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When and why do employers hire and rehire employees beyond normal retirement age?

*Orlaith C. Tunney
Jaap Oude Mulders*

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Affiliations

Orlath C. Tunney – Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute–KNAW/
University of Groningen and The University Medical Center Groningen

Jaap Oude Mulders – Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute–KNAW/
University of Groningen

Abstract

Older workers are increasingly being encouraged to work beyond the normal retirement age (NRA). Given that employers generally control the opportunities for employees to work beyond NRA, better understanding of their motivations, attitudes, and experiences in hiring or retaining employees to work beyond NRA is vital. To date, however, research that investigates employment beyond NRA has primarily focused on the perspective and experiences of employees. In this study, we analyzed data from a 2017 survey of 1,214 Dutch employers to examine whether workplace social norms, their concerns related to workforce aging, and structural organizational characteristics were related to whether or not they employed working retirees. We found that workplace norms about working beyond NRA, concerns about career opportunities for younger workers, and structural characteristics such as organizational size, sector, and the relative proportion of female and older workers in the organization were significantly associated with whether or not organizations employed workers beyond NRA. In the second phase of our analysis, which is exploratory, we investigated attitudes and approaches towards workers beyond NRA among those organizations which had previously employed such workers. Most employers agree that they only hire or rehire workers with unique knowledge or experience to work beyond NRA and expect the employee to take the initiative towards prolonged employment. Employers' opinions on whether employees working beyond NRA should accept a pay cut or block the progress of other employees are more mixed. Insights gained from this research study can help guide future research and policy to support longer working lives, from both employee and employer perspectives, even beyond the normal retirement age.

Samenvatting

Oudere werknemers werken steeds vaker door na het bereiken van de AOW-leeftijd. Werkgevers spelen hierin een cruciale rol, omdat werknemers doorgaans ontslagen worden bij het bereiken van deze leeftijd. Onderzoek naar het werkgeversperspectief op dit thema en de ervaringen die werkgevers hebben met doorwerkende AOW'ers is echter zeer schaars. In deze studie analyseren we data van 1214 Nederlandse werkgevers uit 2017 om te onderzoeken of sociale normen in de organisatie, de zorgen van werkgevers omtrent langer doorwerken, en structurele organisatiekenmerken gerelateerd zijn aan het in dienst hebben van doorwerkende AOW'ers. Sociale normen rondom het doorwerken na de AOW-leeftijd, zorgen over carrièremogelijkheden voor jongere werknemers, en structurele kenmerken zoals organisatiegrootte, sector, en het percentage oudere en vrouwelijke werknemers houden significant verband met het al dan niet in dienst hebben van doorwerkende AOW'ers. In het tweede, meer exploratieve deel van deze studie onderzoeken we de overwegingen die werkgevers hebben ten aanzien van doorwerkende AOW'ers. De meeste werkgevers zijn alleen bereid AOW'ers met unieke kennis of ervaring in dienst te nemen of houden, en velen verwachten dat de werknemer hiertoe zelf het initiatief neemt. De meningen over of doorwerkende AOW'ers met minder loon genoeg zouden moeten nemen, en of zij de doorstroom van jongeren in de organisatie blokkeren, zijn meer gemengd. Inzichten uit deze studie geven richting aan toekomstig onderzoek naar doorwerken na de AOW-leeftijd, en kunnen werkgevers en werknemers informeren hoe zij ook na de standaard pensioenleeftijd kunnen blijven werken.

1. Introduction

Declining fertility and mortality rates have led to significant changes in the age profiles of Western societies and, consequently, their labor markets (Crimmins & Zhang, 2019). To keep social security systems sustainable and to tackle potential labor shortages resulting from these demographic changes, workers across developed nations are increasingly being encouraged to extend their working lives by foregoing early retirement, retiring later, and potentially continuing to work after the statutory or normal retirement age (Barnes, Smeaton, & Taylor, 2009), which is defined as the age at which people become eligible for pension benefits.

Evidence suggests that employees are gradually adjusting to the prospect of longer working lives, leading in recent years to increasing labor force participation rates among older workers and increases in preferred retirement ages across European countries (Hess, 2017). In addition to the intention to work longer, the number of workers continuing in employment after normal retirement age (NRA) has also seen a significant increase (Pleau & Shauman, 2013). A number of factors at individual and societal level, such as social norms regarding retirement (Dingemans, Henkens, & van Solinge, 2017), personal health (Kerr & Armstrong–Stassen, 2011), educational level (Wang, Zhan, Liu, & Shultz, 2008), and financial status (Kim & DeVaney, 2005), have been shown to influence whether people work after retirement. However, while our understanding of the antecedents and the impact of working beyond NRA from the employee's perspective has grown, comparatively little is known about the considerations, attitudes, and motives of employers regarding the employment of older workers beyond normal retirement age.

Employment beyond normal retirement age is conceptually close to the notion of bridge employment, which can be broadly defined as paid employment after retirement (Beehr & Bennett, 2015). However, since 'retirement' itself can be an ambiguous concept (Beehr & Bowling, 2013), bridge employment is mostly associated with employee-focused research, and since the legal context – and therefore the motives – for employers to hire or rehire retirees can vary between types of retirees (e.g., before and after NRA), our study will focus exclusively on employers who hire or rehire older workers beyond NRA.

Improved understanding of employers' perceptions and experiences of hiring or retaining employees after normal retirement age is crucial, as employers ultimately control the opportunities for employees to work beyond normal retirement age (Vickerstaff, 2006), aside from workers moving into self-employment (Van Solinge, 2014). While some retirees may wish to work longer, their ability to remain in or to

return to the workforce largely depends on the decisions of employers to hire or retain them. Certain public policy measures, such as the enforcement of mandatory retirement, in addition to certain employment protection legislation and seniority-based wage-setting procedures, may act as additional barriers to workers seeking employment after retirement (Oude Mulders, 2019). Previous research has shown that, while employers may recognize advantages to employing older workers, such as loyalty and experience, their ratings of the employability and productivity of older workers are commonly more negative than that for younger workers, resulting in disproportionately scarce employment opportunities for older workers (Heywood, Jirjahn, & Tsertsvardze, 2010). While hiring or retaining an older worker after normal retirement age may appear conceptually similar to the decision to hire or retain an older worker before retirement age, there may be important distinctions between these employees and the subsequent hiring decisions. To date, however, employers' decision-making related to employees beyond NRA remains largely unexplored.

We therefore examine the experience of Dutch employers in facilitating the hiring (or continued employment) of workers beyond normal retirement age. More specifically, we first investigate which organizations do and which do not employ workers beyond normal retirement age, and whether that behavior is related to factors commonly associated with employers' behavior regarding older workers. In particular, we consider the relationship between social norms regarding working at older ages within the organization and concerns that employers have regarding workforce aging, and whether or not they employed workers beyond NRA, while controlling for a range of structural organizational characteristics.

Second, focusing exclusively on those employers who have previously engaged with workers beyond normal retirement age, we conduct an exploratory analysis investigating the nature of employers' attitudes and approach towards employing retirees. Specifically, we study whether employers think that older workers working beyond NRA initiate the new employment relationship themselves, possess unique skills or experience, and should agree to a lower salary, and whether they block the career progress of younger workers. This phase is explorative because, while limited evidence suggests that these factors may play a role in employers' considerations to employ workers beyond NRA, these motives and approaches of employers have not been the subject of thorough investigation. For example, Conen et al. (2012) found that only 13% of employers would ask workers to work beyond NRA, even when faced with staff shortages. Quasi-experimental evidence suggests that employers use unique knowledge or experience and the willingness of retirees to accept a pay cut as selection criteria (Oude Mulders, Van Dalen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2014), but evidence

from actual organizations is missing. Lastly, concern that people extending their working lives and working beyond normal retirement age blocks the career progress of younger workers is a common concern in public discourse, and may affect the willingness of employers to employ retirees (Munnell & Wu, 2013).

The current study contributes to the literature in two main ways. Firstly, we elucidate factors that may encourage or discourage employers from hiring or retaining workers beyond retirement age. While previous research has investigated employers' hiring decisions in relation to retirees, these studies have rarely investigated factors such as workplace social norms, employer concerns, existing employee make-up, or differences between internal and external candidates (Karpinska, Henkens, & Schippers, 2011). Instead, they have predominantly focused on early retirees as opposed to those who work beyond normal retirement age (Oude Mulders, Henkens, & Schippers, 2015). Secondly, we explore the attitudes and approach of employers when hiring or retaining employees after normal retirement age. This employer perspective is largely missing from the literature, but it is imperative for a better understanding of labor market dynamics after normal retirement age.

1.1 International and legal context of employment beyond NRA

The normal retirement age can differ from country to country, and within countries it can be different for men and women and for people of different birth cohorts (OECD, 2019). Countries may also differ in the legal context regarding employment beyond the normal retirement age, especially in terms of employment protection legislation and mandatory retirement. Many countries, such as The Netherlands, have mandatory retirement regulations, which allow employers to dismiss workers upon reaching the normal retirement age (OECD, 2017; Wood, Robertson & Wintersgill, 2010). In these countries, working beyond NRA is entirely contingent on the willingness of employers to negotiate, or renegotiate, employment contracts. On the other hand, countries that have outlawed mandatory retirement also have far less stringent employment protection legislation, so that employment after NRA is still largely contingent on employers' willingness to continue an employment relationship (Hyde & Dingemans, 2017). Even though most countries have explicit anti-age discrimination legislation, mandatory retirement regulations are commonly exempted; and since age discrimination against people working beyond NRA is difficult to prove, the effectiveness of such legislation is often limited (OECD, 2019).

Cohort-specific normal retirement ages have been in effect in The Netherlands since 2012, when the government decided to gradually raise NRA from age 65. Currently (2020–2021), NRA is set at 66 years and 4 months, and it will reach 67 years

by 2024. After that, NRA will increase by 8 months for every one-year increase in life expectancy at age 65 (OECD, 2019). Mandatory retirement in The Netherlands is only allowed at NRA, and it is practically always enforced, since employment protection legislation is strong and anti-age discrimination legislation prevents dismissal due to age at any other time. Legislation that specifically regulates employment after normal retirement age was introduced in 2016, ensuring the minimum wage and protecting against unfair treatment, but also lowering employment protection for this specific group (Oude Mulders, 2019). However, evidence that these measures have successfully resulted in increased regular employment of workers beyond NRA is limited (Kok, Luiten, & Zwetsloot, 2019).

2. Theoretical Background

There is hardly any literature that examines the hiring or retention of workers after NRA. While some quasi-experimental studies have looked at how individual characteristics of retirees relate to individual managers' decisions whether or not to hire or retain workers beyond normal retirement age (Karpinska, Henkens, & Schippers, 2011; Oude Mulders et al., 2014), it is unclear how organizational factors and characteristics relate to the actual decision of employers to engage in an employment relationship with workers beyond normal retirement age. Here, we distinguish three groups of factors that may relate to this behavior: age-related social norms regarding working at an older age, employers' concerns regarding longer working lives, and structural characteristics of organizations.

2.1 Social Norms

An important factor in the seemingly low willingness of employers to employ retirees may be the social norms regarding aging in the sphere of work and retirement. Norms refer to the rules and social attitudes governing what is or is not acceptable behavior within a particular social setting (Boudon, 2003). The concept of age-related norms, first outlined in the literature by Neugarten et al. (1965), has gained growing research attention, with the existence of age-related norms for retirement now widely accepted in the literature (Kohli, 2007; Radl, 2012).

An employer's internalized retirement age norm shows the age at which employers generally believe that employees should retire from the workforce. This may derive from a mandated normal retirement age, but also from employers' personal beliefs, the beliefs and behaviors of their peers, or individual experiences with older employees within their organization (Settersten & Hagestad, 1996). While this conceptualization of internalized retirement age norms is concerned with when employees *in general* should retire, employers may differ in the extent to which they apply such a norm to individual cases. While some employers may not condone anyone working beyond what they have internalized as the retirement age norm, others may be willing to let individual cases deviate from the general social norm (Oude Mulders, Henkens, & Schippers, 2017). Previous studies have linked higher internalized retirement age norms to increased willingness to employ (early) retirees (Karpinska et al., 2013; Oude Mulders et al., 2014), and also to an increased support by organizations for longer working lives (Oude Mulders et al., 2017). Therefore, we hypothesize that employers who hold a higher internalized retirement age norm will be more likely to

employ older workers beyond NRA than those with lower internalized retirement age norms (hypothesis 1).

In addition to the internalized retirement age norms of the employers, we also consider their perception of the social norms regarding working at an older age among the employees in their organization. Even though not all employees may hold the same norms, and while employers may not themselves subscribe to the social norms of their employees, it is likely that the employers' behavior is affected by their perception of the social norms among their employees, since employers may fear a backlash of negative responses and decreased commitment by their staff when they transgress an accepted organizational social norm.

Previous studies have shown that hiring an employee from outside the organization is viewed differently from the continued employment of a worker beyond NRA. For example, employers recognize the firm-specific knowledge and expertise held by older employees. However, these advantages are only seen through continued employment rather than the hiring of older workers (Heywood, Jirjahn, & Tsertsvardze, 2010). The general and job-specific training required by new employees may result in younger workers – with their longer projected tenure – being viewed by hiring managers as more cost-effective and therefore more attractive (Adler & Hilber, 2009). We hypothesize that employers who perceive the social norm within their organization as more welcoming to the rehiring of former employees (hypothesis 2a) or the hiring of external retirees (hypothesis 2b) are more likely to have experience in employing workers beyond NRA.

2.2 Employer Concerns

Employer concerns regarding the effects and practicalities of workforce aging may also inhibit their openness to employees working past the normal retirement age. Negative perceptions surrounding the skills and abilities of older workers are pervasive in society, thus affecting the employability of older workers in the eyes of employers and hiring managers (Van Dalen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2010). The extension of working life beyond the normal retirement age could be seen as breaching the 'implicit contract' (Lazear, 1990) between employees and employers, and it may trigger the pre-existing concerns that employers hold about the capabilities of older workers (Oude Mulders & Henkens, 2019). We examine four types of employer concerns related to workforce aging and longer working lives: concerns about the mental fitness of older workers; concerns about the physical fitness of older workers; concerns about the limited employability of older workers with health problems; and concerns about career opportunities for younger workers.

Evidence of employer concerns regarding reduced physical and mental capabilities of older workers is widespread in the literature (Harris, Krygsman, Waschenko, & Laliberte Rudman, 2017). Together, these capacities are often viewed as underpinning an employee's work ability, i.e. the ability, or perceived ability, of an individual to meet the requirements of the job (Cadiz, Brady, Rineer, & Truxillo, 2018; Ilmarinen, 2009). While adoption of certain workplace strategies and policies to accommodate older workers can increase their work ability (Oakman, Neupane, Proper, Kinsman & Nygard, 2018) and ensure that they perform as effectively as their younger colleagues, these measures call for employers who are willing and motivated to implement them. Recent evidence shows that employer concerns about the mental and physical capacity of older workers to withstand the demands of working life significantly relate to employers' behavior in facilitating longer working lives (Oude Mulders & Henkens, 2019). Since it is likely that employers expect the mental and physical fitness of older workers to decline further after normal retirement age, we hypothesize that these concerns will also be related to their decision to hire or retain workers beyond the normal retirement age, and that those who express greater concern about the physical (hypothesis 3a) and mental capabilities (hypothesis 3b) of older workers are expected to be less likely to employ them beyond the NRA.

The impact of concerns regarding the physical capabilities of older workers on hiring decisions may be compounded by concerns regarding the limited employability of workers with health conditions. The likelihood of experiencing health conditions increases with age, with health problems shown to be the most significant cause of declining employment rates among older workers (Barnes, Smeaton, & Taylor, 2009). While chronic health conditions have traditionally been linked to earlier exit from the labor force, more stringent regulations regarding disability insurance in recent years have resulted in individuals with chronic health conditions remaining in the workforce for longer (Staubli, 2011). Given the reduced work ability and lower productivity associated with chronic health problems, adequately providing for the growing number of older workers remaining in the labor force poses a significant challenge for employers (Vanajan, Bültmann, & Henkens, 2019). Therefore, employer concerns about the limited employability of workers with health problems may play a role in their hiring decisions regarding working after normal retirement age. We hypothesize that employers who express greater concern about the limited employability of workers with health conditions will be less likely to have experience in employing workers beyond NRA (hypothesis 3c).

Concerns regarding reduced career opportunities for younger employees due to workforce aging and the prolonged employment of older workers may also relate to

employers' hiring decisions. Rooted in "the lump of labor fallacy" – the misconception that workers compete for a finite number of employment opportunities – many fear that increased participation of older workers in the labor force negatively impacts the career prospects of younger workers (Munnell & Wu, 2013). Employers who believe that, by employing workers beyond normal retirement age, they are limiting career opportunities for other workers may therefore be less inclined to do so. Despite a lack of evidence that more people working beyond normal retirement age limits the opportunities of younger workers, these concerns are pervasive and may therefore affect hiring and retention of older workers beyond normal retirement age (Kalwij, Kapteyn, & De Vos, 2010). Therefore, we hypothesize that employers who report greater concern about the career opportunities for younger employees will be less likely to have experience employing workers beyond NRA (hypothesis 3d).

2.3 Structural factors

In investigating the relationships between, on the one hand, social norms, and employer concerns about workforce aging and, on the other hand, employment of employees beyond NRA, it is important to control for structural characteristics of the organization itself. Factors such as the size of an organization relate to the implementation of age-based HR policies (Oude Mulders & Henkens, 2019), which may in turn impact the opportunity structure to employ retirees. Additionally, the pervasiveness of age-related stereotypes, both positive and negative, can vary significantly depending on an organization's size and the sector in which it operates (Posthuma & Campion, 2009). Furthermore, the makeup of the existing workforce may also affect the availability of employment opportunities for retirees within a firm. Organizations are more likely to employ retirees in more flexible roles (Taylor & Walker, 1998). Therefore, a large organization, or one with a large flexible workforce, may provide greater flexibility in incorporating retirees into the workforce. The gender balance of employees within an organization may also impact the likelihood of an organization having employed workers beyond NRA, given that women report earlier preferred retirement ages (Pilipiec, Groot, & Pavlova, 2020) and may be less likely to work after retirement (Dingemans, Henkens & van Solinge, 2016). Similarly, the current levels of employment of older workers, as well as the existence and severity of recruitment problems within an organization, may be an indication of the supply of and demand for working retirees in an organization, respectively.

3. Methods

3.1 Data

The current dataset consists of responses by Dutch employers to a survey about aging workforces and longer working lives, conducted between December 2016 and March 2017. Some 6,000 organizations from across sectors (except agriculture) were invited to participate in the survey, which could be completed either online or by returning a hard-copy questionnaire. Only organizations with ten or more employees were included. Organizations with less than ten employees were excluded, given their relatively informal HR policies and ad-hoc approach to aging (Cardon & Stevens, 2004).

To ensure an adequate number of responses from a variety of organizations, the sample was stratified by size and sector, with large organizations and those in the public sector being oversampled, while small organizations and those in the services industry were under-sampled. As such, the sample is not fully representative for the total population of Dutch organizations, but size and sector are controlled for in the analysis. Following two reminders, the first comprising only a reminder letter with the organization's unique online code, and the second also containing a new hard-copy questionnaire, a total of 1,358 responses were received. The response rate of 23% matches response rates found in similar large-scale organizational surveys conducted both nationally (Conen, Henkens, & Schippers, 2011) and internationally (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). Since item non-response was relatively low (between 0.5% and 4.7%), single stochastic regression imputation was used to adjust for missing data in most of the predictor variables. However, to ensure that imputed figures remained within a logical range, predictive mean matching (K=10) (Rubin, 2004) was used to impute missing data for the variables that measure the proportions of female employees, flexible contract workers, and employees aged 50 and over in an organization, while truncated regression imputation was used for the variable internalized retirement age norms.

While the questionnaire was addressed to the director or CEO, the letter specified that other employees with in-depth knowledge of the practices of the organization were eligible to complete the questionnaire. To ensure that we only analyze data from respondents that have experience with and are wholly or partly responsible for personnel decisions, we considered their positions in the organization. The respondents of the survey were owners, directors, or CEOs (46.03%), general or departmental managers (6.62%), HR managers (24.74%), HR employees (12.30%), and other types of employees (10.31%). The group of other employees (n = 140) were removed before analysis, since we could not verify if they were involved in making personnel

decisions. Robustness checks showed that our results were not substantively related to respondents' positions.

Two cases were removed as they failed to respond to the question regarding their experience with employees working beyond retirement. A further two cases were excluded due to responding to questions regarding their organization's experiences in employing working retirees despite previously indicating that their organization had no such experience. This left a final total of 1,214 observations for analysis.

3.2 Measures

3.2.1 Outcome variables

In the first phase of the analysis, we examine the employers' previous engagement with working retirees, assessing this via responses to the questionnaire item, "Does your organization have experience with employees who continue to work after normal retirement age?" Participants' responses (either yes or no) then formed the outcome variable for the initial phase of our analysis.

The second phase of our analysis focused on the opinions and experiences of those who had previous involvement with working retirees. Participants were asked to rate on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree), to what extent they agreed with the following statements: (1) "Working beyond retirement in our organization normally happens at the initiative of the employee"; (2) "Working retirees in our organization have unique knowledge and/or experience"; (3) "If people in our organization work beyond retirement age, this holds back career progress of others"; and (4) "If people in our organization work beyond retirement age, they must accept a lower wage".

3.2.2 Predictor Variables

To assess the *internalized retirement age norms* of individual respondents, participants were asked to list at what age they considered employees "generally too old to be working more than twenty hours per week" (Radl, 2012). This item—investigating attitudes towards older employees working more than twenty hours per week rather than explicitly asking when individuals should retire—was measured in this way since the meaning and interpretation of "retire(ment)" can be ambiguous and lead to confusion (Beehr & Bowling, 2013). Responses were truncated between 50 and 90 to reduce the impact of a small number of outliers (but this did not alter the substantive results). To assess *workplace social norms* about retirement, employers were asked to rate on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (very negatively) to 5 (very positively), how

they thought workers in their organization would judge (1) rehiring an employee to work beyond the normal retirement age, and (2) hiring an external retiree to work beyond the normal retirement age.

Additionally, we measured *employers' concerns* regarding prolonged employment of older workers. To assess this, employers were asked the following question: "People need to keep working much longer than before. In that context, to what extent do you, as an employer, worry about ..." (1) the physical capabilities of older workers; (2) mental capabilities of older workers; (3) limited employability of workers with health problems; and (4) reduced career opportunities for younger workers? Employers were asked to respond on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely).

Finally, various structural characteristics of the organizations were controlled for in the analysis. The *size of the organization*, based on the number of employees, was divided into three categories based on Eurostat's Structural Business Statistics classification: small (10–49 employees), medium (50–249 employees), and large (>250 employees). The respondents' *sector of operation* was assessed with Eurostat's NACE Rev. 2 classification system, then reduced to three broad categories: industry, services and trade, and public sector. Employers were also asked to list the *percentage of female employees*, *workers over the age of 50*, and *workers on a flexible (non-standard) employment contract* in their organizations. For ease of interpretation, these percentages were divided by 100 so that they could be read as proportions (i.e., ranging between 0 and 1). Additionally, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not the organization was experiencing *recruitment problems* ("no", "sometimes", or "often").

3.3 Analyses

In the first phase of our analysis, we investigated the factors associated with whether or not employers have previously employed workers beyond the normal retirement age. We conducted a logistic regression to estimate the associations of our predictor variables (social norms and employer concerns) and control variables (structural organizational characteristics) with the outcome variable, i.e., employer engagement with retirees.

In the second phase of the analysis, we conducted four separate ordered logistic regression analyses to examine the relationship between the predictor variables and various measures of employers' attitudes and impressions about their experiences with working retirees. The outcome variables in the analyses were whether employers (1) agree that working beyond NRA happens at the initiative of employees; (2) view

workers beyond NRA as having unique skills and/or experience; (3) believe that workers beyond NRA should accept a lower salary; and (4) believe that workers beyond NRA limit career opportunities for younger employees. Ordered logistic regression is most suitable for these analyses, given the ordinal nature of the Likert-type response variables (Harrell Jr., 2015).

4. Results

Table 1 outlines the descriptive statistics for the variables studied here. A majority of organizations, 54.04% (N = 656), had previously employed workers after NRA, while 45.96% (N = 558) had never previously employed a worker beyond NRA. Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients between the variables included in further analyses.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Variables Included in the Analysis

Variable	N	Mean or %	SD	Min	Max
Outcome variables					
Experience with employees after NRA					
Yes	656	54.04%		0	1
No	558	45.96%		0	1
Working retirees taking initiative for work after NRA	646	3.73	0.89	1	5
Working retirees have unique knowledge and/or experience	649	3.71	0.80	1	5
Working retirees must accept a lower wage	644	2.81	0.98	1	5
Working retirees hold back career progress of others	648	2.85	1.04	1	5
Predictor variables					
Internalized retirement age norm	1214	67.21	4.08	50	90
Workplace norm: rehiring former employee	1214	3.25	1.03	1	5
Workplace norm: hiring external retiree	1214	2.60	1.04	1	5
Concerns about physical capabilities of older workers	1214	3.25	1.14	1	5
Concerns about mental capabilities of older workers	1214	3.1	0.96	1	5
Concerns about limited employability of workers with health problems	1214	3.45	1.05	1	5
Concerns about career opportunities of younger workers	1214	2.71	0.93	1	5
<i>Size</i>					
Small (10-49 employees)	395	32.54%		0	1
Medium (50-249 employees)	470	38.71%		0	1
Large (>250 employees)	349	28.75%		0	1
<i>Sector</i>					
Industry	419	34.51%		0	1
Services and trade	349	28.75%		0	1
Public	446	36.74%		0	1
Proportion of female employees	1214	0.42	0.31	0	1
Proportion of employees aged 50+	1214	0.32	0.18	0	1
Proportion of flexible contract workers	1214	0.14	0.16	0	1
<i>Recruitment problems</i>					
No	421	34.68%		0	1
Sometimes	419	34.51%		0	1
Often	374	30.81%		0	1

Note. SD = standard deviation. NRA = normal retirement age

4.1 Employers hiring or retaining retirees

The results of the logistic regression model that predicts experience of employing workers after NRA are presented in Table 3. While no significant relationship to the internalized retirement age norm of employers was found (hypothesis 1 not

Table 2: Correlation matrix of all outcome, predictor, and control variables included in the analyses (part I)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.Experience with employees after NRA	-								
2. Working retirees taking initiative for work after NRA	n/a	-							
3. Working retirees have unique knowledge and/or experience	n/a	-.00	-						
4. Working retirees must accept a lower wage	n/a	-.07	-.1*	-					
5. Working retirees hold back career progress of others	n/a	.04	-.18***	.17***	-				
6. Internalized retirement age norm	.05	-.00	.1*	-.03	-.09*	-			
7.Workplace norm: rehiring former employee	.26***	.03	.13***	-.1*	-.26***	.22***	-		
8.Workplace norm: hiring external retiree	.18***	-.01	.16***	-.08*	-.3***	.15***	.42***	-	
9.Concern about physical capabilities of older workers	.02	.11**	-.09*	.05	.08*	-.32***	-.18***	-.15***	-
10.Concern about mental capabilities of older workers	.04	-.07	-.12**	-.01	.17***	-.3***	-.12***	-.14***	.48***
11.Concern about limited employability of workers with health problems	.04	.07	-.11**	.06	.09*	-.24***	-.12***	-.12***	.61***
12. Concern about career opportunities of younger workers	-.08**	-.01	-.00	-.01	.16***	-.10*	-.14***	-.12***	.17***
13.Size	.27***	-.02	-.09*	-.07	.08*	-.10*	-.02	.02	.16***
14.Sector	.03	.00	-.01	-.06	.04	.10*	.03	.01	-.27***
15. Proportion of female employees	-.07*	.02	-.08*	-.06	.08*	.05	.00	.02	-.19***
16. Proportion of employees aged 50+	.11***	-.08*	.06	-.06	.06	-.07*	-.05	-.10***	.10***
17. Proportion of flexible contract workers	.02	.04	-.09*	.00	-.03	-.02	.01	.09**	.05
18.Recruitment problems (Ref. = No)	.09**	.04	-.03	-.03	-.07	-.08*	.01	.05	.16***

Table 2: Correlation matrix of all outcome, predictor, and control variables included in the analyses (part II)

Variable	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1.Experience with employees after NRA									
2. Working retirees taking initiative for work after NRA									
3. Working retirees have unique knowledge and/or experience									
4. Working retirees must accept a lower wage									
5. Working retirees hold back career progress of others									
6. Internalized retirement age norm									
7.Workplace norm: rehiring former employee									
8.Workplace norm: hiring external retiree									
9.Concern about physical capabilities of older workers									
10.Concern about mental capabilities of older workers	-								
11.Concern about limited employability of workers with health problems	.42***	-							
12. Concern about career opportunities of younger workers	.23***	.29***	-						
13.Size	.17***	.15***	.09***	-					
14.Sector	.02	-.13***	.08**	.13***	-				
15. Proportion of female employees	.04	-.08**	.06*	.11***	.7***	-			
16. Proportion of employees aged 50+	.1***	.14***	.1***	.15***	.02	-.01	-		
17. Proportion of flexible contract workers	-.04	.04	-.01	.08**	.05	.09**	-.09**	-	
18.Recruitment problems (Ref. = No)	.15***	.17***	.1***	.16***	-.02	-.05	-.05	-.03	-

Note. No correlations were computed between outcome variables in phases 1 and 2 of the analysis since all participants in the second phase of the analysis had responded “yes” to the binary categorical outcome variable from phase 1. NRA = normal retirement age.

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$

Table 3: Logistic Regression Predicting Experience with Employment of Workers Beyond Normal Retirement Age

Variable	OR	SE	p	95% CI	CI
Social Norms					
Internalized retirement age norm	1.02	0.02	.341	0.98	1.05
Workplace norm: rehiring former employee	1.66	0.12	.000***	1.44	1.92
Workplace norm: hiring external retiree	1.23	0.09	.003**	1.07	1.41
Employer Concerns					
Concerns about physical capabilities of older workers	0.99	0.08	.906	0.85	1.15
Concerns about mental capabilities of older workers	1.1	0.09	.240	0.94	1.29
Concern about limited employability of workers with health problems	1.09	0.09	.314	0.92	1.27
Concerns about career opportunities of younger workers	0.8	0.06	.002**	0.69	0.92
Structural Factors					
<i>Size (Ref. = Small (10-49 employees))</i>					
Medium (50-249 employees)	2.01	0.31	.000***	1.48	2.72
Large (>250 employees)	4.88	0.89	.000***	3.42	6.97
<i>Sector (Ref. = Industry)</i>					
Services and trade	1.24	0.22	.233	0.87	1.75
Public	1.83	0.42	.008**	1.17	2.85
Proportion of female employees	0.27	0.08	.000***	0.15	0.49
Proportion of employees aged 50+	3.08	1.18	.003**	1.46	6.51
Proportion of flexible contract workers	1.14	0.47	.745	0.51	2.56
<i>Recruitment problems (Ref. = No)</i>					
Sometimes	1.31	0.2	.081	0.97	1.76
Often	1.24	0.20	.200	0.89	1.71

Note. N = 1,214. OR = Odds Ratio; SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence Interval.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

supported), their perceptions of workplace norms about the acceptability of rehiring a former employee or hiring an external retiree to work beyond NRA are related to their behavior, thus supporting hypotheses 2a and 2b. Organizations with more accepting workplace norms regarding the hiring of outside retirees, and continued employment of former regular employees beyond normal retirement age, were significantly more likely to have previous experience with workers beyond NRA, with this association being much larger for the continued employment of former employees than for the hiring of outside retirees.

In terms of employer concerns about workforce aging, only concerns about how longer working lives may block the career progress of younger workers were associated with hiring and retention of workers beyond NRA by organizations, thus supporting hypothesis 3d but not 3a-3c. Organizations in which employers reported greater

Table 4: Overview of study hypotheses and main findings

Hypothesis	Outcome
1: Organizations where employers maintain a higher internalized retirement age norm will be more likely than those with lower retirement age norms to have experience employing workers beyond the NRA.	Not supported
2a: Organizations where employers perceive the workplace social norm as more welcoming to the rehiring of former employees will be more likely to have experience employing workers beyond the NRA.	Supported
2b: Organizations where employers perceive the workplace social norm as more welcoming to the hiring of external retirees will be more likely to have experience employing workers beyond the NRA.	Supported
3a: Organizations where employers express greater concern about the physical capabilities of older workers will be less likely to have experience employing workers beyond the NRA.	Not supported
3b: Organizations where employers express greater concern about the mental capabilities of older workers will be less likely to have experience employing workers beyond the NRA.	Not supported
3c: Organizations where employers express greater concern about the limited employability of workers with health conditions will be less likely to have experience employing workers beyond the NRA.	Not supported
3d: Organizations where employers express greater concern about the career opportunities for younger employees will be less likely to have experience employing workers beyond the NRA.	Supported

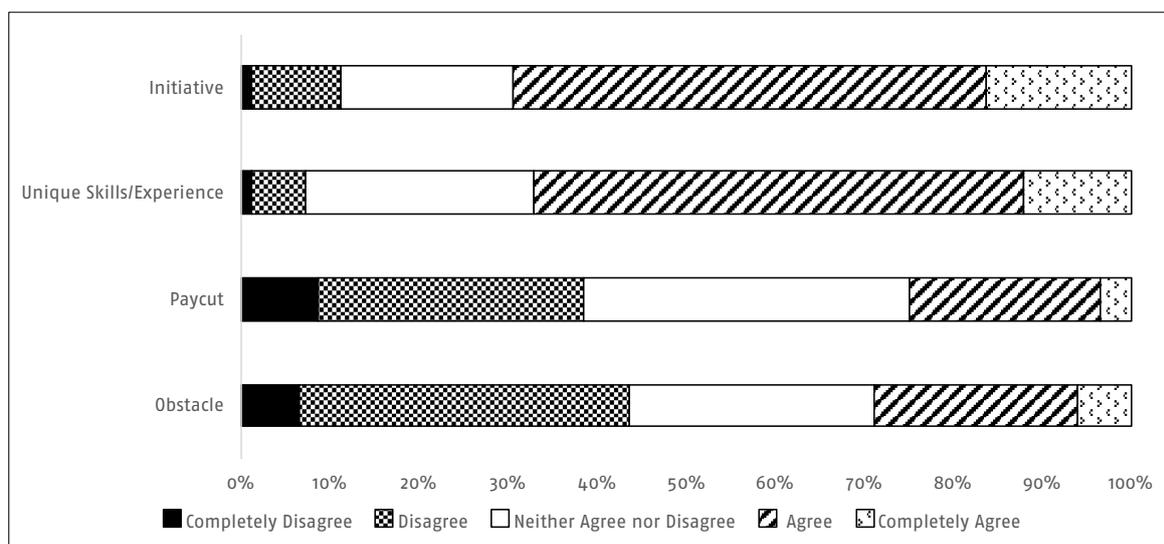
concern about the opportunities for younger workers were significantly less likely to have previously employed workers beyond normal retirement age.

A number of structural characteristics of the organization were found to be significantly related to employers' experience with employing workers beyond NRA. A greater proportion of older workers within an organization was associated with an increased likelihood of having previously employed workers after normal retirement. Contrastingly, organizations with a higher proportion of female employees were less likely to have previously employed workers beyond NRA. The size of the organization was also an important predictor, with medium and large organizations more likely than smaller firms to have previously employed workers beyond normal retirement age. Lastly, a significant relation was found between the sector in which an organization operates and engagement with retirees, with employers in the public sector being more likely to have previously employed workers beyond NRA than employers in industry or in services and trade sectors. An overview of the main results and the study hypothesis is contained in Table 4.

4.2 Characteristics of the employment relationship

The distribution of responses to each of the four outcome variables in the second phase of the analysis is outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Employers' Attitudes Towards Various Important Aspects of Employing Workers Beyond Normal Retirement Age in Their Organization



4.2.1 Initiation of employment

The results showed that a majority of employers (70%) agreed that employment of workers beyond NRA mainly occurs at the initiative of the employee. 11% of employers disagreed, and 19% neither agreed nor disagreed that employment beyond NRA was primarily at the behest of employees. Results of an ordered logistic regression analysis (Model I in Table 5) showed that only employer concerns regarding prolonged employment of older workers were associated with whether they found employees mainly responsible for taking the initiative for working beyond NRA. Employers who reported greater concern with the physical capabilities of older workers were more likely to agree that employment happens at the initiative of employees. In contrast, those who were more concerned about the mental capabilities of older workers were less likely to agree that employment of retirees happens at the initiative of employees.

4.2.2 Unique skills and experiences

Overall, the majority of employers who had previously employed workers beyond NRA (67%) agreed that these workers had unique experience or skills, while 7% of participants disagreed and the remainder (26%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Model II in Table 5 outlines the results of the ordered logistic regression that predicts whether or not employers viewed workers hired beyond normal retirement age as possessing unique skills or experience. More positive workplace norms regarding the hiring of employees from outside the organization were linked

Table 5: *Ordered Logistic Regression Analyses for the Outcome Variables (Initiative, Unique Skills/Experience, Pay Cut, Blocking Progress) that Characterize the Employment Relationship (part I)*

Variable	Model I: Initiative			Model II: Unique Skills/Experience		
	Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p
Social Norms						
Internalized retirement age norm	-0.01	0.02	.680	0.01	0.02	.602
Workplace norm: rehiring former employee	0.1	0.09	.293	0.18	0.1	.068
Workplace norm: hiring external retiree	-0.08	0.08	.312	0.23	0.1	.016*
Employer Concerns						
Concern about physical capabilities of older workers	0.31	0.08	.000***	0.03	0.09	.735
Concern about mental capabilities of older workers	-0.34	0.1	.001**	-0.18	0.10	.081
Concern about limited employability of workers with health problems	0.12	0.1	.217	-0.15	0.10	.148
Concern about career opportunities of younger workers	-0.05	0.09	.566	0.08	0.10	.425
Structural Factors						
<i>Size (Ref. = Small (10-49 employees))</i>						
Medium (50-249 employees)	-0.1	0.21	.638	-0.47	0.21	.025*
Large (>250 employees)	-0.13	0.23	.568	-0.43	0.21	.039*
<i>Sector (Ref. = Industry)</i>						
Services and trade	0.15	0.21	.480	0.21	0.21	.297
Public	0.25	0.28	.383	0.36	0.27	.176
Proportion of female employees	0.38	0.40	.345	-0.84	0.39	.032*
Proportion of employees aged 50+	-1.06	0.57	.064	0.91	0.5	.068
Proportion of flexible contract workers	0.00	0.53	.995	-1.08	0.48	.026*
<i>Recruitment problems (Ref. = No)</i>						
Sometimes	0.13	0.19	.499	0.03	0.2	.878
Often	0.13	0.21	.547	-0.11	0.21	.583
Cut 1	-4.82	1.54		-3.68	1.63	
Cut 2	-2.34	1.47		-1.82	1.57	
Cut 3	-1.05	1.46		0.09	1.57	
Cut 4	1.5	1.46		2.95	1.59	
Pseudo R ²		0.0199			0.0348	

to greater levels of believing that older workers possess unique skills or experience. No significant associations were found for employer concerns. In medium and large organizations (relative to smaller organizations) and organizations with higher proportions of female employees and flexible contract workers, employers were less likely to agree that workers beyond NRA possess unique skills/experience.

Table 5: Ordered Logistic Regression Analyses for the Outcome Variables (Initiative, Unique Skills/Experience, Pay Cut, Blocking Progress) that Characterize the Employment Relationship (part II)

Variable	Model III: Pay cut			Model IV: Blocking progress		
	Coef.	SE	p	Coef.	SE	p
Social Norms						
Internalized retirement age norm	-0.01	0.02	.628	0.01	0.02	.591
Workplace norm: rehiring former employee	-0.14	0.09	.134	-0.34	0.10	.001**
Workplace norm: hiring external retiree	-0.06	0.09	.521	-0.44	0.09	.000***
Employer Concerns						
Concern about physical capabilities of older workers	0.05	0.09	.613	-0.05	0.09	.590
Concern about mental capabilities of older workers	-0.09	0.10	.371	0.25	0.1	.011**
Concern about limited employability of workers with health problems	0.09	0.10	.368	-0.00	0.10	.966
Concern about career opportunities of younger workers	-0.02	0.09	.798	0.25	0.09	.006*
Structural Factors						
<i>Size (Ref. = Small (10-49 employees))</i>						
Medium (50-249 employees)	-0.33	0.2	.098	0.15	0.19	.444
Large (>250 employees)	-0.34	0.21	.103	0.19	0.20	.354
<i>Sector (Ref. = Industry)</i>						
Services and trade	-0.16	0.21	.433	-0.05	0.19	.781
Public	-0.03	0.27	.925	-0.31	0.25	.214
Proportion of female employees	-0.27	0.41	.505	0.73	0.37	.045*
Proportion of employees aged 50+	-0.84	0.49	.089	0.07	0.48	.886
Proportion of flexible contract workers	0.11	0.46	.820	-0.23	0.51	.647
<i>Recruitment problems (Ref. = No)</i>						
Sometimes	-0.13	0.19	.477	-0.32	0.19	.083
Often	-0.19	0.2	.337	-0.46	0.19	.016*
Cut 1	-4.43	1.6		-3.34	1.52	
Cut 2	-2.51	1.59		-0.73	1.5	
Cut 3	-0.9	1.58		0.59	1.5	
Cut 4	1.37	1.61		2.60	1.5	
Pseudo R ²		0.0110			0.0604	

SE = Standard Error.

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

4.2.3 Pay cut

38% of the employers that have previously hired or retained workers beyond NRA disagreed that those workers should take a pay cut, while 25% agreed and 37% neither agreed nor disagreed. Model III in Table 5 shows the results of the ordered logistic regression analysis that investigates employer attitudes towards the pay of employees working beyond NRA. No significant associations were found. Thus, while a fairly large share of employers believed that working retirees should accept a lower salary, this opinion was not overly associated with social norms, employers' concerns, or structural organizational characteristics.

4.2.4 Blocking progress of younger workers

Overall, employers were more likely to disagree (43%) that workers beyond NRA limited the progress of younger workers than to agree (29%) or to be neutral about this (28%). The results of the ordered logistic regression (Model IV in Table 5) show that more accepting workplace norms regarding the hiring of new employees and the continued employment of existing workers beyond NRA, as well as frequently experiencing recruitment problems, were associated with employers disagreeing that older workers block opportunities for other employees. In contrast, employers are more likely to feel that working past NRA does impede other workers when concerned about the mental capabilities of older workers, when they have a greater proportion of female employees, and when concerned about the growth opportunities of younger workers.

5. Discussion

The primary goal of this paper was to identify factors that relate to the employment of workers beyond normal retirement age. The secondary goal was to explore some of the approaches used and the attitudes towards working retirees among those organizations in our sample (54%) that previously employed workers beyond normal retirement age. The results of both the primary and secondary exploratory analyses are discussed below in terms of the three categories of predictors and controls used in the analysis: social norms, employer concerns about workforce aging, and structural factors.

5.1 Social norms

5.1.1 Social norms and employers who hire or retain retirees

In line with our hypotheses (2a and 2b), we found that organizations with more accepting workplace norms regarding the hiring or retention of workers beyond NRA were significantly more likely to have employed workers after NRA. This indicates that employers may consider how their behavior will be judged and perceived by their staff, and that they may let that assessment guide their behavior. This effect was stronger for norms related to rehiring a retired former employee than hiring an external retiree. Beyond simply demonstrating employee – or indeed employer – preference for the continued employment of familiar colleagues versus unfamiliar outsiders, this differential effect is also likely related to how often people working beyond NRA do so for the same employer (Beehr & Bennett, 2015). Continued employment of a worker is the most common form of employment after NRA in The Netherlands. More frequent employment of retired colleagues compared to newly hired workers may in itself promote greater acceptance of the former practice among employees, making it more likely to occur (and be accepted) in the future. However, more research is required to better understand potential differences in the nature and application of these social norms between types of older workers, as well as the causes and consequences of these social norms more generally.

Contrary to both our own hypothesis (hypothesis 1) and previously reported findings (Karpinska et al., 2013), the individual internalized retirement age norms of employers (i.e., the age at which they believed that employees generally should retire) were not related to hiring decisions beyond NRA. This indicates that employers may not always apply general norms regarding working at an older age in their

decisions, but that they rather consider workplace norms and the qualities of the individual employee who wants to continue working.

5.1.2 Social norms and characteristics of the employment relationship

When examining the relationship between social norms and the characteristics of various elements of the employment relationship, we found that more accepting perceived workplace norms about hiring older workers from outside the organization were associated with viewing working retirees as having unique skills or experience. While viewing retirees as possessing unique skills or experience (as most employers in our sample did) may be indicative of positive impressions of working retirees, it may also imply that employers view employment of outside workers beyond normal retirement age as an exception to the rule, thus choosing to only hire exceptional external candidates who have reached or exceeded the retirement age. The lack of statistical significance in relation to perceived workplace norms for *current* employees further indicates that current employees and external candidates may be viewed differently upon reaching NRA.

Additionally, employers who perceived their organization's workplace norms as more receptive to employees beyond NRA were less likely to view working retirees as an impediment to others. Together with the results from the primary analysis, these findings suggest that, in their practices and attitudes towards employment beyond NRA, employers may be driven by whether their employees would tolerate such employment arrangements.

5.2 Employer concerns

5.2.1 Employer concerns and employers hiring or retaining retirees

We found support for the idea that organizations that expressed greater concerns for the limitation of career opportunities for younger employees would be less likely to have previously employed workers beyond normal retirement age (hypothesis 3d). However, contrary to our expectations (Hypothesis 3a-3c) and some previous findings (Oude Mulders & Henkens, 2019), other concerns related to longer working lives, such as about the mental and physical capabilities of older workers and the employability of older workers with health problems, were not related to the hiring or retention of retirees to work beyond NRA. One explanation may be that, as with internalized retirement age norms, employers may make more individualized decisions regarding the employment of retirees (Parker & Andrei, 2020). Thus, while an employer may have general concerns about the physical and mental capabilities of older workers

and about the employability of workers with health issues, these broad concerns will not necessarily apply to every older employee and every hiring decision involving workers beyond normal retirement age.

5.2.2 Employer concerns and characteristics of the employment relationship

We found that organizations that report greater concerns about the physical capabilities of older workers were more likely to agree that working beyond NRA happened at the initiative of the employee, while the opposite pattern applied in relation to concern regarding the mental capabilities of workers. These associations may relate to the type of work conducted within an organization. Organizations with a more physical labor process may be more concerned about decline of the physical capabilities of employees, thus preferring to recruit younger workers to engaging older workers or retirees to ensure future productivity.

Contrastingly, organizations with a less physically demanding labor process, or one that requires strong mental capabilities, may call for a broader recruitment process that is more likely to target an age-diverse group of employees, potentially making them more likely to initiate employment beyond NRA of suitable and interested candidates. However, given the lack of detailed information on the specific nature of the work conducted within organizations in the current study, further research is required to substantiate these relations and test these assumptions. Qualitative research may prove particularly fruitful in exploring the nature of employer concerns and their consequences for hiring decisions.

The fact that employers who reported more concern with the career opportunities of younger workers were more likely to view working retirees as limiting the opportunities of younger workers does not surprise. Positive associations between concerns about the mental capabilities of older workers and agreeing that working retirees block the career progress of younger workers may again relate to the type of work, with organizations that involve a more mentally demanding work process being more concerned about retirees blocking the career paths of younger workers in general. However, this mechanism deserves further study.

5.3 Structural characteristics

5.3.1 Structural characteristics and employers who hire or retain retirees

Structural and organizational characteristics were included as controls in our models, with several of these significantly related to the hiring or retention of workers beyond NRA. We found that organizations in the public sector were more likely to have

previously employed workers beyond NRA than those in the services and trade or industrial sectors. The abolition of mandatory retirement for national-level civil servants in 2008 may have contributed to this, making it easier for certain public sector employees who wish to work beyond NRA to continue to be employed. Alternatively, the skills and experience traditionally associated with older workers may be more relevant or highly sought in certain public sector roles.

Similarly, organizations with a larger number of employees were more likely to have employed workers beyond NRA. This may reflect the fact that larger organizations often have more formalized HR practices (Cardon & Stevens, 2004), which would reduce the likelihood of arrangements only being made for those older workers deemed particularly valuable or with close ties to management (Moen, Kojola, & Schaefers, 2017). The positive association between the proportion of employees aged 50 or more and previous employment of workers beyond NRA is not unexpected, given that such organizations may be more open to hiring older workers. Also, the higher age profile of their employees may provide a greater supply of workers who would seek employment beyond NRA.

The finding of a negative association between the proportion of female employees and the employment of workers beyond NRA is largely in keeping with previous findings that women are less likely to work after retirement (Dingemans, Henkens & van Solinge, 2016). This may relate at least partly to the preference for earlier retirement among women (Pilipiec, Groot, & Pavlova, 2020), which may limit the opportunity for organizations with a larger proportion of female workers to facilitate the continued employment of current staff beyond NRA. While these structural characteristics were significantly associated with previous engagement with workers beyond NRA, the effects of various workplace social norms and employer concerns were evident even when these are taken into account.

5.3.2 Organizational structure and characteristics of the employment relationship

When examining associations between structural characteristics of the organization and the employment relationship when working retirees are employed, we found that medium-sized and large organizations were less likely than small organizations to view workers beyond NRA as having unique skills or experience. This again suggests that the more formalized HR practices in larger organizations may enable older workers to secure work beyond NRA without requiring exceptional skills or experience. Organizations that face recruitment problems were also less likely to agree that working retirees blocked the career paths of younger workers. This showed that, aside from organizational culture, practical concerns are also relevant for employers. The

positive association between concerns about the mental capabilities of older workers and agreeing that working retirees block the career progress of younger workers may, again, relate to the type of work, with organizations that have a labor process involving more mental stress being more concerned about retirees blocking the career paths of younger workers in general. However, this mechanism deserves further study.

5.4 Implications for policy and practice

From a policy perspective, our finding that employers are seldom proactive in the recruitment and retention of employees beyond NRA implies that much more engagement from the demand side is required if longer working lives are to be a viable answer to impending labor market shortages. Given our findings that highlight the importance of perceived workplace social norms for employer decisions, policymakers could try to improve opportunities for older workers by combating age-related stereotypes and employment practices through awareness campaigns and training programs. Additionally, given the likelihood that this lack of initiative from employers may result in only certain candidates seeking or being successful in securing employment after NRA (e.g., experienced, highly skilled, highly educated workers), policymakers may wish to provide additional training and opportunities for those workers who may otherwise struggle to be hired or retained after retirement. Banning mandatory retirement could also be considered, as this would create opportunities for continuation of work beyond normal retirement age for more older workers (Dingemans, Henkens & van Solinge, 2016). However, to successfully increase access to the labor market after NRA, such a change would need to be integrated in a much broader set of policy changes, including limitation of employment protection legislation and seniority-based wage practices (Oude Mulders, 2019).

For employers, we would encourage them to try to create more accepting social norms in the workplace, by creating a flexible and inclusive working environment for people of all ages and emphasizing the value of older employees in a general sense (Eversole et al., 2012). Senior managers propagating the importance of age diversity and employability over the life course may play a guiding role for the rest of the organization in this regard (Moen et al., 2017; Oude Mulders et al., 2017).

For older workers who wish to continue working beyond NRA, our findings that most employers do not take this initiative indicate that they should be vocal about their own desires regarding continuation of employment. Our results also indicate that possession of unique skills or experience may significantly increase a worker's employability beyond NRA but accepting a pay cut may not be necessary.

5.5 Limitations

While our study provides important insights into the views of employers on longer working lives, a number of study limitations must be considered. First, we examined only the behavior and attitudes of employers in The Netherlands. While the mechanisms between the variables studied are presumably similar in other countries, particularities of the Dutch context are nonetheless likely. Furthermore, the exclusion of micro-organizations limits the extent to which our results are representative of the Dutch labor market as a whole and the extent to which these results can be applied to organizations with fewer than ten employees. Second, the survey used for data collection required employers to provide general responses regarding the employment of workers beyond NRA in their organization. Given that respondents could not differentiate between different types of employees within these broad response ranges, (e.g., high-skilled vs. low-skilled, hiring external retirees vs. rehiring former employees), their opinions regarding working retirees and the working practices they reported may not apply equally to all employees.

Third, our study relies heavily on single-item measures, as well as on the responses of a single person within an organization. This may raise doubts about the reliability and validity of these measures. To test the validity and reliability of insights gained from the current study, we therefore encourage additional research that employs validated, multi-item measures of some of our key predictor variables, along with the collection of data from multiple sources where possible.

Finally, with the current cross-sectional data, we could not analyze causal relations between the concepts studied here. Simultaneity or reverse causality could be possible. Also, longitudinal data are needed to better understand how social norms and employer concerns influence outcomes such as the employment of retirees beyond NRA. Especially when it comes to social norms, it seems likely that some simultaneity may occur, since these both shape and reflect reality (Etzioni, 2000). However, given the relative infrequency with which the employment of retirees beyond NRA occurs, we consider reverse causality unlikely. Nevertheless, we encourage additional longitudinal research, both to gain a more nuanced understanding of the perspectives and experiences of employers regarding the facilitation of work beyond NRA, and to establish causality between their attitudes and experiences and decision-making in relation to the hiring and retention of retirees.

5.6 Future research

A number of additional avenues for future research have emerged from our study. First, further research to explicitly investigate the employment conditions of those

working beyond normal retirement age is needed. While our study gives provisional insight into potential links between employer attitudes and the working conditions for retirees, additional research is required to better understand the impact of employer views on actual work practices. Given the purely quantitative nature of our study, in-depth qualitative research is needed, along with more targeted quantitative research to gain better insight into employer perspectives on work beyond NRA. Second, we advise research into the views of employers on longer working lives across cultures and contexts. This would serve not only to address the paucity of research in this area but to confirm (or reject) the reliability and generalizability of our results. Importantly, this would also allow for comparative research to examine the impact of differences in policy and legislation (e.g., enforcement of mandatory retirement) on employer perspectives and practices.

Third, our results highlight the potential importance of perceived workplace norms and certain concerns on the decision-making and approach of employers toward hiring workers beyond NRA. In particular, future research may wish to explore the idea emerging from our results that employers attach greater importance to specific workplace norms over more general, internalized norms about older workers when making hiring decisions that extend beyond NRA. In broader terms, additional research into what factors underly and sustain these norms and concerns, and the mechanisms through which they may impact employer decision-making, could lead to the development of successful interventions to promote longer working lives and to increase opportunities for employment beyond NRA.

5.7 Conclusion

In short, our study examined factors that, from an employer's perspective, encourage or hinder the employment of workers beyond normal retirement age. Furthermore, we explored the factors that relate to employers' opinions of workers whom they have employed beyond retirement age, as well as the nature of the employment conditions offered to working retirees. Our results highlight the importance of several factors, particularly the role of workplace social norms, in making employers more amenable to hiring or retaining workers after normal retirement age.

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