Employability as a Function of Age and OCM Practices: A Cross-country Comparison

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Motivation of the study

• Lifelong employability is a major concern in light of increasingly ageing population

• 1st European Pillar for social rights (2017): The right to quality and inclusive training and learning as a means to “to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market” (p. 11)

• Critical role of organizations

• Yet, the moderating role of HR practices is underinvestigated.
Research aim and questions

- To understand how to support older workers’ employability.
  1) Is age negatively related to employability?
  2) Can Organizational Career Management (OCM) practices buffer this relationship?
  3) Does the country economic situation impact the age-employability relation?
Theoretical framework

Employability ➔ “an individual’s chance of a job on the internal and/or external labor market” (Forrier & Sels, 2003, p. 106)

Perceived employability ➔ The belief of being able to find a job – based on an implicit assessment of one’s skills, competencies, abilities.

• Based on Conservation of Resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 2002; Hobfoll et al., 2018), resource losses are salient.
• With aging there are inevitable losses (Baltes, 1997) and due to this people may tend to perceive themselves as less employable.
Literature review (2)

• OCM → subset of HRM practices targeted at development (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000)

• OCM practices are organizational-based support resources that increase employees’ employability (De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011; Jung & Takeuchi, 2017; Van den Broeck et al., 2014; Van Der Heijden, Boon, Van der Klink, & Meijs, 2009; Wittekind, Raeder, & Grote, 2010).

• They may buffer the losses due to aging, especially if we consider these developmental initiatives as initiatives that over time allow gaining and preserving resources.
Literature review (3)

Context provides constraints and opportunities (Johns, 2006; 2017), fosters conditions that make the losses either more or less salient.

• Unemployment rate at the country level is a relevant variable for employability as it reflects the external labor market conditions.

• High unemployment rate may increase the salience of one’s losses. E.g., it may reinforce the view that opportunities are scarce, competition fierce, ageism an actual bias, etc.
Method

• Data collected within 5C Network (Briscoe, Hall & Mayrhofer, 2012)

• Subsample of professionals and managers: N = 9119 from 30 countries 50/50 men and women, age M=40.5, SD=10.68.

• Web-based self-report questionnaire:
  - OCM practices -> checklist of 10 practices based on Baruch & Peiperl (2000) \( \alpha = .79 \)
  - Perceived employability -> 3-item scale (Janssens et al. 2003; Trevor, 2001) \( \alpha = .78 \)
  - Age -> continuous
  - Control variables -> Gender, Occupation, Hierarchical level, Education.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
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</table>
Key take-away messages

• Age seems to be a competitive disadvantage, in the perception of workers.

• The variance in the age->employability relation across countries is minimal, so it seems a universal finding.

• OCM practices can buffer this – although it is a small effect. This moderation also does not vary by country.

• More responsibility for employability resides with the organizations in a long-term investment (Selm & Van der Heijden, 2013).
Thank you

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