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Department of Human Resources and Organizational Behavior

Does age matter when hiring? Investigating age discrimination in recruitment and selection processes in organizations in Portugal

Maria Madalena Pereira Vinha

Master in Human Resources Management and Organizational Consulting

Supervisor:

PhD Inês Carneiro e Sousa, Invited Assistant Professor at the Department of Human Resources and Organizational Behavior, Integrated Researcher at CIES - ISCTE

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À minha avó Antónia, cuja presença sinto a cada passo da minha vida.

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Resumo

O envelhecimento da população portuguesa, aliada ao aumento da idade legal da reforma, resulta no aumento de uma força de trabalho etariamente diversificada.

Este estudo investigou a discriminação com base na idade nos processos de recrutamento e seleção (R&S) em Portugal, com foco na triagem curricular. Quisemos também entender se a visão estereotipada que os recrutadores têm dos candidatos mais novos e mais velhos impacta a decisão final durante os processos de R&S, e se a perspectiva dos recrutadores sobre o processo de R&S está alinhada com a prática implementada pela organização, nomeadamente sobre a importância da idade dos candidatos na decisão de recrutamento.

Os dados foram recolhidos através de 22 entrevistas semiestruturadas com recrutadores, e de um exercício com *curricula vitae* (CVs) que simulou a fase de triagem curricular de um processo de R&S.

Os principais resultados indicam que os recrutadores perspetivam os trabalhadores mais velhos de forma mais positiva que os trabalhadores mais jovens, ainda que isso não se reflita na contratação dos primeiros. Os resultados também mostram que a idade do candidato é um fator importante na prática de R&S a nível organizacional.

Estes resultados sugerem que as organizações devem adotar modelos de CV sem referência à idade, enfatizando as competências desenvolvidas ao longo das suas carreiras profissionais. É, também, importante que os recrutadores recebam formação para conduzir processos de R&S sensíveis à questão etária, especialmente durante a triagem curricular.

Palavras-chave: Discriminação com base na idade; Idadismo; Trabalhador mais velho; Trabalhador mais novo; Processo de R&S; Análise de CVs

JEL Classification System: M14 – Diversity, Social responsibility; O15 – Human Resources, Human Development

Abstract

The aging of the Portuguese population, coupled with the increase in the legal retirement age, has resulted in an increasingly diverse labor force in terms of age.

This study investigated age discrimination in R&S processes in Portugal, with a focus on CV screening. We also wanted to understand whether the stereotypical view that recruiters have of younger and older candidates impacts the final decision during R&S processes and whether the recruiters' perspective on the R&S process is aligned with the practice implemented by the organization, namely on the importance of the candidate's age in the recruitment decision.

Data was collected through 22 semi-structured interviews with recruiters, and an exercise with CVs, which simulated the CV screening phase of an R&S process.

The main results indicate that recruiters view older workers more positively than younger workers, although this is not reflected in the hiring of the former. The results also show that the candidate's age is an important factor in the R&S practice at an organizational level.

These findings suggest that organizations should adopt a CV template without reference to chronological age, emphasizing the skills developed throughout their professional careers. Also, recruiters should be trained on how to conduct age-sensitive R&S processes, especially in the CV screening phase.

Keywords: Age discrimination; Ageism; Older worker; Younger worker; R&S process; CV analysis

JEL Classification System: M14 – Diversity, Social responsibility; O15 – Human Resources, Human Development

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Introduction

Population aging is a worldwide phenomenon (Kanasi et al., 2016). The global population had 703 million people aged 65 or over in 2019. According to the United Nations (2019) this number is projected to double to 1.5 billion by 2050. Portugal is also experiencing an aging demographic scenario, being the second country in the European Union (EU), behind Italy, with the highest percentage of elderly people (Costa et al., 2021). If, on the one hand, the aging of the Portuguese population results in the aging of the workforce (Osório De Barros, 2016), migratory movements accentuate this scenario, influencing the age diversity of the workforce (Moreira, 2020).

In such a globalized labor market, demographic changes in the workforce have implications for organizations and the way they manage the diversity of their Human Resources (HR), not only because these resources are a source of productivity, but also because a diverse workforce is capable of enriching organizations (Luis et al., 2021). In addition, it is important to raise awareness and promote inclusion in the workplace, as well as the elimination of discriminatory practices at the HR level in organizations (Toledo Alarcón, 2020). This thesis seeks to study, in particular, the R&S process and how this widespread HR practice is a source of discrimination in organizations.

Portugal's sociodemographic landscape has transformed due to improvements in healthcare, living conditions, and survival probabilities (Moreira, 2020), as well as declining birth rates, coupled with declining mortality rates, and rising average life expectancy (Rodrigues et al., 2020). The 2021 census data (INE, 2021) reveal a dual demographic aging trend, characterized by a simultaneous decline in youngsters and an increase in elders.

In 2021, 79 683 babies were born in Portugal, representing a decrease of 5,9% compared to 2020 (Pordata, 2023b). Portuguese women had low fertility rates with an average of 1,35 children per woman (Pordata, 2023g). The Portuguese population's life expectancy at birth rose by 1,18 years over the last decade, with men's life expectancy increasing by 1,38 years and women's by 0,92 years. Life expectancy reached 81,0 years in 2021, with women living up to 83,5 years and men living up to 78,1 years (Pordata, 2023f).

We can add that in 2021, the aging index in Portugal was 178.4%, meaning there were 178,4 elderly people per 100 young individuals (Pordata, 2023c). Also, in 2021 there were 2.423.639 people 65 years or older, 413.575 more when compared with the 2011 census data (Pordata, 2023a). According to predictions from the European Commission, around half of the Portuguese population will be 55 years or older in 2050 (European Commission, 2020).

If birth rates and fertility were decisive factors for demographic aging, emigration worsened this scenario (Moreira, 2020). According to the available data, the trend of declining emigration that had been ongoing since 2013 decelerated in 2019. Nevertheless, approximately 80,000 individuals were estimated to have emigrated (Pires et al., 2022). In 2021, around 60,000 people emigrated. Emigration witnessed a decrease of roughly 44% in the period between 2019 and 2020 due to the pandemic and Brexit. Lockdown policies represented obstacles to mobility and resulted in a sharp slowdown of international migrations. In 2021, migrations increased by approximately 33% when compared to 2020. They have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels but are seeing a growing trend (Pires et al., 2022).

When analyzing the age structure of Portuguese migratory flows, it becomes evident that they are predominantly composed of young individuals in active working years - 15 to 34 years (Pordata, 2023e).

The aging population and the net migration rate naturally result in an aging workforce. The 2021 census revealed that individuals between the ages of 55 and 64 represented 18.9% of the total active Portuguese population, compared to 12.2% according to the 2011 census data (Pordata, 2023d). When it comes to the working population aged between 25 and 44 years old, the 2021 census evidenced that they represented 44.1% of the Portuguese working population, compared with 53.8% in 2011 (Pordata, 2023d). Therefore, over the last decade, the number of people aged between 55 and 64 years old in the labor market has increased significantly and the number of people aged between 25 and 44 years old has decreased.

In 2021, the population renewal index was 75.5% (INE, 2023), indicating a shortage of young workers (20 to 29 years old) joining the workforce to replace older workers (55 to 64 years old). This means that there are not enough young people entering the job market – aged 20 to 29 –, to replace those who are leaving due to retirement (INE, 2023).

As the legal retirement age in Portugal is indexed to average life expectancy, the legal retirement age has been advancing and, therefore, the workforce continues to age (Osório De Barros, 2016). In 2024 the legal retirement age is 66 years and 4 months, and forecasts for 2025 indicate that the legal retirement age will be 66 years and 7 months (Ferreira, 2024). Because of the progressive rise in retirement age, Portuguese workers are facing progressively longer careers (Cabral & Ferreira, 2013). Due to the increase in life expectancy of the Portuguese population, the Portuguese economy began to face challenges in ensuring retirement for a growing number of individuals over longer periods and it also grappled with the task of ensuring there would be sufficient funds to cover both current and future pensions (Mendes, 2016).

The amount of statutory pension, calculated per the law, is subject to a sustainability factor related to the evolution of average life expectancy, aiming to adapt the pension system to demographic and economic changes and assuring its viability. The sustainability factor is a pension cut that penalizes early retirement and, in 2021, this figure was 15,54%, which represented a cut of 15,54% in the value of the pension of those who wanted to retire before the legal age, aiming to discourage early retirement (Caixa Geral de Depósitos, 2021).

An aging workforce, combined with migratory movements and the rise of the legal retirement age, forces the coexistence of both older and younger workers in the same workplace, with people of different ages working side by side (Kunze & Menges, 2017). If, on the one hand, the coexistence of different generations in the same workplace enriches organizations, it can trigger tensions and prejudices based on age, with workers being seen as “too old” or “too young” to perform certain jobs (Patient et al., 2024). Therefore, age diversity in the workplace can result in stereotypes and age discrimination - or ageism (Truxillo et al., 2015).

Ageism occurs when people are classified based on their age in ways that lead to prejudice harm, or disadvantages and is the result of systems that indirectly lead to unequal outcomes for both younger and older workers (Batinovic et al., 2023). Although solutions to combat such discrimination may not be straightforward, they involve strategic HR management, including establishing and developing best practices capable of breaking down age barriers (Ramos, 2015).

Given the growing proportion of older workers, understanding the effect of age discrimination has become increasingly important (Bayl-Smith & Griffin, 2014). According to the authors, workplace age discrimination is connected to decreased well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Furthermore, an employee's sense of belonging and their energy and perseverance can be negatively impacted by age discrimination (Macdonald & Levy, 2016).

Although the literature in the field of Social Psychology indicates that most of the research into ageism is unidirectional, focusing on how older workers are perceived (Patient et al., 2024), ageism against younger workers is also a reality in today's workplaces (Blackham, 2019). However, so far this issue has not been adequately explored (de la Fuente-Núñez et al., 2021).

If on the one hand, employers encourage older workers to leave the labor market, either because they receive fewer job offers compared to their younger colleagues, because of reduced training opportunities, or because they are offered salaries that are unsuited to their positions and experience (Fula et al., 2012), on the other hand, they submit younger workers to unfavorable conditions (López, 2021), unstable and precarious jobs, as well as unpaid

internships (de la Fuente-Núñez et al., 2021). Studies indicate that discriminating against younger workers due to their age negatively impacts their commitment to organizations (e.g., Snape & Redman, 2003). Also, it is important to promote organizational diversity and fair working environments so that all employees can fulfill their potential, regardless of age (Ramos, 2015).

Existing research on ageism in organizations primarily concentrates on negative attitudes toward older workers and their disadvantages in job applications (Fasbender & Wang, 2017) because despite anti-discrimination laws, older job applicants still face lower job prospects, even with similar competencies (Deros & Decoster, 2017). Nonetheless, there is still much to study and there are critical gaps in the existing knowledge of age stereotypes and ageism in organizations (Beier et al., 2022). Few researchers have delved into age biases in R&S processes (Fasbender & Wang, 2017). Due to mixed findings in the literature on ageism, only a limited number of studies have analyzed the reasons and characteristics of hiring discrimination from the recruiter's perspective (e.g., Deros & Decoster, 2017). Thus, further investigation is required to understand in what ways shared negative attitudes within the organization influence decisions related to both older and younger workers' employment, as well as to what extent can decision-makers moderate these effects (e.g., Fasbender & Wang, 2017).

Whilst age discrimination has been extensively examined through quantitative research (Harris et al., 2018), empirical studies should employ comprehensive measures, including qualitative measures and workplace observations, to better understand the intricacies of this social problem (Macdonald & Levy, 2016). A study dedicated to understanding age discrimination against older and younger workers is necessary since studies of ageism in organizations have rarely extended to discrimination against younger employees (Blackham, 2019), and most studies only focused on ageism towards older or younger workers, but rarely on both simultaneously.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to understand if there is age discrimination during the R&S processes in organizations in Portugal. More specifically, we want to understand if the stereotypical view, positive or negative, that recruiters have on both older and younger candidates, has an influence on recruiters' decision-making during an R&S process. Finally, this thesis also aims to understand whether recruiters' perspectives on the R&S processes, particularly on the importance of the candidate's age in the final decision of the R&S process, are aligned with the practices implemented by the organization in this area. We want to understand whether age discrimination exists on the side of recruiters, on the side of organizations, or both.

As far as the organization of the thesis is concerned, the literature review will first be presented, focusing on the concepts of R&S, the concept of ageism and its explanation in the light of the tripartite model of attitudes, and how ageist stereotypes towards younger and older workers are present in the workplace. The method, results, and discussion will follow. Finally, the limitations encountered during this study, the contributions of the research, and proposals for future studies will be identified.

Chapter I - Literature Review

1.1. The R&S processes

1.1.1. Defining concepts: Recruitment vs. Selection

The success of an organization is closely linked to the individuals it hires (Breaugh, 2013). Effective usage of R&S methods for the company can save costs and time involved in the hiring process, making them crucial for HR management (Raupelienė & Zielinska-Chmielewska, 2020). In today's hyper-competitive business environments, it is critical to hire the right people, with the right skills, right knowledge, and right attributes, at the right time (Chungyalpa, 2016).

R&S concepts are often consolidated almost as one term, but some differences exist between them (Searle, 2009). Therefore, R&S should be seen as two phases of the same process: bringing people into the organization. There are financial implications associated with an R&S process when it is not effective. It is possible to spend a substantial amount on R&S and see minimal return, resulting in higher costs (Brown, 2011).

Recruitment, on the one hand, is defined as a process of seeking and attracting suitable candidates from within the organization or from outside the organization for job vacancies that exist (Karim & Latif, 2021). Advertisements, employee referrals, employment agencies, internal job postings, walk-ins, campus visits, and job fairs are traditional external recruitment methods (Acikgoz, 2019). On the other hand, selection is the process that leads to the employer's choice and decision regarding which candidate is the most suitable applicant to fill the relevant job vacancy (Ferreira, 2015). "Suitable candidates" mean those who possess the required characteristics that will enable them to perform satisfactorily in the specific job (Rothmann & Cooper, 2008). Applicants also differ regarding their abilities, skills, experience, age, and academic background, and that is why the objective of selection is to assess which applicant will best fit the specific job (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2010).

An R&S process can start with the so-called initial screening of candidates, which consists of identifying the profiles of candidates who may be of interest (Zwardoń-Kuchciak & Lipińska-Grobelny, 2020). At this stage, HR managers in Portugal in public or private firms use, for example, CV analysis as a selection method, which allows them to narrow down the candidates, separating them into two groups: those who meet the requirements and those who do not (Proença & de Oliveira, 2009). Some studies say that the CV is one of the most used methods in selection processes and allows candidates who do not meet certain requirements to be rejected *ab initio* (e.g., Rego et al., 2008).

1.1.2. Objectivity and subjectivity in R&S processes

Although R&S processes are based on objective requirements on the part of organizations, they are often subject to subjective evaluation criteria on the part of the recruiters (Richardson et al., 2012a). There is a range of biases that can be observed in R&S processes (e.g., halo effect, confirmation biases, etc.) and are more noticeable when it comes to explicit characteristics (e.g., gender). Still, biases exist regarding implicit characteristics like age, making age discrimination (or ageism) during the R&S processes intriguing to research (Derous & Decoster, 2017). So, we can assume that the R&S processes can be subject to conscious and unconscious biases, with some studies suggesting that these biases can condition the recruiter's perspective of the applicant and, more specifically, that the candidate's age can affect the recruiter's decision (e.g., Batinovic et al., 2023).

According to data collected by the Eurobarometer survey on discrimination in Europe, ageism is one of the most frequent forms of discrimination, often hidden and indirect, making it difficult to eliminate (Centeno, 2007). Even though anti-discrimination legislation, it is not possible to guarantee the elimination of biases during R&S processes, with some studies showing that ageism persists at alarming levels during the hiring processes (e.g., Drydakis et al., 2017).

1.2. Ageism during the R&S processes

Age, like race, is a social category that is easily identifiable due to its association with individuals' physical traits and characteristics (Patient et al., 2024).

The initial researcher who introduced the concept of "ageism" described it as the systematic stereotyping and discrimination against older individuals (Butler, 1987). Nowadays, this concept is more broadly conceptualized and refers to age-related discrimination against any age group, including bias and unfairness toward employees on the grounds of being too old or too young (e.g. Dong et al., 2023). We can therefore say that the term "ageism" is not new, but it has become more visible as the population ages, especially in developed Western countries (Snape & Redman, 2003a). Ageism can limit opportunities and job satisfaction, reducing well-being and organizational commitment for employees of all ages, while also impacting organizational performance and social security sustainability (Lössbroek et al., 2021). With the demographic and workforce aging, ageism has been reflected in the work context (Cebola et al., 2021) and remains one of the most socially accepted forms of discrimination in the workplace (Bayl-Smith & Griffin, 2014).

When talking about ageism, specifying “who is and who is not an older worker remains elusive” (Pitt-Catsouphes & Smyer, 2006, p. 2). There remains no established chronological age at which it is possible to define who is an older worker, and what we are left is an age range for older workers that extends from as low as 40 years old through to statutory retirement ages of between 65 and 70 years old (Mccarthy et al., 2014). As with the term “older worker”, there is also no consensus on who is a “younger worker”, with some studies considering that a younger worker is someone aged up to 30 (e.g., Blackham, 2019), and other studies consider a younger worker to be someone aged up to 25 (e.g., Claes & Van de ven, 2008). Although it is understood that in the workplace it is the specific age that designates who is a younger worker and who is an older worker, the specific age used to delineate a category based on age may be less important than other factors, such as the physical manifestations of aging (Kite et al., 2005).

In the literature, ageism can be interpreted according to the tripartite model of attitudes. The tripartite model of attitudes is a latent variable model that assumes that the latent variable (i.e., a person’s attitude) is based on three main dimensions – cognitive (stereotypes), affective (prejudices), and behavioral (discrimination) (Kaiser & Wilson, 2019). Ageism can operate consciously or unconsciously and at three different levels - micro-level (individual), meso-level (social networks), and macro-level (organizational and institutional) (Marques et al., 2020). We are interested in studying ageism explicitly and at a macro level for this research.

Acquired at an early age, stereotypes about aging are part of the cognitive dimension and become activated when aged individuals’ specificities are disregarded (Araújo et al., 2023). Stereotypes generate labels that separate people into different categories, activating beliefs that belittle individuals and generating negative consequences (Araújo et al., 2023). An example of the cognitive component of ageism is when someone believes that older workers are resistant to change (e.g., Patient et al., 2024). The next chapter will explore positive and negative stereotypes regarding both older and younger workers.

The affective dimension, which includes prejudices, pertains to the positive or negative emotions triggered by cognitive evaluations, such as pleasant or unpleasant, that individuals might encounter at a specific time (Wyer et al., 1999), for example, when a recruiter feels sorry for older applicants because they consider them frail (Araújo et al., 2023). Past research indicates that emotions are linked to the social identity that individuals identify with (e.g., Mackie & Smith, 2017).

While stereotypes and prejudices mainly reflect internal categorization reactions, discrimination is the main behavioral component that puts into action thoughts and prejudices against third parties (Fasbender, 2016) that place them in unfavorable social positions solely

because of their age (Araújo et al., 2023). An example of the behavioral dimension is when a recruiter avoids selecting an older candidate or a younger candidate.

At an organizational level, and for the actors of ageism – people who hold ageist beliefs – in positions of power, biases can be expressed through HR management practices and decisions and can have an impact on individuals in terms of R&S processes and dismissals (Cappelli & Novelli, 2013). Much of the research that had been conducted into age discrimination during R&S processes has shown that there is evidence of ageism in both hypothetical (e.g., Richardson et al., 2012b) and real R&S processes (e.g., Gringart & Helmes, 2001). It was also found that age influences recruiters' perceptions of candidates and consequent hiring recommendations during R&S processes, although other applicant characteristics are relevant (Morgeson et al., 2008). For example, according to Krings et al. (2011), during the hiring process, older candidates were considered less competent than younger ones, which was reflected in the final hiring decision.

Ageism can be conceived as bidirectional, with older workers showing negative attitudes toward younger workers, but also younger workers having negative attitudes and beliefs toward older workers (Patient et al., 2024). This is because, compared to middle-aged adults, both younger and older workers are generally seen as having a lower social status in terms of power, respect, wealth, social prestige, and influence, making them recurrent targets of age discrimination by exogroups (i.e., age groups to which the person does not belong) (e.g., Garstka et al., 2004).

1.3. Age stereotypes in the workplace

Given that ageism is based on individuals' beliefs about different age groups, stereotypes are important for understanding the mechanism that leads to ageism in the workplace.

Age stereotypes in the workplace are beliefs and expectations about employees based on their age and are seen as a simplified and undifferentiated portrait of an age group that is often erroneous and unrepresentative of reality (Vignoli et al., 2021).

Research on this topic has primarily focused on descriptive stereotypes, i.e., beliefs about the typical characteristics, attributes, and behaviors that people think the members of a certain age group are (Hummert et al., 1994). A descriptive stereotype can be identified, for example, in the belief that older workers are not very competent (Cuddy et al., 2005). According to the authors, descriptive stereotypes describe what older and younger workers are believed to be or do.

However, more recent investigations have focused on prescriptive stereotypes, i.e., beliefs about how people should behave because they belong to a certain age group (e.g., de Paula Couto et al., 2022). Prescriptive age stereotypes play a crucial role in maintaining social order by defining the acceptable norms of behavior for individuals at different stages of life creating pressure for people to conform to specific roles (de Paula Couto et al., 2022). For example, we are dealing with a prescriptive stereotype when older workers are expected to pass on their experience and knowledge to younger workers, setting an example of how a “good” older worker should be (de Paula Couto et al., 2022).

In the workplace, age stereotypes involve distorted and often inaccurate perceptions of workers based on their age (Toomey & Rudolph, 2017). Although the work and organizational psychology literature on age stereotypes has mainly focused on older workers (Finkelstein et al., 2013), stereotypes about both older and younger workers do exist, even if they are perceived in different ways. Stereotypes about older workers often tend to have more negative connotations, and stereotypes regarding younger workers tend to be comparatively more positive (e.g., young workers as physically and mentally more prepared to take on the demands of today’s workplace, etc.) (McCann & Keaton, 2013).

Even though such stereotypes may have no basis or only a limited one, being true only in certain cases, they have been shown to exert a strong influence on real-world attitudes toward younger and older workers, both on the part of employees and employers themselves (Ng & Feldman, 2012). Such attitudes may then translate into employers preferring younger or older workers for different types of employment decisions, which will in turn affect real-world outcomes (Henkens, 2005).

1.3.1. Age stereotypes in the workplace concerning older workers

Although the perception of older workers varies (Bertolino et al., 2013), as we said before, they generally tend to be viewed stereotypically more negatively than younger workers (Posthuma & Campion, 2009), especially in terms of productivity and adaptability (Karpinska et al., 2013). Typically, recruiters and individuals hold a mixture of positive and negative stereotypes about older workers (Bal et al., 2011).

Positive stereotypes about older workers are less studied than negative stereotypes, but it is important to note that positive stereotypes regarding older workers also exist (Petery et al., 2020). Concerning positive stereotypes, older workers are commonly seen as having more experience and possessing more in-depth knowledge, acquired throughout their lives and

careers (Van Dalen et al., 2010), more reliable and responsible, with a strong work ethic and high commitment to their jobs (Loretto & White, 2006). They are also considered to be more loyal to organizations and less likely to change jobs frequently (Kluge & Krings, 2008). Older workers are generally considered to be warmer (e.g., sympathetic, empathetic, kind) than younger workers (Shiu et al., 2015), more emotionally stable, more resilient, and better able to deal with stress and pressure in a more balanced way (Harris et al., 2018).

Regarding the negative stereotypes relative to older workers, a common stereotype suggests that they are expected to perform worse on the job in comparison to younger workers (Gordon & Arvey, 2004). Several factors contribute to this perception: it is often believed that older workers have diminished mental and physical abilities, are less capable of handling stress, and are generally less competent, which leads to lower job performance (Rosen, 1976). Despite the common stereotype that older workers perform poorly on the job, research on this subject has not provided sufficient evidence to support the idea that job performance decreases as workers age (Ferris & King, 1992). Another negative stereotype regarding older workers is the idea that they are resistant to change (Chiu et al., 2001), also indicating that they are more difficult to train (Weiss & Maurer, 2004), less adaptable compared to younger workers (Chiu et al., 2001), and less flexible (Rosen, 1976). Research also indicates that negative stereotypes lead to older workers being perceived as having a lower capacity to learn and, therefore, having less potential for career development (Wrenn & Maurer, 2004). Raza & Carpenter's (1987) investigations concluded that older workers are perceived as less intelligent. Many studies also indicate that older workers have less time on the job and that the return on investments such as training, is lower, as they have less time left in their careers, so employers will not be able to reap the benefits of investments in training (Greller & Simpson, 1999). Other stereotypes that also prevail regarding older workers indicate that they are less motivated, less healthy, and more vulnerable to work-family imbalance (Ng & Feldman, 2012). According to research carried out by McGregor & McGregor Professor (2002), their lack of adaptability stood out among the various results of negative stereotypes about older workers, with this item referring to factors such as the need to keep up with computer technology. Finally, another prevalent stereotype about older workers is that they are more expensive because they receive higher salaries, use more benefits, and are closer to retirement (Posthuma & Campion, 2009).

The potential negative consequences of age stereotypes on the working lives of older workers are numerous (e.g., Dordoni & Argentero, 2015), but we can highlight that negative stereotypes interact with their characteristics, affecting their motivation at work (Kanfer et al.,

2013), as well as their motivation to continue working or retire (Vickerstaff & Van der Horst, 2021).

1.3.2. Age stereotypes in the workplace concerning younger workers

Younger workers occupy a particularly vulnerable position in today's labor market that may be partly attributable to structural trends, which are rooted in labor law and organizational practices (Blackham, 2019). Younger workers also suffer discrimination in the workplace since workers under 30 years old experience higher levels of ageism than other age groups, which means that ageism against younger workers is at least as widespread as ageism against older workers (Snape & Redman, 2003b).

Although the literature focusing on younger workers' stereotypes is scarcer, in a study of Canadian retirees' perceptions of young people, Matheson et al. (2000) found that their stereotypes showed a mix of positive and negative characteristics but leaned more heavily toward the positive. For example, this investigation considered younger workers more ambitious and considerable.

Regarding positive stereotypes about younger workers, we can say that they are seen as better performers and more productive when compared to older workers (Oude Mulders, 2020). Dordoni & Argentero (2015b) also found that younger workers are technologically advanced because they are considered digital natives, showing a natural ease with new technologies and digital tools, and energetic and enthusiastic, once they are seen as bringing renewed vitality to the workplace. Their eagerness to confront challenges and experiment with new ideas can invigorate teams and foster a culture of innovation and creativity (Deal et al., 2010). They are also seen as faster learners and more easily adaptable to new situations and changes, characteristics that are highly valued in today's labor market (Ng et al., 2010). Research by Truxillo et al. (2012) identified many positive stereotypes towards younger workers, namely that they are more proactive, more extraverted, in terms of gregariousness, activity level, excitement seeking, and cheerfulness, more trustable, more altruist, more cooperative, more sympathetic, and better in terms of openness to new experiences.

Concerning the negative stereotypes, according to Matheson et al. (2000), younger workers are seen as less trustworthy, less friendly, less tolerant, and less acceptable. Twenge's (2010) investigations indicated that younger workers are less experienced and therefore less competent at their jobs. Younger workers are also considered unstable and more likely to change jobs frequently, which can affect and compromise their teams (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). In

consequence, they can be seen as less loyal to companies and more focused on their careers and personal development (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Finally, they are often seen as immature and less able to deal with complex or stressful situations at work (Deal et al., 2010).

Chapter II - Methodology

To better understand each participant's perception regarding age discrimination during R&S processes in organizations in Portugal, we decided to carry out an exploratory study. A qualitative approach was adopted, with online semi-structured interviews and a hypothetical CV exercise that simulated the CV screening phase of an R&S process.

Qualitative research is an approach used to explore complex phenomena, understand human behavior more deeply, and uncover information that quantitative methods often overlook (Ogunrinde et al., 2024). Using a qualitative method, we were able to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences in their workplaces, particularly regarding the role of applicants' age in the R&S processes.

2.1. Participants

The sample comprised 22 participants, whose roles consisted of HR Directors, Talent Acquisition Specialists, Recruitment Managers, Recruitment Consultants, Talent Management Directors, HR Generalists, Recruiters, and HR Trainees, whose daily activity somehow involved a decision-making process in R&S processes of new employees in an organization in Portugal.

The main sociodemographic data of the participants are presented in Chart 2.1. The interviewees' ages ranged from 21 to 59 years old, with an average age of 29 years ($M = 28,73$; $SD = 9,63$). Eighteen (18) female (81,8%) and four (4) male participants were interviewed, and all had Portuguese nationality. Concerning educational qualifications, 4 participants had a Post-Graduate Degree (18,2%), 2 participants had a Bachelor's Degree (9,1%), and 16 participants had a Master's Degree (72,7%).

Regarding the participants' years of experience, the response interval ranged from 4 months to 23 years. All interviewees were engaged in their professional activities in Portugal at the time of the interview.

Chart 2.1.: Participants' Sociodemographic Data

Participant	Gender	Age	Years of Experience	Academic Degree
P1	Male	46	23 years	Post Graduation
P2	Female	24	7 months	Master's Degree
P3	Female	21	10 months	Bachelor's Degree

P4	Female	32	8 years	Master's Degree
P5	Female	26	2 years	Master's Degree
P6	Female	47	23 years	Post Graduation
P7	Male	23	2 years	Master's Degree
P8	Female	24	4 months	Master's Degree
P9	Female	59	22 years	Post Graduation
P10	Female	23	7 months	Master's Degree
P11	Female	34	5 years	Master's Degree
P12	Female	25	3 years	Master's Degree
P13	Female	26	3 years	Master's Degree
P14	Female	25	3 years	Master's Degree
P15	Female	26	3 years	Master's Degree
P16	Male	25	3 years	Master's Degree
P17	Female	25	1 year and a half	Master's Degree
P18	Female	24	3 years	Master's Degree
P19	Female	23	3 years	Bachelor's Degree
P20	Female	24	4 years	Master's Degree
P21	Female	27	2 years	Post Graduation
P22	Male	23	1 year and a half	Master's Degree

2.2. Procedure

Regarding the selection of respondents, there was a non-random snowball sample. Snowball sampling allows access to a small and specific population (Atkinson & Flint, 2001), which is an advantage for this study. The individuals initially selected for this study were known contacts of the research team and the snowball sample grew as each initially selected participant indicated other contacts of theirs to join the sample. We also placed an ad on LinkedIn to reach more participants. Our sample of participants ended when we reached information saturation, which means that no new information or themes emerged, indicating that further data collection was unnecessary (Low, 2019). All those interested in taking part contacted the interviewer via e-mail, expressing their availability. After this initial contact, the day and time of the interview were arranged. After scheduling the interview, the Informed Consent (Annex A) and an invitation to a Microsoft Teams Meeting were sent out. The Informed Consent informed them about the study's general and specific objectives and all their rights as participants. Furthermore, through informed consent, participants were informed about the ethical

considerations of the research, specifically regarding the audio and video recording of the interviews for subsequent transcription and analysis, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of the data.

During the interviews, we began by giving a brief introduction to each participant. Again, the study's objectives were mentioned, and the voluntary and confidential nature of their participation was reinforced. Each participant was also asked to sign and then send in the informed consent document explicitly authorizing the audio and video recording of the interview.

After this brief introduction, and as mentioned above, sociodemographic questions were posed. When asking these questions and those related to the general and specific objectives of this research, it was emphasized that participants could choose not to answer any of the questions if they did not want to or did not feel comfortable doing so, and the confidential nature of all provided information was highlighted.

The interviews were conducted between February and March 2024 and lasted a minimum of 29 minutes and a maximum of 1 hour and 17 minutes.

This study was submitted and approved by the Ethics Committee of ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, who issued the final opinion number 12/2024, approving the conduct of this research on January 24, 2024. This approval ensured that the study followed all applicable guidelines and regulations established by the ISCTE Ethics Committee.

2.3. Instruments

2.3.1. Interview script

As instruments for data collection, the following were used: (1) a semi-structured interview script (Annex B), (2) a document containing requirements for a specific role (HR position), and (3) two hypothetical CVs applying for the open HR position (Annex C). From a general point of view, interviews carried out as part of research that adopts a qualitative methodology are used with the aim of understanding and deepening the perceptions of each participant about the subject under analysis (Cassell & Symon, 2004), an essential requirement for this study. More specifically, we chose to carry out semi-structured interviews, as these give the interviewer greater flexibility to delve deeper into certain topics, thus making it possible to extract relevant data from each interview (Bryman, 2021).

In order to achieve the objectives of this research, the interview script was organized into blocks of questions: a) the first block - "Legitimizing the Interview and Motivating the

Interviewees” - aimed to validate the interview and the participants, and orally present the informed consent; b) the second block – “Personal Background and Professional Career” - aimed to understand the personal and professional background of the participants; c) the third block -“Recruitment Process and Decision-Making” explored the processes of R&S and decision-making in the interviewee’s organization, focusing particularly on the potential impact of age and years of experience on the recruiter’s perception, while also exploring factors that affect decision-making regarding R&S processes; d) the fourth block – “Biases in the R&S Process” - explored how biases, especially those related to age and years of experience, influence the decision-making process within the organization; e) the last block – “Organizational Biases and Recruitment” - aimed to understand how biases manifest during the R&S processes and how personal and organizational biases are consistent or conflicting. It also explored potential organizational biases from the participant’s perspective that may manifest in the recruitment context and the organization’s perceptions of candidates. At the beginning of the interviews, participants responded to sociodemographic questions, through which it was possible to collect information regarding the gender each participant identifies with, age, position held in the organization, years of experience, and the degree/academic field of the individuals. Throughout each interview, the script was duly followed. Still, because a semi-structured interview was used, there was also the possibility of asking additional questions whenever it was considered pertinent to go into some topic in greater depth or redirect the interviewee to the central theme of the interview.

One of the major concerns we faced during the interviews was social desirability. Social desirability refers to the tendency of participants to answer questions in a way that they believe is more favorable or socially acceptable, regardless of their true feelings about an issue or topic (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This bias can compromise the validity of the data collected, and the result is data that are systematically biased toward respondents’ perceptions of what is “correct” (Fisher, 1993). Also, according to Fisher (1993), data collection through interviews (face-to-face and online) can induce a feeling of weak/low anonymity, and the combination of non-anonymous environments and socially sensitive topics is particularly problematic in terms of social desirability biases. Therefore, to combat social desirability, we resorted to 1) indirect questioning – a projective technique that asks respondents to answer structured questions from the perspective of another person or group –, which allows the distortion of private opinions revealed to the researcher to be reduced by asking respondents to report on the nature of external world rather than about themselves, while participants are expected to project their unconscious biases into ambiguous response situations, revealing their true attitudes (e.g., Campbell, 1968).

We guaranteed 2) anonymity and confidentiality to the participants because, by feeling safer and knowing that their answers would not be associated with each of them personally, they would tend to be more honest and truthful.

2.3.2. Exercise with hypothetical CVs

At the end of each interview, participants were asked to engage in an exercise involving hypothetical CVs. Namely, they were presented with the HR Talent Acquisition profile requirements, followed by two hypothetical CVs. Concerning the CVs that were presented to the participants when conducting this exercise, it is important to first highlight the similarities and differences between them.

As for the similarities, we can state that both CVs were from female profiles, both reside and work in Lisbon, and both have Bachelor's Degrees in the same field (HR Management) from the same college (ISCTE Business School). Both speak Portuguese as their native language, with English being the second language in which they are most proficient (oral and written), and both speak a third language. Also, both have extensive experience in job posting and sourcing and currently hold management positions in the recruitment departments of their respective companies.

Regarding the differences between the profiles, one of the candidates is older (53 years old) and the other is younger (23 years old). The older candidate has more years of experience (about two decades), while the youngest candidate has fewer years of experience (6 years). The younger candidate has knowledge of useful tools in the R&S processes, such as LinkedIn Recruiter, Applicant Tracking System (ATS), Boolean Search, and Long List. The older candidate has worked for four different companies during her career, each in a different sector. The younger candidate has always worked for the same company during her career, where she has grown and taken on more leadership roles. Currently, both work in the HR field.

After this, each participant was asked to put themselves in the role of total decision-maker in this hypothetical R&S process, to make their decision and then to justify it.

2.3.3. Data analysis strategy

Once the data collection phase was over, we started by transcribing each interview using Word's transcription tool. After the transcription process, the analysis of the data collected began. For

data analysis, we used MaxQDA, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) software (Consoli, 2021).

The information was analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis as a research method is a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena while allowing researchers to improve their understanding of the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Through content analysis, it is possible to group words into fewer content-related categories, assuming that, when classified in the same categories, the words and phrases, share the same meaning (Cavanagh, 1997). Content analysis makes it possible to make replicable and valid inferences from the data to its context, intending to provide knowledge, new perspectives, a representation of the facts, and an action guide, whose main objective is to obtain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon (Krippendorff, 2019). Content analysis offers researchers several significant advantages, once 1) it is a content-sensitive method, and 2) it is flexible from the of view of research design (Krippendorff, 2019). It is also much more than a naive technique and does not result in a simplistic data description (Cavanagh, 1997). Also, content analysis is extremely well-suited to analyzing sensitive phenomena (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Concerning the analysis itself, a mixed approach was adopted. This means that the categories' definition followed an inductive and deductive approach (Cassell & Symon, 2004). The data was analyzed using a list of categories conceived *a priori*, i.e., based on the literature consulted on the subject and the interview script. At the same time, we tried to create new categories *a posteriori* based on the data collected through the interviews, and this technique gave us the flexibility to modify and/or eliminate pre-existing categories and create new ones (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

The initial template included four main categories defined, as expected, through the analyzed literature and the interview script, namely: stereotypes towards younger workers, stereotypes towards older workers, discrimination towards young workers, and discrimination towards older workers. After analyzing and interpreting the textual data, 51 new subcategories were created. The creation of these subcategories resulted from a review of all pre-existing categories and subcategories, as well as the data that emerged from the interviews. Once this review had been carried out and the need to create new subcategories had been verified, they were added to the analysis. Many of these categories emerged after careful analysis of the literature, in which some of these themes were analyzed. Annex D contains the final template with the initial and emerging categories.

2.4. Quality of Data Analysis

To guarantee the quality of the study, the guidelines given by Bauer (2002) were considered, specifically concerning the a) transparency criterion, the b) reliability criterion, the c) saturation criterion, and the d) selectivity criterion and the relationship between themes.

As far as the transparency criterion is concerned, the descriptions of the coding process are provided, as well as the initial and emerging Content Analysis. In Chapter III - Results, it is possible to find some quotes from the participants illustrating the different categories and subcategories, as well as the various conclusions to be drawn. For reasons related to the anonymity of the participants, the full-text transcriptions of each interview will not be made available, but given that several quotes are included, the reader will be able to validate the real and prominent nature of the conclusions drawn from this investigation. In addition, a dictionary has been created (Annex E) that duly defines the categories and subcategories created *a priori* and identifies the theoretical bases that support each definition. This document also makes it possible to validate the interpretation made in the analysis of the information (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000).

To ensure the criterion of reliability, it is important to note that the entire coding process included several moments of revision of the various categories and subcategories (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000), and the interpretation and validation were also ensured by the supervisor of this master's dissertation.

Also to ensure the quality of the study, the saturation criterion was applied, i.e., until the content of the interviews no longer represented a relevant theoretical novelty for the subject under study (Silva et al., 2013). Redundancy was noted from interview 18 onwards. Four more interviews were carried out to ensure this criterion was met with greater certainty.

Based on the criteria of selectivity and the relationship between themes (Cassell & Symon, 2004), in Chapter III – Results we have identified the themes that we considered most important for fulfilling the defined objectives.

To be able to recognize patterns, the results will be analyzed considering the number of participants in our sample (N=22). The categories and subcategories mentioned by most participants will be studied in detail. In other words, the number of participants who mentioned each category and subcategory will be counted, allowing for the identification of meaning in the answers given, a central feature of content analysis. We chose to focus on counting all the occurrences per participant, i.e., we considered all the instances where each participant mentioned a particular category and/or subcategory. At a later stage, we focused on the

frequency and distribution of themes in our sample. For most of the results quotes from the participants that are representative of the content under analysis will be presented, helping to identify concrete examples of the themes and to anchor the interpretations in the original data.

Chapter III – Results

The qualitative results are presented according to the dimensions, categories, and subcategories of the content analysis. Chart 3.1 shows the total number of occurrences of each category and subcategory.

Chart 3.1: Total number of occurrences by category and subcategory

Dimensions	Categories	Subcategories	Number of Occurrences
R&S insights	R&S role	Interviews	30
		CV screening	17
		Decision-making	11
		Headhunting	7
		Assessments	1
	Attributes valued in candidates	Soft skills	56
		Hard skills	32
		Length of experience	23
		Salary expectations	8
		Past job tenure	8
		Academic Background	8
		Organizational fit	4
		Age	1
Age stereotypes in R&S processes	Recruiter age-related stereotypes	Absent	47
		Present	26
	Age-related stereotypes: older candidates	Positive	61
		Negative	15
		Neutral	8
	Age-related stereotypes: younger candidates	Positive	59
		Negative	49
		Neutral	17
Organizational practices and age stereotypes	Organizational age-related stereotypes	Present	54
		Absent	22

	Recruiter alignment with the organizational R&S practice	Not aligned	35
		Aligned	26
Age discrimination in effective R&S decisions	Age discrimination: older candidates		47
	Age discrimination: younger candidates		9
	Reasons for age discrimination: older candidates	High salary expectations	23
		Nearing retirement	17
		Health issues	6
		Training costs	2
		Perceived inability to learn	2
	Reasons for age discrimination: younger candidates	Lack of experience	7
		Perceived disloyalty	6
		Immaturity	1
		Training costs	1
Age discrimination in the CVs exercise	Selection preference	Both candidates	18
		Younger candidates	9
		Older candidates	3
	Decision criteria	Relevant experience	21
		Salary expectations	7
		Expertise in R&S tools	6
		Innovative mindset	4
		Age	3
		Job market awareness	3
		Suitability	2
		Adaptability	1
		Language skills	1

3.1. R&S insights

In this dimension, we will focus on the participants' perceptions of the R&S processes in their organizations, covering the roles of recruiters and the qualities sought in candidates, in a general way.

This first dimension is divided into two categories: *R&S role* and *Attributes valued in candidates*.

3.1.1. R&S role

According to the participants' answers, this category was divided into 5 main subcategories: 'Interviews', 'CV screening', 'Decision-making', 'Headhunting', and 'Assessments'.

As we can see from reading the data in Chart 3.1 and the table attached in annex (Annex D), we can understand that conducting 'Interviews' had a total of 30 occurrences and was mentioned by 20 participants (90,9%), as the following excerpts illustrate: *My day-to-day work involves managing recruitment processes, carrying out interviews, and reporting on them* (P5); *The most important role I play is in face-to-face interviews with candidates* (P20).

The 'CV screening' subcategory registered a total of 17 occurrences and was mentioned by 13 participants (59,1%), as we can see in the following examples: *I analyze CVs* (P5), and *CV screening is all done by me* (P17).

Concerning the 'Decision-making' subcategory, 10 of the participants (45,5%) said they played an important role in the final decision-making regarding R&S processes, a role that had a total of 11 occurrences, as shown in the excerpts *I ended up having a decision-making role for coordination positions* (P9); *My biggest decision-making role is when I meet the person in a first interview and then decide whether to share their profile with the manager or not* (P13).

Six (27,3%) of the participants mentioned 'headhunting' as one of their core functions, totaling 7 occurrences. We can consider the following excerpts as examples: *We look for candidates on LinkedIn* (P10); *I'm the one who researches the candidate* (P16).

The subcategory 'Assessments' was not as important as the others, as it was only mentioned by 1 participant.

3.1.2. Attributes valued in candidates

Concerning the category 'Attributes valued in candidates', was divided into 8 subcategories: 'Soft skills', 'Hard skills', 'Length of experience', 'Salary expectations', 'Past job tenure', 'Academic background', 'Organizational fit', and 'Age'.

'Soft skills' counted with 56 occurrences and were mentioned by 18 participants (81,8%). According to Participant 10, (...), *a candidate needs to have soft skills*, and *What sets you apart is a lot in terms of soft skills* (P22). The soft skills that the participants highlighted the most were communication skills (*Communication is the most important thing* – P10), empathy (*I always like empathetic people and I value empathy a lot* – P9), the ability to work as part of a team (*So we pay a lot of attention (...) to their ability to work as part of team* – P7) and the ability to adapt (*I value a candidate's ability to adapt* – P18).

‘Hard skills’ were mentioned as highly valued by 15 participants (68,2%), with a total of 32 occurrences, as shown in the following citations: *Basically, the technical component of the candidate always ends up playing a more important role* (P7) and *I value the more technical characteristics* (P16).

The candidates’ ‘Length of experience’ was mentioned by 14 participants (63,6%), an attribute that registered a total of 23 occurrences. According to one participant, *I am much more interested in the experience the person has* (P18).

The subcategories ‘Age’, mentioned by 1 participant, ‘Academic background’, mentioned by 6 participants, ‘Salary expectations’ and ‘Past job tenure’, both mentioned by 5 participants and ‘Organizational fit’ mentioned by 4 participants, were the least relevant to this category.

The results for the first dimension indicate that more than half of the participants assumed they had a role in the CV screening and decision-making process, with most of them (90,6%) conducting R&S interviews with candidates. When asked what they value the most in a candidate, more than 60% said that length of experience and hard skills are highly valued. Nonetheless, participants see soft skills as very important, with more than 80% mentioning them.

3.2. Age stereotypes in R&S processes

In the second dimension, we focus on the existence or non-existence of age-based stereotypes during R&S processes, and on understanding how these stereotypes influence the R&S process - positively or negatively -, for both younger and older candidates.

This dimension is divided into three main categories: *Recruiter age-related stereotypes*, *Age-related stereotypes: older workers*, and *Age-related stereotypes: younger workers*.

3.2.1. Recruiter age-related stereotypes

Regarding age-based stereotypes on the recruiter's side, we classified this category as the presence or absence of stereotypes based on age. Therefore, two subcategories were created: ‘Absent’ if age-based stereotypes were not found to exist in the participant’s discourse, and ‘Present’ if age-based stereotypes were found to exist in the participant’s discourse and condition the R&S process.

Concerning the ‘Absent’ subcategory, 17 participants (77,3%) admitted that they were not conditioned by these stereotypes during the R&S process. This subcategory has a total of 47

occurrences. For example, according to Participant 13 *as far as the age factor is concerned, I do not see it as a problem*, age is not a determining factor in choosing/not choosing a particular candidate.

The subcategory ‘Present’ was mentioned by 12 participants (54,5%), recording a total of 26 occurrences, as we can understand from the following excerpts from our participants’ interviews: *Obviously, there are differences in the way we assess younger and older candidates* (P3) and *I do not think I would be being honest if I said I would never have any kind of bias in recruitment and selection processes* (P6).

Eight (8) participants ended up simultaneously assuming and denying the presence of age stereotypes during an R&S process.

3.2.2. Age-related stereotypes: older workers

This category has been divided into three subcategories, based on how recruiters perceive older candidates. Therefore, we divided this category into ‘Positive’, ‘Negative’, and ‘Neutral’.

The first subcategory, ‘Positive’, had 61 occurrences, and was mentioned by 19 participants (86,4%). According to the participants who mentioned this subcategory, *the more senior profile can more quickly internalize the way the team works, and the structure of the project because they already have the required knowledge to do so, they have had other projects, and they have made these changes several times and therefore they can adapt and mold themselves more quickly to the team structure* (P15). In the same vein, they also say that *the more senior profile is expected to have more experience in the requirements of the job, to be more autonomous, and (...) to serve as a point of reference* (P13).

In the second subcategory, ‘Negative’, there were 15 occurrences, mentioned by 10 participants (45,5%). These participants essentially suggested that older candidates tend to be averse to change (*Sometimes I think older people are more averse to change* – P17), or that they do not have as much energy or availability ((...) *older people will not have as much energy or availability as younger people do* – P10). Participant 1 also said that *older people (...) already bring certain vices with them* and Participant 13 mentioned that *older candidates (...) sometimes have less tolerance for people they do not know*.

The third subcategory, ‘Neutral’, was mentioned by 7 participants (31,8%), summing a total of 8 occurrences. In general, the participants who mentioned this subcategory said that senior profiles are not as permeable to the labor market (*The person, as they are a different age, is no longer as permeable to the market* - P6), as they are already comfortable in certain career-

related stages (*When you reach a certain age and a certain stage in your career, you are already very comfortable in certain areas and you do not want to stray too far from there. And all this is normal* – P19).

3.2.3. Age-related stereotypes: younger workers

As with the previous category, this category has been divided into three subcategories, based on recruiters' perceptions of candidates. Therefore, we have divided this category into 'Positive', 'Negative', and 'Neutral'.

The first subcategory, 'Positive', was mentioned by 17 participants (77,3%) and counted with 59 occurrences. The participants who mentioned this subcategory said that younger candidates are more open and susceptible to changes (*The more junior profiles are more open to change* – P16) and that they are profiles that, in general, enrich organizations (*I think the younger ones enrich the organization a lot* – P11). Participants also considered them energetic profiles with new ideas (*Young people bring a lot of energy, a desire to do things, they have new blood, new ideas to do things differently* – P11). They are seen as motivated, ambitious, and eager to learn (*There are very young people (...) who are extremely motivated, ambitious, eager to learn, and eager to grow* – P22).

The second subcategory, 'Negative', had 49 occurrences and was mentioned by 17 participants (77,3%). According to the participants, *a 25-year-old still doesn't have the experience for the job* (P11), which also leads them to state that *younger candidates may not have the experience to be able to weigh up all the scenarios in certain situations* (P11). Participants also feel that younger candidates *are more demanding but less aware of the contribution they must make to the company* (P16) and that *they are the ones who move around more and spend less time in each job* (P17), highlighting this lack of loyalty of younger people to their organizations. Participant 20 also highlighted this lack of loyalty on the part of young workers when saying that *the younger ones are not loyal, they are not as committed to companies because they are very young, and sooner or later, they will end up looking for other opportunities or other offers*. Furthermore, they are seen as immature and without the ability to perform well (*being 21 years old may not be so positive, in the sense that (...) they are more immature profiles* – P13; *The younger ones do not have so much know-how, so much knowledge, so much experience and, therefore, they will not be able to perform well* – P3), not being able to keep up with the experience of the older ones (*(...) the younger ones cannot keep up with the expertise of the oldest* – P19).

The last subcategory, 'Neutral', had 17 occurrences and was mentioned by 12 participants (54,5%). The participants mentioned that younger applicants are aware of how the job market works in Portugal (*The younger ones, knowing how the market is in Portugal, end up putting their demands aside and trying to get the job – P2*) and that they tend to demand teleworking, especially for IT positions (*What I notice most in younger candidates, and especially in IT areas, is the fact that they always demand teleworking – P17*).

Concerning age-based stereotypes about older candidates, 86,4% of the participants took a mostly positive stereotypical view of these candidates. Regarding younger candidates, 77,3% of participants held both positive and negative stereotypes.

3.3. Organizational practices and age stereotypes

In this dimension, our gaze is directed toward organizational reality according to the participant's perspective. In this sense, we focus on understanding the existence or not of age-based stereotypes in organizational practices related to R&S, namely related to the importance of candidates' age during R&S processes, and whether there is an alignment of perspectives regarding the importance of the age factor between recruiters and organizations during R&S processes.

This third dimension is divided into *Organizational age-related stereotypes* and *Recruiter alignment with the organizational R&S practice*.

3.3.1. Organizational age-related stereotypes

Regarding age-based stereotypes at an organizational level, we classify it as the presence or absence of stereotypes based on age. Thus, the first category of this dimension was divided into 'Present' if the participants' discourse showed the existence of age stereotypes at an organizational level regarding the importance of age during R&S processes, and 'Absent', if this was not the case.

Regarding the 'Present' subcategory, there were 54 occurrences and 18 participants (81,8%) mentioned the existence of age stereotypes at an organizational level regarding the R&S practice. When confronted with this topic, the participants mentioned the following: *One of the biggest factors that end up being determined, and that will always be a factor, is age. For many people is a conditioning factor (P18)*; *When younger people, who have recently entered the job market, apply, it is clear that managers are afraid of choosing younger people (P5)*; *I have*

noticed discrimination based on age (P17); Age always ends up being a factor taken into account (P12); I even think that nowadays prejudice is greater concerning ages than genders (P8); I have some vacancies and they give me these conditions in advance (P15).

We observed that the second subcategory, ‘Absent’, was mentioned by 12 participants (54,5%) and registered 22 occurrences. Participants who reported that there were no stereotypes based on age in their organizations said: *The issue of age is not an issue for us (P4); No, we do not look at the issue of age (P20); I do not feel that age is a factor (P12).*

3.3.2. Recruiter alignment with the organizational R&S practice

The second category of the dimension related to organizational R&S practice was also divided into two subcategories: ‘Aligned’, if the recruited expressed alignment with the organization regarding the R&S process, namely if age is an important factor to the organization as it is to the recruiter when deciding for hiring a certain candidate, and ‘Not Aligned’ if the recruiter stated that they he/she were not aligned with the organization and did not agree with the R&S practice implemented by their organization, i.e. if the recruiter considered the age factor to be important to their organization but not relevant from their perspective as a recruiter.

The ‘Not aligned’ subcategory had a total of 35 occurrences and was mentioned by 15 participants (68,2%). Participants assumed that their vision is not aligned with the R&S practice implemented by their organizations, namely that the candidate’s age is not relevant for recruiters’ decision-making during an R&S process but is very relevant for organizations. We can prove the lack of alignment between participants and organizations through the following quotes: *Our visions did not fit (P8); Our perspectives are different, they are completely different (..) and are not aligned with what I believe in (P18); I believe that, indeed, there may be criticism about certain recruitments that are carried out (P1); The recruitment process goes very against my values (P10).*

This first subcategory ‘Aligned’ was mentioned by 14 participants (63,6%) and registered 26 occurrences. Participants assumed that their vision is in line with the R&S practice implemented by their organizations, namely that the candidate’s age is important for decision-making during the R&S processes by both recruiters and organizations. We can prove this with the following examples: *Yes, I think so. In general, we are aligned (P7); I would say yes. At least from my experience so far, we are aligned (P13).*

We can conclude that about the third dimension, most of the participants (81,8%) indicated that there are age-based stereotypes at the organizational level. Regarding the alignment/non-

alignment of the recruiter's view of the R&S practice, namely that the candidate's age is important for decision-making during R&S processes, the percentage of participants who indicated that they were aligned with their organizations (63,6%) – age is an important factor for both organizations and recruiters - is very similar to the percentage of participants who indicated that they were not aligned with their organizations (68,2%) – the age factor is important for the organization, but not for recruiters. Even so, the percentage of participants who said they were not aligned with their organizations was higher.

3.4. Age discrimination in effective R&S decisions

The fourth dimension aims to understand the existence of age discrimination at the end of a hiring process, whether towards older or younger candidates and what are the reasons for this form of discrimination.

Therefore, this dimension has been divided into 4 categories: *Age discrimination: older workers*, *Age discrimination: younger workers*, *Reasons for age discrimination: older workers*, and *Reasons for age discrimination: younger workers*.

3.4.1. Age discrimination: older workers

The *Age discrimination: older workers* category was mentioned by 18 participants (81,8%), totaling 47 occurrences.

The following examples show the existence of ageism towards older people: *As I told you, we are much more likely to reject someone in their 50s* (P14); *I do not know what older means, but they are not as well regarded* (P21); *I think we will always give preference to the younger person* (P10); *At the time, the team was saying to reject over 35/40 years old* (P7); *Some say quite clearly that they would rather hire younger people than older ones* (P1); *There was one person who, because he was older (...), ended up not being accepted* (P12).

3.4.2. Age discrimination: younger workers

Totaling 9 occurrences, the *Age discrimination: younger candidates* category was mentioned by 6 participants (27,3%), who admitted that there is age discrimination towards younger candidates. This can be seen in the statement made by Participant 12 – *There are situations where we only accept (...) older people*, and by Participant 9 – *Sometimes, we choose the older candidate*.

3.4.3. Reasons for age discrimination: older candidates

This category was divided into 5 main subcategories, also concerning reasons for discriminating against older candidates: ‘High salary expectations’, ‘Nearing retirement’, ‘Health issues’, ‘Training costs’, and ‘Perceived inability to learn’.

The subcategory ‘High salary expectations’ has 23 occurrences and was mentioned by 9 participants (40,9%), who said that *something that may have conditioned the choice was the salary package* (P6), and that *we will always hire the person whose salary expectation is the lowest and who meets what we can afford* (P2). Participants also mentioned that their choices may be *based on salary expectations* (P17).

The second subcategory, ‘Nearing retirement’, had 17 occurrences, with only 9 participants (40,9%) mentioning this factor as the main reason for discriminating against older candidates. They say that they do not choose older candidates *because they are people who will not stay long* (P20), and essentially because *they are already a certain age* (P17). Also, in the voice of our participants, *The argument is that the person will retire afterward* (P10); *We are not going to hire a person who after 5 years is going to retire* (P21); *And then it is that question: the person starts working, then spends some time and retires* (P15).

The subcategory ‘Health issues’ had 6 occurrences and 4 participants (18,2%) mentioned this factor as the main reason for excluding older candidates from the R&S process. The following are examples of the importance of this factor in the decision of some of the participants: *People aged 40 were already going to have health problems* (P7); *The team needed someone who didn’t have a problem with their health”* (P8).

The subcategories ‘Training costs’ and ‘Perceived inability to learn’, proved to be the least relevant subcategories for this dimension, given that they only had 1 occurrence each.

3.4.4. Reasons for age discrimination: younger candidates

The *Reasons for age discrimination: younger workers* category was divided into 4 subcategories, according to the reasons mentioned by the participants that led to age discrimination against younger candidates. The four subcategories are: ‘Lack of experience’, ‘Perceived disloyalty’, ‘Immaturity’, and ‘Training costs’.

The first subcategory, ‘Lack of experience’, was mentioned by 5 participants (22,7%) and had 7 occurrences. The participants who mentioned the lack of experience of younger candidates as a reason for not hiring them said, that *throughout the year, we cannot just hire younger candidates with no experience. We cannot hire a junior candidate for a team*

management position just so we do not have to say that companies only hire senior profiles and people with experience, and do not give young people the opportunity to have their first experience (P4). The participants also mentioned that managers always prefer older candidates because they think younger candidates are inexperienced (*(...) managers when they ask us to open these recruitment processes, usually open them to older people and not to people my age. These managers always end up asking for people with a few years of experience* (P3)).

The second dimension, ‘Perceived disloyalty’ with a total of 6 occurrences, was mentioned by 5 participants (22,7%). Participants said that *younger people are not that loyal* (P14) and that *(...) while young people are always worried about leaving companies more often* (P6). Participant 3 also said that *(...) the company thinks that the trainee will not stay because she/he will find better opportunities than the one we have here*, reinforcing the idea that younger people are less loyal to companies.

The third and fourth subcategories, ‘Immaturity’ and ‘Training costs’ are the least relevant in this dimension, as each of them had 1 occurrence.

3.5. Age discrimination in the CVs’ exercise

The last dimension derives from the qualitative analysis of the CV’s exercise, which simulates a hypothetical R&S process. Thus, we want to understand whether there is age discrimination on the part of our participants, understand the reasons for this form of discrimination, what is the hiring tendency of our participants – older or younger candidates –, and what are the criteria for their decision-making.

This dimension has been divided into 2 main categories: *Selection preference* and *Decision criteria*.

3.5.1. Selection preference

This category was created after the participants answered the exercise related to a hypothetical R&S process. Therefore, it was divided into 3 subcategories: ‘Both candidates’, ‘Younger candidates’, and ‘Older candidates’.

The first subcategory, ‘Both candidates’ was mentioned by 11 participants (50%), summing a total of 18 occurrences. According to our participants *Either way, both profiles are quite valid* (P7); *I think both profiles are very good, and I think both would add a lot to me* (P15); *In the ideal scenario, I would hire them both* (P4).

Eight participants (36,4%) decided that the ‘Younger candidates’ would be more suitable for the position. This subcategory had 9 occurrences. According to Participant 2, *the younger candidate would be selected. Or better said, I would choose her simply for that reason.* Participant 14 states that, given that hypothetical recruitment process, she would be more likely to choose the youngest candidate, rather than the candidate who has more experience (*I would say that I have more tendency to choose the youngest candidates rather than those who have more experience*).

The subcategory ‘Older candidates’ was mentioned by 3 participants (13,6%), meaning that these three interviewees would select the older candidate for the position. The participants said that *the oldest candidate seems the most suitable* (P6). Participant 12 said that *the first person she would call was (...) the first person, the most senior candidate.*

3.5.2. Decision Criteria

The last category of this dimension was divided into 9 main subcategories, considering the reasons for their decision-making when exposed to the hypothetical R&S exercise: ‘Relevant experience’, ‘Salary expectations’, ‘Expertise in R&S tools’, ‘Innovative mindset’, ‘Age’, ‘Job market awareness’, ‘Suitability’, ‘Adaptability’ and ‘Language Skills’. The last 3 subcategories are the less relevant since they were mentioned the fewest times by the participants and, therefore, had the lowest number of occurrences, as we can see in the table in Annex D.

The first subcategory, ‘Relevant experience’ had 21 occurrences and was mentioned by 15 participants (68,2%). The participants mentioned that *these are very similar profiles in terms of experience* (P19), that *both candidates have experience in recruitment* (P13), and that even if it is little, the youngest candidate *already has experience in the area* (P14). This criterion was mostly mentioned when our participants indicated that they would select both candidates.

The subcategory ‘Salary expectations’ had 7 occurrences and 4 participants (18,2%) mentioned that salary expectations were the main criteria for their decision-making. Participant 8 stated that the decision would depend on the *economic factor*. Also, according to Participant 16, *whether we like it or not, no matter how much better the first person may be than the second or vice versa, if we can only pay 1500 euros (...) and the person asks for 2000, that will soon be a factor that will make me choose one of the others.* This criterion was mainly mentioned when the participants indicated that they would select the younger candidate, as the salary expectations of older candidates were too high.

The subcategory 'Expertise in R&S tools' had 6 occurrences, and it was mentioned by 5 participants (22,7%). Participants who mentioned that their choice would be based on the candidate's knowledge of R&S tools said that *the (...) candidate knows application tracking tools, which can be very interesting* (P18), *who would choose based on "the tools she already worked with in terms of recruitment, and (...) the tools she has concerning the selection processes* (P5).

The 'Innovative mindset' subcategory was mentioned by 3 participants (13,6%) and had 4 occurrences. The participants mentioned that *despite being a younger profile, they already bring other ideas, and another type of vision about the processes* (P18) and that *as we want something innovative regarding recruitment processes, the youngest candidate would be the most indicated* (P5).

The 'Age' subcategory was mentioned by 2 participants (9,1%) and it counted with 3 occurrences. In his/her voice *I believe that a younger person, 24 years old, can come in and understand more the elasticity of what people are looking for in the labor market* (P1).

The 'Job market awareness' subcategory, only emerged because the position we had open during the CVs exercise was in the HR field, had 3 occurrences, and was mentioned by 3 participants (13,6%). Participants who admitted that the fact that a candidate had a better knowledge of the current job market was the factor that led them to make their decision, stated that they would hire a certain candidate *for the target audience that they intend to hire* (P1) and that the youngest candidate *because it is closer to the academies, it could be an interesting profile* (P9).

The subcategories 'Suitability', mentioned by 2 participants, 'Adaptability', mentioned by 1 participant, and 'Language Skills', also mentioned by 1 participant, are less relevant for this dimension.

Our participants choose younger candidates because they have lower salary expectations, better knowledge of R&S tools, a more innovative mindset, better language skills, better knowledge of the current labor market, and because they recognize them as more adaptable.

Regarding the choice of the younger candidate, 6 participants mentioned that they would choose her because her experience was more relevant than the older candidate's experience. Concerning the older candidate, 4 of the participants said the older candidate had more relevant experience for the job than the younger candidate. Only 5 participants said that both candidates had equally relevant experience.

Regarding the fourth dimension, we can conclude that age discrimination during R&S processes in Portugal is higher among older candidates (81,8%) than younger candidates

(27,3%). The reasons given by the participants for their ageism towards younger candidates were their lack of experience and their disloyalty to organizations. As for the reasons for ageism towards older candidates, these are their high salary expectations, their advanced age, and their proximity to retirement age.

Following the results of the exercise on the hypothetical R&S process, and trying to understand the participants' preferences and choices, we concluded that most participants had no preference for the candidate and, in this sense, would choose both candidates. However, when choosing only one candidate, more participants tended to choose the younger candidate (40,9%) over the older one (18,2%).

Chapter IV – Discussion

In recent decades, the aging of the Portuguese population, together with an increase in the legal retirement age, have resulted in an age-diverse workforce. Age diversity can lead to age-based stereotypes and age discrimination, not only on the part of workers but also on the part of recruiters and organizations.

Considering that studies focusing on ageism towards both older and younger workers are rare, and ageism's harmful effects on individuals' working lives, our primary goal was to understand whether age discrimination exists during R&S processes in organizations in Portugal from recruiters' perspective. In other words, we were particularly interested in understanding whether there is a stereotypical positive or negative view of older and younger candidates and how it impacts the recruiter's decision-making during an R&S process. To know whether the recruiter's perception of candidates impacts their decision-making, we applied an exercise concerning a hypothetical R&S process, in which participants chose between an older and a younger candidate. We also wanted to understand whether the R&S practice and how the organization defines it align with the recruiter's vision, particularly about age as an important factor in decision-making during R&S processes.

Regarding the role of participants in the R&S processes in the organizations they work for, only half of them said they make final decisions, even though many of them are involved in important parts of the R&S process, such as CV screening. It is relevant that our participants are engaged in CV screening, not only because we want to understand the existence of age discrimination, especially during CV screening, but also because based on the theory of impression formation, CV screening is a decisive phase of R&S processes where “decision-makers are likely to rely on stereotypes due to the lack of individuating information” (Drury et al., 2022, p.331).

When asked about what participants value the most in a candidate, most of them said they value both hard and soft skills. Concerning hard skills, Lamri & Lubart's (2023) investigation said that hard skills refer to technical or practical skills developed during an individual's professional path, such as programming languages, engineering, accounting, or speaking different languages. Concerning soft skills, they encompass several competencies that have come to be seen as crucial for organizations and workplaces in recent years (e.g., Seth & Professor, 2013). The ten essential soft skills sought after in a candidate in today's labor market are communication, decision-making, commitment, flexibility, time management, leadership skills, creativity and problem-solving skills, team spirit, acceptance of responsibilities, and the

ability to work under pressure (Clarke, 2016). According to this author, employers consider young workers to be unprepared for the job market, with the lack of transversal skills (communication, resilience, and teamwork) being the main reason for not hiring them. Since hard skills are acquired throughout a worker's career and the lack of soft skills in younger workers is one of the main reasons for not hiring them, we can say that younger people are implicitly discriminated against in R&S processes because they do not have as many hard and soft skills as an older worker.

Still, on this topic, age does not seem to be a relevant criterion for the obtained results, as only one participant mentioned it. However, questions related to the candidate's length of experience came up with considerable frequency, mentioned by more than half of the participants. These two aspects are inseparable since younger workers do not have as much experience compared to older workers – the years of experience and a worker's age are correlated (e.g., Chung et al., 2014). If recruiters consider the candidates' length of experience to be a relevant factor in their decision-making during an R&S process, this can result in discrimination against younger candidates due to their lack of experience, and against older candidates due to their many years of experience. Therefore, candidates' length of experience is a further discriminatory factor in addition to the lack of skills mentioned earlier.

One of our specific objectives was to understand if recruiters' stereotypical views, positive or negative, of both older and younger candidates impact their decision-making during R&S processes. Twelve (12) participants stated that age-based stereotypes are present on their side during the R&S processes, voicing that there is a possibility that their view of the candidates is biased. However, 17 participants denied the existence of age-based stereotypes that conditioned their perceptions and decision-making during the R&S processes. Finally, 8 participants ended up simultaneously assuming and denying the presence of age-based stereotypes during an R&S process. A study by Zhu (2023) indicates that these results may be due, on the one hand, to the fact that recruiters are not aware of their own biases, since unconscious biases are beliefs that we frequently ignore and that operate outside of our conscious awareness, impacting the way we act and the decisions we make, including during R&S processes. On the other hand, this result may be because recruiters are reluctant to admit that their behaviors and choices regarding R&S processes are influenced by stereotypes, due to social desirability bias and the stigma associated with prejudice (Nederhof, 1985). According to this author, social desirability bias consists of the tendency of respondents to deny socially undesirable traits and opinions and, on the contrary, to claim socially desirable traits, as well as the tendency to say things that put

respondents in a favorable position, projecting a favorable image of themselves to the researcher (Fisher, 1998).

Our findings about this topic show that older candidates are perceived in a mostly positive way by the recruiters (e.g., high experience, responsibility, maturity), with less than half of the participants reporting negative stereotypes about these candidates (e.g., resistance to change). Also, these results contradict the literature which widely reports that stereotypes about older workers are predominantly negative (e.g., Posthuma & Campion, 2009). Also, our results contradict the social role theory that indicates that jobseekers can be vulnerable to implicit stereotypes about age and prejudiced assumptions that older workers belong in low-status roles (Abrams et al., 2016).

We can identify three main explanations for this contradiction between the literature and the results obtained. Firstly, and as previously mentioned, social desirability may be a factor that conditioned the sincerity of the answers given by our participants, because our participants did not want to give the impression that they discriminate against older workers. Secondly, the gender of the recruiters is another important factor that can impact the view of older workers, as research by Chang et al. (2022) suggests that women are less prejudiced and discriminating than men and, therefore, view older workers more positively than negatively. In fact, in our study, more females (18 participants) took part than males (4 participants). Furthermore, our participants' responses may have been conditioned by the type of organization they work for and the positions they hire or usually hire for (Chang et al., 2022). According to the same author, stereotypes are more evident when there is a discrepancy between the characteristics of candidates and the requirements of a particular job, suggesting that biases regarding the age of candidates depend on beliefs about the attributes of the job. In other words, when stereotypes of older workers are aligned with the requirements for a particular job, they suffer less from negative evaluation of age discrimination. In their responses, many participants mentioned that, for positions of high responsibility, they prefer to recruit older candidates over younger ones, since older workers are more responsible and mature. Thirdly, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) and North and Fiske (2013) investigations make it clear that positive contact with members of discriminated groups (including groups of older workers) can alter prejudiced perceptions, reducing stereotypes and increasing the adoption of more positive attitudes, such as those involving the perception of competence in older workers. Although we do not question participants about it, if most of them have daily and close contact with older workers, this is enough for them to generalize the positive stereotypes to all older workers.

Regarding the stereotypes about younger candidates, participants assumed the existence of positive and negative stereotypes in the same percentage. Still, there were more occurrences of positive stereotypes than negative ones. This suggests that despite a mix of positive and negative stereotypes regarding younger candidates, positive characteristics may be more widely recognized or frequently mentioned. The results of our research on this subject seem to be in line with the literature since there is indeed a balance between positive and negative stereotypes about younger workers (Toomey & Rudolph, 2017b). The studies by Twenge & Campbell (2008) also help to justify these results, since the perception of younger workers can vary significantly depending on who is doing the evaluation: if the evaluators are predominantly older, they may tend to recognize more negative stereotypes, while younger workers themselves may emphasize the positive ones. The fact that our sample was made up mostly of younger workers suggests that the perceptions reflected in the results are largely self-referential.

When we invited the participants to carry out the exercise with the hypothetical CVs and asked them to decide in the face of this hypothetical R&S process, half of them chose both candidates. However, it is interesting to realize that of the remaining 11 participants who opted to choose only one of the candidates, more than 50% (8 participants) opted for the younger candidate, which indicates that discrimination against older workers prevails in a situation of direct comparison between younger and older candidates.

There is a tendency that reveals the difficulty for many participants in choosing only one of the candidates. On the one hand, this may be due, once again, to issues related to social desirability – participants are not comfortable discriminating against either candidate. On the other hand, the participants who ended up saying they would choose both candidates said they could not decide based only on the CV alone and would therefore need to have more information about both candidates, which would be possible at the interview phase. In other words, they would need access to more information at later stages of the R&S process. This argument used by our participants is in line with studies by Sackett et al. (2021), which reinforces the idea that combining selection techniques during R&S processes, such as interviews, cognitive tests, and personality assessments, provides the recruiter with a better prediction of the performance of a given candidate than the use of one technique – in this case, CV analysis - alone. In other words, the use of combined techniques allows the recruiter to make a more informed decision, and this could contribute to non-discriminatory decisions.

However, throughout their discourses, without being directly asked about the topic, more than half of the participants (18 participants) ended up admitting in their statements that they discriminate against older workers. They also justified this discriminatory behavior by saying

that older workers are very close to retirement age and that, due to their extensive experience, they have higher salary expectations, which also negatively affects recruiters' views about them. About younger candidates, there was also age discrimination during R&S processes, although the number of participants who mentioned this was lower (6 participants), less than 50% of our sample. They justified these statements by mentioning these workers' lack of experience and their disloyalty to their organizations.

Therefore, we can say that even though the perception of older workers is mostly positive, this has no impact on the decision-making regarding R&S processes, since our participants continue to opt for younger workers. This tells us that recruiters tend to choose younger candidates over older ones, in a direct choice situation between younger and older candidates, suggesting that there is age discrimination against older workers on the recruiter's side in R&S processes.

In addition to the existence of discriminatory behaviors, these results are seen to be explained by a situation of cognitive dissonance (Dechawatanapaisal & Siengthai, 2006), which refers to a psychological condition in which there are inconsistencies between the participants' beliefs and the way they act. According to Derous & Ryan (2019), recruiters' decisions during R&S processes can also be influenced by other heuristics since recruiters' perceptions can be shaped not only by past experiences but also by factors such as the format of the CV and its presentation of information.

We also wanted to understand whether the recruiters' perspectives on the R&S process, namely on the importance of the candidate's age in the final decision of R&S processes, were aligned with the R&S practice implemented by the organization in this scope.

Looking at this subject from an organizational perspective, several participants simultaneously stated that there are and are not age stereotypes in the organization, especially concerning the importance of the age factor of candidates for organizations, which reveals incongruity in the participants' discourse. Once again, and as we mentioned above, the participants who stated both realities at the same time may have answered less truthfully so as not to denounce what happens within organizations, aligning themselves with socially desirable statements and scenarios.

Based on these results, when we asked our participants to tell us about the possibility of conducting an R&S process in an ageist way, i.e., considering that the candidate's age is a determining factor in decision-making during an R&S process, most of them denied this reality. However, when we redirected the participants' gaze to the reality experienced at an organizational level, most of them stated that the R&S practice at the organizational level was

based on ageist assumptions, i.e., that the age of candidates is a relevant factor for organizations, particularly when choosing candidates during R&S processes. According to Nederhof (1985), when we redirected the recruiters' gaze to the organizational level and made them think from the organization's point of view, we adopted the "proxy subjects" method, which made it possible to reduce the social desirability of the participants, reducing the pressure to respond in a socially acceptable way.

When asked the participants if they were aligned with their organizations and if they agreed with the implemented organizational R&S practice regarding the importance of a candidate's age in the decision-making of the R&S processes, 14 participants mentioned they were aligned with their organization, 15 participants mentioned they were not aligned with their organizations and 7 participants mentioned both, i.e., contradicted themselves and expressed simultaneously alignment and non-alignment with their organizations. According to Posthuma & Campion (2009), participants who claimed to be aligned with the R&S practice at an organizational level may not be fully aware of how such practice can be ageist and how it influences recruiters when making decisions regarding R&S processes. Many participants said that they had never thought about how their organizations perpetuate ageist stereotypes in their HR management policies and practices. On the other hand, participants who advocated simultaneous alignment and non-alignment, even though they may be aware of ageist practices at an organizational level, may not feel able or willing to expose them (Posthuma & Campion, 2009).

Given these results, we can say that recruiters may feel uncomfortable admitting that their views on the R&S process are biased, and when facing conflicts between organizational R&S practice and their personal beliefs, they tend to hold the organization responsible for the decision. In addition, based on the high number of participants who pointed out that organizations adopt an ageist R&S practice, and based on previous research (e.g., Gringart & Helmes, 2001; Cappelli & Novelli, 2013), we can argue that there are strong indications of age discrimination on the part of the organization, since age is an important factor for organizations when facing an R&S process. These results also suggest that organizational culture and the R&S practice in HR departments can perpetuate ageist stereotypes. Previous research suggests that age-related stereotypes are adopted by organizations, leading to situations of age discrimination during R&S processes, but these stereotypes are also present on the recruiters' side, having the ability to influence their decision-making regarding both older and younger workers during R&S processes (e.g., Toomey & Rudolph, 2017). We also found that there is discrimination against both younger and older candidates on the part of the recruiters, although

it is more pronounced among older candidates since 27,3% of participants showed ageism towards younger candidates and 81,8% showed ageism towards older candidates. These results agree with the literature (e.g., Patient et al., 2024) that ageism can be conceived as bidirectional, with older workers showing negative attitudes toward younger workers and younger workers having negative attitudes and beliefs toward older workers.

Therefore, our results are in line with the literature (Ng & Feldman, 2012) since age discrimination is perpetuated by both recruiters and organizations. Also, this investigation has shown that, although age discrimination exists towards both older and younger workers, it is more prevalent against the older ones.

4.1. Theoretical and practical implications

4.1.1 Theoretical implications

The results of this study make significant contributions to the field of research on ageism in R&S processes, especially in the Portuguese organizational context.

Firstly, although the phenomenon of ageism has been widely recognized in previous studies, literature in the field of Social Psychology indicates that most of the research into ageism is unilateral, only focusing on how older workers are perceived in the labor market (e.g., Batinovic et al., 2023). This research proved that there is a stereotypical view of older workers, but also a stereotypical view of younger workers, as we were able to find stereotypes (positive, negative, and neutral) for both groups of workers and candidates. Older workers are perceived in a mostly positive way by our participants, while the perspective regarding younger workers is mixed even though a positive perspective prevails. In this sense, our study confirms that ageism is a bidirectional phenomenon (Patient et al., 2024).

Secondly, there are a few published studies on age discrimination in the workplace in Portugal (e.g., Mário et al., 2024), but we did not find any studies that looked at age discrimination during the R&S processes, more specifically during the CV screening phase. The existing literature on age discrimination during R&S processes in organizations in Portugal is “grey literature” (master’s thesis, PhD dissertations, and non-scientific articles). Of the few studies that have investigated the existence of age discrimination during R&S processes, the majority have not focused on the reasons behind age discrimination from the recruiter’s perspective (Derous & Decoster, 2017). Our research reveals that age stereotypes are complex, showing that although recruiters’ opinions of older workers are mostly positive, this does not translate into the choice of older candidates during an R&S process. Previous studies suggested

the need for more in-depth research into how negative attitudes toward workers and candidates influence the employment-related decisions of both older and younger workers (Fasbender & Wang, 2017). Our investigation fills a gap in the existent literature, showing that, in Portuguese organizations, positive perceptions about older workers do not automatically translate into a decision in favor of this group of workers, with older workers being discriminated against more than younger workers in a direct comparison between these two groups.

Thirdly, few studies have understood how recruiters' attitudes, practices, and views towards older and younger workers have been shared with organizations, i.e., whether age is a relevant factor for organizations, playing an influential role in recruiters' decision-making during R&S processes (e.g., Blackham, 2019). Our study set out to investigate this question and found that many recruiters claim that age is a relevant factor for organizations when making decisions regarding R&S processes, reporting a lack of alignment between themselves and their organizations. These results fill a gap in the literature, suggesting the existence of age discrimination on the side of the organizations, as well as the existence of other factors (organizational pressure, organizational norms, and implicit prejudices) that may come into play, highlighting the importance of the organizational context in decisions regarding R&S processes in organizations in Portugal.

4.1.2. Practical implications

The aging population, with more generations coexisting in the organizational workforce than ever, increases the age diversity in organizations. Therefore, this reality can pose challenges regarding intergenerational relations and the inclusion and diversity of all ages (Patient et al., 2024). Consequently, organizational age diversity increases the risk of age discrimination due to negative stereotypes (Bayl-Smith & Griffin, 2014).

Our investigation highlights the importance for organizations and recruiters to take seriously the threat of this form of discrimination in the workplace if they want to maintain highly engaged and motivated employees. Therefore, we can state that this thesis has important implications for organizations, individuals (recruiters, workers, candidates, etc.), and society, in general. Combating ageism towards older and younger workers is a key to promoting equity and fostering an inclusive work environment, as well as maximizing the potential contributions of workers from all age groups.

The results show that age discrimination occurs in the selection of candidates when CVs are screened. We therefore suggest that organizations review their HR practices and policies

about R&S processes, more specifically concerning CV screening. HR practices and policies are crucial to meet these challenges since the success of any organization depends on a competent, motivated, and involved workforce (Patient et al., 2024). Therefore, we believe that recruiters should be trained to carry out age-sensitive R&S processes when CV screening (e.g., Drydakis et al., 2017). Furthermore, in terms of HR management, we recommend adopting policies that address the issues of age diversity with clear guidelines that prohibit exclusionary practices based solely on the chronological age of candidates, both for younger and older workers, thus making it possible to increase opportunities for these groups of workers and, consequently, increase levels of labor engagement (Bayl-Smith & Griffin, 2014). While training and the establishment of anti-discrimination procedures are important, it is also important to create CV templates in which not only is age not mentioned, but in which it is possible to emphasize the skills that workers develop from their professional experiences, without the need to date them.

Algorithmic decision-making in HR and HR departments is becoming increasingly common as a new source of advice (Köchling & Wehner, 2020). Although some organizations implement algorithmic decision-making to save costs and increase efficiency and objectivity, algorithmic decision-making can also lead to unfair treatment and implicit age discrimination of certain groups of people, namely younger and older workers. Indeed, current knowledge on algorithmic decision-making is largely unexplored in the context of HR management, but the literature seems to suggest that these do not increase the objectivity in the R&S process, nor do reduce the possibility of age discrimination.

According to the obtained results, we can affirm the prevalence of age-based stereotypes towards older and younger candidates, which suggests ageist behaviors against these candidates when hiring them. Organizations should address the often-existing negative stereotypes about older and younger workers, which are mostly false. (Beier et al., 2022), and encourage the creation of positive stereotypes (Fasbender & Wang, 2017). Creating this climate and culture and valuing age can be achieved both at work – through the formation of teams made up of people of different ages – and in an environment outside work, such as team buildings and moments of socialization (e.g., Christmas dinner) that allow workers of different ages to get together, namely older and younger workers. The intergroup contact theory (Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013), which has its origins in Gordon Allport's contact hypothesis, argues that people who engage in intergroup contact are likely to be less prejudiced towards members of other groups than those who do not have such experiences.

With the results showing that ageism is such a prevalent and highly accepted form of discrimination in the workplace, policymakers can play an important role in considering initiatives to combat ageism towards younger and older workers. These initiatives should involve different actors beyond governments, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), organizations, and academia (e.g., Patient et al., 2024). Political actors and governments can, for example, offer tax incentives to companies that demonstrate inclusive R&S practices, such as hiring workers from different age groups, and that also implement intergenerational mentoring programs, where both younger and older workers can learn and grow professionally together. NGOs can, on the one hand, conduct research and publish reports that highlight the harmful impacts of ageism in the workplace and, on the other hand, the benefits of workplaces that are age-diverse, providing evidence-based recommendations for policymakers at the organizational level. NGOs and policymakers must recognize that ageism is bidirectional and that they should not focus on just one age group, as this would be counterproductive.

4.2. Limitations and future research

Despite the important contributions of this study, it is important to highlight its limitations.

Firstly, the sample used in this study is mostly made up of recruiters, which is a limitation – it does not include many HR Managers who make final decisions regarding R&S processes, for example. For this reason, we suggest carrying out studies that combine different methods (mixed methods approach), in which we can, for example, listen to organizational representatives to complement the perspectives we already obtained from this investigation.

Secondly, in this study, as mentioned before, interview-based data collection was subject to social desirability bias, where participants respond in ways that align with social norms to avoid appearing prejudiced, which may consequently underestimate the true extent of ageism. Therefore, the use of other data resource methods (e.g., observation in the participants' workplace), could have been beneficial for this study.

Thirdly, the use of a hypothetical scenario (CV exercise) to evaluate recruiters' choices may not fully capture the behavior of recruiters in real R&S situations. Recruiters may respond differently in a controlled environment than they would in practice in a real environment, where they are subject to organizational pressures, leaders' pressure, and other external influences.

Fourthly, the fact that our sample was recruited through a snowball method meant that we had no deliberate control over the characteristics of the participants (e.g., gender, age) and their work context (e.g., sector of activity). In this sense, our sample is very homogeneous in terms

of gender and age, with the majority being females, aged between 23 and 25 years old, who work mainly in the services (7 participants) and technology (8 participants) sectors. Therefore, the results may reflect the practices and policies of a specific group but do not necessarily represent the broader scenario experienced by organizations in Portugal.

On the other hand, as our sample was very homogeneous, it was not possible to conclude what influence the age of recruiters has on the hiring of younger and older candidates, i.e., whether older recruiters tend to recruit older candidates and whether younger recruiters tend to recruit younger candidates. Therefore, we suggest conducting studies with larger and more diverse samples that allow for a better exploration of this relationship. The same study could be applied to understand whether the sector of activity for which recruiters work has an impact on ageist decision-making during R&S processes in organizations in Portugal. Using qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, could provide detailed insights into how and in what way the age of recruiters and the sector of activity they work for may or may not influence decision-making during R&S processes. We also suggest that future research consider the importance of the intersectionality of age discrimination, i.e., that they study age in conjugation with other demographic characteristics of the participants, such as ethnicity or gender (e.g., Potter et al., 2019).

Finally, the analysis of recruiters' perceptions and their self-assessment of the alignment or lack thereof with organizational R&S practice can be subjective and vary significantly between participants, which makes it difficult to obtain a clear and objective understanding of the alignment or misalignment between recruiters and organizations, creating a gap between reported perception and real actions. Therefore, future studies (e.g., longitudinal research) should be able to understand, over time, whether the recruiter's alignment or misalignment with the organizations is a reality, especially when it comes to the importance of age in decision-making during R&S processes. This study would make it possible to observe changes in recruiters' perceptions.

Conclusion

Based on the initial objectives and methodology, we collected data on how recruiters' positive or negative views of both younger and older candidates affect decision-making in R&S processes. Additionally, data was also gathered on how recruiters' opinions about the importance of age in hiring align with the actual R&S practices implemented by organizations.

The results show that older workers are viewed more positively by recruiters and that recruiters have a mixed view of younger workers, although with a more positive than a negative slant. However, during the application of the CV exercise, among the participants who opted to choose one candidate over the other, they chose the younger candidate as their favorite to move forward in the hypothetical R&S process. Then, these results allow us to conclude that the positive view that recruiters have of older candidates does not influence the final decision they make during R&S processes. Throughout this investigation, we have concluded that although age discrimination does exist on the part of Portuguese recruiters towards older and younger workers, it is more prevalent against older workers. This evidence reminds us of the importance of creating a CV template in which the age of candidates is not mentioned, emphasizing the skills that workers developed throughout their professional careers, rather than dating them. At the same time, it is relevant for recruiters to be trained to carry out age-sensitive R&S processes when examining older and younger candidates' CVs.

We invited the participants to think about how the candidates' age is a decisive factor during R&S processes by the organizations they work for. When we asked whether their perspectives as recruiters about this topic on the R&S process were aligned with the R&S practice implemented by organizations, the data made it clear that more than half of them were not aligned with this perspective. In other words, the participants suggested that age is an important factor for the R&S practice at an organizational level, even if their views on this issue were not aligned with the organization's practice. This therefore suggests the existence of age discrimination at an organizational level in Portugal. It is therefore important for organizations to highlight positive stereotypes about older and younger workers by creating an age-friendly organizational culture that leads to an appreciation of age diversity in the workplace. This can be achieved in the workplace by forming teams that are made up of workers of different ages, namely younger and older workers, and outside the work context, through team building and moments of socialization that encourage contact between workers of different ages.

So, as we can understand, the data shows that there is age discrimination during R&S processes in organizations in Portugal, particularly at the stage of CV screening, which is perpetuated both by recruiters and the organizations themselves.

Finally, this investigation does not aim to generalize the results, but it is intended as a contribution to society in general, by showing that age discrimination against younger and older workers continues to be one of the most accepted forms of discrimination in the workplace. Policymakers, governments, and NGOs have a crucial role to play in combating ageism in the workplace since they can offer incentives to companies that demonstrate inclusive R&S practices while promoting intergenerational mentoring programs.

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Annexes

Annex A

Informed Consent

The present study is strictly for academic purposes and is part of research for the dissertation of the Master's program in Human Resources Management and Organizational Consulting at ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa. The study aims to identify the motives for choosing one candidate over another during the Recruitment and Selection process. Your participation in this study, which is highly appreciated as it will contribute to advancing knowledge in this field of science, involves participating in an individual online interview. It will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa is responsible for the processing of your data that are collected and processed exclusively for the study, legally based on Article 6(a) of the GDPR.

The study is conducted by Maria Madalena Pereira Vinha (mmpva@iscte-iul.pt), who you may contact to clear up any doubts, share comments, or exercise your rights in relation to the processing of your personal data. You may use the contact indicated above to request access, rectification, erasure, or limitation of the processing of your personal data. It is supervised by Professor Inês Carneiro e Sousa, an Integrated Researcher at the CIES – Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology (ines_carneiro_sousa@iscte-iul.pt). Your participation in this study is confidential. Your personal data will always be processed by authorised personnel bound to the duty of secrecy and confidentiality. ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa assures the use of appropriate techniques, organisational and security measures to protect personal information. All investigators are required to keep all personal data confidential.

In addition to being confidential, participation in the study is strictly voluntary: you may choose freely whether to participate or not. If you have decided to participate, you may stop your participation and withdraw your consent to the processing of your personal data at any time, without having to provide any justification. The withdrawal of consent shall not affect the lawfulness of processing based on consent before its withdrawal.

Your personal data will be kept for one year, after which they will be anonymized and with their anonymity being assured in the study's results, being disclosed only for purposes of statistics, teaching, communication in scientific meetings, books, or articles.

There are no expected significant risks associated with participation in the study. ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa does not disclose, or share with third parties, information related to its personal data.

ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa has a Data Protection Officer who may be contacted by e-mail: dpo@iscte-iul.pt. If you consider this necessary, you also have the right to submit a complaint to the Portuguese Data Protection Authority (Comissão Nacional de Proteção de Dados – CNPD).

☐ I declare that **I have understood** the objectives of what was proposed and explained to me by the researcher, and I have been given the opportunity to ask all questions about the present study and have received clear answers. I accept participating in the study and consent to my personal data being used in accordance with the information that was given to me.

☐ I do not agree/do not want to participate in this study.

_____ (place), ____/____/____ (date)

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Annex B

Semi-structured interview script

BLOCK	QUESTIONS
<u>Block A:</u> Legitimizing the Interview and Motivating the Interviewees <i>(Estimated average time: 5 minutes)</i>	- Present the informed consent and collect the participant's signature
<u>Block B:</u> Personal Background and Professional Career <i>(Estimated Average time: 10 minutes)</i>	<i>Personal Background</i> - How old are you? - What is your gender? - Could you tell me about your educational background? <i>Professional Career</i> - How many years of experience do you have in your field? - What is your current role in your organization and what is the industry of your organization? - In your professional career, what were the biggest challenges you faced?
<u>Block C:</u> Recruitment Process and Decision-Making <i>(Estimated average time: 10-12 minutes)</i>	- Can you describe the typical recruitment and selection process at your organization? - What role do you play in the recruitment and selection process? - When evaluating candidates, what specific criteria or attributes do you consider most important? - How do you make decisions regarding candidate selection? Are there specific factors that influence your decisions?

	- Have you observed any differences in the way younger and older candidates are evaluated during the recruitment process? If so, can you describe these differences? - Can you provide examples of situations where you've had to choose between a younger and an older candidate for a position? How did you make the decision, and why did you make the decision? What were the outcomes?
<u>Block D:</u> Biases in the R&S Process <i>(Estimated average time: 7 minutes)</i>	- Are you aware of any stereotypes that exist in your industry or organization related to candidates' age and work experience? - Can you provide examples where you believe biases influenced recruitment decisions regarding candidates' age and experience?
<u>Block E:</u> Organizational Biases and Recruitment <i>(Estimated average time: 15 minutes)</i>	- How do you think your personal beliefs align with your organization's commitment to fair recruitment regarding candidate's age? - Can you recall any situations where your personal ideas conflicted with your organization's guidelines for the recruitment process? How did you handle these situations? - We are finishing our interview. Would you like to add something?
<u>Block F</u>	- Thanking participants - Deliver the debriefing

Annex C

Exercise of a hypothetical recruitment and selection process

REQUIREMENTS FOR A RECRUITER (HR) POSITION AT NEXACORE

We are looking for a Recruiter for the Lisbon region, with a profile oriented toward candidate and client management. We value a versatile profile with analytical and organizational skills, experience in recruitment roles, a focus on goals, and excellent customer service.

Your **responsibilities** will include:

- Managing recruitment and selection requests in the temporary and permanent placement work area;
- Managing job postings and diversifying new recruitment sources;
- Conducting interviews and preparing candidate reports for presentation to clients

If you're interested, please send your CV in English to career@nexacore.pt with the reference "HR RECRUITER"

NexaCore has been recognized as one of the 50 Best Companies to work in Portugal and as an Inclusive Employer. Join this winning team! We look forward to having you.

We are committed to providing a work environment that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion, allowing equal employment opportunities without distinction based on race, gender, age, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other legally protected status.

HR RECRUITER CV – Ana Maria Melo

Name: Ana Maria Pereira Melo

Address: Travessa das Oliveiras, Bloco 3ª, Lisboa-Portugal

Birth Date: 15. Setembro. 1970

E-mail address: anamaria.melo@gmail.com

Phone Number: (+351) 936 301 942

Professional Summary: A seasoned recruitment professional with a versatile skill set, offering strong analytical and organizational abilities. Proven track record in managing temporary and permanent placement, conducting interviews, and preparing candidate reports.

Key Skills:

- Over two decades of experience in Recruitment and Selection;
- Managed recruitment processes for diverse industries in Lisbon;
- Expertise in job posting management and sourcing strategies;
- Conducted thousands of interviews, assessing candidates for various roles;

Work Experience:

(March 2015 - Present)

Recruitment Manager (ABC Recruitment Agency, Lisbon)

- Successfully managed recruitment and selection processes for over 50 clients in Lisbon, including industries such as IT, healthcare, and manufacturing;
- Diversified recruitment sources by forming partnerships with Lisbon universities, leading to a 30% increase in local talent pool;
- Conducted over 2000 interviews and assessments, providing clients with comprehensive candidate reports, resulting in a 90% placement satisfaction rate

(February 2010 – March 2015)

Senior Recruiter (GQ HR Solutions, Lisbon)

- Oversaw the recruitment of mid to senior-level positions for key clients in Lisbon's technology and engineering sectors;
- Managed 50+ job postings, maintaining a 95% fill rate and attracting top talent in a competitive job market;
- Maintaining long-term client relationships, becoming the go-to recruiter for their staffing needs

(May 2000 – February 2010)

Recruitment Specialist (PQR Consulting – Lisbon)

- Specialized in candidate sourcing and pre-screening for IT and engineering roles;
- Introduced innovative candidate sourcing strategies, including exclusive partnerships with Lisbon's top technical institutes;
- Administered technical skills tests and reference checks for candidates, ensuring high-quality profiles for clients

(July 1998 – May 2000)

Junior Recruiter (DIS Recruitment Agency – Lisbon)

- Assisted senior recruiters in sourcing and screening candidates, gaining exposure to recruitment processes;
- Collaborated with national and international clients to understand their specific hiring needs, developing job postings and attracting potential candidates;
- Supported in conducting interviews and preparing candidate reports

Education:

- Bachelor's degree in human resources management at ISCTE (Lisbon, Portugal) – Graduated in 1998

Professional Development:

- Completed 100+ hours of continuous training in Recruitment and Selection and Interview Techniques
- Certified in Diversity and Inclusion Best Practices

Languages:

- Portuguese: Native
- English: B2
- French: B1

References: Available upon request

HR RECRUITER CV – Sofia Pinto

Name: Sofia Rodrigues Pinto

Address: Rua dos Pinheiros Verdes, Lote 12, Apartamento 10 (Lisboa-Portugal)

Birth Date: 20. November. 2000

E-mail address: sofia.pinto@gmail.com

Phone Number: (+351) 923 432 104

Professional Skills: A dynamic and goal-oriented recruiter with experience in managing candidate relationships, conducting interviews, and sourcing top talent. Possesses a strong work ethic and a keen focus on delivering results.

Key Skills:

- Innovative Recruitment and Selection tools – LinkedIn Recruiter, Boolean Search, Long List and Applicant Tracking System (ATS)
- Interviewing and Assessment
- Job Posting and Sourcing
- Goal-driven and results-oriented
- Excellent Communication

Work Experience:

(May 2021 – Present)

Recruitment Coordinator (TalentHub – Lisbon)

- Effectively manage recruitment and selection processes for clients in various industries, including IT, Finance, and Healthcare;
- Collaborate with clients to understand their hiring needs and develop tailored recruitment strategies
- Conduct interviews and assessments, providing detailed candidate profiles and recommendations to clients

(July 2019 – April 2021)

Junior Recruiter (TalentHub – Lisbon)

- Assisted in sourcing and pre-screening candidates for a range of entry-level positions, gaining valuable recruitment experience of entry-level positions, gaining valuable recruitment experience;
- Coordinated job postings on various platforms, optimizing visibility and attracting a diverse talent pool;
- Collaborated with senior recruitments to conduct interviews and assessments, learning the nuances of effective candidate evaluation

(January 2018 – July 2019)

Recruiter Intern (TalentHub – Lisbon)

- Supported the recruitment team with administrative tasks, including candidate data management and scheduling interviews;
- Assisted in coordinating job fairs and recruitment events, increasing the company's visibility among potential candidates;
- Gained insights into the importance of diversity and inclusion in the hiring process

Education:

- Bachelor's degree in Human Resources Management at ISCTE Business School – Graduated in 2020

Professional Development:

- Participated in workshops on Advanced Interview Techniques
- Certificate in Diversity and Inclusion in HR Management

Languages:

- Portuguese: Native
- English: B2
- Spanish: B1

References: Available upon request

Annex D

Total of occurrences per participant, per category, and subcategory

Dimension	Category	Subcategory	P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6	P 7	P 8	P 9	P 10	P 11	P 12	P 13	P 14	P 15	P 16	P 17	P 18	P 19	P 20	P 21	P 22	Total no. of occurrences
R&S insights	R&S role	Interviews	1	3	1	1	1	2	2	2		2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	2		1	30
		CV screening	1	1	1	2	1			1			1		2	1	2		2		1			1	17
		Decision-making	1						1		1	1		1	1	1	1	1						2	11
		Headhunting				1						1		1				1		1			2		7
		Assessments																	1						1
	Attributes valued in candidates	Soft skills	3		1			5	4	2	4	3	3	2	4	1	3	1		6	3	5	1	5	56
		Hard Skills	1	2		2			3	3	2	2		2	1	2		3	1	3	1			4	32
		Length of experience						2	1	2		2		1	2	1	2		2	1	2	1	3	1	23
		Salary expectations								1		3			1			2		1					8
		Past job tenure															1	1		2		1	3		8
		Academic background								1				1				1	2		1			2	8
		Organizational fit						1	1					1				1							4
		Age																	1						1
Age stereotypes in R&S processes	Recruiter age-related stereotypes	Absent		1		2	1	3	4		2		1	2	3		2	6	1	4	2	2	4	7	47
		Present			2			5		1	2	5	2	3		1	1			1	1			2	26
	Age-related stereotypes: older candidates	Positive	10		5	1	1	2	1	1	6	1	2	6	5	1	6	3			5	1	2	2	61
		Negative	2			1		1			1	4			1		2	1	1		1				15

		Neutral			2			1		1				1				1		1	1				8
	Age-related stereotypes: younger candidates	Positive	4	1	2		1		5	1	12	4	2	2	4	3	8	4	2		2			2	59
		Negative	10		3	1	3	4	1		6		3	2	4	2	2	2	1		2	1	2		49
		Neutral		1	2			2			3	1		1	1		1	1	1		1		2		17
Organizational practices and age stereotypes	Organizational age-related stereotypes	Present	4	2	3	1	1	3	3	7	2	2	1	8		1	8		1	4	1		2		54
		Absent		1		5			3		2		2	1	1			2			2	1	1	1	22
	Recruiter alignment with the organizational R&S practice	Not aligned	2	3	3				3	3	1	5		1	1		3	2	1	3	3		1		35
		Aligned				2	2	5	2				3		1	1		1	1	1	1	2	1	3	26
Age discrimination in effective R&S decisions	Age discrimination: older candidates		3	4	2			2	2	2	3	8	1	3	2	3	3	2	2	2		1	2		47
	Ag discrimination: younger candidates		1			1					3			1		2					1				9
	Reasons for age discrimination: older candidates	High salary expectations	2		8	1		2		3			1	2					3	1					23
		Nearing retirement										2		1		1	3	3	2	2		1	2		17
		Health issues			1				3				1				1								6
		Training costs														1							1		2
		Perceived inability to learn										1										1			2

	Reasons for age discrimination: younger candidates	Lack of Experience		1	2	2			1											1					7
		Perceived disloyalty			1		1	1			2					1									6
		Immaturity																					1		1
		Training costs													1										1
Age discrimination in the CVs exercise	Selection preference	Both candidates				2			3	1	2	1	1		2		1			3	1			1	18
		Younger candidates	1	1	1		1								1		1	1				2			9
		Older candidates						1						1									1		3
	Decision criteria	Relevant experience	1	2	1			2			2	1		1	1	2		1	1	1	1	3	1		21
		Salary expectations							1					1				3					2		7
		Expertise in R&S tools					2				1				1				1	1					6
		Innovative mindset					2													1	1				4
		Age	2																			1			3
		Job market awareness	1						1		1														3
		Suitability										1					1								2
		Adaptability										1													1
		Language skills																					1		1

Annex E

Categories Dictionary

Dimension	Category	Subcategory	Definition
R&S insights	R&S role	Interviews	Description of the conversation between a recruiters or HR managers and a candidate for a job vacancy
		CV screening	Evaluation of candidates' CVs to determine whether they meet the requirements of the vacancy (manually or through automated software)
		Decision-making	Narration of the process by which recruiters analyze the information gathered during the various stages of the R&S process to make informed choices about which candidates will be hired.
		Headhunting	Description of the practice of actively seeking out candidates to fill specific positions within the organization, through networking and professional platforms (e.g., LinkedIn Recruiter)
		Assessments	Enumeration of structured assessments to measure the skills, knowledge, physical and cognitive abilities, which may include psychometric assessments or technical skills tests
	Attributes valued in candidates	Soft skills	Narration of interpersonal skills and behavioral competencies (e.g., effective communication, teamwork, adaptability) that influence employees' success
		Hard skills	Description of the technical skills and specific knowledge (e.g., programming, fluency on foreign languages, data analysis, or use of software) that are necessary to carry out functions and tasks related to the position
		Length of experience	Identification of the total experience that the candidate has already as a proxy of expertise and familiarity with the position
		Salary expectations	Narration of the candidates' financial expectations regarding remuneration for the position, including base salary, bonuses, benefits and other compensation components
		Past job tenure	Identification of the length of time candidates remained in their previous positions

		Academic background	Description of the candidate's educational qualifications, including diplomas, certificates, and other academic training
		Organizational fit	Identification of the candidate's values, behaviors, and beliefs that are aligned with the organization's culture, mission, and vision, to ensure person-organization fit
		Age	Consideration of the candidate's age as a factor in the hiring decision
Age stereotypes in R&S processes	Recruiter age-related stereotypes	Absent	Absence of age-related stereotypes in R&S processes
		Present	Presence of age-related stereotypes in R&S processes
	Age-related stereotypes: older workers	Positive	Age-related stereotypes are applied in a positive way, resulting in a favorable perception of older candidates during R&S processes
		Negative	Age-related stereotypes are applied in a negative way, resulting in an unfavorable perception of older candidates during R&S processes
		Neutral	Age-related stereotypes are applied in a neutral way, resulting in a neutral perception of older candidates during R&S processes
	Age-related stereotypes: younger candidates	Positive	Age-related stereotypes are applied in a positive way, resulting in a favorable perception of younger candidates during R&S processes
		Negative	Age-related stereotypes are applied in a negative way, resulting in an unfavorable perception of younger candidates during R&S processes
		Neutral	Age-related stereotypes are applied in a neutral way, resulting in a neutral perception of younger candidates during R&S processes
Organizational practices and age stereotypes	Organizational age-related stereotypes	Present	Description of the presence of age stereotypes in R&S policies, practices, and decisions, which includes entrenched beliefs or prejudices about the capabilities, attitudes, or performance of workers based on their age
		Absent	Description of the absence of age stereotypes within the organization, indicating that R&S practices and decisions are conducted without the influence of age-related prejudices
	Recruiter alignment with organizational R&S practice	Not aligned	Misalignment between the views of recruiters and the organization on the importance of the age factor in R&S processes
		Aligned	Alignment between the views of recruiters and the organization on the importance of the age factor in R&S processes
Age discrimination in effective R&S decisions	Age discrimination: older candidates		Description of prejudice or unfair treatment of older candidates during R&S processes based on their age, encompassing actions, attitudes or decisions that devalue, marginalize, or exclude older candidates

	Age discrimination: younger candidates		Description of prejudice or unfair treatment of younger candidates during R&S processes based on their age, encompassing actions, attitudes or decision that devalue, marginalize or exclude younger candidates
	Reasons for age discrimination: older candidates	High salary expectations	Perception that older candidates tend to demand higher salaries
		Nearing retirement	Description of the idea that older candidates are close to retirement
		Health issues	Narration of the perception that older candidates may be more likely to face health problems
		Training costs	Identification of recruiters' concern that older candidates may require more time and resources for training
		Perceived inability to learn	Assumption that older candidates are less capable of learning or adapt to changes in the way they work
	Reasons for age discrimination: younger candidates	Lack of experience	Perception that younger candidates have little or insufficient work experience
		Perceived disloyalty	Perception that younger candidates are less loyal to organizations and more likely to change jobs frequently
		Immaturity	Identification that younger candidates may be less mature or lacking the seriousness
		Training costs	Identification that younger candidates may require significant training to acquire new skills and knowledge needed to fulfill their roles
Age discrimination in the CVs exercise	Selection preference	Both candidates	Preferences for both younger and older candidates during the R&S process
		Younger candidate	Preference for selecting younger candidates over older candidates during the R&S process
		Older candidate	Preference for selecting older candidates over younger candidates during the R&S process
	Decision criteria	Relevant experience	Importance attached to the candidate's previous experience in functions or sectors directly related to the position in question
		Salary expectations	Consideration of candidates' salary expectations as a decisive factor in the R&S process
		Expertise in R&S tools	Identification of the importance of the candidate knowing how to use R&S tools (e.g., ATS) that automate, simplify and organize the various stages of the R&S process
		Innovative mindset	Importance of a proactive and creative attitude on the part of the candidate, showing a willingness to propose new ideas, methods and solutions

		Age	Narration of the importance of the candidate's age as an explicit criterion in the R&S process
		Job market awareness	Identification of the candidate's understanding and knowledge of current labor market trends, job opportunities, industry demands, and up-and-coming skills as important criteria in the candidate's selection
		Suitability	Perception that both candidates (older and younger) have qualities and skills that make them equally suitable for the job
		Adaptability	Identification of the candidate's ability to adjust quickly to changes, new environments, and different demands in the workplace
		Language skills	Identification of the candidate's proficiency in one or more languages, which can be a decisive factor in R&S processes