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**Summary of the doctoral dissertation entitled: "Employee age diversity in the context of organizational results"**

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The modern world is characterized by a significant diversity in organizations in the context of company management methods, obtaining financing or the approach to employees. Managing an organization where age-diversity of workers is an increasingly common phenomenon and important organizational issue is now becoming more and more challenging. Therefore, one of the key trends in human resource management is the skillful use of the potential of various age groups and the selection of appropriate people management tools and practices.

Most scientists in their publications indicate that the organization's performance is improving through the use of activities that support diversity. Otherwise, there may be short-term negative effects, visible in the company's results (e.g. higher absenteeism, lower profitability, and lower job satisfaction). Based on this publication review, there are six main business benefits of diversity in the workplace. The first argument for supporting diversity is the so-called cost argument saying that the cost of equality or diversity policy absence will increase over time. Another argument relates to the human resource acquisition. In other words, managing diversity will positively affect the company's reputation as a potential employer and thus can attract very valuable employees. Another aspect concerns marketing. The actions of international corporations involving the employment of diverse employees will arouse positive reactions, and this may translate into a better image of the company. One cannot but mention the aspects of creativity. In a diverse team of employees, a natural phenomenon will be the shaping of different perspectives, creating new ways of acting, out of the old rules. An important argument is also related to the problem-solving ability. Diversity within groups of employees can help them make better decisions and solve problems by considering the multiple perspectives and points of view for a given problem. Scientific publications also stated that the diversity policy made it possible to hire and retain the most talented employees, improve productivity, efficiency and creativity in the company, strengthen staff trust, increase job

satisfaction and employee engagement, improve relationships with customers and suppliers, and create positive image of the company.

Thus, one of the ways of such a significant diversity enhancement may be applying HR practices that promote employee age diversity - tackling age barriers, promoting age diversity and providing an environment in which each individual is able to realize their professional potential.

Achieving benefits for the organization by increasing the age diversity of employees in the workplace also requires creating proper conditions for diversity appreciation. A workplace climate supporting employee age diversity, which can be defined as the attitude of employees towards people of different ages in the workplace, can contribute to reducing the undesirable effects of employee diversity based on age, e.g. discrimination, a feeling of being aggrieved because of age and barriers in the development of potential.

Moreover, it was assumed that positive effects of age diversity require knowledge transfer among employees. Knowledge transfer is understood as learning from internal and external experts. On the other hand, knowledge transfer among age-matched workers refers to the process of sharing knowledge with one another, for example through discussion, imitation and collaboration. The research presented in the scientific dissertation allowed us to find out to what extent knowledge transfer mediates between employee age diversity and the results of the organization.

Therefore, the problem of proper management of employees of different ages in the organization is important both from the theoretical and empirical point of view because:

- Differentiation by age is an area of interest for scientists, but so far, the context of the entire organization has not been sufficiently researched, in particular for Poland.
- Previous research focused on how age-related diversity affects the overall climate of the organization and good HR practices in dealing with employees. Until now, the problem of diversity antecedence has been insufficiently researched. The way how age-related HR practices and the workplace climate affect age-related diversity has not been analyzed.
- So far it has been pointed out that age differentiation improves financial results, but very often non-financial results were overlooked or analyzed to a limited extent.
- The impact of factors increasing age-related diversity, such as knowledge transfer, has been ignored so far.

There is insufficient evidence in management sciences to demonstrate the relationship between employee age diversity and organizational performance (especially of non-financial organizations) with regard to knowledge transfer and the impact of HR practices antecedence,

favoring employee age diversity and workplace climate supporting employee age diversity, on the analyzed diversity. The subject of this dissertation, concerning employee age diversity, is a response to the identified research gap, and the results of the research undertaken indicated a new perspective for building human resource management strategies in the organization and provided practical tips for managers and HR specialists.

The objectives of the considerations undertaken in this paper can be divided into theoretical and cognitive objectives, practical objectives and methodological objectives.

The theoretical and cognitive objectives of this paper were formulated as follows:

- Systematization of knowledge in the field of: employee age diversity, workplace climate supporting employee age diversity, knowledge transfer and HR practices favoring employee age diversity;
- Determining the impact of employee age diversity on the organization's performance, taking into account possible mediation of individual variables;
- Identifying the antecedence of employee age diversity;
- Developing the concept of a relationship model between employee age diversity and organizational performance, HR practices favoring employee age diversity, knowledge transfer and workplace climate supporting employee age diversity;
- Empirical examination of the dependencies presented in the research model.

The practical objectives of the dissertation are:

- Examining the level of employee age diversity and the application of HR practices favoring employee age diversity, workplace climate supporting employee age diversity and the knowledge transfer process in the surveyed organizations;
- Formulating practice guidelines in terms of enhancing employee age diversity and increasing their impact on the company's results.

The methodological objectives are:

- Confirmation of the possibility of using research tools to measure all variables, in particular the variable related to age diversity;

The formulation of appropriate research hypotheses was to help the implementation of the indicated objectives of the paper. Ten main and nineteen detailed hypotheses were formulated and verified:

*H1. HR practices favoring employee age diversity are positively related to employee age diversity.*

*H2. HR practices favoring employee age diversity are positively related to a workplace climate which supports employee age diversity.*

- H3. A workplace climate that promotes employee age diversity is positively related to employee age diversity.*
- H4. A workplace climate that supports employee age diversity mediates the relationship between HR practices favoring employee age diversity and employee age diversity.*
- H5. Employee age diversity is positively related to the organization's performance.*
- H5a. Employee age diversity is positively related to financial results.*
- H5b. Employee age diversity is positively related to non-financial results.*
- H5b1. Employee age diversity is positively related to innovation of the organization.*
- H5b2. Employee age diversity is positively related to the approach to risk in the organization.*
- H5b3. Employee age diversity is positively related to flexibility of the organization.*
- H6. Employee age diversity is positively related to knowledge transfer.*
- H7. HR practices favoring employee age diversity and workplace climate supporting employee age diversity are positively related to knowledge transfer.*
- H7a. HR practices favoring employee age diversity are positively related to knowledge transfer.*
- H7b. A workplace climate that supports employee age diversity is positively related to knowledge transfer.*
- H8. Employee age diversity mediates the relationship between HR practices favoring employee age diversity and workplace climate that supports employee age diversity, and knowledge transfer.*
- H8a. Employee age diversity mediates the relationship between HR practices favoring employee age diversity and knowledge transfer.*
- H8b. Employee age diversity mediates the relationship between the workplace climate that supports employee age diversity and knowledge transfer.*
- H9. Knowledge transfer is positively related to the organization's performance.*
- H9a. Knowledge transfer is positively related to financial results.*
- H9b. Knowledge transfer is positively related to non-financial results.*
- H9b1. Knowledge transfer is positively related to innovation of the organization.*
- H9b2. Knowledge transfer is positively related to risk approach in the organization.*
- H9b3. Knowledge transfer is positively related to flexibility of the organization.*
- H10. Knowledge transfer mediates the relationship between employee age diversity and the performance of the organization.*

*H10a. Knowledge transfer mediates the relationship between employee age diversity and financial performance.*

*H10b. Knowledge transfer mediates the relationship between employee age diversity and non-financial performance.*

*H10b1. Knowledge transfer mediates the relationship between employee age diversity and innovation of the organization.*

*H10b2. Knowledge transfer mediates the relationship between employee age diversity and risk approach in the organization.*

*H10b3. Knowledge transfer mediates the relationship between employee age diversity and flexibility of the organization.*

The paper has been divided into five chapters preceded by an introduction and ended with a conclusion. The first chapter presents the theoretical foundations of the employee age diversity concept. This disquisition began with a general recognition of employee diversity and an indication of the significant importance of diversity not only in the area of human resource management, but also in a broader aspect, i.e. in the context of corporate social responsibility. The first chapter also classifies employee diversity and presents age theories. In addition, two approaches to defining employees were highlighted, namely the context of generations and groups of younger and older employees. The second chapter was devoted to the characteristics of the antecedence of employee age diversity, namely the focus on HR practices favoring employee age diversity and on the climate supporting this diversity. The relations between HR practices favoring employee age diversity and the workplace climate supporting employees age diversity were also indicated. The third chapter presents the effects of employee age diversity at the organizational level. The focus was therefore on the age differentiation impact on economic and non-economic performance (such as innovation, risk approach and flexibility). In addition, this chapter indicates the impact of knowledge transfer as a mediating variable on the relationship between employee age diversity and organizational performance. The fourth chapter is an introductory chapter to the research part. It describes the research methodology, in particular the methods used, the selection of the research sample, the variables and the method of their measurement. In the fifth chapter, you can find research results and their interpretation. The main thesis of the paper, translated into research hypotheses, was tested on a sample of 800 respondents from medium and large organizations of four sectors. Fourteen out of twenty-nine hypotheses have been confirmed and fifteen have been falsified. The paper ends with a conclusion which refers to the solution of the scientific problem and the objectives

achievement level. It also presents the main limitations of the research procedure and indicates - in the author's opinion - promising directions for further research.

The paper covers individual stages of the research procedure, namely:

- A literature review was carried out on employee age diversity, with particular emphasis on the latest studies on the workplace climate supporting employee age diversity and HR practices favoring employee age diversity;
- The variables of the research model were operationalized, in particular, the existing tools for measuring HR practices favoring employee age diversity were adapted;
- Pilot studies were conducted to verify the research tools;
- Appropriate empirical research was carried out on the relationship between employee age diversity and organizational results (in particular of non-financial organizations), taking into account knowledge transfer and the impact of HR practices antecedence favoring employee age diversity, and the workplace climate which supports employee age diversity, on the analyzed diversity;
- The obtained empirical material was analyzed and the research model was verified, and the results of empirical research were statistically interpreted;
- The substantive interpretation of the results of empirical research was made and conclusions were formulated on their basis; the relationships between the particular variables of the model were described;
- Implications for business practice were formulated, and possible directions of future research on supporting employee age diversity were indicated, which contributed to the improvement of the results at the organizational level.

The original research results allowed for the discovery of new dependencies, i.e. a positive relationship between HR practices favoring employee age diversity and knowledge transfer, and a positive relationship between the workplace climate supporting employee age diversity and knowledge transfer. Moreover, they confirmed the conclusions indicated in previous studies that age diversity has very different effects on organizational performance. On the one hand, employee diversity, which is adequately supported by actions initiated by the organization, can contribute to the improvement of the overall performance of the organization. However, the lack of activities aimed at supporting and appreciating both younger and older workers and an occurrence of actions discriminating against one of these groups may cause a deterioration of the organization's performance, both financial and non-financial. The hypotheses that HR practices have a positive effect on the workplace climate and that both antecedents affect age diversity have also been confirmed. Moreover, it was confirmed that

knowledge transfer generally positively influences organizational performance; however, it is not a strongly mediating variable between age-related diversity and organizational performance.

The impact of the research results and scientific considerations included in this dissertation on the development of the research field and scientific discipline was caused by:

- An explanation of what age diversity is and how it can be managed;
- Understanding what influences age diversity and how these variables can affect the functioning of the organization;
- A confirmation of the possibility of tools application to measure individual variables;
- Presenting an effective way of managing older and younger employees by identifying and accurately recognizing the factors influencing age-related diversity.

Management sciences lacked sufficient evidence to demonstrate the relationship between employee age diversity and organizational performance (especially of non-financial organizations) with regard to knowledge transfer and the impact of antecedents of HR practices favoring employee age diversity and the workplace climate supporting employee age diversity on the analyzed diversity. The subject of this dissertation, concerning employee age diversity, is a response to the identified research gap, and the results of the research undertaken indicated a new perspective for building human resource management strategies in the organization and provided practical tips for managers and HR specialists.

The author is aware that the conducted research procedure is not free from the classic limitations of the research project, research sample and operationalization of variables. The use of a subjective measurement scale in quantitative research may be considered a limitation of the research procedure. Importantly, the organization's performance can also be measured by subjective information gathered from managers or other key people in the organization, asking them to evaluate the company's overall performance, such as market share, profitability, innovation performance, effectiveness of HR practices. Nevertheless, despite these concerns about subjective measures, they are a popular method of assessing organizational performance among researchers - especially in the field of management. Another area of limitations identification is the operationalization of variables. Due to the fact that source literature mentions various tools for measuring the variables presented in the model, it was decided to choose specific tools. In the author's opinion, the operationalization of variables with the use of integrated results of reconnaissance desk (analysis of academic and gray literature, analysis of economic practice examples) and conducting pilot studies as an introduction to the main research contributed to ensuring an appropriate level of operationalization validity.

The conducted research contributed to the current state of knowledge and at the same time did not close the possibility of undertaking further research. On the contrary, in order to further build up knowledge in the area of strengthening and influence of employee age diversity on the results of the organization, several promising directions of research can be identified. In future research, it is possible to apply the tools proposed in source literature by other researchers and not used in the research conducted by the author. Two tools measuring the same variable could also be used in the study to accurately verify and compare the reliability of the tools and ultimately select the more appropriate. Another proposal for future research centers around the level of research. As the explanatory research was conducted at the organizational level, future research may complement the results of this paper by taking a multi-level perspective and examining the effects of applying HR knowledge transfer practices at an individual level to employees of all ages. It is worth carrying out future research in the long-term perspective, as the data obtained through cross-sectional studies do not allow determining the direction of the relationship. From a theoretical perspective, future research directions should take into account the opposite context, i.e. how achieving good financial and non-financial results can improve age-sensitive HR practices. It is worth considering this aspect by using dynamic research, in which the impact of HR practices on the results could be determined during the first stage, and the reverse relationship could be examined in the second stage. In addition, the research carried out by the author verified how the workplace climate influences age diversity and how it mediates the relationship between diversity and knowledge transfer. In future research it is worth analyzing how the workplace climate affects organizational performance. Another direction of future research relates to the generational aspect. Despite many comments made about the concept of generations, even included in this dissertation, it is possible to focus on this issue in future research. Many studies on generations have been based on observation rather than extensive empirical findings, and very little academic research has been carried out on the characteristics and expectations of generations and their implications for the workplace. Based on the observation of the current state of the post pandemic economy in Poland, it seems that an interesting area to study would be the impact of organizational changes caused by the COVID-19 epidemic on HR practices and the workplace climate, in particular with regard to maintaining safety in the workplace and effectiveness in remote task implementation, and to knowledge transfer, which is so important in terms of age diversity.

It is worth indicating practical implications resulting from the importance of knowledge transfer for the organization. Companies which intend to change the scope of knowledge transfer must focus in particular on developing strong and trustworthy employee relationships.

Since such relationships favor close collaboration, they can also support the transfer of knowledge between workers of different ages. In addition, organizations should invest in age-appropriate HR practices to increase the dissemination and quality of knowledge transfer. In particular, recruitment, training and development, and career development practices should be regularly assessed to determine whether they provide equal access for workers of all age groups. As leaders play an important role in shaping employee perception of the value of age diversity and creating a positive workplace climate, they should receive leadership training that equips them with the skills necessary to manage age-diverse employees.