



How Do Employers Think about Older Workers?

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- Higher pensionable age in many OECD countries and a shrinking pension income force older people to postpone their retirement. Yet, age-based discrimination in employers' decisions is a significant barrier to their employment. Hence, this study sets out to explore employers' attitudes regarding the employment of workers aged 60-70, striving for a better understanding of age discrimination.

Methodology- The authors used a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with 30 managers, experts and employees in retirement age in Israel.

Findings - Findings reveal a spectrum of employers' attitudes toward the employment of older workers. Our analytical contribution is a conceptual typology based on employers' perceived ability to employ older workers and their stated attitudes towards the employment of older workers.

Social implications - The insights that emerge from this research are fundamental for organizational actors' ability to expand the productive, unbiased employment of older workers. By understanding employers' preferences and perspectives and the implications on employers' ability and/or willingness to employ older workers, this research will help policy makers formulate and implement policy innovations that address these biases.

Keywords: discrimination of older workers, age and ageism, employer perspective, thematic analysis

INTRODUCTION

Ageing populations are a new reality in developed countries (OECD, 2017a). In light of the increased life expectancy and anticipated increases in pension spending, many countries have been raising the pensionable age, i.e., the age in which a person becomes eligible for pension benefits (Axelrad and Mahoney, 2017). As OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) data reveal, an increase in pensionable age leads to an increase in the share of people aged 60+ in the labor force (OECD, 2017a). Furthermore, a large share of workers continues to work after they reach their pension eligibility age (Maxin and Deller, 2010). Employers are therefore more likely, compared to the past, to be approached by their older workers interested in extending their employment period, or to receive job applications from workers who are passed the age of retirement. Yet, while research on the changing pattern of retirement is growing rapidly, there is a relative scarcity in research about employers' attitudes concerning the extension of their employees' working lives and its effect on their organizations. Obstacles to employing older workers might stem from older workers' human capital; from structural barriers such the official retirement age, or employment protection rules (Neumark *et al.*, 2019); or from employers' biased perceptions and attitudes towards older workers (Axelrad, 2020). Some previous studies investigated age-based bias and examined situations in which older workers encountered discrimination, for example in hiring, promotion, and layoffs (Axelrad *et al.*, 2013; Mong and Roscigno, 2010). While there is a general agreement that such discrimination poses a social problem from a normative as well as a practical perspective (Macnicol, 2005; 2006), less is known about employers' justifications for these practices (Frøyland and Terjesen, 2020), which may explain some of the barriers faced by older workers (Axelrad, 2020).

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3 In the current study, we provide a map of employers' views concerning the
4 employment of older employees, based on semi-structured interviews, and reveal the
5 range of attitudes toward employing/ not employing older workers. Additionally, we
6 reveal how these attitudes are perceived as justified in terms of the employers'
7 (perceived) ability, or lack thereof, to employ workers at older ages. This innovative
8 focus contributes to existing knowledge by showing how employers resolve discrepancies
9 between their attitudes and behavior by shifting responsibility to external factors. The
10 insights that emerge from this research about employers' perspectives concerning the
11 employment of older workers are fundamental for organizational actors' and policy
12 makers' ability to design policy that will expand the productive, unbiased employment of
13 older workers (McGann, 2016; Egdell *et al.*, 2020).
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28 **EXTENDED WORKING LIFE**

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30 Many countries have raised the pensionable age, or are expected to raise it over the next
31 15 years (E.g. Australia, the Netherland, and Poland; OECD, 2017a). In the US, for
32 example, the retirement age is being gradually increased (by two months per birth year)
33 until reaching 67 for those born in 1960 or later (Frankel, 2016). In the UK, the age of
34 eligibility for state pension has been gradually raised from 60 to 65 for women, and for
35 both men and women, state pension age will keep increasing until it reaches 66 by the
36 end of 2020 and 67 between 2026 and 2028 (Demou *et al.*, 2017). In Canada, Old Age
37 Security pension (OAS) will be raised to 67 years old in 2023, although there is no
38 mandatory age for retirement (Brown and Aris, 2017). In 2004, Israel also began to
39 gradually raise the pensionable age from 65 to 67 for men and from 60 to 62 for women
40 (Axelrad and Mahoney, 2017).
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56 With the share of people aged 60+ in the workforce rapidly growing, scholars have
57 turned their attention to those individuals still working passed retirement age (Fasbender
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3 *et al.*, 2014; Maxin and Deller, 2010; Pundt *et al.*, 2015). In the US, only half of all
4
5 workers retire completely upon reaching the eligibility age for social security benefits
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7 (Pleau and Shauman, 2013); in the UK, approximately half of older employees expect to
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9 work past the traditional retirement age of 65 (Calnan, 2017); in Israel, the proportion of
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11 people who continue to work after the age of 65 (21.2%), is higher than the OECD
12
13 average (Axelrad, 2018; OECD, 2017b). Studies concluded that employment in late life
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15 carries a number of non-monetary benefits, including social contact, mental stimulation
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17 and health benefits (Davey and Davies, 2006).

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21 Employers and organizational practices affect employees' decision to continue working
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23 (Appannah and Biggs, 2015; Mansour and Tremblay, 2019). Armstrong-Stassen (2008)
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25 showed that people in post-retirement jobs are drawn to organizations that provided HR
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27 practices tailored to their unique needs and desires as older workers (Armstrong-Stassen,
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29 2008). On the other hand, early retirement was often found to be caused by involuntary
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31 factors, notably economic restructuring and workforce downsizing (Macnicol, 2005).

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35 While evidence suggests that there are opportunities and benefits for businesses in
36
37 employing, retaining and up-skilling older workers (Davey and Davies, 2006), many
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39 employers believe that older workers are a burden to their organizations and their
40
41 management (Van Dalen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2010).

42 43 44 45 **EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTIONS AND AGE DISCRIMINATION**

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47 A significant amount of evidence suggests that older people frequently encounter ageism
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49 – prejudice and discrimination – in the workplace (Ayalon and Tesch-Römer, 2017).

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52 Studies show that many employers are unwilling to employ and recruit older workers due
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54 to age-based biases (Bennington, 2004; McVittie *et al.*, 2008). A survey conducted
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56 among over 1,000 companies in the Netherlands found that employers tend to associate
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58 an increase in the average age of their workforce with higher labor costs, perceive older
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3 employees as resistant to change, and believe that an older workforce would require them
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5 to re-evaluate and re-organize their operation procedures. Specifically, employers tend to
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7 believe that an older workforce would require an adjustment of their workplace
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9 conditions and would hinder or delay the adaptation of new technologies (Remery *et al.*,
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11 2003).
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14 From an economist's perspective, what they consider age discrimination and what
15
16 we refer to as ageism is a form of statistical discrimination, in which, under certain
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18 conditions of limited information, decision makers use observable characteristics of
19
20 individuals (in our case, a worker's age) as a proxy for otherwise unobservable
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22 characteristics, such as a worker's productivity, commitment or ability to work long hours
23
24 (Axelrad, Luski, and Malul, 2013; Phelps, 1972). This type of discrimination is viewed as
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26 a capitalist-based decision, motivated by the desire to reduce costs and maximize profits
27
28 (Moreira *et al.*, 2010) when making decisions about recruiting new employees, wage
29
30 differentials, promotions, etc. (Havet and Sofer, 2008). In our context, statistical
31
32 discrimination may explain employers' hiring decisions, as employers may prefer
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34 younger candidates over older ones (Baert, Norga, Thuy and Van Hecke, 2016).
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40 Another conceptual framework for understanding age discrimination emerges
41
42 from the literature on social closure. Social closure is the process of boundary
43
44 construction between identities and communities, where resources (e.g. promotions and
45
46 key positions that are vacated when older workers leave) are reserved for one's own
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48 group, while excluding outsiders. According to this perspective, the exclusion of older
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50 workers is based on decision makers' perception of such workers as out-group members
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52 (Light *et al.*, 2011), and thus a collective threat (Simms, 2004). Processes of social
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54 closure and resource hoarding can take place through institutional exclusion and
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56 dominant group positioning, but they can also occur consciously and unconsciously
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3 through everyday interactions that replicate the existing hierarchy (Ridgeway, 1997;
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5 Roscigno, 2007).

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8 Social closure as a theoretical framework may explain age discrimination in
9
10 employment as well as the mechanisms and processes through which status inequalities
11
12 are developed, unfolded and reinforced in the organizational environments (Roscigno *et*
13
14 *al.*, 2007). Employers, who are usually younger than the official retirement age, may
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16 either exclude older workers from hiring processes or refuse to prolong employment of
17
18 post-retirement, older workers, who are viewed as outsiders. Both statistical
19
20 discrimination and social closure can thus lead to exclusion (Stainback, 2008), which
21
22 prevents older workers, who are able and willing to work, from prolonging their working
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24 life.
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28 Evidence suggests that employers' discriminatory behaviour varies across
29
30 economic sectors. The public sector, for example, was found to include higher rates of
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32 promotion discrimination against older workers, in which managers devalue seniority,
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34 due to limited accountability for promotion decisions (Byron, 2010). Firing
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36 discrimination was found to be more common in the private sector, as managers can
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38 differentially terminate workers, and justify their actions as cost-effective in a
39
40 competitive market (Byron, 2010). Construction employers were found to implement
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42 fewer training plans and more early retirement schemes than in the public sector, while
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44 policies such as demotion are more common in the services and trade sector, where the
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46 reduction of workload is less common compared to the public sector (Conen, Henkens
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48 and Schippers, 2012). These findings are in accordance with statistical discrimination and
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50 social closure theories (Byron, 2010).
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56 Literature reveals the difficulty of older workers to maintain their jobs or find a
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58 new job, and the need to understand the employers' perspective. Employers' attitudes are
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3 important, because they may affect their practices toward older workers (Loretto and
4 White, 2006; Taylor and Walker, 1998), for example, in recruitment decisions (Loretto
5 and White, 2006). Hence, employers' attitudes might either hinder or facilitate the
6 employment of older workers. Taylor *et al.* (1998) found a statistically significant
7 association between employers' attitudes and behavior. As one would predict from the
8 statistical discrimination approach, Loretto and White (2006) found that experience-based
9 attitudes tend to be associated with positive practices toward older workers, while
10 stereotype-based attitudes are often associated with less positive treatment. These
11 employers' attitudes were found to play a significant role, particularly in recruitment
12 decisions, with differences between sectors stemming from labor market shortages.
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26 Beyond attitudes, employers' perceptions about the structural conditions of
27 employing older workers may also affect their decisions. Such perceptions may be based
28 on accurate or inaccurate information. Such information, about costs and insurance
29 liability, for example, may affect employers' calculations regarding hiring or prolonging
30 the employment of older workers (Roscigno *et al.*, 2007). Sometimes, these perceptions
31 are not necessarily related to workers' human capital but rather to the structure of the
32 labor market.
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42 Literature pays little to no attention to employers' views regarding the
43 employment of a growing number of aging employees in their business (Pitt-Catsouphes
44 *et al.*, 2007; SHRM, 2003; Tishman, Van Looy, and Bruyère, 2012) or to employers'
45 attitudes and the mental categories they use to process their views of older workers and
46 the idea of employing them. The current research contributes to ageism literature by
47 offering a detailed investigation of the various argumentations used by employers with
48 respect to the recruitment and employment of older workers and post-retirement workers.
49 Their argumentations reveal attitudes and the mental categories being used when making
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3 hiring and employment decisions. The justifications used by employers are compared to
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5 the corresponding views of experts (people who had practical experience with
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7 employment at older ages and in retirement age, or those who were involved in the issue
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9 of older workers' employment as part of their job, either in practice or in research) and
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11 employees, in order to better understand the barriers to older workers' employment. And
12
13 here lies another contribution to qualitative research methods: as we use interviews from
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15 different points of view, we show how triangulating perspectives can extend individual-
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17 level results, as such design allows for a broad perspective and a comprehensive picture
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19 of the subject.
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23 24 **METHODOLOGY**

25 26 **Research questions**

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28 In the study, we shed light on and address the following research questions:

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30 *RQ₁*: What explanations do employers give for their attitudes toward (not) employing
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32 older workers?
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35 As evidence suggest that employers' discriminatory behaviour varies across economic
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37 sectors, we also address the question:
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40 *RQ₂*: How are employers' attitudes related to the industrial sector of the organization?
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44 To understand employers' perceptions concerning the employment of older workers as
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46 well as the differences across industries, we conducted, 18 semi-structured interviews
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48 with employers between December 2017 and May 2018, and then gathered additional
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50 data from 12 older workers and professional experts (P01 to P30). Data gathered from
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52 experts and older employees was compared to the data collected from employers, to
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54 obtain a more nuanced understanding of their views. We drew a purposive sample and
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56 targeted employers, experts and workers who had practical experience with employment
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3 at older ages and in retirement age, or those who were involved in the topic of older
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5 workers' employment as part of their job, either in practice or in research. Through our
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7 purposive sampling, we were able to construct an initial sample of employers from a
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9 variety of sectors, industries, positions and professions. We then found additional
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11 interviewees who were able to add insight from their respective fields of research, from
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13 their position in employment agencies, and from their experiences as older employees in
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15 the Israeli labor market.
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19 We used semi-structured interviews as our primary way of collecting data. The
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21 interviewees were asked to express their views on the employment of workers around
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23 retirement age (60-70) and elaborate about aspects they thought were characteristic of
24
25 good management practices regarding older employees. The interviews addressed views
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27 concerning the qualifications and costs of older workers, impressions of current and
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29 future needs of employers to attract or retain workers in retirement age, opinions about
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31 the importance of knowledge transfer and succession planning, and knowledge of the
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33 legal aspects of work in later life.
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38 Each interview lasted between 45 and 70 minutes. All interviews were recorded
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40 and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was performed by the authors, according to
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42 the process described by Braun and Clarke (2006) and other researchers (e.g. Boyatzis,
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44 1998; Charmaz, 2000). Preliminary descriptive codes were given to each sentence, which
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46 was defined as the unit of analysis. Codes representing similar topics were then grouped
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48 together and arranged into relevant categories and themes. To avoid an inconsistent
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50 application of thematic analysis, we used an ongoing reflexive dialogue among the
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52 researchers who conducted the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To generate a
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54 conceptual framework, further analysis was carried out, in which we examined referential
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adequacy as a means of checking preliminary findings and interpretations against the raw data.

Participants

Of the 57 individuals who were initially approached, interviews were conducted with 30 (52.6%). The rest did not want to participate ($N=7$), were unreachable or unavailable ($N=14$), did not meet the inclusion criteria ($N=1$), or did not participate for unknown reasons ($N=5$).

Respondents included 18 employers (of which 13 were HR managers and five were other senior managers), two older workers, an older worker who was also an executive of a placement agency, and an older worker who was also a representative of a nonprofit organization in the field of employment. Six participants were researchers and policy makers – representatives of nonprofit organizations in the field of employment, and two were executives of placement agencies. The employers came from diverse industries: high-tech, insurance, banking, hospitality, services, retail, public sector and governmental organizations, as well as educational and research institutes. The number of employees in the above-mentioned organizations ranged between 50 and 5,000. The mean age of the interviewees was 50.7 (range: 34-80), and 30% of them were men (see Table 1).

<<<Table 1>>>

FINDINGS

Interview data in this study are organized into several thematic categories, which emerged from the thematic analysis of employers, older workers and other experts. Participants were asked to express their opinion about employing workers around retirement age (60-70) and to discuss what they thought were characteristic of good organizational management practice in employing older workers. They presented a

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3 variety of positions and views that were conceptualized using two dichotomies,
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5 ability/inability to employ older workers, and positive/negative attitudes concerning the
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7 employment of older persons. Ability/inability refers to objective (or perceived as
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9 objective) justifications that were mentioned by employers, like health issues, the
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11 presence or absence of structural or institutional constraints, etc., (which may be related
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13 to the social closure argument) when considering the employment of older workers.
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15 Positive/negative attitudes refer to employer's views which may be related to the
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17 concepts of economic efficiency (or statistical discrimination). Thus, under the conditions
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19 of limited information, employers use observable characteristics (worker's age) as a
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21 proxy for unobservable characteristics (e.g. productivity, commitment etc.). By cross
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23 classifying the two dichotomies we created a four-category typology that captures and
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25 arranges the interviewees' statements on the employment of older workers (see Figure 1).
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27 This typology offers a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the barriers to
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29 continued employment in older age.
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35 <<<Figure 1>>>

36 37 **Employers' attitudes across industrial sectors**

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39 Positive and negative attitudes towards the employment of older workers were found to
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41 be associated with the type of industry. Thus, the exclusion of older workers in the high-
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43 tech sector is particularly prominent, as was evident in the interviews of all types of
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45 participants across all sectors. According to data of the Israeli Central Bureau of
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47 Statistics, the high-tech sector is characterized by a younger workforce compared to other
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49 sectors. In 2014, about one third of the employees in the high-tech sector were aged 25-
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51 34, compared to about one quarter of workers in other sectors (CBS, 2017). Only 11.4%
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53 of the workers in start-up companies and 8.9% of workers in the traditional (bigger) hi-
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55 tech companies were 50 years old or over (Hofman, 2013).
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3 In contrast to the high-tech industry, interviews revealed that older workers are more
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5 valued in other sectors and occupations, such as traditional pre-mechanization and
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7 automation occupations in the manufacturing sector, which are about to be extinct
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10 (Sumer, 2018). In other cases, the need arises from the uniqueness of the work or service
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12 in which older employees have a relative advantage, such as providing services to older
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14 clients, fundraising work, etc. in the service sector.

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17 Older workers in the manufacturing sector are considered ‘masters’ (employers explicitly
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19 used this word) – the professionals with whom others consult. Seniority, and experience
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21 that comes along with it, are perceived by many as assets to the organization, and
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23 therefore, organizations try to preserve older workers and their knowledge. According to
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25 the interviews, the value of older workers is particularly prominent in the manufacturing
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27 sector, due to the shortage of workers in the traditional skilled occupations, which makes
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29 it difficult to find people who are trained and willing to work in the old manufacturing
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31 sector. Participant P08, a 45-year-old vice president in an industrial textile company,
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33 said:
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38 Today, there is the world of high-tech, which belongs to young people. That’s
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40 where the money is, and everyone goes there. Every practical engineer who
41
42 earned his degree wants to be a vice president. They want to work with
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44 laptops and computers.
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48 Therefore, justifications in favor or against employing older workers may be related to
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50 the sector and its characteristics: the technology used (low-tech or high-tech), the way
51
52 work is organized, the organizational culture, etc. seem to underline industry differences.

53 54 **Negative attitudes toward the employment of older workers**

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56 Nineteen interviewees (employers and others) expressed negative attitudes toward
57
58 employing workers around retirement age and offered various justifications and reasons.
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3 One such justification referred to the organizational culture as unsupportive of employing
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5 older workers. Such a culture sometimes involves a dismissive, negative, or disrespectful
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7 attitude toward older employees. For example, companies that wish to convey an image
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9 of innovation, which is often associated with “young” and “new”, will often have a
10
11 negative attitude towards employing older workers. Participant P21, a 40-year-old
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13 woman, a human resource manager in a retail corporation, gave an example of such an
14
15 unsupportive organizational culture for older workers:
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20 The management is around the age of 30-40, working 12-13 hours a day and
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22 ending every day with beers, joints, pizzas, where they make important work
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24 decisions. This will not appeal to older workers.
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27 Middle-aged executives, particularly in high-tech companies, sometimes refer to older
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29 workers with contempt and arrogance, as workers who have not been able to achieve
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31 promotion and advance to managerial ranks like the managers themselves. Participant
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33 P30, a 34-year-old woman who works as a director of corporate responsibility in a big
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35 hotel franchise, said:
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40 There is a tendency among middle-aged managers [...] of course, they know
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42 everything, and they are very smart, and they have been in the job market for
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44 15 years, and maybe even 15 years in the same position, which is great. They
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46 have the tendency to underestimate those who have not progressed to the
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48 same rank or status.
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51 According to four interviewees, negative attitudes seem to be more common
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53 among middle-level managers (compared to senior managers), who ultimately manage
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55 the teams and interact with employees. This leads us to a second reason for which
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57 managers prefer not to employ workers around retirement age – managerial difficulties to
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59 cope, communicate with and supervise older employees. Managers in senior positions
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3 also mentioned the difficulty of older employees to accept authority at work and their
4 patronizing attitude. Participant P22, a 48-year-old woman, who works as an HR vice
5 president in a non-profit organization, said:
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11 We had a manager who retired at 72; I felt that even the CEO, who was 15
12 years younger, found it difficult to manage him. The manager indeed had a
13 very impressive resume, but he was difficult to manage because he also had
14 trouble accepting the CEO's authority, the CEO had a hard time facing him...

15
16
17 I was 37 years old, someone came and applied for a managerial position, and
18 he was around the age of 60, or 62. He reminded me of my father. And we sat
19 for negotiation [...] The man was crying shamelessly, and he humiliated
20 himself. It was very difficult for me [...] I remember that after the
21 conversation with him was over, I started crying, because he... I imagined my
22 father begging for a salary. This episode really rattled me.
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33 Two participants mentioned the need for managers and HR teams to receive guidance
34 and direction on how to handle and manage older employees in their workforce, how to
35 deal with these situations and win the appreciation and cooperation of all employees.
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40 Another set of justifications was related to the notions that older workers require
41 special training and coaching, that sometimes they are unwilling to take part in training
42 and seminars, or even are not capable of coping with new realities or technologies, and
43 therefore are outdated, inefficient, slow and tired. Participant P24, a 53-year-old female
44 who is the CEO of a medium-size insurance company, said:
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53 As the age rises, some people just get fed up. After the age of 55, they are
54 tired, they understand that chances of promotion are slim, they don't care
55 anymore about doing more at work, and they just wait for the time to pass,
56 because... because it is too early to retire.
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Hence, some of the justifications for a preference to not employ older workers (60-70 years old) relate to perceived characteristics or stereotypes including that the older worker is “tired”, “expensive”, “incapable of coping with changing realities”, etc. There are also important organizational characteristics, seen in organizational culture or in perceived managerial difficulties that play a role in negative attitudes towards older workers (see Figure 2, under “Negative attitudes”).

Positive attitudes towards the employment of older workers

Twelve out of the eighteen interviewed employers (two thirds) expressed positive attitudes toward older workers or of extended working lives, and offered justifications in favor of employing and retaining workers around retirement age. They mentioned benefits related to the experience and knowledge of older workers, and their important role of transferring knowledge to younger employees. Interviewee P27, a 45-year-old woman, who is an HR manager in an industrial, low-tech company, said:

They [the older workers] are very much appreciated, and everyone tries to absorb as much information from them as possible, that's my feeling. Because those who stayed in the company are usually people who have special abilities or knowledge.

Participant P09, a 75-year-old woman, who is a gerontologist and a senior researcher, echoed this notion and described an older employee in a specific company:

He was a senior director at XXX [a research institute], vice president, for many years. And when he left, retired, management asked him to continue working as a consultant for several days a week. So, they were aware of his potential contribution, and there were others like him, so the system can appreciate such people and it also allows them to contribute and allows others to learn from them.

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3 Experienced retirees might also be valuable for the organization at times of extraordinary
4 workload, when they can return to the workplace and be re-employed to meet a specific
5 project or assist in rush times.
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10 Employment stability is another benefit that was mentioned, for which employers
11 may prefer to employ workers around retirement age. Executives of placement agencies
12 that specialize in placement of older workers testify that many of the job offers come
13 from employers looking for stable employees in order to avoid high turnover. In addition,
14 employers with whom we spoke reported that older employees are characterized by
15 higher commitment, sense of loyalty, and responsibility compared to young workers.
16
17 Employers say that job stability is valuable, since a high turnover is costly. Participant
18 P17, a 38-year-old woman who works as a human resource manager in the headquarters
19 of a large bank, said:
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31 Today, employers are more open to recruit older workers because employers
32 understand commitment is a rare commodity. Younger work seekers believe
33 they can expect a promotion after a year or two. If they cannot be promoted in
34 their organizations, they will leave. So, you put a lot of effort into training
35 someone, and in the end, you never get a return for your investment. [...] With
36 older workers, you can assume they will not leave you after a couple of years,
37 because it is harder for them to get a new job. You will probably benefit from
38 them for the next 15 years; you gain a permanently committed worker.
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49 Interviewees said that job stability is also valuable since retaining older workers is much
50 cheaper and easier compared to younger ones. Young workers tend to seek promotion,
51 wage increases or another job, and therefore they must be kept continuously satisfied by
52 offering money, bonuses and benefits comparable to other firms in the industry.
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Such statements reflect, to some extent, positive age stereotypes of older workers, as well as stereotypical perceptions of young workers.

Financial advantages were another justification provided by employers, for the preference to employ older workers. Often, older workers are willing to settle for a lower wage (whether due to the lack of other options or having additional sources of income). Interviewee P26, a 45-year-old woman who works as a human resource manager in a wholesale and retail trade firm, said:

I think it's kind of a jackpot, like, if you let someone retire, and then they come back, you can tell them "OK, but you're back now under different conditions", and you [the employer] can save a lot of money.

In other interviews, gerontologists and executives of placement agencies supported this view as well.

Subsequently, employers noted the available supply of older workers as an additional advantage. As mentioned earlier, employers' perception is that older people are more established, have less commitment to young children or reserve military service as compared to younger workers (i.e. most men ex-soldiers in Israel are required to serve on reserve duty up to one month every three years, until the age of 40 or 45), and therefore older workers are more available to work.

Twelve participants also mentioned knowledge and experience as economically valuable. A young employee must learn, acquire knowledge and experience – a long and expensive process, before their work yields the output that the adult experienced employee is already generating, which is worthwhile, even if their wages are higher.

One last benefit that was mentioned by many experts but only by two employers is the benefit of age-diverse workforce. Participant P02, a 40+ year-old male, who is the vice president of a placement agency that specializes in placement of adult workers, said:

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3 I would also like any employer to have this conversation about the balance,
4 the mix of workers in each team that includes both: young workers, older
5 workers, Arabs, ultra-Orthodox... which means diversity. All studies show
6 that the higher the diversity, the more efficient the team becomes, the more
7 effective over time.
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14 Justifications for the preference to employ older workers derive from the perceived
15 characteristics of these types of employees – loyalty, stability, commitment; or relate to
16 objective attributes or issues – accumulated knowledge, experience, employer's need or
17 financial advantages. The different justifications we found may also reflect inter-sectorial
18 differences, as we further detail below (see Figure 2, under “Positive attitudes”).
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25 **Inability to employ older workers**

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27 Moving away from these positive and negative interviewee attitudes towards employing
28 older workers, we found that some employers justify not employing older workers by
29 applying structural justifications. These structural reasons, which we built into the theme
30 of being able or unable to hire older workers, are varied and go beyond legislative
31 reasons alone.
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40 First, a few employers and one executive of a placement agency mentioned the
41 difficulty of treating workers differently according to their abilities or needs. Such efforts
42 might create frustration among other workers, as well as managerial difficulties. For
43 example, sometimes managers are asked to split positions to create part-time jobs for
44 older workers. While there is no impediment to the implementation of this solution
45 because of cultural or institutional reasons, it might be expensive and create coordination
46 and responsibility issues.
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56 One third of the employers interviewed said they were unable to modify jobs and
57 the work environment to accommodate older workers. Other interviewees did not address
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3 this issue at all (maybe due to their lack of awareness, or underestimation of its
4
5 importance). Employers said that older workers often want to switch into a less
6
7 demanding position, which requires less hours of presence in the work place, and that
8
9 they were not able to address these requests in positions that require in-office meetings or
10
11 direct contact with clients. Participant P30, a 34-year-old woman, a director of corporate
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13 responsibility in a big hotel franchise, shared her experience:
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18 [....] And many times, there are more illnesses [among older workers]. Now, I
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20 never fire an employee because of illness, but if an employee has an
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22 operational role, for example, in the dining room, and he does not come to
23
24 work or arrives late [...] someone else needs to come in his place, because
25
26 there are guests who need to be serviced. So, if he is late five out of six shifts
27
28 a week – I have a problem. What job can I give him? I do not want to fire
29
30 him; I want to make things flexible for him. Should I make him a
31
32 chambermaid? This is a physical, hard and unsuitable job.
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35
36 A few employers mentioned health issues of older employees, which create difficulties in
37
38 meeting their job requirements. HR managers told us about older workers with health
39
40 issues who want or need to keep working, but their work performances suffer due to their
41
42 poor health. In these cases, employers face an unpleasant situation, in which they are
43
44 forced to fire an employee or hire another employee for the same job.
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48 Two employers mentioned costlier health insurance resulting from age-related
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50 health problems. Participant P22, a 48-year-old female who is an HR vice president in a
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52 nonprofit organization, said:
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56 There are more problems that insurance companies are no longer willing to
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58 insure: Someone who has undergone a catheterization, someone who had
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3 cancer. Exceptions and exceptions... I encountered it in the past, and these
4
5 issues really make things difficult for the system.
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8 Other issues mentioned by five employers were the perception that older workers cannot
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10 market specific products (e.g. surfing equipment or fashion items) as they do not convey
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12 the right message for the brand, as well as physical hardships that cannot be solved, or
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14 can only be solved with substantial financial investment.
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17 Finally, some employers said they were unable to employ older workers due to
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19 legal, tax or regulation limitations. Participant P20, a 42-year-old female who is a human
20
21 resource manager in a software company, said:
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25 I remember we had retired employees, and we really wanted to preserve their
26
27 knowledge, and I remember there was a problem with the entire issue of... if
28
29 I'm not mistaken, it was about their pension or something like that.
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32 It is important to note that employers are not always fully familiar with the laws, and
33
34 some of them admit so themselves. Sometimes, the problem is not state regulations, but
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36 rather organizational reasons, such as labor agreements or union agreements in the
37
38 workplace.
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41 Thus, the inability of employers to employ older workers is attributed to reasons
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43 related to the organization of work around older workers' needs (health issues, health
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45 insurance), the organization (special requirements, wrong message), and institutional
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47 reasons (labor laws, regulations and tax issues) see Figure 2, under "Inability to employ".
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50 **Ability to employ older workers**

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52 Despite the obstacles mentioned by participants, some interviewees did mention reasons
53
54 and justifications that encourage employers to employ workers around retirement age.
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57 Employers who did mentioned these reasons to hire or maintain older workers,
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59 expressed, we believe, a non-discriminatory approach to being able to hire older workers.
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3 One employer, some older workers and other experts noted that organizations can
4 make the necessary adjustments to accommodate older workers. According to them, the
5 organization can and should adapt itself and create flexibility in hours and positions,
6 which can apply to workers of all ages. They believe that new positions need to be
7 created due to changes in the labor market. For example, older workers can take up
8 positions as mentors – a role that, according to some experts we interviewed, does not
9 exist in many organizations – thus taking advantage of the knowledge and experience of
10 older workers who can teach and train younger workers. A point of interest is the fact
11 that this notion was more common among the non-employers. E.g., most employers are
12 reluctant to think in terms of removing structural barriers, whereas experts view this as
13 important for facilitating the employment of older people.
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28 Other interviewees said that no special adjustments are needed, or that older
29 workers are not different from other workers. Participant P29, a woman working as a
30 human resource manager in an agricultural firm, said:
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36 I think it is true for any age, and not only for older population. There are also
37 specific issues for mothers, parents [...] not only workers around retirement
38 age [...] I do not think it's a matter of age.
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43 A common argument by employers, older workers and experts concerning the policy side
44 was that employers are able to employ older workers because no special adjustments are
45 needed, unless there are specific problems. This argument was equally common among
46 employers as among non-employers. "Preventive actions, proper nutrition and exercise
47 are true and needed today for all employees, of all ages" said participant P04, a 50+ year-
48 old woman, who works as relations manager in a nonprofit organization that collaborates
49 with the Israeli government to reduce employment gaps. Contrary to what some of the
50 interviewees thought (and was mentioned above), others said there were no cost
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3 differences between employing older workers and others, as mentioned by participants
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5 P14, a 52-year-old woman who works as an HR manager in a governmental agency:
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8 You can recruit high-tech workers, and after one year, they are already
9
10 looking for their next job. I think it's always better to invest in existing
11
12 employees than to recruit new workers. As long as the employee is good, and
13
14 willing to learn...
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16

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18 As we can see, the positions expressed by the participants are sometimes contradictory.
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20 While some said that older workers are more expensive and need special adjustments,
21
22 others said that workers around retirement age have no special health or organizational
23
24 requirements, and therefore can be employed like any other employee. In their opinion,
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26 there is no reason not to employ older workers (See Figure 2, under “ability to employ”).
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29 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

30
31 The current paper explores the views of employers, employees and experts concerning
32
33 the employment of older workers and the effect of their employment on employers. We
34
35 used a qualitative methodology of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Interviewing
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37 employers as well as other actors in the field allowed triangulation with employers'
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39 responses. As triangulation techniques can be divided into between-methods triangulation
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41 and within-methods triangulation, our study captured within-methods triangulation by
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43 documenting different perspectives on the phenomenon under study (Jonsen and Jehn,
44
45 2009). The findings reveal the varied perceptions of employers concerning the need to
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47 adjust to the reality of the aging workforce. Via our thematic analysis approach, we were
48
49 able to extract and arrange our findings with respect to older workers into a two-axes
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51 model of able/unable to hire older workers vs positive/negative attitude towards older
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53 workers. We underlined that there are differences across industrial sectors; however, we
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3 did find that there were important similarities with respect to approaches to older workers
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5 at the structural level and at the behavioural level.
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8 The two dichotomous dimensions – positive or negative attitudes; ability or
9
10 inability to employ older workers – refer to whether or not employers perceive
11
12 themselves as able to employ older workers while also bringing to light their potential
13
14 attitude (or their ‘want’) to employing such workers. We used the results of our analysis
15
16 of the interviews to characterize four abstract types of employers with respect to
17
18 recruiting older workers. This division is important and vital since it allows policymakers
19
20 to make different efforts with respect to policy creation based on characteristics of each
21
22 typology (see Figure 1). These approaches and policies, organized across these four
23
24 dimensions, are as follows:
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27
28 *Employers with positive attitudes who are able to employ older workers:* Such
29
30 employers will probably be the first choice of older employees when searching for a job.
31
32 Older employees will be welcomed in these organizations; their advantages will be
33
34 cherished; and necessary adjustments, if needed, will be made for them. According to the
35
36 findings, such employers are common, for example, in the manufacturing sector, a sector
37
38 in which, even today, more than 11% of the Israeli labor force are employed (CBS,
39
40 2019). The manufacturing sector faces workforce shortages and have no choice but to
41
42 retain older workers as long as possible and preserve (as well as transfer, if possible) their
43
44 knowledge (Armstrong-Stassen, 2008). Such organizations will be willing to accept
45
46 lower performances of older workers – if their performances are indeed lower – and make
47
48 special adjustments to allow older workers to prolong their working life. Sometimes, the
49
50 preference to employ older workers may stem from a (positive) stereotype about older
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52 workers’ loyalty and easier retainment.
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3 This is likely to be applicable to older workers: By understanding and identifying
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5 these employers, older workers and retired people can focus their job search efforts on
6
7 those organizations that are more open to employ and recruit them, making the process
8
9 easier for them. While it might seem like an intentional segregation of older workers in
10
11 particular companies or industries, the point here is rather to make the process easier for
12
13 them and allow them to integrate in supportive environments.
14
15

16
17 The second group, *employers with negative attitudes who are not able to employ*
18
19 *older workers*, will probably be the last choice for older employees to integrate into, or
20
21 work for this type of employer. It is likely that such organizations will not welcome older
22
23 workers, given the organizational culture that is supported by this type of employer
24
25 (Weller, 2007; McVittie *et al.*, 2003).
26
27

28
29 In the third group, we can find employers *with negative attitudes who are able to*
30
31 *employ older workers*. Those employers gave a long list of justifications for their
32
33 unwillingness, some of them might stem from stereotypes and prejudice against older
34
35 workers (Moss and Tilly, 2001), describing these workers as tired, expensive, unwilling
36
37 to take part in training and seminars, or incapable of coping with changing reality
38
39 (Remery *et al.*, 2003). Older workers will find it more difficult to integrate in such
40
41 organizations or under such employers. Targeted information that highlights the
42
43 importance of older workers in terms of their experience and knowledge (Axelrad, 2020)
44
45 might be useful in changing these employers' negative attitudes.
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49
50 Employers in the fourth group, *who hold positive attitudes, but are unable to*
51
52 *employ older workers*, provided allegedly objective justifications for their perceived
53
54 inability. Their justifications may be external to the organization or workplace, like health
55
56 issues of older workers or regulations that pose difficulties (Moss and Tilly, 2001). Other
57
58 justification may be related to structural feasibility and institutional reasons (For example,
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3 employees cannot return to work after retiring due to reasons related to labor agreements
4
5 or union agreements in the workplace). Yet, in some cases (for example: "unable to
6
7 adjust surroundings to older worker", or "difficulty to treat workers differently according
8
9 to their needs"), employers might be hindered by inaccurate perceptions, as they are
10
11 actually not familiar enough with relevant laws and regulations (about the employment of
12
13 pension eligible workers) or since they believe necessary changes (in positions, for
14
15 example) cannot be made.
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18
19 Thus, employers' willingness to hire and employ older workers does not
20
21 necessarily mean they are more likely to actually do so in practice (Pager and Quillian,
22
23 2005). Previous studies (Pager and Quillian, 2005; Devine, 1989; Carlsson and Eriksson,
24
25 2019) found discrepancies between employers' self-reported likelihood of hiring a
26
27 particular applicant and their actual hiring behaviors when faced with a similar candidate.
28
29 The reason may be implicit attitudes toward stigmatized groups, which unconsciously
30
31 affect the employers' judgment and actions (Devine, 1989).
32
33

34
35 The discussion concerning this group begs the question: When employers argue
36
37 that they are unable to employ older workers, how can we know for sure whether they are
38
39 genuinely unable, or just unwilling to employ them, rationalizing their underlying
40
41 preference through technicalities? The answer is not obvious and varies across
42
43 organizations. If the justifications for the tendency not to employ older workers is related
44
45 to the characteristics of the workers themselves (tiredness, difficult adjustment to changes
46
47 or technologies, etc.), once employers realize their perceptions rely on stereotypes; they
48
49 might be more inclined to employ older workers. If employers talk about organizational
50
51 or workplace difficulties (organizational culture, managerial difficulties), the organization
52
53 should examine its willingness to modify and make changes to enable integration of older
54
55 people.
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3 This is likely to be applicable to policymakers that can implement measures to
4 assist such employers in adjusting positions and environments to older worker, and the
5 costs of accommodations might be supported by legislative frameworks. Additionally,
6 removing social closure, which is a result of institutional exclusion – in the form of tax
7 incentives for early retirees or the reduction in pension payments for those who continue
8 working – may also help in convincing employers to employ workers around retirement
9 age. Our findings reveal a lack of knowledge regarding the current tax regulations and
10 labor laws relevant to extending working life. Many employers even acknowledged their
11 insufficient knowledge and their inability to provide accurate financial advice to their
12 older employees. Providing such information to managers and human resource managers
13 may also help in their decision-making process about older workers. Furthermore,
14 policymakers and managers, along with employees and clients (i.e. all relevant
15 stakeholders), should join forces and work together in defining policy and setting steps
16 for implementation.

17
18
19 Our typology, which illustrates four groups, may be used by practitioners to
20 identify an employer's position on this typology, and can be used by policymakers to
21 formulate and implement targeted policies to address employers' difficulties. The
22 typology also allows older and retired workers to focus job search efforts on those
23 organizations that are more likely to recruit them (Weiss and Perry, 2020). For example,
24 organization in the manufacturing sector or organization that provides services to older
25 populations may be more open to employ older workers. Further research that is being
26 conducted since 2019 will improve the ability to locate employers on the offered
27 typology.

28
29 It is important to note that only a few employers referred to the benefits of age-
30 diverse workforce. These benefits were mentioned mainly by other experts during the
31

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3 interviews, among them a CEO of a placement agency, a senior director of a consulting
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5 group for business and a manager in a non-profit organization in the field of employment.
6
7 This fact might be explained by the lack of awareness to these benefits as well as a lack
8
9 of experience with age diverse teams. Theories about diversity management may play a
10
11 more important role in the workplace, supporting organizational leaders in the
12
13 management of the diverse populations in the workplace (McLeod, Lobel, and Cox Jr,
14
15 1996; Thomas, 1990). For example, Resource Based Theory of Diversity Management
16
17 focuses on the effect of implementing diversity on organizational resources (physical
18
19 capital, financial capital, human capital, and corporate capital resources). These resources
20
21 can either assist or inhibit the operations of the organization. When organizations are
22
23 more diverse, they gain an advantage as they manage to use these resources in ways that
24
25 assist and improve business, compared to organizations that are homogenous (Yang and
26
27 Konrad, 2011).
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33 Addressing RQ_2 , which refers to the association between employers' attitudes and
34
35 the economic industry of the organization, and in line with previous research, our
36
37 findings reveal that differences between sectors (e.g. services, manufacturing, high tech),
38
39 job requirements, and the nature of organizations may explain the different justifications
40
41 and employers' classification into one of the four mentioned groups (Byron, 2010;
42
43 Loretto and White, 2006; Macnicol, 2005). Thus, for instance, employers in the industrial
44
45 sector, characterized by a shortage of workers, will be more willing to employ older
46
47 workers, unless the work requires demanding physical effort. Employers in the high-tech
48
49 sector encourage a young and competitive organizational culture, and may avoid
50
51 recruiting older workers.
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56 A limitation of our study, which is inherent to qualitative research, is the use of a
57
58 limited number of interviews. The interviews were an effective way to study what
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60

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3 employers think about older workers, but our study is small in scale and is comprised of
4
5 volunteer participants. Furthermore, the sample included only 18 employers and 12
6
7 subject-matter experts. However, we believe that our findings showcase that similar
8
9 themes do exist across the categories of interviewees; that is, employers, older
10
11 employees, executives in placement agencies, and policymakers. This observation
12
13 strengthens our findings, and points to our efforts to triangulate our data, while achieving
14
15 data saturation (Francis, 2010). The diversity of the sample in terms of organization size,
16
17 age, gender etc. is a good reflection of the variety of employers' explanations and
18
19 attitudes, since we found representations to all four categories: positive / negative
20
21 attitudes and ability / inability to employ workers around retirement age.
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25

26 Another limitation to this study is that we could not identify whether perceptions
27
28 found among individuals reflected a bias of the HR department or of the organization
29
30 itself. Further research that will collect data from other employees in the organization,
31
32 outside of HR department, might solve this limitation and allow a better alignment of
33
34 advocacy and public relations efforts.
35
36

37 The focus on the Israeli context is another limitation that must be mentioned. We
38
39 do not claim representativeness for our findings. Rather, we seek to present rich insights
40
41 into employers' justifications about employing older workers. Nevertheless, the current
42
43 study is important and innovative, since it reveals not only the justifications used by
44
45 employers to explain that they do not employ older workers (Frøyland and Terjesen,
46
47 2020), but also the perceived "objective reasons" used by employers. As we
48
49 demonstrated with our findings and analysis, employers' attitudes and abilities with
50
51 respect to recruiting older workers are not always objective. Rather, we found narratives
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53 that showcase practices in age discrimination, relying on in some cases stereotypes and
54
55 structural limitations.
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3 Notwithstanding limitations, with our research, we are contributing to the
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5 emphasis and prominence of the diverse argumentations used with respect to the
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7 employment of older workers. Our conceptual typology refers to employers' perceived
8
9 ability to employ older workers and their stated attitudes towards the employment of
10
11 older workers. The methods of in-depth interviews permitted us to develop a typology
12
13 that can be used to characterize organizations and develop targeted interventions. By
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15 positioning employers between the dichotomies of ability and attitudes, we can see that
16
17 employers interpret discrepancies between their attitudes and their actual behavior by
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19 shifting responsibility to external factors, such as older workers' characteristics, labor
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21 market regulations, etc.
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Table 1: Number of interviews in case-study organizations

Type	No.	Sectors	Average Age (SD)
Employers	18	High tech (3), Manufacturing (5), Services (5), Finance and insurance (2), Education (1), Trade (2)	43.7 (6.5)
Older workers	7	Education (3), Services (4)	71.3 (5.9)
Executives of placement agencies	3		54.7 (11.2)
Researchers or policy makers	9		60.1 (14.6)

* We conducted 30 interviews. Some participants, however, fit into more than one category.

Figure 1: Four categories according to positive / negative attitudes and ability / inability to employ workers around retirement age

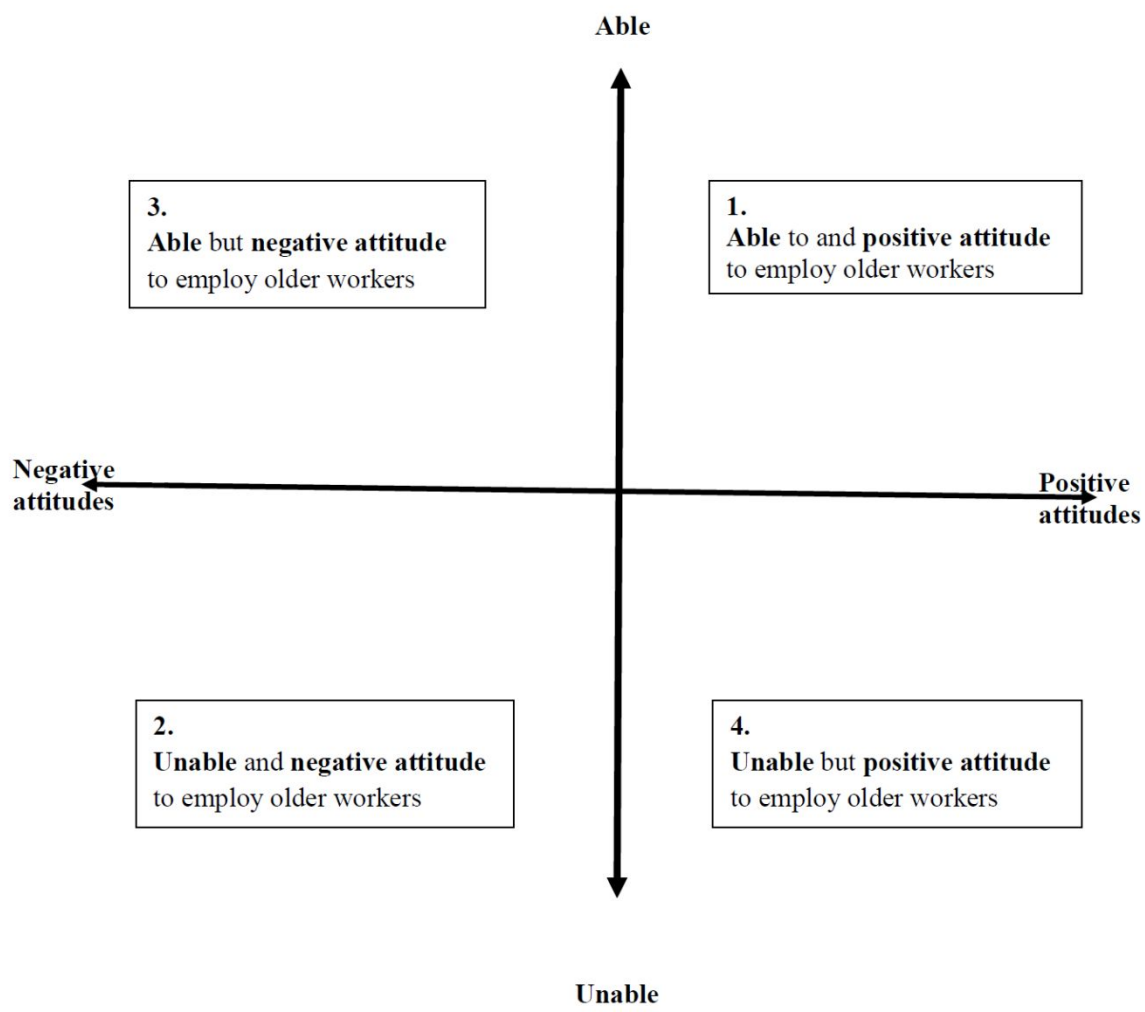
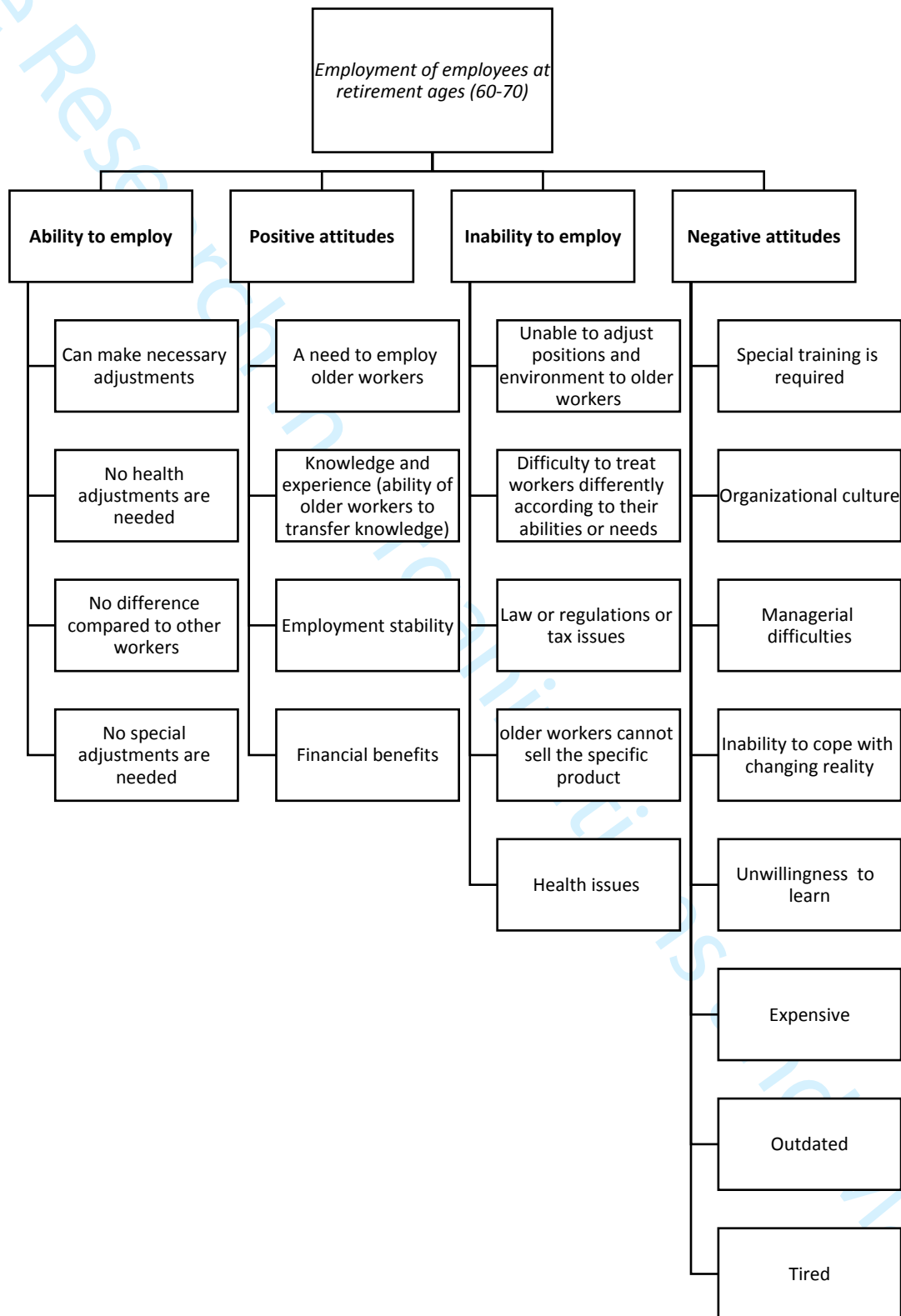


Figure 2: Reasons given by employers for their perceived ability/ inability and high preference/ low preference to employ older workers



Revision (Manuscript ID QROM-10-2019-1830)

The authors sincerely appreciate the comments and suggestions made by the SI co-editor on our submission. As further described, the new manuscript contains the changes recommended.

Abstract

(page 1, line 21-22): please add the following text: "The authors used..." a thematic analysis of... ✓

(page 1, line 40): remove 'of' (By understanding of employers' preferences and perspectives...) and replace 'their' with 'the' (and their implications on employers'...) ✓

(page 1, line 42): replace 'we may help' with 'this research will help' (...we may help policy makers formulate and implement policy innovations" ✓

Keywords

I suggest the following keywords to help get the attention of possible readers:

Discrimination of older workers, age and ageism, employer perspective, thematic analysis ✓

Body of paper

(page 4, line 26): add an 's' to suggest ("While evidence suggest...") ✓

(page 4, line 39041): Please correct to read "A significant amount of evidence suggests that older people frequently encounter ageism" ("multiple evidence" is not appropriate here) ✓

(page 5, line 3): suggest that you change this line to read as follows: "From an economist's perspective, what they consider age discrimination and what we refer to as ageism is a form of..." ✓ – wonder if we can tie this up tighter, given your findings section (page 10, line 33) where you refer to "concepts of economic efficiency (or statistical discrimination)"? What I am trying to say is carry the idea introduced on page 5 to page 10, somehow.

Following the comment, we added the following text (page 10, line 33):

"Positive/negative attitudes refer to employer's views which may be related to the concepts of economic efficiency (or statistical discrimination). Thus, under the conditions of limited information, employers use observable characteristics (worker's age) as a proxy for unobservable characteristics (e.g. productivity, commitment etc)."

(page 5, line 15): I wonder at your use of "rational decision". This implies that any other decision taken with regard to employment is 'irrational'. Given the explanation that follows in the rest of the sentence, could you change the wording to be a capitalist-based decision? Or a neoliberal drive to maximize profits? (See my comment later on this choice of wording again)

Following the comment, we changed the wording to be **"a capitalist-based decision"**.

(page 6, line 12): please add an 's' to 'suggest' ("Evidence suggest that...") ✓

(page 6, line 33): replace "Those evidence" with "These findings" ✓

(page 7, line 45): could you please explain what you mean by “experts”? I saw it in the abstract, and left it thinking that this would be explained in the body of the paper. I think this occurrence needs some explanation for the readers here and not later.

Following the comment, we added the following text:

“...views of experts (people who had practical experience with employment at older ages and in retirement age, or those who were involved in the issue of older workers’ employment as part of their job, either in practice or in research) and employees...”

(page 7-8): Please name this section Method or Methodology, and then put research questions under the main heading of Method or Methodology. ✓

(page 8, line 26): please add “of” just after understanding in “nuanced understanding their views”. ✓

(page 8, line 33- 42): please reword as follows:

Through our purposive sampling, we were able to construct **an initial** sample of employers from a variety of sectors, industries, positions and professions. **We then found** additional interviewees who were able to add insight from their respective fields of research, from their position in employment agencies, and from their experiences as older **employees in the Israeli labor market.** ✓

(page 8, line 44): please reword as follows:

We used semi-structured interviews **as our primary way of collecting data.** ✓

General question: were all your interviews conducted in English? If not, did you have to translate and transcribe? I ask since in your reference list you do use Hebrew documents, and wondered about your sample of participants.

All interviews were conducted in Hebrew and then transcribed and translated by a professional.

(page 9, line 21-22): could you please explain what this “further analysis” consists of to generate the conceptual framework?

Following the comment, we elaborated: **“To generate a conceptual framework, further analysis was carried out, in which we examined referential adequacy as a means of checking preliminary findings and interpretations against the raw data.”**

(page 9, Table 1 insert): I don’t understand the difference between the table and the written text re number of people interviewed. In the text, you state that you interviewed 30 people, from an initial sample of 57 (where 27 were excluded for a variety of reasons). Your table however reports 37 interviewees (18+7+3+9)

Following the comment, we clarified under table 1 that: **“We conducted 30 interviews. Some participants, however, fit into more than one category.”**

(page 10, line 35): add a comma after dichotomies ✓

Figure 1: (page 10 insert) Unless conceptual required, I think it would be easier to number the four quadrants either clockwise or counter clockwise instead of the current ‘hopscotch’ approach.

The figure is consistent with the analysis that appears in the Discussion section of the paper.

Section: Negative attitudes toward employment of older workers

(page 10, line 49): If your sample is indeed 30, then $19/30 = 63\%$. What kind of interviewees? Employers only? This becomes important in the next section on positive attitudes.

Following the comment, we clarified this issue: “Nineteen interviewees (**employers and others**) expressed negative....”

(page 10, line 49): add an ‘s’ to attitude (‘negative **attitude**’) ✓

(page 10, line 54): add ‘a’ after Such (‘such culture’) ✓

(page 12, narrative): when you use ... is this a cut of what was said in the transcript? If so, you need square brackets around the ... like so [...] ✓

(page 12, line35): remove ‘s’ from trainings ✓

(page 12-13, concluding paragraph): rework as follows. I’m afraid I don’t understand the added red text and cannot suggest rewording (the part that starts with “Such justifications...”):

Hence, some of the justifications for a preference to not employ older workers (60-70 years old) relate to perceived characteristics or stereotypes including that the older worker is “tired”, “expensive”, “incapable of coping with changing realities”, etc. There are also important organizational characteristics, seen in organizational culture or in perceived managerial difficulties that play a role in negative attitudes towards older workers (see Figure 2, under “Prefer not to Employ”). ✓

We reworded the added red text to clarify.

(page 13, Figure 2 insert): I believe that the titles of each box need to match the section names. So either change the section names (negative attitudes, positive attitudes) to those in the boxes (prefer not to employ, prefer to employ), or vice versa. This makes it easier for the reader to find. ✓

Section: Positive attitudes towards employment of older workers

(page 13, line 21): “Two thirds of interviewed employers expressed positive attitudes”. This doesn’t work mathematically with your previous section on negative attitudes... in that section you reported 19/30 interviewees reported negative attitudes, which is 63%. So how can 66% of respondents report positive attitudes? If I am missing something, you need to explain further how you can make this statement in the body of the paper.

We clarified that we are talking about two thirds (12) of the (18) interviewed employers: “**Twelve out of the eighteen** interviewed employers (**two thirds**) expressed positive attitudes toward older ...”

(page 15, line10): add an ‘s’ to perception ✓

(page 15, line41): add ‘as’ in front of compared ✓

(page 15, line 43): in the brackets, add i.e. in front of ‘most men...’ ✓

(page 16, line3): remove the m-dash at the end of the sentence ✓

(page 16, end of section): you need to call out Figure 2 again, with the appropriate box name (“prefer to employ” or “positive attitude”, depending on which name you decide to stay with) ✓

(page 16, line 22): change to older workers instead of ‘60-70 year old workers’... and then change “perceived characteristics of older workers” to “perceived characteristics of these types of employees” ✓

Section: inability to employ older workers

(page 16, red text, intro paragraph): reword please as follows:

Moving away from these positive and negative interviewee attitudes towards employing older workers, we found that some employers justify not employing older workers by applying structural justifications. These structural reasons, which we built into the theme of being able or unable to hire older workers, are varied and go beyond legislative reasons alone.

First, a few employers and one executive... ✓

(page 18, line 6): please remove ‘no.’ (I think this is the first time I’ve seen this. If I missed it earlier, please correct). ✓

(page 18, end of section): you need to call out Figure 2 again, with the appropriate box name. ✓

Section: Ability to employ older workers

(page 19, line 10): I suggest softening the non-discriminatory statement to something like this:

Employers who did mentioned these reasons expressed, we believe, a non-discriminatory approach to being able to hire older workers. ✓

(page 19, line 15): add a comma after ‘them’ ✓

(page 19, line 24): re your statement about mentor roles not existing in many organizations, do you have a reference for this? Or is this what you found among your sample of interviewees? If it’s either of these cases, you need to add this information to make this statement more rigorous.

We clarified this point: “...a role that, according to some experts we interviewed, does not exist in many organizations.”

(page 19, line 31): remove ‘no.’ ✓

(page 19, lines 27 – 52): There are several problems with this text.

- (1) Different idea (older workers are no different than others) than mentoring. I think this (no difference) should go into its own paragraph. ✓
- (2) I am not sure how the narrative of P29 helps to be honest. It speaks to stereotypes for me – misunderstandings and assumptions that older workers ‘have all this free time’ as compared to say mothers or parents.

Following the comment, we have brought a slightly different citation that we think clarifies the argument better:

I think it is true for any age, and not only for older population. There are also specific issues for mothers, parents [...] not only workers around retirement age [...] I do not think it's a matter of age.

(3) People are not all the same, some have higher needs than others... and this is what this narrative is saying. Is that what you are trying to get across? (I think not)

Workers might have specific problems or needs, and each employee sometimes needs adjustments regardless of age.

(4) "I do not think it's a matter of age" might help you in justifying your statements about everyone being the same... but I'm not sure if you really want to go down this road of treating everyone as 'the same' (we aren't all the same/equal... that is where equity comes in and accommodations).

We changed the wording to clarify that special adjustment are sometimes needed, but it is not a matter of age.

(5) Red text: what do you mean by "this notion"? (mentoring? Everyone is the same?) and I don't understand how this ties in with "experts views" If its 'everyone is the same' and experts 'believe this' then you need a reference or two to support such a statement

We reorganized this section to clarify what "this notion" refers to.

General comment: I find this section the weakest. I'm not sure you are talking to 'abilities to hire' here, but foundational assumptions about what are older workers and what services they can provide to the organization – no difference among people, mentoring, eating properly and exercising. This might fit better in your positive attitudes to hiring older workers. Your narrative surrounding no additional costs to hiring older workers fits, I think, with this section... but that's it. Perhaps you can rework, moving away from equality to equity, where accommodations and the cost of accommodations might be supported by legislative frameworks? (I don't know if this is 'true' but trying to give you an idea of how to strengthen this section)

We rephrased this section to clarify.

For example: "A common argument by employers, older workers and experts concerning the policy side was **that employers are able to employ older workers because no special adjustments are needed...** Preventive actions, proper nutrition and exercise are true and needed today for all employees, **of all ages**" said participant P04... **In their opinion, there is no reason not to employ older workers** (See Figure 2, under "ability to employ")."

(Page 26) "This is likely to be applicable to policymakers that can implement measures to assist such employers in adjusting positions and environments to older worker, **and the costs of accommodations might be supported by legislative frameworks.**"

(page 20, end of section): you need to call out Figure 2 again, with the appropriate box name. ✓

Section: Employers' attitudes across industrial sectors

(page 21, line 8): re "are about to be extinct": you need a reference to justify such a statement. If you don't have one, remove it.

Following the comment, we added a reference to this statement.

(page 21, line17): put masters in quotes (since you state that employers used this word explicitly). ✓ Also, was this 'masters' used in the industrial sector of manufacturing alone? If so, I would state this right from the beginning. ✓

General comment: I think this section should be at the beginning, right after your intro. By doing this, you are setting up the reader nicely to flow into your figure 2, and your explanation of your themes and findings. Also, your discussion section seems to talk to this at the beginning, so by moving it to the top, you are following a flow that is logical for the reader. ✓

Section: Discussion (rename this section... I need a conclusion at the end of the paper)

(page 21, line 58): we are trying to avoid using phrases like "persons in old age". Try to use more progressive language, such as older workers. ✓ Also, for clarity, I am not sure what "its effect" means – older workers effects on organizations?

Following the comment, we added: "...concerning the employment of older workers and the effect of their employment on employers."

(page 22, line 3-6): remove the brackets and text inside the brackets. You already stated this in the first sentence who these people are. ✓

(page 22, line 6): what do you mean by triangulation? (There are different interpretations of the use of triangulation, and its validity. In many qual studies, you will see a re-interpretation of this approach. Check out QROM articles to gain a better understanding of what I am trying to get at here, and append to your text here please)

Following the comment, we added: "**As triangulation techniques can be divided into between-methods triangulation and within-methods triangulation, our study captured within-methods triangulation by documenting different perspectives on the phenomenon under study (Jonsen and Jehn, 2009).**"

(page 22, line 10-20): Reword as follows please:

Via our thematic analysis approach, we were able to extract and arrange our findings with respect to older workers into a two-axes model of able/unable to hire older workers vs positive/negative attitude towards older workers. We underlined that there are differences across industrial sectors; however, we did find that there were important similarities with respect to approaches to older workers at the structural level and at the behavioural level. ✓

(page 22, line 24): remove 'want and'. So reword as:

... refer to whether or not employers perceive themselves as able to employ older workers while also bringing to light their potential attitude (or their 'want') to employing such workers. ✓

(page 22, line 29 -38): delete these sentences (starting from "Negative attitudes" to the reference by Light et al.) Bring sentence that starts with "we used the interviews" up into this paragraph. This leads better into the four areas of your typology. So it looks like this now;

The two dichotomous dimensions – positive or negative attitudes, ability or inability to employ older workers - refer to whether or not employers perceive themselves as able to employ older workers while also bringing to light their potential attitude (or their 'want') to employing such workers. We used the results of our analysis of the interviews to characterize four abstract types

of employers with respect to recruiting older workers. This division is important and vital since it allows policymakers to make different efforts with respect to policy creation based on characteristics of each typology (see Figure 1). These approaches and policies, organized across these four dimensions, are as follows: ✓

(page 23, line 36): move 'be' after 'probably' (so "... will probably be..."). ✓ Also, change "or work in their organizations" to "or work for this type of employer" (since your focus in your typology is on employers) ✓

(page 23, line 38-40): change to "It is likely that such organizations will not welcome older workers, given the organizational culture that is supported by this type of employer." (keep the references). ✓ I would delete the sentence that follows – sends the wrong message that since the workforce is younger, we shouldn't integrate older workers here. I think your point has been made re the org culture. ✓

(page 23, line 54): "predigests" means what?

Typo. It was corrected to: prejudice

(page 24, line 6): so I don't understand "targeted information" – policymakers create an atmosphere of learning and teaching so that older workers can be part of the organization's work force. The work ahead is to change negative attitudes of employers. Public relations however is something that happens between the organization and the outside world. So I am not sure how using PR will change the employers' negative attitude?

Following the comment, we clarified this point and wrote: "Targeted information that highlights the importance of older workers in terms of their experience and knowledge (Axelrad, 2020) might be useful in changing these employers' **negative attitudes.**"

(page 25, line 24): So policymakers (as the name suggests) create policy. Organizations' managers typically do the work of implementation. Policymakers and managers, along with employees and clients (ie. any relevant stakeholders), should work in tandem in defining policy... better organizations make sure that this happens... but not all do it. I think you need to tease this out here, and not just put the responsibility on policymakers to both create and implement.

Following the comment, we added the following sentence: "**Furthermore, policymakers and managers, along with employees and clients (i.e. all relevant stakeholders), should join forces and work together in defining policy and setting steps for implementation.**"

(page 25, line 29): sorry, you lost me with "social closure". What does this mean? You use this later on also but haven't defined it.

We defined social closure on page 5. However, if you think we need a reminder here we can add:

"Additionally, removing social closure (**the process of boundary construction between identities and communities, where resources are reserved for one's own group, while excluding outsiders**), which is a result of institutional exclusion – in the form ..."

(page 25, line 47): refer to your typology now, not the figure 1. So: "Our typology, which illustrates...". ✓ Also, remove matrix... it's a typology. ✓

(page 26, line 5-6): remove "quantitative"... leave just as "Further research..." ✓

(page 26, line 42-45): I'm sorry, I don't understand this sentence. "Diversity management constructs practices leverage..."

Following the comment, the sentence was deleted.

(page 27, line 13): remove "obvious" ✓

(page 27, line 20-22): Same problem I noticed earlier... we now have 31 participants in your sample. This needs to be cleaned up: is it 30, 31 or 37?

We corrected: 18 employers and 12 subject-matter experts.

(page 27, line 22-33): change idea from "same themes" to:

However, we believe that our findings showcase that similar themes do exist across the categories of interviewees; that is, employers, older employees, executives in placement agencies, and policymakers. This observation strengthens our findings, and points to our efforts to triangulate our data, while achieving data saturation (Francis, 2010). ✓

(page 27, line 42): reword to "Another limitation to this study is that we could not identify whether perceptions found among individuals reflected a bias of the HR department or of the organization itself." ✓

(page 27, line 45): moderating an effect reflects quantitative approaches. This does not play a role here in your qualitative study.

The sentence was deleted.

(page 28, line 8): remove "the fact" ✓

(page 28, line 11-15): rework as follows:

As we demonstrated with our findings and analysis, employers attitudes and abilities with respect to recruiting older workers are not always objective. Rather, we found narratives that showcase practices in age discrimination, relying on in some cases stereotypes and structural limitations. ✓

General comment: as QROM is a methodology rich journal, can you talk to your contribution to qualitative research methods?

We added the following: (Page 8): "employment. **And here lies another contribution to qualitative research methods: as we use interviews from different points of view, we show how triangulating perspectives can extend individual-level results, as such design allows for a broad perspective and a comprehensive picture of the subject.**"

Section: Conclusion

Last paragraph should be reworked into a conclusion to your paper. And by the way, "the paper makes an important contribution"... is not correct as you are anthropomorphising your paper. You can rewrite something like "With our research, we are contributing to..."

Following the comment, we rephrased the last paragraph: "Notwithstanding limitations, **with our research, we are contributing to the emphasis and prominence of the diverse argumentations used with respect to the employment of older workers. Our conceptual**

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2
3 **typology refers to employers' perceived ability to employ older workers and their stated**
4 **attitudes towards the employment of older workers. The methods of in-depth...**
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7 References:

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9 Please check your references to make sure they conform to Emerald's use of Harvard. ✓

10
11 Please also make sure that your references are actually in the paper. For example, Hellerstein
12 et al.'s work is in the reference list but not in the body of the paper. ✓

13
14 Also, I think you have full justification on for your text. Please remove and left justify your
15 references.

16
17 First reference: the title of the journal article needs to be as follows:

18 "Age-friendly organizations: the role of organizational culture and the participation of older
19 workers" ✓

20
21 Third, fourth, fifth reference (etc.): title of article should only have a capital for the first word ✓

22
23 Brown reference: need p. 475. (and not pp. as its only one page) ✓

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25 Boyatzis reference: Only first word should be capitalized. Publisher comes before place. ✓

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27 I stopped checking here. You need to check every entry please, as I scanned them and saw
28 more errors that need to be dealt with. ✓
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