

Intergenerational Relations and Psychosocial Risks Among Late-Career Workers: A Study Conducted Among Employees of CEVITAL, Bejaia-Algéria

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Abstract:

This study examines how intergenerational relationships affect psychosocial risks among late-career employees. A qualitative study of 15 CEVITAL employees aged over 50 identified three relationship types: cooperative, distant, and conflictual. Burnout emerged as the main psychosocial risk, with poor relationships with younger colleagues increasing emotional exhaustion, stress, lower job satisfaction, and intentions for early retirement. These effects were influenced by personal mechanisms, including identity strategies, adaptation, and self-regulation, as well as organizational mechanisms such as intergenerational management, communication, and supportive workplace policies. The findings highlight the importance of promoting positive intergenerational relationships and effective organizational practices to improve older employees' well-being, reduce burnout, delay early retirement, and support longer careers.

Keywords: Occupational Psychology; Intergenerational Relationships; Psychosocial Risks; Late-Career Workers; Early Retirement Intention.

1. Introduction

In an organizational context marked by the progressive aging of the workforce and the coexistence of multiple generations within companies, intergenerational relationships have become a critical issue for human resource management and the preservation of occupational health. Late-career employees, in particular, occupy a distinctive position at the intersection of knowledge transfer, adaptation to organizational change, and the maintenance of employability. However, these interactions are inherently ambivalent: while they may foster cooperation, social support, and the sharing of experience, they can also give rise to misunderstandings, value-based conflicts, and forms of marginalization.

The framework shows that intergenerational connections between workers create conditions that produce psychosocial risks, leading to occupational stress, burnout, and increased turnover intentions. How these social connections affect psychological health and workplace well-being therefore warrants further investigation.

The present study examines employees in their last career years at CEVITAL in Béjaïa, focusing on how different generations relate through cooperative, distant, or conflictual interactions, and how these affect the psychosocial risks most prevalent among late-career workers, namely burnout and early retirement intentions. The study also aims to identify the underlying factors driving these processes and to propose strategies for preventing psychosocial risks and improving human resource management practices.

Study Problem

The demographic profile of the Algerian workforce has undergone significant structural changes over recent years. These changes have largely occurred as a result of the termination of early retirement policies, the increase in the statutory retirement age to 62 years, and the slowing of recruitment in most sectors of the economy, apart from those related to information and communication technologies. These factors have led to the extension of the working lives of Algerian workers and the restructuring of organizational workforces. According to (Sahraoui, 2013), the Algerian workforce is experiencing demographic aging, with an increasing number of retirees and individuals in the upper echelons of the age pyramid. This demographic change is placing pressure upon the country's pension system and necessitating workforce reforms that extend the working lives of Algerian citizens.

The reforms to extend the working lives of Algerian workers have both benefits and consequences for the country's organizations. For example, many organizations now contain multiple generations of employees, with each generation possessing different skills and knowledge of the organization. These changes to the workforce have altered the social climate within organizations, as employees from different generations may experience tensions due to their differing skills and knowledge of the organization. For instance, younger employees may have skills in information and communication technologies, while older employees may have more experience in the organization but less knowledge of these technologies. According to (North & Fiske, 2015), these workforce dynamics can lead to intergenerational tensions within organizations.

These tensions within the workforce can lead to ambivalent relationships between employees of different generations. Such relationships may be based upon the complementarity of the workforce's skills between generations, or based upon conflicts between these generations. If organizations do not have mechanisms in place to manage these relationships between generations, such as intergenerational communication systems or training, employees may experience conflicts in their values and practices within the organization (Lahouze-Humbert, 2010; Delay, 2008; Lahouze-Humbert, 2010; Rudolph, Rauvola, Costanza, & Zacher, 2021; Waligora, 2024). These conflicts can lead to the development of psychosocial risks among employees, such as stress, burnout, disengagement from the organization, and even psychological and social problems among these individuals (Sousa, Ramos, & Carvalho, 2019; Becker, Richards, & Stollings, 2022; Hajek & König, 2024).

These effects are particularly pronounced among late-career workers, who often face multiple sources of vulnerability associated with adaptation pressures, perceived devaluation of their skills, and job insecurity. As emphasized by Bernaud (Bernaud, Desrumaux, & (Editors), 2016), this category of workers is especially exposed to psychosocial risks due, on

the one hand, to the rapid transformation of work environments and the growing demands for continuous skills updating, and, on the other hand, to the gradual decline of physical, psychological, and cognitive resources associated with aging. From this perspective, the management of intergenerational relationships represents a critical challenge for organizations, not only in terms of occupational health and the long-term preservation of competencies, but also with regard to collective performance.

It is nevertheless important to emphasize that workplace generations are not natural categories, but rather socially constructed groupings. By way of illustration, the European SPReW survey (Social Pattern of Relations to Work), which sought to identify social models of relationships to work, distinguished three categories of workers: “young workers” (under 30 years old), the “middle generation” (between 30 and 50 years old), and “older workers” (over 50 years old) (Vendramin, 2007; Delay, 2008).

These authors examined the importance individuals attach to work, the level and nature of their expectations toward work, the meaning they attribute to it, as well as their attitudes toward work more broadly. Their findings suggest that it is difficult to identify a distinct relationship to work based solely on these age groups. Although differences do exist, they appear to stem less from generational effects than from career trajectory effects, given the considerable heterogeneity within age groups themselves. Consequently, such differences cannot inherently be regarded as sources of tension between age groups in workplace settings. Regarding intergenerational relations at work, the study conducted by (Delay, 2008) among employees in large corporations challenges the traditional notion of a “generation gap.” The study highlights the persistence of three major relational patterns between older and younger employees: active cooperation, relational distance, and tense or conflictual interactions. The predominance of one relational mode over another is influenced by several factors, including work organization, team diversity, and organizational policies concerning career management, recognition, and the valorization of experience. Moreover, conflictual relationships are frequently associated with contexts of organizational restructuring and employment insecurity, where employees are placed in direct competition with one another (DiTomaso, 2015).

From our perspective, and in light of the increasingly critical challenges surrounding professional continuity within contemporary workplaces, we introduced the concept of professional generation within the enterprise. Rather than referring merely to an age group, this notion is associated with a position of precedence or succession within the organizational structure, namely, a degree of seniority. It reflects a temporal order of entry, distinguishing long-standing members of a professional environment or organization from newly recruited employees. Professional generations within the enterprise therefore constitute population groups composed of individuals who experience, during the same period, the status of newcomer within an organization. This shared experience places them in a particular relationship with more senior employees who possess a common reservoir of experience, professional reference points, and occupational expertise. Such dynamics contribute to the development of specific professional dispositions toward work and occupational identity. In this sense, professional generations within organizations acquire a distinct social and symbolic coherence. Moreover, the succession of these generations contributes to shaping a

temporal and social order through which the dynamics of professional transmission situate individuals within the organizational environment.

Within this framework, the temporal boundaries defining generations are not fixed; rather, they depend on irregular patterns of recruitment, organizational hiring policies, and workforce inflows. Particular attention is therefore devoted to the synchronic and diachronic relationships established among generations in the workplace. This approach enables, on the one hand, the assessment of intergenerational relationship patterns, whether cooperative, conflictual and tension-laden, or distant and detached. On the other hand, it facilitates the examination of the potential associations between these relational modes and the two psychosocial risks most frequently identified among late-career employees in the literature reviewed in this study, namely burnout and the intention to take early retirement (Hammer, et al., 2015; Henkens, 2018; Lagacé M. , Beeck, Bergeron, & Rodrigues-Rouleau, 2023).

To this end, a descriptive qualitative study was conducted with fifteen late-career employees at the company "CEVITAL," located in Bejaia and specializing in the agri-food industry. The study aimed to examine the potential relationships between intergenerational workplace relations, as perceived by this population, and the two psychosocial risks under investigation. Particular emphasis was placed on employees' subjective perceptions, as discrepancies may exist between the actual effects of intergenerational relations and the ways in which these relations are perceived. According to (Spaas & Vandenbroucke, 2005), as well as (Urick, Hollensbe, Masterson, & Lyons, 2017), older workers are often perceived as less productive, less comfortable with technology, and less inclined to learn, whereas younger employees are frequently viewed as less loyal and more individualistic. In the same vein, (Mannheim, 2011) highlights the existence of subgroups within the same generation that respond differently to social and organizational events. Consequently, the research question and hypotheses were formulated in accordance with these considerations.

To what extent does the negative perception of intergenerational relationships with younger colleagues contribute to the development of psychosocial risks among late-career employees?

Furthermore, to what extent do perceived personal and organizational resources mitigate these effects?

In other words:

- To what extent does the negative perception of intergenerational relationships with younger colleagues contribute to heightened burnout among late-career employees?
- To what extent does the negative perception of intergenerational relationships with younger colleagues contribute to the development of intentions toward early retirement among late-career employees?
- How do late-career employees belonging to the same generation perceive their personal resources, and how do these perceptions contribute to moderating burnout?
- How do late-career employees belonging to the same generation perceive their organizational resources, and how do these perceptions contribute to regulating their intention to opt for early retirement?

Study Hypotheses

H1. Burnout among late-career employees increases as they perceive their intergenerational relationships with younger colleagues as conflictual or distant.

H2. Intentions toward early retirement become stronger when late-career employees perceive their intergenerational relationships with younger colleagues as conflictual or distant.

H3. Late-career employees belonging to the same generation mobilize diverse perceptions of their personal resources, which are associated with differentiated forms of burnout moderation.

H4. Late-career employees belonging to the same generation mobilize diverse perceptions of their organizational resources, which are associated with differentiated forms of regulation regarding their intention to pursue early retirement.

Study Objectives

In light of the research questions and hypotheses formulated, the objectives of the present study can be structured into two complementary dimensions:

Theoretical Objectives

- To analyze intergenerational workplace dynamics by examining their influence on psychosocial risks among late-career employees, particularly burnout and intentions toward early retirement.
- To investigate the role of personal and organizational resources in regulating psychosocial risks, with particular emphasis on the mechanisms through which these resources moderate such risks.
- To explore intra-generational heterogeneity by identifying variations in perceptions and experiences within the same generation of late-career workers.
- To contribute to the advancement of explanatory models in work psychology by integrating insights related to intergenerational relations, coping strategies, personal goal regulation, identity strategies, and psychosocial risks.
- To refine understanding of the subjective processes, including perceptions, representations, and discourse, mobilized by late-career employees in response to organizational and relational constraints.

Practical Objectives

- To identify organizational and relational factors capable of preventing or reducing burnout and intentions toward early retirement among senior employees.
- The study aims to establish human resource management recommendations which will support teamwork between different generations while decreasing job-related conflicts.
- The study proposes three support mechanisms which include training programs, intergenerational mentoring, and working condition modifications to help late-career employees increase their resource perception.
- The study supports the development of policies which will help organizations keep their senior employees by understanding their specific requirements and their varied career paths.

- The study provides empirical data which aims to enhance work life quality at CEVITAL company based in Béjaïa.

2. Definition of Key Concepts

The research model unites multiple theoretical frameworks which include (Garcia & Oiry, 2023) intergenerational management approach, (Higgins, 1997) personal goal self-regulation theory, and Camilleri's (1990) identity strategies theory to study how intergenerational relationships affect psychosocial risk development in late-career employees. The upcoming section presents a structured overview of the essential variables which researchers will study through the theoretical frameworks that each contributed.

2.1. Professional Generation

(Mannheim, 2011) explained in his foundational work *The Problem of Generations* that people who belong to the same generation share more than their birth years because they experience similar historical and social events during their early years which shape their lasting beliefs and actions. The research by (Vendramin, 2007) shows that society creates artificial divisions between age groups which it recognizes as generational categories. The European survey which focused on social relationship models at work. It required (Vendramin, 2007) and (Delay, 2008) to create three distinct employee categories which included "young workers" under 30 years old, the "middle generation" between 30 and 50 years old, and "older workers" who were over 50 years old.

From an operational perspective, the present study defines the professional generation of late-career workers as individuals belonging to the category of "older employees," namely workers aged over 50 years.

2.2. Intergenerational Relations

With regard to intergenerational relations in the workplace, the study conducted by (Delay, 2008) among employees of large corporations challenges the traditional notion of a "generation gap." The findings reveal the persistence of three major relational patterns between older and younger employees: active cooperation, relational distance, and tense or conflictual interactions. The predominance of any one of these relational modes is explained by several factors, including work organization, team diversity, and organizational policies concerning career management, recognition, and the valorization of experience. Furthermore, conflictual relationships are frequently associated with contexts of organizational restructuring and employment insecurity, in which employees are placed in direct competition with one another.

For the purposes of operationalization, the present study identifies three forms of intergenerational relations: cooperative relationships, distant relationships, and conflictual relationships.

2.3. Psychosocial Risks

Given the psychosocial risks most frequently observed among late-career workers, namely burnout and the intention to retire and/or leave the organization, the present study focuses specifically on these two concepts.

Burnout, or occupational exhaustion, can be understood through the harmful effects it generates on the psychological equilibrium of organizational actors (Lachese, 2015).

(Maslach & Jackson, 1981) define burnout as a syndrome resulting from a psychological response to intense work-related strain. From an operational standpoint, burnout is conceptualized as a multidimensional psychological syndrome assessed through three principal components:

- **Emotional exhaustion:** the feeling of being depleted of emotional and physical resources;
- **Depersonalization (or cynicism):** a detached, negative, or indifferent attitude toward work and its beneficiaries;
- **Reduced personal accomplishment:** the perception of inefficacy and declining professional competence.

Although burnout is generally associated with unfavorable working conditions, in the context of the present study it is considered a consequence of a deteriorated social climate resulting from conflictual intergenerational relationships.

The intention of early retirement may be defined as the cognitive and motivational disposition of a late-career employee to consider, plan, or desire a definitive withdrawal from professional life within a more or less immediate time horizon. Conceptually, it constitutes a proximal antecedent of actual retirement behavior and reflects a subjective evaluation resulting from the interaction of several factors:

- **Individual factors:** health status, level of fatigue, personal aspirations, perceptions of age, and the amount of remaining working time;
- **Professional factors:** working conditions, job demands, recognition, job satisfaction, and exposure to psychosocial risks, particularly burnout;
- **Organizational and institutional factors:** age management policies, late-career adjustment mechanisms, economic incentives, and retirement regulations (Wang, 2010).

From an operational perspective, this intention may be understood as a gradual decision-making process among late-career workers, influenced in the present study by conflictual and/or distant relationships with younger colleagues in the workplace.

2.4. Personal Regulation Strategies

The literature emphasizes that personal regulation strategies are rooted in a proactive and reflexive dynamic that promotes adaptation to generational diversity while simultaneously preventing psychosocial risks and improving the relational climate within the workplace. These strategies are reflected in the preservation of self-consistency, identity adjustment, openness to reverse mentoring, the pursuit of cooperation, intergenerational empathy, emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, coping processes, and the self-regulation of personal goals.

From an operational perspective, the personal strategies retained in this study refer, on the one hand, to the self-regulation of personal goals as conceptualized by E. Tory Higgins (2000), and, on the other hand, to the identity conflict-avoidance strategies proposed by Carmel Camilleri (1990). More specifically, the study distinguishes between self-regulation oriented toward promotion goals, associated with “action-oriented attitudes,” and self-regulation centered on prevention goals, which relate to “evaluation-oriented attitudes.”

Furthermore, so-called “synthetic” identity strategies are mobilized insofar as they enable individuals to engage through the construction of original configurations derived from elements belonging to distinct cultural or social systems, while simultaneously ensuring adaptation that is recognized and balanced within those systems. In the context of this study, this corresponds to the search for equilibrium between the values upheld by the younger generation and those associated with the older generation.

2.5. Organizational Regulation Mechanisms

The literature review highlights that organizational regulation mechanisms are embedded within a systemic approach integrating human resource management practices, managerial modes, and organizational culture in order to prevent intergenerational tensions and mitigate their repercussions on psychosocial risks. Within this perspective, several major recommendations emerge, including the promotion of age-diversity and inclusion training to reduce stereotypes, the adoption of inclusive communication practices adapted to different generations, the development of intergenerational mentoring mechanisms that facilitate knowledge sharing, investment in continuous learning, and the implementation of flexible work arrangements that take employees’ career trajectories into account. Overall, the literature underscores the necessity of integrated and proactive organizational regulation capable of supporting generational diversity while attenuating its potentially harmful effects.

From an operational standpoint, the present study approaches organizational regulation mechanisms through the principles of the intergenerational management approach developed by (Garcia & Oiry, 2023), which is grounded in a dynamic and interactional perspective on age-related workplace relations. This approach moves beyond a static conception of generations in favor of a framework centered on encouraging intergenerational cooperation, promoting organizational equity values, developing collective competencies, and supporting organizational adaptation in contexts of change.

3. Research Context and Methodology

3.1. Research Context

This study was conducted among late-career employees working in the production, marketing, and administrative departments of the industrial group CEVITAL, a major company operating in the agri-food sector. The group comprises several production units, including oil, sugar, and margarine refineries. The selection of this research setting is justified by the coexistence of multiple generations within the organization, thereby providing a valuable opportunity to examine intergenerational dynamics and their impact on psychosocial risks among late-career employees, defined in this study as workers aged 50 years and above.

This issue is of particular importance given that late-career employees represent more than 50% of the company’s workforce and constitute the cohort most vulnerable to intergenerational conflict, notably due to the progressive decline in personal resources associated with aging. Moreover, disparities in educational and professional backgrounds across generations, particularly the more limited mastery of new information and communication technologies among senior employees, may further intensify intergenerational tensions. Consequently, the relevance of the organizational context under investigation is firmly established, thereby reinforcing the foundations of the present research problem. The methodological procedures adopted in this study are outlined below.

3.2. Method

From a methodological perspective, the study adopted a qualitative and interpretive approach grounded in field research conducted across several departments, namely production, marketing, and administration, within the CEVITAL industrial group in Béjaïa. The sample consisted of 15 employees aged 50 years and above, considered to be in the late stage of their careers, in addition to managerial staff and human resource professionals. Participant selection followed a logic of diversity in professional situations rather than statistical representativeness of age groups.

The study did not rely on a standardized questionnaire; instead, it primarily employed semi-structured interviews guided by thematic areas related to generational representations, experiences of cooperation and conflict, psychosocial risks, and the personal and organizational strategies implemented to mitigate their effects.

A non-probabilistic sampling strategy was adopted, with participant recruitment based on the snowball sampling technique. It should be noted that most contacts were established outside working hours in order to avoid disrupting production operations. The interview method was selected because it facilitates meaningful interaction with participants. To ensure that respondents remained focused on the subject under investigation, an interview guide structured around the four dimensions of the study was developed, comprising 12 semi-structured questions. Some questions allowed participants greater freedom of expression, whereas others required them to choose among predefined options.

Finally, content analysis was employed as the principal analytical method, given its particular relevance for examining discourse and qualitative data.

Three factual questions concerning age, length of service, and departmental assignment were placed at the end of the interview guide in order to avoid influencing participants' understanding of the type of responses expected throughout the interview process.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Socioprofessional Profile of the Participants

The study sample consisted of 15 late-career employees distributed across three departments within CEVITAL: seven participants from the production department, five from the commercial department, and three from the administrative division. All participants were aged 50 years and above, belonging to a late-career generation, and had accumulated more than 25 years of seniority within the company.

4.2. Findings Related to the First Hypothesis

The interviews conducted with late-career employees from the commercial, production, and administrative departments reveal that 12 out of the 15 participants expressed a strong convergence in their perceptions regarding the impact of conflictual and/or distant intergenerational relationships on the intensification of burnout. In contrast, three participants did not share this perspective and did not perceive such an effect.

Regarding the dimension of emotional exhaustion, participants emphasized a form of psychological fatigue directly associated with relational tensions involving younger colleagues, which were perceived as continuous sources of stress and emotional overload. In this regard, three employees aged between 58 and 60 stated: "Young employees do not take our experience into consideration. We constantly have to justify what we do, and by the end

of the day we feel completely drained.” Similarly, another 55-year-old participant noted: “Conflicts with younger colleagues weigh on me more than the work itself. I go home mentally exhausted.”

Concerning depersonalization, participants’ narratives reflected a gradual withdrawal from social interactions and a form of disengagement toward younger colleagues, who were perceived as unreceptive to communication and knowledge sharing. This distancing was frequently illustrated through statements such as: “I avoid getting involved with younger employees. They do not listen, so I just do my job,” and “I used to share my experience, but now I prefer to keep my distance.”

Finally, reduced personal accomplishment emerged through feelings of devaluation and diminished usefulness within the workplace, reinforced by a perceived lack of recognition and persistent intergenerational tensions. In this respect, three participants aged between 52 and 57 expressed remarkably similar views: “I feel as though my experience no longer matters, as if I have nothing left to contribute,” and “The company values younger employees more, which gives me the impression that I am no longer useful within the organization.”

Taken together, these empirical findings demonstrate a clear relationship between the deterioration of intergenerational relations and the three dimensions of burnout as conceptualized by (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The results therefore provide qualitative support for the hypothesis that burnout among late-career employees intensifies when relationships with younger colleagues are perceived as conflictual and/or distant.

4.3. Presentation of the Results of the Second Hypothesis

The interviews conducted reveal a significant trend supporting the proposed hypothesis. Indeed, 11 out of the 15 participants expressed an intention to opt for early retirement, directly associating this decision with the deterioration of their intergenerational relationships with younger colleagues, which were perceived as conflictual and/or distant. These tensions were described as a source of discomfort and progressive disengagement, with some participants stating that “repeated conflicts with younger employees eventually become exhausting and make us want to leave earlier,” while others noted that “the atmosphere with the new generation has become unbearable on a daily basis.” Several participants also reported feelings of marginalization and loss of recognition. In this regard, two respondents aged 53 and 55 respectively stated that “when you no longer feel respected, you seriously begin to consider leaving the company before retirement age,” and that “the lack of communication with younger colleagues pushes us to view early retirement as a solution to our isolation.”

Furthermore, some respondents emphasized that this relational strain compounds other professional constraints, thereby reinforcing their intention to leave prematurely, as reflected in one participant’s statement: “it is not only the work itself, but above all the relationships that become increasingly difficult over time.” Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted with caution, as four participants, although acknowledging the existence of tense and/or distant intergenerational relationships, did not express any intention to leave the organization before the standard retirement age. These individuals justified their position on pragmatic grounds, with some indicating that “despite the tensions, I prefer to remain until normal retirement age for financial reasons,” while others stated that “relationships are not always easy, but this is not a sufficient reason to leave prematurely.”

Overall, these empirical findings demonstrate that the perception of conflictual and/or distant intergenerational relationships constitutes a determining factor in the emergence of early retirement intentions among the majority of respondents. This qualitatively confirms the hypothesis that such intentions intensify when interactions with younger colleagues are experienced negatively.

4.4. Presentation of the Results Related to the Third Hypothesis

While the majority of participants ($n = 12$) associated conflictual and/or distant intergenerational relationships with an intensification of burnout, a subgroup of employees ($n = 3$) distinguished itself through the ability to develop individual coping strategies capable of moderating these effects. These participants demonstrated a form of self-regulation of personal goals grounded in a prevention-oriented rather than promotion-oriented logic, consistent with the framework developed by (Higgins, 1997), which distinguishes between promotion-focused self-regulation, centered on achievements and aspirations, and prevention-focused self-regulation, oriented toward security and responsibilities. One 53-year-old participant stated, “I now prefer to avoid conflictual situations and focus on what I can control,” while another participant of the same age explained that “I no longer try to prove anything; my goal is simply to finish my career under good conditions.” In the same vein, a 56-year-old respondent reported that he never compares himself to others and does not adopt a critical mindset.

Conversely, the majority of participants experiencing burnout ($n = 12$) predominantly adopted a promotion-oriented form of self-regulation characterized by an intensified pursuit of performance and recognition. Despite strained intergenerational relations, these individuals maintained high expectations, as reflected in statements such as: “I still want to prove that I am competent,” “I keep expecting recognition that never comes,” and “I constantly compare myself to others, and I tend to be highly critical.” This strong investment was accompanied by heightened professional involvement, illustrated by comments such as: “I put in even more effort to demonstrate my skills,” often at the expense of their personal equilibrium. The discrepancy between their aspirations and the intergenerational social climate prevailing within the organization generated frustration and emotional exhaustion. Accordingly, this promotion-oriented regulatory pattern appears to contribute to the amplification of burnout manifestations among the majority of participants.

Furthermore, the three employees concerned mobilized identity-based strategies aimed at protecting self-image, in line with the work of Carmel Camilleri (1990), which posits that individuals experiencing cultural or social fragmentation, as in the present case, suffer disruptions in both their sense of unity and the value attributed to their self-image. To escape the adverse consequences of such fragmentation, including burnout, anxiety, and psychological distress, individuals seek to construct a successful articulation between elements derived, in this context, from two competing social models, namely the values of the younger generation and those of the older generation, through a positive redefinition of their professional role and identity in a manner perceived as recognized and balanced. According to Camilleri, these identity constructions may be described as “synthetic” strategies.

In this regard, all three participants stated that “even if younger employees do not always acknowledge our value, I know what I have contributed to the company,” or

alternatively, “I focus on my experience and on what I have built over the years, which helps me preserve my self-confidence.” In the same spirit, they explained: “To preserve our self-image, we constantly try to reconcile our values with those of younger colleagues, considering intergenerational diversity as a personal asset.” This identity-based dynamic appears to mitigate the harmful effects of deteriorated intergenerational relations on burnout.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that, despite belonging to the same generation and being exposed to similar relational conditions, late-career employees develop differentiated responses depending on the personal resources they mobilize. This variability in perceptions and coping strategies qualitatively supports the hypothesis that the moderating mechanisms of burnout differ according to individual dynamics of personal goal self-regulation and identity construction.

4.5. Presentation of the Results Related to the Fourth Hypothesis

The analysis of the interviews revealed that four participants, despite belonging to the same generation, did not mobilize identical reference frameworks or perceptions when evaluating their work environment. This divergence resulted in differentiated forms of regulation regarding their intention to opt for early retirement. Unlike the majority of participants ($n = 11$), these respondents expressed a distinct form of regulation toward organizational resources, which, in turn, strengthened their intention to remain within the company for as long as possible. To examine the proposed hypothesis, the empirical data were structured around the intergenerational management practices identified by (Garcia & Oiry, 2023), highlighting the diversity of perceptions and, consequently, the varied forms of regulation regarding intentions toward early retirement.

First, regarding the organization’s encouragement of intergenerational cooperation, a subgroup of late-career employees ($n = 4$) perceived this practice as a positive organizational resource. Participants reported that “working with younger colleagues allows me to pass on my experience” and that “managerial encouragement of intergenerational teamwork motivates me to remain active.” These statements reflect improved intergenerational relationships and a regulatory orientation toward continued employment. In contrast, the majority of respondents ($n = 11$) expressed a more negative perception, emphasizing that “managers do not genuinely promote collaboration between generations” and that they “feel disconnected from younger colleagues,” thereby reinforcing stronger intentions toward early retirement.

Second, concerning the promotion of organizational fairness, some employees ($n = 4$) believed that they benefited from equitable treatment by management, which strengthened their organizational commitment. Participants stated that “I am treated the same as others despite my age” and that “my experience is valued in decision-making processes.” Such perceptions contributed to a marked improvement in intergenerational relationships and supported a regulatory orientation aimed at prolonging professional activity. Conversely, the majority of respondents ($n = 11$) reported perceived inequalities, particularly regarding access to organizational resources. As one participant noted, “training opportunities are mainly intended for younger employees,” while another stated that “we are gradually being sidelined.” These perceptions contributed to a stronger inclination toward early retirement.

Third, with respect to the development of collective competencies, some participants ($n = 4$) considered the organizational mechanisms implemented by the company to be supportive of their employability. They reported that “group training sessions help me remain competent” and that “learning alongside younger colleagues facilitates adaptation to work demands.” These perceptions were associated with improved intergenerational relationships and a positive regulatory orientation toward continued employment. In contrast, the remaining participants ($n = 11$) expressed reservations regarding the adequacy of these initiatives, arguing that “training programs are not adapted to our pace” and that “our experience is not taken into consideration.” Such perceptions fostered progressive disengagement and reinforced intentions to leave the workforce.

Finally, support for organizational adaptation within a context of transformation, particularly digitalization in the present case, emerged as a decisive factor. Some employees ($n = 4$) stated that “our managers provide us with resources, including training, guidance, and tools, that facilitate adaptation to digital transformation,” and that they “encourage intergenerational exchanges with younger colleagues who help us adapt to technological changes.” Participants further emphasized that “we receive support from both supervisors and colleagues, regardless of generation, in learning how to use new digital tools.” These perceptions contributed to improved intergenerational relationships, greater adaptability to organizational change, and a reduced intention to retire early. By contrast, the majority of respondents ($n = 11$) expressed a sense of difficulty in coping with these transformations, stating that “we are expected to master digital tools without receiving effective support, either from managers or from younger colleagues who are nevertheless competent in this area.” Such experiences reflected a regulatory orientation toward withdrawal through early retirement.

Overall, these empirical findings confirm the fourth hypothesis, which posits that, within the same generation, late-career employees mobilize diverse perceptions of their organizational resources, resulting in differentiated forms of regulation regarding their intention to pursue early retirement, particularly as a function of the quality of intergenerational management practices implemented within the organization.

5. Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the present study confirm the critical importance of intergenerational relationships in shaping both the psychological experience and retirement intentions of late-career employees. On the one hand, the deterioration of interactions with younger colleagues appears to intensify the three dimensions of burnout, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. These results qualitatively support the hypothesis that conflictual or distant intergenerational relationships increase the risk of professional burnout (Lachese, 2015).

The research reveals that negative views about relationships between different generations function as a primary factor which drives people to retire before their time. The research by Urick and his team from 2017 shows that employees who experience workplace disagreements with younger staff members show higher rates of retirement intention, which supports the idea that workplace relationships affect when people decide to leave their jobs.

People from the same generation show different reactions when facing identical relationship circumstances. They develop self-regulation techniques and adjust their personal goals and build their identity in different ways, which impacts their response to burnout (Mannheim, 2011). Personal self-control systems enable workers to build resistance against workplace stress, particularly during their last working years (Bernaud, Desrumaux, & (Editors), 2016).

People who belong to the same generation also develop different opinions about their organization's resources, which affects how they manage decisions about early retirement. Intergenerational management practices, together with organizational backing and competency recognition, help organizations retain their employees, but organizations lacking these elements will see their staff exit before their time. Consequently, organizations need to develop particular strategies to extend their employees' working years (Garcia & Oiry, 2023).

The research shows that late-career employees use their personal and organizational regulatory systems to build protection against workplace mental health challenges which they face at their workplace. Organizations need to develop management approaches which respect generational differences, while they should help their experienced staff members adapt to their positions to decrease burnout and stop them from leaving their jobs early.

6. Conclusion

This study reveals the crucial role that intergenerational relationships play in the psychological well-being and retirement intentions of late-career workers. The findings of the study indicate that conflictual or distant relationships with younger colleagues can lead to increased feelings of burnout and a stronger desire to retire early. Additionally, the study shows that the ways in which individuals draw upon their personal and organizational resources can significantly impact their ability to manage these risks.

There are several ways in which organizations can work to improve intergenerational relationships within the workplace and reduce the psychosocial risks experienced by their employees. For instance, organizations could implement training programs that focus on the diversity of the different generations within the workforce, promote fairness within the organization, encourage intergenerational communication, and cooperation between employees, develop collective competencies within the organization, and support the organization's ability to adapt to changes, particularly in relation to the digitalization of the workplace. Through implementing these measures, organizations can work to prevent burnout amongst their employees, reduce the number of individuals who feel the need to retire early, and improve the complementarity of the experiences and competencies of employees from different generations.

Nevertheless, this study presents a major limitation: its qualitative scope and limited sample size do not allow for the full generalization of the findings. It therefore appears necessary to replicate this research using larger samples and quantitative research designs in order to validate the observed relationships and refine recommendations for human resource management and the prevention of psychosocial risks in intergenerational work environments.

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