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The Impact of Technological Advances on Older Workers

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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MBA, University of North Alabama, 2008

BS, Shaw University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Management

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Abstract

The general problem addressed in this study was the treatment of older workers in the information technology industry that contributes to age discrimination in the workplace. Age discrimination is against the law irrespective of whether it is aimed at older workers in the workforce or becoming job candidates at an advanced age. Although previous research has shown that age discrimination is prevalent in work environments, little has been suggested to eradicate the issue in the workplace. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the issue of age discrimination as it relates to workers over the age of 50 working in the information technology industry. The conceptual framework of this study was based on the age discrimination theory introduced by noted gerontologist, Robert Butler. Using this theory, this study examined the issue of age discrimination in the workplace and the impact that technological advances have on older workers as it relates to equal opportunities for training and growth. Data were collected from 39 participants using open-ended questions via an online survey and were analyzed via hand coding. Four themes were identified from the received data from the participants. The findings of the study showed that age discrimination against older workers in the information technology industry within a healthcare organization does indeed exist. Results from this study may help to promote social change by educating leadership and management on the policies and laws that regulate discrimination in organizations and encouraging the leaders and managers to implement equal opportunities for all employees and support their career plans, regardless of age.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parakeets, Sammie, and Kacey, who spent many nights keeping me company throughout this process. Their dedication to providing their own brand of support by tweeting and singing while I worked diligently night after night deserves my deepest gratitude and a lifetime of treats. Sadly, both Sammie and Kacey passed away before I finished this program, but I know they are still supporting me at "The Rainbow Bridge". I also dedicate this dissertation to my late grandfather, John Quincy McIntosh, who, before he passed away, bestowed upon me his wishes that I further my education beyond high school. I believe that he is now beaming in Heaven with the completion of this degree.

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"…with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26 (NKJV). My greatest gratitude belongs to my Heavenly Father, without whom none of this was possible. Thank you for sustaining me and instilling in me the belief that I could complete this task.

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I would also like to thank my extended family and friends, who are too numerous to name. Their encouraging words and check-ins with me meant more to me than they can ever know. From the bottom of my heart, I thank all of you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

A 2012 American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) survey revealed that of 1000 registered voters polled, age 50 years and older, one-third of this population had experienced or knew someone who had experienced age discrimination within the last four years (Hannon, 2012). Of those participating in the survey, 64% believed that they, and others over the age of 50 years, had been subjected to age discrimination in the workplace (Hannon, 2012). Although age discrimination is condemned by the Age Discrimination Act of 1967 (Rothenberg & Gardner, 2011), it has been defined as the most socially accepted form of prejudice in the world, regardless of industry (Wallander, 2013). Demotions or a reduction in responsibilities, a decrease in morale, and job loss can be resulting factors in age discrimination cases in the workplace. Older workers, who were once admired for their knowledge, work ethics, and skills, are now being pushed aside to make way for a younger, more technologically advanced generation of workers. These individuals, however, lack the skill set and experience of their older peers.

While age discrimination is not confined to the information technology industry, it is worthy of investigating. Job satisfaction and job motivation are positively affected by positive attitudes towards technology from older workers (Elias et al., 2012). While an employee of any age may be expected to expeditiously learn and conform to new technology, older employees tend to be more scrutinized than their younger peers if they show an inability to learn new applications or accept change. Age discrimination in the workplace occurs when the value of older workers decreases. Wegge et al. (2012) found that the quality and acceptance of older workers was on the rise internationally. One

reason for this rise was because organizations at that time believed they would have difficulty attracting and hiring younger workers.

Background of the Study

Age discrimination, or ageism as originally coined by Dr. Robert Butler in 1969, was introduced as an issue which was not industry specific. Dr. Butler, who, at the time of the introduction of this phenomenon, was the founding director of the National Institute on Aging (NIA), which was founded in 1974. The mission of this organization was to administer and sustain research on aging, with a focus on the specific needs of the elderly as well as those diseases that are interconnected with the aging process (Bernard et al., 2019). Butler described age discrimination as a deep-seated prejudice against growing older by middle-aged and young people (Butler, 1969). In modern times, age discrimination is viewed as an issue not designed to target any particular generational group; rather, it can seek to disparage the old, the middle-aged, and the young (Ayalon, 2013). Unlike in Butler's day, age discrimination in recent years appears to be acceptable against both older and younger workers (Finkelstein & Truxillo, 2013). Negative comments about both younger and older workers are questioned as to their acceptability and an organization's need to hire new employees. While older workers are considered hard-working and committed, millennials are seen as portraying traits of entitlement (Finkelstein & Truxillo, 2013).

Often used in conjunction with the term *ageism*, age discrimination refers to a bias against an individual or group because of their age. While age discrimination is most notably directed at older individuals, this behavior can certainly be used against

those who are younger. As this issue has become more prevalent and ingrained in society, the most acceptable behavior towards age discrimination is to overlook it and pretend it does not happen. While both older and younger individuals can be affected by age discrimination, both are viewed as dependents of society as opposed to constructive members of society (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018). When defining age discrimination, it is necessary to evaluate the emotional, physiological, and intellectual aspects of this phenomenon.

Within this issue of age discrimination emerges the concept of successful ageing at work. This concept is becoming increasingly popular within organizations as they seek to address the changing demographics of the workforce (Zacher, 2015). In an effort to maintain valuable experience, organizations are seeking to retain older workers as long as possible. Likewise, some organizations are aggressively recruiting and hiring older workers to decrease the number of unskilled and unqualified workers in the workforce (Taylor & Earl, 2016). Fortunately for these organizations, some older workers are electing to remain in the workforce beyond retirement age (Bal et al., 2011) for various reasons, including retirement preparation and maintaining a balance of health and vitality. They have delayed their retirement plans because of economic downfalls, and as a result of their remaining in the workforce, organizations must understand the role age plays in work related behaviors and attitudes (Elias et al., 2012). Organizations are trying to retain maturing workers as long as possible (Zacher, 2015).

The gap identified in the literature is that very little has been proposed to eliminate the issue of age discrimination in the workplace (Finkelstein & Truxillo, 2013).

While age discrimination is an issue where both older and younger workers may be victims, the primary focus of this study is the impact of age discrimination on older workers. Positive change with this issue may be achieved by ensuring that organizations cease condoning and promoting age discrimination within the information technology industry.

A study of the issue of age discrimination in the workplace against older workers in the information technology field is needed. While the 1967 Age Discrimination and Employment Act protects against refusal to hire, unlawful firing, and withholding compensation for employees who are let go, it does not address hostile work environments which are created by a history of repetitive bad behavior (Weiner et al., 2014). Age discrimination by its very nature is not age population specific, as there is an increase in the number of cases focused on the younger generation (Choi et al., 2011). Empirical investigations, however, show that age discrimination is primarily focused on older workers (North & Fiske, 2015). This study focuses on age discrimination against older workers.

Problem Statement

The general problem to be addressed in this study is that age discrimination continues to exist in the workplace. While an older worker may have a different confidence level in technological abilities, it does not discredit their technological competency (Lewis, 2012). Zachary (2012) argued that older workers are more likely to be terminated because of age discrimination than their younger coworkers. Likewise, employers are more prone to hire younger workers because of their age. When

evaluating employee resource needs, organizations may decide to reduce their staff. At this juncture, they may choose to let go of older workers first. These older workers, age 55 years and older, may be seen as unqualified to adapt to new advances in technology (Dennis, 2016). This decision to fire or lay off older workers makes room for younger employees with no experience in their field. Terminating older workers may occur because of an organization's attempt to reduce costs by decreasing budgeted salaries and costly healthcare benefits for older employees (Zachary, 2012).

Employment opportunities in information technology within the healthcare industry have increased because of the implementation of electronic medical records, and hiring managers are opting to hire consultants as a means of reducing costs (Hays & Lou, 2015). As recent graduates require time to establish realistic salary demands, they are likely to be paid substantially less than their older, more experienced colleagues. Regardless, organizations are questioning older workers' technological abilities compared to the abilities of their younger counterparts (Abel et al., 2014). The specific problem is that older workers experience age discrimination in the workplace within the information technology industry. Some of this workplace discrimination is at the hands of leadership and management who restrict collaboration between the different age groups and fail to acknowledge quality work ethics.

Having older workers in the workplace is beneficial to an organization as well as society, due in part to their contribution to the growth of the economy. Older people are often viewed as positive examples for their societal neighbors, and the work they perform often reinforces the strength of the society in which they live (Irving, 2015). With

technology changing so rapidly in the information technology industry, older workers are sometimes viewed as less willing to learn new processes as they relate to new applications. They are perceived as being less social and having weakened brainpower as they age, which peers and management believe prohibits them from grasping new technological skills. Older workers are seen as less willing to change, especially when the change involves an advancement in technology. They may be viewed as disinterested in learning new processes and procedures as they advance ever closer to retirement. As a result of this belief and behavior, older workers often lose their jobs to younger workers and consultants (Hays & Lou, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study using a case study design is to explore the issue of age discrimination towards older workers within the information technology field. I will explore the effects of age discrimination on older workers as it relates to evolving technological advances within today's society. Although age discrimination can be imposed on individuals or groups of any age, complaints notably come from those over the age of 50 years, regardless of the industry in which they are employed. The primary focus of this study will concentrate on information technology employees working in the healthcare industry. Technology in the healthcare industry must remain relevant and current as new diseases and health infirmities are discovered, advances in medical treatments increase, and the life expectancy of individuals continue to rise.

The intent of this study by exploring the issue of age discrimination within information technology is to examine the phenomenon of organizations favoring younger

workers in the field. Organizations' behavior of repudiating older workers with the knowledge and experience that has contributed to the success of the organization is also explored. These organizations tend to devalue their older, more experienced workers, and in an effort to cut overall costs, hire younger, inexperienced workers for less pay. Although younger workers may have more experience with current technology, they do not have the work experience of older employees. Organizations perceive new, younger workers, who may be recent college graduates, as more apt to propel their businesses into the future because of their technical knowledge, often disregarding the abilities of current, older workers. This apathy towards older employees may lead to an organization's decision to relieve them of their employment and replace them with younger employees. The decision to discontinue employment of older workers in favor of younger workers can jeopardize the reputation of the organization. It can also negatively impact the organization's ability to sufficiently meet the needs of their clients in goods and services in the manner in which they have become accustomed.

Research Question

The basis for this study is to examine the role that technological advances play on an aging workforce. As workers are aging, leaders must evaluate staffing needs to ensure that the organization continues to meet its goals, while ensuring these older workers do not succumb to the perils of age discrimination and become devalued by their employers. The following question will be used to address the issue of work environment age discrimination against older workers:

RQ1: How do older workers within the information technology field view the

treatment they receive from organizational leaders?

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study relies upon the theory of planned behavior

(previously dubbed the theory of reasoned action), which says that if an individual has

the objective of performing a particular act, they will ultimately fulfill that intention.

Originated by noted social psychologist and professor emeritus at the University of

Massachusetts at Amherst, Icek Ajzen, the theory of planned behavior defines the

intention of an individual to deliberately carry out a preconceived action. As it relates to

the issue of workplace age discrimination, this theory provides insight to the following

negative behaviors aimed at older employees and job applicants:

- negative bias towards older workers when creating job vacancy descriptions

- negative bias towards older workers in hiring process

- hiring avoidance tendencies

Job Vacancy Descriptions

Job vacancy descriptions are created or modified to purposefully include verbiage

that eliminates the qualifications of older workers in hopes of attracting younger

applicants. Recruitment managers use their discriminatory beliefs about older workers

when posting job descriptions as a tactic to omit them from recruitment, including:

- their lack of current skills,

- their ability to learn new processes quickly (and the return on training)

- their viability to remain in the workplace for an extended period of time, and

- the risk of employing those near retirement (Taylor, 2017).

Posting descriptions which allude to the following are against the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations:

- Individuals nearing retirement age need not apply.

- Providing training opportunities to older workers is not worth the effort.

- Invitation to become a part of a young, progressive, and charismatic team.

Employers deliberately devise job descriptions based on factors that impede the recruitment and ultimate hiring of older workers despite being viewed as trustworthy, dependable, and meticulous in the workplace.

Hiring Process

The theory of planned behavior has been periodically used to analyze and reveal reasons why individuals of certain protected classes are ostracized in the hiring process of an organization (Fasbender & Wang, 2017). Discrimination and harassment by employers, peers, or others in the workplace is prohibited against individuals based on the following:

- race,

- age,

- religious affiliation,

- mental or physical impairment, and

- nationality.

These discriminatory acts are against U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations. The EEOC shields members of protected classes against these behaviors. As it relates to the hiring process, the theory of planned behavior ascertains that the negative attitudes of hiring managers towards older workers greatly influences the decision-making process. These behaviors negatively affect hiring managers' decision when determining whether to extend an invitation to employment to older workers. Older workers who seek employment, regardless of their career status or when they enter the workforce, often must compete with younger job seekers. These individuals lack the life and work experiences of older workers, yet organizations often dismiss this inadequacy during the hiring process when they intentionally plan to exclude older workers. Unfortunately, organizations and leaders who adopt the practice of excluding older workers from employment consideration enter into the hiring process with the intent of limiting their scope of applicants to younger job seekers.

Hiring Avoidance Tendencies

Preconceived determinations about older workers, such as their trainability, willingness to learn new processes, and adaptability to change, can negatively play into the hiring process as avoidance tendencies. Organizations whose hiring practices demonstrate a history of avoiding hiring older workers are more apt to validate these tendencies by following through with omitting them from the pool of candidates and opting to hire a younger job seeker (Fasbender & Wang, 2017). Negative attitudes and beliefs about older workers play an immense part of the decision-making process when hiring avoidance tendencies are present. These actions often result in the implementation

of the actual behavior: disqualifying an older worker from the hiring process in order to fulfill the intention of hiring a younger job seeker.

Conceptual Framework

The underlying concept of this study is selective discrimination which is present in organizations today. Organizational leaders participate, whether knowingly or otherwise, in refraining from considering older workers in the industry because of their age or level of technological aptitude (Applewhite, 2016). Age discrimination, by its very nature, presents an opportunity for apathy towards discrimination and mistreatment of older workers. Acceptance of adverse treatment would not be tolerated towards other age groups (Miller, 2016).

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the age discrimination theory introduced by noted gerontologist, Robert Butler (Achenbaum, 2015). Butler's concept of discrimination was developed to investigate discrimination of one age group towards another (Ayalon, 2013). While this concept theory primarily deals with bringing awareness to the needs and rights of the elderly, the basis for the theory can be used as the theoretical background for this study which discusses how technology affects an aging workforce. Just as important as it is for individuals to remain active for their health and wellness as they grow older, such is also true of information technology employees to remain current on technological advances within their industry. As specifically related to healthcare information technology employees, it is equally important to meet and maintain the emotional demands of their positions within the organization. A failure to

do so could result in adversely affecting the health, wellbeing, and emotional status of these employees (Fraccaroli & Deller, 2015).

To expose others to all aspects of age discrimination, Butler characterized age discrimination in both positive and negative light (Jönson, 2013). Some argue that age discrimination is a result of sociocultural and interpersonal views that transpire through social interactions with different individuals (Marcus & Sabuncu, 2015). The discrimination theory is also relevant to this study as it contends that showing favoritism to any individual or group within an organization breeds discrimination and is a means of excluding or ostracizing others (Greenwood & Pettigrew, 2014).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study is utilizing the qualitative method with a case study design. One aspect of this method is to explore how individuals think or feel (McLeod, 2008). It is with this type of study that the intent is to answer the *how* and *why* questions of the issue. The issue of the effects of technological advances on the aging workforce is to explore the *how* and *why* of the situation as well as offer solutions to management and leadership on dealing with this issue.

Often seen as an alternate choice to quantitative research, qualitative research allows researchers to study people, situations, or a phenomenon within their own environments (Flick, 2018). The chosen research design for this study is a case study, which allows for a situation, individual, or group to be observed to obtain information or insight into the behaviors of the subjects (Stake, 1995, 2006; Yin, 2013). A case study is further defined as a research method by which a researcher can examine or investigate a

phenomenon in depth (Yin, 2013). This case study will be addressed first by identifying a group of IT professionals in the Healthcare Industry. The individuals within this group will be diversified in age, education, and technological expertise. These individuals will be over the age of 50 years, having earned a minimum of an undergraduate degree with 10 or more years of information technology experience. Employees in the Healthcare arena within the information technology industry are required to maintain a high level of comprehension of technological advances which affect patient care, including electronic medical records security. This case study will examine the relationship between age discrimination and older workers in a healthcare environment within the information technology industry.

Definitions

Ageism: Ageism is the negative attitudes towards individuals because of their age, whether by those who are younger, older, or within work environments, by management (Kydd & Fleming, 2015).

Age discrimination: Age discrimination develops from prejudicial opinions and viewpoints of a specific individual or group of individuals (Azulai, 2014). The most common definition for age discrimination associates it with age.

Baby Boomers: Individuals born between 1946 and 1964 are designated as Baby Boomers. Today, their age ranges from mid-50's to mid to late 70's.

Generation X: Individuals in the Generation X generation are those born between 1965 and 1979. They are the generation which follows the Baby Boomer generation.

Generation Y: Born between 1980 and 2000, those individuals in Generation Y are also known as *Millennials*. They are the children of the Baby Boomers and are the generation which follows Generation X which is considered to be third in line in the current work environment hierarchy.

Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction gives an indication of how much an employee likes or enjoys the job they perform as a whole, as well as the individual tasks within the scope of their job responsibilities and is interconnected with job performance and an employee's quality of work.

Millennial: Individuals of the millennial generation were born between 1980 and 2000. The term, *millennial*, is simply another word used to define those individuals in Generation Y.

Negative behaviors: Negative behaviors are those behaviors exhibited by individuals that are meant to induce harm to another.

Older Workers: Chronologically, older workers refer to those individuals over the age of 60, and oftentimes specifically identify with those in the Baby Boomer generation. This term is typically used synonymously with any reference to individuals between the ages of 50 and 64, which places them in pre-retirement age (Tempest, S., & Coupland, 2017).

Retirement: Retirement is defined as leaving one's employment and discontinuing working for an organization for pay. The average retirement age is 65, yet some of the Baby Boomers of today have chosen to forgo retirement and continue working (Gibaldi, 2013).

Workplace productivity: Productivity on its own, refers to the efficiency or effectiveness of producing a product. As it relates to employees in the workplace, productivity is the level of efficiency by which an employee performs their job duties.

Assumptions

Several assumptions can be made to this study, including:

- Negative behaviors in the workplace are a result of age discrimination of older workers: Malinen and Johnston (2013) suggested that some older workers are perceived as less productive when compared to their younger peers, which causes negative behaviors toward the older workers.

- Older workers are devalued by their employers: Employers who undervalue their older employees negatively impact them by contributing to feelings of poor self-esteem, a decrease in feelings of self-worth and isolation, and other forms of moral destroyers (Ayalon, 2013). They are often overlooked for training opportunities to enhance or increase their overall skillset in order to remain competitive in the workforce.

- Older workers are less likely to be hired when competing with younger workers: According to Rothenberg and Gardner, older workers seeking employment must apply to more job postings that their younger peers. (Rothenberg & Gardner, 2011).

- Age discrimination in the workplace is due solely to age-focused employee evaluations: Some organizations use competency evaluations to

determine an employee's relevancy to retain employment. This form of discrimination can be defined as a stereotypic perception and may also be used to determine an employee's trainability and reliability (Richardson, et al., 2013).

- Organizations unfairly treat workers of specific age groups: In their study on age discrimination in the workplace and how it affects the health and work capabilities of employees regardless of age, Gonzales et al. (2015) discovered the following:

  - Compared to their middle-aged peers, both younger and older workers revealed that they received more adverse performance appraisals.

  - Job retention, job satisfaction, and employee mental health is substantially related to age discrimination among middle-aged employees.

  - Elevated stress levels, higher turnover rates, and a heightened desire to end their careers and enter into retirement is prevalent among older workers.

- The health and wellbeing of all age groups are negatively affected by age discrimination: The decision to remain employed in toxic work environments or permanently leave their careers for retirement may be

essential to regain a sense of mental and physical healthiness (Gonzales, et al., 2015).

- Career progression in information technology for younger healthcare workers may be stymied by older workers remaining in the workforce beyond retirement age: Information technology is an essential industry that constantly changes. Information technology professionals, especially those in the Baby Boomer and Generation X tend to remain in the industry consistently several years. This tends to make it difficult for younger workers to enter the industry or progress from entry-level positions. Those in the Millennial generation see these older workers as obstructions to their ability to move into higher-level positions within the organization. This perception by younger workers can create resentment and cynicism towards older workers, and a decrease in employment commitment to the organization. These behaviors offer evidence to explain a reduction in job satisfaction (Hays & Lou, 2015).

Scope and Delimitations

The issue of age discrimination in the workplace within the information technology industry provides a plethora of different focal points, including how this issue relates to all employees. The specific focus of this study is how age discrimination against older workers is impacted by technological advances. This focus was chosen because as technology continues to advance, older workers are beginning to go the way of the dinosaur and become extinct. Age discrimination can be directed at any age group;

however, research shows that older workers are primarily the focus of age discrimination

(North & Friske, 2015). The belief that older workers are unable to learn new technology

and keep up with continuous growth has made this issue relevant in today's society.

They are perceived as being incapable of adaptability and trainability and, when

compared to their younger peers, are viewed as deficient in interpersonal and social skills

(Richardson et al., 2013).

      The focal group of this study is primarily those in the Baby Boomer and

Generation X generations. While all are over the age of 50 years, these individuals

belong to a group whose experience and years of service within an organization span 10

or more years. Those individuals in the Millennial Generation are excluded from this

study as they are not typically seen as incapable of learning and adapting to new

technology.

      The modernization theory states that older workers are casualties of modern

technological advances. While relevant, the modernization theory is not used in this

study because it deals primarily with the aging process of an individual. This theory

relates to medical disabilities and limited or a lack of education (Ayalon, 2013). This

study deals with age discriminations based on specific skill sets of older workers within

information technology industry in healthcare organizations.

Limitations

      As a longtime employee in the information technology industry, I have seen my

share of changes and employee turnover. I have observed reorganizations of divisions to

accommodate positions that became irrelevant after major application and system

implementations. Employees, having worked 15 to 20 years as application owners and

senior system analysts, were moved into less-challenging positions as it was determined

that their expertise was absorbed by the latest application installation. While some

organizations make a conscious effort to retain these experienced employees by placing

them in other, oftentimes less demanding positions, other organizations force retirement

or offer early retirement incentives. Unlike their younger counterparts, older job seekers

tend to have more difficulty finding worthwhile job opportunities with organizations that

are willing to compensate them appropriately for their knowledge and experience

(Raynor, 2015). Instead of anticipating retirement from their careers, older workers are

left maneuvering the job market in an effort to recreate their careers or begin new ones.

Reentering the job market is difficult for these individuals, and having been in the

workforce for several years, they are inexperienced in the job search process. Having

first-hand knowledge of these behaviors can be viewed as biased; therefore, the

participant pool for this study will be a diverse group of individuals over the age of 50

years who have been employed in information technology for 10 or more years.

Significance of the Study

Researchers have determined through a recent study on obesity that an

individual's body mass index (BMI) plays a key role in predicting the life expectancy of

a healthy adult (Stenholm, et al., 2017). Healthy adults with a normal BMI can live on

average, an additional nine more years without the onset of chronic disease. Life

expectancy calculators provide an opportunity for individuals to get an estimate of how

long they will live based on their age, gender, exercise, and social habits. With good

health and social habits, the average adult, aged 50 years, could possibly live to 87 years

of age. The concept of growing older is a unique and complex phenomenon that has the

potential to affect everyone (North & Fiske, 2015). The process of aging which includes

the progressive deterioration of the human body and a breakdown of an individual's

bodily functions, is a natural part of life. As such, aging raises the uncertainty of

despondency and fatality. Evidence of aging is in every walk of life, including the

workplace. A change in behaviors as well as the physical changes an individual endures

can provide opportunities for generalized age-related stereotyping, and consequently,

create an environment for age discrimination. As individuals, we also evaluate the

process of aging personally, acknowledging the changes in our own behaviors. Through

this process, we evaluate our own physical and mental competencies. If we allow these

stereotypes to internalize, age discrimination stereotypes become self-fulfilling

predictions (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018). These behaviors and personal beliefs factor

into an older worker's decision to discontinue working.

  Conversely, healthy adults are choosing to work longer in order to retain the

ability to support a relatively decent quality of life (The Author, 2016). Growing older

has its advantages, including wisdom, experience, and positive emotional health (North &

Fiske, 2015). In this season of healthcare instability, older workers are also remaining

employed for health insurance benefits. The study could be significant because it may

identify strategies used by older workers and leadership to alleviate opportunities of age

discrimination while determining solutions to the issue because of growing advances in

technology. This issue could be relevant to today's society in that it unnecessarily

removes mature workers from their positions prematurely based on age-related

speculation of abilities and replaces them with younger workers (Zachary, 2012). As age

discrimination can take many forms in the workplace, it is important for older workers to

recognize the signs. The examples below display a portion of what age discrimination

resembles in the workplace:

- *Exclusion from opportunities to increase knowledge or skills:* Instead of

  providing training to enhance the educational abilities of all employees,

  older workers are excluded, and these opportunities are made available

  only to their younger peers. Older workers may also be excluded from

  continuing education reimbursement, which factors into their decision

  whether or not to continue their education and enhance their skills on their

  own.

- *Belittling comments about age in the work environment from peers and

  leadership:* Immature and hurtful jokes, age-related slander, and remarks

  about their work abilities or physical shortcomings, whether intentionally

  made to inflict harm, or delivered in a playful manner, are not only illegal,

  but also insensitive and damaging to the organizations' reputation.

- *Excluded from more demanding positions or assignments:* When the

  opportunity of a challenging project or assignment presents itself,

  management defers to younger workers to fill these tasks as they believe

  that have the stamina and skillset needed. Deferring to younger workers

for challenging tasks is also a tactic used by management to force older

workers to feel they are worthless and unimportant to their organization.

This behavior not only frustrates older workers, but it can also lead to

intimidation to end their careers early or seek other employment.

- *Exclusion from organizational meetings or other company-wide activities:*

  Invitation to training sessions or meetings provided by outside vendors

  with which the organization is affiliated are not extended to older workers.

  Instead, management extends those invitations to younger employees in

  hopes of solidifying the youthful persona of the organization. Exclusion

  from decision-making opportunities and even relocating older workers

  (i.e. requesting they work remotely) removes them from the office, thus

  making it problematic for them to contribute to the organization's goals.

- *Denied promotions and salary increases:* Unless confirmed by

  performance evaluations or other resources used to assess employee

  productivity, an employee's denial for promotion and salary increases may

  be difficult to verify. Being passed over for promotions in favor of a

  younger coworker with less experience and who is inadequately qualified

  may suggest a case of age discrimination.

Age discrimination in the workplace against older workers has decreased these

individuals in number, thus making them the minority in the workplace (Choi, et al.,

2011). Further examination of this problem may not only provide additional data to

current research, but it may also aid leaders in recognizing and acknowledging the most

valuable resource within an organization: its employees.

Nearly a half century has passed since the introduction of age discrimination by

Dr. Butler, and the issue continues to elude society (Raynor, 2015). Conceivably, the

true beneficiaries of this study could be older workers, their younger peers, and

employers, with older workers as the primary beneficiaries. Some older workers wish to

remain in the workforce beyond retirement and seek opportunities to enhance their

technical knowledge. As a result, some organizations may require older workers obtain

adequate training to guarantee their competency in their work environments (Lee, et al.,

2009). Organizations may, however, decline training for older workers on new systems,

applications, or software because they believe they would not receive a valuable return on

their investment. The perception is that these workers would lack the ability to be trained

on newer systems and software, and that they may retire from the organization before

their employer can reap the benefits of their training (Zachary, 2014). Regardless, each

group should have a vested interest in seeing an improvement to this issue.

Economically, consumer goods and services organizations could also benefit from

this study as the United States economy can boast that 50% of every dollar spent in this

country comes from individuals over the age of 50 years (Raynor, 2015). Workers are

opting to remain in the workforce longer for various reasons, including economic

downfalls and failure to plan for retirement (Elias, et al., 2012). As a result, they remain

strong contributors to the country's economy. Organizations and other successful

businesses and government programs who hire and retain older workers can benefit as the

health of the country's economy is contingent upon the ability of older workers to continue working beyond the age of 55 years (Lee, et al., 2009). While workers may choose to remain in the workforce beyond retirement age, it is not always a choice made lightly. Unfortunately for some, the inability to sufficiently plan for comfortable retirement can be a determining factor when deciding whether to retire. On the other hand, medical advances have positively contributed to the health of older workers, thus making the decision to remain in the workforce as long as they can a little easier (Zachary, 2014).

Significance to Theory

Age discrimination in today's society continues to be an acceptable practice. While this study focuses on discrimination against older workers, the issue of age discrimination is a generalization of a wider problem which affects the young and individuals of advanced age (Finkelstein & Truxillo, 2013). In order to determine the genuine harshness of a hostile work environment, consideration must be given when evaluating the oppression of the discriminatory behavior, as well as the extent to which the abused views the behavior as humiliating or posing a physical threat to them (Wiener, et al., 2014).

Significance to Social Change

The issue of workplace age discrimination continues to receive expansive attention in research (Cadiz et al., 2017). The problem, however, reaches beyond this study and explores discrimination against younger workers as well. Regardless of the age group, age is a defined protected class under anti-discrimination laws, which means it is

unlawful to discriminate against anyone on the basis of age. Age discrimination as a

societal issue has great implications for continued research, and both young and older

victims of the negative behavior of discrimination based primarily or solely on age can

benefit from identifying the causes of the discrimination. Future studies should be

performed as a means of identifying those behaviors that contradistinguish a lack of

moral and ethical attitudes that have continued to fester in society on the basis of age. As

this issue continues to be a reality in society, additional research on the subject can

catapult positive social change in the future by further identifying those inappropriate

behaviors and abusive conduct towards older workers; this in an effort to define a more

systematic approach to managing and ultimately abolishing age discrimination.

Continued research on this specific issue can promote positive social change by

addressing an age-old problem which devalues older workers in the workplace by their

peers and managers.

Summary and Transition

The issue of age discrimination continues to be a relatively underdeveloped and

under-investigated anomaly (Avalon, 2013). In today's society, age discrimination is

widely seen as the "most socially accepted form of prejudice in the world" (Wallander,

2013). While this study is focused within the information technology industry, age

discrimination has no bias to industry. Technology changes often, and to keep up,

organizations must employ workers with the knowledge or capability to learn new

applications, processes, and technological procedures. The perception of these

organizations is that younger workers are more technologically savvy, and therefore, are

more conducive to productivity, cost efficiency, and organizational viability. They view older workers as technologically dubious and medically expensive burdens (Raynor, 2015).

Organizational leaders, while trying to maintain an adequate, capable workforce, must realize that as their employees age, employers must face the reality of a decreasing workforce (Taylor & Earl, 2016). Some older workers are planning to retire, and employers must fill vacated positions. Because of a declining workforce, some employers are choosing to encourage these older workers to delay retirement (Zacher, 2015), while others seek younger workers as replacements. Research has shown that organizations treat older workers differently than their younger peers. The Age Discrimination Act of 1967 forbids this treatment (Bal, et al., 2011).

When Dr. Butler first introduced age discrimination as a concept in 1969, it was primarily seen as an issue of one age group against another. In this study, the focus is on age discrimination against older workers by their younger peers and employers. Previous research examines various levels of age discrimination against older workers and identifies the various reasons for the materialization of hostile work environments. Perhaps the most poignant act is the allowance of bad behavior and mistreatment of older workers by their younger counterparts and employers (Wiener, et al., 2014).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Today's work environment is comprised of Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials. Each generation has as its goal to matriculate through the ranks of an organization. As such, Millennials sometimes must delay their matriculation to allow

Generation Xers an opportunity to assume the positions vacated by retiring Baby

Boomers. Unfortunately, for varying reasons, Baby Boomers are not always in a position

to retire at retirement age and must continue to work. With the face of technology ever-

changing, employers must evaluate the needs of the organization as it relates to

personnel. This evaluation may conclude with a reduction in responsibilities for older

workers, or worse, termination of their employment (Zachary, 2012) based on age (age

discrimination) or perception of technological skill sets. Older workers must not only

contend with the physical, psychological, and mental effects of aging, but also age

discrimination: in the workplace, in their daily lives, and for this study, within the

information technology industry.

Literature Search Strategy

For this study, I utilized several search engines, websites, and databases for my

literature search strategy. My first point of contact was the Walden Library, where I was

able to access several different databases at once. To search for relevant literature related

to my study, I used the following databases available via the Walden Library:

- ABI/Inform Collection

- Academic Search Complete

- Business Source Complete

- Computers and Applied Sciences Complete

- Computing Database

- Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts

- ProQuest Central

- SAGE Journals

- SAGE Research Methods Online

- Taylor and Francis Online

- Thoreau Multi-Database

- US Department of Health and Human Services

  I also used the following internet search engines and websites:

- www.google.com

- www.monster.com

- www.safari.com

- www.scholar.google.com

  Within the aforementioned databases and search engines, I searched for the

following key words and phrases:

- *Age discrimination*

- *Ageism*

- *Aging in information technology*

- *Aging workforce*

- *Baby Boomers and technology*

- *Discrimination theory*

- *Dr. Robert Butler*

- *Generation X*

- *Generation Y or Millennials*

- *Information technology*

- *Millennials and technology*

- *Older workers and productivity*

- *Older workers and technology*

- *Older worker evaluations*

- *Older workers in information technology*

- *Retirement*

This literature review is a compilation of scholarly resources primarily from a period of six years, spanning from 2012 through 2017. It also includes sources from pre-2012 which address the history of age discrimination and relative theories, as well as the work of Dr. Robert Butler who is recognized as the originator of the term, *ageism*. As ageism is a relatively broad subject, I redefined my search to include the three primary generations who are current employees in today's workforce: *Baby Boomers*, *Generation*

Xers, and *Generation Y* or *Millennials*. I also narrowed the search by using more

descriptive keywords, such as *older workers* and the *aging workforce. Information*

technology was integrated into the keyword search to further define the components of

the study and provide a focal industry for the study.

Conceptual Framework

This case study is grounded by theories centered on age discrimination and

ageism. The underlying concept of this study is selective discrimination which is present

in organizations today. Organizational leaders participate, whether knowingly or

otherwise, in refraining from considering older workers in the industry because of their

age or level of technological prowess (Applewhite, 2016). Age discrimination, by its very

nature, presents an opportunity for apathy towards discrimination and mistreatment of

older workers, and acceptance of adverse treatment that would not be tolerated towards

other age groups (Miller, 2016). While age discrimination in this study focuses on those

individuals within the workplace, research has shown that this phenomenon can reside

and flourish in nearly every facet of our lives (Ayalon, 2013).

Also, this study is based in the works of those researchers who contest the

supposition that the communicative processes of people globally are basically the same

(McCann & Keaton, 2013). Conversely, others deduce that due to cultural differences,

different social structures, different religious beliefs, and different moral values, people,

globally, think about and see the world differently. This can also be said of how,

globally, people view each other with respect to age. Younger individuals have

developed less than admirable stereotypes against older people. They perceive older

people as frail, crabby, loquacious, detestable, and unsatisfied with the lives they live.

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the age discrimination theory

introduced by noted gerontologist, Robert Butler (Achenbaum, 2015). Butler's concept of

discrimination was developed to investigate the discrimination of one age group towards

another (Ayalon, 2013). He proposed that age discrimination allowed younger individuals

to view those older than they are different and inhuman (Jönson, 2012). While this

concept theory primarily deals with bringing awareness to the needs and rights of the

elderly, the basis for the theory can be used as the theoretical background which

discusses how technology affects an aging workforce. Just as important as it is for

individuals to remain active for their health and wellness as they grow older, such is also

true of IT employees to remain current on technological advances within their industry.

To expose others to all aspects of age discrimination, Butler characterized age

discrimination in both positive and negative light (Jönson, 2012). Some argue that age

discrimination is a result of sociocultural and interpersonal views that transpire through

social interactions with different individuals (Marcus & Sabuncu, 2015). The

discrimination theory is also relevant to this study as it contends that showing favoritism

to any individual or group within an organization breeds discrimination and is a means of

excluding or ostracizing others (Greenwood & Pettigrew, 2014).

The attribution theory, which relates to job performance, is also relevant to this

study. When management performs work evaluations on their employees to identify

successes and failures, they evaluate performance as a means of determining the cause for

an individual's successes and failures (Cox & Beier, 2013). Furthermore, the intergroup attribution theory contends that the age of those performing the work evaluations plays a role in poor performance evaluations of older workers.

The modernization theory, which deals with the source of age discrimination, asserts that with medical advances and advancements in technology, older employees lose their social standing. Instead of representing gracefully aging with wisdom, older workers are now viewed as frail, challenged, and despondent (Ayalon, 2013). No longer are older workers valued for their knowledge; rather, they are considered obsolete when compared to the knowledge of their younger counterparts. This behavior is due in part to technological advancements. Advancements in education also contributes to the low societal standing older individuals hold, as their younger peers have more education opportunities. Throughout the social structure of the modernization theory, improvements in healthcare for older workers have prolonged their ability to work (Stypińska & Nikander, 2018).

The terror management theory deals with thoughts regarding aging and death (Cadiz, et al., 2017), and is based on the premise that no other species, other than human beings, experience fear of death simply because non-humans (animals) are fully aware of their mortality. This empirical theory was introduced by noted anthropologist and author, Ernest Becker (Chonody et al., 2014). This theory also deals with an individual's views on the importance of aging and death, as it suggests that the anxiety of aging can be mitigated by enriching their self-perception of success (Cadiz et al., 2017). This theory is relevant to an employee's view of aging and success, particularly when evaluating the

possibility of extending employment or entering into retirement. An individual may experience feelings of anxiety about their own impending death as they age; thus, producing an opportunity for self-reflection. Their behavior may change towards others as they begin to distance themselves in an effort to disengage from any discussions or thoughts about aging and mortality. An individual may also seek to suppress this fear of death simply by avoiding anything that would remind them of their mortality (Chonody, et al., 2014).

The age stratification theory suggests that as time passes, older individuals from the past are different from older individuals of the present. Likewise, these present older workers will be different from older workers of the future (Jönson, 2012). This theory is based on predicting individuals' lifespan, overall health, and wellbeing based on analyzing previous health and lifestyle data. Research shows that due to advancements in healthcare, individuals are living longer as opposed to previous generations, and are much healthier. As a result, these individuals are able to work longer, often beyond retirement age (Truxillo, et al., 2014). This includes full-time and part-time employment, as well as those individuals who change careers later in life. With the increasing uptick of postponing retirement, the average age of the current workforce continues to be on the rise. This leads to a more diverse work environment.

Literature Review

The Aging Workforce

The idea of "aging" refers to a decline in both an individual's physical and physiological competence. As individuals age, they may experience increased difficulties

in adapting to a work schedule which is beyond the normal nine-to-five workday. The definition of "older worker" can vary from country to country. Cultural differences can factor into who is considered "older". Since individuals appear to be aging more slowly than normal, they are able to work longer and remain contributing members of society (Truxillo, et al., 2015). For example, in the United States, the law defines older workers as age 40 years and above, or those individuals born between 1946 and 1964 (Gibaldi, 2013). European countries define older workers as age 65 years and older. This age distinction is directly related to the country's actual mandatory retirement age of 65 years (Wanberg, et al., 2015).

A study of Baby Boomers showed that they perceive old age as beginning at age 72 years, although the average retirement age is 66 years. This perception has been attributed to positive attitudes of older workers who state that they feel younger than they actually are (Gibaldi, 2013). Baby Boomers are post-World War II babies, born within the decade following the war (Shadle, 2016). They are so named because at the time of their births, statistically, there was a momentous increase in babies born. They were born during a time of newly discovered success, and despite their pension for traditional ways, Baby Boomers have begun to accept changes in technology and embrace it. The oldest individuals in this generation reached the retirement age of 65 in 2011.

In the workplace, the following descriptions are used to define older employees:

- unable to learn new processes or applications,

- nonproductive or less productive than their younger peers,

- known to take more sick leave off from work,

- slow to learn or incapable of keeping up with changing technology,

- will, at some point, leave the organization by retiring, and

- are resistant to change.

Regardless of one's definition of "older workers", the general population continues to age due in part to a decrease in fertility rates and an increase in mortality rates. As a result, the workforce is influenced as well, as employees are working longer, and the average age of workers continues to increase.

Age discrimination, or ageism, was originally defined as prejudice against older individuals by those who are younger and was viewed as an aversion to growing older (Butler, 1969). It is the dislike, disdain, and utter disregard for a particular age group. Loosely defined, ageism is discrimination against a particular age group. It is the systematic stereotyping of people based on age (Lloyd-Sherlock et al., 2016). The term, ageism, was introduced by Dr. Robert Butler, who described it as "subjective prejudice" of middle-aged individuals against the old. Butler further surmised that this prejudice personifies bigotry and injustice by society's middle-aged generation against younger or older individuals and groups. This behavior of the middle-aged occurs because in society, this group is not only responsible for the wellbeing of the older generation (their parents), but also the younger generation (their children). These two groups represent dependency by the middle-aged group (Ayalon & Tesch-Römer, 2018). It is the subservient treatment of individuals based solely on age. At first glance, the definitions

of ageism appear negative; although, some stereotypes relating to age have positive

consequences and actually spawn positive outcomes, such as reduced housing costs,

membership discounts, and priority benefits in transportation and retail. Although

ageism can be positive or negative, it is most commonly viewed as a negative

connotation.

Butler further contended that the anomaly of age discrimination would,

unfortunately, be a part of society indefinitely. He also indicated that it infiltrated

societal programs designed to assist those individuals of advanced age, including Social

Security, Medicare, and access to reduced or public housing (Achenbaum, 2015). Butler

surmised that in 20 to 30 years, age discrimination would be comparable to racism as a

problem plaguing our societies. Age discrimination personifies the prejudiced behavior

an individual or group displays against another solely because of their age (Greenwald &

Pettigrew, 2014). It is the blatant stereotyping and bias exhibited by individuals or

groups against another based on their chronological age. Actually, this issue has no

respect of person based on age, as it can be directed at any age group (Azulai, 2015).

This age-based phenomenon is predominantly associated with the subordinate treatment

of older individuals, although it is not confined to this particular group of people. Age

discrimination can be directed toward any age class (Azulai, 2014). Although Butler was

renowned for introducing the world to age discrimination, he was not the first to identify

this phenomenon. Age discrimination has always been deeply rooted in history

(Achenbaum, 2015), and because of the growing population of older individuals, the

topic of age discrimination has become one of great interest over the years. It has

become so important that more research should be performed in clinical and social work settings to provide a better understanding of this phenomenon (Azulai, 2014).

Since its introduction by Butler, age discrimination has morphed into four identifiable forms in society:

- Societal entitlements and discounts adapted for older individuals, while viewed as positive consequences of getting older, are also viewed in a negative light. Most of the programs directed at older individuals were created under the premise that these individuals were poor and in need of assistance. Evidentially, this is not the case, as older individuals historically retain more income and financial resources that their younger counterparts.

- When they were younger, Baby Boomers mocked those individuals over the age of 30 years. Those in younger generations fear that programs designed for aging adults (Social Security, Medicare, Retirement Pensions, etc.) will be depleted by the time they are old enough to benefit from them. Now that Boomers are over the age of 60 years, they have been exposed to both sides of age discrimination: being the aggressor against those over the age 30 years, and now, being the target of age discrimination themselves by a younger generation.

- The concern for the health and welfare of older workers has increased as rates of disease and mental health issues continues to rise. An increase in

dementia and Alzheimer's cases in the aging population has spiked

distress in those in the healthcare industry.

- No longer are older individuals forced into retirement at the age of 65 years. Committed to continue working, older workers are now extending their careers, and even starting new ones. This self-assurance in their ability to continue functioning as reliable, competent employees, as a result, has relatively immunized these workers against the disparities of age discrimination (Achenbaum, 2015).

As older workers seek to find and maintain their place in the age diverse workplace of today, it may be necessary to evaluate the need for additional skills for personal development. Online classes and courses made available through their employer are options for continuing education and honing new skills (Heisler & Bandow, 2018). By learning new skills, older workers increase the probability of more marketability in the workforce. This is especially beneficial when they are forced to continue working beyond retirement age or when they must reenter the job market.

A common misconception about older individuals is that as they continue to age, their physical and mental abilities decline. This perception of decreased physical and mental capacities makes it difficult for them to respond to the physical responsibilities of their positions in the workplace. Ultimately, this places an increased burden on their ability to learn new technologies and procedures. It is also argued that as individuals age, their senses of sight and hearing also decline, making it difficult to function in the workplace and interact with others. Basic mental abilities, including rational thinking and

judgment, along with cognitive skills including hand-eye coordination are also viewed as declining with age (Chou, et al., 2013). Healthcare advances have extended life expectancies. This puts a strain on health and social agencies who are experiencing challenges in supporting the aging workforce due to the longevity of life and increased quantity of older workers (Morris, et al., 2014). This produces a more diverse work environment, with Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, Millennials, and Generation Zers all working together. In some cases, even the Traditionalists or Silent Generation are still actively employed (Cadiz, et al., 2017). On the surface, today's workforce is viewed as diverse in several ways, including culture, ethnicity, nationality, and gender. A deeper look at current work environments shows diversity in:

- Personal behaviors

- Matriculation in education

- Religion

- An individual's physical abilities

- Core and personal values, and

- Behaviors and work ethics (Pant &Vijaya, 2015).

Today's workforce is also diverse in age. Age diversity in the workplace means that there are employees of various ages and generations working together. Advances in technology and the medical field have attributed to the longevity of today's workers. An inordinately large baby boom generation, as well as a rise in life expectancy, has also

played a part in extending an individual's ability to work beyond normal retirement age (Boehm, et al., 2014). As a result of this age diversity in the workplace, interpersonal exchanges between members of all age groups within the organization is inevitable and can set the stage for negative exchanges, leading to age discrimination (Toomey & Rudolph, 2015). Age discrimination can be directed toward any age class (Azulai, 2014). Although Butler was renowned for introducing the world to age discrimination, he was not the first to identify this phenomenon. Age discrimination has always been deeply rooted in history (Achenbaum, 2015). Because of a globally aging population, it is increasingly essential to review labor stereotypes and revise them (Smol'kin, 2015). Some Human Resource departments have begun to facilitate age diversity in the workplace by developing and integrating a work lifespan perspective (Fraccaroli & Deller, 2015). This perspective involves encouraging employees to be tolerant of each other, regardless of age, as hiring managers have become more apt to create practices of recruiting, keeping, and rehiring older employees (Taylor & Earl, 2016). As employees continue to age, organizations must contribute to the sustainability of older workers to ensure they maintain a reasonable quality of life and remain healthy throughout their employment (Truxillo, et al., 2015).

Age discrimination takes place when individuals are:

- passed over for employment opportunities,

- denied promotions,

- demoted or fired from their current positions, or

- excluded from training opportunities created to enhance their knowledge

  and skills, or learn a new process because of their age (Iweins, et al., 2012)

Cadiz, et al. (2017) characterizes age discrimination as a tendency of an individual or

group of people to treat others differently because they belong to a specific age group.

Age discrimination has its consequences, including exclusion from job advancement,

performance increases, training advances, and even being hired. Iweins, et al. also point

out that this age discrimination spans across any and all industries. Human Resource

departments show no connection between age discrimination and any one industry.

Age biases in the workplace have become the norm, and often include biases

about employee behavior differences as they relate to younger workers, as well as

personality assumptions (Rauschenbach, et al., 2012). One of the most positive

stereotypes, the loyalty stereotype, shows older workers as being more dependable,

rational, responsible, loyal, and committed to their job and employer. They are also seen

as less likely to steal from the organization (McCann, 2013). Reports show that older

workers are wiser, more accomplished, more dependable, tougher, and more proficient

compared to younger workers in interpersonal relationships. They are viewed as highly

motivated by work situations that present accomplishment opportunities, assisting their

coworkers and others, job security, and independence (Wanberg, et al., 2015).

Conversely, they are often also seen as less efficient in their positions, less

productive and unable to keep up with their work, less creative, disinterested in

technology, and less able to adapt to change (Iweins, et al. 2012). These stereotypes have

also become important research for practitioners as the current workforce continues to

age. While Baby Boomers are on the cusp of retirement, with Generation Xers not far

behind, research on age discrimination should continue well into the future.

Some corporations have discovered that older employees are more valuable to the

organization than their younger counterparts. As a result, they must adjust their

employment retention practices ensuring that these more experienced workers are up to

date with technology and processes (Choi, et al., 2011). They have discovered that some

older workers are not only healthier but better educated. Since they are remaining active,

they are more likely to remain in the workforce longer (Čiutienė & Railaitė, 2014).

Where once it was tradition for older workers to work to retirement age, medical

advances, changes in work and work environments, and technological advances have

made it possible for those over age 50 years to push beyond the standard retirement age

and work longer (Yeh, 2015). These older workers were instilled with the values of

education and a strong work ethic and are viewed as equally competent as their younger

peers (Iweins, et al., 2012). Some are seen as more competent than those who are

younger. With working longer, older workers are seeking a balance between work and

life responsibilities from their employers (Taylor & Earl, 2016). Studies predicted that

by 2016, older workers (age 55 and over) would make up 43% of the active workforce

(Cox & Beier, 2013). While these older workers are remaining in the workforce longer,

statistics show that they are still treated differently than their younger counterparts. One

reason for this difference in treatment is age, and oftentimes, older workers are viewed

negatively. This negative treatment affects not only their ability to move up within the

organization but also opportunities for training to enhance skills and job performance

(Čiutienė & Railaitė, 2014). Although age discrimination is illegal, two-thirds of individuals seeking employment at an advanced age report that they have experienced bias. These individuals feel a sense of dismissal of their employment worthiness through the skills, experience, and outstanding work ethic they bring to a position because of their age (Applewhite, 2016).

To address and combat age discrimination, the Age Discrimination Act of 1967 (ADA) was enacted in the United States to protect citizens against employment discrimination based on age. According to the ADA, a person's abilities should be the asset considered in hiring and retaining employment rather than age (Smol'kin, 2015). Whether direct or indirect, age discrimination is against the law. To further support this idea, the Equality Act of 2010 extended the existing legislation of the ADA, proclaiming that an employer could not discriminate against any employee on the basis of:

- Age

- Marital status: whether single, married, divorced, widowed, or any other identifiable civil relationship/partnership

- Ethnicity, race, color, or nationality

- Physical or mental disability or incapacitation

- Gender or gender identification

- Religious beliefs

The Equality Act advises employees who are discriminated against, and even subsequently dismissed from employment for the above-mentioned reasons to submit a written grievance. This grievance must clearly define the basis for the discrimination and subsequent firing and should be filed within three months of the occurrence (Cornock, 2012).

The issue of age discrimination has encouraged some older workers to evaluate their abilities through self-empowerment. Self-empowered aging gives one control over their life by way of improving existing skills and learning new skills, as well as building confidence (Irving, 2015). Learning new skills allows for more marketability for older workers to not only remain in the workforce, but it is also beneficial to those who are looking to reenter the workforce. This concept encourages older workers to take control over their personal circumstances and fosters risk-taking. Self-empowered aging gives older workers the courage to accomplish goals later in life and enjoy the satisfaction of completing such goals. Although self-empowerment allows older workers to take control of their lives as they age, the media has contributed to negative stereotyping through images and words that are designed to shape the public's view of older workers (Mason, et al., 2015).

Butler's introduction of the term coined to define bias based on age has created an impact on society and industries, including healthcare, media, work environments, and politics. Much as things were in 1969 when Butler first introduced this phenomenon, older individuals are still vilified and their personal situations, including employment opportunities, cultural diversities, and educational pursuits, remain disparate

(Achenbaum, 2015). The impact of age discrimination over the years continues to belittle and undermine those of advanced age. While there are some positive impacts of aging, unfortunately, the impact has been primarily negative:

- Older workers, even while employed, find it more challenging to obtain favorable employment.

- Healthcare providers often dismiss the health anxieties of older adults. As a result, they are less likely to seek professional care, including recommended regular screenings.

- The media stereotypically portrays older workers negatively.

- The age and vitality of older individuals seeking political positions are often called into question:

  o Are they in good health?

  o Are they mentally and physically able to sustain the rigorous grind of a campaign?

  o Are they mentally and physically able to fulfill the obligations of a political office?

  o What is the prospect of life longevity? Does the individual have ample life expectancy to fulfill a political office term?

- Although older individuals make meaningful impacts in their communities, their communities often do not possess the ability to support them (Raynor, 2015).

Studies have shown that the perceptions of peers regarding older workers produce stereotypes that are both negative and positive (Rauschenbach, et al., 2012). While younger workers are seen as more aspiring and having the ability to learn quicker than their older counterparts, they are also seen as less loyal and emotionally unstable (Bertolino, 2012). Younger workers not only perceive their older counterparts as outdated, slow, less motivated, and unable to learn new technology, but also as having a wealth of historical knowledge, dependable, self-sufficient, and grounded. Some organizations view younger workers, as compared to their older counterparts, as more motivated by their work, more ambitious, and quick learners. They also see these younger workers as less committed and more emotionally unstable than older workers (Bertolino, 2012).

Meanwhile, some older workers have more positive beliefs about themselves. Additionally, older workers are more likely to believe that negative feedback for an individual's poor work performance will act as a catalyst for future improvements in their job performance (Cox & Beier, 2013). Those who believe they can control certain aspects of aging will plan for their retirement by preparing for their financial futures (Fraccaroli & Deller, 2015). This early planning for retirement will prove beneficial in the long run as the decision to retire will be less taxing for the individual when they reach retirement age. Conversely, those who are less in touch with the aging process and have not

developed control over any aspect of the aging process are less likely to financially

prepare for their futures. This failure to prepare will prove detrimental to their ability to

survive when their work careers end. It is at this point when individuals nearing

retirement age must make the crucial decision to delay retirement and continue working,

or, if retirement is forced, seek other employment which may not provide the same

benefits and salaries once afforded them in the previous employment.

Age Stereotypes

Age stereotypes are defined as streamlined portrayals of any given age group that

have the potential of garnering support and believability from less open-minded peers.

This behavior strips individuals of the ability to get to know diverse age groups as

individuals (Dordoni & Argentero, 2015). Age stereotypes often are viewed as

precursors to age discrimination. They represent the association between the age of an

employee and their employment results (Perry, et al., 2016). From a subjective

perspective, age stereotypes represent the method by which an individual's characteristics

are based on their age. Often stereotypes depict negative and inaccurate perceptions of

older people, and in the workplace, these stereotypes represent misguided beliefs and

judgments that are directed at older workers by their younger peers and upper

management (Toomey & Rudolph, 2015).

Work environments are plagued with several negative and positive age-related

stereotypes. As compared to younger employees, older employees are negatively

viewed as poor performers in the workplace. They are seen as less flexible and more

resistant to change. Although there is no research evidence to support this idea, the

perception can lead to bias. Older employees are less likely to engage in career development training, which for the organization, limits a return on investment of employee involvement and contribution. It is perceived that older workers have poor learning skills and an inability to learn, adapt to, and master new job-related required skills. The following are additional negative age-related stereotypes:

- Because they are more advanced in chronological years, older employees are more likely to retire and cause a decrease in the workforce. This perception is based on the idea that older employees, as this characteristic implies, are more advanced in their careers:

  o Older employees are seen as less healthy, more inclined to be involved in work or family-related conflicts, and closer to retirement age than their younger peers.

  o Older employees are more costly for organizations to retain due to their higher salaries and the elevated need for health insurance.

  o Older employees are more probable to maintain their employment with an organization as compared to their younger counterparts who are more likely to leave the organization after a short period of time.

- Older individuals resist change, whether in life, business, or career.

- Older workers are viewed as less versatile, which attributed to bias during the job search and hiring process (Perry, et al., 2016).

- Older workers are more intolerable of advances in technology.

- Older workers are not only physically frail but also mentally unproductive.

- Older workers are less cooperative than their younger counterparts (McCann & Keaton, 2013).

On a positive front, older employees are viewed as more reliable, stable, secure, trustworthy, and committed to their employer and their job responsibilities. This perception implies that older employees are less likely to be involved in theft in the organization and absent from their jobs. They possess a higher level of organizational knowledge and wisdom due to their longevity of institutional employment and job experience (Toomey & Rudolph, 2015). These individuals are seen as more knowledgeable, dependable, loyal, and honest. Although they may spend more time on a task, they are more thorough and less likely to make mistakes. When injured, older workers take longer to recover; however, they are injured less often than younger workers (Applewhite, 2016). Older workers are more vigilant in their jobs and more rigid in adapting to change. They are more prone to making mental mistakes and are more apprehensive of technology.

Younger employees tend to be more susceptible to judging their older counterparts more harshly if they behave in ways contrary to these sanctioned stereotypes. This behavior implies that they tend to take the negative stereotypes of older employees at face value instead of being open to the possibility that there is little or no validity to these stereotypes. Despite the availability of resources touting these

stereotypes, both negative and positive, there is no absolute evidence to prove the validity and accuracy of them (Perry, et al., 2016).

Toomey and Rudolph (2015) propose that more research is needed on generational stereotypes within the workplace. The need for additional research on generational stereotypes is due to the perceived differences from age stereotypes. Generational stereotypes are those stereotypes that focus on a particular generation which organizations tend to believe are true regardless of whether there is evidence to support this supposition. Those stereotypes dealing with an individual's adaptability, aptitude, and provocation are shown to be directly related to the employment and hiring process (Perry, et al., 2016). Of the four generations commonly found in today's workplace (Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, Millennials, Generation Zers), age stereotypes are most often directed towards Baby Boomers. Those critical of this generation contend that they are resistant to change and have an inability or decreased ability to learn. Others see Baby Boomers as reliable, career-driven, hardworking, and possessing a strong work ethic.

Baseless stereotypes against Generation Xers contend that they are lazy and self-absorbed, while Millennials are portrayed as eager to learn, productive, and seeking affirmation from management (Toomey & Rudolph, 2015). Generation Xers have now reached the age of 50, and some in this generation are believed to be the first in United States history who are not projected to achieve higher success than their parents (David & Rangel, 2017). With the state of the current economy, these individuals are more concerned with living paycheck to paycheck than ever before. Individuals in this

generation were dubbed "latchkey kids" as they often spent time at home without parental or adult supervision. This is due to their parents' need to work, and inability to be at home when their children returned from school. The character, integrity, and personalities of this generation's members were shaped by their self-sufficiency during their formative years. Their adaptability in changes in technology is more formidable than that of Baby Boomers.

Millennials have never known life without the internet, cellphones, or social media (Bolelli & Durmuş, 2017). They were born and raised in the age of globalization of technological breakthroughs and mass communications and are influenced by the unlimited exposure to online multitasking, information processing, and messaging. In the workplace they are viewed as:

- *Lazy*: the way they work is typically different from their older peers, although they claim to work smarter as opposed to working harder.

- *Obsessive job-hoppers:* their non-committed behavior towards the organizations for which they work causes them to move from job to job rather than establishing themselves with the same company and remaining committed to it.

- *Possessing a sense of entitlement*: they expect things to be handed and given to them rather than to work for what they want and need. Their fast-paced expectations of moving up in their organizations is often unrealistic.

- *Consumed with technology*: they are always on their mobile devices, often interacting with others via social media outlets and other forms of non-face-to-face communications.

- *Commendation seekers:* they seek the approval of management and their peers for their accomplishments.

Others view older workers as less adaptable and resistant to change, resorting to face-to-face meetings for communicating. Younger workers, meanwhile, are seen as preferring technology as their means of communication (emailing, texting, webinars, etc.). Younger workers are viewed as liking technology, while both younger and older workers value work/life balance (Perry, et al., 2016).

While the issue of age discrimination continues to plague and confuse those in management nearly 50 years after Dr. Butler's introduction of the phenomenon, the issue itself has morphed into new forms of prejudice:

- While older individuals benefit from positive age-specific discounts and incentives, there is still the negative stigma of growing old. These incentives directed at individuals over the age of 50 carry the perception that as people age, they have less disposal income and need assistance. On the contrary, older people, on average, have more income than those younger than they.

- As there are two sides to age discrimination, the Baby Boomer Generation has now seen both. When they were young, they ridiculed older individuals, and now

in their 60's and older, they are the older adults they used to mock (Achenbaum,

2015).

Ageism and Information Technology

Age discrimination is not shown to be prevalent in any particular industry;

however, this study focuses on the information technology industry. This industry is an

ever-changing, revolving door of technological advances, and employees are tasked with

keeping up with technology. Prior research determined that age stereotypes are more

prominent in the financial, retail, and information technology industries (McCann &

Keaton, 2013). Healthcare information technology employees, regardless of age, are

challenged with motivating clinicians and healthcare providers to adapt to new

technology related to electronic medical records (Hays & Lou, 2015). To accommodate

the implementation of this new technology in healthcare facilities, talent acquisition has

increased for information technology employees. Headhunters and human resource

employees are tasked with finding employment candidates with a minimum of a

bachelor's degree, although an advanced degree in healthcare or information technology

is preferred. Clinicians seeking to transition into healthcare information technology are

encouraged to make sure their licensure and certifications remain active. Likewise,

current information technology employees are encouraged to continue their training to

ensure they are current on the latest system upgrades and application processes. Any

certifications they have earned should also be kept current and active.

Studies show that the perceptions of older workers are mixed, having both

positive and negative views. These mixed perceptions range from stellar dependability to

poor trainability (Richardson, et al., 2013). Older workers when compared to their

younger counterparts, are viewed as being less creative, less ambitious, and less energetic

for learning new technology (Rauschenbach, et al., 2012). They are seen as difficult to

train and inflexible to changes in procedures and policies, while being more prone to

illnesses that keep them out of work. These stereotypes are a discredit to older workers,

who, with career longevity, have proven their ability to adapt to new technology.

Another misconception about older workers is that they are slow to adapt to technology,

unlike their younger coworkers (McCann & Keaton, 2013). They are seen as being

fearful of technological change.

Additionally, Baby Boomers and Generation Xers are seen by Millennials as

having little interest in technology, and not suited for teamwork in the workplace

(Rauschenbach, et al., 2012). They are perceived by younger workers as being

uncomfortable with new technology and possessing less flexibility in learning new

processes and procedures (McCann & Keaton, 2013). These two generations are viewed

as being less creative, less ambitious, and less flexible. Misconceptions, such as these,

are contrasted by alternative perceptions of older workers that state that they are more

loyal to the organizations for which they work, are absent from work less often, and are

more dependable (McCann & Keaton, 2013). Older workers are also seen as more

cautious in the workplace and less likely to make mistakes or cause accidents. Studies

show that while some managers have a highly positive view of older workers and view

their experiences with an older workforce as positive, they are known to select younger

employees when recruiting new hires (Iweins, et al., 2012). While these stereotypes and

misconceptions about older workers are viewed as less flattering to them, they have relevancy in the workplace because these stereotypes can influence decisions made within and about the work environment for all employees (Bertolino, 2012).

Hays and Lou (2015) determined that information technology employees who work in the healthcare industry have a need to be connected to leadership. This connection can be obtained via face-to-face communications. When not available, leadership can connect to their employees via online conferencing or meetings (WebEx), or via email communications. One important function of technology is to provide a simpler, quicker means of communication. Organizations not only utilize social networks to canvass the job market for potential employees, but they also use this media as a means of communicating with current employees (Hays & Lou, 2015). Electronic communications and social media networks are used by organizations' leadership to seek employment candidates who possess particular interests and skill sets that are in line with their organization's goals.

Hays and Lou (2015) researched to determine the job satisfaction of information technology employees in the healthcare industry as compared to their fellow non-employee (consultant and temporary) coworkers. These individuals, both fulltime employees and temporary contract employees, are on the front lines of healthcare application implementations. It is their responsibility to not only ensure the seamless implementation of new applications and software but to also provide training and support for the organization's non-IT employees. They are responsible for motivating each other and their clinical counterparts in the successful implementation of these systems (Hays &

Lou, 2015). Overall, organizations would do well to assist older employees in not only

adapting to new technology, but also establish new technology that is more easily

adopted by all, and sufficiently addresses the needs and obligations of older employees

(Truxillo, et al., 2015).

Older Workers as Job Seekers

In 2016, 20% of Americans age 65 years and older were still in the workforce

(Applewhite, 2016). Some of these individuals were still actively employed because of a

need to work (high rate of personal debt, the need for continued health benefits, lackluster

retirement planning, etc.) or because they were simply not ready to retire (want to stay

busy, continue active lifestyle, maintain a degree of good health, etc.). In addition,

traditional pension plans have taken a downward turn, forcing some workers to work well

into their 60's and 70's in order to maintain the lifestyles to which they have become

accustomed. In some cases, they continue working to maintain a respectable standard of

living.

Workers who are thrust into the job market due to forced retirement, layoffs, or

displacements are faced with the challenges of younger, more technologically savvy

competition. Studies show that although people may become more satisfied as they age

and have higher salaries and better jobs than younger employees, re-entering the

workforce as job seekers can be stressful (Hays & Lou, 2015). As a result, they must

apply to more job postings than their younger counterparts. These individuals do so with

the understanding that even though they may be more qualified and have more

experience, they still may not receive an invitation to an interview (Rothenberg &

Gardner, 2014). In such cases, older job seekers may feel that having experience is a liability instead of an asset. They may become discouraged, and discontinue their job search (Applewhite, 2016). When applying for positions as older job seekers, they run the risk of being disqualified as potential employment candidates since employers tend to migrate towards younger candidates. As for the length of time that an older worker spends reentering the job market, Wanberg, et al. (2015) contend that there is a negative connection between the age of an older individual seeking employment and the time it takes for them to find gainful employment. This negative connection is most prevalent with those individuals over the age of 50 years, and finding a new job is more difficult when the job seeker has just lost a job.

Those individuals who, upon examining their retirement planning, choose to retire rather than remain in the workforce, have the option to seek part-time or temporary employment to supplement savings or retirement income. They often rejoin their current organization as consultants or part-time employees. This action proves beneficial to the organizations, since it retains the knowledge, they have acquired that may otherwise be lost in retirement (Heisler & Bandow, 2018). Older workers also have the option to reenter the workforce under part-time or temporary assignments in less stressful positions than their previous careers. Some have even chosen to change careers when reentering the workforce.

Workers between the ages of 45 and 64 years have the highest level of unemployment of all the age ranges in today's workforce. Older workers may lack more current or relevant job skills, making it more difficult to find suitable employment. In

fact, studies show that the likelihood that an older job seeker would not be considered for employment is directly related to the negative attitudes projected towards them during the hiring process. These negative behaviors play into the discrimination of older job seekers, decreasing their rate of being hired for open positions for which they are qualified. Negative behaviors towards older people in the workplace or even during the employee search process can not only harm the employees, but also the reputation of the organization they represent. Careers or jobs in the field of geriatrics or aging tend to be unpopular due to the negative behaviors inflicted on the elderly (Hayslip, et al., 2013). As a result, negative behaviors toward older job seekers can result in the definitive decision to remove the individual from hiring consideration. Positive attitudes towards older job seekers, on the other hand, were directly related to hiring managers' intentions to hire older candidates (Fasbender & Wang, 2017). To support the push to hire older workers, business best practices have been devised based on five key components:

- return on investment,

- averting skill shortages in the workplace,

- maximizing prospective recruitment,

- acknowledgment and respond to the change in workplace demographics, and,

- encouraging diversity in the workplace (Taylor & Earl, 2016).

Compared to their younger coworkers, these employees remain unemployed for longer periods of time (Richardson, et al., 2013). Smol'kin (2015) surmised that older workers

are often stereotyped as having limited skills, which restricts their ability to obtain gainful employment. Sometimes, despite having ample skills, however, older workers find themselves employed in low wage, vulnerable positions. They are seen by employers as low-cost employees having substantial experience and a high level of quality (Taylor & Earl, 2016).

Older workers possess positive traits that make them a better choice during the hiring process. Organizations would do well to hire older workers not only for their years of experience, but also for their leadership skills. They tend to have strong communication competencies, which are a must for good, effective leaders. Unlike younger workers, who entered the workforce with instant communication skills (including email, text messages, and instant messaging), older workers were accustomed to traditional forms of communication. Telephone calls and face-to-face communications tend to be the preferred mode of communication for older workers. Self-assurance is another trait older workers possess. Unlike their younger counterparts, they tend to know what they want…both in their careers and in life.

Older workers are strong believers in stability and enter into employment with longevity in mind. Remaining employed affords organizations to retain not only the experience of older workers, but also their strong work networks. It is through these networks that organizations have access to further build their professional networks. Loyalty and strong work ethics are additional traits older workers possess that are attractive to hiring managers. Older workers are loyal to their employers and their jobs. They are not known to "job hop" during their careers. Instead, they find the position that

meets their needs where they are satisfied, and they remain there indefinitely. They consistently prioritize their work over other responsibilities, possessing stellar work ethics.

Once hired, there are several reasons for organizations to retain older workers. Older workers are more flexible than their younger peers, as they typically have less family and social responsibilities. This allows them to be more readily available to work long hours and devote more time to projects. Retaining these employees dismiss the need to hire less-experienced workers. While hiring younger employees at lower salaries may appear on the surface to be cost efficient, the time spent training them and getting them up to speed will prove costly.

Years of working has afforded older workers more experience in their field and in life than their younger counterparts. With their strong work ethics, they have proven to be more responsible with their time and duties. These employees also display role-model leadership skills in their attention to detail, responsibilities to their positions and organizations, and their strong work ethics. They are strongly committed to their work and treat even the most menial task as important.

As job seekers, older workers, specifically those in the Baby Boomer generation, tend to have comparable degrees of enthusiasm and initiative in the job market as their younger peers (Perry et al., 2016). They exhibit a matured level of eagerness to secure employment motivated by the need to sustain their lifestyles and survive economically, as well as fortify and strengthen their retirement resources. As compared to more advanced-aged workers, Baby Boomers are viewed as more motivated to pursue employment.

This motivation, which fosters positive self-assurances in individuals, is also instrumental in influencing the decision-making process when hiring managers are seeking new employees (Fasbender & Wang, 2017). The decision-making process is also influenced by the opinions of those in the inner circle of management within the organization. It is human nature to want to see those in the inner circle succeed and progress within the organization. Conversely, those outside the inner circles of management are viewed as threats or detrimental to the organization's ability to meet their goals.

Consequently, long-term unemployment of older workers can have a profound effect on their financial status and health. This oftentimes endangers their ability to pay their bills, afford a moderate standard of living, and maintain healthcare (Zacher & Bock, 2013). Health issues may arise as a result of prolonged unemployment. Depression is perhaps the most prominent health issue experienced by those who are unemployed and having difficulty finding suitable employment. Studies suggest that the impact on an older person that depression, brought on as a result of unemployment, is far greater than the impact on a younger person (Smol'kin, 2015).

Some positions have the stigma of being age-defined, where organizations tend to place a predefined age on potential applicants. This limits the pool of those who are deemed eligible for employment. In these cases, older applicants are discriminated against because their age does not fit the predefined age of the position they are seeking (Toomey & Rudolph, 2015). Some recruiters have been guilty of limiting the pool of potential applicants by stating that anyone with more than three years of work experience should not bother to apply, showing a preference to younger workers (Applewhite, 2016).

Regardless of the age, however, of the individual who is ultimately recruited for the open position, there is no guarantee that, once in their new position, the individual would be the best fit for the organization. The compatibility of the potential employee with the organization they seek to join is important for the positive progression of the organization's goals (Fasbender & Wang, 2017). Furthermore, as mental and physical abilities decline with age, older job seekers must evaluate the types of jobs they pursue and to which they ultimately apply. They must approach their employment search with caution, knowing that they may be excluded from certain job postings (Wanberg, 2015). Sometimes, qualifications and experience do not factor into an individual's ability to be hired. In fact, it is more difficult for older individuals to find employment than younger people (Cadiz, et al., 2017). They tend to approach their job search with the expectation of a salary which reflects their previous job experience and skills, and unlike their younger counterparts, they are typically more unwilling to relocate for a new position. This is due primarily to the fact that they are already established in their communities (Wanberg, et al., 2015).

Even with the influx of job openings available that older workers seek, they still may only be offered contract or temporary positions. Employers fail to see the value in the experience they bring from their career jobs, and do not offer permanent positions to older workers (Taylor & Earl, 2016). Most often, these positions do not offer healthcare benefits, which forces them to supplement their income with part-time jobs in order to afford healthcare coverage. Historically, it can take a job seeker age 55 years or over three months longer than their younger counterparts to find a suitable job (Hannon,

2012). As a result, the length of time increases to over a year for these individuals to find

and secure a job. Even with the years of experience they have earned in previous

positions, it still takes them longer to obtain employment. This is due, in part, to

institutional and social barriers they may face, such as bullying and harassment, which

may not be covered by the Age Discrimination act of 1967 (Rothenberg & Gardner,

2011). Oftentimes, when we hear about bullying, it is in reference to school bullying.

Likewise, when we hear of harassment, especially in recent times, it has been harassment

of one gender by another. While bullying and harassment typically occur in schools or

are reported by the media, these issues also occur in the workplace, be it one age group

against another, or management against employees, regardless of age.

In most work environments, it is a common practice of hiring managers to

encourage current good workers to refer other good workers to the organization.

Unfortunately, this practice can breed segregation, as individuals typically network with

those of the same race, class, upbringing, and cultural background. This separation of

races and classes invites current "good" workers to refer their racial equals; thus,

producing a segregated pool of employees (Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014). Hiring

managers would do well with their current employees to stress the importance of

diversity in the workplace. They should encourage referring potential employees who are

in line with the organization's goals and mission statement rather than relying on seeking

those with similar backgrounds or interests. Human Resource departments have begun to

evaluate their organizations' diversity policies and encourage employees to share their

views of the policies and how they can be improved (Boehm, et al., 2014).

Diversity management is a term used to describe placing value on the differences of employees within an organization. The purpose of diversity management is to invoke a work environment that is conducive to the full capability and productivity of all employees (Pant & Vijaya, 2015). It values and commends not only the differences of an organization's employees but also looks at the economic benefits afforded an organization by the work of its employees. It is therefore equally important for all employees, regardless of age, to feel as though they contribute positively to the growth and success of an organization.

Older Workers' Productivity and Job Satisfaction

A common misconception of the productivity of older workers is that their skills and knowledge declines as their age increases. This is untrue, however, as the decline in skillset knowledge of any age group is attributed to skill obsolescence (Čiutienė & Railaitė, 2014). In personal, non-skill evaluations, older workers are viewed as wise, generous, and caring (McCann & Keaton, 2013). They receive high ratings for leadership stability, problem-solving skills, dependability, commitment, and dedication (Irving, 2015). Both older and younger workers are evaluated on their ability to learn, as well as physical performance, adaptability, technology, and loyalty (McCann & Keaton, 2013).

Job performance at an advanced age is also an issue within the workplace. Those who rate the performance of employees have the task of impartiality while providing necessary performance feedback. The age of the older worker, who is the target of the performance rating, and the age of the person giving the rating affect the attributions

made for the older worker's poor performance (Cox & Beier, 2014). For those who are deemed as poor performers, it is important to comprehend the characteristics of those rating the performance of these older workers. This may involve comparing the character of the rater to the older worker to determine if there are similarities; thus, affecting the outcome of the performance rating. Poor job performance of older workers as compared to younger workers is attributed to external, controllable causes produced by younger workers (Cox & Beier, 2014). An experienced worker in age and skill may not have the ability to compete with the skillsets of their younger counterparts in advanced technology. Conversely, those who have good job performance ratings are an asset to their organizations. In the past, organizations questioned the abilities of the older workers they employed. This lack of faith in their abilities leads to age discrimination, which in turn lead to the enactment of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (Choi et al., 2011). An employee is typically advised of their productivity via employee job performance reviews as well as manager/employee consultations; however, one way to counter or even deflect a negative evaluation is through self-evaluations. Employees of any age have the ability to review their own productivity at any time to determine their performance status as good or stellar, or lacking or poor (Fasbender & Wang, 2017). For those employees, whose self-evaluations reveal room for improvement, a change in self-esteem, efficiency, and psychological strengths are essential in turning around a possible negative evaluation from management.

Organizations are increasingly developing an understanding and appreciation of the value of having intergenerational workforces (Irving, 2015). Unfortunately, they also

have the propensity for assessing the training abilities of older employees lower than compared to younger employees (Rauschenbach, et al., 2012). Zwick (2013) asserts that employees age 55 years and older are more likely to be excluded from training opportunities. This, in turn, produces workers with limited, yet more current and relevant training. As such, an employee's ability to earn promotions and salary increases are dependent upon not only job performance, but their ability to learn and exhibit their training in their day-to-day responsibilities. Some employers are hesitant to employ older workers because they assume that these older workers' skillsets are not comparable to younger workers. They fear that older workers do not have the capacity, drive, no interest in technology, nor the desire to engage in tougher, more daunting tasks (Choi, et al., 2011). Oftentimes, these older workers are excluded from training and higher employment opportunities because their employers are fearful that they will retire before the organization gets the benefit of their training (Zachary, 2012). Conversely, older workers may resist training opportunities because the financial incentives presented may be less than what is offered to younger workers. If older workers have not received any form of training for an extensive period of time, the task may prove to be more daunting for them, and they are less likely to be motivated by training opportunities. While work motivation does not necessarily decrease as workers age, they may be less inclined to engage in some work responsibilities, such as training. This is due in part to the idea that these older workers may not have participated in training for a long period of time. They may resist committing to engaging in training opportunities, even though it may be to further an individual's career or assist in transitioning to a new one. Older workers may

view participating in training late in their careers as interruptions to their established

routines. Zwick (2013) proposes that when older workers commit to training, they are

more successful with self-induced training opportunities. When comparing training

effectiveness of older workers to their younger counterparts, studies have found that this

effectiveness is unfavorable towards older workers because the capacity to learn

decreases with age in some skills (Zwick, 2013). Likewise, the training that older workers

receive is not only less effective, but also less valuable than the training received by their

younger counterparts.

Training within the organization is not the only option, however. Increasingly,

older workers are reentering the education field as mature students in an effort to gain

additional skills, especially in technology. Returning to school is a personal endeavor for

anyone, and for older workers, it is an exercise in knowledge stimulation and

empowerment. With additional, more current education and knowledge, older workers

are better equipped to connect with those work peers who are younger (Irving, 2015).

This renewal of educational pursuits allows for a redefining of an older worker as viewed

by others within their organization.

Hays and Lou (2015) contend that job satisfaction is related to the age of the

individual. As workers age, they are believed to become more satisfied with their jobs

and overall quality of life. They may typically have better jobs in their advanced years,

as well as better salaries. Job satisfaction refers to the emotional reaction that an

individual feels regarding diverse facets of a job. Regardless of industry, an employee's

level of job satisfaction refers to the level of gratification or fulfillment that employees

feel or have with their jobs. Satisfied employees are more apt to engage in those

activities which promote success for their organizations (Hays & Lou, 2015). Generally,

individuals experience more of a sense of fulfillment as they age. Those who remain in

the workforce are more satisfied with their jobs in part, because of higher salaries and

better positions that those younger than them. The ability to maintain life and work

balance is an integral part of an employee's job satisfaction, regardless of the

organization or industry in which they work.

   While an individual may express satisfaction with one facet of their job, they may

also express displeasure with another. Job performance and an individual's work quality

not only play an important part in employee productivity, but it also affects the success or

failure of an organization (Hays & Lou, 2015). An employee's ability to complete a task

successfully or unsuccessfully or perform their job responsibilities can ultimately lead to

the success or failure of the organization they represent. This is why job satisfaction is so

important. A satisfied employee responds favorably to and supports the goals of their

organization. To ensure and maintain an employee's productivity, organizations must

equip their employees with sufficient work environments as well as evaluate any age

management policies they may have in place ((Čiutienė & Railaitė, 2014).

   Job satisfaction is often believed to explain how an employee views their job

through appraisals. Actually, job satisfaction is associated with job performance, as well

as good physical and mental health for employees. Likewise, employers benefit from

their employee's job satisfaction when they experience lower absenteeism and turnover

in the workplace (Besen, et al., 2013). Supporting work-life balance is also important in

keeping all employees satisfied, regardless of age. Furthermore, assisting employees with career adaptability favorably affects an individual's career satisfaction as well as their job performance (Truxillo, et al., 2015). When employees are satisfied with their jobs and work environment, the organizations for which they work are positively impacted; therefore, keeping their employees happy, healthy, and satisfied should be important to organizations (Hays & Lou, 2015).

Different employees experience different degrees of job satisfaction. Within the Healthcare industry, managers of information technology employees are tasked with assessing the satisfaction of their employees while strategizing a plan or procedure for maximizing an employee's productivity (Hays & Lou, 2015). Employers can monitor employee satisfaction by their behavior, productivity, interaction with others, and overall health. For employees whose job performance is poor, leadership must recognize the importance of job satisfaction if they expect an improvement in job performance. Healthcare industry employees, according to Hays and Lou (2015), relate their ability to be a part of the organization's decision-making process, freedom to speak freely and express themselves, and open communications with leadership to job satisfaction. Furthermore, healthcare employees, regardless of age, have an expectation of managers and those in leadership positions to adequately recognize and acknowledge good work behaviors to ensure job satisfaction.

According to Bertolino (2012), there are six aspects of perceived personality and job performance:

- Conscientiousness: older workers are more conscientious.

- Openness to experience: individuals who are intellectually curious and exhibit creativity are typically open to experience.

- Neuroticism: individuals who experience high levels of negative emotional stability often experience fear and embarrassment.

- Extraversion: younger individuals are typically higher on extraversion than older individuals as this condition/behavior decreases with age.

- Agreeableness: older individuals are considered more agreeable. In the workplace, this implies that they are more likable, upbeat, adaptable to change, and collaborative.

- Task performance (employee behavior that is essential to technical organization performance): this behavior appears to stabilize as employees age.

With healthcare employees, job performance is also dependent upon a relationship with management. Employees need to feel a connection not only to their peers, but also to their employers. Communication is key to forging a positive working relationship and maintaining it; therefore, leaders would do well to make regular contact with their employees via the many forms of communications, including email, face-to-face meetings, and WebEx or online meetings. Communicating with their employees includes providing prompt and speedy feedback regarding job performance, evaluations, and advancement opportunities (Hays & Lou, 2015).

Older Workers and Retirement

While growing older may be viewed as a negative consequence of life, there are some valuable benefits. With age comes positive characteristics, including wisdom, rational thinking, and a reasonable portion of emotional health. Pragmatic societal benefits, such as tax breaks, senior citizen discounts, and special housing programs are also positive consequences of growing older (North & Fiske, 2015). Workers who reach retirement age are not always in a position to do so. Poor financial planning, insufficient long-term medical planning, and fear of the unknown of retirement are but a few examples of retirement hesitation and delay (Choi et al., 2011). The fear of not having enough money at retirement plagues some older workers (Irving, 2015). The state of the economy also plays an important role in a worker's decision to retire. A weak economy where the older worker must decide how they will survive on a fixed income may cause them to delay retirement (Elias et al., 2012). For this reason, many older workers are choosing to remain employed beyond retirement age. An increase in the United States retirement age to 66 years has further validated an individual's ability to extend their employment years. The decision to retire or remain in the workplace may depend on several reasons, including:

- An individual's financial planning for retirement: the inability to appropriately plan for retirement financially, causing a shortfall in their retirement wealth, thus forcing them to remain in the workforce (Gonzales et al., 2015).

- An individual's desire to remain active and mentally viable: those individuals who choose not to succumb to the stereotypes of retirement by

becoming inactive once they leave their careers may opt to remain

employed, either fulltime or by a reduction of work hours. They may also

choose to continue working as consultants in their current field as a means

of maintaining and enhancing their skills.

Retirement marks the end of an individual's career, and occasionally leads the individual

to another career, or affords the opportunity to engage in extracurricular activities and

hobbies they may have put aside during their working years.

When assessing the possibility of delaying retirement, older workers must

evaluate their financial resources, as obtaining and maintaining financial security is high

on the list of reasons why workers at any age continue to work. Older workers view their

financial stability as a major concern when contemplating a comfortable retirement

(Heisler & Bandow, 2018). If future retirement is not properly planned, the fear of losing

steady income as well as material possessions (home, vehicle, etc.) weigh heavily on the

decision to continue working or delve into investment savings. This fear of loss may

spawn questionable investments and bad financial behaviors (Wohrmann et al, 2017).

The choice of taking early withdrawals from their retirement investments before

retirement age to continue making ends meet are weighed heavily against seeking

additional employment or delaying retirement. Extending employment and delaying

retirement assists older workers in retaining and preserving personal resources, including

a regular salary and access to health benefits (Heisler & Bandow, 2018). Continuing to

work also affords the opportunity to increase retirement resources. It is most beneficial

to those who enjoy the work they do, as job satisfaction is important when evaluating the

decision to retire or continue working. For those individuals who are less satisfied with their jobs, choosing to retire early may justify a loss of personal resources, as job dissatisfaction affects not only one's financial status, but also their mental and physical health (Maurits, et al, 2015).

Given a choice, Baby Boomers are more likely to opt to remain in the workforce, especially since the average life span is beyond retirement age. They want to continue to be more productive and to remain active and engaged. Some Baby Boomers are not eager to retire, and actually, dread the idea of retiring. Older workers need to remain physically and mentally active in an attempt to maintain personal health and establish a quality of life after they leave the workplace. They are terrified of becoming removed from social acquaintances and friends. The ability for older workers to remain in the workforce could become costly for their employers, as this extends paying for their salaries and employee benefits (Gibaldi, 2013). This move by employers is beneficial to the organization; however, as experience and knowledge are retained within the organization by extending the employment of Baby Boomers. The delay of retirement by older workers affords the organization an extension of valuable resources in not only their wealth of knowledge but also continuing providing their business services without the need of training and hiring new talent. To the advantage of those individuals who choose not to retire early or at retirement age, continued advances in technology has afforded older workers the ability to delay retirement and continue working into their later years (Taylor & Earl, 2016). Management must realize and understand the connection between attitudes, behaviors, and age, no matter what generation their employees are a part of (Elias, et al., 2012).

Once these workers are no longer able to work, or forced into retirement, their exit from the workforce causes a decrease in the number of experienced, skilled workers within an organization (Taylor & Earl, 2016). Management, at this point, must evaluate the employment needs of the organization and hire new workers. Meanwhile, younger employees remaining in the workplace are left with fewer opportunities when these older, experienced workers continue to work beyond retirement age (Choi, et al., 2011). This, in turn, causes them to leave the organization prematurely when they tire of waiting for older workers to vacate their positions. There are cases, however, where older workers opt for early retirement. Financial planning and improvements to organizational pension plans have made the decision to take early retirement for some easier to make (Čiutienė & Railaitė, 2014). Some individuals are eager to give up the rigors of working and are excited about moving on with their lives and focusing on spending time with family and engaging in other interests (Gibaldi, 2013). In these cases, older workers vacate their positions early, leaving available jobs for existing younger workers who are looking to move up in the organization or presenting opportunities for new employees to be hired.

Conversely, older workers who are more diligent about retirement planning are not fearful of leaving their jobs at retirement age. They are more inclined to plan and adjust to retirement if they are not the victims of age discrimination in the workplace (Fraccaroli & Deller, 2015). They are more positive about their ability to retire and to control the stages of aging. Workers who are fulltime employees, as opposed to those who have temporary employment contracts, are more likely to engage in some form of retirement planning (Fraccaroli & Deller, 2015). Studies show that individuals who

choose to remain in the workforce after retirement age fulfill basic human needs. The

organizations for which they work benefit from retaining the experience and skills of

these older workers (Bal, et al., 2012). When evaluating their ability to retire, older

workers should ponder how retirement will affect their health and finances (Irving, 2015).

The following should be evaluated before deciding to retire:

- Health insurance in retirement:

  o Affordable plans for retired workers compatible with their

    decreased income

  o Plans available for those individuals with pre-existing conditions

  o Planning for possible future surgeries, hospitalizations, or other

    medical emergencies which may occur

  o Affordable plans for regular checkups, immunizations, and visits to

    specialists

- Finances:

  o Savings and retirement accounts:

    ▪ determine how much money is needed to comfortably retire

      - maintain the ability to pay monthly expenses, such

        as mortgage/rent, utilities, credit accounts, vehicle

        maintenance, household maintenance, etc.

- projection of how long the funds saved will carry through retirement

  - State of the economy: will it support retirement?

- Hobbies:

  - Maintain the ability to afford hobbies and recreational activities currently engaged in. As retirement age approaches, interests in hobbies and extracurricular activities most likely will not decline if the individual is highly motivated to maintain a normal lifestyle…one to which he or she has become accustomed (Bal, et al., 2012).

- Career change:

  - If the potential retiree has reservations about retiring or is simply not ready to retire, consider a career change (Irving, 2015).

In addition to evaluating personal finances and health, older workers must also assess economic and social elements when deciding to retire. While age is the primary element, others include:

- Marital status,

- Health status of the individual or their spouse (if married),

- For those who are married, the employment status of their spouse,

- Employment and living arrangement status of any dependents,

- Status of current and long-range financial assets and liabilities,

- Financial and physical ability to continue working if necessary, and

- Status of the current labor and economic environments (Gibaldi, 2013).

On average, those workers who are self-employed and those who are managers in their organizations are more likely to continue working well beyond retirement age (Čiutienė & Railaitė, 2014). Conversely, manual, non-management employees are more likely to stop working upon retirement age, provided they have sufficiently planned financially for retirement. These workers are more apt to work longer if they have adequate personal resources and little to no issues or experiences with age discrimination while in their work environments (Fraccaroli & Deller, 2015). Collectively, both medical advances and the state of the economy play a huge role in an older worker's decision to retire or continue working. These workers are protected by the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) (Zachary, 2012). Fortunately, technological advancements make it possible to delay retirement for older workers.

In lieu of retirement, those contemplating whether the time is right to retire may simply decide they wish to change careers or venture into a new area within their current organization (Heisler & Bandow, 2018). They may also decide to take this time to explore a longtime hobby as a means of earning additional income to compensate late or lack of financial retirement planning.   Heisler & Bandow further contend that while older workers may express a desire to continue working beyond retirement, this decision

may be made for an assortment of reasons, of which some are aligned with those of their younger counterparts:

- income to support financial responsibilities and way of life,

- health and life insurance at a group rate with reduced premiums,

- establish and maintain retirement fund with employer (if available), and

- comradery in the daily interactions with others.

One difference between the two groups is that, unlike their younger peers, older workers cannot simply move on to another organization if they find that a particular job does not fit their social or economic needs. It is more difficult for older workers to move into new employment the closer they are to retirement age.

When evaluating the needs of the workforce, management must take into consideration different aspects of their employees, including education, experience, and skills. In some ways, the age of their employees factors into the makeup of the workforce for some organizations. Some employers now understand that there is a connection between the recruitment, hiring, and retirement processes of their more seasoned workers (Taylor & Earl, 2016). To retain older workers beyond retirement age, organizations should begin motivating them to continue working long before they reach retirement age. Human resource departments can assist in motivating these workers by offering engaging and interesting job opportunities, as well as identify and execute a process to manage the organization's aging workforce (Čiutienė & Railaitė, 2014). Baby Boomers are living longer and can work well beyond the retirement age; therefore, organizations must develop plans to retain older workers (Bal, et al., 2012). Those workers who have

maintained reasonably good health or who have less than perfect finances typically will

remain employed if that option is made available to them; however, individuals who

choose to retire contribute to the decreasing labor force, and ultimately, give rise to the

need for experienced employees in the workplace (Heisler & Bandow, 2018). Regardless

of whether older workers choose to retire or maintain their position in the workforces,

they must be reasonably healthy, both mentally and physically. Likewise, organizations

must provide adequate and flexible work environments, as well as current learning

opportunities to ensure they can continue working efficiently (Čiutienė & Railaitė, 2014).

Older Workers in Hostile Work Environments

Hostile environments, whether at work, home, or school are often the result of

abusive behavior and discrimination. Hostility in the workplace stems from the bad

behavior of an individual or group against another of the protected classes identified

below. These groups are protected by federal law:

- Race

- Religion

- Gender

- Age

- Disability

- National origin (Wiener, et al., 2014).

When identified, a review of hostile behaviors should be evaluated by management to determine if the behavior was abusive, demeaning, humiliating, or threatening. Likewise, management should determine if these behaviors are deemed as isolated incidents of miscommunication (Weiner, et al., 2014). One could argue that there is a fine line between miscommunication and interpretation of actions; therefore, those in management must be able to not only evaluate the situation but also respond accordingly to those employees who seek to dehumanize their peers and older workers within the workplace.

According to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), it is against the law for an employer to discriminate against a potential employee as it relates to compensation or other employment privileges based on age (Weiner, et al., 2014). When hiring, talent acquisition should be based on experience and skillsets as well as other potential employment factors. Hostile work environments can occur due to many factors, such as jealousy among employees, favoritism from management, or an imbalance of work responsibilities among peers. One employee's misconduct or bad behavior against another employee of a protected class according to the ADEA that proves to be severe or abusive creates a hostile work environment (Wiener, et al., 2014). While hostility in the workplace should not be tolerated by anyone of any age, a negative portrayal of older workers can certainly lead to or add to hostility toward them. These negative portrayals and stereotypes of older workers can adversely affect any chances of employment advancement and training opportunities (Čiutienė & Railaitė, 2014). They can also affect job performance ratings. To facilitate an environment more conducive to productivity and

equality, management would do well to change the environment to alleviate the hostility, which in turn, is best for all employees, regardless of age (Choi, et al., 2011). Classes and workshops on workplace diversity are valuable resources when dealing with hostile work environments as age discrimination is precursor to workplace hostility, and sometimes, violence. Management and leaders should proactively seek resolution if they intend to retain their valuable seasoned employees, as older workers are less apt to remain in a work environment that is detrimental to their health. They are also less likely to engage in or accept emotional burdens in the workplace (Maurits, et al, 2015).

Job satisfaction in hostile work environments can be difficult to achieve, especially when older workers are faced with work evaluations performed by hostile managers. Studies have shown more favorable results in work evaluations when they are performed by an evaluator who has commonality with the employee. That is, the evaluator or manager and the employee have similar characteristics, including work ethics, race, gender, and age (Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014). Employees indicated that, in addition to a commonality with their managers, the following attributes are important in the workplace to ensure and maintain a non-hostile environment and job satisfaction:

- evidence of the possibility of personal growth and career or position advancement,

- positive interpersonal relationships with management and peers,

- working with and for likeminded professionals, and

- management creating a positive work environment that not only provides a means to motivate its employees, but also encourages and fosters job satisfaction (Hays & Lou, 2015).

Hostile work environments promote the dehumanization of older workers and create a habitat for age discrimination. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 regulates the mistreatment of workers on the basis of age, and organizations are bound by the policies set within this act (Wiener, et al, 2014). Despite the existence of this regulatory act, hostile work environments still exist, and are breeding grounds for age discrimination as well as racial and ethnic discrimination. It is the responsibility of the organizations to ensure a non-antagonistic environment for which all individuals can work.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter captures the meaning of age discrimination, its origin, and stereotypes, as well as the effects of age discrimination on employee productivity, diversity, and retirement. Robert Butler, often touted as the first to introduce the idea of age discrimination to the world, noted that this phenomenon (also described as age bigotry) would be an ever-present issue in modern society. He further surmised that government programs, such as Medicare, Social Security, and public housing which were designed to assist older or disenfranchised individuals, stemmed from age discrimination (Achenbaum, 2015).

Although some research has been performed on age discrimination, this phenomenon still remains relatively underappreciated, under-researched, and understated.

As individuals continue to age and live longer, there is an increase in the necessity to continue research of this topic to gain a greater understanding of age discrimination (North & Fiske, 2013). While it is more commonplace for older workers seeking employment to experience and report adversity due to their age, there is still a need for additional research on age diversity in the workplace and within the information technology industry (Wanberg, et al., 2015). Organizations can contribute to the resolution of age discrimination within the workplace by addressing current behaviors toward older workers. Negative attitudes must be minimized, and those with positive attitudes towards older workers should be encouraged to continue this behavior while creating a favorable and supportive work environment for all. When organizations present themselves as having positive perceptions of older workers, their job performance, health, overall work satisfaction, and the inclination to assist others increases. This behavior shows that organizations value their older, more experienced employees (Čiutienė & Railaitė, 2014), and creates a positive regard for age diversity in the workplace (Fasbender & Wang, 2017).

Age discrimination within the information technology industry provides just a glimpse of an under-researched issue which is not exclusive of one industry. Further research on this topic is essential in providing a deeper understanding of organizational and individual behaviors towards employees based on age. This study utilized direct feedback from participants over the age of 50 years working in information technology in the healthcare industry.

Chapter 3: Research Method

As previously stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the issue of age discrimination as it relates to older employees working in information technology within the healthcare industry. This case study sought to explore the effects of age discrimination by management and peers of older workers within the information technology industry as it relates to the changing technological advances in today's society. The primary focus identified for this study concentrated on information technology employees who work in the healthcare industry. The intent of the study was to explore the phenomenon of the industry-specific age discrimination against older workers where organizations and management show partiality towards younger workers in the field. When this behavior occurred, older, more experienced workers were often discarded, and in turn, were devalued by their employers in order to reduce overall staffing costs, which allowed them to hire younger, less experienced workers.

Research Design and Rationale

Chapter 1 identified the following research question to be explored:

RQ1: How do older workers within the information technology field view the

treatment they receive from organizational leaders?

The primary concept of this study was the presence of selective discrimination in today's work environments. Age discrimination was not a new phenomenon when this study took place; in fact, it has been a part of society for several decades (Butler, 1969). Age discrimination in the workplace focused on the prejudice against older workers in their work environments by peers and management. Historically, this phenomenon was not industry-specific, nor was it confined to one particular age group; however, the

primary focus of age discrimination has been typically on older workers (North & Fiske, 2015). For this study, the emphasis was on older workers in the information technology industry, and the focus as within healthcare facilities.

The research design chosen for this study was qualitative. I selected the qualitative research design because the method by which data is obtained for this type of study was the best fit for this research. The chosen research strategy for this study was the case study, which is a definitive research analysis of a group, individual, or occurrence. Yin (2013) stated that a case study, under certain conditions, can morph into a study whereby individuals were subunits of the study. If the data obtained from the research shows, for example, comprehensive individual or employee data, it may actually become an individual or employee study. This research strategy was chosen for the study because of the proposed participant pool setting and my role as an observer. The case study was the best fit for this research because it involved observing a group of individuals in their natural work environments. This observation allowed the researcher to not only observe the research participants but also to engage them as an observer-participant. It was later determined that the observation setting was no longer needed, as the survey questions provided ample data for the research.

Role of the Researcher

One role of the researcher in any research study is to collect data that will not only be used for their study, but also for future studies in their field of concentration (Fink, 2000). As the researcher for this study, it was my responsibility to investigate how seasoned employees view how they were treated by management and peers as it related to

their age. My role in this process as researcher, and an individual who was also in the selected age range for this study, afforded me the ability to have viewed the issue from not only the study participants, but also the opposing views of others.

My role was initially proposed to include that of an observer-participant; however, I choose to defer to the actual participants of this study for the data needed via the questions posed to the participants via the survey. The role of observer-participant runs the risk in the research when personal relationships were involved with the research participants. Ethical parameters of research, however, act as a barrier for potential problems that may arise due to personal associations with individuals directly involved in the research (Wallace, 2014).

As a member of one of the three generations targeted for this study, I did not anticipate any direct biases towards the study participants. The individuals were drafted primarily from the Baby Boomer generation; however, I anticipated that a few would be from Generation X. One criterion for the study participants was that they must be employed in the information technology industry for a minimum of ten years; therefore, these individuals were most likely to be over the age of 55 years. Although the participant pool was comprised of individuals within my work division, the possibility of bias in the research was slim to none, as I did not work directly with any of the potential participants. In qualitative research, there is the risk of confirmation bias where the researcher attempts to align their beliefs around the participants' responses to confirm the belief (Sarniak, 2015). This bias would come into play during the time that the researcher evaluated the responses of the research participants and tried to make the interpretation of

these responses align with their own beliefs. As the researcher, I refrained from this bias

by accepting and evaluating each response as it was given.

Methodology

Loosely defined, methodologies are processes or systems of methods which are

used in collecting data for the purpose of research. Within research, there are three

primary methods:

- Qualitative: the method of research used to produce results or findings by

  non-statistical means (Golafshani, 2003). It is an exploratory method of

  research which includes four primary types of research methods:

  - Phenomenology

  - Ethnography

  - Grounded Theory

  - Case Study

- Quantitative: the method of research which uses numerical, ordinal, and

  nominal data to determine the existence of relationship in research. This

  research method relies on statistical data, and includes four primary types

  of research strategies:

  - Descriptive

  - Correlational

  - Quasi-experimental

- o Experimental

- Mixed methods: this method of research uses both qualitative and quantitative methods and has four primary research design methods:

  - o Triangulation design

  - o Embedded design

  - o Explanatory design

  - o Exploratory design

This study used the qualitative method of research and was a case study. A case study deals primarily with an individual or group of people or an event and is used to investigate an issue or topic in greater detail without the need for large participant populations. Case studies examine behaviors and social frameworks of individuals, organizations, or groups of people using interviews or participant observations (Meyer, 2015). The IRB approval number for this study is 07-26-19-0342539. Data collection for this case study will be obtained by the use of an online research survey.

Participant Selection Logic

The participant population identified for this study consisted of individuals age 50 years and over. While the probability that these individuals will primarily be members of the Baby Boomer generation, it was also possible that the participant pool will include individuals from Generation X as well. These individuals had a minimum of 10 years of information technology experience and had worked in or had experience working in the

healthcare industry. The participant pool consisted of 20 to 30 individuals within the aforementioned age and experience range. Since this study focused primarily within the healthcare work environment, the participant population was drafted within healthcare facilities in the information technology division.

A listing of potential research participants was created based on the age and work experience criteria for this study. These potential participants were known professionally by the researcher, having worked with some of them at the time of the study or previously in information technology. Public records, available to any citizen, was used to confirm the age of the potential participant pool, and the initial listing was updated as necessary. Once the final potential participant pool listing was completed, an email invitation was sent to those individuals on the list inviting them to participate in the study.

Simply stated, data saturation is data satisfaction. It refers to the point in research where no new data can be obtained. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation occurs when enough information has been obtained in the research to replicate the study. It is at this point that the researcher can determine that additional data collection would produce similar results; therefore, no further data collection is necessary. The next step is to report:

- how data saturation is obtained,

- when data saturation is obtained, and

- to what degree data saturation is received (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017).

If data saturation is not reached, the validity and quality of the research are affected (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Burmeister & Aitken (2012) contended that data saturation is not necessarily achieved simply because there is no more new data to be obtained. Rather, data saturation deals more with the quality of the data rather than the quantity. Since neither a large nor small sample size is a guarantee of data saturation, researchers must select the sample size for their study which has the greatest chance of reaching data saturation.

Sampling strategy in qualitative research is defined as a process of selecting a portion of a defined population in order to determine common characteristics from the entire population (Gentles, et al., 2015). The steps for identifying a sampling strategy include:

- Define the total population for the study.

- Select the sample size for the study. The sample size is derived from the total population.

- Record the selected population.

- Assign numbers to the subjects in the selected population.

- Identify random numbers within the selected population.

- Select the sample.

Sampling

For this study, purposive sampling was the sampling strategy that was used. Purposive sampling in qualitative research is used when the researcher has some idea of the potential participants for the study due to specific qualities identified. Also known as judgement sampling, purposive sampling is a nonrandom strategy which does not require a set number of participants (Etikan, et al., 2016). With this sampling strategy, the researcher decided the information to be obtained for the study and attempted to identify willing participants who could provide the needed information. This strategy focused on identifying specific characteristics in potential participants needed for the research. The sampling size for this study relied upon the population size, confidence level, and margin of error (confidence interval). Since the research questions posed to the participants were open-ended questions where the participants could freely express their ideas and opinions, and no two responses were anticipated to be identical, the determination was made to use a larger margin of error of seven in order to maintain a 95% confidence level. Using a simple sample size calculator, the sample size for this study was 28, and the range was between 26 and 30. At the beginning of the study, there were 33 potential participants identified for the study, and the expectation of participants responding was 28.

Instrumentation

For this study, there was one data collection instrument used:

- Online survey questions

Online Survey Questions

The online survey questions will not be simple *yes* or *no* questions. Instead, they will allow the research participants an opportunity to respond openly using open-ended responses (see Appendix A). There will be a word limit to the responses, however, in order to alleviate the possibility of a participant's response being more than what is needed for the research.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

This qualitative research study is a case study. Data will be collected via an online survey.

Online Surveys: The primary data for this study was obtained via surveys consisting of open-ended questions to the participants of the study:

- From where was the data collected?

  o Data was collected via online surveys.

- Who collected the data?

  o I as the researcher collected the data. The survey questions were drafted by me.

- Frequency of data collection events.

  o Data collection took place only once.

- Duration of data collection events.

  o The estimated time to complete the online survey was no more than 30 minutes.

- How was the data recorded?

    o Survey results were captured via an Excel spreadsheet.

For all methods of data collection (online surveys):

- Follow-up plan if recruitment resulted in too few participants.

    o The initial solicitation of potential pool participants failed to yield a
    minimum number of participants; therefore, an invitation to participate in
    the study was extended to additional employees in the information
    technology division of the healthcare facilities.

Debriefing

At the end of the research study data collection process, all research participants
were contacted electronically for study debriefing. It was during this communication that
the intention of the research collected from the participants was reiterated to ensure that
they were fully aware of how their survey responses were used. If any deceptions were
identified at the end of the study, these were to be divulged to the research participants as
well as providing a viable explanation as to why the deception occurred and was
necessary. No deceptions were identified at the end of the study.

Data Analysis Plan

All data collected for this study was related to the overall research question:

- How do older workers within the information technology field view the
    treatment they receive from organizational leaders?

The online survey questions were constructed with the overall research question in mind and gave the participants the chance to provide open-ended responses. The purpose of this strategy was to provide an opportunity for research participants to respond openly and concisely about their treatment from peers and management. As the responses received from the participants were confidential, assurance was given to them to ensure they were open and honest with their responses to the survey questions.

Data analysis in research is a process of assessing collected data using analytical and logical rational to analyze every aspect of the collected data. The data analysis technique chosen for this case study was pattern-matching logic. Yin (2013) described pattern matching as a data analysis technique which compared the results of a current researcher's case study to that of a predicted study. To aid in the analysis of the collected data, the information collected from the online survey was coded and analyzed via hand coding. Thematic analysis, which refers to identifying and reporting patterns in the collected data, was used to show and highlight common responses from the research participants. Once all data was collected and documented, it was evaluated to show any themes or patterns identified from the participants' responses. Likewise, the data, was also reviewed and checked for saturation after it was analyzed via hand coding.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility of the research determines how factual the results are. Data collected was obtained directly from the research participants in their own words; therefore, credibility of the research was not difficult to prove. Qualitative researchers use

methodological strategies to protect the credibility of the research findings, including

keeping meticulous record of data collection (Noble & Smith, 2015). Triangulation,

which refers to using multiple methods of data collection and is used to circumvent bias

in research, was the strategy initially selected for this study to confirm credibility.

Transferability

The issue of age discrimination in the workplace for this study was restricted to

older workers. The general issue of age discrimination, however, is not limited to one

particular age group. Studies have shown that age discrimination can take place against

any age group. As a result, transferability in this study was obtained via thick

description, which is a detailed explanation of the researcher's data collection experience

(Noble & Smith, 2015). From the results of this study, further research studies can be

performed to investigate age discrimination against any age group.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the concept used to assess qualitative research. Validity

of the research must be assured and was initially selected to show in this study using

triangulation, which provided more inclusive data results (Noble & Smith, 2015). Just as

triangulation was selected to confirm credibility of this study, it was also selected to be

used to confirm the research's dependability. This study will use an online survey to

collect the research data. Through this method, participants will be given an opportunity

to respond to open-ended questions via an anonymous survey.

Confirmability

Confirmability determines the degree of objectivity of a research study's results. It refers to the extent of corroboration of these results by others. The researcher's ability to remain unbiased during the research will ensure confirmability. Although the research will be performed within the researcher's work organization, the researcher is not personally or professionally connected to the potential research participants.

Ethical Procedures

The first step in securing participants for the study was to provide the *Participant Consent Form* to identified potential research participants. This form provided the background of the study as well as the procedures participants followed once they decided to participate in the study. Potential participants were also provided with the risks and benefits to participating in the study. For this particular study, written consent was not required for those agreeing to participate in the study via the online survey. They were requested to return a completed survey as their agreement to participate. The data collected was anonymous and the participants' consent to participate via the online survey was treated confidentially, even though no consent form was required. The participants' completion of the online survey was their consent to participate.

The *Research Ethics Planning Worksheet* was used as a guide to ensure the ethics of research were appropriately followed. Particularly, the information and questions related to *Research in One's Own Workplace*. To ensure there were no ethical issues with conducting the research in my own workplace, I reviewed the information available in the worksheet related to this concept and abide by the guidelines twice.

Summary

This qualitative case study investigated the issue of age discrimination where older workers in information technology were the subjects of this discrimination. Technological advances are prevalent in today's society, and the effects on older workers who may be less familiar with more modern technology created an environment for age discrimination against them by not only their younger peers, but also management. This study was performed within healthcare facilities in the information technology division. The participants of the study were age 50 years and older and had a minimum of ten years of work experience in information technology. Specifically, this study related to age discrimination within the information technology division of a healthcare facility. There was no personal connection to the participants of this study, although some were known to the researcher as fellow employees in the information technology industry. Data was collected using an online survey. The results of this survey were captured in an Excel spreadsheet in preparation for evaluation.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the issue of age discrimination against older, seasoned workers. Furthermore, I sought to determine if age discrimination truly existed against this class of individuals within the information technology field. Technology, as we know it, has continued to evolve, and improve, providing more opportunities for success or failure in the workplace, regardless of industry. Seasoned workers possess years of experience in their field. Through this experience, they have crafted their profession in such a way that makes them invaluable to the organization for which they have worked for several years. Unfortunately, some organizations failed to see the value of seasoned workers. In an effort to cut costs and other business expenses, they forced some into early retirement or prematurely displaced them from employment (Brandon, 2012). These workers were replaced by younger, less experienced employees at lower salaries.

As employees continued to age, they lose the desire to learn new processes and technology; however, they should not be discounted by the leaders and management of organizations today. To facilitate this study, nine open-ended questions were devised and presented to the research participants to obtain relevant data related to the following research question:

RQ1: How do older workers within the information technology field view the
treatment they receive from organizational leaders?

As a result of presenting these nine questions, the responses provided by the research participants offered an opportunity for further research of this issue. It also provided

relevant data which both supports and opposes the existence of age discrimination within the information technology industry in a healthcare environment. The intent of this chapter was to provide information regarding the research setting, research participant demographics, the method of data collection, and data analysis. Information regarding evidence of trustworthiness, and final study results were also presented. It is within this chapter that the research data findings were revealed, and a transition to the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations from the study was presented.

Research Setting

The research for this study was conducted using an online survey. As such, there was no fixed physical location for the research. The physical location for the study was determined individually by each of the research participants. Individuals who chose to participate were given one week to respond to the nine open-ended research questions made available to them via an online link using an online survey creation tool. Since the survey was presented to the participants online, it was at their discretion to complete whenever and wherever they chose within the preset time frame of one week. As the participants were anonymous in this study, there were no known personal or organizational conditions that may have influenced their responses to the research survey.

Demographics

For this study, each research participant met the following requirements:

- were at least 50 years of age.

- were currently or previously employed in the information technology field

- had a minimum of 10 years of information technology experience.

The individuals on the potential research participant list invited to participate in this study consisted of both male and female employees from various cultures and nationalities, with the aforementioned criteria. Individuals over the age of 50 years in Generation X and the Baby Boomer Generation made up this research study participant pool. They hold various positions in the information technology industry in a healthcare environment, from administrative positions to leadership and management. This group of individuals is best suited for this study in that they have the experience of working with a group of people from diverse age groups as well as different nationalities and cultures. They are often seen as less savvy technologically, often taking a back seat to their younger peers. Some are mid-level in their careers, and others are moving closer to retirement. These individuals have seen industry and organizational changes to which they have learned to adapt.

Data Collection

The online survey, consisting of nine open-ended questions, was initially presented to 33 potential participants. A link to the survey was provided by email via the research participant consent form. Potential participants who chose to be a part of the research study were invited to access the online survey by clicking the link provided and responding to the questions presented. The participants were asked to respond to the research questions within one week of receipt of the survey link. The number of survey responses received was evaluated after one week, at which time it was determined that 19 of the 33 potential participants had responded. A reminder email was sent to the initial

potential participant group of 33 individuals to inform them that their participation was still needed, and the survey was still available to access. At that time, an invitation was sent to six additional potential participants, inviting them to participate as a minimum of 26 responses was needed. With this second invitation, a total of 39 potential participants were contacted. Because the email reminder was sent, and an additional group of individuals were invited to participate in the study, the opportunity to respond was extended by an additional week. At the end of the second week, the number of survey responses received was again evaluated, and it was determined that the minimum number of responses needed was received. At this point in the process, an email was sent to the potential participants to thank them for participating in the study. This email communication also reiterated the purpose of the study as well as how their survey responses would be used. All communications sent via email were sent to all of the individuals who were invited to participate in the study since the research study participation was anonymous. This option was chosen as there were no identifiers to determine who the actual participants were.

In Chapter 3, the participant pool was identified as consisting of 20 to 30 individuals aged 50 years and over. These individuals have a minimum of 10 years of information technology experience. It was determined at the time that the sample size for a population size of 27, with a 95% confidence level was 26 (see Figure 1). To obtain a 95% confidence level from data obtained from open-ended questions, to a participant pool of 27 individuals (the mean between 20 and 34, allowing for four additional

potential participants) and a margin of error of five, the sample size calculation from

Survey Monkey in Figure 1 was used.

Figure 1: *Sample size calculation in Chapter 3.*

At the time of submitting the online survey to the potential participants, the number of

individuals increased to 33, and the population size increased to 30 (the mean average

between 27 and 33). This change in population size changed the sample size to 28 which

was ultimately used (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: *Revised sample size calculation after data collection began.*

The survey was closed to participants once the new sample size of 28 was

reached. Once the survey was closed to the participants, the data was downloaded from

Survey Monkey into an Excel spreadsheet. The data obtained from the study was then

separated in the Excel spreadsheet by the nine survey questions. Each question and

subsequent responses from the study participants were placed on a separate worksheet within the data response spreadsheet. As was expected with presenting the study research via open-ended questions, the information received from the participants was in full sentence form. The data obtained was loaded into the worksheet exactly as it was presented by the participants in the online survey.

Data Analysis

The online survey questions used in this study were developed to invoke descriptive responses from the research participants. The questions presented pertained to training, support, and implementation for new technology for their age group as compared to younger peers. With the survey responses, the themes of training inconsistencies, the lack of support from managers and peers, and insufficient time allotted to implement new technology were identified. The idea of beginning with the training aspect of introducing new technology to an organization stems from making all employees aware of the new application and providing valuable resources to aid in their understanding of the application once implemented.

The first two survey questions presented to the research participants addressed the issue of management's response to training and the availability of training resources. The responses ranged from minimal training and resources provided by management, to leaving the training and procurement of resources up to the individual:

- *Management where I work would post videos on the company website to view…that is how I receive my training on new technology.*

- *Minimal training and then "let loose".*

Training sessions, whether onsite or offsite, were not offered. Employees were left to their own devices to obtain guidance in learning how to use and support new applications. Some respondents noted that one person was identified to take responsibility for getting the rest of the team up to speed. Utilizing a peer resource worked best to facilitate a smooth implementation and transition. The peer resource is one employee who attends all strategy and support meetings and serves as the team representative for training and support for new applications. This employee served as the subject matter expert for the project. This individual was oftentimes a seasoned employee and was responsible for training their peers. When no peer resource is identified, the employees were responsible for obtaining their own training and learning how to use and support new applications.

The respondents were told to either seek training on their own or use what is provided by the application vendor. Several stated that it was left up to the individual to obtain the necessary resources to support a new application. Still others noted that they identified third party resources to assist in learning how to use and support a new application or system. Overall, the consensus of the respondents was that little to no training was provided when implementing new technology, and employees are often left to their own devices to learn how to support new technology. Regardless of whether training or application resources are provided, employees are expected to share their knowledge with their peers. In some cases, it is believed that the lack of training provided is driven by the cost of training several employees. Management may

determine that the expense of the training is not merited, and therefore, chooses not to provide it.

Questions three and four addressed support from peers and management when learning about and implementing new technology. This line of questioning addressed receptiveness, or the lack of support older workers received from their peers and management when learning new technology. Nearly half of the respondents stated that their peers are very supportive of them in learning new technology. They cited that some are in the same situation of having to learn how to use and support new applications as well (see Table 5). Peers were as supportive as they could be when they were expected to obtain the same necessary supportive skills. Conversely, 36 percent of the respondents state that management is not supportive or helpful when learning a new application or technology. While their peers related to the stresses and difficulties of learning new applications, management was less likely to empathize with adding the responsibility of learning new applications to the already overwhelmed workforce.

Questions five through seven addressed the following:

- the process of implementing new technology,

- the time allotted for implementation,

- fair treatment among peers when introducing new applications to the workplace, and,

- the equality of training and job promotion opportunities.

The reason for this line of questioning was to address the oftentimes overwhelming issue of application implementation and how employees and management responded to the process. The responses obtained from question five revealed that 43% of the respondents have negative feelings overall about the processes of implementing new technology, citing overwhelming workloads and cumbersome processes. Respondents confided that with multiple simultaneous application implementations in process, resources were stretched thin. This lack of available resources presented a burden on the existing heavy load that the departments carried daily. A deficiency in staff as well as resources contributed to the respondents' inability to obtain sufficient training to support new applications. Respondents also noted that there was a lack of communication when informing staff about newly implemented technology or applications. They contended that the process is oftentimes convoluted and cumbersome.

The study responses showed that less than one third of the respondents believe that ample time is allotted for implementing new technology. The number of active projects during the time of new technology implementation factored into the availability of sufficient time. Others feel that not enough time is allotted for implementation, which can lead to a stressful application onboarding. Sometimes, the issue of having enough time to implement new technology is situational, and a successful implementation depends upon the number of projects currently in the works. 50 percent of the responses received revealed that sufficient time is not provided for new application implementation. The remaining 50 percent of the responses was split between the beliefs that ample time is allowed, or it is situational. All things considered; it is sometimes difficult to

determine the exact amount of time needed for a successful application implementation. This is due to the oftentimes instability and uncertainty of information technology.

The issue of equality of training and job promotion opportunities revealed that more than half of the respondents were afforded the same opportunities as their younger peers. Even so, there still may be stipulations and/or exceptions, such as familiarity with upper management or the lack of promotion opportunities afforded to all employees. As time passed from the date of hire to the present, some respondents noted that they were afforded less access to promotion opportunities. In fact, their younger peers were more apt to further their careers within the organization at a faster rate while older workers' careers remain stagnant. Responses to this question also identified that there may be issues with racial discrimination as it relates to equality in providing opportunities to advance within an organization.

The remaining two questions dealt directly with the issue of age discrimination as it relates to promotions and project assignments. Surprisingly, more than half of the respondents stated that they, to the best of their knowledge, have never been passed over for a promotion in favor of a younger coworker. These affirmative responses were presented as a simple "no" response with no additional information provided. Conversely, less than half responded that they have been the victim of age discrimination with regard to promotions within the workplace. Issues of job promotion inequities were identified when workers were presented with opportunities for promotion within their departments. When made available, higher positions, including senior analyst and management positions were filled by younger workers. Reasons including ineligibility

due to a previous promotion were given to older workers by management to validate promoting a younger peer. In one such case, the younger worker who was promoted to the higher position quit within a year. Others reported that the more years they spent in their position or with an organization, they were presented with less promotion opportunities. This resulted in stagnation of these more experienced workers' careers. Younger workers, it was noted, move up in the organization more quickly than their older peers. Oftentimes, the individual with the least amount of education and with little to no experience was hired and quickly promoted within the organization. They were hired and subsequently promoted over their older counterparts.

Roughly two-thirds of the respondents stated that they have more technological experience than their younger peers and believe that their experience and knowledge are comparable or exceeds that of their younger, less experienced coworkers. This experience does not always guarantee job promotion opportunities, higher salaries, or challenging projects. While the respondents reported that younger workers have more recent classroom instruction and training, their experience does not compare to their older counterparts. These younger workers bring new ideas and energy into the workplace; however, management should never underestimate or discount the value that years of experience bring to the organization. The benefit of years of information technology experience in the healthcare industry is imperative due to the lifesaving needs of clinical organizations. Those individuals who have extensive experience in the field reported that they have secured valuable contacts and resources over the years that have aided in their success. Overall, the consensus of the group was that their technical experience is

comparable or far exceeds that of their younger peers. This despite the idea that younger workers have been exposed to more advanced technology at an earlier age.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Initially, this study was slated to use triangulation, which involves using multiple methods of data collection as the strategy to confirm credibility of the data results. Since there was a change in the number of data collection methods used in the actual research, triangulation could no longer be used to confirm credibility in this study. The research data was obtained via a single online survey; therefore, persistent observation, which refers to identifying characteristics that are most relevant to the issue being addressed in the study, was used to confirm credibility.

The research questions presented to the study participants were in open-ended form, which allowed each participant to respond freely to the questions. The use of free-form, open-ended questions gave the participants the opportunity to expound on their responses without limiting them to multiple-choice and *yes* or *no* responses. This method of unstructured survey responses also afforded the researcher the opportunity to fully evaluate a participant's response without the need for additional information. With persistent observation, the researcher relied on the anonymity of the research participants to prove credibility. Each response received was directly from the research participant and having the shield of anonymity protected each participant from providing any identifying information in their answers; therefore, each response is considered factual based on the beliefs of the participants.

Transferability

While the issue of age discrimination in the workplace for this study was focused on older workers in the information technology industry working in a healthcare environment, it is not restricted to this class of individuals. Likewise, it is not restricted to the healthcare industry nor information technology. Age discrimination certainly has no respect of age and can occur to any age group or economic class. It is also a possible occurrence in any industry. For this study, the focus was on a specific age group working within a particular sector. Since this phenomenon is not restricted to a particular class of people, age group, or industry, other research studies can be performed to investigate age discrimination in different industries and against other age groups. In evaluating the responses to some of the survey questions, it was discovered that there may be a need for a study within the information technology industry regarding racial discrimination. Transferability in this study will allow for applying the results of the study to a race discrimination study as well as to other industries and age groups.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research refers to the assurance of validity in the research. It is valuable to the trustworthiness of a study because it validates the results of the study as consistent and repeatable. Dependability is used to show that if the same study or work were repeated, using the same study participants, the responses received would be relatively consistent, and the results of the study would be similar. Initially, I was prepared to use triangulation for the credibility and dependability aspects of trustworthiness; however, because the number of methods used to obtain data was

decreased, triangulation could not be used. Rather, dependability was assured in this study as the researcher relied on the truthfulness of the study's participants. Since the study and the research participants are anonymous, the researcher can trust that the study participants gave truthful responses to the survey questions.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research refers to the amount of objectivity there is in the research study results. It is important for the researcher to remain objective when gathering and analyzing the research data. As a means of avoiding bias in this study, I was not in the dual role of participant and researcher; rather, I maintained the role of researcher only. Furthermore, when reviewing the data, I was sure to review and assess the responses without regard to my own feelings as I was not a participant in this study. I was mindful to keep an open mind and assess the responses objectively when reading them, although I, as well as the research participants, work in the information technology industry.

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Study Results

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As previously stated, the research question for this study dealt with how older, seasoned workers view the treatment they receive in the workplace:

RQ1: How do older workers within the information technology field view the

treatment they receive from organizational leaders?

The following topics were identified from the data received from the survey responses:

- Peer and management support

- Training resource availability

- Time - New application/technology implementation

- Promotion/advancement opportunities

Table 1 gives a breakdown of the most common responses received for each of the identified data themes. The responses related to peer and management support revealed that while peers were moderately supportive of older workers, management was generally unsupportive of them. Management was not readily available when needed, nor did they provide any direct assistance to their employees. Younger peers proved to be helpful at times, but only when they were in the same situation as their older peers. Providing ample training for either group was relatively uniform, as was the availability of resources. The participants in the study revealed that they were afforded the same training as their younger peers. Likewise, support resources made available to the employees were equivalent as well.

Time allowed for application implementation and support relied heavily on the number of projects already in the works at a given time. Inadequate planning for implementing an application into the organization provided opportunities where employees were overworked and extended beyond reason. Processes for implementing new technology were not fully vetted to ensure ample time was provided for a smooth execution of implementing new applications. Opportunities for promotion and advancement were sometimes made available during new application implementation, including project management roles; however, the respondents contend that these opportunities are made available primarily to younger workers.

Table 1

Research Data Themes

Support	Training/ Resources	Time: Application Implementation	Promotions/ Advancement Opportunities
Peers and coworkers are not supportive of their older peers	Ample on-site training resources not always made available	Not enough time is allotted when implementing new technology	Management not always supportive when advancement opportunities become available
Newer, younger employees rely on seasoned employees for support	Limited training made available via Learning Made Simple (LMS) courses available to employees	Constant change in industry restricts time needed to fully implement new applications	Promotions are usually given to younger peers
Peers and coworkers are of little to no help when learning new applications/technology	Employees directed to vendors or outside sources for training on applications/new technology	Sufficient time to learn new technology is not available during normal work hours	Older workers are overlooked for promotions in favor of younger workers
Management support is lacking/not helpful	Insufficient time allowed for training before application	Too many consecutive projects going on at the same time	Experience and education are not considered when promoting seasoned employees.

Peer and Management Support

The issue of support by peers and management when introducing new applications produced a mixture of responses, ranging from very supportive to non-supportive by both groups. Peer support was generally deemed as "very helpful and supportive". In most cases, employees are introduced to new applications as a group unless one individual is designated as the peer resource for the department or team. This individual is tasked with learning the necessary skills to support the new application, and in turn, pass this information along to their peers. The responsibility of providing training to the department rests with the peer resource. When there is no peer resource designated, each employee is expected to learn the necessary skills on their own to support the application. The *less than* supportive responses revealed that peers did not take the initiative needed to obtain the skills to support new applications; rather, they chose to wait for others to assume the responsibility of getting the necessary training.

Management support of employees when introducing new applications was split between supportive and non-supportive. Roughly 43% of the respondents stated that manager support depended upon the manager. Circumstances, such as time constraints, budgeting, and available training, reduce a manager's ability to offer support to their employees. These managers, however, encourage employees to seek assistance and support from their peers. The remaining 57% of respondents report that management is not supportive; oftentimes, they are removed from the task of supplying training or offering resources.

Training Resource Availability

The survey questions about training availability and resources for learning new technology were designed as prerequisites to address whether ample training resources and opportunities are made available to all workers, regardless of age or technical experience. The specific question of how management responds to training produced several different answers, yet the majority of the responses report that training was not typically a priority for management; therefore, employees were left to find available resources on their own. These employees sought assistance from application vendors, online technical databases and blogs, and any resources that were made available through their training department onsite. They also sought assistance from younger peers who, while not possessing the same degree of technical experience, may have been more knowledgeable about the new applications they were tasked with supporting. Overall, the same training resources were afforded to most of the respondents regardless of age; however, one response indicated the presence of race discrimination with regard to training opportunities and resources.

Time: New Application/Technology Implementation

Much time is spent in the decision and planning phases of acquiring new applications or other technology; however, according to the study participants, not enough time is allowed for implementation. 25% of the respondents stated that enough time is allowed for implementation; albeit with stipulations, including evaluating the number of projects currently in the works at the time of implementation and available resources. Still others felt sufficient time is granted; however, a better, streamlined process which includes contact personnel (i.e., database administrators, network

administrators, and end-user support personnel) would be helpful to address any questions or issues that may arise from a vendor or application owner.

The remaining 75% of the respondents contend that the time allowed for implementation is insufficient. Oftentimes, there are multiple projects in the works which makes implementation even more difficult. Maintaining sufficient staff may also prove to be challenging, although contract employees are typically brought in during these times. According to the respondents, at times there may be several projects going on consecutively, and being understaffed, they are not given ample time to devote to learning new technology. They further contend that the nature of the information technology industry rarely allows sufficient time when implementing new applications or systems, as there are always variables in the implementation process that contribute to unrealistic timelines and goals. Within these timelines, employees oftentimes do not have enough time or staff to comprehensively test or vet the application or new technology before moving to production.

The process of planning and implementation of new applications requires sufficient time and resources. Employees are expected to learn how to support new applications, all while addressing the day-to-day responsibilities within their department. During implementation, employees are required to work 12-hour shifts for application support; therefore, it is imperative that ample time is allotted for implementation of new technology to ensure sufficient support.

Promotion/Advancement Opportunities

Ideally, promotion and advancement opportunities should be made available to all, and every individual who is qualified for a position should be encouraged to apply. Unfortunately, 39% of the respondents report that they were passed over for promotion opportunities for younger peers. Younger employees are brought into a department, with great expectations from management. They are immediately assigned high-level projects, only for management to discover that these younger employees were less qualified than previously imagined. Others are passed over for promotions in favor of younger workers with no prior, relative experience or education. Conversely, the majority of the respondents reported that they have never experienced being passed over for a promotion for a younger peer. Additionally, one percent of the respondents stated that a person of another race was promoted to a higher position instead of them.

The selection of survey questions was developed to invoke discussion around the most prevalent issues plaguing an information technology division in a healthcare organization. The sole research question inquired as to how these workers, age 50 years and over, viewed the treatment they received from organizational leaders. Respondents reported that management was both supportive and non-supportive. There were also times when management did not have the bandwidth to offer support to their employees, nor ensure they have adequate resources available to them. While this does not excuse the need for manager support, it identifies other issues within information technology that should be addressed.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the treatment of older workers by organizational leadership. From the study responses, four themes were identified:

- Peer and management support

- Training resource availability

- Time - New application/technology implementation

- Promotion/advancement opportunities

Data from the study respondents showed that employees received little to no support from management. Peers, on the other hand, were typically supportive in specific situations, such as training for new application implementation. The availability of training resources is typically left to the employee to obtain. Management does not provide ample training resources or direction on how to obtain training for their employees. Training resources are not viewed as priority for management. Providing ample time to implement new technology is a must. 75% of the respondents state that multiple projects are typically in the works simultaneously. Combined with insufficient staffing, and the constant change in technology, it is difficult to achieve sufficient time to fully vet the support needs of new technology before implementation.

The intent of this study was to answer one primary research question: How do older workers within the information technology field view the treatment they receive from organizational leaders? Through a series of questions related to the day-to-day operations within an information technology organization, the research participants

provided information which defined the nature of the organization. The varying

circumstances that positively and negatively affected the successfulness of both the

employees and the implementation of new technology were also provided. Employees

shared that during times of new application implementation planning, not enough time is

allowed for proper testing and vetting. This, in turn, caused opportunities for costly

mistakes. A lack of training and the time to become fully versed in the nuances of the

new application also provided opportunities for individuals to proceed to implementation

without proper instruction. Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions and recommendations

derived from the results of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Chapter 1 defined the purpose of this qualitative study as a means of investigating age discrimination in the information technology industry. As technology changes rapidly, employees are expected to learn new applications expeditiously. Older, seasoned workers are often seen as lacking the appropriate skills for learning and adapting to new applications. Younger employees, on the other hand, are viewed as possessing a higher level of adaptability to new applications, having been exposed to technology from an early age. This view of both groups can be a breeding ground for age discrimination in the workplace against older, seasoned workers.

The nature of this case study was to investigate how workers over the age of 50 think and feel about the treatment they receive in the workplace as compared to their younger peers. From training opportunities to promotions, older workers are sometimes excluded, regardless of their experience in the field of information technology. Investigating the *how* and *why* of the issue of age discrimination towards older workers was at the forefront of this study.

Interpretation of Findings

In 1969, Dr. Robert Butler defined age discrimination as a prejudiced behavior against aging by both middle-aged and younger individuals (Butler, 1969). Over the last five decades, the phenomenon of age discrimination has extended prejudicial behavior to individuals of all ages. Age discrimination is no longer exclusive to those of advanced age (Finkelstein & Truxillo, 2013). The perception of growing old or advanced aging has changed over the years, however. According to employment laws in the United States,

those individuals who are between the ages of 56 and 74 years are considered "older" (Gibaldi, 2013). Previous researchers revealed that due to healthcare advances, life expectancies have increased, and people are living longer, and subsequently, working well past retirement age (Morris et al., 2014). The diversity of today's workforce, in a perfect world, would be a parallel mesh of education, technical experience, behaviors, work ethics, and respect. Instead, the results of this study revealed that workers over 50 years old are undervalued for their work experience, both by younger peers and management. They are disrespected for their technical experience by management when promotions within the industry or project leadership opportunities are made available. Management defers to younger workers with little to no experience to fill project management roles instead of older, more experienced workers. These individuals are more educated than their peers, and in some cases, than those in leadership and management positions.

Iweins et al. (2012) stated that older employees are viewed as less productive, less efficient, and less interested in technology. Results from this research study show that they are able to:

- manage their time wisely,

- hold down fulltime jobs, working 45 or more hours per week,

- take care of their families, and

- serve in their communities and churches.

They have the ability to adapt to new technology as well as their younger peers. While the natural cycle of living and growing older assures that an individual's physical abilities and mental faculties will decline with age (Chou et al., 2013), this research showed individuals should not be ostracized. They should not be excluded from leadership roles because of their age or a perceived notion of declining mental faculties or abilities. They should be afforded the same promotion and training opportunities as any other employee in any age group.

According to Hays and Lou (2015), an individual's rate of job satisfaction increases with age. Employees are given an opportunity to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with any aspect of their jobs during annual job performance reviews. Job satisfaction among employees is a very important factor of employee retention. The results of this research study revealed that while the participants enjoy the work they do, they are dissatisfied with the:

- quality and quantity of training provided for new applications,

- time allotted for new application implementation, and

- support provided by management.

Generally, these employees were satisfied knowing that the tasks they perform in their jobs were an important part of patient care within the healthcare organization for which they worked. Organizations benefit from employee job satisfaction, as it promotes reduced absenteeism and less employment turnover (Besen et al., 2013).

Limitations of the Study

Chapter 1 identified a primary limitation to the study as a possibility of bias by the researcher, given the first-hand knowledge of observed questionable behaviors by organizational leaders towards older workers. The participants in the study were individuals age 50 years and older who have worked for 10 or more years in the information technology industry. The researcher was excluded from this participant pool, eliminating the possibility of bias. The credibility of the data obtained for the research study was deemed dependable, as each participant anonymously responded to the open-ended questions in the survey.

Initially, triangulation was to be used to validate the research; however, since only one method of data collection was used, triangulation could no longer be utilized. While the intent of this research study was to investigate age discrimination in information technology, the results revealed issues with racial and gender discrimination. Transferability in this research study can not only apply to age discrimination of other age others, but also to racial and gender discrimination in the workplace.

Recommendations

As described in Chapter 2, age discrimination is an issue in any industry. The information technology industry is a fast-paced, constantly changing industry, and at times, a breeding ground for contention, especially during high stress times (application releases). Employees are under pressure to meet oftentimes impossible deadlines. They are given tasks that require more time than is allocated and expected to perform their duties with limited resources. They are required to work long hours and endure

prejudicial attitudes and treatment from peers and management, all while maintaining the integrity of the organization.

Based on the results of the research study, the following topics were identified as additional workplace issues, and should be researched as well within the information technology industry and beyond:

- the lack of sufficient training opportunities for employees,

- management support for employees,

- racial discrimination in the workplace from management and peers,

- fair and ethical treatment of older workers, and

- providing job promotion opportunities to all employees, equitably and unprejudiced.

Likewise, although this study took place in the United States, it can be extended beyond U.S. borders.

According to the results of this research study, the current state of affairs in the information technology industry within a healthcare organization is one of mixed reviews. Some employees who participated in this study expressed total dissatisfaction with their current managers. As a result, they are unable to move into other departments within the division because of personal blackballing from managers. Promotions and project management opportunities are given to less-experienced, younger workers; thus, discounting the experience of older workers. Training opportunities are limited, and employees are expected to secure training on their own.

Management is generally unsupportive of not only providing training opportunities for new application support, but also for older workers in general. They lack empathy when dealing with older workers who are constantly passed over for promotions. They discount the level of incompatibility with younger workers as it relates to experience and education by promoting younger, inexperienced workers over their older peers. Management does not practice fair and ethical treatment of all employees. They disproportionately interact with employees from different age groups, which creates opportunities for age discrimination.

Implications

Age discrimination is alive and well in today's society, regardless of industry. Initially, the intended positive change target of this research study was to identify ways that organizations can ensure that age discrimination in their work environments cease. Leadership should no longer condone this prejudicial behavior towards any age class. Upon completion of analyzing the data obtained in the research, it was discovered that management in these organizations have a relatively unsupportive attitude and negative view of their employees over the age of 50 years. The prejudicial behaviors of these managers promoted contention and dissatisfaction among older workers within the organization. This type of organizational unrest among employees fosters an antagonistic work environment and detracts from the ultimate goals of the organization. The healthcare industry's primary focus is the protection and care of patients. To support this initiative, healthcare organizations require supportive information technology employees. These individual must be committed to providing excellent customer service, patient and

client empathy, and meet the goals of the organization. Information technology employees are an integral resource in the daily care of healthcare patients; therefore, their overall job satisfaction is necessary to ensure quality patient care.

Previous research performed on the issue of age discrimination revealed that the phenomenon affects all age groups and spans all work industries. Age discrimination has increased in societal significance; therefore, additional research should be conducted to produce a greater comprehension of this issue (Azulai, 2014). Positive social change occurs when organizations no longer foster work environments plagued by age discrimination. Training in workplace diversity is needed for all employees to ensure each understands the importance of cultural, personality, racial, and ethical differences. This training is necessary for all levels of employment within an organization, from the mailroom to the boardroom.

Sensitivity training could also be useful in eliminating age discrimination in the workplace. Being cognizant of another's differences, whether they are cultural or religious beliefs, or family dynamics, is important in producing work environments that promote positive interactions between employees. Training on work ethics would also help foster a positive work environment. This type of training encourages awareness of the organization's ethical practices. Ethical training benefits the individual as well as the organization. Benefits to the employee include:

- a boost in morale,

- promotes respect for moral principles, including honesty, equality, diversity, and individual rights,

- produces effective work in employees,

- fosters a more harmonious relationship with coworkers and peers, and

- encourages a respectful work environment.

Benefits of ethical training to organizations include:

- encourages abiding by the regulations of the organization,

- protects the integrity of the organization,

- ensures conflicts of interests are avoided, and

- produces a boost in employee morale, which leads to individual improvement in work ethics and productivity.

Conclusions

Age discrimination is an offense against any person or class of people based on their age, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1967 (Rothenberg & Gardner, 2011) prohibits this offensive behavior. This transgression is enforced and regulated by the Civil Rights Center agency of the Department of Labor. Age discrimination is in no way restricted to any one age group and can occur in any organization and any industry. The primary focus of this study was on age discrimination within the information technology industry in a healthcare organization.   The responses received from the series of questions presented to the research participants related to overall treatment from younger colleagues and management. They revealed that age discrimination has a presence in the information technology industry in a healthcare environment. The treatment experienced

by workers aged 50 years and older in the workplace who participated in this study

revealed that there are definitely issues that need to be addressed. Problems faced by

older workers identified in this study include issues of inequality when evaluating job

performance for promotion opportunities. Valuing technical and past work experience as

well as training opportunities when implementing new applications were identified as

well. From making training for new system applications available to offering job

promotion opportunities, seasoned workers over the age of 50 years and working in the

industry for a minimum of 10 years reported a lack of support from management. The

results further revealed that racial discrimination is also prevalent within this industry and

environment and should be explored in the future. Further research is needed to fully

investigate the phenomenon of age discrimination to provide ways to ensure

organizational leaders are compliant with government laws against discrimination

towards a protected class of employees or citizens.

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Appendix A: Online Survey Questions

The following open-ended questions will be made available for participants via an online survey:

1. When new technology (applications or programs) is introduced, how does management respond to providing training?

2. What resources are made available to you to become familiar with new applications in order to support them?

3. How supportive and/or helpful are your peers and coworkers when learning new applications?

4. How supportive and/or helpful is management when learning new applications?

5. How do you feel overall about the process of implementing new technology into your current workflow?

6. Do you feel that enough time is allowed for implementing new technology in your workplace? If not, how much time do you believe should be allowed for introducing and implementing new technology?

Appendix B: Study Results Topics

The following topics were identified from the study results:

1. Peer and management support

2. Training resource availability

3. Time – New Application/Technology Implementation

4. Promotion/Advancement Opportunities