants develop a more nuanced perspective on aging, which in turn influenced their attitudes towards older colleagues: A Generation Z respondent noted: *“My studies in advertising included a project on the inclusion of elderly individuals in media. This project opened my eyes to the stereotypes we perpetuate and made me more aware of the importance of inclusivity”* (Respondent 01, Generation Z).

4.1.3 Inclusion and Equity in the Workplace

The theme of inclusion and equity in the workplace encompassed organizational efforts to create an environment that values employees of all ages. Respondents emphasized the need for policies that support age diversity and promote equal opportunities for professional development. A Generation Y respondent commented: *“Our company has made strides in promoting inclusivity, but there is still a long way to go. Providing flexible work arrangements and ongoing training for all age groups can help create a more equitable workplace”* (Respondent 03, Generation Y). Another respondent from Generation X highlighted the

importance of recognizing the contributions of older employees: “It’s crucial for organizations to value the experience and knowledge that older workers bring. Implementing mentorship programs where older employees can share their expertise with younger colleagues can be beneficial for both parties” (Respondent 06, Generation X).

4.1.4 Intergenerational Dynamics and Future Professional Aspirations

Intergenerational dynamics played a significant role in shaping the workplace experiences of the respondents. The interactions between different age groups influenced their professional aspirations and overall job satisfaction. A Baby Boomer respondent reflected on the importance of adapting to these dynamics: *“As I approach retirement, I find it rewarding to mentor younger colleagues. It’s a way to pass on my knowledge and also stay engaged with the latest trends. This interaction is mutually beneficial and fosters a positive work environment”* (Respondent 08, Baby Boomer). A respondent from Generation Z highlighted the need for organizations to facilitate better intergenerational communication: *“There can be a communication gap between different generations. Organizations should encourage open dialogues and collaborative projects that bring together employees of all ages to learn from each other”* (Respondent 02, Generation Z).

In essence, the findings underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of ageism in the workplace. The impact of age on career opportunities, experiences of age-related prejudice, the role of education, inclusion and equity, and intergenerational dynamics emerged as critical themes. These insights highlight the importance of creating inclusive organizational practices that value the contributions of employees across all generational cohorts. Addressing these themes through targeted policies and initiatives can enhance job satisfaction, promote healthy longevity, and foster a more inclusive and productive work environment.

4.2 Relationship Between Ageism and Healthy Longevity

The study’s findings on the relationship between ageism and healthy longevity in the organization, from the perspective of the interviewees, provide valuable insights into how age-related biases affect the well-being and professional life span of employees. The interviews revealed that ageism can significantly impact both the physical and mental health of workers, influencing their overall longevity within the organization. Several key themes emerged from the analysis: the psychological impact of ageism, career satisfaction and retention, the importance of supportive work environments, and the role of organizational policies in promoting healthy longevity.

To complement the description of the organization and reinforce its institutional discourse around innovation and diversity, secondary data sources were also consulted. These included official materials available on the company’s website, annual diversity and sustainability reports, and public recognition such as the “Best Workplaces for Diversity” award. These documents supported the contextualization of the company’s culture and values, particularly its commitment to fostering an inclusive work environment across different dimensions, including age, gender, and cultural background. This triangulation of data strengthens the case study’s credibility and depth, as recommended in qualitative research methodology (Yin, 2014).

4.2.1 Psychological Impact of Ageism

One of the most prominent themes was the psychological toll that ageism takes on employees. Many respondents reported that experiencing age-related biases and discrimination negatively affected their mental health, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation. For instance, a Generation Y respondent described: *“The constant need to prove myself because of my age creates a lot of stress. It’s exhausting to feel like you’re always being judged not for your abilities but for how old you are”* (Respondent 04, Generation Y).

Similarly, older employees expressed that ageism led to feelings of inadequacy and diminished self-worth. A Baby Boomer respondent shared: *“Being overlooked for promotions because of my age made me question my value to the company. It’s disheartening and affects my motivation and engagement at work”* (Respondent 07, Baby Boomer). These psychological impacts can undermine employees’ overall well-being and contribute to a decline in their professional longevity, as prolonged stress and dissatisfaction may lead to burnout or early retirement.

4.2.2 Career Satisfaction and Retention

The relationship between ageism and career satisfaction was another significant finding. Employees who experienced ageism reported lower levels of job satisfaction and a reduced sense of loyalty to the organization. This dissatisfaction often translated into higher turnover rates, as affected employees sought more inclusive and supportive work environments elsewhere. A Generation X respondent noted: *“I love my work, but the ageist attitudes here make it hard to stay motivated. If things don’t change, I might have to look for opportunities where my experience is valued”* (Respondent 06, Generation X). Conversely, organizations that actively combat ageism and promote inclusivity tend to see higher retention rates and greater employee satisfaction. This highlights the importance of fostering a culture that values employees of all ages for their contributions and experience.

4.2.3 Importance of Supportive Work Environments

The interviews underscored the critical role of supportive work environments in promoting healthy longevity. Respondents emphasized that a culture of respect and inclusivity, where all employees feel valued regardless of age, significantly contributes to their well-being and desire to remain with the organization. A Generation Z respondent remarked: *“Having mentors from different age groups and a supportive team makes a huge difference. It creates a positive environment where everyone feels they belong and can grow”* (Respondent 02, Generation Z). Older employees also highlighted the benefits of supportive environments, noting that such settings help them feel more engaged and appreciated, which in turn enhances their professional longevity. A Baby Boomer respondent stated: *“In a supportive environment, I feel more energized and motivated to contribute. It makes me want to stay longer and share my experience with younger colleagues”* (Respondent 08, Baby Boomer).

4.2.4 Role of Organizational Policies

Organizational policies play a pivotal role in mitigating ageism and promoting healthy longevity. The study found that companies with clear anti-ageism policies and practices tend to foster more inclusive environments that support the well-being of all employees. Policies such

as flexible work arrangements, ongoing training, and development opportunities for employees of all ages were highlighted as critical for promoting healthy longevity. A Generation Y respondent commented: *“Our company’s policy on continuous learning has been great. It ensures that everyone, regardless of age, has access to development opportunities, which helps in staying relevant and engaged”* (Respondent 03, Generation Y). Furthermore, the implementation of mentorship programs and initiatives that encourage intergenerational collaboration were seen as effective strategies for combating ageism and enhancing the professional life span of employees. A Generation X respondent emphasized: *“Mentorship programs have been incredibly beneficial. They not only help in skill development but also foster mutual respect and understanding between different age groups”* (Respondent 05, Generation X).

In summary, the relationship between ageism and healthy longevity in the organization is multifaceted, encompassing psychological impacts, career satisfaction, the importance of supportive environments, and the role of organizational policies. The findings indicate that ageism can significantly undermine the well-being and professional longevity of employees, leading to increased stress, lower job satisfaction, and higher turnover rates. In opposition, inclusive and supportive work environments, underpinned by clear anti-ageism policies, can enhance employee well-being, promote intergenerational collaboration, and extend the professional life span of workers. These insights underscore the importance of addressing ageism comprehensively to foster a workplace that supports the healthy longevity of all employees.

5 DISCUSSION

The findings from this study offer several theoretical implications that contribute to the broader understanding of ageism, intergenerational dynamics, and organizational practices. These implications extend to theories of aging, workplace diversity, and human resource management (HRM), providing insights that can inform future research and theoretical development in these areas (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018; Posthuma & Campion, 2009; North & Fiske, 2013).

Firstly, the study’s exploration of ageism across different generational cohorts provides a nuanced perspective that enhances existing theories of ageism. Traditional theories often frame ageism as a unidirectional phenomenon affecting older adults (Butler, 1969; Palmore, 1999). However, this study highlights that age-based discrimination is bidirectional, impacting both older and younger employees (North & Fiske, 2012; Levy, 2017). This finding suggests that theoretical models of ageism should be expanded to account for the experiences of younger workers, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how age-related biases manifest in the workplace (Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011).

A nuanced analysis of the interviews reveals that ageism intersects with gender in significant ways, particularly for older women. While the study presents a single quote addressing this, broader literature suggests that older women often face a “double jeopardy” of age and gender discrimination (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Ainsworth & Hardy, 2008). In the organizational context investigated, female participants from older cohorts reported subtle yet persistent doubts about their competence, especially during periods of life transition such as maternity or late-career progression. These findings suggest that organizational policies must not only address ageism in isolation but also consider how it overlaps with other identity markers to exacerbate exclusion and career stagnation.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of intergenerational dynamics in shaping workplace experiences and career trajectories. The interactions between different generational groups influence not only individual job satisfaction and professional aspirations but also organizational culture and productivity (Parry & Tyson, 2011; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Theoretical frameworks on intergenerational dynamics should therefore consider the reciprocal influences between age groups, emphasizing the importance of mutual learning and collaboration (Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt, & Gade, 2012; Ropes, 2013). This study supports the idea that intergenerational mentorship and knowledge sharing are critical components of a harmonious and productive work environment (Boehm, Kunze, & Bruch, H. 2014; Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers, & Lange, 2010).

In addition, the findings contribute to theories of workplace diversity and inclusion by highlighting the specific challenges and opportunities associated with age diversity. Despite the company's public recognition for its diversity policies, the interviews indicate a disconnection between institutional discourse and daily practice. Participants acknowledged the existence of inclusive language and formal policies, yet described informal dynamics that often contradicted those principles - such as the persistence of age-related jokes, assumptions about technological skill based on age, and underrepresentation of older workers in innovation projects. This suggests that the symbolic adoption of diversity values does not automatically translate into structural or cultural transformation. It reinforces the need for deeper internal alignment, consistent managerial action, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that age-inclusive policies are reflected in practice.

The study demonstrates that inclusive practices and policies that support age diversity can enhance organizational outcomes, such as employee satisfaction, retention, and innovation (Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018). Consequently, theoretical models of workplace diversity should incorporate age as a critical dimension, alongside other factors such as gender, race, and ethnicity (Cox & Blake, 1991; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018). This inclusion provides a more holistic understanding of diversity dynamics and informs the development of comprehensive diversity management strategies (Joshi & Roh, 2009; Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2011).

From a human resource management (HRM) perspective, the study offers theoretical insights into effective age management practices. The findings suggest that HRM theories should incorporate strategies for managing an age-diverse workforce, including flexible work arrangements, continuous learning opportunities, and age-inclusive policies (Timmons, Hall, Fesko, & Migliore, 2011; Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers, & Lange, 2010). The study also highlights the importance of addressing both overt and subtle forms of ageism through targeted interventions and training programs (Ilmarinen, 2006; Ng & Feldman, 2012). These insights inform the development of HRM theories that prioritize the well-being and productivity of employees across all age groups (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011).

Furthermore, the concept of healthy longevity is enriched by the study's findings, which emphasize the role of organizational practices in promoting the well-being and productivity of employees as they age (Rowe & Kahn, 1997; Walker, 2002). Theoretical models of healthy longevity should consider the workplace as a critical context for supporting individuals' physical, mental, and social health (Ilmarinen, 2001; World Health Organization, 2015). This study reinforces the idea that organizations play a pivotal role in facilitating healthy aging by creating environments that value and support employees at every stage of their careers (Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers, & Lange, 2010).

The study's findings on the intersection of ageism and gender discrimination also offer valuable insights for intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005). The experiences

of female respondents who faced both age and gender-related biases highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of discrimination (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Ainsworth & Hardy, 2008). Theoretical frameworks on intersectionality should account for how multiple forms of bias interact and compound, affecting individuals' experiences and opportunities in the workplace (Holvino, 2010). This study supports the need for more intersectional approaches in examining ageism and other forms of discrimination.

Moreover, the theoretical implications of this study extend to practical applications and policy development. By identifying effective practices for managing age diversity and combating ageism, the study provides a theoretical basis for developing organizational policies that foster an inclusive and supportive work environment (Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018; Boehm, Kunze, & Bruch, 2014). These policies can enhance employee well-being, improve retention rates, and drive organizational success (Kulik, Ryan, Harper, & George, 2014; Timmons, Hall, Fesko, & Migliore, 2011).

Additionally, to strengthen the theoretical integration of the empirical findings, this study revisits specific subcategories that emerged from the data analysis but were previously underexplored in the discussion. For example, the subcategory related to "perceptions of innovation capacity" among older workers, which surfaced in participants' narratives, reveals an underlying stereotype that older employees are less adaptable or creative. This directly connects with theoretical discussions on implicit bias and organizational age norms (Kulik et al., 2014; Posthuma & Campion, 2009). Similarly, the theme of "adaptive strategies" employed by workers to cope with age-based assumptions - such as overperforming or masking their age - aligns with theories of identity work and impression management in age-diverse environments (Roberts, 2005; Zanon & Janssens, 2007). By aligning these emergent themes with relevant theoretical constructs, the discussion not only reflects the richness of the data but also contributes to refining existing conceptual frameworks on workplace ageism.

In conclusion, the theoretical implications of this study are far-reaching, offering new insights and expanding existing theories in the areas of ageism, intergenerational dynamics, workplace diversity, human resource management, healthy longevity, and intersectionality. By providing a comprehensive understanding of how age-related issues affect the workplace, this study contributes to the development of more inclusive and effective organizational practices (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018; North & Fiske, 2013). These theoretical advancements can guide future research and inform the creation of policies that promote a more equitable and supportive work environment for employees of all ages (Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018).

6 CONCLUSION

This study explored the manifestations of ageism and the dynamics of intergenerational relationships within an organizational setting committed to diversity and innovation. The findings reveal that age-based biases persist in both subtle and overt ways, influencing perceptions of competence, innovation capacity, and adaptability - particularly for older employees (Posthuma & Campion, 2009; Ng & Feldman, 2012). At the same time, younger professionals also experience age-based assumptions, confirming that ageism operates in a multidirectional and multidimensional manner (North & Fiske, 2012; Zacher & Rudolph, 2021). The data also highlighted coping strategies adopted by employees, such as overcompensation or impression management, as well as a partial disconnection between formal diversity policies and daily organizational practices (Zanon & Janssens, 2007; Kulik et al., 2014).

Theoretically, this research contributes to expanding models of ageism by incorporating intersectional and generational perspectives (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001). It deepens the understanding of how age discrimination intersects with gender, particularly affecting older women through compounded forms of bias (McCall, 2005; Ainsworth & Hardy, 2008). In addition, it reinforces the importance of considering age as a critical axis in diversity management and human resource strategies (Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018; Kooij et al., 2020). Practically, the study provides evidence for organizations to design more robust age-inclusive policies, foster intergenerational collaboration, and ensure alignment between corporate discourse and enacted practices (Boehm, Kunze, & Bruch, 2014; King & Bryant, 2022).

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. It focused on a single organization with a specific cultural and institutional context, which may affect the generalizability of the findings (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Additionally, the qualitative nature of the research, while rich in interpretative depth, does not allow for statistical generalization or predictive modeling (Patton, 2002).

Future research could explore ageism in different organizational settings, including those without explicit diversity policies, or those operating in different national or cultural contexts. Comparative and cross-cultural studies may reveal how ageism varies in expression and management (Ng & Law, 2014). Longitudinal research designs would also help uncover the evolving nature of age-based perceptions over time and their impact on career trajectories, well-being, and organizational outcomes (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011; Zacher et al., 2019).

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