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# Worker-related ageism: a systematic review of empirical research

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## Abstract

With the demographic and workforce ageing, ageism has been reflected in the work context. Ageism can be defined as stereotypes, prejudice and/or age-based discrimination. It is a form of devaluation and non-inclusion of workers, which materialises in a decent work deficit. It affects workers and organisations. The present literature review aims to provide a comprehensive and accurate picture of empirical research on worker-related ageism. We searched the word *ageism* in the title or abstract of articles indexed in the EBSCOhost and Web of Science. Fifty-eight peer-reviewed articles were retrieved (March 2020). Some of these articles report more than one empirical study. Thirty-two articles include quantitative design studies, 20 qualitative design, three mixed methods, two experimental and three instrument development and/or validation. The focus of the studies is mostly about negative ageism on older workers. The main findings present several facets of ageism and show different experiences, whether implicit or explicit. Ageism acts in a plurality of aspects, such as obstacles in the hiring process, employability and performance evaluation of older workers. We found research gaps such as determinants and interventions aiming at ageism prevention and proposed corresponding future research.

**Keywords:** ageism; workers; employees; workplace; workforce; labour market

## Introduction

This study aims to characterise the empirical research on worker-related ageism by undertaking a systematic review of the literature and deepening the conceptual approach of the concept. Furthermore, we aim to identify the existing gaps in the research carried out so far and state new conceptual propositions and new lines of research. We offer new inputs to those who intend to design and implement interventions to combat worker-related ageism.

The study of ageism in the scientific literature started in 1969 when Butler (1969: 243) coined it for the first time as ‘age discrimination or ageism, prejudice by one age group toward other age groups’. Despite this definition, Butler’s article related to the elderly population and the early studies were focused only on the ageism

against older people (Butler, 1980; Palmore, 2001, 2004; North and Fiske, 2013). Furthermore, the first empirical research article on worker-related ageism appeared only in 1983 and the second one ten years later.

The main components of ageism are discrimination due to age, or the prejudice of one age group against other age groups, based on systematic stereotyping (Butler, 1969; Palmore, 1999), which according to the definition of Jost and Hamilton (2005) is: fixed ideas, beliefs, which attribute psychological characteristics to others, and which justify the acceptance or rejection of a group. In its complexity it includes cognitive (perceptions and images of others based on age), affective (prejudice) and behavioural (discrimination) components, is expressed positively and negatively, can be implicit and explicit, and is present at the micro (intrapersonal), meso (social networks) and macro (institutional/organisational) levels. It can be conscious and include exploiting the vulnerabilities of the older people or the young, or be unconscious and inadvertent (International Longevity Center USA, 2005).

The unprecedented demographic changes as a result of increased longevity and the extremely low birth and death rates, especially in Europe and North America, led to the ageing of the global population (European Commission, 2015b; Rouzet *et al.*, 2019; United Nations (UN), 2019a, 2019b). The proportion between the active population and people aged 65 and over has been steadily declining for several decades. This context profoundly challenges the sustainability and management of organisations that promote and generate paid work, health care, social security and retirement (Lagacé *et al.*, 2015; Gahan *et al.*, 2017; Rouzet *et al.*, 2019). Older workers tend to prolong their working lives. Often they find in ageism an obstacle to their wellbeing, to productive employment, to training and qualification opportunities (Unson and Richardson, 2013; Cebola, 2016; Garcia *et al.*, 2017), and job satisfaction, commitment and involvement (Macdonald and Levy, 2016).

Ageism is a transversal phenomenon. It is observed in the work context in different countries, expressed in many ways. For example, in discrimination regarding selection and access to job vacancies (Drydakis *et al.*, 2017; Garcia *et al.*, 2017; Jones *et al.*, 2017), pressure to retire (Thorsen *et al.*, 2012), negative stereotypical images, devaluation of older workers (McMullin and Marshall, 2001), relational discomfort (Dixon, 2012), and the stress that arises from the imposition of the youth of the image of women, particularly on television (Spedale *et al.*, 2014). Regarding younger workers, ageism can be expressed in the lack of confidence in their age/experience (Loretto *et al.*, 2000), in not being taken too seriously (Jyrkinen and McKie, 2012) or in barriers to promotion (Duncan and Loretto, 2004). Ageism can be expressed in legally prohibited behaviours (hard ageism) or in behaviours that, not being prohibited, affect their targets negatively (soft ageism), often in the interpersonal sphere (Stypinska and Turek, 2017). The concept evolved and is no longer described or studied only concerning elderly people (Palmore, 2001, 2004; Hooyman, 2003; Butler, 2005; Levy and Macdonald, 2016) but also concerning the younger (European Social Survey, 2012; Raymer *et al.*, 2017). Ageism can also have a positive characteristic that seems empathetic but is paternalistic and discriminatory instead, leading to negative ageism (Iversen *et al.*, 2009; Lagacé *et al.*, 2015; Chonody, 2016).

Ageism being depreciation and non-inclusion that affects workers results in a decent work deficit (International Labour Office, 2001). Therefore, its importance, combat and concern are expressed in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (International Labour Office, 1998) and in the Decent Work Agenda (Ferraro *et al.*, 2018; International Labour Organization, nd). The Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015) also express this concern, namely in Goals 3, 4 and 8, focusing on social inclusion and decent work.

The psychological and sociological approach to ageism, at the individual level, can be made by the theory of terror management: from death – to which ageing leads – in a response of avoidance and detachment; from the threat of deterioration of the physical body and physical appearance that reminds us of our mortal nature (which opposes the current apology for physical health and youth); and from insignificance, through the loss of skills and resources that conditions positive self-esteem. This approach is complemented by two other theories, the stereotype embodiment theory – age stereotypes and negative attitudes internalised and incorporated throughout life; and the social identity theory – the identification related to interpersonal and inter-group behaviours (Lev *et al.*, 2019).

The psychological approach explains ageism in the intrapsychic reasons for simplifying reality (uncertainty reduction) and valuing the ingroup (those of the same age) compared to the outgroup (those of other ages, the oldest, the youngest, *etc.*). The sociological approach highlights the importance of the context in the following ways: (a) different places where it occurs (workplace, family, society); and (b) cultural and cross-cultural perspective (local, regional, national and/or international).

Ageism can hit all age groups, although there is a great deal of agreement that older people are more significant victims of this scourge with the ageing of the population. However, reverse ageism – ageism directed at young people – is also an important issue. Some authors even claim that younger people have related more perceived age discrimination than older ones (Bratt *et al.*, 2018).

Given the ageism-related problems for individuals, organisations and society, its combat requires a comprehensive study that describes, maps, explains, and prevents or remedies it. Empirical research undertaken so far is enough for deserving a literature review, and it is of great use to public policy and intervention. It is helpful to take stock of the empirical research and propose new avenues for future developments. Jones *et al.* (2017) conducted a meta-analysis in which they sought to understand the relationship between prejudice and discrimination in the workplace concerning gender, age and race. However, their target was not workers. Additionally, more than double were students, and the rest were undifferentiated. Their meta-analysis is essential to understanding the prejudice–discrimination relationship in the workplace. However, it does not address the main findings and purposes of the empirical research conducted on worker-related ageism.

## Method

### *Literature search and inclusion criteria*

This systematic review follows the guidelines by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) at the University of York (CRD, 2009) and the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Moher

*et al.*, 2009). This review includes only empirical research reported in English, focused on worker-related ageism (workers/labour market/workplace/workforce) published in peer-reviewed journals.

### **Procedure**

We searched the electronic academic databases EBSCOhost (Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Directory of Open Access Journals, ERIC and Science Direct) and Web of Science (Core Collection) until March 2020.

Figure 1 shows the different combinations of keywords applied. We retrieved 381 articles after duplicates were removed. After all rounds and eliminating the articles that did not meet the eligibility criteria, we retained 58 articles for analysis. Figure 1 describes the process.

## **Results**

### **Study characteristics**

Research on ageism in the labour market is relatively recent. Most studies analysed were published post-2000, with only 15 articles before 2010 and just three before 2000. Most of the studies were from the United States of America (USA) (12) and the United Kingdom (UK) (nine). The others were from the following countries: Australia, Canada (four), Belgium, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden (three), Finland (two), Brazil, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, India, Japan, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Finland and UK, The Netherlands and Germany, UK and Hong Kong, Portugal and Brazil, the USA and Canada, and the USA and New Zealand (one), as shown in the online supplementary material.

The sample sizes are highly diverse, ranging from one to 4,852, and are composed of applicants, job searchers, workers, recruitment texts, government web pages and even a text of a final judgement of an employment tribunal court case. Ten articles had research with samples aged explicitly over 45. Just two had ages specifically less than 50, one article had a sample above 18 years old, and three studies had students' samples (workers or with work experience). In addition, 35 per cent of samples are under 100, 32 per cent from 100 to 500, 15 per cent from 501 to 1,000 and 18 per cent above 1,000.

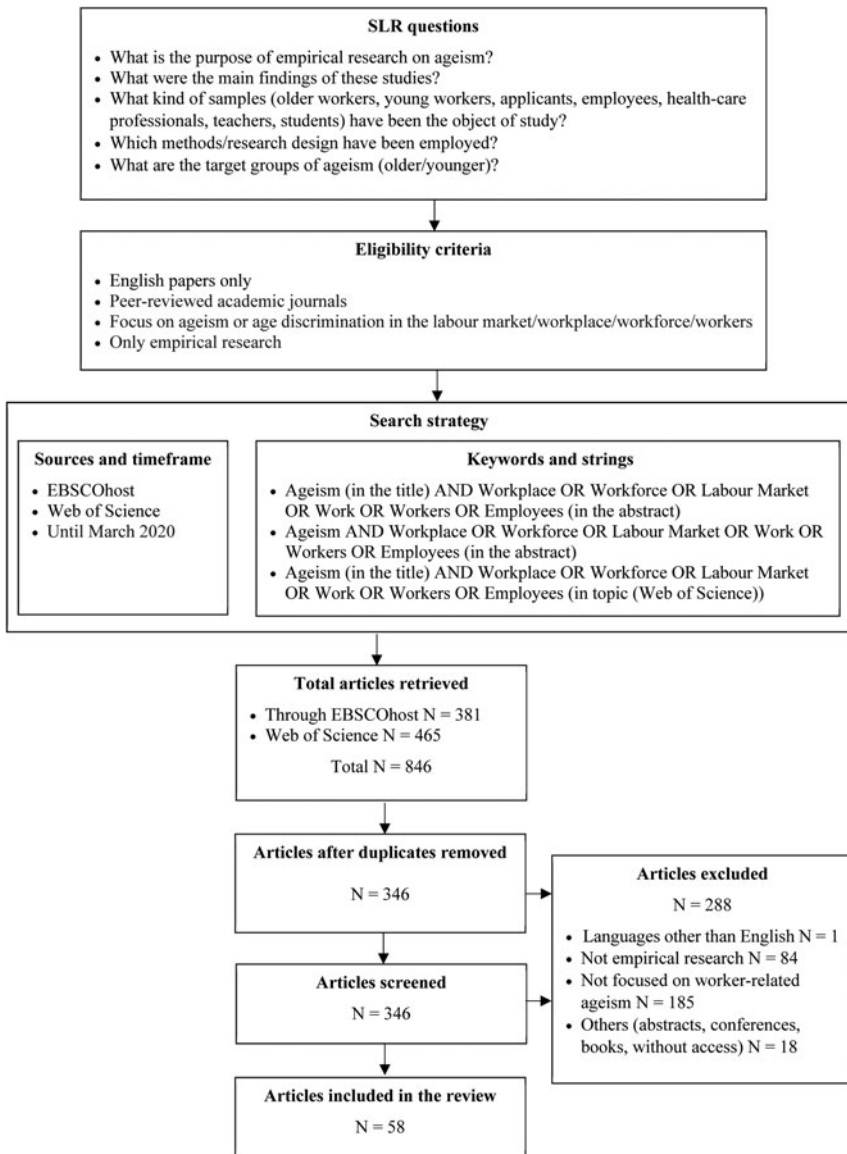
Most studies adopted a quantitative approach (33), followed by those using a qualitative approach (21). In their article Iweins *et al.* (2012) have two studies, one used a quantitative approach and the other adopted an experimental approach. Two studies followed a mixed research design and three reported instrument development.

### **Research objectives and main findings**

Considering the objectives and the main findings of the studies, the following seven main categories emerged.

#### **Category 1**

The most represented category is diagnosis studies. Twenty-seven articles report research aiming to identify and describe the prevalence of ageism (Table 1). All studies found some ageism in the corresponding samples, going from the hiring



**Figure 1.** Flow diagram of article selection.

Note: SLR: systematic literature review.

process and employability, the severity with which the performance of older workers is evaluated, to retirement, making salient that the psychological process behind ageism crosses all the working lifespan.

Some of the studies relate sociodemographic variables to ageism, showing that gender and race can potentiate ageism. The type of ageism identified is implicit and explicit, and the studies suggest that it is a cross-phenomenon present in

**Table 1.** Diagnosis studies on ageism

Reference and place	Objectives	Main findings on ageism
Ahmed <i>et al.</i> (2012); Sweden	To investigate whether people are discriminated against in the hiring process based on their age.	Younger applicants receive more call-backs for interviews.
Allen <i>et al.</i> (2006); USA	To investigate the standpoint of female information technology employees related to workplace barriers and voluntary turnover.	Ageism emerged in the implicit map of women working in information technology as a promotion barrier and ‘had an impact on Lack of Respect’.
Amorim <i>et al.</i> (2019); Brazil	To identify the ageism and prejudice against workers ( $\geq 50$ years old) in the Brazilian labour market.	Some companies hire fewer old workers than the market.
Brodmerkel and Barker (2019); Australia	‘To understand the lived experience of older creatives in advertising agencies in their own terms and in its richness and complexity’.	Ageism is implicit, older workers have ‘the need to perform the immaterial labour of embodying specific forms of youthfulness valorised by their workplace cultures’.
Challe (2017); France	To identify the differences between labour market participation of older workers in France and age.	Significant discrimination against older workers. Discrimination decreased significantly during the crisis period. This might be interpreted as an apparent non-degradation, in relative terms, of the employment rates of older workers compared to those of workers in the median age of the population during the crisis.
Drydakis <i>et al.</i> (2017); UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether ageism is prevalent in the UK at the initial stage of the hiring process.</li> <li>• Whether race can moderate the relationship between age and labour market outcomes.</li> </ul>	<p>Older people have lower access to vacancies and sorting in lower-paid jobs.</p> <p>A minority racial background exacerbates both penalties – lower access to vacancies and sorting in lower-paid jobs.</p>
Duncan and Loretto (2004); UK	How ageism affects different age categories of employees (gender).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees over 45 and under 25 were most prone to negative age discrimination.</li> <li>• Men: Negative treatment related to pay, benefits or job deployment (below 40).</li> </ul>

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued.)

Reference and place	Objectives	Main findings on ageism
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women: barriers to promotion; less-favourable treatment and more negative attitudes resulting from their (perceived) youth.</li> <li>• Over-40s: women have unequal access to promotion.</li> <li>• Older men and women: negative barriers to training.</li> </ul>
Gringart <i>et al.</i> (2012); Australia	Western Australian nursing recruiters' attitudes towards older nurses.	Negative attitudes of nursing recruiters towards older nurses.
Handy and Davy (2007); New Zealand	Relationship between mature female jobseekers and private employment agencies in the Auckland region.	Gendered ageism based on women's 'appearance and the perception that they might not relate well to younger staff and have deficiencies in technical skills'.
Jyrkinen and McKie (2012); Finland and UK	Intersectionality of gender and age in work and careers of women managers.	Women experience ageism and lookism.
Jyrkinen (2014); Finland	Intersections of gender and age in the careers of senior-level women managers in private companies and third-sector organisations.	Gendered ageism is the prevalence and takes place at many moments of the careers.
Kanagasabai (2016); India	'To map the intersections of ageism, sexism, and capitalism in these neoliberal newsroom settings', by analysing 'how young female journalists working in Indian English-language television (TV) newsrooms negotiate feminism in relation to their profession'.	'...ageism was more pronounced in the television newsrooms...' but, 'ageism does play out in subtler ways in print newsrooms as well'. '...solidarity is built in female-only spaces of camaraderie behind the scenes of corporate TV newsrooms.'
Kaye and Alexander, 1995); USA	To examine the 'placement experiences of older adults at four senior employment programs in the greater Philadelphia metropolitan area'.	Discrimination was not perceived to be a major impediment. When it is perceived, it is 'reflected in reduced salaries, fewer promotions, and inadequacies in fringe benefit packages'.
Lagacé <i>et al.</i> (2015); Canada	To understand the arguments on which the Canadian institutional discourse is built, how the Canadian government frames issues around ageing, work and older workers.	'Underlying standards of positive ageing models, which may generate, perhaps inadvertently, a new form of ageism by creating intra- and intergenerational divides in the workplace.'

Loretto <i>et al.</i> (2000); UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To what extent younger adults experience ageism in employment.</li><li>• How salient the issue of ageism is among younger adults.</li><li>• To what extent younger adults are themselves ageist in their attitudes and beliefs about older employees.</li><li>• The degree of cross-generational solidarity and intergenerational tensions in the younger adults.</li></ul>	'The term ageism should refer to any form of age-based discrimination, irrespective of age.' Thirty-five per cent of the students who had working experience had experienced age-related discrimination; given that 'the majority were in favour of legislation to tackle ageism, particularly that which would challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviour'.
Lössbroek and Radl (2019); The Netherlands and Germany	Gender differences in older employees' training participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Older women more often pay for enrolment in educational programmes themselves.'</li><li>• 'Managerial ageism primarily targets older women, excluding female employees from the training opportunities available to their comparable male colleagues.'</li><li>• For on-the-job training: the level of training is higher for older men than for older women in the departments that have a female manager.</li></ul>
Lucas (1993); UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Whether hospitality employers understood the nature of the demographic time bomb and to shed some light on the employment strategies being developed by these employers to counteract the demographic change.'</li><li>• 'To review organizations' recruitment policies in changed (adverse) economic conditions against longer-term labour market changes with particular reference to older workers.'</li></ul>	'Incomplete understanding of the labour force is resulting in too much emphasis being placed on initiatives to enable businesses to attract young people.'
Malinen and Johnston (2013); New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implicit attitudes towards older workers and their malleability.</li><li>• To compare implicit-explicit attitude.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Negative implicit attitudes towards older workers remained stable even when positive examples of older workers were made salient.'</li><li>• 'Explicit attitude measures showed no bias against older workers, and these were easier to modify.'</li></ul>

(Continued)



Table 1. (Continued.)

Reference and place	Objectives	Main findings on ageism
McGann <i>et al.</i> (2016); Australia	How age and gender interact to shape older jobseekers' experiences of age discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'There has been a considerable decline in national levels of perceived ageism generally among older men relative to older women.'</li> <li>• 'Women were significantly more likely than men to cite ageism as a barrier to finding work.'</li> <li>• 'The nature of ageism experienced by older women is qualitatively different from that experienced by men.'</li> </ul>
McMullin and Marshall (2001); Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether ideological and/or behavioural dimensions of ageism are at play within the lives of garment workers in Montreal.</li> <li>• To assess ageism from the point of view of older workers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age relations shape both the ideological and behavioural components of ageism.</li> <li>• Older garment workers believed that their fate was linked to ageism and that their work experience was discounted by management.</li> <li>• Managers seemed to use stereotypical images to discourage older workers and did not organise work routines to facilitate the adaptation of them.</li> <li>• Workers implicated the owners, managers and themselves as being ageist.</li> </ul>
McVittie <i>et al.</i> (2003); UK	To 'analyse the actions being performed' by human resources 'when they described their organizations' current employment practices in the context of equal opportunities and the employment of older workers': (a) 'commitment to equal opportunities for older workers', (b) 'the age balance of the workforces employed by the organizations' and (c) 'the age balances which were described' by them.	'New ageism offers a readily available set of discursive resources which justify the existing marginalization of older workers within organizations and have the ideological effect of maintaining existing inequalities.'
Ojala <i>et al.</i> (2016); Finland	To better understand the diversity of ageism, its contextual variations and gender-specific dynamics in people's daily lives, this study focuses on how different interactional contexts shape men's perceptions of ageism.	Men are not totally immune to ageism. Negative ageism took place in institutional contexts, in contrast to family contexts, where positive ageism was seen as a favourable feature of intergenerational relations rather than discrimination.

Rupp <i>et al.</i> (2006); USA	Employee's age and manager ageism interactions on the severity of recommendations about employee's performance errors.	'Older employees received more severe recommendations for poor performance than did their younger counterparts. Also, some ageist attitudes moderated the relationship between age and performance recommendations. Stability attributions mediated the relationship of employee age on endorsement of the more punitive recommendations.'
Solem (2016); Norway	To explore 'the cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of ageism in working life in Norway'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Age discrimination is not very frequent.</li><li>• Employed people 'have experienced a little more often than managers that age discrimination occurs' and women more than men.</li><li>• 'Managers think of workers above age 50 as performing at least as well as younger workers. Yet, managers tend to hesitate to call in applicants in their late 50s, to job interviews.'</li><li>• 'Seniors' and 'older workers' have higher scores for retention than for recruitment.</li></ul>
Spedale <i>et al.</i> (2014); UK	To study gendered ageism in the workplace by investigating how the routine of day-parting in broadcasting participates in the social construction of an ideology of 'youthfulness' that contributes to inequality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'The ideology of youthfulness was constituted through discursive strategies of nomination and predication that relied on an inherently ageist and sexist lexical register of "brand refreshment and rejuvenation".'</li><li>• '...in the legitimate and authoritative version of the truth constructed in the Tribunal's final judgment, ageism discursively prevailed over sexism as a form of oppression at work.'</li></ul>
Stypinska and Turek (2017); Poland	To characterise ageism as hard and soft in the labour market and correlations with sociodemographics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Soft discrimination was experienced more often than hard discrimination with higher occurrences among women than men, people in precarious job situations or residents of urban areas.</li><li>• Education played no role in perceived discrimination.</li></ul>

(Continued)

**Table 1.** (Continued.)

Reference and place	Objectives	Main findings on ageism
Wilson and Roscigno (2017); USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To know more about the consequences of age and ageism for minority workers and susceptibilities to downward mobility.</li> <li>• Coupling insights regarding race with recent work on employment-based age discrimination and the extent to which African American and Whites, aged 55 and older, experience job loss across time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Substantial support for an age-minority vulnerability nexus.’</li> <li>• African American older workers ‘compared to their White gender counterparts have significantly higher rates of downward mobility’, specifically, among older men.</li> <li>• ‘This pattern of inequality is similarly found among women, although race differences tend to be smaller.’</li> </ul>

Notes: UK: United Kingdom. USA: United States of America.

multiple cultures. The older worker is the main target of ageism, followed by the younger. Cortina *et al.* (2013), Kaye and Alexander (1995) and Solem (2016) found not frequent or even no evidence of perceived discrimination at work. Moreover, there is no evidence of age-based selective incivility – which could be, in the first case, the result of relatively young samples. Furthermore, McGann *et al.* (2016: 375) found ‘a considerable decline in national levels of perceived ageism generally among older men relative to older women’.

### Category 2

Seventeen articles are focused on expanding the nomological network of ageism (Table 2). The variables studied can be framed within five types: (a) demographics (*e.g.* gender); (b) psychological characteristics or states (*e.g.* dual identity); (c) organisational procedures, processes and policy (*e.g.* organisational multi-age perspective); (d) interaction practices (*e.g.* intergenerational contact); and (e) context (*e.g.* labour market characteristics).

The main findings suggest that age (and gender-based) discrimination at work may be particularly detrimental for mental health (Harnois and Bastos, 2018; Shippee *et al.*, 2019). However, policies favouring older workers, or preferential treatment, increased negative perceptions towards them, provoking ageism (Iweins *et al.*, 2012). Younger workers also can suffer ageism (Raymer *et al.*, 2017; Meinich and Sang, 2018), despite the fewer empirical studies retrieved. Ageism affects workers, yet it is also a challenge for organisations whose workers affected by it are more prone to voluntary turnover, negative job satisfaction and job commitment (Soidre, 2005; Macdonald and Levy, 2016; van der Horst, 2019). These factors could have profound implications for an excellent working environment and productivity. However, the high identification of workers with different age groups and the perceived procedural justice are critical mediators in ageism (Iweins *et al.*, 2013).

### Category 3

Five articles focus on coping strategies that are used by those who are the ageism target. Those strategies can be: the care and maintenance of health and wellbeing of the body and mind, use of external memory aids, change of working hours or flexible working hours, the transition to less physically demanding tasks, plans to avoid future job limitations, flexible attitudes to change, optimism, being willing and open to training, finding an organisation with a compatible value set that recognises prior experience but also provides growth opportunities, work in family and support environments, or early retirement, and in the case of young women, the adoption of less feminine and young clothing and behaviours (*see* Table 3). The social construction of the older worker and even the self-categorisation of older workers contribute to discrimination against them and negative attitudes towards work (Desmette and Gaillard, 2008).

### Category 4

Three articles refer to instrument development (Table 4). Only two different ageism instruments were reported. One is the Nordic Age Discrimination Scale, from Norway, for monitoring age discrimination in the workplace among elderly

**Table 2.** Studies on the nomological network of ageism

Reference and place	Objectives	Main findings on ageism
Dixon (2012); USA	To explore how age was a central factor in describing sexuality in the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age stereotypes emerged.</li> <li>• Older co-workers are kept out of certain conversations and considered that they lose their sexual identity.</li> </ul>
Harnois and Bastos (2018); USA	The extent to which discrimination and harassment contribute to gendered health disparities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men and women report similar levels of workplace ageism.</li> <li>• Women: the combination of age and gender discrimination may be particularly detrimental for mental health.</li> <li>• Multiple forms of discrimination associated with decreased physical health.</li> </ul>
Iweins <i>et al.</i> (2012); Belgium	Whether age-related preferential treatment reinforces ageist attitudes in the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Policies favouring 50 years old workers increased negative perceptions toward them.’</li> <li>• ‘Compared to a merit-based treatment, a preferential treatment increased negative perceptions, emotions, and behaviours toward an old target.’</li> </ul>
Iweins <i>et al.</i> (2013); Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence of both intergenerational contact and organisational multi-age perspective on ageism and attitudes at work.</li> <li>• Ageist attitudes at work by considering stereotypes of, behaviours toward, and emotions about older workers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workers’ dual identity (high identification with both age group and the organisation) mediates the effects of context (intergenerational contact and organisational multi-age perspective) on positive and negative ageism.</li> <li>• Favourable intergenerational context and organisational multi-age perspective are positively associated with favourable perceptions of older workers, positive emotions about them and facilitation behaviours; and negatively associated with intentions to quit.</li> <li>• Dual identity mediates the relationship between (a) intergenerational contact and organisational multi-age perspective and (b) stereotypes; and (c) intentions to quit. Procedural justice appeared to be a complementary mediator in explaining the effects of a multi-age diversity and organisational multi-age perspective, and stereotypes towards older workers and marginally on intentions to quit.</li> </ul>

Lagacé <i>et al.</i> (2019); Canada	To what extent positive intergenerational climate, and knowledge sharing and donating practices, contribute to lower levels of perceived ageism.	'The perception of a positive intergenerational workplace climate seems to decrease feelings of ageism and increase satisfaction as well as successful aging at work' while it 'influences knowledge donating and collecting practices and vice versa.'
Macdonald and Levy (2016); USA	Perceived age discrimination 'that may buffer or hinder job satisfaction, commitment, and engagement.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Age discrimination at work was negatively related to job satisfaction and job commitment; however, it was not significantly related to job engagement.'</li><li>• 'Greater age identification overall was positively correlated with job satisfaction, commitment, and engagement.'</li></ul>
Meinich and Sang (2018); Norway	To discuss the intergenerational contact and its relationship to ageism, to understand their mechanisms and impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Age discrimination is perceived by both older and younger workers.'</li><li>• Ageist stereotypes, implicit and explicit.</li><li>• 'The perceived strengths of younger workers were often associated to be the weaknesses of older workers and vice versa.'</li><li>• 'Institutional-level ageism operated within TechNor1, through mandatory retirement at 67 years old; despite the official retirement age in Norway of 70 years'.</li><li>• 'Ageism was exercised by managers who restricted opportunities for employees over 45.'</li><li>• Being too young was often articulated in terms of inexperience.</li></ul>
Raymer <i>et al.</i> (2017); USA	Origins and consequences of reverse ageism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Compared with Millennials, Boomers and Xers view "the typical young professional" more stereotypically.'</li><li>• 'Age moderated the relationship between endorsements of generational stereotypes and assessments of work skills.'</li><li>• Over 60% of older employees describe their young colleagues negatively, and 30% of young employees experience reverse age discrimination.</li></ul>

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued.)

Reference and place	Objectives	Main findings on ageism
Redman and Snape (2002); UK and Hong Kong	To examine stereotypical beliefs and discriminatory attitudes towards teachers over 50.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stereotypical beliefs about older teachers consists of two dimensions: ‘work effectiveness’ – job skills and work attitudes – and ‘adaptability’ – ‘ability to adapt to change, to earn and be trained, and to accept new technology.’</li> <li>• ‘Age is a positive predictor of both work effectiveness and adaptability.’</li> </ul>
Rego et al. (2018); Portugal and Brazil	‘Brazilian managers’ attitudes toward older workers, and how those attitudes explain HRM decisions in hypothetical scenarios.’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Managers’ attitudes toward older workers explain the managers’ decisions, but this relationship is a multiplex one.’</li> <li>• Despite ‘expressing positive attitudes toward older workers, a significant number of managers chose a younger one even when the older worker is described as more productive.’</li> <li>• ‘Ageism in the workplace is multi-targeted, in that it discriminates against individuals from different age strata.’</li> <li>• ‘Managers’ ageism is affected by their own age.’</li> <li>• This ‘study does not corroborate the double jeopardy for women’.</li> </ul>
Shippee et al. (2019); USA and Canada	To examine ‘the role of work-related perceived age discrimination on women’s mental health over the life course and tests whether financial strain mediates this relationship’.	‘Women who experienced age discrimination had greater overall depressive symptoms but not after controlling for financial strain ... Age discrimination affected financial strain, which, in turn, increased women’s depressive symptoms. Women who reported age discrimination had lower odds of being in higher categories of overall life satisfaction; financial strain partially mediated the relationship but age discrimination remained a significant predictor.’
Soidre (2005); Sweden	To find out ‘the factors that were associated with preferences for ‘early retirement’ or ‘late exit’ from paid work’.	‘In some of these cases, the “push” factor’ that made men feel that they were unappreciated at work and wish for an early exit was related to ageism.
Thorsen et al. (2012); Denmark	To examine the association between psychosocial factors (particularly ageism) at the workplace and older workers’ retirement plans, while taking health and workability of the employee into account.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageism is associated with older male workers’ retirement plans. “Ageism” was a significant predictor in the male subgroup, but not at all in the female subgroup.’</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘The gender difference is found in the effect of “ageism” and not in the prevalence of ageism.’ ‘A part of the explanation is that women on average retire at a younger age than men – hence, they retire before ageism becomes a notable issue.’</li> </ul>
van der Horst (2019); The Netherlands	‘To assess the degree to which internalised ageism is related to one’s preferred retirement age.’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only women who consider themselves old want to retire earlier.</li> <li>• A consistent relationship between health pessimism and preferred retirement age.</li> </ul>
Wanner and McDonald (1983); USA	To determine the degree to which older people employed full-time experience a decline in earnings not related to a decline in productivity.	‘Older persons do not earn less than younger workers because they are unable, as are other minorities, to transform training, occupational level, or education into higher earnings; instead, they earn less almost exclusively because they have been in the labour force longer.’
Wolfram (2017); UK	‘Whether the association between modern prejudice and strength of conjunction error was weaker for gender-untypical than for gender-typical targets.’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern ageism is correlated with greater strength of conjunction error. But it was not shown to be a significant predictor of conjunction error.</li> <li>• No evidence ‘that different types of prejudice’ (racism, sexism, ageism) ‘are equally relevant to strength of conjunction error’.</li> </ul>
Yamada <i>et al.</i> (2005); Japan	To examine whether the existing research on organisational commitment applies to older employees, whether measures that are unique to older employees have significant relationships to their organisational commitment and whether the effects of these factors differ by retirement status.	Negative ageism and employer-sponsored programmes for older employees had significant relationships to organisational commitment.

Notes: UK: United Kingdom. USA: United States of America. HRM: human resources management.



**Table 3.** Studies on coping with ageism

Reference and place	Objectives	Main findings on ageism
Clendon and Walker (2016); New Zealand	To identify why some nurses cope well with continuing to work as they age, and others struggle.	Ageism in the workplace is implicit, faced by nurses in the latter stages of their careers.
Desmette and Gaillard (2008); Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To analyse strategies that older workers are likely to adopt to deal with age-related stigmatisation in the workplace.</li> <li>Relationship between perceived old worker identity and attitudes towards early retirement and commitment to work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ageism is implicit.</li> <li>Early retirement intentions revealed that cognitive identification with age-related peers increased the wish to retire as soon as possible.</li> <li>Only complete retirement was predicted by cognitive identification.</li> <li>Intergenerational competition was more likely to be adopted by participants who were in poor health.</li> <li>The work-to-private conflict did not predict the redefinition of ageing.</li> </ul>
Krekula (2019); Sweden	Conditions for extended working life from an organising perspective.	'Conceptions of career moves as being on- or off-time are constructed parallel with age-normality constructions, and that the temporal order constitutes a disciplining element for the employees; it makes individuals plan for avoiding future job limitations as a result of ageism.'
Unson and Richardson (2013); USA and New Zealand	To examine 'the barriers faced, the goals selected, and the optimization and compensation strategies of older workers in relation to career change'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ageism is faced as an external barrier, especially in finding work.</li> <li>Strategies to cope: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation: sometimes for about 15–20 years prior and, also, being able to seize the moment.</li> <li>Flexible attitudes to change, optimism, being willing and open to training, and a concern to make the most of their remaining time alive. The support of others, including family, colleagues and managers.</li> <li>Finding an organisation with a compatible value set that recognised prior experience but also provided opportunities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

		for growth and development together with flexible work schedules.
Worth (2016); Canada	To examine specific instances of agency, power and privilege in the contestation of age and gender stereotypes in young women's working life stories, within the wider context of labour market precarity and everyday sexism and ageism in the workplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Some millennial women had some power to be seen differently and changed themselves to avoid negative stereotypes. Many aimed at portraying themselves as less girlie at work, developing work identities that were perceived as older and less feminine through dress, speech and behaviour.'</li><li>• 'Some women with particular kinds of privilege are able to challenge everyday age and gender discrimination, carving out work spaces where stereotypes are contested.'</li></ul>

Note: USA: United States of America.

**Table 4.** Instrument development studies

Reference and place	Objectives	Main findings on ageism
Carral and Alcover (2019); Spain	Spanish preliminary validation of the Nordic Age Discrimination Scale (NADS)	The Spanish NADS meets standard psychometric properties.
Furunes and Mykletun (2010); Norway	To construct a scale for measuring work-related discrimination of older workers.	The NADS showed adequate psychometrics properties (Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish samples).
King and Bryant (2017); USA	To develop and validate a new tool, the Workplace Intergenerational Climate Scale (WICS).	The findings of these three studies support the reliability and validity of the WICS (five subscales).

Note: USA: United States of America.

workers. The other is the Workplace Intergenerational Climate Scale, from the USA, designed to measure employees' attitudes and perceptions about workers of different ages in the workplace. The third instrument paper is a Spanish validation of the Nordic Age Discrimination Scale.

### Category 5

Three articles focus on a theoretical test (Table 5). Only the Cortina *et al.* (2013) theory of selective incivility is presented as a theory, while the other two studies test theoretical hypotheses.

### Category 6

Two articles try to identify determinants of ageism such as the *ideology of youthfulness* and the *social construction of the 'older worker'*, how they are insinuated, reproduced and manipulated (Riach, 2007; Spedale *et al.*, 2014) (Table 6).

### Category 7

Two articles focus on the managerial strategies to prevent and minimise ageism and its effects (Table 7).

In the analysed articles, some authors adopt definitions of ageism previously presented by other authors, quoting mainly Butler and Palmore (Lucas, 1993; Loretto *et al.*, 2000; McMullin and Marshall, 2001; Rupp *et al.*, 2006; Desmette and Gaillard, 2008; Furunes and Mykletun, 2010; Iweins *et al.*, 2012, 2013; Cortina *et al.*, 2013; Spedale *et al.*, 2014; King and Bryant, 2017; Stypinska and Turek, 2017; Meinich and Sang, 2018; Carral and Alcover, 2019). All these authors present this phenomenon in its complexity (*e.g.* discrimination based on age, stereotypes – positive and negative, stigmatisation, beliefs and attitudes). Although some of these authors (Rupp *et al.*, 2006; Desmette and Gaillard, 2008; Iweins *et al.*, 2012, 2013; Cortina *et al.*, 2013; Stypinska and Turek, 2017) analysed several dimensions of ageism, they only applied those dimensions to elderly people. Challe (2017), Harnois and Bastos (2018), Raymer *et al.* (2017) and Thorsen *et al.* (2012) define ageism as workplace mistreatment and attitudes, and discrimination

**Table 5.** Theoretical tests on ageism

Reference and place	Objectives	Main findings on ageism
Bowman <i>et al.</i> (2017); Australia	To compare two key explanations of the difficulties confronting older jobseekers: human capital theory (focused on the obsolescence of older workers' job skills) and ageism in employment.	Deployment of different forms of capital valued in the labour market influencing older workers' employability.
Cortina <i>et al.</i> (2013); USA	To test aspects of Cortina's theory of selective incivility as a 'modern' manifestation of sexism and racism in the workplace and extend it to ageism.	No age-based selective incivility. One possible explanation for these null effects is that participants in both samples were relatively young (mean ± 40 years old).
Paleari <i>et al.</i> (2019); USA	To test the 'prediction that ageism against older and younger workers was related to prejudiced individuals' behaviours toward colleagues and organizational identification, both directly and indirectly through intergroup anxiety and quality of intergroup contact.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageism was negatively related to organisational identification.</li> <li>• Ageist prejudice was consistently related to the quality of intergroup contact.</li> <li>• The interpersonal level prejudice had an indirect negative impact on behaviours toward colleagues, which was mediated by the quality of intergroup contact.</li> <li>• Higher levels of ageism and of poor quality of intergroup contact corresponded to higher levels of counterproductive behaviours.</li> </ul>
	'To examine whether ageist attitudes toward co-workers predicted decreases in the prejudice holders' reported quality of intergroup contact and organizational identification and increases in their counterproductive behaviors over a 3-month period.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageism has equally detrimental outcomes for both older and younger prejudiced workers.</li> <li>• Ageism was: (a) 'concurrently associated with quality of intergroup contact and significantly predicted it over time'; (b) 'related to counterproductive work behaviors, both concurrently and longitudinally through quality of intergroup contact'; and (c) 'concurrently related to vitality at work and organizational identification and marginally predicted them over time indirectly, through quality of intergroup contact.'</li> </ul>

Note: USA: United States of America.

**Table 6.** Determinants of ageism

Reference and place	Objectives	Main findings on ageism
Riach (2007); UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The social processes that create and reproduce ageist ideologies within an organisational context.</li> <li>• Older worker identity as a discursive phenomenon.</li> </ul>	The 'social construction of the 'older worker' may in itself serve to marginalize and contribute towards age inequalities.'
Spedale <i>et al.</i> (2014); UK	To study gendered ageism in the workplace by investigating how the routine of day-parting in broadcasting participates in the social construction of an ideology of 'youthfulness' that contributes to inequality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'The ideology of youthfulness was constituted through discursive strategies of nomination and predication that relied on an inherently ageist and sexist lexical register of "brand refreshment and rejuvenation".'</li> <li>• 'The ideology of youthfulness was reproduced through a pervasive discursive strategy of combined de-agentialization, abstraction and generalization that maintained power inequality in the workplace by obscuring the agency of the more powerful organizational actors while further marginalizing the weaker ones.' 'Despite evidence that the intersection of age and gender produced qualitatively different experiences for individual organizational actors, in the legitimate and authoritative version of the truth constructed in the Tribunal's final judgment, ageism discursively prevailed over sexism as a form of oppression at work.'</li> </ul>

Note: UK: United Kingdom.

**Table 7.** Ageism management studies

Reference and place	Objectives	Main findings on ageism
Urbancová and Fejfarová (2017); Czech Republic	‘To evaluate the importance of individual visions of age management according to Ilmarinen (2006) and Cimbálníková <i>et al.</i> (2012) in organisations in the Czech Republic and to identify factors that influence the implementation of individual visions in the organisation.’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Age management is employed by only 29.3%’; 43% do not consider age management important and ‘28.1% of respondents said that the culture of the organisation does not support age management’.</li> <li>• ‘The main disadvantages that became evident during and after the implementation of age management ... include the demanding character of leading and managing an age-diverse group of employees, higher demands on communication in order to plan work, and higher financial and time demands.’</li> </ul>
Wainwright <i>et al.</i> (2019); UK	To seek new organisational policies and management strategies on Extending Working Life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Many of participants expressed a strong sense of entitlement to a period of healthy life between the ending of formal employment and the onset of serious illness and death. For these people, retirement is an important rite de passage marking a major transition in the lifecourse.’</li> <li>• Detrimental effects in extending workplace anti-discrimination law to include ageism, as organisations have retreated from the active management of retirement through fear of falling foul of the legislation, despite its benefits for older workers.</li> </ul>

Note: UK: United Kingdom.

against older adults, without citing other authors (Jyrkinen, 2014; Raymer *et al.*, 2017; Paleari *et al.*, 2019). Despite ageism being mostly felt and studied against older people, it is not exclusive to them and can also emerge against younger people (Jyrkinen, 2014; Raymer *et al.*, 2017; Paleari *et al.*, 2019). The concepts of positive and negative ageism, implicit and explicit, personal and institutional, cognitive, affective and behavioural, already appear in the definition in some of the studies (Allen *et al.*, 2006; Rupp *et al.*, 2006; Stypinska and Turek, 2017).

## Discussion

The ageing of the workforce makes ageism a real threat to workers, the economy and society. While a type of discrimination, ageism goes against the decent work concept. Among the seven decent work dimensions, non-discrimination is part of *fundamental principles and values at work* (Ferraro *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, those targeted at ageist treatment suffer a decent work deficit. That is against Goal 8 of the UN 2030 Agenda. Consequently, there is high legitimacy to actions which aim to combat ageism at work.

This review found a lack of reliable and broadly used instruments on worker-related ageism. The construct mainly was measured using a few *ad hoc* questions or scales whose items were withdrawn and often adapted from other studies/scales, which do not allow a robust comparison between studies. The Nordic Age Discrimination Scale is an essential first step. A Spanish version of the scale is already available. Nevertheless, this scale focuses only on the elderly workers, which entails at least two questions. First, it is not clear what an elderly worker is, *i.e.* from what age someone is old or elderly in the workplace/labour market. Most studies consider old workers to be aged 55 and over. For the labour market, a worker can be considered old much earlier (*e.g.* in the recruitment and selection process or information technology (IT) sector), creating deviations in the results. Thus, the age from which one can be considered an old or elderly worker is another difficulty in allowing a robust comparison between studies. Secondly, young workers, and the rest of the age spectrum, are left out of this scale and still do not have an instrument that measures the behaviours of prejudice and discrimination targeting them. Another important measuring instrument found in this review is the Workplace Intergenerational Climate Scale. This instrument, measuring the intergenerational climate of an organisation, covers all ages. That is an essential aid to study ageism, considering the importance of positive intergenerational contact to minimise or even eliminate ageism.

Regarding diagnostic studies, one of the aspects that stood out in this review was that the cluster of sample age was over 50 years old. There are hardly any studies on ageism in young workers or workers who are no longer young but are also not yet old or elderly. Consequently, there is a lack of accurate information for institutions and organisations to develop policies and practices to fight against ageism, considering its particularities in these different age groups.

Researchers from Asia, Europe, America and Oceania studied ageism. Despite the cultural differences between the various geographic regions of the studies, there were no differences in its focus or their main findings. Almost all studies have identified some type of ageism, implicit and explicit. Those studies focus on

the full range of working life moments, from employability and the hiring process to retirement. Researchers reported studies in varied sectors of activity – IT, advertising, financial, education, health care, journalism, hospitality, employment tribunal court and human resources (HR) managers. Overall, research shows that ageism crosses all the working lifespan and contexts. Even though ageism can be positive or negative, the studies retrieved are mostly about negative ageism on older workers.

Race and gender are moderators (see Figure 2) which potentiate ageism (Spedale *et al.*, 2014; Kanagasabai, 2016; McGann *et al.*, 2016; Drydakis *et al.*, 2017; Stypinska and Turek, 2017), as well as age and image, with the latter, in a society oriented to beauty and youth, having higher incidence among women. Several studies show that older women are not the only ones who have to deal with the stigma of the juxtaposition of age and image (Handy and Davy, 2007; Jyrkinen, 2014; Spedale *et al.*, 2014). Young women sometimes have to deal with this burden, often seeking to create a professional character, less female and less young, to feel taken seriously (Jyrkinen and McKie, 2012; Worth, 2016).

Until a few years ago, governments and organisations had appealed for the anticipation of retirement, either due to the economic crisis and consequent reduction of jobs or because of the need to make room for the younger ones (Eichhorst *et al.*, 2014). Nevertheless, now, whether it is for the increase in longevity (physically and cognitively sound), for the sustainability of institutions, or the significant human and intellectual capital of older workers, it is urgent to delay the retirement age and retain workers' full of knowledge (Gibson *et al.*, 2010; Stevens, 2010; International Labour Office, 2011; European Commission, 2015a; Kenny *et al.*, 2016; Nelson, 2016). This need and urgency has led governments and institutions to create and disseminate positive images about ageing and promote policies and programmes that help and favour older workers (Iweins *et al.*, 2012). However, that can lead to negative ageism or generate positive ageism (Iweins *et al.*, 2013; Lagacé *et al.*, 2015), which *per se* can lead to negative ageism.

For several reasons, older workers tend to extend their working lives (International Labour Office, 2011; Rouzet *et al.*, 2019), while younger generations enter or try to enter the labour market, becoming more technological and competitive. While older workers are regarded as potential sources of knowledge, experience and talent, they also may be seen as an obstacle to young people entering the labour market. However, despite being considered more agile and better prepared for the new skills required by the labour market, younger workers also suffer from ageism. They are considered inexperienced, being too casual, having communication training needs or even not staying long enough to deserve investment in training (Raymer *et al.*, 2017; Meinich and Sang, 2018).

Ageism targets individuals physically and mentally (Harnois and Bastos, 2018; Shippee *et al.*, 2019) and impacts organisations (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), 2019). It can directly correlate to job satisfaction, job and organisational commitment (Yamada *et al.*, 2005; Levy and Macdonald, 2016), and retirement plans (see Figure 2).

Workers' strategies to cope with ageism are diverse. They range from early preparation for the end of the career, attention to health and physical performance, attitudes to change, training, support from others, change of working hours, and physical and behavioural appearance (Desmette and Gaillard, 2008; Unson and



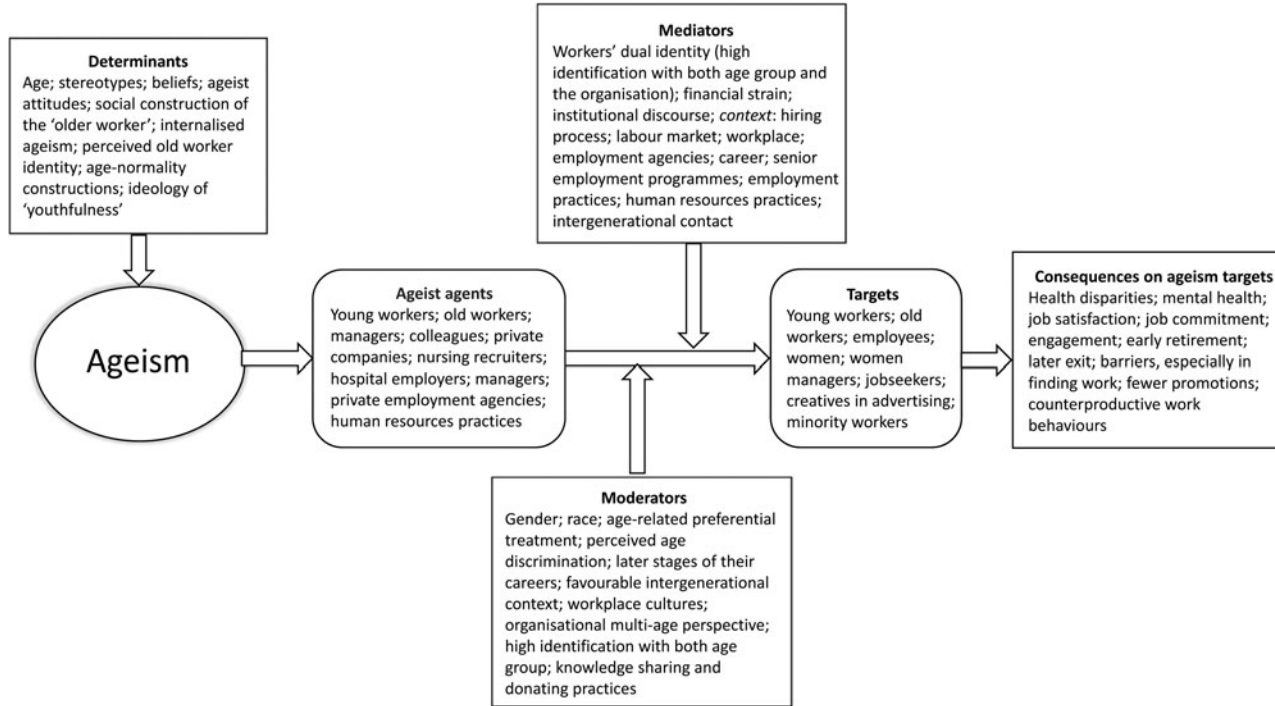


Figure 2. Nomological networks of ageism.

**Table 8.** Gaps, suggestions and assumptions

Research gap	Suggested focus of further studies	Assumption
Instruments to measure ageism against young and middle-age workers	Design and development of new instruments.	Ageism measurement is relevant for theory development, empirical research enabling and intervention.
Research on the full range of age groups	Full range of age groups.	Different age groups may have different perceptions of ageism and ageist attitudes.
Ageism determinants	Ageism determinants.	It is important preventing ageism.
Age and gender discrimination at work	Combining age and gender discrimination on hiring process, employment, treatment at work and career development opportunities.	Gender-balanced employment and treatment combined with no discriminations by age are values that deserve to be pursued.
Ageism in professions that involve image or physical appearance	Impact and consequences of age in professions like, models, actresses/actors, news presenters, television presenters and customer service.	Different professions may have different perceptions of ageism and ageist attitudes. Ageism has negative consequences for individuals, organisations and society.
Ageism in professions involving physical strength or dexterity	Impact and consequences of age in professions like construction, security forces, industry and professional drivers.	Different professions may have different perceptions of ageism and ageist attitudes. Ageism has negative consequences for individuals, organisations and society.
Research on ageism in different types of workers	Impact and consequences of ageism in different types of workers such as independent contractors, permanent or fixed-term employees, part-time employees, casual employees and entrepreneurs.	Different kinds of workers may have different perceptions of ageism and ageist attitudes. Ageism has negative consequences for individuals, organisations and society.
Level of job position	Discrimination of age against managerial or leadership positions and other kinds of workers.	Different job positions in the organisations may have different perceptions of ageism and ageist attitudes. Ageism has negative consequences for individuals, organisations and society.
Activity sector	Ageism in different activity sectors, e.g. public or private sector, areas of education, health, commerce, services or others.	Different activity sectors may have different ageist attitudes and ageism perceptions against their workers. Ageism has

(Continued)

Table 8. (Continued.)

Research gap	Suggested focus of further studies	Assumption
		negative consequences for individuals, organisations and society.
Reverse ageism at work	Hard and soft reverse ageism at work.	Ageism is negative <i>per se</i> since it is an expression of discrimination and goes against human rights and decent work. Ageism has negative consequences for individuals organisations and society.
Positive ageism at work	Impact and consequences of positive ageism over time.	Positive ageism can lead to negative ageism which is an expression of discrimination and goes against human rights and decent work. Ageism has negative consequences for individuals, organisations and society.
Consequences of ageism on intergenerational co-operation	Studying organisational consequences of ageism on knowledge management.	New generations need to learn from the elderly population their knowledge and wisdom.
Experimental studies on interventions aiming at ageism prevention	Experimental research designs in intervention studies.	Intervention studies can build new relevant knowledge through explanation of the psychological processes underlying ageism and contribute to prevent ageism.
Organisations and HR management policies and strategies	Organisations and HR management policies and strategies.	Organisational culture and management of age by organisations and HR management are relevant for knowledge and to enable interventions to reduce and deal with it.

Note: HR: human resources.

Richardson, 2013; Clendon and Walker, 2016; Worth, 2016; Krekula, 2019). These are essential contributions of this study for those investigating and preparing policies and strategies to combat this problem.

Furthermore, some companies cope with ageism using age management. However, the percentage of companies that are aware of workforce ageing and the challenge of a multigenerational workforce and try to manage it using age management is still low (Urbancová and Fejfarová, 2017).

Besides that, extending workplace anti-discrimination law to include ageism has led to organisations withdrawing from active retirement management for fear of violating legislation, despite its benefits for older workers (Wainwright *et al.*, 2019).

The summary of the studies and prominent findings in this review are an asset for researchers and organisations. Those who want to manage workforce ageing and the multiple variables of a multigenerational workforce may find inspiration and evidence to design suitable policies and HR practices. Age management and retirement management can be carried out, with more evident benefits for organisations and workers.

Ageism can be targeted at workers by their colleagues, managers and recruiters. However, ageism is also often created by the worker her- or himself (Desmette and Gaillard, 2008), with the stereotypes and prejudices present in society insinuated over time. We may realise that the social construct of the 'older worker' and the ideology of youth are determinants of ageism (Spedale *et al.*, 2014; Riach and Kelly, 2015).

Nevertheless, good intergenerational relationships, as we said previously, can help to minimise ageism (Iweins *et al.*, 2013) by leading younger workers to be less prejudiced towards older workers, to accept their knowledge, often tacit, and their professional experience.

Additionally, older workers would be able to learn and take advantage of the skills and characteristics of younger workers (Stevens, 2010). Good labour relations, knowing how to co-exist, learning from each other, taking advantage of each other's assets, and filing individual and group weaknesses make it possible for organisations and society to grow healthily (Di Fabio, 2017). If organisations understand the importance, for their success, of an excellent relational climate among workers, they can use this knowledge to improve HR management practices.

In an economic and social context with limited resources and employment, making efforts to improve the employability of older or less-young workers is essential for the survival of institutions, for the physical and mental health of individuals, and the wellbeing of society. However, like the reverse of the medal, this need may decrease the employment of young people, who themselves are often the target of ageism or who, feeling threatened, may have ageist attitudes.

This review constitutes a fundamental support base for studies on age and ageism. Information on worker-related ageism is synthesised, gaps identified and future lines of research are proposed in the next section. It is a base for organisations to access information about the impact of ageism and the ageing of the labour force, allowing them strategically to anticipate scenarios and plan their HR management. It draws a vital input regarding interventions aiming to prevent and mitigate worker-related ageism.

The workplace, while a locus of acculturation, is an essential target of such interventions. Considering the ageism determinants (Table 6), the test of explanatory theories (Table 5), studies on coping with ageism (Table 3) and age management practices (Table 7), those interventions must focus on: (a) designing HR policy and practices meeting non-discrimination standards as proposed by the concept of decent work; (b) creating positive intergenerational interactions integrating the full range of ages, namely intergenerational co-operation; (c) persuading organisations to include in their job advertisements non-age discrimination statements; and (d) helping organisations to design and implement age management practices. By providing such inputs, this study also addresses the concerns of Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015) and the UNECE (2019).

### Limitations and recommendations for future research

This review has the limitation of being restricted to only two databases (EBSCOhost and Web of Science), and keywords with ageism in the title or abstract, which may exclude studies about age discrimination but without using the word *ageism*. Furthermore, only articles written in English were included. Additionally, the search strategy did not search other databases and studies not published, which was ineffective in dealing with publication bias.

The multi-dimensionality and complexity of ageism at work has ground to be explored. Table 8 synthesises the main gaps found and future studies for filling those gaps, and the assumptions behind the suggestions.

Ageism has the potential to become a more relevant topic in research and intervention, also in the field of economics and management. For this to be true, an effort is needed to unite the different research disciplines, carrying out interdisciplinary research, thus contributing to the understanding of this phenomenon and its impact.

### Implications for organisations

Ageism is an issue that, if not tackled now, with the expected growth of ageing in the coming decades, could have a significant negative impact not only on workers and organisations but also on the economy and society. Combating ageism should be a priority for policy makers, those in charge of organisations and people management. For that endeavour, it is imperative to adopt a broad perspective of worker-related ageism – throughout the entire process, from vacancies and job applications to employment, pre-unemployment and pre-retirement – and identify the determinants, actors and moderators at play.

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