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RETIREMENT AGE: PREFERENCES OF EMPLOYEES REPRESENTING VARIOUS AGE GROUPS

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ABSTRACT. Prolonging professional activity constitutes one of the possible solutions for alleviating negative consequences of demographic changes/population ageing. Devising effective tools motivating employees to remain professionally active must take into account preferences associated with retirement age. The following constitute the objectives of the present paper: 1) identification of preferences in the retirement age for various age groups; 2) indication of potential consequences behind particular preferences; 3) formulation of guidelines for human resources management in organizations. In order to achieve these objectives, the results of the study encompassing 2076 respondents, specialists employed in various departments of Polish innovative companies, were analysed. On average, for each evaluated age group, the preferred retirement age was much lower than the statutory retirement age in Poland (65 years). In case of women in 45+ age groups, the average retirement age was observed to be higher than 60 years (the new statutory threshold).

JEL Classification: J14, J26,
M12, M54

Keywords: retirement age; referred retirement age; retirement; HRM.

Introduction

Aging of the population entails a number of consequences. Forecasts of unfavourable changes in the size of population, its structure with regards to economic groups and labour dependency ratio, are significant for Polish labour market and for the functioning of organisations. According to the Central Statistical Office (GUS), at the end of 2050 the size of Polish population will decrease to 33.951 thousand people, which makes up 88.2% of the population size as of 2013. It is also predicted that in 2050 potential labour resources will constitute 56% of the population (in 2013 63% of people were in the working age), and a significant difference will be observed for the population of non-productive age – the share of the elderly (retirement age) will be twice as high as the youth (pre-working age). The total dependency ratio of non-working population to working population will grow from 42 people in 2013 to 81 people in 2050 (GUS, 2014). Progressive demographic aging is measured by the following factors: demographic dependency ratio of the elderly and economic dependency ratio. On the basis of these two factors we can determine the share of elderly people in

population, and the share of working people to non-working population. According to (Guzikowski, 2012), the economic dependency ratio (showing the relationship between the total number of unemployed persons aged over 65 to the total number of working age population in the age of 15-64) will increase from 31% in 2010 to 99% in 2060. This means that consumption of the growing number of retirees will have to be financed by working population, whose size is shrinking. The increase in expenditures on pensions could be financed in three ways: by increasing taxes and pseudo-taxation for working population (employees and employers), extending the number of working hours weekly (e.g., from 8 to 10-12 hrs. per day), or increasing the supply of labour in the economy by raising the retirement age (Urbaniak, 1998, pp. 43-44; Guzikowski, 2012, p. 7 et seq.).

The above demographic forecasts for Poland resemble the situation in the majority of other member states of the European Union. It is expected that in 2060 the median age in the EU will be 45 for men and 47 for women (as compared to the median age in 2013 which was 40 for men and 43 for women respectively). The percentage of young people (aged 0-19) in 2060 will amount to approximately 20%. Major changes will occur in the older-age groups. The share of people aged 20-64 in the EU-28 population will fall down to 51% (from 61% in 2013). People aged 65 and above will constitute 28% of the population (18% in 2013), while the percentage of people aged 80+ will be about 12% (5% in 2013).

Most EU countries have taken measures to extend working lives and thus increase the availability of human resources involving, among others, the retirement age increase. A similar solution was introduced in Poland. The Act of 11 May 2012 raised the retirement age in Poland for women and men to 67 years of age. Men were supposed to reach this level in 2020, while women – in 2040. According to new regulations, which came into force on 1 October 2017, the retirement age will return to the state before 2012 and will be set to 60 in case of women and 65 in case of men. The first people to conclude their economic activity according to new regulations are women born in 1957 and men born in 1952. At the same time, provisions specifying the path to reaching retirement age amounting to 67 were repealed.

Therefore, a rational "step forward" to mitigate the effects of demographic changes made by the previous government has been revoked. A "step backwards", which is lowering the retirement age, even though enthusiastically received by part of the society, entails a number of negative consequences (suffice to mention the forecasts on pension benefits for those who choose to take the opportunity to retire when they reach the statutory retirement age).

Demographic and legislative changes concerning the retirement age and other areas of employees' and employers' functioning will entail the need to make changes in the functioning of organizations and this become a new challenge for managers and HR departments. For employers, demographic prognoses entail the need to prepare for quantitative and qualitative changes in human resources. Management of qualified and skilled workforce will be associated with higher costs due to shortages at the labour market. Searching young job applicants will be increasingly difficult because labour market will gradually become the market of the senior and elderly. It should also be taken into account that older employees have low professional and spatial mobility, which will potentially result in rigidity of the labour market. This will result in employers experiencing increasing problems with finding employees. It is also significant for employers that older employees are more likely to agree for periodic withdrawal from workforce, especially if it involves the possibility of obtaining various types of benefits (Kryńska, 2011, pp. 12-18).

Having considered the described phenomena, trends and processes, it seems reasonable to seek solutions that will ensure functioning of organizations by extending the activity of senior employees. The results of research on the functioning of senior employees in organizations, their needs, preferences, expectations, attitudes and decision-making processes relating to retirement gain importance today due to legal and demographic changes described above.

1. Literature review

As indicated by B. Szatur-Jaworska (2012, p. 22), presently, retirement has ceased to be a cultural norm and become a "biological" norm (it is seen as a natural, not convention-based, stage in human life). Review of the literature indicates that problems of old age pensions have been intensifying for the last thirty years. However, this has not led to a conclusive determination of retirement as such or creating a universal list of factors that determine making decisions about retirement. As researchers claim, the nature of retirement has been changing (Ekerdt, 2010). Traditional understanding of retirement as the point at which one finishes paid work is not sufficient to describe various forms of professional deactivation. More and more employees withdraw from employment gradually by limiting the number of hours of work or changing the scope of activities. Others retire but remain employed. There is also a group of retirees returning to labour market (for various reasons). Thus, pension should be seen as a process spread over time, with individualized dynamics and course (Wang & Schultz, 2010). The term "retirement" can mean both a moment to leave the organization and limiting one's commitment to work, receiving pension benefits and/or as a reflection of the status, which the person assigns to themselves.

Research on pensions points to four major theoretical conceptualizations of pension and retirement. The first group of studies focuses on decision-making processes, in the second group there are individual processes of adaptation to retirement. The other two research groups are: 3) retirement as a stage in career, and 4) pension as a component of human resource management (Wang & Schultz, 2010).

A decision to retire is traditionally seen as a consequence of personal and environmental factors: organizational (work and its attributes) and extra-organisational (e.g. family pressure and other socio-economic factors) (Wang & Schulz, 2010). Most frequently quoted classification of factors influencing retirement decisions is the division into "push" factors and "pull" factors (Bayl-Smith & Griffin, 2014). "Push" factors can be either personal or environmental. They form a kind of sense of pressure to withdraw from employment, e.g. because of deteriorating health (including its subjective evaluation) or age discrimination in the workplace. Pull factors appear outside the organization. Most often they build a positive incentive to retire. They can be, for instance, legal provisions for obtaining a pension. "Push" and "pull" factors reinforce each other and, acting together, they may increase the likelihood of a decision to retire.

The process of retirement consists of three phases (Feldman & Beehr, 2011). In the first phase people imagine themselves as retired. The second phase is based on an assessment of one's career, which has led to a decision of the time of retirement. In the third phase, it comes to pension plans, complete or partial withdrawal from employment. This model is based on psychological mechanisms that arise in connection with the decision about retirement. The phases described in the model can be extended in time. Even a relatively young employee can imagine activities they want to undertake when retired. These images are constructed on the basis of the observation of the environment, contacts with people who are already retired, or on the basis of media news. The plans at this stage cannot be regarded as realistic, as they relate to the period that is "psychologically" too distant (Feldman & Beehr, 2011). In older employees, these ideas become more realistic because they are based on their past experience and the assessment of their professional achievements.

In the second phase of the process, employees review their past experience which influences their decisions as to when to retire. A major role is played by the perception of retirement as the experience of loss ("end of career") or a new, positive stage of life ("a new beginning"). These beliefs will influence the decision of a possible early withdrawal from employment or extending it beyond the statutory retirement age. As Beehr (2014) indicated, a

popular explanation for behaviour at this stage is the theory of decision-making, since most models of retirement are derived from economic theories (rational choices based on financial estimates). However, these models are not satisfactory explanations of the reasons for continuing employment or connecting a status of a retiree with further employment. The combination of economic and psychological models (e.g. model of individual – environment compatibility) expands the spectrum of forecasting the results of the decision – making process of the employee.

The transition to the third phase of the process is signalled to the environment by taking formal information actions. The employee frequently informs their superiors and other people about the decision. In rational-economic approaches or the theory of the expected value, the motivation to retire is based on the assessment of financial and non-financial benefits/losses possible to obtain in case of retirement or further employment. In Polish conditions, the decision to retire is often based on a choice between pension benefit at a certain level, which is guaranteed, and functioning in precarious labour market conditions and relatively frequent legal changes defining the situation of future retirees.

2. Preferable age of retirement – a model of the study

The above model of retirement assumed a three-phase process in which the employee initially imagines themselves and their activity when retired, then assesses their career and prospective additional employment in terms of profits and losses. By comparing the marginal benefit of working with the marginal cost, the following decisions can be taken (Liwinski, 2008, p. 7):

1) Retirement:

- Discontinuation of professional activity,
- Change of professional activity (adapting to limitations related to combining paid job and obtaining a pension benefit),

2) Continuation of employment:

- Continuation of professional activity,
- Discontinuation of professional activity.

The process ends with a communication of the decision.

From the point of view of our research it was important that these steps may appear at different points of career, and their course may be specific for an individual because of a variety of individual circumstances.

Examining the preferred retirement age, we focus on the first phase of this process, especially as far as younger employees are concerned. When examining senior employees, we have to deal with more realistic preferences, which may be the result of a calculation, taken in connection with approaching the final stage of their career. This allows to formulate the following hypotheses:

H1. *There are statistically significant differences in the preferred retirement age in groups of employees at different ages.*

Chronological age is one of the strongest and most obvious predictors of a decision to retire (Wang & Shi, 2014, Fisher *et al.*, 2016). With age (higher chronological age), the awareness of an employee that the time to pursue a career is limited increases. At the same time, a high level of awareness that comes from experience, realistic assessment of one's position in the organization, widely understood climate and social norms regarding retirement age result in preferences in terms of retirement age becoming more predictive. Subjective assessment of health status, ageism level in the workplace, social expectations as to the moment you leave the organization and the assessment of "attractiveness" of a pension are factors that have the

greatest influence on retirement decisions (Wang & Shultz, 2010; Loretto & Vickerstaff, 2013; Perera *et al.*, 2015).

Based upon the published research results, it can be concluded that the older the employee, the more likely it is they will intend to retire as early as possible (Fisher *et al.*, 2016; Kim & Feldman, 2000). Available test results also indicate that the preferred and planned retirement age of older employees is higher than that of younger ones (Zappala *et al.*, 2008). On this basis we formulated the following hypotheses:

H2. *There is a statistically significant relationship between chronological age and the preferred age of retirement.*

H3. *The highest preferred retirement age is reported by the oldest employees.*

The second demographic variable taken into consideration in the study is sex. Polish women, in accordance with new rules applicable since October 2017, will be able to retire at the age of 60, i.e. 5 years earlier than men born in the same year. Apparently, this regulation does not give women a privileged position, because it results in a significant reduction in the pension level. According to the survey, for women a decision to retire is determined by family situation and material status (Fisher *et al.*, 2016). Cultural norm imposes responsibilities associated with both children and elderly parents on women. This affects periodic interruptions in pursuing a career and early professional deactivation. Results of research by Rice (Rice *et al.*, 2011) confirm a relationship between early retirement and sex. According to the data of Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) the average age of retiring women was 60.7 in 2015 (ZUS, 2016) which is higher than the law stipulating lowering the retirement age; the average age of retiring men – 62.8. The ambiguity of the results of research about the relationship between sex and age of retirement (Fisher *et al.*, 2016) determined the formulation of another hypothesis.

H4. *The preferred retirement age for women is higher than for men in relation to the new statutory retirement age (60/65).*

3. Research methodology

Preferred retirement age is a moment in the life cycle, defined in terms of chronological age, when an employee can retire. The preference to continue employment or retire constitutes important predictors of behaviour – retirement intentions and pension decisions (Barnes-Farrell, 2003). In our study, the preferred retirement age test was determined numerically by finishing a sentence: "If it was only up to me to decide, I would like to retire at the age of"

The study involved a purposefully selected group of respondents, economically active people working in large and medium-sized innovative Polish companies (57 companies) in various functional areas of the organization. Companies were based in southern, south-eastern and central Poland. The study involved a total of 2,076 people. Despite a relatively considerable number of respondents, the sample is not representative. Respondents came from companies defined as innovative which were listed on PAN's (Polish Academy of Sciences) list of innovative companies, or identified by means of a similar methodology¹. Therefore, sampling was purposive and stemmed from research premises the study was based on. The question regarding the preferred retirement age was not critical from the point of view of objectives set in the grant. As a consequence, the sample was not representative for this particular variable.

For the purpose of the analysis, 4 age groups were selected: up to 34 years of age, 35-44 year-olds, 45-54 year-olds, 55-65 year-olds. A total of 1894 people were qualified for the analysis. The analyses ignored the oldest age group (65+). In the first group (34 years of age), there were 674 people, 51.9% of women and 48.1% men. The average age was 29.5 (SD =

¹ Criteria based upon studies of the Institute of Economics of the Polish Academy of Sciences, 2013, http://www.inepan.waw.pl/aktualnosci.html?id_komunikat=389 [12.10.2014]

2.82). The average length of employment in this age group was 6.5 years and the average experience at the current position was 3.4 years. The second group (35-44) was represented by 538 people, 48.5% of women and 51.5% men. The average age was 38.9 (SD = 2.80). The average length of employment in this age group was 15.1 years (SD = 4.9), and the average experience at the current position was 6.9 years (SD = 4). Group III (45-54 years) encompassed 404 people; 47.5% of women, 52.5% of men. The average age in this group was 49.5 (SD = 3.0). The average length of employment was 26.7 years (SD = 6.4), and the average experience at the current position was 12.1 years (SD = 8.12). The oldest group of respondents (55-65 years) consisted of 278 people; 59% of men and 41% of women. The average age in this group was 58.3 years (SD = 2.7). The average length of employment was 35.2 years (SD = 6.4), and the average experience at the current position was 16 years (SD = 9.8).

Other characteristics of the research sample are presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1. The level of education and position in the various age groups.

	Group I (up to 34)	Group II (35-44)	Group III (45-54)	Group IV (55-65)	
	%	%	%	%	
<i>Education</i>	higher	85.8	86.2	69.1	57.2
	post-secondary	4.6	3.9	6.9	9.0
	secondary	7.4	8.4	21.0	28.4
	vocational	2.2	1.5	3.0	5.4
<i>Position</i>	operational	33.1	15.1	25.8	26.6
	specialist	57.0	57.0	47.8	50.7
	managerial	9.9	27.9	26.4	22.7

Source: own study.

Through the quantitative part of the research, the focus was on data collecting, processing, and analysis. A nine-level Likert scale was used to measure the perceptions and assessments of the respondents, on the dependent variable (transitional crisis), as well as the independent variables (heritage of socialism, geopolitics, nomenclature authorities, deficit of institutional changes, and neoliberal ideology), in a survey that was applied during the research. In measuring the dependent variable (transitional crisis), the scale marks were set from the lowest (1) to the highest (5). Regarding the independent variables, the negative impact was measured from the minimum negative (1) to the maximum (5) on the dependent variable. The survey included filling out 500 questionnaires for each country (Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina), which made a total of 1,500 respondents. Collected data for this study were processed by SPSS software. According to the purpose defined in the hypothesis of work, descriptive statistics were used for the data analysis, correlation analysis, and multi-correlation. The multiple linear regression model was applied after (the method of least square), as well as hierarchical multiple regression model.

4. Results

The preferred retirement age differed between age groups of employees. In the youngest group (up to 34), the largest percentage of respondents (42.3%) pointed at the age of 60 as the preferred age to retire. 19.6% would like to retire at the age of 55, and 17.2% at the age of 50. 8.5% of the respondents declared the age of 65 as the preferred retirement age, and 2.2% – the age of 67. Among the employees qualified to the second group (35-44), almost 47% would like

to retire at the age of 60. 16% of respondents would like to retire earlier, at the age of 55, and 9% at the age of 50. Working until the age of 65 is declared by 12.6% of respondents in this age group. 4.3% of respondents pointed to the age of 67 as the preferred retirement age, and 4% 70 years of age. Respondents from group III (45-54 years) mostly prefer the age of 60 as retirement age (42% of responses). 15% of respondents indicated the age of 55, 19% the age of 65 and 6% would prefer the retirement age of 67 and 70 years. Respondents from the oldest age group (55-65) in 35% of cases pointed to 60 years of age as the preferred retirement. Compared to previous groups, the percentage of respondents declaring the age of 65 and 67 as the age of retirement increased. There were 25% of indications for 65 and 11% for 67. 11.5% of the respondents pointed to 70 years of age as the preferred retirement age.

The average preferred age of retirement for different age groups is presented in *Table 2*.

Table 2. The average preferred age of retirement in the examined groups of employees

	Group I (up to 34)	Group II (35-44)	Group III (45-54)	Group IV (55-65)
<i>M</i>	58	60	62	63
<i>SD</i>	5.6	5.2	5	5.3
<i>Min</i>	48	50	50	50
<i>Max</i>	85	90	90	80

Source: own study.

For a comparison of the averages, one-way ANOVA test was used in a scheme for independent groups (ANOVA)². The analysis showed a significant effect of the variable “preferred retirement age” $F(3.1894) = 68.482$, $p < 0.001$. Differences in average preferred age of retirement for specific groups of respondents are significantly different for $p < 0.001$.

To establish the relationship between chronological age and the preferred age of retirement, Pearson correlation coefficient r was used. For the entire sample this ratio was statistically significant ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$), which leads to the conclusion that there is a relationship between the chronological age and the preferred age of retirement. The same analysis performed for different age groups showed a statistically significant relationship between chronological age and the preferred age of retirement only in two out of four research groups. For group III (45-54) we found a weak but statistically significant relationship between the studied variables ($r = 0.03$, $p < 0.05$). In the oldest group (55-65), Pearson’s r amounted to 0.133, $p < 0.05$. The preferred retirement age was different for men and women in different age groups of employees. The results are presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3. The average preferred retirement age of men and women in the examined age groups

	Group I (up to 34)		Group II (35-44)		Group III (45-54)		Group IV (55-65)	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
<i>M</i>	57.7	58.9	58.5	60.9	60.2	62.7	61.9	63.9
<i>SD</i>	5.035	6.132	4.502	5.556	4.516	5.054	4.929	5.091
<i>Min</i>	50	48	50	50	50	50	50	50
<i>Max</i>	80	85	70	90	75	90	80	80
<i>N</i>	337	310	246	268	186	204	113	156

Source: own study.

² To adjust the data requirements to ANOVA, random sampling was used to align the size of groups.

The biggest difference between the mean values of the preferred retirement age between men and women was found for employees aged 45-54. This difference was 2.5 years. The smallest difference was observed in the preferences reported by women and men in the youngest age group (up to 34) it amounted to 1.2 years. It is worth noting that in none of men's age groups the preferred average retirement age has not reached the new statutory threshold for men, i.e. 65. The average for women indicates that women from the age group 45-54 ($M = 60.2$) and women aged 55-65 ($M = 61.9$) would like to work longer than the new statutory retirement age.

In each case a comparison of the average for men and women in each age group using t-test for independent samples showed a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in the average preferred retirement age specified by women and men.

The choices of the preferred retirement age are summarized in *Table 4* presenting detailed results for men and women in each age group.

Table 4. The preferred age of retirement-the differences between men and women in different age groups

PRE	Group I (up to 34)		Group II (35-44)		Group III (45-54)		Group IV (55-65)	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
50	19.0 %	15.5%	10.6%	9.0%	2.2%	2.0%	1.8%	1.3%
55	19.3%	21.0%	24.8%	8.2%	22.6%	7.8%	11.5%	4.5%
60	48.7%	31.7%	49.2%	48.1%	48.9%	38.7%	43.4%	30.3%
65	6.5%	11.3%	8.1%	17.5%	10.2%	28.4%	17.7%	31.6%
70	1.2%	2.3%	2.0%	6.0%	4.8%	6.9%	10.6%	11.6%
N	337	310	246	268	186	204	113	156

Source: own study.

The most frequent choice for women in each age group was the age of 60 (from 48.7% of respondents in the youngest group of respondents to 43.4% of respondents in the oldest group). 48% of the surveyed men aged 35-44, almost 39% of men aged 45-54 years, about 30% of respondents in the age group 55-65 and 31.7% of men in the youngest group would like to retire at the age of 60. In each age group, regardless of sex, the number of indications of retirement age above 60 years of age increased with chronological age.

5. Discussion

The aim of the study was to identify preferences for retirement age among employees in different age groups. The average preferred retirement age in each age group differed significantly and ranged from 58 in the group of surveyed employees aged under 34, up to 63 in the oldest group of respondents (aged 55-65). Thus, the first hypothesis was confirmed. These results are consistent with the logics of the model presented by Beehr (2014). Preferences of the youngest employees are lower than the "new" retirement age (60/65). This is due to a large psychological distance of their retirement. Low average preferred retirement age may also be a reflection of a small interest in their future pension, which is also observed in a report by Czapiński and Góra (2016). The results of their study indicate that 40% of respondents do not think about their future pension at all. In this group there were 52% of respondents up to 34 years of age.

The results of the study allowed to confirm the assumptions stipulated in the two following hypotheses. The preferred age of retirement is related to chronological age. This applies to older groups of employees. The higher the chronological age, the preference for retirement has a higher predictive value. Importantly, this can be a reference point for further

actions in the field of HRM (*Human Resource Management*). The highest preferred retirement age was reported by the oldest respondents. This is most likely the result of a realistic assessment of both the past and the future. As Czapiński and Góra claim: "... among people who actually think about their future pension, i.e. 14.8% of respondents, a vast majority begin thinking about their retirement at the age of 50+ ..." (2016, p. 8). It can therefore be concluded that the resulting average of the preferred retirement age reflects the results of the process of rational decision-making.

Considering the regulations coming into force in October 2017, which differentiate the retirement age for men and women (60 and 65), it is interesting how the preferences reported by respondents in groups distinguished by sex are shaped. Men, regardless of their chronological age, indicate lower preferred retirement age than that provided by law. The highest percentage of men in each age group indicates the age of 60 as their preferred retirement age. With increasing chronological age, the percentage of men who would like to retire at the age of 65 and 70 increases. Based on the average value, it can be said that women from the two oldest age groups prefer higher retirement age than the one stipulated in new regulations. Having analysed the choices made by women in detail, it should be emphasized that the number of women who indicated 65 years of age as their preferred retirement age is highest in the youngest group (22 respondents). This result is at a comparable level in other age groups (20 choices in 35-44 group, 19 indications in 45-54 group, 20 indications in 55-65 group)³. Conclusively, the fourth hypothesis cannot be clearly confirmed.

Results of the present study ought to be approached with caution. The sample was not representative, thus results cannot be considered as representing the whole population. In addition, it ought to be noted that restrictions in the interpretation of research results emerge because contextual factors such as health status, familial situation, awareness of the way the retirement system operates and consequences it entails for respondents, and the level of professional burnout, were not taken into consideration. It would be interesting to establish how the awareness of solutions in social security impacts individual preferences with regards to the time of becoming retired.

The presented results of the study can constitute a contribution to the reflection on the activities of human resource management in relation to employees, whose majority express their willingness for an early retirement. From the point of view of HRM, the expected shortages in the labour market (resulting from increasingly low numbers of school graduates entering the labour market, as well as from the provisions of lowering the retirement age) should encourage to seek solutions for extending employees' activity beyond the retirement age. Unfortunately, the activity of employers in finding and implementing solutions that enable and facilitate the functioning of older employees is very low (Van Dalen *et al.*, 2009). HRM decisions are dominated by stereotypical perception of senior employees (Karpinska *et al.*, 2013). This applies to both human resource planning, recruitment, selection, performance evaluation, training, job space design and practices relating to retirement (Avolio & Barrett, 1987, pp. 56-63; Hirschfeld & Thomas, 2011, pp. 661-692). Most of research results indicate that attitudes and practices of employers are motivated by negative stereotypes, which proves the existence of firmly entrenched model of the deficit of aging (Duncan *et al.*, 2000). As Kanfer and Ackerman (2004) indicated the perception of aging as always bound with the decline, particularly in the field of cognitive and intellectual skills, is a far-reaching simplification and may be misleading. High diversity of this process and its effects on behaviour in organizational situations is indicated by Taneva (Taneva *et al.*, 2014). Stereotypical perceptions of older

³ Alike the average, the percentages are not always a correct illustration of test results. This is especially true in comparing the groups of different size. Paradoxically, basing the analysis on percentages could generate a conclusion about progressive increase of the age of 65 as a preferred retirement age.

employees reduce their involvement in pro-development activities (Armstrong-Stassen & Templer, 2005). Employees exposed to negative stereotypical information express stronger desire to leave the organization/retire than those who operate in an environment providing neutral or positive information about them (Gaillard & Desmette, 2010, pp. 86-98).

In the literature one can find a number of tips for HRM practices aimed at prolonging the working lives of senior employees. However, as Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser (2011) notice, there is no answer which practices are most effective in retaining such employees. The authors suggest that HRM practices should be differentiated within the organization. The perception of HRM practices as dedicated to meeting the needs of senior employees, gives this group of employees a sense of privileged position, which translates into a sense of obligation to remain in the organization. On the basis of extensive literature review, Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser (2011) identified two types of practices in the field of human resource management that are particularly relevant to the needs and preferences of older people. The first group refers to tasks. Senior employees should be given difficult and stimulating tasks and have the possibility to enter new roles (e.g. mentoring, which can satisfy the need of generativity) or be able to perform less demanding tasks if it is required or necessary. The second group concerns the evaluation of performance, which should be based on age-neutral criteria and always involve a constructive feedback.

Kooij *et al.* (2014) present four groups of practices that can be effective in influencing employees to remain employed beyond the retirement age. Based on the theory of life course, the authors postulate the use of bundles of practices within which they should find a solution taking changes in the life cycle into account. The first "bundle" of practices is determined by the authors as development practices, i.e. those that allow the employee to obtain a higher level of functioning (e.g. training). The second group is the practice of "maintenance", aimed at maintaining the level of functioning of an employee at a constant level for new challenges (e.g. changing the physical environment to a more ergonomic or allowing flexible working time). The third group constitutes practices of utilisation – these are measures undertaken to restore the employee to be operational when the current job requirements appear to be excessive (e.g. shifting to a parallel position in the organizational hierarchy within which the employee can use their experience). The last group of HR practices is the practice of adjustment (accommodation). Their use is associated with a reduction of requirements, often degradation to a less demanding position, when the gap between the requirements for a position and widely understood employee's capabilities is too large to bridge. The value of the proposal made by Kooij *et al.* (2013) results from being dedicated not only to senior employees. Many of these can be successfully used for younger employees as well.

Conclusion

The objective of the present study was to identify preferences of age-diversified employees regarding retirement age. Most employees want to work until a maximum of 60 years of age. While the law coming into force will enable this, the problem of the amount of pension for people who will benefit from this opportunity emerges. Obviously, one can assume that the amount of pension will be discouraging to withdraw from labour market, but one has to take into account the low propensity of employers to employ people in their senior age. There is also no knowledge (and perhaps the will) to develop different action programs in the field of HRM dedicated to employees of all ages. This creates a very interesting and promising research perspective.

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