



# Workplace Social Capital in the Development and Implementation of a Senior Policy<sup>1</sup>

■ **Karen Albertsen<sup>2</sup>**

*Senior Researcher, Team Working Life, Valby, Denmark*

■ **Per H. Jensen**

*Adjunct Professor, Department of People and Technology, Roskilde University, Denmark*

■ **Ulrik Gensby**

*Senior Researcher, Team Working Life, Valby, Denmark*

■ **Flemming Pedersen**

*Director, Team Working Life, Valby, Denmark*

## ABSTRACT

Senior policies have been introduced by many Danish companies with the intention of retaining senior employees, but implementation can be challenging and may create tension at the workplace. This study aims to explore how **social capital at the workplace** may support or counteract the development and implementation of **senior policies**. A qualitative case study approach was used to collect and analyze interview data from managers, union- and H&S representatives, and senior employees at eighteen workplaces. The analysis reveals that successful development and implementation of a senior policy rely on **legitimacy, transparency, and involvement of relevant parties in the process**, as well as a good fit between the policy and the companies' structure for collaboration. **Workplace social capital is discussed as a supporting factor** for senior employee retention, and a reciprocal positive relationship between implementing senior policies and procedures and the social capital of the workplace is suggested.

## KEYWORDS

*age management / companies' initiatives / early retirement / organizational justice / organizational trust / senior benefit / senior policy / senior scheme / workplace social capital*

## Introduction

Within the last two decades, changes in demography, combined with labor shortages, have in many of the western countries increased focus on how to retain more senior employees in the labor market. Accordingly, researchers have identified factors contributing to retirement or prolonged working life (e.g., Andersen et al. 2021; Carlstedt et al. 2018; Meng et al. 2020). At societal level, measures have been taken to support a longer working life. This development is, however, not necessarily without tension and conflicts. Researchers within the field of welfare have described

<sup>1</sup> You can find this text and its DOI at <https://tidsskrift.dk/njwls/index>.

<sup>2</sup> Corresponding author: Karen Albertsen. E-mail: [kal@teamarbejdsliv.dk](mailto:kal@teamarbejdsliv.dk).



how financing pension systems, for example, may lead to a conflict between the older and younger generations, and they have named it intergenerational justice (Hess *et al.* 2017). Such intergenerational conflicts may also play out within the companies.

Many companies have tried to meet labor shortages by developing and introducing senior policies at workplace level (Albertsen *et al.* 2020a). However, implementation of a senior policy often entails specific schemes for employees over a certain age and may accordingly also create tension at the workplace. So, given that a senior policy may be associated with an age-based reallocation of resources and opportunities, it may also give rise to intergenerational conflicts in as much as younger employees consider it to be unfair if older workers are offered preferential treatment (e.g., Friis *et al.* 2008). Implementing senior policies may require a certain level of legitimacy, transparency, and organizational trust to succeed. To avoid the experience of injustice, arbitrariness, and opacity among employees, Hilsen and Midtsundstad (2014) argue that award criteria should be developed in a way that creates legitimacy among managers, employee representatives and employees and they should be visible and controllable. In other words, the process, and the result of allocating the senior benefits must be experienced as fair, and the likelihood of this can be assumed higher in organizations with a high level of resilient trust between management and employees.

## Purpose of the present study

This qualitative study aims to explore how social capital at the workplace may support or counteract the development and implementation of senior policies at the workplace level.

It was assumed (1) that the process of preparing, implementing, and maintaining a senior policy at work interplays with the social capital in the company, and (2) that the success of the senior policy depends on the extent to which it is supported by, and contributes to the social capital at the workplace.

The study is based on the qualitative results from the SeniorWorkingLife study.<sup>1</sup> The overall purpose of the SeniorWorkingLife study is to examine the push and stay mechanisms in the Danish labor market to support and ensure continued working life for senior employees and their retirement decisions in a dignified manner.

One of aims of the qualitative part of the study was to examine the companies' considerations and actions for retaining of senior employees. Results from the first round of the study have previously been published in Danish in (Albertsen *et al.* 2018, 2020b). This article draws on data from the first and second rounds of data-collection and analyzes them in the perspective of workplace social capital.

This qualitative study comprises interview data from 18 case companies chosen to represent diversity in the target of the core tasks (production, work with symbols or work with humans), and interviews at each workplace were collected to cover employer as well as employee perspectives.

## Retention of senior employees in the Danish labor market

Since the turn of the century, several welfare reforms have been implemented in Denmark. These reforms have aimed to raise the general retirement age of the workforce.

The state pension age has been indexed based on life expectancy and is expected to reach 72 years of age in 2050, while at the same time, early retirement opportunities have been restricted (Jensen et al. 2023). In parallel, policymakers have encouraged companies to apply senior policies, and to some extent, this has been implemented during the period 2000–2008 in different company contexts. Between 2010 and 2020, the retention rate of senior employees aged 60–64 rose in Denmark from 37% to 54% (OECD 2019, 2021).<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to define exactly what is meant by a senior policy, and other terms exist for the same issue (e.g., age management, age-awareness policies). However, the main dimensions of senior policies are often considered to be (1) job recruitment, (2) training, development and promotion, (3) flexible working practices, (4) ergonomics/job design, and (5) changing attitudes within organizations (e.g., Walker 1998; Mykletun et al. 2012). Studies show that about 47% of Danish workplaces make use of senior policy instruments targeting employees at 55 years or older (Jensen 2022). The most common practices in Denmark are flexible work hours, access to more days off/longer holidays, and less burdening work tasks (Albertsen et al. 2020a). These practices are sometimes implemented as senior policies offered only to employees over a certain age, and sometimes integrated into the general personnel policy or a ‘life-phase’ policy of the company (Albertsen et al. 2020b). The study by Jensen (2022) also found that employers perceive senior policy as an effective instrument to retain older workers.

In a Danish context, collective agreements on senior policies are part of the main collective bargaining process, which serves as the overall framework for formulating local workplace senior-agreements with specific benefits based on the framework of the main agreement. In addition, companies can formulate specific local workplace policies beside the main agreement. These are decided by the works committee (SU) at the workplace, the working environment organization (AMO) or unilaterally by the management of a company. These policies may – or may not – be linked to collective agreements but can very well play along with these. While the process of designing, implementing, and maintaining a senior policy at the workplace can support the retention of employees, challenges in the collaboration at work may also occur, which may counteract the intentions behind the policy (Albertsen et al. 2020b).

## **The role of the psychosocial work environment in retention of senior employees**

Studies have found that good relations between management and senior employees (Berglund et al. 2017; Browne et al. 2018), and collaboration and togetherness between colleagues (Amilon & Larsen 2019) may delay retirement from the labor market. If employees experience low recognition from managers, low organizational justice, low trust in management, low management quality, and low predictability, then they are more likely to choose an early transition to retirement (Thorsen et al. 2016).

In line with these findings, others have found that workplaces with lower social capital, organizational justice, and quality of management have a higher rate of early retirement (Breinegaard et al. 2017) and that the likelihood of a later retirement age increases with higher recognition from management, higher influence, possibilities for development, and a higher level of information about decisions and work (Andersen et al. 2021).

Sewdas et al. (2020) found that employees with poorer relationships with colleagues had an almost three times higher likelihood for voluntary early retirement compared to employees with good relationships with colleagues.

Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser (2011) examined fairness in relation to senior policies and their implementation in the workplace. They found that company implementation practices of senior policies were related to how senior employees experienced social belonging in the company.

A meta-analysis based on 151 empirical studies concluded that older workers' social environment was related to early retirement, and thereby underlined the relevance of the organizational climate for successful aging with regard to the motivation of older people to continue working (Topa et al. 2018). The authors suggest, that 'if the organization provides a climate for successful aging, older employees would perceive better job opportunities' (Topa et al. 2018, p. 13) that in turn would be positively related to affective commitment and discourage early retirement. In other words, the quality of relationships and collaboration at the workplace seems to be of high importance for the retention of senior employees.

Within the area of workplace intervention research, studies have found that the success of an organizational workplace intervention depends on the extent to which the intervention can fit into the culture of the organization (Nielsen & Miraglia 2017). It is therefore also likely that implementation of a senior policy will interact with the existing culture and influence relationships and collaboration at the workplace. On the one hand, senior policies can be decided and implemented in ways that support and increase good collaboration. On the other hand, senior policies can be met with – or contribute to – conflicts, distrust, and injustice, counteracting the initial intentions behind them. Therefore, it is crucial to address the ways in which a senior policy is designed, implemented, and maintained.

## Workplace social capital as the theoretical framework

The theoretical approach for this article is based on the concept of *social capital* having its roots in sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu (1986), James Coleman (1988), and Robert Putnam (1995). Over the years, the concept has been defined in many ways, primarily differing as to whether social capital is seen as an individual resource, a collective resource, or a combination (Claridge 2004).

In this study, we draw on the definition of workplace social capital as: '... the social relations that develop in the solution of the company's core task' (Hasle et al. 2010, p. 29). According to this definition, the quality of social relations is determined by *the trust* that characterizes the relations between employees and managers, and between employees and by the experience of justice, that is, the experience of whether distributive procedures in the company *are fair* (Hasle et al. 2010; Olesen et al. 2008).

Organizational justice and organizational trust represent two different research areas, although studies have found close associations between the two (Ambrose & Schminke 2003).

*Trust* within an organizational context is characterized by being both an antecedence to, and a result of, successful collective action. Successful collaboration can foster higher levels of trust and, in turn, further increase the likelihood of successful collaboration

(Leana & van Buren 1999). Many researchers have agreed that trust requires a willingness to be vulnerable ‘based on positive expectations of the intentions of another’ (Rousseau et al. 1998, p. 395).

According to the theory, organizations with strong social capital are characterized by *generalized trust*, in the sense that the trust does not necessarily rest on direct knowledge or experience with all individuals, but indirectly rests on norms and behaviors generalized to the whole organization (Leana & van Buren 1999).

Research within the field of *justice* has primarily distinguished between three different forms of justice (Ambrose & Schminke 2003; Colquitt et al. 2001; Kim & Mauborgne 2003; Virtanen & Elovainio 2018):

- *Distributive justice*: is about whether the distribution of goods, for example, the distribution of work tasks, is perceived as reasonable. This does not necessarily mean that the distribution is equal, but that it has taken place according to principles that are perceived as reasonable.
- *Procedural justice*: is about the extent to which the process that has led to the distribution of the goods is perceived as reasonable. Were the principles applied in a consistent manner to different people and was it on an informed basis? Were the parties concerned consulted? Were there opportunities to appeal or challenge the decision?
- *Interactional justice*: is about the extent to which the parties involved feel that they are treated with dignity and respect by those who carry out procedures and decisions.

Intergenerational justice, as mentioned in the introduction, can be assumed to show up in relation to senior policy in all three forms; as justice related to the distribution of preferable goods or treatments, as whether the procedures and principles for the allocation of the goods are fair for all ages of employees, and as the perception of respect in the interaction between employees and managers.

Hilsen and Midtsundstad (2014) have developed a model that divides senior schemes into four categories, depending on whether the award criteria are universal and needs-dependent and whether the schemes are tailor-made or standardized (Table 1).

**Table 1** Four main types of senior schemes depending on the award criteria and benefits (Hilsen & Midtsundstad 2014 [Author’s translation]).

	<b>Universal</b>	<b>Needs-dependent</b>
Tailor-made	1. Universal and tailor-made initiatives. Everyone has a right to the scheme, and the scheme is individually adapted.	2. Needs-dependent and tailor-made. The scheme is assigned by the management and is individually adapted.
Standardized	3. Universal and standardized schemes. Everyone has a right to the scheme, and everyone gets the same.	4. Needs-dependent and standardized. The scheme is assigned by the management, and everyone gets the same.

Award criteria may challenge the perception of justice (distributive, procedural, interactional, or intergenerational) in different ways, depending on the types of criteria and benefits in play. We will refer to this categorization of award criteria in the Discussion section.



## Methodology

The study was conducted as a qualitative and exploratory study in a multiple case study design (Flyvbjerg 2006; Yin 1994). It was exploratory in the sense that the purpose was to gain detailed and practical knowledge about companies' considerations and actions in relation to retaining senior employees. The study was multiple, as several companies participated, and each of them included the perspectives of different actors.

Potentially relevant companies were identified and selected through four knowledge sources: (1) contacts with professionals and organizations from practice, (2) peers in the field of working life research, (3) ongoing dialogue with the project advisory board, and (4) mapping of relevant grey literature that had previously identified companies with focus on senior initiatives.

In the first round of data-collection (2017–2018), a total of 28 potentially relevant companies were identified. A group of 15 companies were selected to represent a diversity of industries within three very broad categories of the core task: (1) work with production (i.e., the job function is to work on processing, producing, or moving things), (2) work with symbols (i.e., office work, administration, analysis, IT, etc.), or (3) work with humans (i.e., service, care, etc.) (Jensen *et al.* 2020). The 15 companies were contacted, and of these, nine agreed to participate. The second round of data collection (2020–2022) took place in the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the recruitment of cases turned out to be more difficult. In total, we contacted 64 potentially relevant companies, of which 46 did not have the time and resources to participate or did not have the required focus on seniors, nine were positive for participation, but not for the time being, and nine workplaces ended up as part of the sample.

**Table 2** Interviews from first and second round of data collection from each of the three main categories of industries.

<b>Qualitative interviews – Individual and group interviews</b>				
	<b>Number of case companies</b>	<b>Number of managers/HR representatives</b>	<b>Number of union and H&amp;S representatives</b>	<b>Number of other employees</b>
Work with production of things and transportation	6	16	10	17
Work with symbols and knowledge	7	15	13	15
Work with humans	5	9	9	13

Data was collected through a combination of individual and group interviews among managers, union- and health & safety representatives and employees. From the 18 companies, 31 managers or HR representatives, 32 union or health & safety representatives, and 45 employees were interviewed. Table 2 summarizes the number of interviews from both rounds, and Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of the interviewed employees. The companies were basically selected as 'best cases', in the way that they all had some relatively well-developed senior policies.

**Table 3** Characteristics of respondents from each of the three main categories of industries. We have distinguished between unskilled (without vocational education), vocational education, short (1–2 years), medium (3–4 years), and long (5+ years) higher education.

<b>Characteristics of employees</b>				
	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Mean age (min-max)</b>	<b>Education</b>
Work with production of things and transportation	2	15	64 (58–72)	Short (1–2 years): 3 Vocational education: 12 Unskilled: 2
Work with symbols and knowledge	8	7	64 (60–72)	Long (5+ years): 4 Medium (3–4 years): 5 Vocational education: 6
Work with humans	8	5	62 (54–72)	Long: 2 Medium: 3 Short: 1 Vocational education: 5 Unskilled: 2

All interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews based on two different interview guides (one for management/HR and union representatives and another for employees). The interview guides focused on factors that previous research has pointed to as essential for ‘push’ and ‘stay’ and for senior policy and practice. In the first round, the interview guide for management and HR representatives as well as union representatives comprised questions about (1) the company’s need for, and view of, senior workforce and changes over time, for example, ‘Are there special reasons for wanting senior employees employed and/or retained in the company?’ (2) the content, development process, and practical use of the senior policy, for example, ‘Is there a written seniority policy in the company? If so, how did it come about? How has it been developed? What role did the Health & Safety committee play in the process?’ and (3) The possible interplay between the senior policy in the company, welfare-state schemes, and trade unions, for example, ‘Has the [national] late retirement scheme had any influence on the company’s senior policy?’ In the second round, this interview guide was supplemented with more questions on implementation and maintenance of the senior policy, for example, ‘Are the elements mentioned a right for the employees or an option, and is the allocation made according to needs assessment and measurement, or according to fixed criteria? How is experience collected about senior agreements concluded? And how is this experience incorporated into new policies and schemes?’. Furthermore, there were questions about the unanticipated effects, for example, ‘How are the senior schemes perceived by employees who are not covered by them? Do they see it as a good thing? Or does it give rise to envy/feelings of injustice?’

The guide used for interviews with the senior employees included questions on expectations of retirement, for example, ‘What will determine when you want to retire? What are your perceptions of positive/negative consequences of retirement?’ and further questions (if not already answered) on the importance of health, economy, family and work factors for expectations regarding retirement. Furthermore, we asked employees what it would take to keep them working for more years. In the second round, this guide



was supplemented with more questions about the actual job-situation, for example, ‘Do you have a job for which you need further training/competence development in order to keep up with developments in your work tasks? And do you have an opportunity to participate in further training?’

Interviews were recorded and subsequently written as meaningful minutes. The analysis of the interview material from the first round was based on an inductive coding process consisting of three steps (Gioia *et al.* 2006). In the first step, two researchers conducted a manual coding process across interviews, in which statements were grouped according to their relevance to the ‘push’, ‘stay’, ‘pull’, ‘jump’, and ‘stuck’ categories. This part was implemented as separate coding processes for each stakeholder group (managers/HR, union representatives, and employees). The second step focused on deriving commonalities across actor perspectives from a thematic content analysis. This resulted in 31 themes with significance for push decisions and 30 for stay. In the last step, the different themes were narrowed down to a number of overarching themes that were divided according to whether they related to an individual, social-relational, or organizational dimension of early or late retirement (Jensen *et al.* 2020). For this article, the organizational dimensions derived from the first round were analyzed in the perspective of social capital and further supplemented with case-examples from the second round. We used the model developed by Hilsen and Mitsundstad (Figure 1) as a framework for the categorization of options for seniors.

## **Interplay between workplace social capital and senior policy**

In the following, we will first present examples on how trust in professional relationships played an important role for the perception and acceptance of senior initiatives. Second, we will describe how different allocation criteria impacted procedural and distributive justice. And third, we will explain how the perception of interpersonal justice could be supported or counteracted by the implementation process.

### **Trust as a precondition for a successful senior policy**

At most companies, managers as well as employees were aware that trust in the relationships was crucial for the success of senior agreements. One of the employees from a company working with symbols (second round) explained: ‘It’s very important with respect in the workplace. If there is not trust and freedom, then I would like to be able to pull up a piece of paper and say: “this will be without me”’. The manager from another workplace working with humans also highlighted the importance of trust and psychological safety in this way: ‘Emphasis on meeting each other where you need to be met, and honesty that it’s legitimate to fail’. At this, and at some of the other workplaces, there was usually a longer process with dialogue before a senior stopped, in which the senior made the management aware of his considerations.

Trust could be compromised if employees experienced a lack of consistency between the intentions formulated in the senior policy and those signaled at the local level of the organization. Some employees were aware that their companies offered some form of senior scheme and initiative, but were unsure of what it entailed in



practice, and whether the intentions of the senior policy were also unfolded in the implementation.

One case company (from the first round) was facing a downsizing, and some senior employees expressed doubt as to whether the senior policy was developed as an instrument to promote a socially responsible end to the employment rather than retaining senior employees. This kind of strategic mindset was found in companies of different sizes. Employees felt uncertain about senior policies and initiatives if signals from the middle management at the local level were not clearly in line with the policies formulated at higher levels in the organization. This situation quickly led to different interpretations of the management signals related to using senior initiatives and schemes in practice. For example, offers of reduced time could be interpreted as a signal that the company lacked work, rather than a desire to adapt requirements and employee resources to each other. The intentions were to a large degree interpreted and considered in relation to the general level of trust in the relationships between the management and employees. Thus, dis-trust toward management intentions with a senior policy could arise, particularly when the level of trust was low from the beginning.

Further, the term ‘senior’ was debated. Some employees perceived it as a sign of passive contribution, a negative label that reflected how employees were no longer considered an active player in the field, but rather as a spectator on the bench. An employee working with symbols said: ‘I have not signed up for that senior club. I don’t want to be identified with someone who has retired ..... you feel really reduced in worth when you transfer to that senior class’.

Also, managers had reflections about the use of the ‘senior’ term, and considered whether the term could be replaced:

There is a need for a general rethinking of the senior concept because it activates thoughts and feelings about ending – for example, fear of illness. There is a lack of psychological and mental preparation of the seniors instead of ‘what are you planning and when will it be?’ There is too little focus on the difficult feelings. [Manager, work with production, second round.]

Knowledge and responsiveness toward the employees’ needs were characteristic for the relationships between managers and employees at many of the workplaces. And trust and responsibility had to be mutual:

There are many opportunities to be heard and enter into individual agreements. It means something that you have been here for a long time. If you give a lot to the department, then the management is also willing to go to great lengths. They value anyone who wants to make an effort. [H&S representative, work with production, second round.]

And precisely the topic of criteria for allocating resources and qualifying for senior initiatives and schemes appeared to be highly important for the perception of justice.

### **The impact of allocation criteria on procedural and distributional justice**

Should senior initiatives and schemes be considered universal rights that can be standardized and applied to all employees in the company, or should they be considered as



opportunities that could be granted to employees with special needs, in special situations and maybe with bespoke customizations? Or something in between?

We saw examples of senior initiatives that could be attributed to any of the cells in the matrix (Figure 1). However, most examples fit into the needs-dependent criteria and tailor-made schemes (cell 2). But universal criteria and standardized schemes were common as well (cell 3). Fewer could be characterized as universal and tailor-made (cell 1) or as needs-dependent and standardized (cell 4). In the following, we will give some examples of each of the different kinds of schemes and allocation criteria and discuss how they may influence justice at the workplace.

### **Needs-dependent and tailor-made schemes**

We saw many examples of middle managers who had an obligation to contact employees who were not thriving. They could be suffering from fatigue or have a high level of sick leave, and the managers were tasked with investigating whether work adjustments of one kind or another were needed. Work adjustments related to the adaption of working hours and tasks to the needs and wishes of the employees. This approach to senior policy meant that the opportunities and benefits were dependent on the needs of the employees and were tailor-made to the individual.

Importantly, we found a certain degree of arbitrariness in relation to whether middle managers were aware of employees who were not thriving. Therefore, the needs-dependent and tailor-made approach had some costs in the sense that it could contribute to feelings of injustice and arbitrariness.

It can be difficult to accommodate everyone's wishes, sometimes we have to follow a first-come, first-served principle. The price of individual treatment is the risk of splitting and the feeling of being disadvantaged. And that is what we experience every day, but rather that, than having a completely rigid process. [Health & Safety representative, human work, first round.]

However, the needs-dependent and tailor-made approach also provided flexibility for the management. The management could choose primarily to offer benefits to employees who have done well, are loyal, or have knowledge, skills or experience that are important to the company. A manager, working within production, second round explained:

The individual management assessment of who is awarded a senior scheme may very well create a feeling of injustice among the employees. There are, of course, examples of employees who have not been given a scheme, even though they have wanted it, but for the company it's absolutely vital to keep those we want to retain.

At the same workplace, a union representative said:

We have called for a clearer personnel policy to create security for the employees as well as knowledge about the possible schemes available as a senior. Scenarios for different senior situations could, for example, be drawn up in the personnel policy. [Work with production, second round.]

The success of these needs-dependent and tailor-made schemes was to a high degree dependent on the general level of trust in the relationship between managers and employees, as they often opened for speculation concerning fairness.

### **Universal criteria and standardized schemes**

At the other end of the spectrum, we met workplaces that had decided to let the senior policy be universally applicable to everyone over a certain age. This had clear advantages in terms of legitimacy, transparency, and experience of fairness. In one of these workplaces, they had explicitly stated in the policy:

It's necessary to ensure that a senior is also a senior in a legal context, and that the topic senior schemes can be discussed without simultaneously sending a signal that the employee is no longer adequate. This is ensured by making the subject a general matter which applies to everyone. [Citation from the senior policy from a company within production, first round.]

At this workplace, all employees above the age of 58 were offered an annual senior conference and an annual senior interview (a conversation about needs and wishes associated with being a senior employee). In addition, there were offers of senior positions, participation in a senior club, health checks and exercise. In practice, about half of the employees above the age of 58 participated in the annual conferences and slightly fewer accepted offers of senior interviews. They had decided the senior policy locally at the workplace level.

At another workplace with high physical demands, they had a huge emphasize on prevention of bodily wear and tear. The workplace offered massage and physical training within workhours, for all employees, regardless of age. The perception from the management was that:

The senior policy is just a small piece in prevention and retention. It's far too late to start after the employees have become seniors. Attrition must be prevented throughout life, and the attractive workplace must retain employees of all ages. [Manager, work with production, second round.]

The universal and standardized schemes could, however, also challenge workplaces that were so large that the practice could vary greatly from department to department, or at workplaces that were down-sizing, or when the benefits were part of a general agreement that was not compatible with the terms and practices of the individual company.

We saw an example of this in a workplace with a large proportion of senior employees. Through a main collective senior agreement, the seniors were entitled to hold 4–6 days off per year, and covering these days caused problems for the management. A middle manager said:

I think it's great that we don't have so many older employees anymore. I am not saying this negatively, but last year – January 1st – I had 132 senior days to cover. .... you must put in a lot of hours and days – in addition to everything else. As such, it's not a cumbersome scheme, but you do have to take employees out of operations for many days. [Work with humans, first round.]



This meant that the company had to hire hourly wage earners instead. The middle manager had nothing against senior employees as such, but she experienced it as a relief that the number of senior employees had decreased, and accordingly the administration of the many senior days.

Also, the distributive justice was challenged at this workplace:

One should not let one age-group pay for another – earlier on, the ‘middle group’ had to cover for the younger ones to have a sick child and the older ones to have senior day off.  
[Union representative, work with humans, first round.]

The redistribution of workload meant that the middle group had to take on a greater workload (e.g., take more night shifts) to enable the retention of colleagues. This could give rise to friction, dissatisfaction, or experience of injustice, particularly because the other employees did not always agree that the groups entitled to the special rights also had the greatest needs.

### **Universal criteria and tailor-made schemes**

We saw a few examples of senior schemes that could be categorized as universal and tailor-made (in cell 1, Figure 1). A large workplace working within production had for several years worked with benefit packages that were offered to all employees above 65 years, for example, days off, adjustment of working time and tasks, and half-time work on full pay half a year before retirement. But the needs differed, and there were differences in how the specific benefits were designed in practice. The HR manager explained:

Everyone has physically hard work, they are ‘shop people’, and the arrangements are adapted to them. Having an extra day off or leaving early can provide variety. Some get different tasks when they go on part-time work – they adjust it. Some want to continue until they can’t do it anymore and don’t want to go on a benefit scheme. It’s individual what people want and can do. [Work with production, second round.]

Both representatives and employees expressed high satisfaction with the workplace and the senior schemes. They stressed the importance of respect between colleagues and trust and responsiveness in the relationship between management and employees. Furthermore, they stressed the importance of special consideration not only for seniors, but also for others with special needs, for example, employees with small children.

### **Needs-dependent criteria and standardized schemes**

We saw at one of the companies an example of needs-dependent and standardized schemes (Figure 1, cell 4) in the form of a return-to-work program after sick leave (for all employees). The employees expressed great satisfaction with this program, offering good information and gradual escalation in the return-to-work process. A middle manager reflected: ‘The workplace does a lot to retain workers on sick leave who might

have been laid off elsewhere. But there could be more focus on prevention and hiring temporary workers when people get sick' [Working with humans, first round.]

Another company had a longer tradition for retention of employees, but the offers of, for example, days off, had been non-formalized and were random. After the COVID-19 pandemic, they realized that justice was challenged due to different possibilities for working from home: 'some were allowed to work from home, while others were not fully allowed to' [Employee representative, work with symbols, second round.] This led to standardization of the rules for working at home and to a written senior policy with standardized benefits that could be given to senior employees in need of them. The HR manager thinks, however, that a life-phase approach would be more sustainable in the long run:

We must not only talk about seniors, but a policy for the entire working life. You must look at it much more flexibly if we are all to be able to last many years in working life, otherwise we will be completely driven down. [HR-Manager, work with symbols, second round.]

At this company, they were also aware that there was a difficult balance between flexibility and not discriminating between employees, and that this balance became more difficult the bigger the company grew.

This type of scheme may support the experience of procedural and distributional justice in the way that employees experience a sense of security that everyone who has the same needs is seen and treated in the same way by the company. Furthermore, this approach may correspond better with a life-phase policy, supporting all employees in need of special offers.

However, the balance between consideration for the individual employee and consideration for colleagues' work situation can also be challenged, even when the benefits are needs-dependent and either tailor-made or standardized. Particularly, if many employees experience that it is difficult to complete all their work tasks and that the work is stressful, it may be harder to gain acceptance that there are colleagues who must be given special consideration.

### **Interactional justice: Involvement of relevant parties in implementation and maintenance**

Senior policies can be adopted and maintained with more or less involvement of the parties to which they relate. The involvement of stakeholders in decisions is an important aspect of supporting the experience of justice (e.g., Kim & Mauborgne 2003), and as the implementation of a senior policy concerns many parties, it is important how and in which forums co-operation on the design and maintenance of senior policy takes place.

In most of the case companies, middle or line managers with personnel responsibilities played an important role in the implementation, and it was often a middle manager or a line manager who took the senior interviews. One of the advantages of letting the line manager be responsible for implementation in practice was that he or she usually had insight into the daily work and had a good overview of opportunities for work adjustments, considering the production. However, in some cases, the line manager did



not receive sufficient support to handle the task. We saw examples of a gap between the intentions of the overall policy and the capacity, opportunities, or interest of middle managers in living up to the intentions in practice. It could be that the local manager had only a limited overview of the possibilities for changing or adapting work tasks, or it could be that, in practice, it was difficult to make the operation cohesive if special consideration had to be given to senior employees. A line manager working within production said:

It should be aligned with the production. We can't totally remove the employee from production. For each senior employee, we must assess how much they need to reduce time, and if it can fit in with our production. If it can, then I don't see it as a problem [...] There can also be employees, where it's not possible. [first round.]

On the other hand, the middle or line manager may be less committed to a senior policy that is created centrally in the company. This applies, in particular, if the manager has not been involved in the development of the senior policy, and if concerns related to the operation have not been heard and taken seriously. If this has been the case, the line manager may, as suggested by Nielsen (2013), be less willing to show the flexibility, for example, required to redistribute the work or to accept part-time work.

One of the case-companies working with symbols had a procedure for the involvement of the right parties in the specific senior agreements. The manager described the principles:

In special agreements, HR is involved, and HR discuss with the head of department on how to find a good solution. In this way, HR helps to lay down a line so that all employees are treated equally. If a senior employee's wish is to be refused, the top manager is involved. [Second round]

A union representative from another company was aware that it was not enough to establish a senior policy, it was necessary continuously to pay attention to how it worked in practice so that it does not become outdated:

I don't think that the employee policies work optimally in practice. It's not enough with a policy. You also have to talk about it, and this is not happening at the moment. The management could do more to inform the unions and H&S representatives about it, ensure that the policies were implemented more thoroughly, or ensure that the policies were discussed and debated at a staff meeting. [Work with humans, first round.]

A union representative from another workplace had the opposite experience about the use of the senior policy: 'We are talking about it. It is in our interests, it is not just a piece of paper, it will be used' [First round]. At this company, the senior policy seemed to be very much 'alive'.

Thus, the involvement of middle and line managers in the process seems to be crucial, not only as the executers of the senior policy, but also to secure commitment and to adjust the policy toward what is realistic and possible in the specific context. Likewise, the involvement of employee representatives may improve the legitimacy and contribute to the evaluation of how the policy is lived and executed in practice.

## Discussion

The results from this study suggested that trust in the relationships between management and employees may be a pre-requisite for a successful senior policy. Moreover, the award criteria for the senior benefits seemed to be highly important in relation to the perception of procedural, distributional, and interpersonal justice in the company. The perception of balance between individual needs and shared goals for the company were assessed to be important for the employees' approval of the individual considerations taken. Involvement of the right parties in the development and implementation seemed to influence commitment, particularly among the middle and line management, and to keep the senior policy alive and in tune with the organization.

Taken together, the results support the assumption that the process of preparing, implementing, and maintaining a senior policy at workplace level will interplay with the social capital in the company. Furthermore, the results indicate that the success of the senior policy will depend on the extent to which it is supported by, and is able to contribute to, the social capital at the workplace.

### Trust and justice in the interface between needs-dependent and universal benefits

The results regarding award criteria suggested that fairness and trust may come into play, regardless of the nature of the award principles. However, the needs-dependent and tailor-made initiatives seem to be especially likely to rise questions of arbitrariness and unpredictability. And thereby this kind of award criteria may challenge the experience of procedural and distributional justice among the employees.

Midtsundstad and Bogen (2014) found in a case study from Norway that managers often recommended senior measures based on 'individual needs assessment, not as a universal good, distributed to all above a certain age' (p. 148). However, at the same time, the managers realized that 'distribution of measures according to evaluation of individual needs could cause an unfavorable work climate' (Midtsundstad & Bogen 2014, p. 148).

It may be argued that the tailor-made and needs-dependent initiatives require a high degree of generalized trust or high social capital at the workplace (Leana & van Buren 1999), if they are not to challenge the perceptions of distributional justice.

In contrast, standardized offers and universal allocation criteria are supposed to contribute to a high degree of both procedural and distributional justice. However, studies have questioned the effectiveness of reducing early retirement (Hermansen & Midtsundstad 2018) and meeting the age-related needs of individual employees (Jonsson et al. 2020).

Results from the present study contribute to these previous results by showing that a serious dilemma can arise when in practice there are limited resources to provide universal measures to everybody. Consequently, the management (incl. middle managers), may try to reduce the problems of limited resources by reducing the proportion of senior employees – contrary to the intentions of the senior scheme. The universal measures may, furthermore, contribute to feelings of injustice, when other employees experience increased work pressure due to the senior schemes or think that the schemes are not given to the employees most in need of them.



## **Procedural justice with clear award criteria and standardized benefits**

Needs-dependent criteria and tailor-made schemes may not necessarily be perceived as unreasonable and unjust by employees. We saw examples that both universal criteria and tailor-made schemes as well as needs-dependent criteria and standardized schemes worked well. Visibility and transparency in allocation criteria and principles for the process were important to reduce perceptions of arbitrariness and injustice in the employee group.

Thus, the experience of justice can be achieved, even if not everyone is treated in the same way. If it is clear to the employees why and in which situations specific benefits are offered (Hilsen & Midtsundstad 2014). Justice can thus be retained if employees trust that the schemes will also benefit themselves if they need them at some point.

However, this approach may also pose challenges. From the company's point of view, it may be difficult to determine whether the need is present or whether the situation is the 'same'. In addition, it can be difficult for the company to promise to meet the similar needs of all employees in the future. The financial possibilities may change.

Management must also be willing to – in practice – to refrain from using its right to differentiate benefits according to who they want to retain and who they can do without. This may be challenging due to prevalent perceptions among leaders of ambivalence toward older workers as a group (Frøyland & Terjesen 2020).

Seen from the perspective taken in this paper, procedural clarity and transparency of criteria and principles for allocation of senior measures seems to be crucial for the potential effect on justice and in turn social capital of the workplace, also under circumstances where the value of benefits has to be reduced due to financial strain. However, clear award criteria and procedures should not interfere with the management right to dismiss employees who are not – or who are no longer- valuable for the company – regardless of age. On the other hand, high age should not be used as an excuse for not taking responsible management decisions by waiting for employees to retire.

## **Commitment toward the senior policy at all organizational levels**

Finally, successful implementation of the senior policy seems to be more likely if there is commitment at all levels, not only by top management, but equally by middle managers and employees. Accordingly, it may be crucial that organizational structures and communication channels support the collaboration and ensure knowledge sharing and common direction between the individual departments and between all levels in the company (Gittell 2012). Furthermore, it is crucial to consider how middle managers are supported in their role with the implementation of senior policies. In a study of managers in the public sector, Furunes *et al.* (2011) found that the decision latitude among managers regarding age management relied on access to adequate human and financial resources as well as appropriate attitudes among the managers. They also found that 'sufficient decision latitude was most likely to be found among managers in an administrative position, with few subordinates and full responsibility for age management' (Furunes *et al.* 2011, p. 1243). In line with this, Jonsson *et al.* (2022) described how managers within the field of healthcare found themselves in a very difficult situation due to insufficient supply of nurses and auxiliaries. On the one hand, this makes it attractive to retain senior workers at the workplace, but on the other hand it increases the demands on both

employees and employers and makes it difficult to offer reduced working hours to senior workers, for example.

Thus, sufficient resources for middle and line managers, as well as organizational support are required to break this vicious circle. One possibility could be, as presented in one of the case examples, to let the specific senior schemes depend on a collaboration between the line manager, a central manager, and an HR-person (who usually has to cover all reductions in working hours).

### **Strength and limitations of the study**

The present study is a multiple case study based on qualitative data material from 18 workplaces. It is therefore not possible to draw causal links in any statistical sense. The material covers data from a broad range of workplaces with different primary tasks, from different sectors and geographic locations, and from the private as well as the public sector. This variation makes it possible to compare similarities and differences and based on this assess the relevance of the findings.

The companies were selected as best-cases, and their experiences and attitudes cannot be expected to reflect or represent the general experiences or attitudes about senior initiatives in Danish workplaces. It is likely that many companies are far less equipped to deal with senior employees, so theoretically one can imagine that the difficulties that these best-case companies experience with implementing and maintaining senior initiatives will also pose difficulties for other workplaces with less experience.

A major strength of the present study was the relatively thorough investigation, with five to seven interviews at each workplace, and with representatives from three organizational levels. Thus, it may contribute to the credibility of the interpretation that they are built on utterances and observations that have been confirmed or sometimes contradicted at different levels of the organization. Furthermore, information about the workplaces and their senior initiatives was validated by the workplaces before presentation.

The first data collection took place between 2017 and 2018, and recruitment for the second round took place at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic (2021–2022). The difficulties with recruitment of for the second round may reflect that the senior theme was not at the top of the agenda for most companies at that time. It is likely that the workplaces who participated in the second round represented a select group, probably with more resources and interest in the topic than the average workplaces. This may have contributed to more positive experiences with senior policies in this round.

### **The development of senior policies within a Nordic context**

The overall results from the present study supported the assumption that social capital at workplace level plays an important role in the process of implementing and maintaining a successful senior policy within a Danish context. It seems likely, that this assumption will also hold true in countries outside the Nordics – that the perception of mutual trust and justice in the collaboration around the core task will interplay with the possibilities of implementing a senior policy. However, in countries with a less strong tradition for collective bargaining, it is possible that the perception of what is in fact fair in a



workplace setting may be different. The value attributed to the universal and standardized senior offers may, for example, not necessarily be as high in Anglo-Saxon countries, where individualized work arrangements are more common. Also, the perception of the specific behavior and signals supporting trust in professional relationships may differ with context, as well as the possible roles to be filled by employee representatives.

In a Nordic perspective, Denmark has lagged far behind countries such as Norway and Sweden with regard to the employment rate of older workers. In 2011, the employment rate of older workers was 57% in Denmark, 70% in Norway, and 71% in Sweden (<https://data.oecd.org/emp/employment-rate-by-age-group.htm>). Most probably, these differences can be explained by the fact that older workers in Norway and Sweden, as compared to Danish older workers, have been better qualified, healthier, and, more importantly, safeguarded by rather extensive employment protection systems (e.g., Jensen 2021). However, the introduction of senior policies may have helped Denmark to catch up with the Norwegian and Swedish experience. Between 2011 and 2021, the employment rate among older workers in Denmark grew from 57% to 72%, from 70% to 75% in Norway, and from 71% to 77% in Sweden. This indicates that the gap between the three Nordic countries has diminished.

## Conclusion

The results of this qualitative case study suggest that the success of a senior policy implemented at the workplace level may depend on whether employees experience procedural, distributional, and interpersonal justice in the policy, and whether they feel trust in the relationship with the management.

Simultaneously, a senior policy and its implementation may, to a greater or lesser extent, contribute to the experience of trust and justice in the company, between management and employees and mutually among employees. Trust and justice may particularly benefit by transparency in clear connection between intentions, practices, and award criteria around the implementation. Furthermore, commitment from all levels and departments in the organization can be assumed to contribute to the collaboration around implementation, and thereby increase the chances of the senior policy being successful.

## Acknowledgement

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. This article was supported by a grant from the Danish foundation TrygFonden.

## References

- Albertsen, K., Gensby, U. & Pedersen, F. (2018). SeniorArbejdsLiv – i et praksisperspektiv. Resultater fra første del af praksisundersøgelsen på ni case arbejdspladser. [SeniorWorkingLife – in a practical perspective. Results from the first part of the practice study at nine case workplaces.] <https://www.seniorarbejdsliv.dk/forskning/>

- Albertsen, K., Jensen, P. H., Andersen, L. L., Nielsen, P. & Pedersen, F. (2020a). Seniorpolitiske arrangementer – afgrænsning, udbredelse og medarbejdernes kendskab. [Senior political events – delineation, dissemination and employees' knowledge]. I: Jensen PH (red). SeniorArbejdsLiv. [SeniorWorkingLife] Frydenlund Academic.
- Albertsen, K., Jensen, P. H., Gensby, U. & Pedersen, F. (2020b). Udvikling og implementering af seniorpolitik – opmærksomhedspunkter for relationer og samarbejde. [Development and implementation of senior policy – attention points for relationships and cooperation]. I: Jensen PH (red). SeniorArbejdsLiv. [SeniorWorkingLife] Frydenlund Academic.
- Ambrose, M. & Schminke, M. (2003). Organization structure as a moderator of the relationship between procedural justice, interactional justice, perceived organizational support, and supervisory trust, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 88(2): 295–305. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.2.295>
- Amilon, A. & Larsen, M. (2019). Forventet tilbagetrækningsalder og arbejdsrelaterede forhold – Opgørelser baseret på Ældredatabasen. [Expected retirement age and work-related conditions – Calculations based on the Aging Database]. VIVE
- Andersen, L. L., Thorsen, S. V., Larsen, M., Sundstrup, E., Boot, C. R. L. & Rugulies, R. (2021). Work factors facilitating working beyond state pension age: Prospective cohort study with register follow-up, *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health* 47(1): 15–21. <https://doi.org/10.5271/sjweh.3904>
- Armstrong-Stassen, M. & Schlosser, F. (2011). Perceived organizational membership and the retention of older workers, *Journal of Organizational Behavior* [Internet]. 2011; 32(2): 319–344. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/job.647>
- Berglund, T., Seldén, D. & Halleröd, B. (2017). Factors affecting prolonged working life for the older workforce: the Swedish case, *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies* 7(1): 19–36. <https://doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v7i1.81396>
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In: J. G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York: Greenwood. 241–258.
- Breinegaard, N., Jensen, J. H. & Bonde, J. P. (2017). Organizational change, psychosocial work environment, and non-disability early retirement: a prospective study among senior public employees, *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health* 43(3):234–240. <https://doi.org/10.5271/sjweh.3624>
- Browne, P., Carr, E., Fleischmann, M., Xue, B. & Stansfeld, S. A. (2019). The relationship between workplace psychosocial environment and retirement intentions and actual retirement: a systematic review. *European Journal of Ageing* 16: 73–82. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-018-0473-4>
- Carlstedt, A. B., Brushammar, G., Bjursell, C., et al. (2018). Scoping review of the incentives for a prolonged work life after pensionable age and the importance of “bridge employment”. *Work* 60: 175–189. <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-182728>
- Claridge, T. (2004). Social Capital and Natural Resource Management: An Important Role for Social Capital? Unpublished Thesis, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. <https://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/current-definitions-of-social-capital/#respond>
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology* 94: 95–120. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228943>
- Colquitt, J. A., Conlon, D. E., Wesson, M. J., Porter, C. O. L. H. & Ng, K. Y. (2001). Justice at the millennium: a meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 86(3): 425–445. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.425>
- Gittell, J. H. (2012). *High Performance Healthcare. Using the Power of Relationships to Achieve Quality, Efficiency and Resilience*, Mc-Graw Hill.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case study research, *Qualitative Inquiry* 12(2): 219–225. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363>



- Friis, K., Jensen, P. H. & Wégens, J. (2008). Seniorpraksis på danske arbejdspladser – baggrund, indhold og effekt, København: Frydenlund Academic.
- Frøylund, K. & Terjesen, H. C. A. (2020). Workplace perceptions of older workers and implications for job retention, *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies* 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v10i2.120819>
- Furunes, T., Mykletun, R. & Solem, P. E. (2011). Age management in the public sector in Norway: exploring managers' decision latitude, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 22: 1232–1247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2011.559096>
- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G. & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: notes on the Gioia methodology, *Organizational Research Methods* 16(1): 15–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112452151>
- Hasle, P., Toft, E. & Olesen, K. G. (2010). Ledelse med social kapital. [Management with social capital], Copenhagen: L&R Business.
- Hermansen, Å. & Midtsundstad, T. (2018). The effect of retaining bonuses on delaying early retirement – financial incentives revisited, *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies* 8(1): 43–63. <https://doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v8i1.104848>
- Hess, M., Nauman, E. & Steinkopf, L. (2017). Population ageing, the intergenerational conflict, and active ageing policies – a multilevel study of 27 European countries, *Population Ageing* 10:11–23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12062-016-9161-3>
- Hilsen, A. I. & Midtsundstad, T. (2014). Seniorpolitik – behov for nytt kart og compass?. [Senior policy – need a new map and compass?] *Søkelys på arbeidslivet* 31(1–2): 157–182. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn1504-7989-2014-01-02-09>
- Jensen, P. H., Albertsen, K., Gensby, U. & Andersen, L. L. (2020). Data. I: Jensen PH (red), *SeniorArbejdsLiv*. Frydenlund Academic.
- Jensen, P. H. (2022). Arbejdspladsen og seniorpersonalet. Rekruttering, fastholdelse og afvikling af seniorarbejdskraften. Aalborg Universitetsforlag. <https://www.seniorarbejdsliv.dk/boeger-og-rapporter/>
- Jensen, M. C. F., Jensen, P. H. & Von Nordheim, F. (2023). Ældrepolitikken i det aktive samfund [The elderly policy in the active society]. In: S. Juul & J. E. Larsen (Eds.), *Socialpolitik* (5 ed., pp. 345–369), Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Jensen, P. H. (2021). On how different combinations of conditions produce different early exit/retirement outcomes: a qualitative (case-oriented) comparison of Denmark and Sweden, *Ageing & Society*, 41(19): 2335–2355. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X2000029X>
- Jonsson, R., Lindegard, A., Björk, L. & Nilsson, K. (2020). Organizational hindrances to the retention of older healthcare workers, *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies* 10(1): 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v10i1.118679>
- Kim, C. & Mauborgne R. (2003). Fair process: managing in the knowledge economy, *Harvard Business Review* RO301K: 127–136.
- Leana, C. R. & van Buren, H. J. (1999). Organizational social capital and employment practices, *The Academy of Management Review* 24(3): 538–555. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259141>
- Meng, A., Sundstrup, E. & Andersen, L. L. (2020). Factors contributing to retirement decisions in Denmark: comparing employees who expect to retire before, at, and after the state pension age, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17(9): 3338. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17093338>
- Midtsundstad, T. & Bogen, H. (2014). Active aging policies between individual needs and collective goods. A study of active aging policies and practices in Norway, *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies* 4(2): 139–158. <https://doi.org/10.19154/njwls.v4i2.3868>
- Mykletun, R. J., Furunes, T. & Solem, P. E. (2012). Managers' beliefs about measures to retain senior workforce, *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies* 2(3): 109–127. <https://doi.org/10.19154/njwls.v2i3.2366>

- Nielsen, K. M. & Miraglia, M. (2017). What works for whom in which circumstances? On the need to move beyond the ‘what works?’ Question in organizational intervention research, *Human Relations* 70(1): 40–62. ISSN 0018–7267. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726716670226>
- OECD. Older workers scoreboard, 2010 and 2020, Denmark, EU and OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/els/emp/>
- Olesen, K. G., Thoft, E., Hasle, P. & Kristensen, T. S. (2008). Virksomhedens sociale kapital. Hvidbog. [The company’s social capital. white paper], Copenhagen, Arbejdsmiljørådet.
- Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone: America’s declining social capital, *Journal of Democracy* 6(1): 65–78. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1995.0002>
- Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S., Burt, R. S. & Camerer, C. F. (1998). Not so different after all: a cross-discipline view of trust, *The Academy of Management Review* 23(3). <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1998.926617>
- Sewdas, R., Thorsen, S. V., Boot, C. R. L., Bjørner, J. B. & Van der Beek, A. J. (2020). Determinants of voluntary early retirement for older workers with and without chronic diseases: a Danish prospective study, *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 48(2): 190–199. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1403494819852787>
- Thorsen, S. V., Jensen, P. H. & Bjørner, J. B. (2016). Psychosocial work environment and retirement age: a prospective study of 1876 senior employees, *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health* 89: 891–900.
- Topa, G., Depolo, M. & Alcover, C.-M. (2018). Early retirement: a meta-analysis of its antecedent and subsequent correlates, *Front Psychol* 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02157>
- Virtanen, M. & Elovainio, M. (2018). Justice at the workplace: a review, *International Journal for Healthcare Ethics Committees* 27(2): 306–315. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963180117000639>
- Walker, A. (1998). *Managing an Ageing Workforce – A Guide to Good Practice*, Dublin: European Foundation.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 2nd ed., Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.seniorarbejdsliv.dk/forskning/>

<sup>2</sup> All employees currently aged 60–64 with a job tenure of five years or more as a percentage of all employees aged 55–59 5 years previously. Year 2020 refers to 2019.