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Adapting to an Ageing Workforce: How Employers and Economies Can Benefit from Senior Employees

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Abstract

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As the global population continues to age, organisations and policymakers are increasingly challenged to adapt workplace structures and retirement systems to meet the evolving needs of older employees. This thesis explores how fostering successful ageing at work (SAW) can contribute not only to individual well-being but also to long-term organisational sustainability. SAW is associated with socio-economic benefits such as prolonged workforce participation, reduced turnover costs, and increased employee productivity. To support these outcomes, four organisational dimensions are identified as key contributors to successful ageing: person-work fit, job control, leadership, and opportunities for occupational growth. These factors are examined in relation to their ability to foster a sense of purpose and connection, two essential components in maintaining engagement and mental well-being among ageing employees, influencing individual successful ageing. Drawing on an extensive review of academic literature, this thesis provides practical recommendations for both organisational leaders and policymakers. These aim to support the development of more inclusive and age-friendly work environments, where the experience and expertise of older employees are valued and retained. Ultimately, the thesis advocates for a shift in how ageing is perceived in the workplace and encourages organisations to create environments that actively support individual successful ageing.

Keywords: successful ageing at work; longevity; purpose; connection

The originality of this thesis has been checked using Turnitin Originality Check service.

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List of Abbreviations

ABM: Automatic Balancing Mechanism

ERA: Early Retirement Age

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

HRM: Human Resources Management

NDC: Notional Defined-Contribution

ILO: International Labour Organisation

SAW: Successful Ageing at Work

SDT: Self-Determination Theory

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1 Introduction

Addressing the challenges of an ageing society has become a key social policy concern, as declining birth rates and rising life expectancy have placed increasing pressure on the working-age population (Biggs et al 2017: 1458). To address the challenges posed by an ageing workforce, a more holistic approach is required to ensure not only long-term retention and sustained productivity but also long-term health benefits for the employees. The emerging concept of successful ageing at work (SAW) must be implemented due to the important influence that the workplace has on individual successful ageing. SAW refers to the long-term preservation of an individual's capacity to work, overall health, and motivation throughout their professional life, impacting directly individual successful ageing (Albert et al 2021: 105).

Individual successful ageing, which is generally understood as ageing without chronic diseases while maintaining high cognitive and physical function (Nilsen et al 2022: 2), is inherently multidimensional, encompassing sociocultural, psychological, physical and environmental factors (Robson et al 2006: 161). To support employees effectively, organisations must embrace a holistic approach that addresses health in all its dimensions. This extends beyond creating happier employees at work to fostering a better quality of life overall. In addition, it offers an opportunity for employers to capitalise upon a hitherto underappreciated resource that can exploit its accumulated expertise, instead of being discarded due to mandatory retirement.

The objective of this thesis is to emphasise the urgent need for organisations and retirement systems to adapt to an ageing population. Globally, the number of people aged 60 and above is projected to increase from 962 million in 2017 to 2.1 billion by 2050 (Virtanen et al 2022: 273). In this context, the thesis explores how organisations can cultivate a sense of purpose and connection among senior employees. These are key dimensions of successful ageing, ensuring both mental health and long-term organisational sustainability. First,

the concept of successful ageing is examined in depth to establish a theoretical foundation. This is followed by an analysis of the broader advantages that fostering successful ageing offers to both governments and organisations, including improved workforce retention and reduced healthcare costs. Based on this understanding, four organisational dimensions are proposed as critical to supporting employees' mental health and, in turn, promoting successful ageing: person-work fit, job control, the role of leadership, and opportunities for occupational growth. Finally, the thesis outlines practical implications and recommendations for both policymakers and organisations, emphasising the often-underestimated value of retaining experienced employees and leveraging their contributions.

2 Literature Review

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines employee well-being as encompassing all aspects of working life, including the physical environment's quality and safety, workers' perceptions of their roles, workplace climate, and organisational practices (Kawakami et al 2023: 3). This concept is seemingly comprehensive; however, it requires further development into a more thorough approach. Whereas job-related well-being is a stable component, it remains subjective due to the influence of personal experiences (Haymes 2013: 284), individual characteristics, and the working environment (Kawakami et al 2023: 4). While it is established that high levels of subjective well-being may boost physical health and longevity (Boccardi & Boccardi 2019: 4), and that subjective well-being in the workplace as a broad construct can lead to tangible benefits (Kawakami et al 2023: 4), this alone is not sufficient. To achieve a truly holistic approach, objective health-related factors must be integrated into organisational design. With the ongoing demographic transition and rising competition for skilled labour, many organisations are placing greater emphasis on developing and retaining older workers (Robson et al 2006: 156). The developing concept of SAW highlights the crucial role of workplaces in supporting successful ageing, proposing that maintaining long and positive work-related experiences depends on effectively adapting to both personal, such as age-related, and

external, for example environmental, changes. SAW can be defined as the ongoing preservation of an individual's work ability, health, and motivation throughout their career, accentuating the importance of creating work resources and securing a person-environment fit (Albert et al 2021: 105). While further research needs to investigate the validity of SAW in more detail, this concept has been associated positively with health (Albert et al 2021: 109), therefore individuals' successful ageing. Robson et al (2006: 156) suggest five theoretical domains for SAW: (a) adaptability and health, (b) positive relationships, (c) occupational growth, (d) personal security, and (e) continued focus and achievement of personal goals. The suggested factors align with the framework proposed by Buettner in 2023, as discussed in section 2.1 below.

This thesis in particular examines how organisations can incorporate the principles of connection and a sense of purpose into their organisational design to cultivate environments that promote successful ageing. The economic benefit of implementing SAW lies in a long-tenured workforce and increased productivity, while also reducing turnover costs and supporting employee health over time.

2.1 The Concept of Successful Ageing

Although researchers in the field have not reached a consensus on the definition of the term, successful ageing can be described as a multifaceted concept that encompasses both physical and mental health in later life, enabling individuals to maintain a low risk of illness and associated impairments (Boccardi & Boccardi 2019: 2). Successful ageing is a complex process influenced by genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors (Buettner 2023; Cheung & Wu 2013: 647; Robson et al 2006: 161; Viljanen et al 2024: 2). While genetic predispositions play a role, around 20 per cent of an individual's life span, our surroundings have a profound impact, accounting to 80 per cent on lifespan and quality of life (Buettner 2023). In the documentary *Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones* (2023), Buettner highlights how communities with high longevity rates share common practices, such as healthy diets,

predominantly plant-based; regular physical activity, with natural movement integrated into daily life; social connections and purposeful living, resulting in a strong sense of community and family. These factors collectively enhance both lifespan and quality of life. Therefore, while Buettner uses the term “longevity” in his works, the results presented align closely with the principles of successful ageing, emphasising quality of life and holistic well-being.

The proposed findings align with the idea that our surroundings and daily choices play a critical role in shaping the ageing process. Buettner (2023) highlights that the objective is not just to add years to life but to enhance the quality of life in those years, making his insights highly relevant to workplace design. The ultimate goal should be to empower employees to work to live rather than live to work, fostering not only professional success but also personal thriving. This ideal goes beyond financial considerations, encompassing physical, mental, social and spiritual health. Employees should feel that their work contributes positively to their quality of life. As can be observed in Figure 1, there are four key dimensions that can enhance quality of life and life span:

- Eating wisely
- Social Connections
- Regular Movement
- Purposeful Living



Figure 1. The Four Dimensions of Longevity According to Buettner (2023)

Although it would be ideal to explore how to apply all these principles to the workplace, practical constraints require a more focused approach. This thesis is inspired by the following two key dimensions of successful ageing derived from Buettner's work (2023): outlook and connection. Outlook refers to an individual's perspective on life, encompassing optimism, resilience, and a sense of purpose, all of which can influence mental health and workplace engagement.

Connection refers to the quality of social relationships and support networks, which are essential for fostering a sense of belonging and collaboration within organisations. By narrowing the focus to these two dimensions, this thesis seeks to suggest some components that promote successful ageing in a workforce by fostering positive outlooks and meaningful connections, therefore impacting psychological well-being in the workplace.

Psychological well-being is a complex and multifaceted concept, encompassing three key aspects: (1) the individual's emotional state (e.g., positive or negative feelings), (2) their abilities (e.g., adaptive capacity or coping skills), and (3) their perception (e.g., satisfaction, sense of purpose, and outlook) (Boccardi & Boccardi 2019: 3). These principles not only align with the factors Robson (2006: 156) and Buettner (2023) identified, but also offer actionable insights for organisations aiming to support the health, happiness, and productivity of their workforce, impacting therefore positively successful ageing with a long-term approach. Research has shown that happier people tend to live longer and maintain better health, exhibiting higher survival rates. Prospective studies indicate that older individuals with higher well-being are less likely to experience declines in activities of daily living, show a significantly slower decrease in walking speed, and recover more effectively in terms of motor, cognitive, and functional performance, even after a major cardiovascular event. The survival benefits linked to higher well-being are especially pronounced in older adults, as demonstrated by a meta-analysis of over thirty prospective studies, where greater positive well-being was associated with a lower risk of mortality in both healthy and ill populations (Boccardi & Boccardi 2019: 4).

2.2 Implementing SAW to Address Demographic Change

Over the years, life expectancy has been steadily increasing, but the health span has remained stagnant. While people are living longer, ageing has led to a rising prevalence of chronic age-related conditions, resulting in more years spent living with disability (Boccardi & Boccardi 2019: 1). Moreover, apart from a sharp increase in life expectancy, another significant trend has been identified: a significant decline in fertility rates. The proportion of individuals over 59 is anticipated to rise from 9.2 per cent in 1990 to 21.1 per cent by 2050. Within the next decade, this age group is expected to surpass younger adult age groups in size (Burmeister & Deller 2016: 2), meaning there will be fewer people available to replenish the workforce (Rožman et al 2019: 1046). The epidemiological transition has highlighted the need to prioritise both physical health and psychosocial well-being, especially in older adults (Boccardi & Boccardi 2019: 3). The urgency of shifting to the SAW approach, is particularly given by the significant proportion of life spent at work. As can be seen in Figure 2, the European Commission (Eurostat, 2024) reported that the expected duration of working life has been increasing steadily for years, amounting to 39 years for men and 34.7 years for women in 2023.

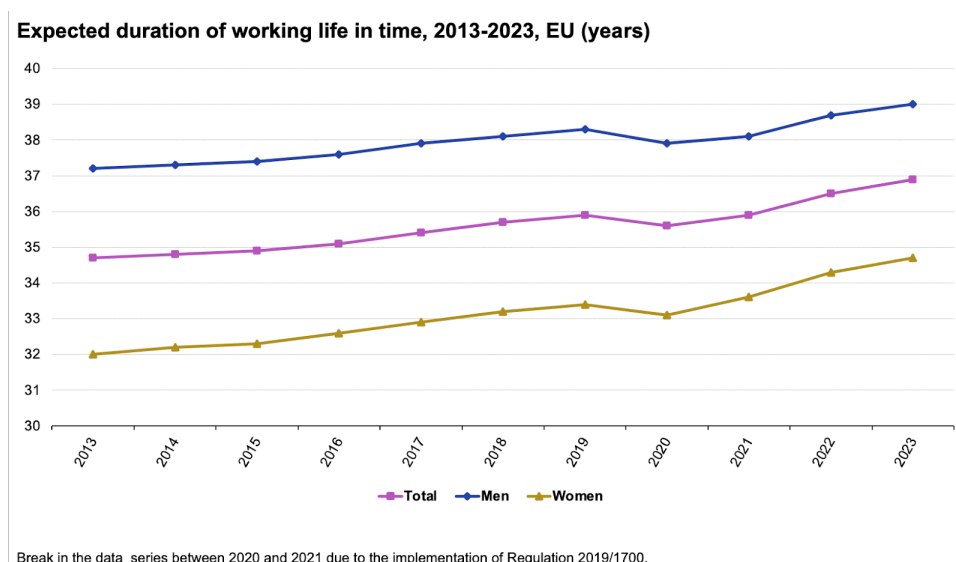


Figure 2. Expected Duration of Working Life in Time from 2013-2023 (Eurostat, 2024).

Given the reasons above and the growing interest in SAW from a contemporary lifespan perspective, it is surprising that no tool to measure this construct within organisations has been created yet (Albert et al 2021: 106). The work environment has a role in shaping the health and behaviour of employees (Nilsen et al 2022: 1), indicating that organisations must adopt strategies to adapt the management of older employees and promote successful ageing, by ensuring a healthy working environment. A truly healthy workplace actively manages risks and fosters collaboration between employees and managers to enhance working conditions and overall well-being. Targeted occupational health promotion programs can play a crucial role in supporting this effort (Rožman et al 2019: 1047).

The process of ageing is malleable and can be accelerated or decelerated at any point in life (Boccardi & Boccardi 2019: 2). There are many factors that contribute to successful ageing, including genetics, environmental factors, and lifestyle factors (Buettner 2023; Cheung & Wu 2013: 647; Robson et al 2006: 161; Viljanen et al 2024: 2), emphasising how important it is to create an environment conducive to both physical and mental health through organisational design. Stressful jobs, which are associated with low control, high demand and their negative combination (Nilsen et al 2021: 1314), are associated with fewer outside activities, higher smoking rates and accumulated health disadvantages over time (Nilsen et al 2022: 2). Leadership, in particular, has a profound impact on employee health outcomes, influencing stress levels, mental health, and even lifestyle behaviours such as diet and physical activity (Kuehnl et al 2019: 11). This underscores the need for organisations to recognise their role in shaping not only workplace well-being but also the broader health trajectories of their employees. Moreover, the ageing population is bringing new managerial challenges that include addressing employee health, ensuring the productivity of an age-diverse workforce with varying mindsets and work values. HR practices, such as training, must be able to be adapted to meet the needs of older workers as part of inclusive strategies for all generations. Additionally, organisations must navigate extended careers and working lives

while ensuring the retention of critical knowledge from experienced and retiring employees (Burmeister & Deller 2016: 2).

Retaining and managing senior employees is a key aspect of human resources planning, ensuring that organisations can benefit from their experience and expertise (Rožman et al 2019: 1055). In this context, Human Resource Management (HRM) has a critical role to play in creating workplace environments that support the demographic transition and the successful ageing of their employees. As the function responsible for aligning employee commitment with organisational goals, HRM can lead initiatives that address the long-term health and productivity of the workforce (Baptiste 2008: 287). There is already a significant amount of research on how various organisational factors, such as job design, the physical work environment, and management style, influence employee well-being. However, a clear gap exists in the level of investment that employers make towards supporting a healthy workplace (Miller 2016: 291).

2.2.1 Advantages for the Organisations

Research indicates that many older employees continue to encounter pervasive negative age stereotypes related to their motivation, performance, flexibility, and ability to learn (Kooij et al 2020: 27). Ageing, particularly in later stages of life, is indeed often framed as a restrictive condition linked to deteriorating health, increasing dependence, and diminishing social and economic relevance. It marks the intersection of two declining roles in Western societies: the independent individual and the productive worker. In this context, the perception of the ideal worker, characterised by efficiency and contribution, converges with narratives of ageing as decline, reinforcing the image of the "old and obsolete" employee. Additionally, older workers are frequently positioned within organisational discourses that prioritise speed, adaptability, and technological proficiency, qualities typically attributed to younger employees (Thomas et al 2014: 1572). In contrast to the age discrimination faced by many older workers and the common perception of ageing as a period of decline, older individuals

can be seen as a valuable resource capable of contributing to both their own well-being and that of society through continued productivity (Biggs et al 2017: 1461).

Due to the declining proportion of young workers and the intensifying competition for skilled labour, retaining older workers is increasingly crucial for managers (Cheung & Wu 2013: 645). By embracing SAW, organisations can build a healthier, more sustainable workforce, enhancing employee retention, engagement, and productivity (Miller 2016: 289). This approach also offers additional advantages, such as safeguarding organisational knowledge, a crucial factor in maintaining long-term success (Burmeister & Deller 2016: 2). Additionally, supporting mental health issues in organisations is fundamental as it imposes considerable financial burdens on companies. In 2022, across the 27 EU Member States and the United Kingdom, the total costs of mental health problems exceeded 4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), amounting to over 600 billion euros (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work 2024: 5). Only in the UK, individuals at risk of developing mental health issues were found to experience 13 per cent higher productivity losses compared to those not at risk (Isham et al 2021: 2). Addressing mental health proactively in the workplace is in the best interest of employers, as it can help reduce sickness absence, presenteeism, and staff turnover (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work 2024: 5), which leads to a long-tenured workforce.

A well-supported workforce contributes directly to organisational success, as healthier, more satisfied employees drive both profitability and long-term resilience (Miller 2016: 295), resulting in lower sickness-related absences, less presenteeism, reduced staff turnover and thereby cost savings for the employer (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work 2024: 5; Rožman et al 2019: 1055). Furthermore, the benefits extend beyond the workplace, positively impacting the local community and even the nation by reducing the demand for health services due to healthier individuals, whose superior income and expenditure from continuing employment is also a source of tax revenue (Miller

2016: 295). By adopting a holistic approach to employee care, organisations can help employees unlock their full potential at every stage of their lives.

2.2.1.1.1 Knowledge Retention

Maintaining a workforce of older employees is becoming a key managerial priority due to the decreasing number of young workers and the rising competition for skilled professionals (Cheung & Wu 2013: 645). Knowledge retention refers to preserving essential knowledge that risks being lost, and developing a strategy to ensure it remains within the organisation (Wikström et al 2018: 1511). The decline in the number of skilled workers due to an ageing workforce has already posed significant challenges for organisations and will remain a critical issue, especially in highly developed economies. With the large-scale retirement of the baby boomer generation, preserving the valuable knowledge and expertise of older and retiring employees has become an urgent priority, considering that not all tasks can be automated (Autor 2015: 7). A crucial factor in maintaining organisational success is the retention of knowledge from older and retiring employees. Experienced workers possess valuable institutional knowledge gained through years of practice, which can serve as a critical resource for both organisational decision-making and the development of junior staff. By effectively transferring this expertise, companies can minimise the risk of repeating past mistakes, ultimately reducing the likelihood of costly errors (Perrin 2016: 247). This is based on the recognition that access to critical knowledge is a key success factor for organisations striving to gain a competitive edge in today's knowledge-driven economies (Burmeister & Deller 2016: 2). Preserving knowledge allows companies to learn from key experiences and enhance business performance (Wikström et al 2018: 1511). According to Burmeister and Deller's findings (2016: 2), teams with diverse experiences can enhance organisational learning by combining their knowledge in innovative ways. However, while knowledge has become increasingly critical, its loss has also become more likely due to the retirement of the baby boomer generation. Knowledge transfer is not automatic but rather a complex process influenced by various factors, including the nature of the

knowledge itself, individual and relational dynamics, and the broader organisational context. Some researchers suggest that intergenerational knowledge transfer is essential for organisational survival, as it helps prevent corporate amnesia (Burmeister & Deller 2016: 3).

2.2.2 Advantages for the Governments

Many Western governments are prioritising policies to extend working lives to ease the financial strain on public funds caused by rising pension costs due to increased life expectancy and longer retirement periods (Beach 2014: 1; Cribb 2022: 4). In many European countries, the public pension system includes all private sector workers and offers benefits such as early retirement, old age, and disability pensions, which serve as the primary source of income during retirement (Staubli & Zweimüller 2013: 4). However, as the proportion of retirees to workers is expected to almost double in the next decades, exceeding 70 retirees per 100 workers by 2050, many of these nations are facing a projected pensions crisis due to rising age-related government expenditures. In several states, including Luxembourg, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, and Ireland, spending is expected to increase by more than a few percentage points of GDP, while smaller increases are anticipated in countries such as Belgium, Finland, the United Kingdom, and Germany. On average, EU spending on age pensions is forecasted to exceed a significant share of GDP by the middle of the 21st century. However, some experts challenge this narrative, arguing that international organisations may have overstated the economic impact of an ageing population to justify pension system reforms (Biggs et al 2017: 1461).

Despite policies promoting longer working lives and rising state pension age thresholds, a significant number leave the labour market before reaching retirement age (Beach 2014: 1; Staubli & Zweimüller 2013: 1). While increasing the state pension age from 65 to 66 in the UK resulted in an increase of employment, due to people staying in their existing jobs for longer, the majority has already left the workforce before age 65 (Cribb 2022: 2). Data from the Office for National Statistics show that 28.4 per cent of UK workers aged 50-64

are economically inactive, compared to 13.4 per cent of those aged 35-49 (Beach 2014: 1). A similar issue is observed in Austria, where, while raising the early retirement age (ERA) by one year led to a modest increase in employment, with a 9.75 per cent rise among men and 11 per cent among women, the reform significantly increased unemployment benefit claims, with a rise of 12.51 per cent for men and 11.77 per cent for women, while the impact on disability benefits was relatively minor.

Raising the statutory retirement age disproportionately affects workers in low-paid, less healthy jobs while having less impact on those in better health and higher-paid roles (Staubli & Zweimüller 2013: 4). Lower-wage and less healthy workers either retire early via disability benefits or rely on unemployment benefits (Staubli & Zweimüller 2013: 3). People with lower-paying jobs need to work longer to make up for the money they lose from the state pension therefore may have no choice but to keep working, regardless of their personal preferences (Biggs et al 2017: 1466). On the other hand, it is worth highlighting that high-wage and healthier workers and those living in better-off areas tend to stay employed. This may be because they have sufficient savings to retire at 65 but choose to continue working until they reach the state pension age of 66 or beyond, perhaps feeling more prepared to retire at that point (Staubli & Zweimüller 2013: 3). This could be linked to individuals' pursuit of purpose and the need to maintain the social identities tied to their professional roles (Smith et al 2024: 1178). Moreover, such decision may be influenced by the strong positive correlation between higher education levels and better health maintenance (Biggs et al 2017: 1466).

The previous discussion underscores the importance of employment retention strategies that support workers before retirement, ensuring sustained engagement throughout their careers (Beach 2014: 1), reinforcing the argument to implement SAW, which is positively related to health and intentions to stay in the company (Cheung & Wu 2013: 648). Maintaining workers' physical and mental health and good functional capacity increases their willingness and ability to extend their participation in the workforce (Biggs et al 2017: 1464;

Virtanen et al 2022: 274). Raising the ERA leads to a decrease in retirement benefit payouts and an increase in income and payroll tax revenues, reducing the government's financial strain. However, some of the savings are offset by higher costs in the unemployment insurance and disability insurance programs due to spillover effects, including the continued occupation of employment positions that would otherwise have been made available by retirement. Staubli and Zweimüller's (2013: 3) analysis suggests that, for a typical birth cohort, extending the ERA by one year results in a net reduction of Austrian government expenditures by 107 million euros for men and 122 million euros for women, factoring in that behavioural changes may occur not only when individuals reach the ERA but also in the years before and after. However, rather than solely focusing on increasing the ERA, greater emphasis should be placed on supporting employees' health. Research suggests that individuals are more likely to willingly extend their working lives if their health is well maintained. Moreover, evidence from other British studies suggests that compared to younger workers, those who continue working beyond the traditional retirement age report higher job satisfaction and find their work more engaging (Biggs et al 2017: 1464).

2.2.3 How Work Affects Health and Vice Versa

The work environment plays an important role in shaping employees' health (Kuehnl et al 2019: 9; Lee et al 2016: 1; Rožman et al 2019: 1049). Research demonstrates that workplace conditions significantly influence long-term health outcomes, with subjective well-being yielding measurable benefits across key life domains, such as health, longevity and life satisfaction (Boccardi & Boccardi 2019: 4; Kawakami et al 2023: 4).

In 2022, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2024: 5) reported that 27 per cent of workers experience anxiety, stress or depression caused or made worse by work, and 10 per cent reported feeling burned out. Stress describes the adverse reaction people have to perceived excessive pressures or demands placed on them (Isham et al 2021: 3). Chronic stress, marked by

persistently high cortisol levels, negatively impacts physical health, damaging muscles, the brain, the heart, and the vascular system by disrupting immune function, blood pressure, metabolism and hormone balance, ultimately raising the risk of cardiovascular disease (Boccardi & Boccardi 2019: 3; Nilsen et al 2022: 5). Individuals in high-stress jobs tend to have fewer extracurricular activities, higher smoking rates, lower incomes, and are often from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, leading to cumulative health disadvantages over time (Nilsen et al 2022: 5). While successful stress management can improve performance and quality of life, unsuccessful coping mechanisms may contribute to long-term health issues (Kuehnl et al 2019: 9). Excessive denial, avoidance, suppression, and repression of emotions and basic needs seem to weaken the body's natural resistance to carcinogenic influences (Vitetta et al 2005: 501). Moreover, work-related stress is linked to physical health-related behaviours, such as heavy alcohol use, low physical activity, smoking (Isham et al 2021: 3) and substance abuse, leading consequently to several physical long-term health issues such as coronary heart disease and musculoskeletal problems. Hence, stress should not only be viewed as a risk factor but also as a condition that reduces overall quality of life (Kuehnl et al 2019: 9). Managing stress effectively requires balancing demands with personal capacity. Equipping workers with skills to reframe and handle challenges can reduce work-related stressors like job strain, insecurity, and conflicts. While relaxation techniques help, long-term resilience comes from reducing demands or enhancing coping skills. When demand reduction is not feasible, targeted training can boost confidence, coping ability, and job performance (Redekopp & Huston 2019: 7).

A disengaged workforce, which is characterised by high stress levels, burnout risk, high turnover, and high sickness absence rates, is detrimental to the company's productivity (Miller 2016: 290) and can lead to high costs (Baptiste 2008: 285). Stress is a key factor influencing absenteeism and presenteeism, phenomena that are more prevalent in organisations that do not recognise the importance of employee health and well-being (Miller 2016: 298). Absenteeism refers to when people are absent from the workplace because of poor health,

and presenteeism occurs when people are present at work, but operating at a diminished capacity (Isham et al 2021: 2). Measuring the relationship between stress and absenteeism is challenging, as 90 per cent of employees cite alternative reasons for stress-related absences (Isham et al 2021: 3). Presenteeism often stems from fear of stigma and discrimination, as employees worry about being labelled mentally ill, compelling employees to attend work despite feeling unwell (Miller 2016: 297). These issues highlight the critical need for organisations to address employee health and psychological well-being proactively.

Work is not solely a source of negative health impacts; in fact, it can significantly enhance overall happiness, well-being and quality of life (Redekopp & Huston 2019: 1). Employment generally has positive effects on mental health and well-being, especially when compared to unemployment, as it provides a sense of identity, social support, financial stability, and sense of purpose (Redekopp & Huston 2019: 6). The concept of "good work," characterised by skilled, autonomous, supported, and secured roles with a healthy work-life balance and fair income, is strongly associated with improved physical and mental health, reduced absenteeism, and overall well-being (Cooper & Hancock 2017: 14). Notably, well-being in the workplace contributes to success at individual, collective, and organisational levels (Kawakami et al 2023: 4).

2.3 Implementing a Positive Outlook and Social Connections into a Workplace

Evidence suggests that eudaimonic well-being, which refers to having a sense of purpose and maintaining a positive perspective on life, is associated with successful ageing (Boccardi & Boccardi 2019: 4; Buettner 2023). In the Blue Zones, regions of the world renowned for their residents' long lifespans and vibrant health (Wiederhold 2024: 437), individuals present a strong outlook, having clear reasons to wake up each morning, often rooted in their community, family, or meaningful activities. Similarly, the dimension of connection highlights the importance of social bonds, including strong family ties, close social circles,

and a sense of belonging within a community (Buettner 2023). Buettner emphasises that the concepts of outlook and connection are deeply intertwined: a positive perspective is easier to sustain when supported by strong relationships, while social bonds often provide the foundation for purposeful living. Together, these dimensions create a life rich in meaning and connection, contributing to the exceptional longevity observed in the Blue Zones (Buettner 2023). Likewise, in a workplace setting, the dimensions of outlook and connection are closely interlinked, as one can significantly influence the other. Implementing these concepts in practice can foster a supportive and purpose-driven work environment, influencing positively the mental health of employees.

As mentioned earlier, work is generally associated with positive effects on mental health and well-being, particularly when compared to unemployment, as it provides individuals with identity, social support, financial resources, and a sense of purpose (Redekopp & Huston 2019: 6). It is important to note that work is not an absolute factor in improving mental health, as with regard to individuals with severe mental illness, research found that work is neither harmful nor helpful regarding their particular illness (Redekopp & Huston 2019: 3). Work can offer a daily routine, opportunities for social engagement, and mental stimulation that may contribute to maintaining cognitive function as people age (Nilsen et al 2021: 1314). By implementing health-focused programs, HRM can influence employee behaviours, promote a culture of care, and enhance organisational performance (Haymes 2013: 283).

The literature offers several approaches to fostering a purposeful and positive workplace. However, few of the articles explore their impact on SAW or emphasise employees' objective health over their happiness and subjective well-being at work. The following subsections outline four key strategies for cultivating a meaningful and supportive work environment that fosters both a sense of purpose and a sense of community among employees. These strategies include person-work fit, job control, the role of leadership, and opportunities for occupational growth, and they have been shown to positively influence mental health, thereby contributing to individual successful ageing.

2.3.1 Person-Work Fit

The workplace, particularly the psychosocial work environment, plays a crucial role in determining employees' health and successful ageing. Quality employment shapes personal identity, establishes social status, and provides structure to daily life (Kuehnl et al 2019: 9). Pursuing person-environment fit is a substantial factor of the concept of SAW (Albert et al 2021: 108; Kooij et al 2020: 3). Ensuring person-work fit is imperative for mental health. When work aligns with an individual's interests, values, strengths, and needs, either in their professional role or in other life roles, it is associated with improved well-being outcomes compared to work that does not fit (Huston & Redekopp 2019: 6). When job demands exceed a worker's abilities, resources, or needs, it can lead to stress (Rožman et al 2019: 1051) and psychological inability to work productively (Kooij et al 2020: 15). Dissatisfaction with working conditions is a significant predictor of poor health outcomes, including sleep disturbances (Eurofound 2017: 58). The concept of person-work fit aligns with Buettner's (2023) construct of "finding the right tribe," which plays a key role in promoting successful ageing. Moreover, in addition to ensuring a satisfied workforce, this approach would contribute to long-term employee retention (Albert et al 2021: 109), particularly with the ageing population, bringing several advantages to the organisation. Recent lifespan research highlights that certain work roles and personal characteristics can help maintain or even enhance work ability, particularly in late career.

2.3.2 Job Control

Factors linked to low job control, such as restricted decision-making power, are associated with symptoms of mental health conditions, higher risks of suicide and increased absenteeism due to mental health diagnoses. In contrast, higher decision latitude has been shown to protect against depressive symptoms and is linked to lower levels of emotional exhaustion and burnout (Elovainio et al 2005: 85; World Health Organization 2022: 14). The combination of low control associated with high job strain, is associated with health concerns including

reduced cognitive function, higher risk of dementia, and increased likelihood of cardiovascular diseases (Elovainio et al 2005: 85; Nilsen et al 2021: 1314). Research shows that it is not work itself that negatively impacts health, but rather the mismatch between the actual and desired workload, both in terms of intensity and duration (Biggs et al 2017: 1465).

The notion of control plays a key role in the self-determination theory (SDT), which suggests that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fundamental psychological needs. Fulfilling them has a stimulating effect on individuals' psychological processes, behaviours and motivation at work (Henning et al 2023: 34; Virtanen et al 2022: 274). Henning et al (2023) suggest that SDT may be a key aspect of SAW.

2.3.2.1.1 Control Over Working Hours

Flexible working hours allow older workers to reduce their workload, achieving a better work-life balance while maintaining their efficiency and productivity. Therefore, flexible working hours are becoming increasingly important for senior employees, as they help maintain a healthy professional and personal life balance, prevent burnout, and support their well-being, avoiding leading to exhaustion and deterioration (Rožman et al 2019: 1049). Work-life balance is one of the factors fundamental to employee productivity (Cooper & Hancock 2017: 14), as hours of work and workload impact the well-being of workers, their families and their communities (Lee et al 2016: 1). For older employees, the significance of flexible working arrangements lies in their potential to enable participation among those with caregiving responsibilities, which may otherwise limit their ability to remain in the paid workforce (Biggs et al 2017: 1476; Perrin 2016: 248). Particularly women tend to work part-time more often than men, take extended parental leaves, and provide care for sick children and relatives, all of which contribute to significant income disparities (Aspegren et al 2019: 7). Surveys conducted over the past decade on older workers' retirement expectations suggest that many older adults either desire or require employment beyond the traditional retirement or pension age, often in a part-

time or flexible capacity (Biggs et al 2017: 1466). Older employees who are offered the option of shorter working hours tend to have better mental health and well-being compared to those without this flexibility (Rožman et al 2019: 1050). Regrettably, research on flexible work options for older workers in the UK indicates that many still lack the opportunity to adjust their work arrangements to better align with their preferences, with the majority remaining in full-time employment (Biggs et al 2017: 1467).

2.3.2.1.2 Control Over Retirement

In psychological research, retirement is frequently viewed as a decision-making process (Henning et al 2023: 38). The effect of retirement on health is largely determined by whether it occurs voluntarily or is imposed. Research indicates that involuntary retirement is associated with higher rates of depression and harmful health behaviours, including smoking, decreased physical activity, and increased alcohol consumption among previous non-drinkers. Similarly, the potential health benefits of extended employment likely depend on whether working longer is a deliberate decision or a necessity due to inadequate retirement resources (Biggs et al 2017: 1466).

In response to government initiatives aimed at promoting extended working lives, working beyond retirement age has become increasingly common. This is often referred to as "bridge employment," which involves paid work following retirement, typically part-time, whether with the same employer, a new employer, or as a self-employed individual (Virtanen et al 2022: 273). The decision to continue working by their quest for meaning and the desire to sustain their social identities associated with work (Smith et al 2024: 1178), aligns with Buettner's (2023) longevity domains: connect and outlook. Maintaining social networks and a positive perspective has been found to enhance well-being and contribute to a greater sense of purpose among older adults. Consequently, offering flexible, meaningful roles to older employees can support both their successful ageing and the broader goals of organisational sustainability.

2.3.3 The Role of Leadership

Positive social relationships significantly impact successful ageing, highlighting the importance of promoting workplace environments that encourage meaningful connections. For many individuals, work shapes identity, provides meaning, and offers opportunities for connection (Huston & Redekopp 2018: 6), which are not only key dimensions for SAW (Robson 2006: 156) but directly impact individual successful ageing (Buettner 2023). A strong sense of community at work can contribute to the satisfaction of the relatedness need, which, in turn, positively influences work-related outcomes, such as increased autonomous work motivation (Henning et al 2023: 38). Line managers play a crucial role in influencing employees' attitudes and beliefs towards their employer, their well-being and productivity (Baptiste 2008: 290). Additionally, supervisors can have an indirect impact on employee behaviours related to stress management, including smoking, alcohol consumption, presenteeism, physical activity, unhealthy diet, and participation in health promotion programs (Kuehnl et al 2019: 9). These behaviours, in turn, are connected to long-term health and longevity, highlighting leadership's profound impact on fostering meaningful workplace connections that extend beyond immediate well-being.

The psychosocial work environment significantly influences outcomes such as employee stress, absenteeism and mental health (Kuehnl et al 2019: 9). While unsupportive management can contribute to mental health issues, leading to increased sickness absence and presenteeism, supportive and empowering leadership positively influences successful ageing, intention to remain with the company (Cheung & Wu 2021: 648) and is associated with greater well-being (Redekopp & Huston 2019: 8). High-quality leaders drive greater productivity by effectively teaching, motivating, and fostering trust among their supervisees. Moreover, employees report higher job satisfaction when they work under effective leaders. For instance, it was found that supervisors' competence and communication skills were positively linked to employee's mental health, even after accounting for factors like job strain and working hours (Isham et al 2021: 4).

Managers must remain mindful of the profound impact their actions have not only on employees' health, but also on their trust, engagement, cooperation, and organisational effectiveness (Baptiste 2008: 301). According to the social exchange theory cited by Baptiste (2008: 287), the perceived support from managers and trust in them leads to positive employee attitudes, increased motivation and commitment, which therefore enhances performance. Moreover, it reinforces a perception that the organisation values them, strengthening commitment and their sense of purpose (Baptiste 2008: 288), which is an influencing factor to individual successful ageing (Buettner 2023). Trust is the willingness of employees to be vulnerable to managers, expecting them to act in their best interest (Baptiste 2008: 290). It is essential for promoting emotional commitment, openness to change, and retention (Baptiste 2008: 303).

Proper management of older employees involves creating a healthy work environment, as it influences their lifestyle, collaboration, engagement, health, and overall productivity in the workplace (Rožman et al 2019: 1046). Indeed, epidemiological research has consistently demonstrated that social and emotional support play a protective role against premature mortality, help prevent the onset of illnesses and facilitate recovery from health conditions (Vitetta et al 2005: 499). Compared to their younger counterparts, older workers face unique challenges that can impact their growth and sustained performance in the workplace. These include adapting to new technology, balancing work with family responsibilities, such as caring for ageing parents, declining physical and cognitive abilities, and facing age-related stereotypes and discrimination. These factors significantly influence how older employees adapt and age within an organisation. Organisational support serves as a crucial protective resource against these, helping older workers maintain their performance and thrive in their roles while minimising negative psychological responses to stressors (Cheung & Wu 2021: 648).

Older workers are often perceived as disengaged with work; however, factors such as improved health, reassessing their goals, or taking on new responsibilities can reignite their motivation, leading them to pursue learning

and career advancement (Robson et al 2006: 164). Engagement occurs when an employee is fully dedicated to their work, demonstrating focused energy and a positive mindset (Rožman et al 2019: 1046). With an ageing population, there is a growing need to focus on older employees and implement targeted strategies to enhance their work engagement. The impact of ageing on employee engagement varies significantly depending on the workplace and the specific tasks performed within the organisation. SAW is closely linked to maintaining engagement, making a supportive work environment essential for older employees, as it directly influences their performance and well-being (Rožman et al 2019: 1051).

2.3.4 Occupational Growth

While occupational growth is an important sphere for SAW, analyses suggest it is negatively associated with age (Robson et al 2006: 179). Findings reveal that career development and mental health are connected, as the practice and subsequent work choices can directly influence happiness, enhance well-being, and improve overall quality of life (Redekopp & Huston 2019: 2). Despite this, as workers age, they often see fewer opportunities for advancement within their organisation and prioritise job stability over seeking new growth. This suggests that age alone may not accurately predict workplace behaviour or SAW. Instead, factors like perceived career time remaining or functional age (e.g. cognitive changes and physical health decline) may serve as better indicators.

The existing research presents inconsistencies regarding career development of senior workers, highlighting the need for further investigation to reconcile these discrepancies. Further investigations suggest that it is fundamental to consider the entire workforce when implementing career development strategies, and that senior employees show higher levels of engagement when given opportunities for continued growth and advancement within the organisation (Perrin 2016: 248). Discrimination based on age in access to skill development and professional growth opportunities can gradually impact the performance of older workers. Such practices are often driven by stereotypical

views about older workers' learning capacities and a general undervaluation of investing in their development. However, these practices may change as societal expectations adapt to rising retirement ages, including the gradual extension of employment protection and pension eligibility thresholds. Normal physiological ageing up to the age of 75 generally does not pose a significant limitation when it comes to meeting the mental requirements of job demands (Albin et al 2021: 150). These findings have significant implications for an ageing society, as retaining older workers is crucial given the shortage of young and skilled labour. Older employees bring valuable experience and knowledge to their roles and serve as essential mentors, transferring skills to younger colleagues. On a broader scale, failing to retain older workers could slow economic growth, increase public spending on retirement, and reduce the future skilled labour pool. Therefore, understanding and promoting factors that enhance retention is a critical HRM issue for both organisations and society (Cheung & Wu 2013: 657).

2.4 Implications for Organisations and Governments

2.4.1 Implications for Organisations

To attract and keep top-performing older employees, organisations must adapt to meet their evolving needs (Perrin 2016: 247). Strategies aimed at older employees lead to reduced stress, enhanced physical and mental well-being, decreased psychological strain, and lower emotional exhaustion. They also contribute to greater job satisfaction, stronger social support, improved perception of organisational fairness, reduced workplace absenteeism, better overall employee welfare, and increased enthusiasm for work (Rožman et al 2019: 1055). Policy discussions present the extension of working lives as both an economic necessity and a means of supporting health in later years (Biggs et al 2017: 1463). As mentioned in sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, if older individuals maintain good health, they can actively contribute to the economy while reducing their reliance on health and social benefits. Furthermore, productive ageing alleviates the burden of an ageing population on younger generations.

Productive ageing refers to the potential of older individuals to continue working and contributing to their communities, supported by improved health and reduced workplace physical demands, challenging age-related discrimination and the notion of ageing as decline. The key argument is that maintaining workers' health increases their willingness and ability to extend their participation in the labour force (Biggs et al 2017: 1464). Organisations should implement health-promoting programs to enable older employees to extend their careers while contributing to their successful ageing. There are numerous ways on how to structure the work environment to improving psychological health. In this section practical implications are suggested for the domains person-work fit, job control and the role of leadership.

First, achieving a strong person-work fit is essential for long-term employee retention. This requires developing more efficient recruitment processes that go beyond merely assessing a candidate's suitability for the role to also evaluating their cultural fit within the organisation. If the "right sort of people" is recruited, they are less likely to leave the organisation. For this purpose, innovative and higher-quality recruitment and selection strategies are necessary to attract the best candidates. By recruiting, developing, and training the right people, organisations can reduce turnover and build a more cohesive and effective workforce (Baptiste 2008: 289).

Giving the opportunity for older employees to have control over their working hours is essential. Commonly, older employees could benefit from flexible arrangements or part-time jobs as they are often involved in caregiving responsibilities (Biggs et al 2017: 1476) or need to support their retirement (Baptiste 2008: 285). This would have beneficial effects on their mental health and successful ageing. Enabling older workers to remain in the workforce longer has the advantage of fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer, particularly tacit knowledge, which is deeply personal, context-specific, and embedded in workers' experiences and memory. To facilitate this, organisations should create environments that nurture relationships and daily interactions, establish spaces for knowledge transfer, whether physical, virtual, or

conceptual, and actively support the conversion of both explicit and tacit knowledge (Harvey 2012: 401-403; Wikström et al 2018: 1521). Senior employees could be engaged in personalised projects to pass on their professional legacy. Harvey's (2012: 405) recommendations include storytelling group meetings, where they share experiences, and one-on-one mentoring sessions, which remain confidential and independent of organisational constraints. Wikström et al (2018: 1520) suggest further tools and techniques, such as storytelling, job shadowing, exit interviews and process manuals. Institutions could also leverage the expertise of senior employees by involving them in consultancy services or advisory roles as independent contractors. This would offer the employees a role in which they thrive, without the need for a full-time commitment, while capitalising on their extensive knowledge and experience of the market (Perrin 2016: 247-248).

Training managers is fundamental to creating an environment that promotes SAW. With the increasing prevalence of mental health issues such as burnout and depression among workforces in post-industrialised nations, leaders are becoming more aware of their broader responsibility to ensure the well-being and safety of their employees. Various reports highlight supervisory behaviour as a significant risk factor for employee health concerns, including job strain, burnout, and depression, reinforcing the crucial role that leaders play in shaping workplace well-being. HRM training programs should be implemented to enhance supervisors' ability to support the health of their employees. For instance, 360° feedback sessions can help pinpoint work-related stressors, such as communication gaps between supervisors and employees, which may lead to unclear or contradictory instructions. These issues can be addressed through targeted interventions, such as coaching for supervisors. Businesses should also prioritise employees' mental and emotional health by cultivating self-confidence, purpose, fulfilment, and emotional resilience. This can be achieved through supportive and nurturing workplace relationships (Baptiste 2008: 303). Positive attitudes and behaviours foster trust in social exchanges, which builds incrementally through reciprocal investments in relationships (Vitetta et al 2005: 499). Managers who recognise and understand their

employees' emotions can effectively motivate them, leading to higher job satisfaction and improved performance. By valuing each employee as a whole individual with both rational and emotional needs, managers play a crucial role in enhancing work quality and overall job satisfaction, ultimately boosting productivity and efficiency (Rožman et al 2019: 1051). Furthermore, epidemiological studies confirm that social and emotional support can reduce premature mortality, prevent illness, and aid recovery (Vitetta et al 2005: 499). A workplace environment built on mutual support and trust encourages employees to engage in self-regulatory behaviours (Kooij et al 2020: 23). While there is limited scientific evidence on the impact of these leadership interventions on employees' psychological and mental health (Kuehnl et al 2019: 9), the World Health Organization (2022: 26) recommends training managers to support employees' mental health, as their awareness, attitudes, and behaviours can encourage workers to seek help. The goal is to build confidence in recognising, engaging with, and assisting team members facing mental health challenges while adjusting job-related stressors accordingly.

2.4.2 Implications for Governments

Governments should reform their pension systems to adapt to the demographic change. Sweden was among the first EU Member States to reform in depth its pension system to meet the challenge of ageing, inspiring other reform projects across the EU (Aspegren et al 2019: 2). The Swedish pension system is innovative as it combines a Notional Defined-Contribution (NDC) model with automatic adjustments for life expectancy and economic conditions, ensuring long-term sustainability. The system's simplicity and high level of automation enhance its transparency. Individuals can easily understand their pension rights at any given time, and any changes to the system are clear and evident, making short-term political interference more difficult (Aspegren et al 2019: 3-6).

The reform maintains flexibility, allowing individuals to retire between 61 and 67, soon increasing to 64-69, with benefits adjusted accordingly (Aspegren et al 2019: 6). As highlighted in section 2.3.2.1.2 having control over retirement has

positive effects on successful ageing itself, making the Sweden reform relevant to prolonging workers' life expectancy. An additional step could be eliminating a mandatory retirement age, which could increase older workers' perceived capability and motivation to remain employed (Kooij et al 2020: 31). Although the timing of individual retirement is influenced by various factors such as health, income, and family life, workplace experiences significantly impact the decision of when to retire. As a result, retirement can sometimes stem from reduced motivation at work, as dissatisfaction with one's job appears to drive retirement intentions (Henning et al 2023: 38). Therefore, before raising the pension age, governments should prioritise encouraging businesses to implement supportive workplace practices, as these have a significant indirect effect on individuals' willingness to remain in the labour market.

The Sweden pension system consists of three pillars: a public pension (NDC + premium pension), occupational pensions (semi-mandatory employer-provided schemes), and private savings. A guaranteed pension ensures a minimum income for those with low lifetime earnings, increasing fairness. To prevent financial strain, the Automatic Balancing Mechanism (ABM) reduces benefits if liabilities exceed assets, securing fiscal stability. Pension benefits are indexed to wages, keeping them aligned with economic growth. Additionally, gender considerations include unisex annuities and the option for spouses to share pension rights, taking into consideration also people who must reduce working hours in their lifetime for caregiving responsibilities or disabilities (Aspegren et al 2019: 5-8).

2.4.3 Anticipating Issues

The value imperialism of work is a largely overlooked issue in the context of SAW, government policies and organisational practices. Official policy discussions and favourable gerontological perspectives often frame delayed retirement as a positive alternative to the dependency structures of the welfare state. The "value imperialism of work" refers to how capitalist systems organise people's time around work, rendering all other activities, such as relaxation or

leisure, secondary or unimportant. This results in constant pressure to remain productive, leading to a restless experience of time. It becomes increasingly difficult for people to enjoy leisure without feeling guilty or as though they are wasting time. In advanced capitalist economies, daily activities are primarily shaped by the processes of production and consumption, which in turn reinforce the money-driven system. The way time is organised by capitalist production methods shapes our overall experience of time, fostering a sense of restlessness and making it challenging to avoid engagement in either work or consumption. Recently, the lines between work and personal time have become further blurred, largely due to flexible work schedules and advances in technology. While these changes were initially thought to offer more freedom to workers, they have instead resulted in longer and more demanding work hours, as work can now occur at any time and in any place. The lack of clear separation between work and personal life has left many people with less time and energy for personal activities, contributing to greater isolation and a growing sense of disconnection from family and leisure. This trend is particularly evident among the long-lived population, especially the baby boomer generation, which is the healthiest and most resourceful to date. Older adults are increasingly seen as an economic resource, and their "surplus" time in retirement is viewed primarily in terms of its exchange value. Rather than being able to enjoy their additional years of healthy life for personal fulfilment, they are encouraged to remain active in the workforce or in work-like activities, to avoid becoming a perceived burden on younger generations and to support economic growth. Life's time has thus become dominated by a narrow view of what is considered valuable. The emphasis on productive ageing agendas, which view time throughout the life course as a uniform, "empty" chronological space to be filled with economic value, contrasts sharply with psycho-social perspectives on ageing, which emphasise a shift in existential awareness of time in the second half of life. The concepts of value imperialism and restlessness are particularly alarming as they reduce the existential value of time in later life to mere economic utility, disregarding the deeper personal and emotional dimensions, such as the search for meaning and reflective living, that become increasingly important as individuals age (Biggs et al 2017: 1469-1475).

3 Methods

This study is based on an extensive scoping review, adopting a theory-driven approach to gather insights from existing literature on SAW and its impact on individual successful ageing, organisational behaviour, and health psychology.

The analysis involved a thematic synthesis of the literature on the impact of workforce-related factors on mental health and their subsequent effects on successful ageing, with a particular focus on fostering employee outlook and connections through the workplace. For the purposes of this investigation, the search focused on the terms "successful ageing" and "work". A comprehensive search strategy was implemented, utilising databases of scientific publications and application of standard search techniques

Inclusion criteria were set to ensure the relevance of the selected material: (1) only articles published in English were considered, (2) full-text availability was required, (3) articles published from the year 2000 onwards were included, and (4) materials from any discipline, category, or subject area were eligible. The exclusion criteria were: (1) articles not published in English, (2) incomplete articles or those without full-text access, and (3) articles focused on the third world. Articles were screened using a two-step process: initially by reviewing titles and abstracts, followed by a full-text review to ensure relevance to the research question.

Data extraction involved identifying key themes, findings, and study designs, which were then categorised for thematic synthesis. The quality of the studies was assessed using a qualitative appraisal framework to ensure rigor and consistency. The thematic synthesis process helped identify patterns across the literature, ensuring that the analysis accurately represented the factors influencing employee well-being, successful ageing, and organisational behaviour.

4 Limitations

Countless factors influence successful ageing, making it necessary to narrow the scope of this thesis to only a select few. For instance, this paper focuses solely on the direct impact of work on employees, while overlooking indirect factors that also affect health. One such example is the organisation's environmental impact, which can have significant consequences on employees' longevity (Isham et al 2021: 1). Moreover, the factors considered in this paper were selected due to various constraints. Among the direct influences, only those affecting mental health were explored, yet even this aspect is highly complex and multifaceted. Mental health is shaped by numerous factors, including historical and cultural contexts, and while organisations can foster a generally positive work environment, it is not the sole determinant of an employee's mental well-being that impacts successful ageing. Moreover, mental health is not only affected by intrinsic factors, but also extrinsic, which were not considered in this paper. While this thesis primarily examines intrinsic workplace factors, external elements also play a crucial role in shaping mental health. Job-related factors such as wages, working hours, workload and access to paid or unpaid sick leave all impact employee well-being, extending their effects to workers' families and communities. These elements can serve as both protective and risk factors for overall health (Lee et al 2016: C1).

5 Conclusion

Retaining older workers is a crucial organisational strategy (Cheung & Wu 2013: 657; Perrin 2026: 247; Rožman et al 2019: 1055). This thesis highlights two key reasons behind this. Firstly, demographic shifts indicate that the global population is ageing, and in the coming years, the older demographic will outnumber the younger one (Burmeister & Deller 2016: 2; Virtanen et al 2022: 273). This will lead to a declining labour supply, which will intensify the financial burden on public pension systems. As a result, numerous countries are exploring pension reforms that reduce retirement benefits and/or raise the official retirement age (Staubli & Zweimüller 2013: 1). As working lives continue

being extended, there is an increasing need to retain senior employees and support their health and successful ageing.

Secondly, preserving the knowledge of older and retiring employees has proven to be essential for sustaining organisational success (Burmeister & Deller 2016: 2). Although letting go of higher-paid, older employees may appear to reduce costs in the short term, it can be harmful in the long run. Experience is irreplaceable, and when seasoned workers leave, they take valuable knowledge with them. Numerous studies highlight that older employees contribute not only expertise but also advanced communication skills, well-established professional and client networks, and a strong work ethic (Perrin 2016: 246). Their long-term perspective and ability to mentor younger colleagues also support knowledge transfer and help maintain organisational continuity during periods of change.

To effectively support and retain senior employees, organisations need to adopt a comprehensive approach that considers health in all its aspects. This thesis proposes the implementation of SAW practices. It specifically explores factors that enhance mental health, as these contribute positively to successful ageing. Particular attention is given to strategies that foster meaningful relationships and a sense of purpose in the workplace. Finding a good person-work fit, promoting flexibility and ensuring high-quality leaders are factors that contribute positively to SAW. Moreover, when senior employees are offered a chance to continue growing and advancing within the company, they are more engaged, leading to higher performance (Perrin 2016: 248).

Future research should focus on assessing the tangible impact of the proposed strategies on individual successful ageing. Empirical studies could provide valuable insights into how initiatives aimed at fostering connection and purpose influence employee mental health and engagement over time. Moreover, the relationship between coworkers and its impact on health outcomes remains an area that deserves deeper investigation, as understanding the social dynamics within the workplace is essential. Further research is needed to identify practical approaches for creating environments that encourage open communication and

supportive relationships, which are key components of a healthy and age-inclusive workplace. Finally, further research investigating the impact of SAW on productivity and other key performance indicators would be valuable. Such evidence could contribute to reducing employer resistance to SAW-oriented HR policies that may stem from prejudice or a focus on short-term outcomes.

Looking ahead, organisations must recognise the value of older employees, not just as a source of experience but as essential contributors to a sustainable future workforce. Developing policies and strategies that prioritise the successful ageing and inclusion of older workers will be essential in addressing the challenges posed by demographic shifts. As the workforce continues to age, fostering a workplace culture that values lifelong contributions and actively supports ageing employees will not only improve individual job satisfaction but will also have long-term benefits for organisational resilience and success.

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