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Ageism in Gauteng Public Service: the experiences of the older professional employees

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ABSTRACT

Ageism, like racism and sexism, is a form of discrimination prevalent in the workplace. Ageism manifests in attitudes, behaviour, institutional practices, and policies. This study focused on age discrimination of older professional employees in the South African public service. The aim of this qualitative research study, using thematic analysis methods, was to determine if there are age-differentiated practices and policies in the workplace, from the older professional employee's perspective. A total of ten participants between the ages of 50 and 65 years were selected from the workforce population of 2000 employees using purposive sampling. As part of the study, the expert sampling method was employed to recruit social workers to participate in a focus group session. The study was framed using Erikson's Development Theory with specific reference to the seventh stage of Generativity and Stagnation, and a systemic understanding of ageing by applying the Person-in-Environment contextual perspective. The main findings of the study indicated that the participant's self-regard was influenced by their perceived self-worth, level of integration in the workplace, and the value they place on their accumulated professional knowledge and experiences. The research results will contribute to social work knowledge about the older skilled professional person's experiences in the workplace and the support required to ensure appropriate accommodation.

Keywords: ageism, institutional ageism, occupational social work, older skilled professional employees, age discrimination