Perception of age and creativity in the workforce context

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Background

• Hong Kong’s workforce is aging
• Previous studies showed that age and creativity are not related
• Mature workers can contribute as much as younger workers
• In the work environment, it is common to have work teams with age diversity
• Misperception about creativity and age (if exists) may lead to bias in personnel decisions
• It is therefore important to study whether perceptions of creativity depend on age of workers in a work context
Research objectives

• To examine the perception of performance of work teams with or without age diversity
• To examine whether the perception of team performance depend on age of participants
Literature review

• Studies showed that people perceive that personal attributes increase (or decrease) with age; certain attributes such as wise and dignified, had a late onset and closing age

• Few studies compare the perceived performance of teams with or without age diversity in an experimental setting

• Creative industry seems to have a young workforce. 50% of employees are aged under 35 (Hui, 2002)
method

- Laboratory design using video image as source of elicitation
- 2 (type of team) x 2 (age group of participants) design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team with age diversity</th>
<th>Team without age diversity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants aged 20-34</td>
<td>Participants aged 35 or above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team with age diversity</td>
<td>Team without age diversity</td>
</tr>
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<td>Participants aged 35 or above</td>
<td>Participants aged 20-34</td>
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</tbody>
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stimulus

• Two video clippings (each 5 minutes) featuring a team of 4 advertising agency employees at work
• They need to come up with a proposal for an outdoor poster for a flu killer, using forced association, direct comparison, and mood generating techniques to come up with creative ideas

• Identical scripts, camera angles, and time each character appears
• In video A, two employees were aged above 35 (42, 45) and two employees were aged below 35 (27, 28)
• In video B, all four employees were aged below 35 (27-28)
Characters in the video

Characters in the first video

A1  B1  C  D

Characters in the second video

A2  B2  C  D
participants

• 220 individuals recruited through personal network
• 55% aged 20-34 and 45% aged 35-55
• Randomly assigned to view one of the clips in groups
• First take a Test for Creative Thinking
• Complete a questionnaire after viewing
• Measure perceived team performance on nine attributes such as creativity in 6-point Likert scales
• Measure perceived quality of the final advertising proposal in 100-point scale
• Measure perceived performance on five attributes such as flexibility in 6-point Likert scales for each character
• Guess the age of the characters
Manipulation check on age of characters
Results

Perceived overall team performance

- Team with age diversity
- Team without age diversity
Results

perceived quality of the final ad proposal

- team with age diversity
- team without age diversity
interpretation

- Participants did not have bias against team with age diversity
- Participants perceived that both teams were equal in overall performance
- Participants perceived that both teams would produce ad proposals of equal quality
- This is a good news
Perception of team performance by age of participants

![Bar chart showing perception of team performance by age of participants. The chart compares teams with and without age diversity.](chart.png)
Perception of quality of ad proposal by age of participants

- 20-34: Team with age diversity
- 35 or above: Team without age diversity
Perception of characters by age of participants

![Bar chart showing perception of characters by age of participants.](chart)
interpretation

• Participants aged 35 or above are more likely to give higher scores for both performance of the team as well as the quality of the ad proposal
• The effect is significant after controlling for participants’ creativity score and educational level
Limitations

• Convenience sample in an experimental setting
• Perceived age gap of the two characters was not wide
Discussion

• Our study did not find biased perception on age of creative workers and their creativity
• Organizations should support such teams in aging workforce
• There was systematic difference in perception of team performance and quality of ad proposal among participants of different age profiles
• Participants (GenerationY) seem to have high demands of work performance in the work context
• Orientation of these employees about a realistic expectation in work context is needed
Q&A