

<https://doi.org/10.17221/399/2021-AGRICECON>

Holistic human resource management as a tool for the intergenerational cooperation and sustainable business

PAVLA VRABCOVÁ^{1*}, HANA URBANCOVÁ²

¹Management Department, University of Economics and Management, Prague, Czech Republic

²Human Resources Department, University of Economics and Management, Prague, Czech Republic

*Corresponding author: vrabcovapavla@gmail.com

Citation: Vrabcová P., Urbancová H. (2022): Holistic human resource management as a tool for the intergenerational cooperation and sustainable business. *Agric. Econ. – Czech*, 68: 117–126.

Abstract: As for human resources, the period before the COVID-19 pandemic can be characterized as relatively stable with a low unemployment rate, while stereotyping in the employment of different age groups subsided. With the arrival of COVID-19, organizations have begun to lay off employees 50+, the employee turnover has increased, the demands of employees and organizations have changed, and the scissors in the number of wages and salaries for both sexes and most positions are widening. Against the background of this recent research, the main objective of our study is to identify access of organizations to implementation of age management (precisely measures supporting employees' cooperation and knowledge transfer). Data were obtained using standardized ($n = 183$) and qualitative research ($n = 5$) implemented in the second half of 2020 in agricultural and forestry Czech organizations and were evaluated using multidimensional and descriptive statistics. The results have shown that leaders in Czech organizations, due to financial problems of organizations, employee illness, insufficiently skilled workforce, have begun to take unsystematic steps leading to the destabilization of teams, the demotivation of employees. They have stopped paying attention to sustainable human resource management (SHRM), which is necessary for sustainable business. The factors identified using a factor analysis include the group of organizations according to their behavior similarity when organizations primarily focus on HR marketing, the stabilization of the internal environment or performance management, and the acquisition of qualified employees. The results of this study are limited to the researched sample of Czech companies.

Keywords: age management; diversity management; factors; social responsibility; stakeholder theory; sustainable management

Doing business that is not focused only on short-term profit but also considers the principles of long-term sustainability can be called sustainable business while being based on the principles of sustainable development (Nosratabadi et al. 2019). The research of sustainable development in the context of economic, social, and environmental pillars within the scientific examination of management (Pacana et al. 2020; Petříček et al. 2021), and hence human resources, is continuously expanding, as evidenced by the studies of Lorincová

et al. (2018), Macke and Genari (2019), and Zemigala (2019). The social domain (Cobbinah et al. 2015) can be thought of as a group of external and internal elements in the context of human resource management (HRM), also applicable to agricultural and forestry organizations; the internal ones include, for example, occupational health and safety (OHS) issues, employee training, job satisfaction, equal opportunities, the balanced structure of employees in terms of gender, ethnicity, and age, turnover rates, non-discrimi-

<https://doi.org/10.17221/399/2021-AGRICECON>

nation of any type, and others. External social areas may include corporate donorship, volunteering, social integration, assistance to disadvantaged groups, employment development, debt prevention, education support, consumer protection, etc. Supporting the agricultural and forestry value chain is essential for further developing the bioeconomy, as it provides jobs and economic prosperity in rural and urban areas. The sector is facing challenges such as introducing new technologies, digitization, or, for example, labour shortages, for which effective management and the retention of human capital are necessary. Human resources make agricultural and forestry enterprises successful and help to ensure sustainable competitive advantages, as suggested by e.g. Lorincová et al. (2016), Hitka et al. (2018), Järlström et al. (2018).

Over the last two decades (Tooranloo et al. 2017; Chams and García-Blandón 2019; Macke and Genari 2019), a new approach to HRM, namely sustainable HRM (SHRM), has been developing. Järlström et al. (2018) identified four dimensions of SHRM: fairness and equity, transparent HR practices, profitability, and employee well-being. It can be seen as an extension of strategic HRM, with SHRM adding a new view angle to the discussion on corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Bombiak and Marciniuk-Kluska 2018). In the context of the economic, social, and environmental pillars, SHRM is, among other things, based on the following approaches:

- i) green HRM, which can be seen as supporting environmental management and the adoption of environmentally friendly practices (Bombiak and Marciniuk-Kluska 2018; Järlström et al. 2018);
- ii) age management as business management concerning the age of employees (Urbancová and Vrabcová 2020; Garavaglia et al. 2021);
- iii) diversity management as the effective management of a diverse workforce to promote organizational equality (Dennissen et al. 2020);
- iv) sustainable systems of work (Järlström et al. 2018);
- v) the Ehnert's model (Ehnert 2009) and the Kramar's model (Kramar 2014), which complements the Ehnert's model by including ecological results; and
- vi) the theory of stakeholders (Järlström et al. 2018; Ren et al. 2018).

The paper focuses on intergenerational cooperation and age management in SHRM in the COVID-19 pandemic accompanied by severe economic downturns and political instability. According to Carnevale and Hatak (2020), this is particularly challenging for HRM as tensions between stakeholders intensify, shareholders' pri-

macy is challenged, work organization is debated, and changes in job designs are manifested (Collings et al. 2021). Core problems (Carnevale and Hatak 2020) include the need to adapt quickly to a new working environment, the inability to find alternative workspaces, the inability to separate work and private life when working from home, loneliness, and many others. In the agriculture and forestry sector, other aspects that can be mentioned in the context of COVID-19 and HRM are the introduction of new labour practices (Charlton and Castillo 2021) to slow down the virus spread among workers, workforce shortages due to the restrictions on immigration and travel, the risk of crop loss due to quarantines, the disruption of global trade, government interventions, and others.

Therefore, the main research objective is to identify access of organizations to implementation of age management (precisely measures supporting employees' cooperation and knowledge transfer). Recommendations are given for employee collaboration across all generations based on these factors, focusing on agricultural and forestry organizations. A research question is formulated: Does the implementation of age management depend on the organization's size?

Theoretical part. There is no consensus in the literature on what SHRM should encompass (Järlström et al. 2018; Chams and García-Blandón 2019), and that is why Table 1 gives definitions of SHRM that relate not only to age management and intergenerational collaboration. The Scopus and Web of Science database fields of title, abstract, or keywords were used to search for the following terms: sustainable HRM, sustainable human resource management, and sustainable work system.

It follows that SHRM involves strategic practices that reflect the triple bottom line principle by developing partnerships with all stakeholders to ensure sustainable competitive advantages and societal well-being. According to Tooranloo et al. (2017), the critical dimensions and factors influencing the implementation of SHRM include, among others, CSR, availability of career opportunities, green management of employee health and safety, green human resource planning, human resource efficiency, management commitment to economic sustainability, and employment guarantee.

Concerning the current demographic development, it is necessary to ensure the continuity of knowledge between the older and the upcoming generation in agriculture and forestry (Hitka et al. 2018). Age management is the management of an organization with respect to the age of its employees (Garavaglia et al. 2021). Garavaglia et al. (2021) suggest adopting an ac-

<https://doi.org/10.17221/399/2021-AGRICECON>

Table 1. The definitions of SHRM

Definition of SHRM	Reference
'A model of sustainable human capital starts with pre-hiring processes (raw materials), on-boarding (design stage), training and development (production stage), developing external partnerships and integrating individual employees with the ecosystem (distribution stage), building internal relationships through mentoring (use and maintenance stage), and employee's exit through succession planning (recovery stage).'	Banerjee (2013), p. 216
'Sustainable HRM could be defined as the pattern of planned or emerging HR strategies and practices intended to enable the achievement of financial, social and ecological goals while simultaneously reproducing the HR base over a long term.'	Kramar (2014), p. 1084
'Adoption of HRM strategies and practices that enable the achievement of financial, social and ecological goals, with an impact inside and outside of the organisation and over a long-term time horizon while controlling for unintended side effects and negative feedback.'	Ehnert et al. (2016), p. 90
'Sustainability of an organization depends on the exploration of external environment for opportunities, changes, trends and risks involved and the balance between economic, social and environmental areas in an organization.'	Tooranloo et al. (2017), p. 1253
'This is a new approach to the realization of the HR function, the nature of which is to include ecological objectives in all HRM sub-areas, from employment planning, through recruitment, selection, employee motivation and development, to their evaluation and influence on working conditions.'	Bombiak and Marciniuk-Kluska (2018), p. 5
'SHRM and sustainability are two paradigms that converge toward a common organizational benefit, not only satisfying shareholders' objectives but also operating in a responsible manner, while taking into consideration collective welfare and the preservation of natural resources.'	Chams and García-Blandón (2019), p. 113
'The SHRM model points out that human resource management enables the promotion of social welfare, considering that individuals and organizations can work together, in a reciprocal and sustainable manner, seeking long-term benefits.'	Macke and Genari (2019), p. 813
'Sustainable human resource management enables the management of organizations to use the potential of employees of all ages through the application of age management.'	Vraňaková et al. (2021), p. 2

SHRM – sustainable human resource management; HRM – human resource management

tion research approach to facilitate the implementation of these practices. The research conducted by Urbanová and Vrabcová (2020) identified three significant explanatory factors for the application of age management in the primary sector, namely internal employer branding through the application of current management trends, external employer branding, and ensuring knowledge continuity, which is related to the social factor identified by Earl and Taylor (2015).

The conditions in which current employee teams across all generations emerge and work are undergoing dynamic changes (Skibiński et al. 2016), and the COVID-19 pandemic reinforces this statement as a result of the need for social distancing (Hartley et al. 2020). This paper identifies organizations' access to the implementation of age management (precisely measures supporting employees' cooperation and knowledge transfer). Following the au-

thor's arguments in Table 1, age management can significantly influence intergenerational employee cooperation in organizations. Therefore, the following preconditions have been formulated:

Precondition 1: Age management is appropriate to apply in all sectors of the economy, i.e. all business areas (Göbel and Zwick 2012; Falk et al. 2018). Therefore, the paper's results are always focused on all sectors of the economy.

Precondition 2: The approach to human resources management and age management is not completely sensitive, responsible, and systematic on the part of organizations (Göbel and Zwick 2012; Vraňaková et al. 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to work with human resources in organizations more sensitively and respect their needs to support employees' cooperation and knowledge transfer.

<https://doi.org/10.17221/399/2021-AGRICECON>

MATERIAL AND METHODS

As part of the research preparation, previous publications and other documents related to SHRM and intergenerational cooperation in social sustainability were reviewed. Based on Anderson (2013), it is appropriate to assess the behavior of companies within the socio-scientific discipline through a questionnaire survey. The quantitative data were obtained by an online standardized questionnaire survey in the Czech organizations across all sectors ($n = 183$) in Google Forms. The survey was conducted from June 2020 to December 2020. The qualitative research followed it in 2021. The questionnaire did not use the term 'age management', but the management method concerning the age of employees to better understand the respondents. Respondents understood all the terms, and a preliminary survey was conducted ($n = 10$). The identifying features of the questionnaire survey include the size of the organization, the sector (primary, secondary, tertiary), the organization type (private, public, non-profit), the annual turnover, and majority ownership (domestic, foreign) (Table 2). The questionnaire was completed by the middle or higher management

of the organization; in the case of smaller organizations, it was conducted by the owner.

The results were obtained using two statistical tools, namely the dependence test (χ^2) and the power of dependence test (Cramer's V) at the given level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$.

The exploratory factor analysis was performed to explain the correlation structure of the group of observed manifest variables based on the smaller number of unknown unmeasurable latent factors. The method of principal components was used to extract the factors. The Varimax rotation of maximizing the sum of variances of all factors was used. To check the suitability of the data for the factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy value greater than 0.7 and Bartlett's test of sphericity were observed to test the null hypothesis that all correlations between variables are zero. The result of Bartlett's test was statistically significant, and the null hypothesis was rejected. Considering the specificity of sociological research, where the behavior and attitudes of employees and management are dealt with, according to the recommendations of Anderson (2013), the statistically significant factors are considered those that explain more than 10% of the sample behavior, and, overall, the factors present at least 50% of the behavior of the entire phenomenon observed. Anderson (2013) states that factor analysis is a more heuristic method that requires a deep understanding of the researched problem in the area of personnel works and management of the employees. Therefore, the process may sometimes reject statistics as less accurate, ambiguous, and subjective. On the other hand, many researchers in the social sciences (especially sociologists) use factor analysis quite often and trust it (Stewart 2001; Anderson 2013; Meyers et al. 2016).

The results from the qualitative survey ($n = 5$; plus moderators) were based on the focus group (the owners, directors, economists, and human resources specialists were asked). These are the representatives of agricultural and forestry organizations selected concerning the specifics of the sector. Thanks to focus groups, the data obtained from the standardized survey were confirmed. Other essential research areas were identified, which are specified in the discussion part of the paper. The IBM SPSS Statistics 28 statistical software was used to evaluate the results. The results can only be generalized for the research sample because the required minimum number of respondents to generalize the research results to the whole population was not reached.

Table 2. Organizations that participated in the research – Types and structure of surveyed organizations

Characteristics	Percentage
Economic sector of the organization	
Primary	4.4
Secondary	41.5
Tertiary	54.1
Size of the organization (number of employees)	
≤ 50	26.2
51–249	28.4
≥ 250	45.4
Majority ownership	
Domestic	45.4
Foreign	54.6
Type of organization	
Private	85.8
Public	11.5
Non-profit	2.7
Annual turnover (million EUR)	
≤ 10	38.3
11–49	37.7
≥ 50	24.0

Source: Authors' own elaboration

<https://doi.org/10.17221/399/2021-AGRICECON>

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results. As part of the research, it was first necessary to determine how the surveyed organizations apply age management (Table 3). It can be noted that the majority of the surveyed organizations stated that they are engaged in age management (55%), and more than 80% have information on how the age structure of employees develops over time.

However, the standardized survey results have also shown that the overall majority of respondents (55%) do not make plans for the age structure of their workforce within 3–5 years. As shown in Table 3, most respondents mentioned that they are engaged in age management. Still, on the other hand, they also reported no difference in the attitude of the heads of different departments towards young or older workers in the last 12 months (77%). Therefore, it is evident that although the respondents tended to create a positive image of their organization in the context of age management application, the respondents' answers do not indicate that they were taking active steps to implement age management of human resources. This is also evidenced by the fact that 67% of the organizations surveyed do not have training programs on age-related management and intergenerational cooperation. Company representatives do not have to perceive different attitudes towards different age groups of employees as potentially discriminatory. The proper management approach assesses each individual's potential and an individual approach, regardless of age. However, the situation in organizations is often different, as evidenced by research conducted in the Czech Republic and abroad concerning the incidence of ageism.

The organizations see the benefits primarily in the context of increasing motivation and organizational

performance, recruiting talented employees, and, last but not least, retaining key personnel [Table S1 in electronic supplementary material (ESM); for the ESM see the electronic version]. The respondents mainly agreed that this is a management-intensive way of managing the organization, not only in terms of communication and financial requirements (Table S2 in ESM; for the ESM see the electronic version).

The results of the standardized questionnaire survey show a relatively high level of CSR in the context of supporting employee health (regardless of age), as 77% of respondents contribute to activities that help improve physical activity. Following preconditions 1 and 2 based on Göbel and Zwick (2012), Urbancová and Vrabcová (2020), Vraňáková et al. (2021) is an essential issue for all sectors of the economy. Health and safety are primary in all industries, even more so in manual work than intellectual work. However, the article describes organizations' approaches following the preconditions, so the sectoral specificities and differences are not explicitly discussed further. At the same time, 80% of the surveyed organizations stated that practices to transfer the knowledge and skills of older and more experienced employees to less experienced ones (peer consultations, sharing of work tasks) are in place. Table 4 shows the results of testing the qualitative variables (the sector, the size by the number of employees, ownership, type, and annual turnover).

Based on the results, it can be summarized that the majority of the monitored activities (variables) are/or not related to one another. The examined variables were tested at the 0.05 level of significance, i.e. it can be concluded that all activities can be performed by any organization, regardless of its size, focus, or turnover, with the same benefits. The most affected by the variables examined is when the management of organizations approach their former employees with the offer of further work activities or cooperation despite their retirement (the dependence on its size, owners, and annual turnover). However, this activity is pivotal concerning the long-term demographic development despite the negative contemporary (shorter-term) effect of COVID-19.

The data regarding factors influencing the implementation of age management are further subjected to multivariate statistics (the factor analysis) as illustrated by applying the principal components method in Table 5.

The factor analysis identifies four significant factors combining variables related to the benefits of age management for the organization. Factor analysis creates organizations according to their behavior simi-

Table 3. Contingency table (relative frequencies in %): The application of age management and the size of agricultural and forestry companies

Applying age management	Size of the company (number of employees)			Total
	≤ 50	51–249	≥ 250	
Company applies age management	13	18	24	55
Company does not apply age management	13	10	22	45
Total	26	28	46	100

Source: Authors' own elaboration

<https://doi.org/10.17221/399/2021-AGRICECON>

Table 4. Chi-square test of independence and the Cramer's V measure of association between applied age management measures/instruments and selected structural variables

Variable	Sector	Size	Ownership	Type	Annual turnover
	(P-value/Cramer's V)				
The management tracks how the age structure of employees develops over time	0.300/–	0.182/–	0.756/–	0.804/–	0.585/–
The company management makes plans for the age structure of the workforce within a period of 3–5 years	0.422/–	0.733/–	0.624/–	0.507/–	0.709/–
The organization has noted different approaches to young or senior staff by department heads over the past 12 months	0.341/–	0.437/–	0.737/–	0.038/0.186	0.012/0.214
The education program in the organization takes into account the age of employees and emphasizes the cooperation of generations	0.097/0.274	0.331/–	0.016/0.176	0.403/–	0.094/0.159
The organization contributes to activities that help improve physical fitness as part of supporting the employees' health (regardless of their age)	0.375/–	0.146/–	0.382/–	0.408/–	0.259/–
The organization has practices to transfer the knowledge and skills of more senior and experienced employees to less experienced employees (mutual consultations, sharing of work tasks, etc.) in place	0.297/–	0.517/–	0.510/–	0.771/–	0.444/–
The organization allows for flexible working hours as employees' life roles change	0.087/0.276	0.012/0.215	0.421/–	0.059/0.173	0.099/0.157
The organization approaches its former employees with an offer of further work activities or involvement in the organization even after their retirement	0.200/–	0.033/0.190	0.009/0.190	0.385/–	0.002/0.256

Source: Authors' own elaboration

larity when organizations primarily focus on human resources management. As shown in Table 4, the first factor accounts for approximately 19% of the variance, the second one accounts for 14%, the third one accounts for 11%, and the fourth one accounts for 10%.

Table 6 shows the analysis results in detail, with each variable (out of the 4) described in the table by the factor weights, specifically by the correlation value of the item. Statistically significant factors together explain 54% of the final sample.

Table 5. Resultant factors by the Varimax method

Factor	Name of the factor	Total variance	Total % of the variance	Cumulative % of the variance
Factor 1	emphasis on HR marketing	1.893	18.927	18.927
Factor 2	emphasis on stabilizing the internal environment	1.385	13.850	32.777
Factor 3	managing work performance	1.110	11.099	43.876
Factor 4	emphasis on acquiring	1.037	10.370	54.246

Source: Authors' own elaboration

<https://doi.org/10.17221/399/2021-AGRICECON>

Table 6. Resultant factors by the Varimax method, access organizations and their process settings influencing of implementation of age management

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Name of the factor	emphasis on HR marketing	emphasis on stabilizing the internal environment	managing work performance	emphasis on acquiring qualified employees
Retaining key employees	0.292	0.125	-0.747	0.152
Acquiring talented employees	0.279	0.060	-0.010	0.783
Improving motivation and performance	0.527	0.246	0.018	-0.534
Improving the organizational climate	0.030	0.586	0.262	-0.228
Improving organizational culture	-0.067	0.707	-0.027	0.275
Improving the organization's reputation	0.592	-0.058	-0.052	0.065
Building the employer brand	0.639	-0.131	0.091	0.170
Gaining a competitive advantage	0.685	0.199	-0.030	-0.024
Improving crisis management	0.051	0.590	-0.067	-0.068
Improving the organization's performance	0.282	0.178	0.746	0.137
Total % of variance	18.927	13.850	11.099	10.370

Important measures of the association are highlighted in bold

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The results have shown that the trends were improving the HR marketing of the company, both external and internal, are the most emphasized ones by the representatives of organizations. There are processes of enhancing the motivation and performance of existing employees, employer branding, and prestige building to gain a competitive edge. The coefficients here range between 0.527 and 0.685. The first factor of factor analysis can be called 'emphasis on HR marketing'. These organizations can be presumed to have set a strategy to achieve their competitive advantage by setting up practical human resource work.

The second factor of factor analysis focuses on stabilizing the internal environment, primarily of the organizational climate (0.586) and culture (0.707). The organizations emphasize proactive resolving any workplace conflict that may lead to employee demotivation, discontinuity, or threat to the organization. The third factor of factor analysis 'work performance management' describes organizations whose strategy is based on a resource-based approach, where the critical knowledge employee is instrumental in enhancing the organizational performance. However, knowledge sharing needs to be ensured here, especially in the COVID-19 period. Companies that apply HR measures to improve organizational performance are unlikely to implement measures to retain key employees and *vice versa*.

The fourth factor of factor analysis called 'emphasis on acquiring qualified employees' stresses employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities and knowledge sharing among employees. The organizations focus on continuous and regular retraining, education, and development of employees. Furthermore, the focus group participants ($n = 5$) agreed that intergenerational cooperation and knowledge transfer need to be emphasized, given the unfavorable demographic situation and the lack of young farmers and foresters.

Focusing on young employees and facilitating business development in rural areas is essential, along with providing guidance on administration and transfers, reducing transaction costs (a handover plan), and advice on the possibility of expanding and modernizing the business (creating a business plan, etc.), subsidies, etc.

According to experts in the focus groups, the current system concentrates mainly on the one-way transfer of knowledge from experts to entrepreneurs. The support for decision making, problem-solving, the help of local initiatives, and conflict solving, which require individual involvement of experts or advisors and long-term cooperation, is not sufficiently applied or developed in the present agricultural and forestry system of knowledge and innovations. Young farmers can also be supported by helping them to set up business plans. The above mentioned is an important area of interest for the future common agricultural policy, which aims

<https://doi.org/10.17221/399/2021-AGRICECON>

to develop agriculture and rural areas, ensure food production, and, last but not least, safeguard farmers' standard of living. We can summarize the test identified association between two age management measures and the sector following support precondition 1. Age management is an area with excellent prospects for developing organizations of all sizes and doing business in all sectors and industries.

Discussion. The results were achieved based on a questionnaire survey and a focus group evaluation. Descriptive statistical methods, factor analysis, and focus group results helped verify the results obtained from several angles. Factor analysis validated and revealed organizations' behavior in the approach to the implementation of age management. The limit of this method is their high application in sociological research; on the contrary, they are not frequently used in economic research. Concerning the achieved results, it is necessary to apply age management in all sectors of the economy, while it is necessary to reflect the specifics of the sector.

The proposals to redefine the future common agricultural policy have several instruments that can partly contribute to improving the competitiveness of agriculture. Generational cooperation and knowledge transfer include supporting and establishing new demonstration farms (Eitzinger et al. 2019; Šťastná et al. 2019) and implementing field days for knowledge dissemination. Given the increasing priority of knowledge transfer at the EU level, it will be necessary to focus on the appropriate support, including exploring mechanisms for knowledge transfer, developing independent consultancy (Oliveira et al. 2019), developing information technologies and their use (Šťastná et al. 2019), which can also help intergenerational collaboration and supporting age management.

More than 37% of the surveyed organizations do not perceive any disadvantages. However, the remaining two-thirds of respondents agree that the work schedule places greater demands on communication, and the age diversity is, according to respondents, challenging to manage. In their research, Urbancová and Vrabcová (2020) and Garavaglia et al. (2021) discuss the resistance to the implementation of age management associated with the persisting stereotypes and barriers related to employee age and the existence of hostile organizational cultures. Leadership plays a crucial role in SHRM (Chams and García-Blandón 2019; Macke and Genari 2019), particularly concerning legitimizing of HR practices and resource allocation (Järlström et al. 2018), which is increasingly relevant in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is a threat

to the health and safety of employees, so it is essential that organizations systematically assess this risk (Collings et al. 2021).

The qualitative research results show that people are the most valuable factor in organizations. Despite the fluctuations in the labor market, goods, and services market accompanying the financial instability of companies due to COVID-19, it is necessary to approach employees in a non-discriminatory, human, and stimulating way and promote intergenerational cooperation continuous sharing of knowledge and experience more.

Based on the previous research results on the age management issues, it can be summarized that owing to the pandemic; there have been unsystematic steps in setting up human resource strategies due to frequent financial problems, increased employee sickness rate including the short-term (the turnover of skilled employees) and long-term shortage of skilled workforce in the labour market. The cost-cutting pressure during COVID-19 caused an increase in the number of dismissals without systematic practices (no emphasis on identifying knowledge employees in the company), leading to the destabilization of teams, the demotivation of employees who remain in the company. To a more significant extent, the management of companies is no longer paying attention to the necessity of SHRM. However, without meeting this condition, sustainable business cannot be ensured, and it may even lead to the company's existence being threatened. The results of this study are related to the effects of international studies by Earl and Taylor (2015) and Garavaglia et al. (2021) focused on age management. Garavaglia et al. (2021) agree with this research in that stereotypes persist in organizations. Age management practices were not found to be part of the systematic strategy of the surveyed companies, which is in line with the research of Garavaglia et al. (2021). As shown by the findings of Kooij (2020), the 50+ older workers may be more affected by the COVID-19 pandemic than younger ones.

Does the implementation of age management depend on the organization's size? The majority of respondents (55%) do not make plans for the age structure of their workforce within 3–5 years; almost half of them are organizations with more than 250 employees. The majority of the monitored activities related to age management are not statistically influenced by the examined variables at the 0.05 level of significance. Following the results, the theoretical preconditions of the article were confirmed (preconditions 1 and 2). Demographic development implies the need to apply age management, which will help to respond to the impact of de-

<https://doi.org/10.17221/399/2021-AGRICECON>

mographic development of population ageing in the Czech Republic, to ensure knowledge continuity between generations of employees (from owners to successors), and to set appropriate development programs for employees, to be able to constantly respond to the needs of the company and the labor market.

CONCLUSION

Based on the presented results, theoretical and practical contributions can be made to the organizational HRM setting. This paper aims to highlight the challenges and opportunities that influence the process of intergenerational collaboration and knowledge transfer in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study's results will help develop individual and organizational knowledge sets through building responsible and sustainable HRM to avoid their loss. These findings may help reduce intergenerational conflicts, mitigate ageism in companies, and support the willingness to share knowledge among employees. The system approach was implemented to identify possible factors influencing the process mentioned above, namely the improvement of HR marketing, the stabilization of the internal environment, the knowledge continuity, and the acquisition of qualified employees, which is becoming increasingly complicated not only in agriculture and forestry. Yet, sustainable employability is crucial both for the further employability of employees and for the success of firms and, consequently, for the country's prosperity. The research results are significantly influenced by the selected sector of the economy and can be generalized only to a given sample. The research limit can be considered that the results come from data and answers from the questionnaire survey and interviews from business representatives. At the same time, the impact of individual recommendations was not assessed. Respondents may have tended to create a better picture of their business and be more rational. However, the questions were asked non-exhaustively and in compliance with the rules of social science research.

REFERENCES

- Anderson V. (2013): *Research Method in Human Resource Management*. 2nd Ed. London, United Kingdom, Chartered Institute of Personnel Development: 496.
- Banerjee P.M. (2013): Sustainable human capital: Product innovation and employee partnerships in technology firms. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 20: 216–234.
- Bombiak E., Marciniuk-Kluska A. (2018): Green human resource management as a tool for the sustainable development of enterprises: Polish young company experience. *Sustainability*, 10: 1739.
- Carnevale J.B., Hatak I. (2020): Employee adjustment and well-being in the era of COVID-19: Implications for human resource management. *Journal of Business Research*, 116: 183–187.
- Chams N., García-Blandón J. (2019): On the importance of sustainable human resource management for the adoption of sustainable development goals. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 141: 109–122.
- Charlton D., Castillo M. (2021): Potential impacts of a pandemic on the US farm labor market. *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 43: 39–57.
- Cobbinah P.B., Erdiaw-Kwasie M.O., Amoateng P. (2015): Rethinking sustainable development within the framework of poverty and urbanisation in developing countries. *Environmental Development*, 13: 18–32.
- Collings D.G., McMackin J., Nyberg A.J., Wright P.M. (2021): Strategic human resource management and COVID-19: Emerging challenges and research opportunities. *Journal of Management Studies*, 58: 1–5.
- Dennissen M., Benschop Y., van den Brink M. (2020): Rethinking diversity management: An intersectional analysis of diversity networks. *Organization Studies*, 41: 219–240.
- Earl C., Taylor P. (2015): Is workplace flexibility good policy? Evaluating the efficacy of age management strategies for older women workers. *Work, Aging and Retirement*, 1: 214–226.
- Ehnert I. (2009): *Sustainable Human Resource Management*. Heidelberg, Germany, Physica-Verlag: 292.
- Ehnert I., Parsa S., Roper I., Wagner M., Muller-Camen M. (2016): Reporting on sustainability and HRM: A comparative study of sustainability reporting practices by the world's largest companies. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 27: 88–108.
- Eitzinger A., Cock J., Atzmanstorfer K., Binder C.R., Läderach P., Bonilla-Findji O., Bartling M., Mwangera C., Zurita L., Jarvis A. (2019): GeoFarmer: A monitoring and feedback system for agricultural development projects. *Computers and electronics in agriculture*, 158: 109–121.
- Falk A., Becker A., Dohmen T., Enke B., Huffman D., Sunde U. (2018): Global evidence on economic preferences. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 133: 1645–1692.
- Garavaglia E., Marcaletti F., Iñiguez-Berrozpe T. (2021): Action research in age management: The quality of ageing at work model. *Work, Aging and Retirement*, 7: 339–351.
- Göbel C., Zwick T. (2012): Age and productivity: Sector differences. *De Economist*, 160: 35–57.

<https://doi.org/10.17221/399/2021-AGRICECON>

- Hartley D.M., Reisinger H.S., Perencevich E.N. (2020): When infection prevention enters the temple: Intergenerational social distancing and COVID-19. *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*, 41: 868–869.
- Hitka M., Lorincová S., Bartáková G.P., Ližbetinová L., Štarchoň P., Li C., Zaborova E., Markova T., Schmidtová J., Mura L. (2018): Strategic tool of human resource management for operation of SMEs in the wood-processing industry. *BioResources*, 13: 2759–2774.
- Järlström M., Saru E., Vanhala S. (2018): Sustainable human resource management with salience of stakeholders: A top management perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 152: 703–724.
- Kramar R. (2014): Beyond strategic human resource management: Is sustainable human resource management the next approach? *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25: 1069–1089.
- Lorincová S., Hitka M., Čambál M., Szabó P., Javorčíková J. (2016): Motivation factors influencing senior managers in the forestry and wood-processing sector in Slovakia. *BioResources*, 11: 10339–10348.
- Lorincová S., Hitka M., Štarchoň P., Stachová K. (2018): Strategic instrument for sustainability of human resource management in small and medium-sized enterprises using management data. *Sustainability*, 10: 3687.
- Macke J., Genari D. (2019): Systematic literature review on sustainable human resource management. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 208: 806–815.
- Meyers L.S., Gamst G., Guarino A.J. (2016): *Applied multivariate research: Design and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, US, SAGE Publications: 978.
- Nosratabadi S., Mosavi A., Shamshirband S., Kazimieras Zavadskas E., Rakotonirainy A., Chau K.W. (2019): Sustainable business models: A review. *Sustainability*, 11: 1663.
- Kooij D.T. (2020): The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on older workers: The role of self-regulation and organizations. *Work, Aging and Retirement*, 6: 233–237.
- Oliveira M.D.F., Gomes da Silva E., Ferreira S., Teixeira M., Damásio H., Dinis Ferreira A., Gonçalves J.M. (2019): Innovations in sustainable agriculture: Case study of Lis Valley irrigation district, Portugal. *Sustainability*, 11: 331.
- Pacana A., Czerwińska K., Bednárová L., Džuková J. (2020): Analysis of a practical approach to the concept of sustainable development in a manufacturing company in the automotive sector. *Waste Forum*, 3: 151–161.
- Petříček M., Chalupa Š., Levičková V. (2021): Comparison of expected marginal revenue models in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management*, 2021: 1–7.
- Ren S., Tang G., Jackson S.E. (2018): Green human resource management research in emergence: A review and future directions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 35: 769–803.
- Skibiński A., Sipa M., Gorzeń-Mitka I. (2016): An intergenerational cooperation in the organization-view from the age perspective. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 235: 412–419.
- Stewart D. (2001): Exploratory *versus* confirmatory factor analysis. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, Methodological and Statistical Concerns of the Experimental Behavioral Researcher*, 10: 76–78.
- Šťastná M., Peřinková V., Pokorná P., Vaishar A. (2019): New approach to sustainability in rural areas comprising agriculture practices – Analysis of demonstration farms in the Czech Republic. *Sustainability*, 11: 2906.
- Tooranloo H.S., Azadi M.H., Sayyahpoor A. (2017): Analyzing factors affecting implementation success of sustainable human resource management (SHRM) using a hybrid approach of FAHP and Type-2 fuzzy DEMATEL. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 162: 1252–1265.
- Urbancová H., Vrabcová P. (2020): Age management as a human resources management strategy with a focus on the primary sector of the Czech Republic. *Agricultural Economics – Czech*, 66: 251–259.
- Vraňaková N., Gyurák Babelová Z., Chlpeková A. (2021): Sustainable human resource management and generational diversity: The importance of the age management pillars. *Sustainability*, 13: 8496.
- Zemigala M. (2019): Tendencies in research on sustainable development in management sciences. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 218: 796–809.

Received: November 23, 2021

Accepted: February 16, 2022

Published online: March 29, 2022