

Age Management in the Brazilian Context: A Theoretical Discussion

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Abstract. *The aging of population and workforce has significantly impacted living conditions in society and organizations around the world. This scenario represents a challenge for public policymakers and for the labor market, whose future depends on the maintenance of the work capacity of the older workers and their continued participation in the labour market. In this context, age management policies are increasingly important as they play a crucial role in increasing and sustaining the participation of these workers in the labor market. This theoretical essay aims to discuss age management in the Brazilian context. Specifically, it seeks to present the concept of age management and its challenges for the organizations in Brazil. Age management has been defined as the best way to strategically deal with the changes resulting from the aging of the population and consequent changes in the labor market. We argue, in this study, that the phenomenon of aging has specific characteristics in Brazil, a country with a collectivist trait in which intergenerational affective-moral-financial responsibility is the main issue.*

Keywords: *aging workforce, age management, intergenerational responsibility, Brazil, age diversity*

1. Introduction

The aging of the population and, consequently, of the workforce has significantly impacted the living conditions in society and organizations around the world (Walker, 2006). This is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has profound implications

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for human life and will affect everything from economies, labor markets to provisions of health and social care (UN, 2021a; 2021b). This scenario is, without a doubt, a challenge for public policymakers, as well as for the labor market itself, whose future depends on the participation of older workers (Walker, 2005; Fabisiak & Prokurat, 2012; UN, 2021b).

For at least two decades, scholars have already warned of aging as one of the main contemporary issues in the world. However, even though it has direct consequences for society, the distribution of income and savings, and the relationships between different generations, the topic is still little investigated in the area of Business Administration (Walker, 2006; Ciutiene & Railaite, 2015; Santos Pinto, 2015).

The literature further suggests that while there is research on specific issues of aging of the workforce – given global demography and competitive realities – a specifically integrated business management perspective is crucial in advancing our understanding of successful management of the aging workforce and any related issues (Streb et al., 2008).

Existing studies, although scarce, seek to examine the phenomenon of aging in organizations from its impact on the labor market. Using a more managerial approach, Ciutiene and Railaite (2015) and Streb et al. (2008) assessed that the future competitiveness of organizations and economies will depend on the use of people's skills, productivity, and performance. Therefore, the aging of the population requires suitable age management measures, with substantial changes in people management strategies and labor market policies, so that this ageing workforce can contribute as much as the younger one. In this way, organizations that reshape their recruitment, engagement, work structures, and cultures to attract and retain this new workforce will be well positioned to know how to manage age diversity in the face of an unprecedented growth of experienced workers (Dychtwald & Baxter, 2007).

Analyzing the phenomenon from the perspective of individuals and assuming that old age represents a social problem, we note that aging is also associated with bottlenecks in the field of people management. Since there is, in the attitudes and practices of employers, a prevalence of negative stereotypes about the performance and motivation of older workers, organizations demonstrate that they are not prepared for this new context. Deeply ingrained and not always explicit, these stereotypes associate them with such characteristics as: unhealthy, more costly, less productive, vulnerable, not so flexible or not open to change, and unable or slow to learn new skills (Brooke & Taylor, 2005; Streb et al., 2008; Ciutiene & Railaite, 2015). In other words, social representations of what it means to be old in society also (re)produce situations of discrimination and age prejudice in the organizational context (Locatelli & Fontoura, 2013), in which characteristics such as dynamism, flexibility, agility, and creativity are associated with younger professionals only.

It is understood, therefore, that most organizations persist in management practices designed for a young workforce, causing the constant rejuvenation of the staff and a

lack of preparation for: a) facing the challenges posed by the reconfiguration of their aging workforce; b) breaking down age barriers toward combating discrimination; c) retaining and appreciating these older professionals (Uyehara, 2003; Cepellos, 2018; Tonelli et al., 2020).

It is important to remember that age discrimination may intersect with other forms of discrimination based on race, gender, class or sexual orientation (Nash, 2008; Cepellos, 2021; Stelzer & Kyriillos, 2021).

The relevance of addressing gender discrimination in this debate also lies in seeing the intersection of age and gender in the world of work, in which male career norms predominate. Ageism intersects with sexism, whereby factors such as negative assumptions and implicit stereotypes make women in the aging process more vulnerable. In the work context, the aging woman has her knowledge and experience considered less valuable than that of a man of the same age group or younger, in addition to being judged by her appearance (lookism) and based on myths about female aging (menopause, body). Thus, studies show that even with the predominance of women in the older working population, they face greater “difficulties regarding insertion, maintenance and progression in their careers due to gender and age prejudice, in addition to other professional challenges” (Atkinson et al., 2015; Cepellos, 2021, p. 1). Older women are negatively impacted by both their advanced age and their gender with far-reaching consequences for their health and well-being (Rochon, Kalia & Higgs, 2021).

Approaching the gender issue is justified by the high number of women aged over 50 in the labor market. Furthermore, older women’s needs are unique in terms of overlapping roles, discontinuous career trajectory, family commitments, social norms around the female role, and gender discrimination around female ageing (Edge et al., 2021).

Despite the problem exposed, there are few organizations with institutional and formalized policies in place that encourage the retention of older employees or that attract retirees looking for new possibilities to enter the labor market. Here, it is argued that the absence of policies that consider age diversity denotes that the presence of mature professionals in the workplace is not yet considered by contemporary management (Uyehara, 2003; Cepellos, 2018; Tonelli et al., 2020; Helal, Nóbrega, & Lima, 2021). Although the scenario indicates the need for greater adoption of age management practices by organizations, the approach to the topic is still incipient.

It is known that a minority of organizations invest in measures to combat age discrimination and, based on them, in new ways of managing aging. This also means, like in the case of Europe, that public policies to encourage and support change among employers are necessary and relevant. Furthermore, they need to arise not from a reactive attitude, but from an integrated and comprehensive age management strategy (Walker, 1999, 2005; Loth & Silveira, 2014; Tonelli et al., 2020).

Given the challenges brought by the aging of the workforce, the management of older workers has become a political concern for governments and organizations (Rodrigues et al., 2020). At this juncture, employers’ age management policies will become

increasingly important as they play a crucial role in increasing and sustaining the participation of these workers in the labor market (Fuertes, Egdell & McQuaid, 2013).

Thus, in pursuit of contributing to this debate, this theoretical essay aims to discuss age management in the Brazilian context. Specifically, it seeks to present the concept of age management and its challenges for the organizations in the case of Brazil. Brazil is a country with a cultural collectivist trait, in which intergenerational “affective-moral-financial” responsibility assumes contours not seen in individualist countries (e. g., USA, among others) which are still hegemonic in studies on age management. Moreover, young people are economically dependent on their parents, “due to their difficulties in entering the labor market, the longer time spent at school and the greater instability of affective relationships” (Camarano, 2020, p. 4170).

In addition, it is known that the country currently has a 14.1% unemployment rate (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE, 2021), and the largest share of employed Brazilian workers work in the informal sector. The IBGE (2021) estimates that in 2021 alone, informal work in Brazil reached the level of 36.3 million people. In July 2021, 40.8% of workers worked in the informal economy.

It is also important to note that in Brazil, some legal and regulatory conditions represent barriers to the implementation of some age management practices, such as reduced and/or flexible working hours and bridge employment.

Finally, it is understood that even though the proposed study only covers formal employment links and public administration, the article contribution lies in shedding light on the phenomenon and approaches to managing aging at work.

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1 Age Management: Context and Concepts

Age management has become a macroeconomic issue in the labor market policy. In Europe, given the inversion of the age pyramid, public policymakers, legislators, and organizations have increasingly adopted age management in recent decades. The objective is, above all, to enable greater participation of employees over 50 years in the workforce (Fabisiak & Prokurat, 2012).

The generational diversity provokes concerns in the contemporary context when considering the possible difficulties and opportunities that arise in this context for organizations, from the coexistence of workers of different age groups with different expectations, characteristics, values and worldviews that interfere in relationships to the environment of work (Colet & Mozzato, 2021).

Conceptually, as shown in the literature on the subject, the age management construct is interpreted in different ways. Speaking of age management permeates not only the field of organizations but also the understanding of global management of the aging of the workforce, through public policies or collective bargaining (Ciutiene & Railaite,

2015). Age management has been defined as the best way to strategically deal with the changes resulting from the aging of the population and consequent changes in the labor market (Rodrigues et al., 2020).

For Walker (2005), the term *age management* refers specifically to the various dimensions – recruitment; training, development, and promotion; flexible work practices; ergonomics and work design; and changing attitudes toward aging workers – by which people are managed. With an explicit focus on aging, each of these areas is closely related to each other (Walker, 1999; Walker, 2005).

Fabisiak and Prokurat (2012), in turn, consider that age management can be analyzed from three levels: the macroeconomic policy of the labor market, the organization, and the individual level.

The policy level is associated with public policies, with policymakers and governments, which address age discrimination and other issues related to the impact of aging on the labor market. Such policies represent the first step – favored by governments – but do not necessarily expose the perceptions of age underlying discriminatory practices in the society and organizations (Ciutiene & Railaite, 2015).

The organizational and individual levels will emphasize the benefits obtained by organizations that implement a set of measures to mitigate the consequences of aging (Ciutiene & Railaite, 2015). Such age management practices may retain more valuable employees, but may also help to overcome the loss of organizational knowledge, lack of qualified personnel, inadequate assessment of potential or current employees, inequality issues, team management challenges, age-related conflicts, etc. Thus, there are two categories of age management benefits: ensuring labor supply and greater productivity, and maximizing the usefulness of the older workers.

Here, it is understood that Ciutiene and Railaite (2015) contribute to the subject, among other things, when they recognize that age does not imply a reduction in the worker's productivity, but rather the obsolescence of skills. However, viewing age management solely as beneficial to the productivity of organizations is not sufficient.

Taylor and Walker (1998) found that workplace perceptions of older employees can directly influence not only their professional insertion but also their prospects for development and progress within an organization. Brooke and Taylor (2005) highlighted the need to overcome certain negative stereotypes of managers about older workers and the importance of investing in training policies for them. This is because, according to the literature on the subject, older workers have fewer opportunities for training allocation, despite training being deemed the most relevant and appropriate policy to deal with age discrimination in the organizational environment (Lazazzara & Bombelli, 2011).

On the adoption of “age-conscious” practices, Brooke and Taylor (2005), in a survey of organizations in Australia and the United Kingdom, highlighted the need for a radical rethinking of organizations' strategies when facing the new composition of the aging workforce. They pointed out that although many studies have examined attitudes

from social representations and age-related stereotypes of workers among employers, their role and influence on organizational and people management policies and practices, as well as on the experiences of older employees, are still difficult to substantiate (Brooke & Taylor, 2005).

It is believed, therefore, that age management and age diversity should be a concern of all actors present in the labor market, including governments, employers, trade organizations, and unions, so that the results of an effective age management policy imply the enrichment and safety of workers and greater productivity for organizations (Walker, 2005, 2006).

In the context of organizations, effective age management permeates the encouragement of mature workers to continue to participate in the workforce. Thus, complying with this active and successful ageing policy requires a more intensive approach to combating age barriers, aiming at changing the employer's behavior, ensuring lifelong education, continuous training; the provision of incentives to extend working life – in ways that allow for flexible employment, or bridge employment – transition to retirement, retirement and post-retirement (Walker, 2005, 2006).

2.2 Age Management in Organizations

2.2.1 Developing an (integrated) age management strategy

The literature on the subject suggests that as both the employer and the employee benefit from the implementation of age management practices they should be part of the organization's strategy (Ciutiene & Railaite, 2015). Thus, effective age management should not be directed only at older workers who hold positions of power; age should be seen as a positive value and as a synonym for knowledge and skills, which workers can share if there is space and adherence of the organization to that (Lazazzara & Bombelli, 2011).

Thus, Walker (1999) highlighted initiatives that can be seen as a starting point for a new policy and new work practices concerning age, employment and pointed out the danger of concentrating such actions exclusively on aging workers as this can stigmatize them. By shedding light on this aspect, Walker (1999) understands that the ideal solution would be for organizations to adopt a holistic approach designed to prevent age discrimination across the whole career of individuals.

This argument is in line with Barnett et al. (2008) because, according to these authors, age management strategies within an organization must be comprehensive and include four elements: a) emphasis on prevention (addressing risk factors); b) focus on the entire life course, not just on old age; c) holistic focus (addressing a range of issues, including health, education, and training); d) compensatory provision for older workers (Ciutiene & Railaite, 2015).

Although there are a number of age management practices that organizations and the human resources management can implement to prevent and manage issues related

to aging and its implications, the commitment to age diversity in organizations must go beyond the adoption of these practices to engage management and staff in a holistic and comprehensive way. That is, to develop a culture of inclusion and promote age diversity, it is necessary to encourage intergenerational relationship through an integrated and even continuous process of promoting closer ties between workers at the very different stages of life and age (Lazazzara & Bombelli, 2011; Loth & Silveira, 2014).

2.2.2 Specific elements of an age management strategy

In this sense, Naegele and Walker (2006) proposed methodologies to identify key areas for the development of a comprehensive age management system. Intended primarily for the organizational level, the report was designed to be a guide for all those responsible for employment in the European Union – such as managers, policymakers, and social actors – to ensure that aging in the workplace is successfully managed and that workers can fulfill their potential.

The guidelines are mainly derived from the conclusions of a project that analyzes employment initiatives for an aging workforce in 11 EU countries (Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, and the United Kingdom) and of the pioneering project “Combating Age Barriers in Employment” (funded by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions), which produced the first guide to good practices in managing an aging workforce (Walker, 1999; Naegale & Walker, 2006).

In a prescriptive way, Naegele and Walker (2006) explain how the experiences of organizations show the reasons for implementing effective age management, namely: a) recruiting older workers means gaining extra experience and skills for the organization; b) organizations benefit from cost containment by investing in skills and health promotion for the aging workforce; c) retaining older workers avoids costly loss of skills and may increase their market share; d) intergenerational solidarity and work motivation can be increased by taking advantage of age diversity (Naegele & Walker, 2006).

These measures may imply specific initiatives aimed at the eight specific dimensions of age management: a) recruitment for jobs; b) learning, training, and lifelong learning; c) career development; d) flexible working hours; e) health protection and promotion and workplace design; f) reinsertion; g) leaving work and transition to retirement; h) comprehensive approaches (Naegale & Walker, 2006).

Finally, Naegele and Walker (2006) indicate the following items as essential ingredients of an integrated age management strategy: a) emphasis on preventing age-related work problems, rather than reactive problem solving; b) focus on the entire working life and all age groups, not just the older workers; c) ensuring a joint approach that brings together all the dimensions and actors that contribute to effective age management; d) changing attitudes within organizations and in the society as a whole to educate

people about the need for age diversity; e) ensuring, in the short term, recovery provision for older workers who have lost out on skills training, or whose health has been negatively affected by employment; f) promoting regular strategic assessments of age management policies and initiatives.

In this context of organizations' demand for human resource management policies that meet the needs of economically active elderly people, Kooij and other authors (2008) sought to investigate age-related factors that influence the motivation of these workers to work and remain active in the labor market.

Based on the analysis of previous studies, Kooij et al. (2008) demonstrate that employees who perceive themselves to be older than most people in their work-group show more involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. At the same time, researches show that the importance attached to high work demands, job variety, and feedback tends to decrease with age, while the importance attached to occupational and physical safety increases. With aging workers, job satisfaction is more closely related to intrinsic factors or internal rewards of work, compared to younger employees (Kooij et al., 2008).

Also, from a review of the existing literature linked to factors that impact work longevity, Flynn (2010) sought guidance and used typologies to identify groups of older workers according to their work and retirement patterns. Knowing that work experience impacts the worker's attitude in relation to transition to retirement planning, the author glimpsed important implications for public policies and, in organizations, people management policies.

Flynn (2010) demonstrated the existence of groups of workers who are more willing to financially manage their careers in a more social and convenient way than others. At the same time, some workers of the same age group may be more willing to take advantage of policy initiatives that encourage delayed retirement than others. This approach works well for older workers who are able to negotiate changes with their employers, such as flexibility, choice of work content, staying in work beyond normal retirement age, etc.

Finally, Flynn (2010) argues that having a "one-size-fits-all" approach to designing incentives for late retirement is not adequate, and that this workforce diversity can be beneficial to policymakers and people management practices because the diversity of older workers requires a variety of policies and instruments to encourage an extension of the working life.

It is important to note that although age management practices may seem prescriptive (beyond the idea of a "tool"), when adapted to the needs of each organization, they can have a positive impact on its development. It is highlighted here that age management principles may be adapted in various types of organizations and should not be applied in a single way.

2.2.3 *Training and Development, Retirement, Retention*

Lazazzara and Bombelli (2011), for example, advocate for the adoption of proactive measures to manage an aging workforce, which can be grouped into six dimensions of people management practices: recruitment; learning, training and development; career; flexible work practices and modernization of work; leaving work and transition to retirement; workplace design and occupational health promotion.

In a similar vein, Silva and Helal (2017; 2019) consider that offering retirement preparation programs is important in the context of age management as they provide opportunities for the workers to consider the topic, as well as for organizations to deliberate actions.

Walker (2005), in turn, presents some specific age management measures, such as career planning, continuous training, flexible working hours, teams of different ages, work redesign, ergonomics and identification of functions, maintaining and promoting good health and work capacity, combating age discrimination, and intergenerational collaboration.

Armstrong-Stassen (2008) argues, based on the extensive study carried out in Canada with mature workers, that people management practices focused on the needs of this group indicate that the organization values the contribution of these workers who respond by remaining in the organization. This practice thus represents an important issue in worker retention. In the study, the researcher also identified that older workers ranked recognition and respect as the most important HR strategies.

In 2009, Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel published a study in which they tested a conceptual model of the relationship between organization, work, and career factors and older workers' intention to stay in the organization. The results showed that perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between training and development practices, hierarchy and stagnation of work content, and the worker's intention to stay.

The identification and promotion of age-related organizational practices such as the implementation of training and development practices adapted to the needs of older workers are important for the perceptions of organizational support and career satisfaction and, ultimately, for retaining these workers. Furthermore, results suggest that HR practices are more likely to be associated with the perception of organizational support when they are specifically tailored to meet the needs and desires of older employees (Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009).

Finally, the main practices related to retention of older employees are to provide continuous opportunities to update existing skills, acquire new skills, and ensure that older employees have interesting and challenging work assignments (Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2009).

In 2011, Armstrong-Stassen, now with Schlosser, also carried out the third study in Canada, this time to test the theoretical model that analyzes how human resource practices adapted to the needs of older workers are related to the perception of belonging,

based on how your immediate supervisor implements and manages human resource practices. In addition, the paper points out that the existence of HR practices adapted to aging workers, in combination with their fair application, will support inclusion in an organization (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011).

For Fabisiak and Prokurat (2012), in practice, some age management measures adopted by companies include awareness of managers and workers; the implementation of best practices through the adoption of age management strategies in the recruitment, training, development, and promotion of workers; the implementation of lifelong learning programs; health and safety programs; the adoption of flexible ways of working.

In addition to advocating for comprehensive and active age management so that organizations can improve the management of their aging workforce and fight age discrimination, the paper points to other reasons for its introduction into an organization's strategy. These reasons include: synergy effects of hiring young, motivated and creative workers and older, experienced and loyal workers; improving the corporate image of an employer that provides equal opportunities; increased motivation for younger workers who observe their older colleagues, benefiting from their long-term contribution to the organization; greater horizontal and vertical mobility of older and better-trained workers; prevention of burnout syndrome; pool of readily available temporary workers consisting of semi-retired and experienced former employees with company-specific skills and knowledge; and, finally, adaptation to changes in legislation concerning retirement age limits, collective bargaining agreement and other administrative measures that seem to be underway in many countries (Fabisiak & Prokurat, 2012).

When considering the areas mentioned, a truly cross-sectional and comprehensive age management system should focus on preventing dismissal of older workers, on applying age management tools for workers of all ages, on employing all age management tools and flexible support for older workers affected by health problems and lack of skills (Fabisiak & Prokurat, 2012).

Fabisiak and Prokurat (2012) break away from the mainstream that focuses on age management, particularly for older workers who are at or near retirement age. To do so, they start from the argument that societies are aging and, therefore, incentives for these workers to stay or return to work from post-retirement are necessary thus expanding the age group of people who work. However, they also understand that the debate should not be restricted to just one age group among many. Furthermore, age management means not only focusing on all age groups of workers but also on its three levels of applicability: individual, business, and macroeconomic.

It is also important to mention the results of the study developed by Rodrigues and his collaborators (2020) in Portugal. In it, Rodrigues et al. (2020) demonstrated that Portuguese companies are little committed to adopting age management measures. However, the adopters notice an influence on older employees' decision to remain active in the labor market, with the following variables taking on great importance: rec-

ognition and respect, remuneration, and work design. In this context, the existence of differences was verified in the perception of these practices when considering some characteristics such as a) sex of the worker (men are more aware of the existence of these practices); b) sector (the private and public-private sectors are more aware of the existence of these practices); and c) size of the company (workers in small companies showed a greater perception of the existence of these practices) (Rodrigues et al., 2020).

Rodrigues et al. (2020) conclude that a greater perception by older workers of age-appropriate people management strategies favors the intention of these workers to continue working, especially when faced with practices of recognition, respect, and performance assessment (Rodrigues et al., 2020).

Such a result is in line with what was found by Hennekam and Herrbach (2015) in a study in the Netherlands: recognition and respect seemed to be the main motivator to extend working life. According to them, feeling valued, being appreciated, having the feeling of contributing, and being respected for the skills and experience acquired throughout life influence the willingness of older people to remain in the workforce.

Rodrigues et al. (2020) pointed out that the size of the company influences the perception of the existence of age management practices. This is also observed by Fuertes, Egdell and Mcquaid (2013), who, when studying age management implemented by small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the United Kingdom, identified that good practices in age management found there do not show up as a systematic way; there is often a gap between policy and practice.

Loretto and Vickerstaff (2015) recall, however, the notable lack of attention given to the role of gender in extending professional life, as work for the older workers is constructed and performed differently for men and women. For example, when age management practices are discussed, there is little regard for the relationship between gender and flexible work and a tendency to think about the end of professional life and retirement in a gender-neutral way, or from a typically male perspective. As pertinent as age management practices are, by viewing older workers as a single group and their anxieties as equal, organizations assume the potential risk of ignoring the needs of specific groups of workers, especially older women workers (Earl & Taylor, 2015).

According to Egdell et al. (2020), although government has sought to encourage the continued labour market participation of older workers, the research base has consistently demonstrated that organizations are failing to prepare and benefit from demographic and labour market changes, and that the business case approach to support the extension of working lives has not had the impact envisaged, as stereotypes of older workers still persist.

2.3 Age Management in the Brazilian Case

Age management is becoming an increasingly important part of people management practices, because by implementing measures that help to better integrate individuals

of all age groups in the workforce, they enable the retention of the aging worker, the successful achievement of business objectives, and ultimately, competitive advantage for the organization (Boehm, Schröder & Kunze, 2013; Urbancová et al., 2020).

Age management policies and practices, despite bringing contributions to organizations and workers, need to be designed and implemented taking into account the social context in which they are inserted. In this sense, it is argued that Brazil has specificities that need to be taken into account when thinking about age management. First, it is important to remember that the phenomenon of aging itself needs to be analyzed from the perspective of the production of the system of representations about old age and the social position of mature subjects, their meanings, socially and culturally determined by capitalist relationships, processes, and structures under which these representations gain specific meanings in different historical, social, and cultural contexts (Haddad, 1986; Hareven, 1995; Debert, 2010). At this juncture, organizations must be understood as human conglomerates where interactions occur within organizational settings and concrete sociocultural contexts (Idrovo & Bosch, 2019).

Motivation to work, for example, requires a holistic view of the nature of these workers' goals, their relationships over time, and the factors that influence motivation to achieve goals in adulthood (Kanfer, Beier & Ackerman, 2012). Kanfer, Beier and Ackerman (2012) highlight that studies on the motivation of older people to work have often focused on four reasons why these individuals continue to work: social (to interact and gain positive consideration from others), personal (to obtain intrinsic and their own rewards), financial, and generating (to transmit knowledge to other people) reasons. In the opposite sense, regarding the exit from the labor market, Flynn (2010) points out that individual retirement plans are influenced by a series of factors such as labor rights, pension provision, family influence, and the push and pull factors of the employers.

Bosch et al. (2018) contributed to this argument, based on a study that included a sample of 2,046 employees from four countries – Brazil, Kenya, the Netherlands, and the Philippines – which aimed to analyze how family-supportive supervisor behavior (FSSB) relates to the motivation of individuals to work, based on the assumption that organizational work–family policies are heterogeneous and differ according to societies. The results indicated that the organizational support provided to the worker and the family probably leads employees to repay the organization for the positive treatment received, in addition to generating a pro-social motivation at work.

It is worth remembering that Latin American countries may be deemed collectivist societies, in which the family context has outstanding importance in work relations and organizations. Idrovo and Bosch (2019) highlight that there are, in these nations, family-friendly policies, which influence social behavior and create an environment where workers can feel inclined to reciprocate and do things for others. This means that in these societies, elements of reference groups, such as group rules or group goals, are more salient for individuals than in non-collectivist societies such as the European and North American ones (Triandis, 1989).

For example, in Japan, studies show that a Japanese worker's decision to retire is independent of their spouse's employment. This is in sharp contrast to Western industrialized countries such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, as it is known that men's retirement decisions in Western industrialized countries are strongly affected by their spouses' employment (Sakai, Toda & Yamada, 2021).

Idrovo and Bosch (2019) carried out a study with 486 workers from private organizations in Colombia and Chile, which observed that family-supportive supervisor behavior (FSSB) and organizational work-family policies influence the turnover intention, satisfaction with the work-family balance, and pro-social motivation.

Allen and Shockley (2012) highlight some relevant family issues in the work context of older workers: care for elderly parents, simultaneous care for parents and children, care for grandchildren, cumulative disadvantages in the careers of women, and work-family influence on retirement decisions. In this context, the authors point out several organizational initiatives that help in the process of balancing work and family, and their relevance for older workers, namely: flexible work arrangements, support for dependent care, and transition to retirement. These arrangements facilitate the management of work and family roles, allowing workers to adapt their work situations to better accommodate family demands (Allen & Shockley, 2012).

Thus, according to Allen and Shockley (2012), the type of society in which organizations are embedded (more or less collectivist) and the work-family relationship are issues that need to be considered when dealing with age management. We note, however, that research that aims to understand how workers from different countries experience the work-life interface and assess how organizational settings and cultural contexts affect them carried out in Latin American countries with a collectivist trait is still scarce. The Latin context as a *locus* of research carries, in itself, a central characteristic that is not present in Anglo-Saxon societies (like countries of Oceania, North of America and the UK) namely the intergenerational affective-moral-financial responsibility (Idrovo & Bosch, 2019).

We argue that, in Brazil, family influence and the financial factor are fundamental to the investigation not only of the phenomenon of aging, but of the retirement process, the motivation for the worker to remain working and, of course, the age management in organizations. Together, the high levels of informality and precariousness present in the Brazilian labor market and the importance of the family are essential elements of the debate proposed here.

It is also important to note that, in Brazil, some legal and regulatory conditions represent barriers to the implementation of some age management practices, such as reduced and/or flexible working hours and bridge employment. In the country, the retirement rule is linked to the worker's contribution time to social security. Thus, the minimum contribution period is 30 years for women to retire and 35 years for men to be entitled to a pension. In addition, the mandatory retirement age in Brazil is 70 years old for men, and 65 years old for women; in addition to that, a minimum period of 15

years for social security contributions is required. In general, the value of the pension of each retiree is calculated through an average of the contribution salaries during the contribution period (INSS, 2021).

Elderly rights in the country are governed especially by the Statute for the Elderly (Law No. 10,741 of October 1, 2003), which, in its Article 3, provides as follows:

It is an obligation of the family, the community, the society, and the Government to ensure the elderly, with absolute priority, has effective rights to life, health, food, education, culture, sports, leisure, **work**, citizenship, freedom, dignity, respect, and family and community coexistence (Estatuto do Idoso, 2003, p. 1, *emphasis added*).

In addition, Article 4 of the same legal instrument determines that “no elderly person shall be subject to any type of negligence, **discrimination**, violence, cruelty, or oppression, and any violation of their rights, by action or omission, will be punished by law.” We also highlight Articles 26 and 27:

The elderly has the right to develop a professional activity, with due respect to their physical, intellectual, and psychological conditions (Article 26).

When an elderly person is admitted to any work or job, there may not be discrimination and the setting of a maximum age limit, including in government recruitment examinations, except in cases where the nature of the position so requires (Article 27, Estatuto do Idoso, 2003, p. 1–4).

Although organizations do not appear in Article 3 of the aforementioned statute as one of the entities with legal obligations to ensure the rights of this age group, we defend here that, as part of the society, organizations have a decisive role in ensuring the rights of the elderly, as well as in fighting age discrimination (as indicated in Articles 26 and 27 of the Statute of the Elderly).

It is important to remember that Article 28 of this law assigns the State an important role in preparing the elderly for the labor market, considering the creation and promotion of “specialized professionalization programs for the elderly, taking advantage of their potentials and skills for regular and paid activities; preparing workers for retirement [...], and encouraging private companies to admit elderly people to work” (Estatuto do Idoso, 2003, p. 5).

In general, Neumann and Albert (2018) consider that, in Brazil, the implementation of elderly rights is still slow.

França et al. (2017) claim that in Brazil, where population ageing accelerates at a fast pace, it requires several measures to be taken by organizations since soon the older group will have the greatest representation. They developed a scale for measuring ageism in the Brazilian context and identified different attitudes towards ageing in the organizational context among different groups in a survey conducted in 2017 with 600 workers from all regions of the country. Younger and male workers have more negative

attitudes towards aging, while women, older workers and older workers with less education have more positive attitudes towards aging.

Such provisions may very well be understood as actions inherent in age management at the political level. However, as demonstrated by the European experience, although the legal provision is necessary and relevant for the promotion of active and successful ageing and fighting ageism (Silva & Helal, 2019), it is insufficient and incomplete if effective participation of the society and organizations in this challenge is not pursued. However, the UN and WHO have identified four main action areas to promote healthy ageing; one of these is to combat ageism (Rochon, Kalia & Higgs, 2021).

3. Final Considerations and Potential Contribution

Affected by this social change, organizations in the world of work are faced with several challenges, examples of impact experienced by organizations in various parts of the world: the simultaneous retirement of large groups of workers, the potential lack of qualified candidates, as well as the increase in the average age of the workforce. Based on the analysis of this social issue, it appears that aging is also associated with bottlenecks in the field of people management, often designed for young workers, and not for all age groups. In other words, organizations demonstrate that they are not prepared for this new context of age diversity (Boehm, Schröder & Kunze, 2013).

Therefore, we argue here for the need to deconstruct these organizational policies and practices conceived on stereotyped bases that discriminate and make the older worker invisible, while at the same time overvaluing the young worker. The alternative to this management approach focused mainly on young workers is the concept of age management (Boehm, Schröder & Kunze, 2013).

Age management policies and practices emerged based on the discussion on social responsibility and organizational diversity. From the understanding that age represents a pillar of diversity present in society and organizations, several actors started to design solutions to the challenge of population aging and the fight against age discrimination.

From the perspective of the social role of research, the contribution of the discussion proposed here is to shed light on the issue of the aging of the workforce and the role of organizations in facing the dilemmas and challenges arising from it, with emphasis on age discrimination. In this context, it is essential to re-discuss the policies and practices for managing people, which are sometimes inappropriate, since they are commonly conceived for an overvalued young workforce, predominantly under 45.

Therefore, there is an obvious need to take a closer look at older workers, as they currently receive little attention in Business Administration studies and the daily routine of organizations. In the meantime, an expansion of people management policies and practices seems to be necessary, seeking to deconstruct and combat the negative stereotypes attributed to the aging worker, a reflection of the ageism rooted in contemporary societies (Helal & Viana, 2021).

Another contribution of the study is the argument that the phenomenon of aging has specific characteristics in Brazil, a country with a collectivist trait in which intergenerational affective-moral-financial responsibility assumes contours not seen in individualist countries such as the Anglo-Saxon ones (countries of Oceania, North of America and UK), which are still hegemonic in the studies on age management in the last four decades.

The argument that the phenomenon of aging has specific characteristics in Brazil is supported by the relevance of the context to the question raised. Because, as Boehm, Schröder and Kunze (2013) add, there may even be convergence factors between nations, however, the national institutional context is important in relation to how and why organizations design their specific approaches to management and people management. In other words, an explanation for why Brazilian organizations have not yet awakened to the management of age diversity is found in the Institutional Theory, which argues that despite global converging movements—an aging workforce—organizational policies and practices remain different between countries, because of the influence of national institutions (Boehm, Schröder & Kunze, 2013).

It is also important to remember the benefits of age diversity in organizations, as indicated by Walker (2005), i. e. improved organizational performance; team motivation; stimulation of creative thinking; attracting and retaining talented employees; promoting equity and social justice; coexistence of heterogeneous teams; exchange and transmission of experiences, perspectives, skills, and know-how between generations, and fight against age discrimination (Walker, 2005).

Finally, the role of gender must be taken into account in this debate on age management. As emphasized by Cebulla et al. (2007, p. 865), “working longer in life may well lead to an extension or perpetuation of unequal domestic divisions of labor”. It is not just about seeing aging and longevity at work, but the factors that particularize the experiences of aging workers, including gender. This implies more attention to how gender roles are maintained, intensified, or even challenged throughout professional life, and the need to better understand the complexity of work constructions in old age and the work-life balance (Loretto & Vickerstaff, 2015).

The theoretical considerations presented here are based on the assumption that age management is not only an instrumental and prescriptive tool. On the contrary, it is a means for organizations to help address age discrimination, and to assume their role in facing the challenge of population aging.

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