



Exploring age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates among employees within South African organisations

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- The study on which this mini-dissertation reports, followed the prescribed format of the Publication Manual (6th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA) as a framework for the editorial style and references. This practice corresponds with the policy requiring that all scientific documents must employ the APA style as from January 1999, as stipulated by the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus).
- The study is submitted by using the structure of a research article. The specified editorial style is used as set out by the *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* (which is mainly in agreement with the APA style), but the constructing tables were designed following the APA framework and guidelines.
- Each chapter of this mini-dissertation has its own reference list.

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DECLARATION

I, Isabel Meyer, hereby declare that “Exploring age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations” is my own content and that the views and opinions expressed in this work are those of the author and relevant literature references, as indicated in the references.

I further declare that the content of this research will not be handed in for any other qualification at any other tertiary institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Isabel Meyer', written in a cursive style.

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NOVEMBER 2017

DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE EDITOR

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I hereby confirm that the MCom dissertation *Exploring age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations* by Ms I Meyer (student no: 23438665) was edited and groomed to the best of my ability. This included recommendations to improve the language and logical structure, guide the line of argument as well as to enhance the presentation.

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SUMMARY

Title: Exploring age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations

Key words: Stereotypes, age stereotypes, younger managers, older subordinates, leader-member exchange (LMX), in-group, out-group, South African organisations

Extensive research has been conducted focusing on stereotypes in an organisation. Prior research has indicated that stereotypes can be found in organisations between various employees. These stereotypes can be identified in diverse situations and setups such as schools, universities as well as organisations. One of the areas where stereotypes are found is between a younger manager and the older subordinate. The research indicated that stereotypes have deep-set influences on the performance and relationship of both parties and can lead to negative or positive outcomes for the individuals and organisation. Thus, it is important that the topic above is researched specifically within the South African context.

The objective of the present study was to explore the influence that age stereotypes has on the relationship and performance between a younger manager and older subordinate. The research was informed by the social constructivism paradigm. This study was conducted further through a qualitative method based on a phenomenological approach. A strategy of multiple case studies was used for which participants were identified through purposive and snowball sampling methods to ensure the objective of this study was achieved. The sample consisted of 24 participants ($N=24$) from a wide range of South African organisations, namely education institutions, telecommunications, and the public-utility industry.

OPSOMMING

Titel: Die verkenning van ouderdomsstereotipes tussen jonger bestuurders en ouer onderdane in Suid-Afrikaanse organisasies

Sleutelwoorde: Stereotipes, ouderdomsstereotipes, jonger bestuurders, ouer onderdane, leier-lid-ruilteorie, in-groep, uit-groep, Suid-Afrikaanse organisasies

Uitgebreide navorsing is onderneem waarin gefokus is op stereotipes binne 'n organisasie. Vorige ondersoekte het aangedui dat stereotipe binne organisasies tussen verskeie werknemers voorkom. Hierdie stereotipes kan binne diverse omstandighede en opsette uitgewys word, soos skole, tersiêre instellings en natuurlik organisasies. Een van die terreine waar stereotipe opgespoor kan word, is tussen jonger bestuurders en die ouer ondergeskiktes. Die huidige navorsing het getoon dat stereotipes 'n ingrypende invloed uitoefen op beide partye se prestasie en verhoudings. Dit kan óf negatiewe óf positiewe uitkomst vir die individue asook die organisasie inhou. Gevolglik is dit noodsaaklik om hierdie bogenoemde onderwerp na te vors, veral binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks.

Die doel van die huidige studie was om die invloede te verken wat ouderomstereotipes uitoefen op die verhoudings en prestasie tussen 'n jonger bestuurder en die ouer ondergeskikte. Die navorsing is teoreties begrond op die paradigma van sosiale konstruktivisme. Voorts is die studie onderneem deur 'n kwalitatiewe metode wat op 'n fenomenologiese benadering geskoei is. 'n Strategie is ingespan waar veelvuldige gevallestudies gebruik en deelnemers geïdentifiseer is deur doelbewuste en sneeubal-steekproefneming. Sodoende is gesorg dat die doel van die studie bereik is. Die steekproef het bestaan uit 24 deelnemers ($N=24$) vanuit 'n breë spektrum Suid-Afrikaanse ondernemings, naamlik: onderwysinstellings, telekommunikasie asook openbare nutsdienste.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem statement

Research on stereotypes suggests that stereotypes can be formed from a very early age in an individual's life (Rowley, Kurtz-Costes, Mistry, & Feagans, 2007). In schools, universities and any social circle stereotypes may be found. The concept of stereotyping individuals was only introduced to the English language in the 20th century and is now broadly used across different cultures and countries (Blum, 2004). There exist numerous definitions for stereotypes. According to Blum (2004, p. 251) stereotypes can be defined as "false or misleading generalisations about groups held in a manner that renders them largely, though not entirely, immune to counterevidence." According to Jones and Colman (1996) stereotypes are seen as quite fixed and relatively easy generalisations about groups and categories of individuals.

Stereotypes can also be found within the organisational environment. Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick, and Esses (2010) stated that stereotypes steadily affect how people perceive, process information about, and respond to co-workers. In addition, Madon, Jussim, Keiper, Eccles, Smith, and Palumbo (1998) is of the opinion that stereotypes have been considered to generate social problems because they are inherently inaccurate and exert powerful influences on individual's perceptions. It was stated by Brink and Nel (2015) that organisations in the 20th century are also becoming more aware of these stereotypes and the negative implications these stereotypes can have on the organisation. In the opinion of Leonardi (2013) individuals who are not personally known by their manager or co-workers but rather acknowledged by their stereotypes within the bounds of the organisation may have an effect on how these individuals interact and treat each other (Leonardi, 2013). May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) highlighted that when managers are perceived or stereotyped negatively by their subordinates as being unpredictable, inconsistent or hypocritical, employees may show a greater inclination to leave. Kouzes and Posner (2002) indicated that an important reason in the decision of a subordinate to leave or stay at the organisation is the manager. The authors further indicate that generally the subordinate is not leaving the organisation per se but leaving the manager that they worked for. Thus when a subordinate feels that they are being stereotyped by their manager it can have an enormous effect on their decision to stay loyal to the company or not.

The leader-member exchange theory (LMX) was utilised to support the above-mentioned

argument which is to establish what the effects are of stereotypes on the relationship between managers and their subordinates. The LMX theory focuses on the relationship between a manager and each respective subordinate that they supervise rather than on a relationship that they might have with a particular group that works under them (Lunenburg, 2010). Seeing that the LMX theory focus on individual relationships, it may be possible that the manager might have relationships with individual subordinates that are of high quality and with other subordinates the quality might be poor (Lunenburg, 2010). This therefore makes it possible for the manager to have high and poor quality relationships with their respective subordinates.

Franklin (2015) provided the researcher with very interesting literature. The LMX relationship is a dyad relationship which means that it is two sided, therefore for the purpose of this study the dyad relationship exist between the manager and subordinate. Most individuals that are employees of an organisation and who fulfil managerial roles within the organisation have the habit of stereotyping and this can cause great damage to the LMX relationship (Franklin, 2015). This can cause great damage because trust is such an important aspect in the LMX relationship and stereotyping can cause trust to decrease or even to be lost. On the other hand, Blauth, McDaniel, Perrin, and Perrin (2011) explained that if senior management avoided stereotyping their employees at all cost this can have a huge positive effect on the whole organisation, one can infer that this will also have a positive effect on the relationship between the manager and their subordinate.

Additionally, and more specifically relating to stereotypes regarding age, the research of Yakoub (2008) found that when a younger manager specifically has age stereotypes about their older subordinate this will have a negative effect on the LMX relationship when the relationship is experienced from the subordinate's point of view. Yakoub (2008) and Fonken (2011) also determined in their results that when an older subordinate experiences negative stereotypes from their managers it influenced their individual performance. Other negative effects of these stereotypes include a decrease in job satisfaction, organisational commitment and corporate citizenship behaviour. On the other hand, Bornay-Barrachina and Guerrero-Villegas (2014) is of the opinion that when managers and their older subordinates avoid stereotyping all together it will provide the organisation with immense opportunities to gain strategic and organisational increase in job satisfaction, commitment, subordinate's loyalty and extra role tasks. It is therefore clear that age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates have enormous effects on both the individual and the organisation, and which is therefore also the focus of the

current research study.

According to Posthuma and Campion (2009), personal beliefs and expectations about workplace age groups are considered workplace age stereotypes. According to Shani and Lau (2008, p. 157), “age stereotypes is the belief that differing traits and abilities make a certain age group more or less suited to different roles or display different behaviour toward work”. Frequently these stereotypes are biased, negative preconceptions about older employees (Posthuma & Campion, 2009). McCann and Keaton (2013) support the above mentioned statement by indicating that older employees are most often stereotyped negatively whereas younger employees are stereotyped positively. Stewart, Chipperfield, Perry, and Weiner (2012) argued that these age stereotypes are becoming so prevalent that the older employees are starting to believe these views about themselves and their age group. Posthuma and Campion (2009) stated there is a belief that the performance of older employees decrease as their age progresses. The authors further stated that when compared to younger employees older employees are less inclined to learn new things such as new ways of doing tasks. Also, the majority of the community expects that older workers have a lower level of ability and are less motivated and productive than their younger colleagues (Posthuma & Campion, 2009).

According to Liebermann, Wegge, Jungmann, and Schimdt (2013) some age stereotypes regarding older individuals are also positive in nature, such as being loyal and honest. Rauschenbach, Goritz, and Hertel (2012) determined in their study that older employees are most likely more competent in coping with difficult situations than younger employees thus diminishing the age stereotype that older employees have lower emotional resilience than younger employees. According to Posthuma and Campion (2009) there is also little indication that supports the decrease in performance with age, and more often performance improves with age.

Liebermann et al. (2013) are also of the opinion that younger employees who hold negative stereotypes about older employees will possibly evaluate their own age group as superior to the negatively labelled older age group. Posthuma and Campion (2009) indicated in their study that younger employees are characterised as easy to train. It was further indicated that management and organisations as a whole, hold stereotypes that younger employees are more adaptable, flexible, resistant to change, and have more energy than older employees (Posthuma & Campion, 2009). There are numerous positive stereotypes pertaining to younger employees but Tolbize

(2008) indicated a prevailing negative stereotype such as younger employees not being hard working when compared to older employees. Irving (2012) further indicated that younger employees are viewed as being irresponsible and lacking judgment. Lastly, Gross and Hardin (2007) further stated that younger employees are often characterised as being rebellious, willing to take risks, and egocentric.

Age related stereotypes, attitudes and beliefs have become more prominent and important in organisational life, having a leading effect on hiring and staffing decisions as well as the way in which workers interact with each other (Rauschenbach et al., 2012). Research by Van Berkel (2011) indicated that when employees experience age stereotypes it can have a negative effect on their relationship with the organisation. Blauth et al. (2011) indicate that age stereotypes can restrict the abilities of employees of all ages and the organisation as a whole. According to the authors, aspects such as the productivity, relationships and the self-perception of the employees can be influenced when age stereotypes are experienced by employees. Lamont, Swift, and Abrams (2015) explained that age stereotyping an employee introduces more ambiguity in the performance situation of the employee which explains the effect on employee's performance. It was further explained in their findings that age based stereotypes can have significant reduction effects on the employees cognitive and memory performance (Lamont et al., 2015).

The goal of this research study is to determine the age stereotypes that are attributed to younger managers and older subordinates and also to investigate the influences of these stereotypes. However, these stereotypes were investigated from both the view of younger managers and older subordinates. Individuals do not only categorise themselves into groups but they also categorise other individuals based on the characteristics they have. Therefore the manager will stereotype both himself/herself and their subordinates, and vice versa, subordinates will categorise both themselves and their managers. Therefore, to understand how stereotypes exist about older subordinates and younger managers, the concepts of in-group and out-group stereotypes will now be explained. The belief that an individual belongs to a certain group or does not belong to a certain group can be referred to as in-group and out-group. In-group can be defined according to Giles and Giles (2012) as the ability to identify oneself with a particular group and to feel that one belongs to that group and out-group can be defined as the direct opposite as in-group, therefore a group that one does not belong to. In-group and out-group stereotypes are derived from the social identity theory which was developed by Henri Tajfel in 1979. The social identity theory can be described as the social category into which one is placed either by oneself or by

others (Tajfel, 1979). McLeod (2008) stated that individuals would like to improve their self-image and one way that they can achieve this is by promoting the group they belong to or discriminating against the group they do not belong to. Therefore, it is more likely that in-group stereotypes were more positive in nature and out-group stereotypes are more inclined to be negative.

Based on the above mentioned it can clearly be seen that age stereotypes between managers and subordinates lead to various consequences. Not only do these age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates lead to consequences regarding workplace relations and performance but also to consequences related to the individual and the organisation as a whole. A careful study of the literature also revealed that the influence of age stereotypes between younger managers and older managers has not been thoroughly investigated in the South African context and therefore the importance of this study. The purpose of the study will thus be to determine the age stereotypes that exist between younger managers and older subordinates and to determine the influence of these stereotypes within South African organisations.

1.2 Research questions

Based on the above mentioned research problem the following research questions arised:

- How can stereotypes and age stereotypes be conceptualised according to literature?
- What is the influence of age stereotypes on the relationship between younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations?
- What is the influence of age stereotypes on the performance of younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations?
- What other influences do age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates have within South African organisations?
- What recommendations can be made with regard to future research and practice?

1.3 Expected contribution of the study

The expected contribution of this study was to provide insight to individuals, organisations and also to the literature with regards to the influence of age stereotypes on younger managers and older subordinates. This study will also contribute to the body of knowledge (of which there is a

limited amount) regarding age stereotypes within the South African work context.

1.3.1 Contribution to the individual

This study aimed to help younger managers and older subordinates in the organisation to become aware of the stereotypes they hold of others and others hold of them. Also, younger managers and older subordinates had the opportunity to learn more about the influence of their stereotypes on aspects such as performance and relationships. Also, by making younger managers and older subordinates aware of these influences, it motivated these individuals not to stereotype others but to rather make judgements based on factual information.

1.3.2 Contribution to the organisation

The results gained from this study hopes to identify the influence of age stereotypes on aspects such as performance and the relationship between younger managers and older subordinates and to provide insight to the organisation in this regard. If organisations gain this much needed insight it may provide them with the opportunity to address these influences these stereotypes have on the working environment.

1.3.3 Contribution to the literature

Due to the limited research conducted with regards to age stereotypes in the South African work context, this study can add to the existing body of literature regarding stereotypes, and more specifically age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates.

1.4 Research objectives

The research objectives are divided into a general objective and specific objectives.

1.4.1 General objective

The general objective of this research is to investigate the age stereotypes that exist between younger managers and older subordinates and to determine the possible influences that these age stereotypes have within South African organisations.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To conceptualise stereotypes and age stereotypes according to literature.
- To investigate in-group and out-group stereotypes about younger managers.
- To investigate in-group and out-group stereotypes about older subordinates.
- To investigate the influence of age stereotypes on the relationship between younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations.
- To investigate the influence of age stereotypes on the performance of younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations.
- To investigate other influences of age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations.
- To make recommendations with regard to future research and practice.

1.5 Research design

The research design consists of the research approach, research strategy and research method.

1.5.1 Research approach

A qualitative research design from a phenomenological approach was used for the purpose of this study. According to Shank (2002), qualitative research is defined as a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning. Qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach, which means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret a phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The phenomenological approach focuses on the meaning that experiences have for participants. Thus the researcher used this approach to determine how participants of this study experienced age stereotypes and to obtain a comprehensive description of this experience through the eyes of the participant (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a).

For the purpose of this research, the social constructivism paradigm was used. The social constructivism paradigm makes it possible for the researcher to view the world through the participant's eyes and experiences (Thanh & Le Thanh, 2015). The researcher used the

perceptions and experiences of the participants gathered through the data collection process in order to understand the phenomenon of age stereotypes as experienced by younger managers and older subordinates. This paradigm has a few assumptions of which one states that human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world. With this assumption is meant that there is not a single reality for the phenomena that is under investigation but rather multiple realities. These realities can also differ with regard to place and time (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a). With regards to the present study, this paradigm will therefore assist the researcher to obtain different views and perceptions regarding the phenomenon of age stereotypes as experienced by the individual participants of this study.

1.5.2 Research strategy

The research strategy that was used within this study is a multiple case study strategy. According to Yin (2009) a case study is an experiential investigation into a specific situation or case that occurred within the actuality of the world. This strategy is especially utilised when the lines between the situation and the context within which it takes place is not clear. According to Nieuwenhuis (2016b) there are various types of case studies that can be utilised. A multiple case study strategy was used for this study and this will enable the researcher to examine differences between various cases. The cases in this researcher will therefore be younger managers and older subordinates (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). This multiple case study strategy furthermore helped the researcher to understand the phenomenon of age stereotypes as experienced by both younger managers and older subordinates. Seeing that there is little to be known about age stereotypes regarding younger managers and older subordinates specifically within the South-African work context this study added great value in this regard.

1.6 Research method

The research method consists of the literature review, research setting, entrée and establishing researcher roles, sampling, data collection methods, recording of data, data analyses, strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity, reporting style, and ethical considerations.

1.6.1 Literature review

A complete literature review was conducted regarding age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates. The literature that was utilised is not primarily found within

the South African context, seeing that there is a limited amount and therefore international research will also be utilised for the purposes of the current research study. The keywords that were used in the search for relevant sources will include: stereotypes, age stereotypes, managers, subordinates, LMX, in-group, and out-group. Journals that were consulted will include: *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP)*; *Journal of Business Management*; *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, and *International Journal of Management Reviews, Research and Practice*. Relevant academic textbooks found within the Ferdinand Postma Library of the North West University will also be consulted. The databases that was consulted include: Science direct; SAEpublications; Ebsco Host (Academic Search Premier; PsychArticles; PsychInfo) and Google Scholar

1.6.2 Research setting

For the purpose of this study data were collected within the Gauteng and North West provinces aiming at individuals working at large corporate companies. Corporate sectors such as financial companies, accounting firms and recruitment companies were consulted to ensure that the researcher obtains the sample group that is needed. When consent was obtained from the organisations and participants, the researcher arranged interviews at venues that are comfortable for the participants. These venues ranged from conference rooms to private offices within the organisations of the participants.

1.6.3 Entrée and establishing researcher roles

CEO's or managers of departments within the corporate companies chosen were contacted to set up a meeting. In this meeting the goals of the research study was discussed in a very detailed manner. After the research was approved and permission was granted, the names of all the younger managers of departments and their older subordinates were asked for. Afterwards these individuals were contacted via email. The intention with this email was for the employees to grant the researcher permission to conduct an interview with them which they will willingly participate in.

The researcher had a variety of roles and responsibilities that she needed to adopt within this research study. The researcher formulated a detailed and accurate plan for the research study from start to finish and therefore the first role of the researcher was that of planner. As data collector the researcher engaged in semi-structured interviews with the participants where the researcher

made use of questioning and probing to ensure that rich and useable data were obtained. The researcher also transcribed all the recordings and field notes obtained in interviews onto an Excel sheet, and therefore also had the responsibility of data transcriber. Furthermore, as data analyser the researcher analysed and interpreted all the data obtained from the participants into codes, themes and sub-themes that accurately represented the meaning and experiences the participants communicated to the researcher. After this has been done, the researcher then adopted the role of report writer. The report writing consists of the researcher discussing the findings of the study in a scientific and reliable manner. The discussion of the results of the study was further substantiated or contradicted by literature. Throughout the entire research process the researcher remained objective, thereby not letting her own opinions and values influence the data collection and reporting.

1.6.4 Research participants and sampling

The sample size of this research was 23 ($N=23$) to ensure an extensive investigation into this field of study. The population of this research study was divided into 15 ($n=10$) younger managers and 15 ($n=13$) older subordinates. Purposive voluntary sampling was used within this research study (Fouché & Schurink, 2011). The sample therefore included employees who possess the characteristics that are needed by the researcher in order to reach the objectives of this research study. This was not a random choice of individuals but rather carefully picked employees who met the requirements for this study (Tongco, 2007); the requirement being that the managers should be young of age and their subordinates should be five or more years older than them. Furthermore snowball sampling was also utilised. Snowball sampling is when the researcher obtains additional names of employees who meet the requirements of the research from the employees who are currently being interviewed (Tracy, 2013). This process was followed until data saturation was reached.

1.6.5 Data collection methods

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data for this research study. Semi-structured interviews provided room for the researcher to ask additional interview questions as the interview progressed and probed for answers when information was needed (Strydom & Delpont, 2011). The researcher ensured that all participants were accurately informed about the venue and time of the interviews.

The respondents were also provided with a biographical questionnaire to complete which inquired about their age, gender, qualification and race. The reason for this was that the researcher would not like to restrict herself in this regard. If any other stereotypes such as that of gender and race were reported by the participants, the researcher was then able to report on and utilise these findings in her results.

Before the actual interviews commence the researcher first conducted a pilot study. By conducting a pilot study the researcher/interviewer ensured that all respondents understood all the interview questions asked during interviews. A pilot study was done with approximately four respondents (two younger managers and two older subordinates) within a corporate environment in order to determine if the questions that are asked are interpreted correctly. If the participants did not understand the questions they were asked, the researcher made the necessary changes and adjustments that were required. All participants were asked the following interview questions:

Interview question asked to younger managers:

- *In your own words, please explain what you understand about the word ‘stereotype’?*
- *What is your perceptions regarding subordinates older than yourself?*
- *What stereotypes do you think older subordinates have about younger managers?*
- *What are the influences of these age stereotypes on your work or work performance?*
- *What are the influences of these age stereotypes on your relationships with your older subordinates?*
- *What additional influences do you experience with regard to age stereotypes (other than on performance and relationships)?*

Interview question asked to older subordinates:

- *In your own words, please explain what you understand about the word ‘stereotype’?*
- *What is your perception regarding managers younger than yourself?*
- *What stereotypes do you think younger managers have about older subordinates?*
- *What are the influences of these age stereotypes on your work or work performance?*
- *What are the influences of these age stereotypes on your relationship with your younger manager?*
- *What additional influences do you experience with regard to age stereotypes (other*

than on performance and relationship)?

1.6.6 Recording of data

When the respondents were interviewed, the answers to interview questions were voice recorded with an electronic voice recorder. This was done with the permission of the respondent to ensure that no data is lost. Afterwards the data were transcribed onto an Excel sheet. The researcher also ensured the safe keeping of the data collected. Data collected was also then protected with a password. Only the researcher and her supervisor had access to the data.

1.6.7 Data analyses

Interviews were transcribed and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. According to Braun and Clark (2006) the following steps was utilised to ensure that the data is accurately analysed:

Step 1: Familiarise yourself with the data

The researcher conducted the data collection process herself. The researcher, after conducting interviews, transcribed the interviews into written word in order to analyse the data. After the data collection and transcribing, the researcher (together with her study leader and independent co-coder) analysed the data in depth. This entails that the data were read and re-read a few times until meanings and patterns come to the surface. This process was time consuming however, it was essential that this process was not omitted. During this process the researcher took notes on any meanings, patterns or codes that surfaced. The transcripts that were developed as the stages progressed must represent the most important aspects of the collected data. Also, the data collected should always reflect the true meanings that were communicated by the participants to the researcher.

Step 2: Generating initial codes

The process of coding was defined by Yin (2011, p. 334) as “words or short phrases to capture the meaning of a larger portion of (the original) textual or visual data.” This step involves generating initial codes from the list of ideas that was written down during the first step. The initial codes that are generated are usually the ideas that are the most eye-catching to the

researcher as well as possess the meanings that the researcher would like to accentuate in the research. The types of codes that were generated will also depend on whether the codes are data driven or theory driven. The codes are data driven when the codes are constructed according to the specific data that the researcher collected and theory driven codes are when the researcher develops codes according to the specific questions that the researcher wants to answer in his/her study. A further aspect that was taken into account was if the entire content of the data were coded or if the researcher only wants to code a particular idea that develops as the researcher analyses the data.

Step 3: Searching for themes

This step starts with the initial codes that were extracted in step 2. The codes were re-focused into broader themes. This process consisted of sorting all the different codes into relevant themes. The researcher will search for different codes that will fit under a specific theme. To stimulate the researcher's thinking it may be needed to use graphs, maps etc. The researcher also had to critically analyse all the codes that she has developed thus far as well as the relationships they might have with other themes and sub-themes. Some codes were used as a main theme, some was used as sub-themes and some might be totally useless to the researcher. The researcher had a list of codes that did not fit anywhere within the data and for the time being they were placed in a different category.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

When the themes are established by the researcher, the next step was to re-analyse in order to refine the themes. By doing this the researcher was able to identify which themes have no meanings and which themes should be categorised under different themes or which themes must be further broken down. This step will consist of two levels. The first level was to read through all data extracts to establish if there was a coherent pattern. If a pattern was not established then the researcher must analyse the extracts again to identify if the entire theme was problematic or if the extracts within each theme fits accurately. If a pattern was established, the researcher will continue with level two. Level two will consist of analysing the validity of themes as a whole, thus the entire data set. The researcher ensured that the themes and their sub-themes accurately represent those meanings that were expressed by the participants. Furthermore, this was an opportunity for the researcher to then add any codes that might have been overlooked. If level 2

was unsuccessful, the researcher will then return to the review step to ensure that the first steps of the process was done accurately.

Step5: Defining and naming themes

This step consisted of the researcher defining and further refining themes and their sub-themes. The researcher identified the essence and meaning within each theme by critically re-reading each theme. The researcher ensured that each theme was accurate and simple in order for all readers to understand the meaning of each theme. It was very important not to only quote important extracts, but also to indicate the importance and relevance thereof and also what was interesting about the extracts. A detailed analysis of each theme was written. When this was done it was important to consider not only what story the theme was telling but also to consider how the individual theme stories fit into the overall story of the data. Also the relationship or connection some themes may or may not have with each other was also considered. After this the researcher ensured that all sub-themes are accurately and correctly defined and interpreted. To ensure the concise discussion and interpretation of the themes the content of each theme was described by making use of only a few sentences. If this was not possible, the researcher went back to refine the themes even more.

Step 6: Producing the report

The final codes, themes and sub-themes as extracted from the data were considered by the researcher in order to write a report of the findings. The writing of a report was very important because the reader must be provided with clear, concise, logical, non-repetitive and an interesting account of the story that was told throughout the data. The researcher utilised exact quotes from the participants to ensure that the reader understands the true meaning of the data collected. The report that was written was not merely be an enumeration of the extracts but provided the reader with a narrative of the argument of the study.

1.6.8 Strategies employed to ensure quality data and integrity

To ensure that this study is reliable and valid the researcher will give attention to the following four constructs: dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability.

Dependability: Dependability is related to reliability and is the criterion for consistency (De Vos, 2002). According to Shenton (2004) dependability refers to when the research is conducted again in the same context using the same procedures and therefore the results remain the same. The researcher will ensure that the research process is done in a logical and well-documented manner. The dependability of the research was concerned with the research design and the implementation thereof. The researcher ensured that the study was dependable by keeping a detailed diary of all the changes that occurred throughout the research study. Changes may include aspects such as adding questions to the interview schedule and reasons for doing so and also reporting on the body language of participants by indicating how they reacted when certain interview questions were asked. This was done throughout the entirety of the study to ensure that the reader can follow the process in a logical manner. This will also help future researchers to envisage how the study was conducted and why certain decisions were made throughout the research process.

Credibility: Credibility concerns internal validity, in which the goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described (De Vos, 2002). The researcher ensured that the participants that were chosen adhered to the necessary criteria such as being a manager young of age and a subordinate older of age. The age of managers and subordinates are of utmost importance for the purpose of this study. Credibility was also ensured by asking the participants to verify the data that was obtained from them and to see if they might have any additional information to add. A strategy that can also be implemented is called member checking. This is done by sending the data notes to the participants to ensure that the information that they provided during the interviews were accurately captured and described by the researcher.

Transferability: Transferability concerns the external validity of a research study and refers to the degree or extent to which the findings of the research data may be transferred to other groups other than the original study (De Vos, 2002). For the purpose of transferability, the researcher aimed to describe the research setting in as much detail as possible. By doing this, the researcher was able to provide as much detail as possible so that the reader can form a clear picture or idea of the study and where the study was conducted. By interviewing participants from various South African organisations the researcher strived to gain an overall picture of the experiences that employees have regarding age stereotypes. By doing this the results may possibly be applied to different context and settings within South Africa.

Confirmability: Shenton (2004) stated that confirmability refers to the objectivity of the researcher. The researcher ensured that she stayed objective throughout the entire research study. The researcher ensured that her subjective opinions and values do not influence the participants, research process or results of the research. The researcher of the study was also flexible and neutral throughout the entire study. This was done in order for the researcher to obtain the real and accurate experiences of age stereotypes as reported by the participants of this study.

1.6.9 Reporting of data

Data were extracted into tables, which also includes themes and sub-themes. Themes and sub-themes were substantiated by direct quotes from the participants that were interviewed. This was done in order to support the results and objectives of the current research study.

1.6.10 Ethical considerations

Fouché and Delpont (2011) provide ethical guidelines which direct the behaviour of individuals. These codes of conduct must be adhered to by all professionals including those whom wish to conduct research. According to these guidelines all of the participants should be voluntarily drafted, have the right to make informed decisions, and should be ensured that confidentiality was adhered to. These guidelines will now be discussed:

Voluntary participation: All organisations that were approached to participate in this study were informed of the research aims and that participation is completely voluntary. This was discussed with not only the management of the participating organisations but also the employees who was approached to participate in this study. Participants should voluntarily give consent to participate in this study and not be forced to participate in this research project.

Informed consent: All health care professionals (including researchers) are bound by professional good practise guidelines and these guidelines assert the importance of obtaining informed consent (Fouché & Delpont, 2011). This ethical guideline describes every person's right to decide whether or not to undergo or participate in any inquiry (Fouché & Delpont, 2011). Furthermore, all persons must be provided with full and accurate information regarding the inquiry in order to enforce their right to make an informed decision (Fouché & Delpont, 2011). This is relevant to this study because the participants in this study have the right to know what is being studied and the goal of the study. Furthermore the participants were informed that they are allowed to withdraw from the

study at any time, without any consequences.

Confidentiality: Fouché and Delport (2011) emphasise the right that every citizen has to have their privacy protected. Therefore, individuals such as researchers in the social sciences must take great care to ensure confidentiality (Fouché & Delport, 2011). The authors furthermore state that confidentiality means protecting information, ensuring that the use of information is safe and that individuals whom have access to information are bound by the same ethical agreement. Privacy and anonymity of the participants should therefore be respected.

Protection from harm: The researcher will explain to the participants that they will not be harmed in any psychological or physical manner during the entire research process. The researcher will therefore adhere to this by not harming any of the participants and treating the participants and their rights with the necessary respect. Furthermore, the researcher will not for any reason manipulate the participants or the data that they were provided with. The researcher will also ensure that their personal values and opinions will not be enforced on the participants of this study.

1.7 Chapter division

This mini-dissertation will consist of three chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Research article

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

1.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the problem statement and the research objectives were discussed. In addition, the research method was explained, followed by a brief overview of the chapters that follow.

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXPLORING AGE STEREOTYPES BETWEEN YOUNGER MANAGERS AND OLDER SUBORDINATES WITHIN SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS

Orientation: Organisations are diverse in terms of age, therefore, the occurrence of stereotypes particularly regarding age is not uncommon.

Research purpose: The objective of this study was to explore the influence of age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates, especially on performance and the relationship between the two parties.

Motivation for the study: Age diversity is a growing concern within South African organisations. Not only is age perceived differently by diverse employees, the influence of age stereotypes may also be experienced differently between various age groups. The researcher thus aimed to identify existing age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates and how these perceptions may influence work-related aspects such as performance or relationships.

Research approach, design and method: A qualitative research design was used in the present study. In conjunction with this research design a phenomenological approach was followed based on the paradigm of social constructivism. Furthermore, two types of sampling methods were utilised (purposive and snowball sampling). The sample size consisted of 23 South African employees selected from four different organisations respectively ($N=23$). The organisations that were approached formed part of the following employment sectors: telecommunication, primary and secondary schools, meat industry and electricity-supply sector. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data, after which thematic analysis was used to process the data.

Main findings: The results of the present study indicated that age stereotypes influence the relationship and performance of both parties (younger managers and older subordinates) in a positive and negative way. The age stereotypes concerning younger managers was commonly found more negative than positive, whereas the older subordinates were generally stereotyped in a more positive sense. Older subordinates experienced the influences of these stereotypes on their performance positively, seeing that it motivated them to be productive or efficient. In contrast, younger managers experienced the influence on their performance extremely negative.

Practical implications/managerial implications: Should individuals from different age groups be aware of stereotypes, it gives employees from both groups the opportunity and motivate them

to strive actively to mitigate or eliminate their stereotypical perceptions. Organisations should, therefore, foster a culture where employees (no matter what age or rank) do not rely on their stereotypical assumptions to make judgements. Organisations must ensure all employees are fully informed on age stereotypes, their impact, and how to prevent these stereotypes from becoming a problem.

Contributions/value-add: The meaning of age stereotypes as well as how they influence performance and the relationship between two parties, has been widely researched internationally. However, in the South African context limited research has been done in this regard. Through the present study, the researcher attempted to sensitise employees of South African organisations about these age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates and its effects or influence. This research may motivate employees to take the time to get closer acquainted, rather than judging each other based on characteristics which they assign through stereotypes.

Keywords: Stereotypes, age stereotypes, younger managers, older subordinates, leader-member exchange (LMX), in-group, out-group, South African organisations

INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes are generalisations that several individuals will experience at certain stages in their lives (Kotter-Grühn & Hess, 2012). One of the most popular environments in which stereotypes can be identified and experienced are organisations. Such stereotypes can be based on a various factors such as age, culture and gender (Kotter-Grühn & Hess, 2012). Typical groups that can be stereotyped in organisations are: managers, supervisors, subordinates, union members, the younger generation or the older employees (Luthans, 2010). For the purpose of this research article, the focus was on stereotypes that exist between managers and their subordinates, specifically younger managers and older subordinates.

The research of Franklin (2015) indicates that managers have the habit of engaging in stereotypes within an organisation. Franklin adds that these stereotypes can harm the relationship between managers and subordinates. Research findings indicate that when subordinates have the experience that they are stereotyped either negatively or positively, by their respective managers, it can

influence the subordinate's choice significantly to remain or leave the organisation (Franklin, 2015).

To support the argument above (i.e. determine the influence of stereotypes on the relationship between managers and subordinates), the leader-member exchange theory (hereafter: LMX) was employed. According to Krisnan (2005) this theory focuses on dyadic relationships, which indicate that two parties are involved in all relationships. Thus, the present study focused on the managers and their subordinates. Further research explains LMX as follows: Since the relationship is dyadic, the leaders (or managers in this case) will develop relationships of different qualities with each of their subordinates (Bader, 2007). These relationships, of varied quality according to the LMX, are important with regard to stereotypes. If the subordinates experience that they are perceived/stereotyped as trustworthy and valued by their manager, it will influence them to exert themselves for this specific manager (Franklin, 2015). This form of LMX relationships is termed high-quality exchanges. However, if a subordinate experiences the opposite, the relationship is known as a low-quality exchange relationship. When the manager and subordinate have a low-quality exchange relationship, their interaction is characterised by reduced trust, respect and obligation from both sides.

Yakoub (2008) indicated that when younger managers hold stereotypes (esp. based on age) of their older subordinates, the LMX relationship can be influenced extremely negatively. These negative influences of age stereotypes were expounded further by Yakoub (2008). Due to these age stereotypes, a change becomes observable in subordinates functioning on three platforms. Firstly, the subordinate's loyalty will decrease. Secondly, their affective functioning within the bounds of the organisation will be hampered, in other words, their interaction and work with their manager and fellow employees will suffer. When subordinates experience age stereotypes, they tend to have a colder, aloof affect towards their manager and fellow employees. On a third plane, the contributions and performance of the subordinate will decrease significantly. This means that the subordinates will provide poorer quality work to their manager (Yakoub, 2008). As a result, subordinates may become less oriented towards the overall goals of the organisation where they are employed.

According to Rauschenbach et al., (2012), age stereotypes are becoming more prevalent in organisations and cause growing concern. Findings by Berkel (2011) and Lamont, Swift and Abrams (2015) indicate that when employees' performance was investigated it was found that age stereotypes introduce severe uncertainty in the working environment, which lowers the performance of individual employees as well as the organisation as a whole (Berkel, 2011; Lamont, Swift & Abrams, 2015; Gruhn & Hess, 2012). Additional consequences of age stereotypes on employees are as follows: decreased job satisfaction, impeded psychological empowerment, less vigour and enthusiasm, higher intention to quit as well as increased stress and, eventually emotional exhaustion (Carmeli et al., 2009; Harris, Wheeler & Kacmar, 2009; Hooper & Marin, 2008; Vijoen, 2014).

Based on the explanation above, it is evident that age stereotypes hold numerous consequences for the organisation as well as individual employees. The present research study, therefore, aimed to explore the age stereotypes that exist between younger managers and older subordinates, including how these stereotypes impact the relationship and performance of both parties. A thorough literature study found that age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates have not been investigated in-depth within the South African context. This, therefore, highlighted the need for the present study.

Research purpose and objectives

Age stereotypes and its possible influence on the performance and relationship of employees have been researched internationally. However, the primary focus of the present study is on younger managers and older subordinates in South African organisations. The objective of this study was to explore the types of age stereotypes between these two groups of employees and how it impacts the relationship and performance of both parties. Discussed below is a literature study, empirical study, discussion, while limitations are pointed out and recommendations made.

Literature review

Conceptualisation of stereotypes

Stereotypes can be understood in various ways. Greenwald and Banaji (1995, p. 11) define this phenomenon as “a socially shared set of beliefs about traits that are characteristic of members of a social category”. Stereotypes are explained by Hilton and von Hippel (1996) as the specific beliefs that an individual holds about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviours of members of certain groups. When employees stereotype each other, it is presumed that a person or group possesses certain traits and exhibits specific behaviour patterns typical of the social group to which they belong (Ndom et al., 2007). Therefore, individuals who are part of a specific group, judge each other based on the characteristics of that group. Furthermore, it is the opinion of Rake and Lewis (2009) that once individuals are labelled by a stereotype, they will behave similarly to which they have been stereotyped.

It is pointed out that the stereotyping of individuals usually occurs unconsciously and unintentionally, and mostly in unfamiliar situations such as during first meetings (Devine, 1989; Hinton, 2000). Ndom, Elegbeleye, and Williams (2008) discussed the reason why people revert to stereotypic behaviour. They explain that when employees or individuals are unwilling or unable to obtain the necessary information about, for instance, a colleague, then the employee will revert to stereotyping. Further reasons for stereotyping are highlighted by Desforges et al., (1991) and Zikargae (2013), namely when individuals do not communicate sufficiently with each other, they begin generalising the behaviour which they observe of each other and apply it to all similar types of individuals. This means stereotyping the entire group rather than typifying only a single individual. Brink and Nel (2014) support the argument above by explaining that when individuals stereotype each other, the information on which they base their stereotypes is not necessarily correct and accurate.

Various types of stereotypes can be experienced within organisations such as age, race and gender (Hilton & Von Hippel, 1996; Rowley, 2007; Moloto, Brink & Nel, 2014; Gill, 2012). In this regard, Nelson (2005) indicates that fellow employees stereotype each other within a few minutes based

on age, race and gender. The reason is that these aspects are easily observable, for example an individual's skin colour. However, the present research was concerned particularly with the experience of age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates. Therefore, it is important that the literature study specifically focus on age stereotypes. Respectively, the social identity theory and the LMX theory will also be discussed to support the argument for this study. The social identity theory was discussed within the literature review to explain the occurrence of age stereotypes, which not only younger managers experienced, but older subordinates as well. The LMX theory was applied to explain the influence of these stereotypes on the relationship and performance of both younger managers and older subordinates (as discussed in the introduction).

Social identity theory

When stereotyping, individuals label both themselves and others, which is referred to as in-and out-group stereotypes respectively (McLeod, 2008). Regarding the phenomenon of the in- and out-group, Giles and Giles (2012) explain that the in-group is the group to which the individuals feels they belong, whereas the out-group is the one with which the individuals does not identify or does not feel they belong. An applicable theory to explain in-group, out-group and thereby, stereotyping and its use, is the social identity theory. This theory has been adapted by numerous researchers but the present study opted for the explanation of Henri Tajfel and Sabine Trepte.

The social identity theory was developed by the founder, Henri Tajfel (1979). Tajfel described this theory as the social category in which individuals are placed by others or by themselves. He further explained that individuals may regard their social identity as more important than the personal identity in their lives. When individuals place more importance on the group to which they belong (social identity), they will most likely be prone to experience stereotypes of an in-group and out-group type (Trepte, 2006). According to Trepte (2006, p. 256) "It is social-psychological theory that attempts to explain cognitions and behaviour with the help of group processes." Trepte (2006) explains the social identity theory by pointing out that the theory does not start at the basis of assumptions about the individual (e.g. the younger manager is lazy) but rather on the group of which the individual is part (e.g. all younger managers are lazy).

To follow is a discussion on the leader-member exchange theory. This is done to explain how stereotypes can influence the relationship and performance of the younger manager and older subordinate.

Leader-member exchange theory

The leader-member exchange theory (LMX) entails a dyadic relationship implying interaction between two individuals or parties (Lunenburg, 2010; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). According to Viljoen (2014), a dyadic relationship can be found between a manager and a subordinate. The LMX relationship can be explained in terms of two individuals who enter a relationship as strangers. The dyadic relationship on which the present study focused was between younger managers and older subordinates.

The dynamics of the relationship consist of the manager giving the subordinate a specific task or set of tasks to perform professionally and formally. The subordinate is required to comply with this request due to an obligation towards the leader, who is the manager (Viljoen, 2014). All tasks and communication between the two parties are termed “exchanges” and are formal throughout.

The exchanges between the parties can be of low or high quality. The LMX relationship typically starts off at a low-quality stage where the leader tasks the subordinate, who then must comply. The low-quality exchanges can be identified when there is low trust, respect, or obligation. At this stage, self-interest is the highest concern from both sides. When high-quality exchanges are required, values such as trust, respect and obligation must be developed and given much-needed concentration (Viljoen, 2014; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The stage of high-quality exchanges can also be referred to as the partnership stage. It is characterised by high levels of the above-mentioned values where individuals participate in activities, other than those initially expected of them. This entails activities in which the leader and the subordinate will walk the extra distance to provide high-quality levels of work to each (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Krishnan, 2005).

When the manager and the subordinate find themselves in the stage of their LMX relationship where there is low-quality exchange, then stereotypes typically tend to develop. This finding is in

line with that of Desforges et al. (1991), Zikargae (2013) and Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). They indicated that when the manager and subordinate enter the LMX relationship as strangers, their communication is limited since they are still taking their time to analyse and observe their partners in the new LMX relationship. This means that the parties begin making their assumptions based on the behaviour that either the manager or subordinate shows in the relationship. Thus, either the manager, or subordinate, will stereotype each according to characteristic behaviour, which is consistent with a specific generalisation. Examples would be that younger individuals are stereotyped as being lax, thus the older subordinate may consider their younger manager as lazy (Franklin, 2015).

Franklin (2015) and Fonken (2011) elucidated that when stereotypes are found in such an LMX relationship between managers and their subordinates, it can harm the relationship severely as well as their interaction on a daily work basis. Not only do age stereotypes influence the LMX relationship between managers and subordinates, it also hampers the performance of both parties involved.

Age stereotypes

Age stereotypes are defined by Robinson, Gustafson, and Popovich (2008) as well as Sargeant (2011) as assigning particular characteristics to a whole age group, rather than a particular characteristic to only one individual in that age group. Such stereotypes can be assigned to both younger and older individuals, however, the stereotyping of older and younger employees differ entirely.

When younger employees are evaluated, it is apparent that they are characterised as being easy to teach and train; they are also viewed as adaptable to difficult or new situations. Furthermore, younger employees are deemed more flexible and more energised compared to older employees (Posthuma & Campion, 2009; Sargeant, 2011). In a different vein, Tolbize (2008) and Irving (2012) found negative stereotypes attributed to younger employees, for example, that they are not as hard working as compared to their older colleagues. These younger employees are also characterised by their older fellow employees as irresponsible and lacking judgment. In contrast,

Sargeant (2011) indicates that younger employees are also stereotyped as more passionate than older employees. The younger employees are perceived to be more dynamic, enthusiastic and more friendly with regard to information technology (Sargeant, 2011).

The stereotypes attributed to older employees differ significantly from those of younger employees. According to Posthuma and Campion (2009), numerous stereotypes are found within the organisation, for example, that older employees' performance decreases as their age increases. Further findings indicated other age stereotypes attributed to older employees: they are truly loyal workers and can cope better with difficult situations than their younger counterparts (Posthuma & Campion, 2009; Wegge, Jungmann, & Schimdt, 2013). Furthermore, according to Kreitner and Kinicki (2012), older employees are experienced as not as easy to please and not as engaged in their work as younger employees, therefore, less motivated and productive. Nussbaum et al. (2005) found that older employees are also stereotyped as being confused and forgetful. These scholars added that when younger employees engage in a conversation/discussion with an older employee, they speak to them patronisingly, which also indicates a lack of respect towards the older ones.

Consequences of stereotypes

Singletary, Ruggs, Hebl, and Davies (2009) explain that negative stereotypes can cause destructive responses from employees. This tendency can be observed from their behaviour patterns, namely their reaction towards certain employees or individuals, performance of a task, and how motivated they appear at work. According to Al Waqfi and Jain (2007), stereotyping may lead to biased opinions about the behaviours and abilities of fellow colleagues.

Furthermore, Gill (2012) indicates that the organisation and, especially corporate companies, can be caused severe damage because of stereotypes. These damages may imply the loss of employees leaving the organisation; poor morale among employees; and low retention of employees. Thus, organisations struggle to maintain the productivity and motivation of their employees, Gill (2012) further outlines possible consequences on an individual level as well. When employees experience that they are stereotyped, or when they stereotype each other, there are several detrimental effects. They forfeit the opportunity to obtain valuable experiences in the workplace and connect on an

open and authentic level where they may gain important insights into fellow employees. Finally, Gill (2012) points out that these stereotypes will hinder employees in forming relationships in the organisation, which can be used as social support systems.

It was argued further that the act of stereotyping one's manager or subordinate, can have devastating effects on the hiring of new employees and the performance appraisals (Al Waqfi & Jain, 2007). This finding is in line with that by Enns and Rotundo (2012), who explain that when managers stereotype employees, this may cause complications in human resources, which may also lead to decreased performance and higher employee turnover. Zikargae (2013) explicates the specific consequences for the manager and subordinate when either the experience that they are being stereotyped by the other party. This will impede effective communication with each other.

According to Persson (2014), older employees in particular, will experience a decrease in their workplace performance if they become aware of age stereotypes in their working environment. Persson (2014) also indicates that older employees may experience increased stress and a decrease in their well-being due to such stereotypes. In this regard, Persson (2014) points out that while the older employees are confronted with the perceptions mentioned above, their younger manager and employer will suffer the consequence of losing an experienced worker. Chasteen, Schwarz and Park (2006) indicates that when older employees are faced with age stereotypes, the performance of their memory will decrease significantly. It was explained further that age stereotypes do not only impact the older workers memory, but their overall cognitive functioning within the work setup (Chasteen, Schwarz & Park, 2006).

When the stereotypes of younger employees were investigated, the following were found. According to Posthuma and Campion (2009) younger employees show the prevailing stereotypes of being technologically advanced, compared to older employees in the work place. It was also found that younger employees are stereotyped as less driven by work ethics, thus being less ethical in their daily tasks than their older counterparts. Rozman, Treven and Cancer (2016) pointed out further that younger employees are stereotyped as being immature, unreliable and disloyal to their organisations due to the fact that they move between organisations (“company hopping”) when they feel the need. Furthermore, it was found that younger employees' social lives are extremely

important to them. Due to the tendency of “company hopping”, they are also able to adapt sooner when moving on to a new position and organisation.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

The present study used a qualitative research design that was approached through a phenomenological lens. Qualitative research is defined according to Maxwell (2013) as a situated activity or situation that focuses on the viewer of the situation in a specific context of the world. Furthermore, qualitative research consists of interpretive and materialistic practices that make the world or specific context in which the actions occurred visible or known. The qualitative research design that was employed in the present study also investigates these situations as they occurred in their natural setting. The aim is to make sense and understand the specific phenomenon under investigation. Lester (1999) explains that the phenomenological approach attempts to identify the experience or situation of the participants. This is done by connecting with their subjective experiences and understanding the meaning these experiences have for the participants. To sum up, the experience of age stereotypes by younger managers and older subordinates was explored by following this approach. A detailed description was provided of the participants’ (older and younger employees) experience of age stereotypes in their particular organisation.

The social constructivism paradigm was applied in conjunction with the phenomenological approach. Social constructivism argues that all experiences or phenomena can best be understood and investigated from the perspective of the individual who has lived those moments (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). Individuals experience situations and phenomena differently; this forms the basic understanding of the social constructivism theory. This means that not one participant in this study will experience age stereotypes similar to another (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012). Based on social constructivism, the way in which one employee experiences the age stereotypes in organisations will probably differ from the experiences of another employee. This paradigm enabled the researcher to investigate age stereotypes, which both younger managers and older subordinates experience. As a result, the researcher could investigate age stereotypes from multiple perspectives and realities.

Research strategy

The present study utilised a multiple case study as research strategy. A case study can be defined primarily as an investigation into a specific group of individuals to gather information on their experiences and then generate knowledge about the specific phenomenon (Leedy & Ormond, 2013). This study, therefore, used multiple case studies to investigate how younger managers as well as older subordinates experience the specific phenomenon, namely age stereotypes. This strategy was considered best suitable for this study seeing that the participants were investigated in their natural setting. By employing multiple case studies, the researcher was able to analyse and examine different cases simultaneously (Niewenhuis, 2016). The cases for the present study were, therefore, chosen as younger managers and older subordinates. The investigation focused on their respective experiences of the phenomenon –age stereotypes. As was mentioned, there is limited knowledge on age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates within the South-African context. Therefore, the study will add value and contribute to the body of knowledge in this field.

Research method

The research method consists of the research setting, entrée and establishing researcher roles. It also entails sampling, research procedure as well as the methods to collect data and recording it. Furthermore, the method focuses on strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity, certain ethical considerations, analysing and processing the data, and the reporting style.

Research setting

The Gauteng Province and North-West Province were the areas targeted for data collection. The organisations that partook in the present study were selected from different employment sectors: telecommunication organisations, the education sector such as schools; as well as organisations in the food industry. Comfortable rooms and offices were utilised within the organisations to conduct the interviews after the participants gave their informed consent.

Entrée and establishing researcher roles

When an organisation was identified, a meeting was arranged with the specific CEO or HR manager to discuss the details of the research study. After agreeing that the research would be conducted in the specific organisation, the HR manager or CEO provided the researcher with a list containing names and details of younger managers and older subordinates. These participants were contacted through email to obtain informed consent and voluntary participation.

During the study, the researcher fulfilled several functional roles. Firstly, the researcher adopted the role of *planner*, by developing a detailed plan that outlined how the study would be conducted. The researcher also acted as *data collector* where she conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants employed in the selected organisations. During this role the researcher also posed questions, probing participants to obtain the necessary information to attain the objectives of this study. Furthermore, the researcher acted in the role of *transcriber*, by transferring the voice-recordings onto an Excel sheet. Thereafter, the researcher fulfilled the role of *data analyser*, which entailed analysing and interpreting the data and information obtained from the participants and sorting it into categories, themes and sub-themes. Finally, the researcher wrote a report on the findings, thus fulfilling a *report-writer's* role.

The mentioned report presented the findings of the study in a scientific and reliable manner. These findings were supported further and evaluated according to literature. Lastly, the researcher adopted the role of being *objective* throughout this whole process. This ensured the results and findings were not influenced by the researcher's personal values and biased opinions.

Research participants and sampling

For the purpose of the present study, the sample size was ($N=23$). The size of the sample enabled the researcher to explore this particular field widely. The method was purposive voluntary sampling, which can be explained as a sampling unit that adhere to specific criteria specified for a study (Maree & Pietersen, 2007). The main criterion that participants needed to adhere to for the present study was that managers should be at least 10 years older than their subordinates. Secondly,

snowball sampling was also utilised for the purpose of this study. When a participant was interviewed and knew of someone who also fitted the study's criteria, the researcher contacted these individuals as well. These two samplings methods were employed until data saturation had been achieved.

The sample for the present study consisted of 23 employees who were selected from various South African organisations ($N=23$). The characteristics of the sample group for this study are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Characteristics of participants (N=23)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Race	African	2	8.6
	Coloured	1	4.3
	Indian	3	13.04
	White	17	73.91
Gender	Female	13	56.52
	Male	10	43.47
Language	Afrikaans	13	56.52
	English	8	34.78
	isiZulu	1	4.3
	Others	1	4.3
Qualification	Higher education and training (NQF level 5)	18	78.26
	Further education and training (NQF level 4)	5	21.73
Age	30-40 years of age	7	30.43
	41-50 years of age	7	30.43
	51-60 years of age	6	26.08
	61-70 years of age	3	13.04
Years of experience in organisation	1-10	12	54.54
	11-20	4	18.18
	21-30	4	18.18
	31-40	2	9.09

Table 1 above indicates that more than half of the participants (56.52%) were female. The majority of participants were white (73.91%), while 13.04% were Indians. Most of the participants were Afrikaans speaking (56.52%), with 34.78% English speaking. The majority of the participants (78.26%) possessed a qualification of NQF level 5, and 21.73% of the participants were qualified at NQF level of 4. There were 30.43% participants who fell into the 30-40 age brackets, and 30.43% were from the age of 41-50. Finally, more than half of the participants (54.54%) reported to have been employed in their specific company for at least 12 years.

Data collection methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted for the present study. The purpose was to present the predetermined questions, but also probe and pose additional questions if the particular interview needed clarity on a specific question (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). All the participants who took part were informed fully about the time, date and place where the interview was to take place. The respective participants were asked the following interview questions:

Interview question posed to older subordinates:

1. *In your own words, please explain what you understand about the word 'stereotype'*
2. *Who would you regard as a younger worker?*
3. *What is the estimated age of your supervisor?*
4. *What is your perception regarding managers younger than yourself?*
5. *What stereotypes do younger managers have about you as an older subordinate?*
6. *What are the influences of these age stereotypes on your work performance?*
7. *What are the influences of these age stereotypes on your relationship with your younger manager?*
8. *What additional influences do you experience with regard to age stereotypes (other than on performance and relationship)?*

Interview question posed to younger manager:

1. *In your own words, please explain what you understand about the word 'stereotype'*
2. *Who would you regard as an older worker?*
3. *Do you have many subordinates who are older than yourself?*
4. *What is the estimated age difference between you and your subordinates?*
5. *What is your perceptions regarding subordinates older than yourself?*
6. *What stereotypes do older subordinates have about you as a younger manager?*
7. *What are the influences of these age stereotypes on your work performance?*
8. *What are the influences of these age stereotypes on your relationships with your older subordinates?*
9. *What additional influences do you experience with regard to age stereotypes (other than on performance and relationships)?*

When the participants arrived at the venue for the interview, they were also asked to complete a biographical questionnaire, which enquired about their age, race, gender, qualification as well as years of experience. The purpose was to describe the population that formed part of this study.

To ensure the participants understood all interview questions fully, the researcher conducted a pilot study. In this way, the researcher was able to alter questions ensuring the participants understood it better, before the actual interviews for data collection commenced. Four participants who fitted the specific criteria of the study was chosen (two younger managers and two older subordinates) to partake in the pilot study.

Recording of data

To prevent that data obtained from the interviews getting lost, the researcher used an electronic voice recorder with the permission of each participant. Thereafter the recordings were transcribed and compiled into an Excel sheet. Throughout the process, the researcher took care that data were secured and safe from misuse. This was done by password protecting the data sheets. The researcher and her supervisor were the only individuals who had access to the information.

Data analyses

Interviews were transcribed and the data processed through thematic analysis. Based on the model by Braun and Clark (2006), the steps expounded below were followed to ensure the data were analysed accurately.

Step 1: Familiarise yourself with the data

The interviews with the participants were conducted by the researcher herself. When the interviews were completed, the data were be transcribed and compiled onto an Excel sheet to be analysed. After gathering and transcribing the data, the researcher, in collaboration with her supervisor and independent co-coder (individual within the field of Industrial Psychology), analysed the data intensively and in depth. Thereafter, data were read and re-read until meanings and patterns became apparent. The process of analysing the data was extremely time-consuming, however it was important to follow this procedure.

Furthermore, the researchers made notes on meanings and patterns that emerged during the analyses. As the process progressed, the transcripts were developed and the researchers made sure to capture the most important and useful information from the interviews. This ensured the processed data relayed the accurate answers which the participants provided in the interviews.

Step 2: Generating initial codes

The process of coding is defined by Yin (2011, p. 334) as “words or short phrases to capture the meaning of a larger portion of (the original) textual or visual data”. This step involved generating or producing initial codes (categories) that were developed from the list of ideas which emerged in the first step. These ideas were the most attractive or eye catching to the researcher. The different generated ideas were also in accordance with the specific research questions and objectives of the present study. The categories that were found included in-group stereotypes of younger managers and out-group stereotypes of older subordinates. Furthermore, the researcher and co-coders had to decide whether to code the whole data set or only certain sections to accentuate a specific idea.

Step 3: Searching for themes

The first codes that were extracted from the data were re-worked to focus more on the broader subject of the study. The step entailed organising the codes into the different themes where they fitted the best. Furthermore, the researcher investigated possible relationships between the codes, after which the themes developed thus far, were evaluated critically. During this step the researcher and co-coders also organised themes and subthemes under particular codes. This was done by identifying subthemes that could be categorised under the same themes and which would present their own theme in the data gathering process.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

The themes the researcher extracted were re-analysed to refine the themes and sub-themes further. This helped the researchers identify themes that were not useful or which may fit more accurately under other themes and categories. This step consisted of two levels, firstly the themes were analysed to seek a coherent pattern in the data that were already extracted. If such a pattern could not be identified, the researcher had to investigate whether the complete theme was problematic, or each extracted theme does fit accurately. When the coherent pattern was recognised, the researchers moved to the second level. This entailed ascertaining whether the validity of the entire data set was acceptable. This was done by ensuring all the developed themes and sub-themes represent the accurate meanings which the participants experienced. The second level also gave the researchers the opportunity to include codes that, according to them, may fit the theme. If the actions on this level were not successful, the researchers would have to return to level one.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes

After the researchers moved on to step 5 they could define each theme and the concomitant sub-theme as well as refine each identified theme while working through the process. Thereafter, each theme and sub-theme was interpreted by critically reading through each of them again until specific meanings surfaced. It was also crucial to ensure each theme and sub-theme was accurate and clearly understandable to the readers. The researcher further allocated each extract to a specific

theme that proved important and explained the extract's relevance to the theme. As this step progressed, the researcher wrote a comprehensive analysis on the themes and subthemes. For the purpose of the research, it was critical to consider not only the narrative of the overall theme, but that from individual themes as well. Furthermore, interrelationships were discovered between themes and sub-themes, which was important to analyse and discussed as well. To ensure each theme and sub-theme conveyed the identified data accurately, the researcher summarised the content of the themes in concise sentences.

Step 6: Producing the report

An in-depth analysis was done to process the data and write a report on the findings of the present research. The report provided a clear, concise, logical, non-repetitive narrative of the data. Direct quotes were used to convey the findings practically and understandable and explain how it was collected and the research conducted. A professional language practitioner translated Afrikaans quotes into English to make the findings understandable to diverse language groups.

Strategies employed to ensure quality data

It was important for the present study to be reliable and valid. Therefore, the researcher focused on the following four constructs: dependability, credibility, transferability and conformability.

Dependability

The dependability of a study refers to the consistency of the findings, should the research be repeated in a similar environment (Maree, 2007). The dependability of the present study was ensured by actions such as writing down the changes that occurred during the research process, as well as the reasons for such deviations.

Credibility

Credibility entails the process of establishing that the research results are credible and believable from the perspective of the participants and those who read the report (Maree, 2007). This is done by ensuring all participants adhere to the criteria set out for the study. Regarding the present study, interviews were thus conducted with both younger managers and older subordinates. The credibility was also ensured by asking participants if the information which they have provided are correct and whether they wish to add information.

Transferability

The transferability of a study is concerned with generalisations that can be applied to the broader population based on the results obtained from the sample (Maree, 2007). This was done by describing the setting where data were gathered and the way it was done. The description of the present study was in detail to provide a clear and comprehensive picture of the research's content and why it was conducted. The sample group consisted of employees from various organisations, which allowed the researcher to obtain an overall and objective view, perspectives, and experiences of the phenomenon, age stereotypes.

Conformability

The researcher ensured conformability by staying objective throughout the study (Maree, 2007). Care was taken that the researcher's subjective opinions and values did not influence the participants' responses or behaviour in any way. The researcher furthermore remained flexible and neutral in order to accommodate participants' busy schedules. The main aim was to reach an accurate description and full picture of the way participants experience the phenomenon under investigation (age stereotypes).

Reporting of data

When the data were obtained from the participants, the researcher analysed and reported this information in table format. The tables below present themes and sub-themes, which are substantiated with excerpts from participants' direct quotes. This process was followed to support the results and attain the objectives of this study.

Ethical considerations

Ethical strategies were applied by the researcher and the co-researcher throughout the study. The following ethical strategies were followed in accordance with guidelines by Ivankova, Creswell and Clark (2008):

Informed consent: Firstly, selected organisations were contacted to arrange a meeting with the industrial psychologist/psychologist on site. When employees were selected to participate, they were provided with an informed-consent form. The objective of the present study was discussed in detail with each participant to ensure full understanding of the aim and objectives. Thereafter, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any given time if they have the need to.

Right of privacy: All participants were informed and assured that their identity would remain anonymous at all times of this study. They were also reassured that the information which they discuss and provide in the interview will not be shared with the organisation, their manager, or any employee of the organisation. The researcher also took care that the organisation as a whole were comfortable with the research. This was done by ensuring the "gatekeepers" that no organisation's identity will be disclosed at any stage during the research.

Protection from harm: The researcher reassured the participants that they will not be psychologically or physically harmed at any stage of this research. They were also reassured that should they feel harmed by the researcher or the process, at any given time, they have the right to withdraw from the study forthwith, without repercussions. To recap: the participants were not manipulated or treated unfairly throughout the process of the present research.

FINDINGS

The findings that were drawn from the collected data, were organised into different categories, themes and sub-themes. These different categories with concomitant themes and sub-themes are presented in the following tables. Direct quotes were extracted from the data to support the findings and are included in the tables below.

Category 1: The age of older employees

Regarding Category 1, the younger managers were asked to discuss when they would classify a subordinate as being old. The reason for such a request was that literature provide no clear indication when an employee is considered to be old or young. It was evident from the results that the majority of the younger managers classified a subordinate as old when the latter is between 6-10 years older than their managers (50%). The results regarding the older employees' age are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 2

Age of older employees

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age of older employees	1-5 years younger	2	20
	6-10 years older	5	50
	11-15 years older	1	10
	16-20 years older	2	20

According to Table 2 above, the majority of younger managers in this study indicated that when the older subordinate is 6-10 years (50%) older than them, they would classify them as old. Furthermore, 20% indicated the age difference as 1-5 years older; and 20% of managers affirmed that 16-20 years older would classify older subordinates as old, whereas 10% of the managers indicated the “cut off” age difference as 11-15 years older to be classified as old.

Category 2: The age of younger employees.

For Category 2, older subordinates were asked to discuss when they would classify an employee as young. Again, the reason was literature give no clear indication of when an employee can be considered as old or young. The results are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 3

The age of younger employees

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age of younger employees	1-5 years older	2	20
	6-10 years older	5	50
	11-15 years older	1	10
	16-20 years older	2	20

Table 3 above indicate that the majority of older subordinates maintained that if the manager is 6-10 years younger than them, they would classify the former as young. Furthermore, 20% of older subordinates indicated the age difference as 1-5years younger; 20% set this difference at 16-20 years younger; and 10% of older subordinates indicated 11-15 years, in order to classify their manager as young.

Category 3: Number of older employees working for younger managers

Under Category 3, participants, especially younger managers, were asked to identify the number of older subordinates who currently are working under them. The results indicated that the majority of younger managers have between one and ten older subordinates (73.33%). These results are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 4

Number of older employees

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Number of older subordinates	1-10	11	73.33
	11-20	4	26.66

According to Table 4 above, the majority of younger managers indicated that they have 1-10 older subordinates who report directly to them (73, 33%). The rest of the younger managers reported that they manage approximately 11-20 (26, 66 %) older subordinates.

Category 4: Age differences between younger managers and older subordinates

The younger managers specifically were asked about the number of years that they and their older subordinate differ. The majority of younger managers indicated an age difference of 10-15 years (60%). The results on the age differences are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Age difference between younger manager and older subordinate

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
age difference between younger manager and older subordinate	10-15 years difference	6	60
	16-20 years difference	4	40

It is evident from Table 5 above, that 60% of younger managers indicated that their older subordinates are 10-15 years older than them, while 40% pointed out the age difference as 16-20 years older.

Category 5: In-group stereotypes of younger managers

For Category 5, younger managers had to provide the researcher with stereotypes that they believe older subordinates hold about them (i.e. in-group stereotypes of younger managers). Participants identified various positive and negative stereotypes in this regard, which are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6

In-group stereotypes of younger managers

Theme	Sub-theme	Sample response/quote
Positive stereotypes	Educationally privileged	<i>“Yes, so we get a lot more exposure in terms of education and training and opportunities and things like that.”</i>
	Energetic	<i>“... so, younger people have more energy ...”</i>
	Fast paced	<i>“... nowadays with the workforce being younger just the pace at which things is expected to be done.”</i> <i>“We have a different speed of doing things. My urgency around doing things is much stronger ...”</i>
	Open to change	<i>“I think myself and other younger people are not scared of trying some new process or to try something we’ve never done before...”</i> <i>“I think I am a bit more open to alternative.”</i>
Negative stereotypes	Technologically advanced	<i>“Yes, I mean and maybe this is of topic, but I think a lot of it is about technology. Because I really think if I need to find something I don’t have to ask around or read a book. I quickly Google it and I’m comfortable with a phone and you can pick up a computer so I think you’re so resourceful.”</i> <i>“... younger generation like myself are very reliant on technology so I will use my phone for 20 different functions.”</i>
	Disloyal	<i>“I think she can perceive me as not loyal.”</i> <i>“The younger generation like myself is less loyal when compared to herself from an older generation and you see this by the younger employees changing their jobs so often.”</i>
	Disrespectful towards older individuals	<i>“... that I’m sometimes disrespectful for her specific needs from where she is because her age is not on my mind.”</i>

Instant gratification	<i>“So, it’s maybe around instant gratification that we are looking for.”</i>
Not knowledgeable	<i>“... the general assumption made by most people and I don’t think he thinks we know as much as we do.”</i> <i>“... very young we’ve got a lot to learn; we don’t know much...”</i>

Based on Table 6 above, the following two forms of stereotypes could be discerned:

Positive stereotypes: Younger managers believe that older subordinates stereotype them positively as energetic and technologically advanced. Furthermore, they indicated that they are believed to be educationally privileged in the sense that they had more opportunities to further their studies. They also mentioned that they view themselves as more open to change than older subordinates and they (as younger managers) perform tasks at a fast pace. Other stereotypes that were mentioned include: they are easy going; ambitious; technologically advanced and thus stereotyped as having theoretical knowledge. Finally, the younger managers also discussed their perception that older subordinates view them as instigators of change who enter the organisation wanting to make wholesale changes and in addition, dispense unsolicited instructions to older subordinates.

Negative stereotypes: Younger managers also mentioned being stereotyped negatively. These generalisations include: seeking instant gratification, implying they strive to move up the hierarchy sooner and faster than older employees would.

Category 6: Out-group stereotypes of younger managers

For Category 6, participants (esp. older subordinates) were asked to discuss in full detail the types of age stereotypes that are held about younger managers (i.e. out-group stereotypes). Table 6 below describes out-group stereotypes attributed to younger managers.

Table 7

Out-group stereotypes of younger managers

Theme	Sub-theme	Sample response/quote
Positive stereotypes	Ambitious	“... career motivation; drive ...” “The younger generation comes in and you know they want to move up in the hierarchy a lot quicker.”
	Cautious	“He is very cautious of taking risks and thinking outside the box.”
	Committed	“... commitment in terms of his work, how much is his input? Is he willing to walk the extra mile?”
	Different way of thinking	“... new thinking ...”
	Do not force authority	“... he doesn't force his ways on you ...”
	Easy going	“Younger people are much more like: Whatever comes goes”
	Educated	“...young ones that are more educated.” “...younger ones are more educated.”
	Energetic	“... expectation of him to be energetic ...”
	Hardworking	“He is a hard worker.”
	Insightful	“... insightful person ...”
	Knowledge of modern techniques	“...learnt new techniques that emerged recently with machines that we did not have in olden times.”
	Professional	“The younger ones are more professionals.”
	Psychologically stable	“... very psychological stable ...”
	Skilful	“I learn from them. They have skills which I don't.” “... the skills ...”
	Target driven	“The new generation is more driven; it's all about figures and quantities and targets and things like that. In those days, it was a little bit different. We were managed. Nowadays, it's all about the figures and targets. I think most companies, you know, and these guys are under a lot of pressure, because coming from the top; so, they are all target-driven.”
Technically focused	“... very technical ...” “He is highly technical when compared to me.”	
Technologically advanced	“... then, when he sits behind the computer, he can perform more than one function.”	

		<i>"His skills with computers are excellent, for example, compared to mine."</i>
Negative stereotypes	Arrogant	<i>"They come with that mind of: 'I am qualified, so, I can do anything.'"</i>
	Change instigator	<i>"They probably will say, 'The young person who will come and change everything.'"</i>
	Controlling	<i>"... quiet controlling ..."</i>
	Defensive	<i>"I found that the stereotype was that she was quiet defensive."</i>
	Emotionally immature	<i>"He may lack in certain areas such as in emotional maturity." "So, I would almost say that things that will not faze me will faze him in a way that is quite, one needs to have compassion with him in that situation."</i>
	Entitled	<i>"Also not willing to do the work to move to the next levels. So, you would want to move up the corporate ladder quite faster as than first, working hard to get there, not just coming in with a degree and just thinking that you can walk into XYZ positions."</i>
	Force authority	<i>"...wanted to almost force the hand of being the senior."</i>
	Impatient	<i>"... not patient ..."</i>
	Incompetent	<i>"...do not have the required knowledge and skills to adequately manage the project or the work."</i>
	Inexperienced	<i>"That people who has worked and has a lot of practical knowledge might think that who this guy is, coming from university, who might not have the experience managing everything that needs to be done." "They do not have the necessarily the right experience to move that quickly and they do not know the organisation that well as well; so, I think it has a lot to do with the inexperience of how things work."</i>
	Nervous to share information	<i>"...was little bit nervous to share information."</i>
	No organisational commitment	<i>"... not feeling loyal to a boss anymore ..."</i>
	Unsolicited instructions	<i>"This young one is not going to tell me what's going on and how I must do my job."</i>
No stereotypes	Focus on the individual's skill and competence	<i>"...for me this is not about age; this is also not about race. It is about one's skills to fill one's position and what one is capable of."</i>

Based on Table 7 above, the following three approaches to stereotyping become apparent:

Positive stereotypes: When participants (esp. older subordinates) were asked what perceptions or stereotypes they hold about the younger managers for whom they are working, most stereotypes were positively inclined. Participants indicated that when they had to characterise younger managers; they view them as energetic as well as technologically advanced. Furthermore, younger managers were stereotyped as strongly target driven to reach their objectives on a specific project. Several older subordinates indicated that they stereotype their younger manager as being educated but not necessarily experienced in the corporate environment.

Younger managers were also stereotyped as ambitious; hardworking; driven; and committed to the particular task they have to perform. Furthermore, they were stereotyped as cautious to think out of the box; do not force their authority onto their older subordinates; and have a different way of thinking about plans and problems. Younger managers were further characterised as being skilful; psychologically stable; insightful; loyal; professional and knowledgeable about modern techniques that can be used in organisations.

Negative stereotypes: Younger managers were stereotyped by their older subordinates in a negative sense as well. Firstly, they were perceived as defensive; controlling; nervous to share information about a project, particularly with older subordinates; emotionally immature; forcing their authority onto others such as older subordinates; and still inexperienced. Younger managers also discussed negative stereotypes they presume their older subordinates hold about them. Prevalent stereotypes were that younger managers are viewed as arrogant; impatient; entitled; uncommitted to the organisation; disloyal; fast paced; disrespectful towards older individuals; inexperienced; and not knowledgeable.

No stereotypes: Certain participants indicated that they do not stereotype their younger managers for the various reasons. Older subordinates explain that they do not stereotype or feel stereotyped since they focus on the individuals' competencies and ability to conduct their work, instead of on personal characteristics. The older subordinates explained further that they classify themselves and their younger managers on the same level in the organisation. According to these participants, they

are no better than others and treat each other in a manner which eliminates stereotypes between the two parties.

Category 7: In-group stereotypes of older subordinates

For Category 7, older subordinates were requested to provide the researcher with stereotypes which they believe younger managers hold about them (i.e. in-group stereotypes of older subordinates). Older subordinates mentioned and described that their younger managers view them in a certain way, which underlines in-group stereotypes of older subordinates, as presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8

In-group stereotypes of older subordinates

Theme	Sub-theme	Sample response/quote
Positive stereotypes	Advisor	<p><i>“There is an expectation that I can provide advice.”</i></p> <p><i>“He tends to seek my advice and listen.”</i></p>
	Experienced	<p><i>“He has the expectation that I would have acquired certain forms of experience about matters, so, yeah.”</i></p> <p><i>“He would often comment about the fact that experience brings wisdom.”</i></p>
	Knowledgeable	<i>“He will say that I am knowledgeable.”</i>
	Life experience	<i>“He believes that I have life experience.”</i>
	Loyal	<i>“I am loyal towards the work.”</i>
No perceived stereotypes	Same level	<p><i>“I must add – it’s because of the life journey that we both had. We both had been through incredible transformational work. We have grown, the both of us. In that, I mean we have gone through a lot of work to discover about who I am, rather than worry about everyone else. So, we have done the same programme actually, which helps us to be aligned in spiritual spaced.”</i></p> <p><i>“We are on the same level because I think she is capable of her leadership and where she is right now.”</i></p>

From Table 8 above, the following approaches to stereotyping become apparent:

Positive stereotypes: The older subordinates discussed stereotypes they perceive their younger managers have about them. These stereotypes were either positive, or the older employees did not experience any stereotypes at all. Regarding the positive stereotypes that were identified, older subordinates thought that younger managers would view them as follows: very loyal to the organisations they work for; highly knowledgeable in their field of work; many years of work experience and life experiences; and may be used by younger managers as advisors. Thus, there is an expectation that older subordinates will be able to advise the younger managers on certain taxing aspects of the work.

No perceived stereotypes: As was highlighted in Table 8 above, older subordinates indicated that they do not experience any stereotypes from their younger managers’ side because they consider themselves to be “on the same level”.

Category 8: Out-group stereotypes of older subordinates

For Category 8, younger managers had to describe the stereotypes they hold of older subordinates (i.e. out-group stereotypes). Results indicated that, in certain instances, older subordinates are not stereotyped by younger managers. On the other hand, results also showed that older subordinates are stereotyped both positively and negatively. Table 9 below provides excerpts of out-group stereotypes about older subordinates.

Table 9

Out-group stereotypes of older subordinates

Theme	Sub-theme	Sample response/quote
Positive stereotypes	Committed to organisation	<i>“...more focused on what they can do to contribute to the organisation typically.”</i>
	Experienced	<i>“He has a lot of experience.”</i> <i>“She’s been around the block; her experience and, specifically in the field we work in, her growth as a human being and her experience that she brings to the table ...”</i>

	Hardworking	<p><i>“Both of them are hard workers; they put everything in; and are determined to get the job done. They do not moan, only set themselves and – they’ll get it done.”</i></p> <p><i>“I would definitely say that he is a hard worker; and he does actually get the job done.”</i></p>
	Life experience	<i>“This person has more life experience.”</i>
	Loyal	<p><i>“... very loyal ...”</i></p> <p><i>“She was happy staying in the same job for 20 years.”</i></p>
	Modest	<i>“They often have less ego in the organisation.”</i>
	Not technologically advanced	<p><i>“... then the technology. It really befuddles them. They get frustrated.”</i></p> <p><i>“The obvious stereotype about older people is that they struggle with technology.”</i></p>
	Outdated	<i>“... firstly, don’t understand the terms we currently use in business.”</i>
	Professional	<p><i>“What makes them both stand out: they are absolute professionals in what they do and how they perform in the business.”</i></p> <p><i>“... way she talks to people is very respectful ...”</i></p>
	Sharing of knowledge	<p><i>“... life perspective and I also think having her in my team just creates opportunities to learn more about life skills.”</i></p> <p><i>“... that they are more willing to teach ...”</i></p>
	Wise	<i>“Here is more wisdom just by virtue of her being longer on the planet...”</i>
Negative stereotypes	Bad memory	<i>“...method is not always followed because she forgets about it and then she is too, I think, maybe too proud to ask. She can’t remember, so then, she would rather go out on her own mission.”</i>
	Educationally disadvantaged	<i>“... sometimes wonder if they feel like, ‘We didn’t have the same opportunities. So, maybe if I had the opportunity to study and whatever, then I could have done that myself.’ So, it can also be that stereotype of the disadvantaged versus the advantaged with regards to that.”</i>
	Health issues (diabetes, high blood pressure)	<i>“In that age category there is specific ailments in that category, so, for example, blood pressure issues and diabetes, that is not particular to her but to her age group. So, in terms of work performance, that is something to be mindful of and also it can translate into issues with energy.”</i>
	Incompetent	<i>So, if you are older, we will assist you.”</i>

		<i>“That’s the most frustrations we can actually have with the fact that they don’t have the ability, according to us, to do the work.”</i>
	Misunderstands instructions	<i>“...being very easily confused. So, there would be an instruction, she’d do whatever she thought she heard and when I get it back, it’s totally something different.”</i>
	Not open to change	<i>“They would think: ‘We have done this now for 20 years. Why do you now want to shift it around?’ So, I also think not just about technology, but having that open mindedness ...”</i> <i>“The older generation is that they always want to things according to the old style and the old manner.”</i>
	Not open to learning opportunities	<i>“It’s not about competency; it’s about the abilities that she does possess, but an old dog can’t learn new tricks.”</i>
	Preference for structure	<i>“She holds much higher expectation of the organisation as a system to provide structure and mandates and logic for what we do, than I would.”</i> <i>“So, in general the older people prefer a lot more structure than the younger people.”</i>
	Slow paced	<i>“The old generation, like her, may be perceived to be slower ...”</i> <i>“She does do it; it’s just a lot slower.”</i>
	Unenthusiastic	<i>“I think she’s getting less excited about stuff and work. Do I hold the perception that she is less passionate, you know, about what we are doing now and into the future? Yes.”</i>
No perceived stereotypes	Do not stereotype	<i>“In our team there are none of that. There’s no mention of age difference. All there is: You are appointed in a specific position and on a specific post level and must do the work.”</i> <i>“I don’t really have stereotypes about him. Honestly, I don’t have any...”</i>
	Non-judgmental	<i>“... but to recognise a particular person comes with a specific set of abilities and experience and that is more important than placing a stigma on a person just because they are in a specific age category, I think, to that you are being naïve ...”</i>
	Self-aware of own stereotypes	<i>“I tend to not let stereotypes dictate my response to a situation.”</i>

From Table 9 above, the following approaches to stereotyping can be discerned:

Positive stereotypes: Older subordinates explained that they feel their younger managers stereotype them as experienced due to the years they have worked already; they are also perceived to enjoy life experience; deeply loyal to the company for which they work; and are also expected to fulfil a role of advisor for their younger managers. Finally, older subordinates attested to being stereotyped as knowledgeable; loyal; hardworking; professional; wise; modest; and willing to share their knowledge in teams.

Negative stereotypes: Older subordinates were stereotyped negatively in the following sense: not technologically advanced; struggling to understand instructions; outdated with current business jargon; and not open to change in the organisation. They were characterised further as being incompetent in their work; preferring structure in the organisation; unenthusiastic; not open to new learning opportunities; and suffering from bad memory. Furthermore, it was understood that individuals in that life stage will have certain health problems such as high blood pressure, which can lower their performance. Finally, they were stereotyped as educationally disadvantaged, implying they did not enjoy the same opportunities to study as the younger generations do.

No perceived stereotypes: One older subordinate also affirmed that his generation actively attempt to avoid stereotyping. They accomplish this by focusing primarily on the work and competency, not personal characteristics. Furthermore, younger managers also indicated that they have no perceived stereotypes of their older subordinates. They mentioned that they believe age is just a number and age difference does not exist. Furthermore, a participant admitted that they, as younger managers, are self-aware of the stereotypes that they may hold about their older subordinates. However, they actively attempt not to let these stereotypes dictate their behaviour or response to these older subordinates. Finally, a participant emphasised that they do not stereotype because they are non-judgmental and accepts the individual's different personality aspects.

Category 9: Influence of age stereotypes on relationships

For Category 9, participants were asked how the stereotypes they experience influence the relationship with their younger manager, or older subordinates respectively. Most participants indicated that they feel highly frustrated in the relationship. Other participants experienced the

stereotypes in a more positive vein. They explained that when they experience possible stereotyping or problems in the relationship, they discuss it with the other party until it is resolved. This indicates open communication in the relationship from their side. The responses are presented in Table 10 below.

Table 10

Influence of stereotypes on relationships

Theme	Sub-theme	Sample response/quote
Perceived influence on relationship	Angry	<i>"You may get annoyed, but hours later, you just carry on and carry on working; no sense in staying cross over this."</i>
	Friction	<i>"... expected to be done can cause friction in the relationship because they are not used to it."</i>
	Frustration	<i>"This also makes things a bit frustrating ..." "I was getting hugely frustrated."</i>
	Impatient	<i>"... stereotypically more impatient, because maybe the old generation, like her, may be perceived to be slower."</i>
	Overwhelming	<i>"...sometimes it feels as if things it gets a bit much get..."</i>
No influence on relationship	Turnover intention	<i>"... started looking around for other work ..."</i>
	Acceptance	<i>"One cannot fight it; and it does not only come from him; this is a global problem from senior management, and they get it from the senior manager."</i>
	Adaptability	<i>"I think his technical skills was hard from me, but then I got used to it and his management style was a bit different."</i>
	Mutual commitment	<i>"There is a mutual commitment behind it."</i>
	Mutual respect	<i>"So, if I am dealing with someone that is older, I need to respect that and that's fundamental when you are in any relationship if you have respect." "It is about respect and he has also shown respect to me, because I do the same thing."</i>
	Non-judgemental	<i>"I think we both know that we are assuming. So, it's not facts that we are given and we know and that's why I don't think we take it to heart when we work with each other." "We know that behaviour is only a symptom. So, for me to judge her, or for her to judge me on how I show up at work on a day, is</i>

	<i>dangerous to the relationship, but to actually take the time and to build a relationship ...”</i>
Open communication	<p><i>“I pick up something, and it can be anything – not necessarily a stereotypical thing; I would point it to him and we would have a conversation about it and vice versa.”</i></p> <p><i>“So, we are lucky in the sense that from her maturity point of view, that we can have these conversations. If we hadn’t had those conversations, if the openness and respect wasn’t there, I think it would be extremely difficult.”</i></p>
Respecting diversity	<p><i>“... that not everyone is going to have the same outlook we are all different we are all unique people.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think to have an awareness of how different we are is important.”</i></p>
Separate stereotypes from work	<i>“I feel we don’t have a bad relationship and I think that’s because we don’t take it to heart, because I make my assumptions and he makes his assumptions, but I don’t manage him according to his assumptions. I manage him according to the system that is in place.”</i>
Shared work goals	<i>“We can focus on the same objectives.”</i>

From Table 10 above, the following perceived influences become apparent:

Perceived influence on relationships: Participants did identify certain influences, namely feeling frustrated, overwhelmed, impatient and angry in their relationships. These stereotypes may also lead to friction. A participant indicated that it influenced older subordinates to such an extent that they want to leave their manager.

No influence: A few participants maintained that they do not experience stereotypes in their relationships. They cited the following reasons: they display respect towards each other; there are shared goals in the relationship; enjoy mutual commitments; adapt to the stereotypes; and learn to work with stereotypes in the relationship between the two parties. It was further evident that both the younger manager and older subordinate accepts these identified stereotypes between them since they view such generalisations not as an individual aspect, but rather a global problem. A number of participants professed that stereotypes do not influence their relationship because there is mutual respect and open communication between the two parties. Participants further attested

that the issue of stereotypes taught them to respect individual characteristics in each other. Other participants pointed out that due to the problem of stereotypes, both younger manager or older subordinates approach each other in a non-judgemental manner. It was also emphasised that due to the existing perceptions, the two parties attempt to separate their work from stereotypes. Additionally, younger managers explained that since they work with older subordinates, they respect their elders. Therefore, they take care to display the respect that older individuals deserve.

Category 10: Influence of stereotypes on work performance

Regarding Category 10, participants were asked to discuss how the stereotypes they attribute to each other (both younger managers and older subordinates), influence their work performance as a whole. The excerpts from the various responses are provided in Table 11 below.

Table 11

Influence of stereotypes on work performance

Theme	Sub-theme	Sample response/quote
Decreased performance	Time wasted	<p><i>“On my work performance it gets to the point where I have to do it myself. I have to do the work myself and I just sit later; and we do the work, and that’s basically counterproductive and, obviously, you have to meet certain deadlines and you can’t.”</i></p> <p><i>“Performance impact is quite negative in terms of time because, obviously, in any team when you work with somebody, it takes time to work with that person and teach them the new procedures.”</i></p>
No influence	Acceptance of stereotypes	<i>“I think then we cooperate better, then there’s no surprise that I might have missed something, and now it became a major problem that must be sorted out. So, this works better. We get along better, and this makes things easier in the work situation to move faster.”</i>
	Separate stereotypes from work	<p><i>“I think from both sides we put assumptions aside...”</i></p> <p><i>“No, for me work performance is based on experience and skills, irrespective of your age or gender. So, I think I have been deliberate in separating those issues from the actual work.”</i></p>
Enhanced performance	Accepting diversity	<i>“It influenced my performance positively because he acknowledges that there are certain things that I am not comfortable with”</i>

“She will now approach me if she struggles and I understand that this is her pace of work. I need to match that and understand that and how many tasks I can assign to her – that type of thing.”

Motivation	<i>“To a great extent, I think I use it as motivation.”</i>
Mutual learning	<i>“Well, for me it’s enriching; its learning, so, there is mutual learning.”</i> <i>“You learn a lot from the younger generation.”</i>
Prove to be competent	<i>“She kind of has to prove herself in the environment.”</i>
Team performance important	<i>“I see myself also as a team player; the team’s achievement is important for me, and my input and contribution to it is important to me.”</i> <i>“...he also is a team player ...”</i>

From Table 11 above, the parties’ performance due to stereotyping can be discerned as follows:

Decreased performance: Participants were asked how these stereotypes influence their performance at work. A large number of participants indicated that the stereotypes lower their performance in the sense that such perceptions lead to loss of time in a work day. The employees have to face the stereotypes about older subordinates being slow paced, resistant to change and not technologically advanced. Thus, younger managers are required to explain certain procedures repeatedly, which causes a decline in work performance.

Enhanced performance: Other participants indicated that these stereotypes enhance their performance in the sense that there is mutual learning and it motivates both parties. The motivation can be due to the urge to (esp. the older subordinates) prove themselves in the positions where they are placed. Furthermore, participants mentioned that since younger managers are stereotyped positively as team players, the older subordinate find common ground for work performance. The older subordinates explained that this common ground and the team performance is important to both groups, since it enhances their performance. Finally, a number of participants accept this diversity by allocating specific tasks to certain team members. Therefore, older subordinates experienced that their energy was not wasted but put to better use, which ultimately led to improved performance.

No influence: Participants indicated further that these stereotypes do not influence their work performance since they separate their work from such generalisations. Thus, the stereotypes or characteristics they assign to certain individuals in the organisation do not affect the way in which they work.

DISCUSSION

Outline of the findings

The first objective of the present study was to conceptualise stereotypes, specifically surrounding age, according to literature. Hilton and von Hippel (1996) view stereotypes as assumptions that are made about behaviour or personality attributes of others. This enables the social perceiver to process information about others faster and easier. Jones and Colman (1996 p. 843) define stereotypes further as follows: “a relatively fixed and oversimplified generalizations about groups or classes of people. In practice, they generally focus on negative, unfavourable characteristics, although some authorities include in their conceptions of stereotypes positive social overgeneralizations as well”.

The present study focused specifically on age stereotypes. Such stereotypes can thus be explained as the beliefs that individuals/employees attribute to other individuals or fellow employees highlighting their specific age (Levy, 2009). The construct of age stereotypes is explained further by Shani and Lau (2008) as a belief about different traits, abilities and characteristics, which may make an age group favourable or appropriate for a particular role in the organisation.

The second objective of this study was to investigate in-group and out-group stereotypes regarding younger managers. During the data collection, these participants indicated various stereotypes which they perceive older subordinates holding about them (i.e. in-group stereotypes). The results indicated that both positive and negative stereotypes are attributed to younger managers within an organisation (Posthuma & Geurrero, 2013). The most stereotypes assigned to individuals are believed to be negative, according to Kreitner and Kinicki (2010). However, the findings showed that stereotypes are not always, and in every situation, negative and inaccurate. Certain stereotypes

can be found to be positive and accurate regarding the specific individual or group. Even though numerous stereotypes are based on non-factual information or perceptions, a number of such generalisations do originate from a basis of truth.

From the results, it became evident that younger managers are stereotyped as technologically advanced (Sargeant, 2011). This implies that these managers are much more comfortable using the available technology. They also highlighted this stereotype since it is believed that when they need information on a certain topic or field, they merely Google the subject, rather than asking a co-worker to assist. Because younger managers are considered as technologically advanced, it may get them appointed easier in a position, or it may provide them more opportunities in the working environment when compared to older subordinates (Zboralski-Avidan, 2014).

Furthermore, younger managers are stereotyped negatively by perceiving them as disloyal since current young employees do not remain at an organisation for 20 years. They rather change from organisation every five years, for example. This finding is in line with that of Rozman, Treven, and Cancer (2016) that currently younger employees are stereotyped as disloyal to organisations and that they easily take on new positions in other organisations. The reason may be that they seek different and new forms of experience. It may also be that they have more opportunities to climb the corporate ladder in another organisation. Finally, older subordinates also stereotyped younger managers as emotionally immature (Rozman et al., 2016). This may be since these younger managers have not yet gained the life experience in years that older subordinates have done.

The study's third object was to investigate in-group and out-group stereotypes about older subordinates. After analysing the data, it became evident that older subordinates are being stereotyped as more experienced. This may be since they have been working more years at the same organisation, compared to their younger managers. This means they have acquired more experience in the world of work than younger managers. It was further evident that older subordinates are stereotyped negatively as not open to change. Numerous younger managers indicated that when their older subordinates needed to change the way in which they conducted a certain task, it caused anxiety and resistance. The reason may be that these older employees have an established way of performing tasks after several years and may thus not understand the need

to change.

The findings above are in accordance with those of Posthuma and Geurrero (2015) who add that older employees are not only stereotyped positively, but also in a negative way such as not open to change; not technologically advanced; and slow paced (Finkelstein, King & Voyles, 2015). Furthermore, older employees are viewed as incompetent by their fellow employees. It is explained by Finkelstein, King and Voyles (2015) that older subordinates are usually stereotyped in this way since they are considered incapable to perform the task that is expected of them. However, Posthuma and Campion (2009) point out that very little research has been done to confirm that older employees' performance declines with age; most of the time, their performance rather increases with their age, thus contradicting the stereotype of older employees as slow paced.

The fourth objective of the present study was to investigate the influence of age stereotypes on the relationship between younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations. The results indicated that stereotypes may, or may not, influence the relationship between younger managers and older subordinates. Certain participants indicated that such age stereotypes influence their interrelationship in a negative way. These findings are in line with Franklin (2015) and Fonken (2011) who explain that when employees experience stereotypes in an LMX relationship, this may harm the relationship severely. In this regard, the findings of the present study indicate that younger managers felt highly frustrated and even angry in certain instances. The reason may be that the older subordinates are perceived as unable to work at the pace their younger managers expect of them, or the older employees find it difficult to follow the younger managers' work style.

A further influence of age stereotypes on the relationship between a younger manager and older subordinate is that one of the latter wished to leave the organisation where he was employed. Thus, the stereotype in that specific relationship had such a severe impact on the relationship that turnover intention increased. These findings corroborate those of May, Gilson, and Harter (2004), namely when older employees experience age stereotypes by their younger manager, it may encourage them in their decision to leave. Furthermore, it Kouzes and Posner (2002) explain that subordinates are not merely leaving an organisation but rather leaving their company because of

their manager. Gill (2012) points out that when employees experience negative stereotypes, it can hamper their capability to form relationships and maintain these relationships within organisations.

The results also indicated certain instances where age stereotypes did not influence the relationship between younger managers and older subordinates. The participants explained that they are open to diversity. Furthermore, participants attested to an open communication channel in the relationship. Therefore, stereotypes which both parties experience are discussed openly and worked through constructively. This helps strengthen their relationship further. Certain themes identified in the data analysis were: shared work goals; open communication; mutual commitment; and adaptability. These results are in line with those of Viljoen (2014) and Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) namely, that within a relationship there is a partnership stage, which is characterised by high levels of respect, trust and obligation. During this stage, individuals participate in additional activities other than those initially expected of them. In other words, the leader and the subordinate will walk the extra distance to provide high-quality levels of work by each party (Krishnan, 2005).

The fifth objective of this study was to investigate the influence of age stereotypes on the performance of younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations.

When analysing the influence of age stereotypes on work performance, it became clear that the majority of employees experienced this impact positively. The employees explained that they experience these age stereotypes with the influence of improving their work

The majority of participants affirmed that age stereotypes influence their work performance by inducing mutual learning. Younger managers are stereotyped as technologically advanced, and older subordinates as experienced due to working several years in the organisation. These stereotypes may encourage both parties in their strive to learn from each other, which would enhance their performance. Empirical studies, however, contradict these findings by maintaining that when individuals are stereotyped in a certain way and become aware of these stereotypes, it lowers their work performance (Finkelstein, King & Voyles, 2015). In this regard, however, Shih, Pittensky and Ambady (1999) found that stereotypes can influence an employee's performance both positively or negatively.

Other employees, especially the younger managers, indicated that these age stereotypes hamper their work performance. This result is in accordance with that of Schmader, Johns and Forbes (2008) who explain that when negative stereotypes are experienced by either the younger manager or older subordinate, it can cause an additional situational burden, which may lower the performance of both parties.

The sixth and final objective was to investigate other influences of age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations. The younger managers and older subordinates were posed the following question: “What additional influences do you experience with regard to age stereotypes (other than on performance and relationship)?” Most participants indicated that they do not experience any additional influences. This question formulated a study objective. However, based on the results obtained through the data collection, this information had to be categorised under either the relationship, or the performance table.

Practical implications

By conducting the present study, the researcher attempted to make younger managers and older subordinates aware of how their mutual perceptions can cause either positive or negative influences in the workplace. This applies especially to work performance and the relationships between both parties. The study may encourage employees to be more attentive in the way they perceive and behave towards one another. Thus, the aim was that employees should actively guard against stereotyping their fellow employees, but rather value unique characteristics of each individual. Organisations can also encourage employees not to rely on stereotypes within the working environment, but rather focus on the strengths that each individual employee can provide to the organisation.

Limitations and recommendations

Various limitations emerged during the research. Early in the process, the researcher noticed that some of the participants would not be able to use their home languages such as isiZulu in the interviews, whereas one of the selection criteria was that participants had to partake in interviews

through English. Thus, certain participants may have found it difficult to discuss their experiences in an open and comfortable way. This may also have influenced the detail they provided in the interviews than when discussing their experiences in their home language. The researcher further observed that certain participants may have felt uncomfortable when an electronic voice recorder was used in the interviews. However, the researcher took the necessary time to explain to the participants why the voice recorder was needed and gained informed consent for the interviews to be recorded. Furthermore, since the sample size consisted only of 23 participants ($N = 23$), the results of this study cannot be generalised to the whole of South African organisations.

Recommendations that can be made for future research are the following. Firstly, participants should be interviewed in their home language to ensure the experiences that are obtained from these participants are rich in detail. This will also help participants feel more at ease in the interview process. Secondly, a recommendation can be made on the choice of participants. The majority of younger managers and older subordinates differed in age by at least 5 years. However, they may have worked together for at least between 5-10 years, which could have influenced their experiences due to an already-formed work relationship. For future research it is recommended that interviews should be conducted with individuals who have been working together a shorter period. In this way, comparisons can be drawn between employees working together for shorter or longer periods. This can include comparisons between the two groups' experience of stereotypes and the influence of these stereotypes on the employees and the organisation.

Conclusion

The present study clearly showed that stereotypes have a role to play in organisations. Numerous age stereotypes were identified between younger managers and older subordinates. These stereotypes are not only experienced about others, but also regarding individuals themselves. Furthermore, stereotypes were found to be both positive and negative. In addition, these age stereotypes were found to influence both parties (younger managers and older subordinates) on different levels based as on the relationship and the performance of the parties involved.

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final chapter presents the conclusions on the objectives of the present study. Furthermore, it points out limitations that was experienced and make recommendations for future research and practice.

3.1 Conclusion

The first objective of the present study was to conceptualise stereotypes, especially age-stereotypes, according to the literature. Khan, Benda and Stagnaro (2012) view stereotypes as a mental shortcut that individuals use to categorise other individuals into different groups in order to gain information about them more painless and faster. According to Sargeant (2011), age stereotypes can be defined as individual characteristics that are assigned to individuals based on their age. The specific characteristic is assigned to the whole age group, irrespective of whether it is true or accurate for each individual.

The second objective was to investigate in-group and out-group stereotypes attributed to younger managers. After the data analysis, it became evident that younger managers are stereotyped in both a positive and negative way. The identified positive stereotypes include that they are technologically advanced and work at a faster pace, compared to older subordinates. The results of this study are in line with literature (Sargeant, 2011). Other stereotypes entailed that younger managers are perceived as ambitious and educated and, therefore, equipped with theoretical knowledge to perform their duties at work. Negative stereotypes that were mentioned include that younger managers are inexperienced and disloyal to the organisation. This last-mentioned result also corroborates the finding by Rožman, Treven and Čančer (2016).

The third objective was to investigate in-group and out-group stereotypes about older subordinates. The findings showed that older subordinates are stereotyped negatively. However, when these older employees were asked about in-group stereotypes, they mentioned more positive examples such as being experienced in their work; loyal in nature due to their longer tenure at an organisation (e.g. 25 years); and thus knowledgeable. All the in-group stereotypes that were outlined were found

to be positive, which is in line with Cohen and Garcia (2005). They found that since individuals seek a positive outlook on themselves, they also want that to reflect on the group to which they belong. As a result, they will stereotype and characterise themselves and their group (i.e. the in-group) in a positive sense.

The findings showed that younger managers stereotyped older subordinates positively, namely as highly experienced in both their work and personal lives. Negative stereotypes that were mentioned include that older subordinates seemingly are not open to change, which decreases their performance. These two negative examples are some of the widely-held stereotypes about older subordinates. This finding find support in that of Finkelstein, King and Voyles, (2015), namely when older subordinates need to change, it causes anxiety and resistance, which, therefore, hampers the implementation of the change. In contrast, Posthuma and Campion (2009) indicate that little to no research supports the stereotype that performance decreases with age.

The fourth objective was to investigate the influence of age stereotypes on the relationship between younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations. As outlined in chapter 1 and 2, stereotypes have severe negative influences on the leader-member exchange relationship of a younger manager and older subordinate (Yakoub, 2008; Franklin, 2015). The findings of the study supported the scholars mentioned above by indicating that when negative stereotypes were found between the two parties, it damaged the leader-member exchange relationship. These damages were discussed by participants expressing strong feelings of frustration and anger, as well being overwhelmed within the leader-member exchange relationship, which applied to both younger managers and older subordinates. A major damage was highlighted by a participant: because of these negative stereotypes, this group felt like quitting their jobs (Harris, Wheeler, & Kacmar, 2009; Hooper & Marin, 2008; Vijoen, 2014). On the other hand, when participants highlighted positive stereotypes, it caused both parties to engage in a mutual learning experience, which in turn strengthened the leader-member exchange relationship.

The fifth objective of this study was to investigate the influence of age stereotypes on the performance of younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations. Participants' responses indicated that performance can either decrease or increase when

stereotypes are evident. This is in line with Kunze, Boehm and Bruch (2011), who indicated that age diversity in organisations can either have a positive or negative influence on employees' performance. To provide further insight: when the older subordinates are being stereotyped as experienced, the younger manager essentially attempts to gain more insight and knowledge from them to improve themselves as well as the team in which they function (Posthuma & Campion, 2009; Werner, Bagraim, Cunningham, Potgieter, & Viedge, 2007). As a result, performance is not being influenced negatively but rather positively.

Additionally, it was found that age stereotypes do not influence the work performance of younger managers and older subordinates. Participants mentioned that they attempt to separate their stereotypes from work, thereby treating each individual according to personal expertise and abilities instead of perceived stereotypes. As a consequence, both parties experience mutual acceptance.

The sixth objective was to investigate possible other influences of age stereotypes between younger managers and older subordinates within South African organisations. The specific question was posed to participants to ensure all their experiences about age stereotypes are covered. However, most of the participants discussed influences that were already covered by two categories: Influences on relationships and performance, as well as Influence on work performance.

3.2 Limitations

There are various concerns regarding the present study. Firstly, since the sample size was a mere ($N=23$), the results obtained throughout the research cannot not be generalised to the entire population group of South Africa. Also, a limited number of employment sectors was selected for the data collection, namely: telecommunication, primary and secondary schools, meat industry and the electricity supply sector. This added to the fact that the results could not to be generalised to the whole of South African enterprises.

The second limitation experienced concerns the recording of the interviews. Although all participants gave consent for interviews to be voice-recorded, some may have felt uncomfortable with its use. This could have affected the amount and richness of the information that they provided during the interviews.

The third limitation, closely related to the second one, was the language in which the interviews were conducted. Certain participants indicated that English was not their home language. This means that some of the responses provided by participants could have been richer in detail and information if they were able to respond in their home language.

The fourth limitation was that, in certain instances, the younger managers and older subordinates have been working together for at least five years. Thus, according to the leader-member exchange theory (LMX), the two parties already had time to work through the issues arising from the age stereotypes. It was also found that, in certain situations, the younger managers and older subordinates have worked together previously. However, that was on the same post level where the younger manager currently is appointed higher in the organisation's hierarchy. As a result, both parties have already built a strong mutual relationship and thus are not experiencing any age stereotypes or any consequences of such stereotypes.

3.3 Recommendations

Recommendations can be made for future research as well as for practise.

3.3.1 Recommendations for practise

A crucial recommendation regarding practise is to raise awareness in the organisations about the way stereotypes originate and how they influence the performance and relationships of employees. It may be beneficial for an organisation to develop workshops for employees where they are informed specifically about diversity management and how to appreciate and value diversity, especially with regards to age. Employees will be encouraged during such a workshop to treat fellow employees according to unique individual characteristics instead of merely on the basis of

assumptions. As a result, all participants gain a better understanding of each individual team member. This maximises an organisation's efficiency by handling each individual most effectively according to their personality.

Policies and procedures can be implemented to help mitigate stereotyping of individuals within the work context. Policies and procedures should be implemented in order to help minimise the effects of stereotypes on employees, especially on their performance and working relationships. In this regard, the Human Resources department fulfils an important role – firstly to develop awareness workshops for employees to attend and secondly, to help implement and champion policies and procedures against stereotyping.

3.3.2 Recommendations for research

The first and most important recommendation taken from the present study is that future researchers should obtain and use a larger sample group, for the reason stated above. It is recommended that the study be enlarged by, for instance, including more employment sectors or individuals from diverse occupational levels. In this way, future comparative studies can also be conducted. It could also be beneficial for future research if the researcher posed more probing questions during the interview process. This will help the researcher obtain the optimum data, which is rich in detail.

Recommendations can also be made about the language barrier. Fieldworkers can be employed in the interview process to interact with the participants in their home language. This may also help enhance the richness of the data that will be obtained. Furthermore, the home-language option will make participants feel more at ease during the interview process. More extensive training should, therefore, be provided to the fieldworkers before interviews are conducted. This will ensure the posing of questions and probing of responses will help provide relevant and rich information.

A final recommendation would be to pair participants with a fieldworker who is for example, from the same race, age, or gender. This may also help participants feel more at ease to share their experiences since they can identify more with the specific fieldworker.

In conclusion, the changing demographics in especially developing countries, lead to an increase in the work force of younger employees, climbing the corporate ladder sooner and faster. The result is younger managers who have to cope with the incumbent older subordinates. Thus, a strategy to sensitise both parties about age stereotypes, is crucial to enhance work performance and help the organisation gain a competitive advantage in the industry. Such a corporative strategy of stereotype-management is proposed by the present study.

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