

Employment Initiatives for an Ageing Workforce: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we assessed initiatives related to ageing workforce management in a selected manufacturing company. The study was based on a survey conducted among 50 production and administrative employees. The research covered five areas such as: organizational activities, health protection and promotion, training and educational initiatives, career and professional development, and pre-retirement activities. The results showed that age management practices are only partially implemented in the organization. Most respondents indicated that there is no person responsible for coordinating age-related initiatives and that monitoring of recruitment processes to prevent age discrimination is limited. Older employees are rarely recognized as experts, and age-diverse teams are not actively promoted. In addition, respondents reported insufficient health protection measures, limited access to medical services, and a lack of initiatives promoting healthy lifestyles. Many workplaces are also not adequately adapted to the needs of older employees. At the same time, training related to new technologies and equipment was positively assessed. The study suggests introducing a coordinated age management strategy, improving health promotion activities, and implementing flexible work arrangements for employees over 50.

Keywords: Ageing, Ageing society, Age management, 50+, Labour market

INTRODUCTION

The aging process is a key aspect of human resources management today. It is closely linked to the demographic structure of highly developed countries, characterized by low birth rates and increasing life expectancy, leading to an increase in the proportion of older people. This process is steadily intensifying and can be considered global, although its intensity varies across regions. The trend is particularly noticeable in European countries (Calvo-Sotomayor & Atutxa, 2025; Seidl et al., 2022). The aging population clearly impacts the labor market as work capacity changes as people age. Decreased performance, physical fitness, and various psychophysical abilities result from diminishing work capacity. Furthermore, cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, and other bodily dysfunctions also reduce this capacity. All these factors suggest that the actual workload may increase with age. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to work demands and work organization (Mocan et al., 2022; Thatcher et al., 2026).

In Poland, the economic activity of older people has increased in recent years but remains below the European average. Statistics Poland (GUS) data from 2023 indicate that the economic activity rate for the 65–89 age group is 6%. Therefore, it is crucial to focus on workers aged 50+ to fully utilize their potential in the labor market (Kukołowicz et al., 2024). An extremely important factor contributing to the low level of employment among employees over 50 years of age is primarily the insufficient or complete lack of interest from employers, as well as the lack of regular upgrading of qualifications by this age group, inadequate level of education, limited opportunities for retraining and the use of early retirement options. Managers are the only professional group in Poland for which an increase in the demographic renewal rate has been recorded (Hildt-Ciupińska et al., 2012; Dudek & Rosa, 2023; Dziennis et al., 2024).

The changing demographic situation, along with the challenge of employing older workers, should become a driving force behind efforts to activate people aged 50+ to ensure they remain professionally active for as long as possible. An aging society will increase the number of workers in this age group. To ensure their safety, improve their quality of life, and extend their professional activity, it is essential to develop and implement preventive and training measures (Mrugalska, Górny, and Grzybowski, 2013; Mrugalska & Dovramadjiev, 2023). WHO recommendations focus on promoting such measures and creating appropriate programs that utilize both the physical and social abilities of seniors and their individual potential (Suchecky and Jewczak, 2018). This presents a significant challenge for businesses and employers to adapt the work environment to the needs and capabilities of older workers. It is also crucial to introduce tools, programs, and instruments that will help retain this group in the labor market, which requires action from both national policymakers and businesses (Pulut, 2021).

One way to curb the aging workforce is through “age management.” This strategy focuses on implementing solutions that allow companies to rationally utilize human resources of all ages, especially older ones. Considering the needs and capabilities of employees from different age groups is crucial. Age management encompasses many areas, from recruitment, through professional development, health protection and promotion, to retirement and post-retirement activities (Hildt–Ciupińska et al., 2012).

This paper aims to assess the ageing initiatives in a selected manufacturing company. A survey was conducted among a selected group of production and administrative employees. The obtained results were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis, which allowed for an objective assessment of the current status. Based on this analysis, a concept for improving the approach was proposed.

Methodology

To meet the study’s objectives, a survey questionnaire was developed. Its primary goal was to gather information on selected aspects of age diversity management, with particular emphasis on initiatives aimed at employees aged 50+. A survey approach was employed, utilizing a questionnaire consisting

of two main parts. The first part comprised a personal profile and included basic demographic data, such as gender, age, length of service, education level, and position (production or office). The second, key part of the questionnaire comprised a set of statements related to the study's topic. For clarity and ease of analysis, the data was grouped into five thematic areas:

- health protection and promotion,
- training and pro-educational activities,
- career and professional development,
- pre-retirement activities.

The questionnaire was delivered to the workplace in paper form. The study was conducted in a selected manufacturing company located in the Greater Poland Voivodeship. Fifty respondents participated, of whom 32 were women, representing 64% of the study sample, and 18 were men (36%). Employees with varying lengths of service, ages, education levels, and positions participated in the study. Most respondents (28%) had been with the company for 10 to 15 years. Experience levels of 3 to 6 years and 6 to 10 years each accounted for 20% of the respondents, while 7 (14%) had less than 3 years of experience. Respondent age is a key aspect of this thesis. People aged 25–40 constituted 42% of the respondents, representing 21 respondents. The 41–55 age group comprised 30% of the respondents, and those over 55 constituted 16%. Employees under 25 constituted 6%. The educational level of the respondents varied. Most respondents had secondary education (44%) and higher education (34%), while fewer had vocational education (18%) or primary education (4%). It is worth noting that 94% of those with higher education held office positions, the majority of respondents held production positions (52%), while office workers constituted 48% of the study group.

Analysis of Research Results

The survey questionnaire conducted among the group of respondents allowed us to obtain information on organizational aspects in the selected manufacturing enterprise (Table 1).

Table 1: Organizational aspects.

No.	Action	N = 50					M	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	My company has a designated person who is responsible for coordinating age management activities.	22%	46%	14%	14%	4%	2.32	1.10
2	My company offers part-time employment or flexible working hours for seniors.	8%	46%	32%	12%	2%	2.54	0.89

(Continued)

Table 1: Continued.

No.	Action	N = 50					M	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
3	In my company, occupational risk assessment takes into account risks arising from the age of employees.	4%	40%	18%	26%	12%	3.02	1.15
4	In my company teams are diverse in terms of age.	30%	32%	18%	12%	8%	2.36	1.26
5	In my company, older people are treated as experts who pass on their knowledge to others.	24%	42%	20%	6%	8%	2.32	1.15
6	In my company, professional duties are adapted to the age, fitness and physical abilities of employees.	8%	24%	4%	44%	20%	3.44	1.28
7	In my company, the recruitment process is monitored to prevent age discrimination.	10%	42%	22%	18%	8%	2.72	1.13
8	Unusual, more demanding tasks are more often assigned to younger employees than to older ones.	6%	38%	12%	36%	8%	3.02	1.15
9	In my company, supervisors are aware that tasks should be designed in such a way that every employee, regardless of age, can increase their level of efficiency.	2%	34%	10%	46%	8%	3.24	1.08
10	In my company, conflict situations and misunderstandings often occur between older and younger employees.	6%	38%	28%	20%	8%	2.86	1.07
11	In my company, I feel an atmosphere of community and mutual trust between all employees regardless age.	0%	24%	22%	42%	12%	3.42	0.99
12	In my company, the opinion of older employees is more valued and taken into account than that of younger employees.	18%	30%	36%	12%	4%	2.54	1.05

Analysing the research results regarding organizational aspects of age management, it can be concluded that activities such as monitoring the recruitment process to counteract age discrimination are not generally implemented in the selected company. 68% of respondents stated that there is no person responsible for coordinating age management activities. Creating age-diverse

teams that could foster mutual exchange of knowledge and experiences is not crucial for organizations. Among those surveyed, 66% believe that individuals with greater experience and knowledge are not treated as experts. According to 48% of respondents, their opinions are not valued or taken into account more than those of younger employees. On the other hand, top management and supervisors focus on creating optimal working conditions and assigning tasks to employees in a way that maximizes their productivity. An atmosphere of mutual trust prevails within the organization, allowing supervisors to recognize employees' efforts by supporting two-way communication.

The analysis of activities undertaken within the framework of health protection and promotion is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Health protection and promotion.

No.	Action	N = 50					M	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	My company provides permanent, private access to a full range of medical care for seniors.	24%	30%	26%	16%	4%	2.46	1.15
2	My company promotes a healthy lifestyle and health promotion (e.g. free webinars and lifestyle trainings).	28%	42%	30%	0%	0%	2.02	0.77
3	My company adapts workstations to the age of older employees, their health and abilities (e.g. by equipping workstations with auxiliary equipment).	26%	32%	26%	12%	4%	2.36	1.12
4	In my company, all employees receive training in the use of new devices and equipment, regardless of their age and skills.	2%	14%	14%	58%	12%	3.64	0.94

The results presented in Table 2 indicate a lack of assurance and promoting preventive healthcare among employees. Older workers do not receive additional benefits related to their age. There is a lack of regular access to medical services and additional medical examinations. Furthermore, most respondents believe that a healthy lifestyle is not promoted within the company, and free sports and recreational activities are not available. According to the majority (58% of respondents), workplaces are not appropriately adapted to the age of employees and lack equipment to facilitate the performance of assigned tasks. Respondents can count on additional training in the use of new devices and equipment, which was positively assessed by 70% of respondents.

The research results regarding training and pro-educational activities are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Training and pro-educational activities.

No.	Action	N = 50					M	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	My company ensures continuous development for all employees, regardless of age (e.g. by organizing training).	22%	28%	28%	12%	10%	2.6	1.25
2	In my company, the needs and age of employees are taken into account when organizing training.	22%	34%	22%	14%	8%	2.52	1.22
3	In my company, training is tailored to age and the specific nature of the work performed.	18%	24%	28%	18%	12%	2.82	1.27
4	My company provides additional training for older people, which gives them the opportunity to retrain for a different position.	16%	34%	30%	16%	4%	2.58	1.07

As can be seen, the analysed company lacks investment in employee development. Over 50% of respondents believe that their needs and age are not considered when organizing training. Furthermore, there are no opportunities to participate in training that would allow for retraining for a different position.

Research on career and professional development in the context of diversity management is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Career and professional development.

No.	Action	N = 50					M	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	My company provides development opportunities for all employees regardless of age (development of competencies and qualifications).	22%	18%	18%	12%	30%	3.1	1.56
2	In my company, older employees have the same opportunities for promotion as younger ones.	0%	16%	16%	52%	16%	3.68	0.94
3	In my company, knowledge, skills and competencies play a key role in job evaluation, not the employee's age.	2%	8%	12%	64%	14%	3.8	0.86
4	My company provides guaranteed and secure employment conditions for older people.	4%	8%	32%	48%	8%	3.48	0.91
5	In my company, the pay system established by management takes into account the qualifications, experience and age of employees.	6%	22%	24%	28%	20%	3.34	1.21

Over 50% of respondents stated that the company maintains equal promotion opportunities, providing equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of age, to advance their careers. Furthermore, over 60% of respondents believe that performance and effectiveness are assessed based on knowledge and competencies, not age. Responses regarding remuneration are mixed. Twenty-two percent of respondents stated that the remuneration system is not dependent on qualifications or age, while nearly 50% believed that it does. Additionally, 24% of respondents expressed uncertainty, answering “I don’t know,” which may indicate a lack of knowledge about the applicable remuneration policies. The employer’s concern for the guarantees and security of employment for older employees is evident. However, a perceived problem is the lack of opportunities for skill development. This statement was rated as inadequately supported, with 22% responding “definitely not” and 18% responding “rather not.” Developing strategies in this area is crucial to increase motivation and offer opportunities for career advancement.

Table 5 presents the results of research covering post-retirement activities.

Table 5: Pre-retirement activities.

No.	Action	N = 50					M	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	My company creates retirement plans.	18%	22%	42%	6%	12%	2.72	1.20
2	At my company, top management holds retirement preparation talks for older employees.	22%	24%	40%	12%	2%	2.48	1.03
3	In my company, employees have the opportunity to benefit from additional pension insurance.	26%	14%	40%	10%	10%	2.64	1.26
4	My company maintains contact and establishes collaborations with employees who have retired.	14%	22%	34%	18%	12%	2.92	1.21
5	My company creates projects that enable collaboration with retired employees.	16%	12%	36%	16%	20%	3.12	1.32

Based on the survey results in Table 5, it can be seen that the first three statements related to retirement planning, preparatory interviews, and additional pension insurance received the most “definitely no” and “probably no” responses. Improving retirement-related activities should become one of the key goals of the organization, as it improves the security of older employees and indirectly influences the positive perception of the company by younger employees. A deeper analysis reveals that employees, particularly those in the manufacturing sector, are insufficiently aware of the available benefits and advantages of their work, as evidenced by the high percentage of “I don’t know” responses (3), which constituted approximately 40% of the responses to each of the statements. Pension policy also emphasizes maintaining contacts and collaborating on projects with former employees, which largely facilitates the exchange of knowledge and experiences between people of different ages.

The Concept of Improving the Ageing Initiatives

The concept of improving ageing initiatives within the company was divided into main pillars corresponding to the various survey questionnaires. From an organizational perspective, it is crucial to appoint a person responsible for overseeing, supporting, and implementing age management processes. This person should also actively participate in the recruitment process, facilitating the employment of older workers. Initiatives and activities targeted at employees can be communicated through informational activities. Discussion of key issues related to occupational risks and work environment factors should be included in the responsibilities of the occupational health and safety department. An additional solution that should be considered for employees over 50 years of age in production is the consent to change the work system to single-shift operation and part-time work.

As part of the health protection and promotion pillar, it would be possible to propose a medical facility open during selected working hours. During medical appointments, each employee could have access to basic tests and consultations. Additionally, the specialist could provide dietary and lifestyle recommendations. During visits with a physiotherapist, employees could discuss their musculoskeletal problems and ailments. Additional initiatives within the health promotion and protection pillar include organizing webinars with specialists in various fields, such as a psychologist. Furthermore, creating a “sports zone” would enable both production and office workers to actively utilize work breaks. Another important step is implementing a program for suggesting workstation modifications. This could be done using a form containing the necessary information, such as the location of the area requiring modification, a description of the situation prior to implementing the improvements, and proposed solutions.

To support staff education and development, one possible strategy is to implement a program that engages employees of all ages. A key element of this program is appointing internal trainers from various production departments as mentors. These individuals should meet specific criteria regarding seniority and soft skills, such as the ability to transfer knowledge and leadership qualities. Their role would be to introduce and instruct newly hired employees in key production processes. By engaging the most experienced employees, they could also conduct training for employees considering a change of position.

Among retirement preparation initiatives, it would be worthwhile to introduce a program that provides additional days off for employees of a certain age. Employees using this benefit should document their absence with appropriate documentation, and it is suggested that this time be allocated to specialist visits or rehabilitation. Developing a career path for retiring employees is also a good idea, which should include regular meetings with an HR representative and the supervisor. During these meetings, employee achievements and performance reviews should be discussed, along with any information regarding the retirement process, such as notice deadlines, accrued vacation time, and retirement benefits.

CONCLUSION

Demographic change, alongside technological progress and globalization, is one of the key challenges facing the contemporary labour market. This is evident in the social context of ESG, which encompasses issues related to the impact on local communities and consumers, as well as the responsibility of companies as employers. A key element of employers' social impact in the area of diversity and inclusion is not simply a set of regulations. Attention is focused on equal treatment of employees and openness to individuals with different characteristics, experiences, and needs. Furthermore, engaging employees over 50 can be a strategic solution to the increasingly common labor shortage. To achieve this, it is necessary to adapt working conditions and take into account the health status and specific needs of this group. Providing opportunities for lifelong learning and development is also essential. Despite numerous legislative and organizational steps and initiatives aimed at supporting and promoting the professional activity of older adults, employers are often reluctant to hire them. Age discrimination and the undervaluation of experienced employees as a significant corporate resource persist. Stereotypes persist in society that older workers are less productive and less flexible compared to their younger colleagues. There's a general trend toward investing in the younger generation rather than those approaching retirement. It's crucial to engage older people both inside and outside of their professional lives.

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