

PERSPECTIVE ARTICLE

Ageism in the workplace from Singapore to
Canada: A translational perspectiveLynn Yu Ling Ng^{1*}  and Swapna Dayanandan^{2,3} ¹Department of Politics, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada²Department of Gerontology, S R Nathan School of Human Development, Singapore University of Social Sciences, Singapore³Joy in Living Aged Care Services Ptd Ltd, Singapore**Abstract**

This perspective piece tackles transnational ageism in the workplace by focusing on the Singapore case and national context while making connections to timely observations in Canada. Following existing studies, our review finds that although cultural circumstances of Confucian filial piety (in Singapore and East Asia) lead to higher degrees of implicit rather than explicit age discrimination, ageism is equally serious, and similarly intense, across contexts. Our discussion challenges the oversimplification of cultural differences between “East” and “West” in how societies are thought to address aging and age discrimination, as well as how ageism in various settings of daily life manifests. By analyzing policies, workplace practices, and social attitudes in Singapore, then situating these in global trends such as in Canada, we reveal common anxieties faced by older adults regarding financial insecurity and access to re-employment. This transnational lens underscores the importance of delving deeper into the culturally specific ways ageism manifests while simultaneously working toward the creation of effective international strategies. Deeper shifts are needed in the hearts and minds of people for significant changes to occur. In our view, shifting global demographics and rapid workplace changes necessitate a move beyond stereotypes and toward intergenerational cooperation, especially but not just in the workplace. We emphasize the importance of addressing ageism at all levels, relationally and transnationally, interpersonally to institutionally, to promote age-inclusive societies and secure a more dignified future for aging populations. Both authors’ perspectives are anchored in lived experiences as Singapore citizens. In what follows, we weave together our academic and community-engaged practitioner expertise in Singapore’s context of workplace ageism in light of ongoing community and social gerontology trends. We offer some observations in Canada for a comparative lens by way of gesturing to future transnational research directions for population studies.

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1. Background: Anxious aging, precarious futures, and age discrimination

As a world society, we are poised to become more defined by age than any other social identity. A joint perspective on ageism in the workplace and social institutions, such as we illustrate from Canada and Singapore, is timely because in the current frame of understanding population behavior, cultural differences between “East” and “West” tend to be overdrawn (*e.g.*, Marcus, 2022). For the field of population studies, the concurrent convergences of unprecedentedly low fertility rates, rapidly aging populations (leading to the continuous pushing back of retirement ages), and startling readjustments/changes to the workforce composition and skills training landscape – exacerbated by the exponential growth of Artificial Intelligence tools – necessitate transnational frameworks for ageism in the family and society (Ng, 2025). Combining our respective academic expertise on understandings of “reproductive ageism,” which refers to processes that reproduce elderly marginalization and the sidelining/downplaying of older adults’ needs and perspectives in family care planning from East Asia to North America (Ng, 2023), as well as community-engaged gerontological and nursing home experience in Singapore (Dayanandan & Mehta, 2022), we present a global comparative perspective of ageism in the workplace; a crucial complement to existing studies on healthcare settings that tend to dominate discussion of ageism. From our perspective, broader commonalities of ageism in the workplace across large cultural differences are a most pressing domain for this journal to address in light of global population woes and aged dependency concerns.

Cultural values have, and always will, shape people’s perceptions and treatment of older workers. A unique social norm in Singapore, as well as its East Asian neighbours of Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan, is the strong social stigma of elderly institutionalization in nursing homes (Ng, 2023; Rozario & Hong, 2019). This prevailing norm alludes to certain well-recognized cultural circumstances of family care norms, namely Confucian filial piety that manifests in Singapore’s particular migrant-in-the-family model of eldercare to allow for aging-in-place (at home or at least in a comfortable, familiar community environment). From critical social gerontology perspectives, we gather that these already existing attitudes and norms regarding appropriate eldercare arrangements at an interpersonal level bleed into, and mediate, institutional processes and structural outcomes of age-related discrimination in the workforce (North, 2022). In other words, communal-oriented societies with familialist foundations of family care in which adult children have an automatic obligation of parental care, contrast starkly with individualist social

orientations where seniors may dislike, but nonetheless are resigned to, the possibility of sending oneself to a home. In light of these observations, we might expect the strong influence of familial values in Singaporean workplaces—social norms of “respect your elders—” to bring about greater respect for senior employees in contrast to elsewhere. However, as cross-country surveys have shown (North, 2022), ageism in the workforce can be equally, if not more, serious in degree and scope in Confucian cultural settings. As mentioned above, its signs may manifest in an implicit or subtle (*e.g.*, unconscious biases of patronizing speech acts in Maulod & Lu, 2019) rather than an explicit fashion that reflects socially accepted standards of deferent and polite behavior toward elders (North & Fiske, 2021).

Canada is typically associated with an individualist liberal social attitude toward issues of aging, where the emotional and physical struggles of older adults tend to be rationalized as part of individual resilience and responsibility. Older adults in North America may see institutionalization in the long term as an inevitable, albeit undesired, outcome that one is resigned to (*e.g.*, Herron *et al.*, 2021). In contrast, in Singapore, where Confucian cultural norms of filial piety (expectations of aging-in-place at home) prevail, sending one’s elderly parents to a nursing home is still socially stigmatized—often perceived as an unfilial act, and associated with negative feelings of abandonment, estrangement, and isolation (Ng, 2023). The intense public stigma associated with elderly institutionalization in this context, where hiring foreign domestic workers for live-in care is a popular (if not default) arrangement for middle-income households (Rozario & Hong, 2019), is a unique social phenomenon that stands out relative to their Canadian counterparts. In Singapore’s context, Confucian cultural preferences of filial piety in the form of aging-in-place (stay-at-home) care arrangements are still a strong social norm and often attributed to collectivist or familial model types of care. This societal perspective significantly influences caregiving decisions, often placing immense pressure on families to provide direct home-based support despite growing care complexities (Basu, 2016). Consequently, the decision to opt for institutional care typically arises from acute necessity rather than a preferred choice, revealing a profound tension between ideals and realities. It is important to note that filial piety beliefs and practices are diverse and dynamic among Singapore’s multiracial and age-diverse population. However, the common understanding tends to be overshadowed by dominant Chinese ethnic claims in and beyond the Southeast Asia region, which the Singapore state strategically taps into for economic and political projects of nationhood, including family building. Before we outline this unique situation, we situate our transnational lens of ageism in the workplace in critical social gerontology perspectives.

2. Theoretical positioning in Singapore's community and critical social gerontology

In contrast to conventional gerontology approaches, which focus on the biological or psychological aspects of aging, critical social gerontology foregrounds the role of power relations, social norms, and policy environments on the lived experiences of older adults. Its perspectives draw on formative and contemporary work in the sociology of aging, political economy, and qualitative anthropology, all of which underscore the importance of understanding aging within its specific social context and recognizing the centrality of ideology, stratification, and global forces (Buffel & Phillipson, 2018; Katz, 2019). Hence, critical social gerontology provides a robust framework for understanding ageism beyond individual experiences of aging, such as in medical or healthcare settings where discussions of elderly abuse tend to cohere, by alluding to the wider cultural, structural, and institutional forces that shape older adults' lives yet escape one's individual agency or control (Holstein & Minkler, 2003). Community gerontology, a complementary perspective and practitioner toolkit (Dayanandan & Mehta, 2022), prioritizes community-engaged local expertise and collective action in supporting older adults. It focuses on intergenerational support mechanisms in the family and grassroots initiatives as crucial elements of positive aging experiences and resilience building (Chan, 2017; Ma, 2020; Mehta, 2020). Collectively, these frameworks encourage multifaceted power-attentive analyses that consider macro-level structural forces, meso-level community dynamics, and micro-level interpersonal relationships.

This integrated and holistic approach of ageism and its associated processes as well as settings, is particularly relevant to Singapore, where our perspective is anchored. Singapore is one of the world's most rapidly aging societies with a strong emphasis on values of filial piety, the family unit, and the community's role as primary pillars of social support (Chan, 2017; Ng, 2023). The nation-state's aging policies, blueprints, and masterplans are deeply rooted in an integrated intergenerational resource pooling mechanism, and informed by customary norms of family obligation, responsibility, and involvement in caring for one's aging parents (Rozario & Hong, 2019). By 2030, almost one in four residents will be aged 65 years or older; the city-state's demographic trajectory necessitates culturally sensitive approaches that pay heed to the population's multi-religious and multi-racial nature (Koh, 2025). Government initiatives have for long promoted integrated health and social services, active engagement through community programs, and aging-in-place facilities (TOUCH Elderly Group, 2023). These national initiatives include the

construction and expansion of Active Ageing Centers (AACs), lifelong learning programs, intergenerational volunteering to foster inclusive age-diverse environments, and challenging age stereotypes. As of 2025, Singapore has more than 220 AACs, each providing a range of social, physical, and skills learning activities/workshops to support senior engagement and wellbeing (Koh, 2025). In that vein, the community gerontology landscape thus provides an essential lens for analyzing aging as a social construct and lived experience in and beyond Singapore, challenging oversimplified binaries of culture, policy, and community in aging outcomes.

Crucially, ageism is compounded for diverse marginalized population groups, such as women, ethnic/racial minority groups, and disabled individuals, which highlight the need for intersectional frameworks that account for overlapping social identities and positionalities of power and privilege that confer structural (dis)advantages in not always linear ways (Dayanandan & Mehta, 2022; Higgs & Gilleard, 2020). Life-course perspectives of reproducing society further enrich intersectional awareness by drawing attention to how ageist attitudes and practices can, and do, evolve across one's working life to influence hiring, promotion, training, and retirement decisions. Integrated critical and community gerontology informs Singapore's recent anti-ageist legislation, which includes the Workplace Fairness Act (passed in 2025) that reflects the population's growing demand and need for robust protections against incriminating forms of age discrimination (Chih & Chang, 2025). The Act prohibits employers from making decisions based on age and other associated characteristics at all stages of employment, and is complemented by the Retirement and Re-employment Act, which raises the statutory retirement age to 65 years by 2030 (Ministry of Manpower, 2023). Yet as we reflect below, applying these conceptual frameworks to actually existing scenarios of workplace ageism throws up both persistent challenges and promising avenues for fruitful intervention. Ageism is still the most common form of workplace discrimination in Singapore despite recent reports of its decline; one 2023 survey found an almost 6% and 22% decrease in the number of employees who reported experiencing age discrimination compared to 2021 and 2018, respectively (Ministry of Manpower, 2023). Nonetheless, older adult workers—especially those aged 40 and above—are the most affected and least likely to self-report, whereas age-based discrimination also impacts younger generations and remains an intergenerational dilemma (Ma, 2020; Randstad Singapore). We outline our comparative perspective of such issues before turning to enforcement challenges.

3. Comparative approach, context, and perspectival lens

Crucial case differences are important to unpack for a contextual perspective, yet as we note, our transnational framework for understanding ageism is situated in broader commonalities. A key case in point is the ongoing global trajectory of extended work-life agenda, where regardless of the cultural, social, and political context of planning for retirement and later life care, older adults are increasingly being coerced to delay retirement and compete with younger colleagues in arenas (e.g., digital skill sets) that they lack formative exposure to (Maulod & Lu, 2019). Across the globe, older adult workers are expressing heightened anxieties, concerns, and worries about longer-term financial insecurity and struggles to access meaningful re-employment opportunities. The Singapore government has a stronger whole-of-nation hold on an eldercare strategy that places “the family” at the front and center. In Canada too, private households bear the brunt and cooperate informally to keep up with aging parents’ needs. But as we explain below, Singapore’s systematic implementation of an intergenerational resource pooling mechanism (in the form of a nationally enforced savings scheme for family members of all ages) remains unparalleled in its scope of application and universal efficiency. Still, while Singapore has policies and initiatives to support older adults, age discrimination nonetheless persists in various forms, particularly in the workplace. Less often is ageism discussed beyond its explicitly obvious zones of concentration, namely, nursing homes, long-term care homes, and other eldercare institutions. Yet as populations globally are forced to contend with age diversity in the workforce, it is all the more crucial to investigate its banal, mundane aspects that, at least on the surface, may appear neutral or even harmless. For instance, in skills upgrading/retraining courses, patronizing speech acts and unconscious biases often emerge (e.g., having a “senior moment”) that deserve greater interrogation for their negative assumptions (Maulod & Lu, 2019).

In a global context of an extended work-life agenda, we find that regardless of the cultural, social, and political context of planning for retirement and later life care, older adults increasingly exhibit common anxieties, concerns, and worries about financial insecurity and struggles to access meaningful re-employment opportunities. Ageism in Singapore is a growing concern as the population ages rapidly (Michael Page Singapore, 2023). While Singapore has policies and initiatives to support older adults, age discrimination persists in various forms, particularly in the workplace. Locally

and globally, perceptions of reduced productivity, adaptability, and tech-savviness among older workers negatively impact their access to employment, advancement, and professional development (Ng & Feldman, 2021). Singapore’s Central Provident Fund (CPF) serves as a cornerstone of retirement planning, encompassing various accounts for housing, healthcare, and compulsory retirement savings that every working citizen and their employers contribute to (Yeo & Lee, 2022). While the Retirement Sum Scheme (formerly the Minimum Sum Scheme) provides monthly payouts (Leong, 2024), it is crucial to acknowledge the evolving landscape of re-employment for older adults. Continued CPF contributions during re-employment are beneficial; however, the reality of part-time or contract work, coupled with reduced employer contributions for older workers, can significantly impact retirement adequacy. This backdrop of socially engineered intergenerational resource pooling mechanism, which materially ties family members across the age spectrum together in a network of reciprocal financial transfers (Ching, 2023; Lim & Koh, 2021), exerts significant influence on public attitudes, expectations, and understanding of retirement pensions as well as deservedness vis-à-vis Canadian counterparts.

A growing number of older adults face precarious employment, such as in low-paying blue-collar work in service industries or gig work, leading to inconsistent CPF contributions and heightened financial vulnerability. Consequently, supplementary retirement planning becomes essential to bridge the gap between CPF payouts and the rising cost of living to ensure a more secure future (Yeo & Lee, 2022). In light of these challenges, intergenerational resource pooling has emerged as a vital strategy for the city-state’s finances (Zhan & Huang, 2023). From the government’s perspective, this concept emphasizes the collective support of families and communities to bolster the financial well-being of older adults. It can encompass intergenerational transfers by way of allowances, caregiving, and shared living arrangements, effectively complementing CPF payouts, particularly for those in precarious re-employment or involuntary retirement. Furthermore, community organizations and government programs offer valuable resources, providing some safety net for older adults (Lim & Koh, 2021). That said, a holistic approach that combines CPF payouts with proactive intergenerational support is necessary to address the financial precarity faced by many older adults in Singapore. This approach must not only acknowledge the challenges but also promote actionable solutions, ensuring a more secure and dignified retirement for all.

4. Age discrimination in the workplace: A view from Singapore to Canada

At a national level, Singapore's Workplace Fairness Legislation (Chih & Chang, 2025) is expected to be enacted in 2026 or 2027 and aims to protect workers from age discrimination. However, it remains to be seen how effectively this legislation will address the deeper issues. In this local context, implementation gaps exist between in-principle promises and the ongoing realities. A major challenge is the burden of proof (evidence of age discrimination) and enforcement challenges. The hurtful truth is that if an employer decides your time is up and they want you gone, termination can happen without due notice or even compensation. While there may be significant differences across small to large-sized companies in terms of implementation capacity, ageism remains an unconscious bias that is hard to quantify and objectively call out. Whether in Canada or Singapore, older adults tend to be more vulnerable to corporate loopholes that allow ageist hiring practices because navigating legal processes can be daunting, especially if one lacks the legal knowledge or financial resources (De Stefano, 2021; Government of Canada, 2024). Transforming workplace mindsets, in other words, is easier said than done. More often than not, complaints boil down to a murky "he/she said, they said" scenario that manifests in implicit biases during hiring, promotion, and occupational development decisions, all of which are difficult to prove where the role of age attitudes is concerned (Bae & Choi, 2023; Lahey, 2020).

Older workers in financially precarious positions may fear retaliation if they proceed further with formal complaints, leading to underreporting of discriminatory practices. Ultimately, much of effective enforcement requires adequate resources for investigation and adjudication of employee claims, and the capacity of existing mechanisms for redress to handle a potential surge of age-related cases remains to be seen (Ng & Feldman, 2021). Legislation may induce significant incentives to change behavior, but it is a lot harder to change deep-seated stereotypes in people's hearts and minds (North, 2022; North & Fiske, 2021). Negative stereotypes about older workers' capabilities prevail and persist despite legal protections and institutional commitments to equitable opportunities (Burnes et al., 2020; Marcus, 2022). As we gather, employers may find ways to circumvent the rules by creating job descriptions that implicitly favor younger candidates, among other strategies. Ongoing awareness and education campaigns that draw on intergenerational collaborations, in that vein, to increase exposure to age diverse perspectives are needed to transform workplace culture.

In essence, Singapore's Workplace Fairness Legislation is a vital step, but its success hinges on robust enforcement and sustained efforts to change workplace culture. It will be very important to monitor the implementation of this legislation to see how effective it will be in practice. This step is a positive sign for anti-ageist advocates and supporters, yet it does not significantly improve the later life prospects of many aging adults and senior citizens who have depleted the majority of their savings through CPF spending: housing, education, and healthcare spending. Many older adults are asset-rich but cash-poor. Singapore has some of the highest property values in the world. While this builds equity, it also means a significant portion of wealth is tied up in housing, often leaving limited cash for daily expenses or retirement. Singaporean parents prioritize education and often invest heavily in their children's schooling, tuition, and even overseas education. This can strain finances and reduce cash reserves. Another contributing factor is healthcare expenses, which increase with age. Medisave, a component of CPF, can be used for medical expenses, which again draws down on retirement savings (Koh et al., 2021). The same can be said of Canada's existing anti-ageist stance, which disproportionately relies on the charitable goodwill of individual employers rather than strict legal enforcement. Similar to their Singaporean counterparts, the Canadian workforce is slowly but surely laboring beyond the traditional retirement age of 65 years. Today, an increasing number (at least one in five older Canadians) are delaying retirement plans and/or maintaining part-time work arrangements for financial or aspirational reasons (Government of Canada, 2024). Despite an undeniable age diversity in the modern workforce, people have not dealt with ageist attitudes and prejudice adequately, allowing these outdated views to continue acting as barriers to participation.

Another key legislation in Singapore is the Retirement and Re-employment Act (Retirement and Re-employment Act [RRA], 2017). This act primarily deals with the process of retirement and re-employment, not necessarily discrimination in other aspects of employment. It sets the minimum retirement age (currently 63) and requires employers to offer re-employment to eligible employees who have reached this stage, up to the age of 68 years. The RRA ensures that older workers can continue working beyond the initial retirement age, providing some protection against outright dismissal due to age. However, it does not prevent discrimination in hiring, promotions, training, or other workplace developmental opportunities before retirement age or for those above 63. In sum, there is reason to pursue broader agendas of increasing age diversity awareness and our seemingly universal desire to age-in-place (at home or in a comfortably familiar

setting) while being validated and recognized for our social contributions, regardless of cultural background and geopolitical environment. Cities, including but not limited to ones across the United States, Canada, England, China, India, Brazil, and Singapore (Kuper & Jivraj, 2022), are implicated in an international context of confusing social changes in age distribution and urbanization that challenge the sociocultural infrastructures of aging and older adults.

Rather than a workplace-specific legislation, Canada's Human Rights Act outlaws age discrimination in all aspects of employment: decisions about recruitment, retrenchment, job scope allocation, promotion opportunities, training resources, and benefit entitlements. The Government of Canada maintains an official stance through federal, provincial, and territorial (FPT) statements against ageism: "the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel), and discrimination (how we act) toward others or oneself based on age." (Government of Canada, 2024, p. 4). Although research on ageism in workplace interactions remains limited, the available data strongly suggest that age stereotypes persist to the detriment of older adults' life opportunities. Positive and negative stereotypes are at play, with the former including perceptions of higher loyalty and reliability and the latter usually implying "decreased performance activity" and less capacity to adapt "especially to new technologies" (Lagacé et al., 2022: 2). In Canada, as in Singapore, starting from as soon as 45 years old, people report receiving lower callback rates on job applications and fewer training or upskilling opportunities, which are worse for women and ethnic minority groups in particular (Ching, 2023; Firzly et al., 2021; Maulod & Lu, 2019). Ongoing research underscores the importance of combining legal safeguards with cultural awareness and changes in consciousness, organizational innovation, and community engagement initiatives to address the complex, intersectional nature of how ageism manifests in workplace interactions (Randstad Singapore, 2023; Higgs & Gilleard, 2020). By grounding policy and practice in critical and community gerontology, Singapore and its transnational counterparts can harness more contextually relevant and nuanced strategies for fostering age-inclusive workplaces in highly age-diverse societies.

5. Future directions: Uncovering (and combating) transnational ageism

As a field of study, systematic reviews find that experiences of age discrimination tend to rely on self-reporting methods, which raises the likelihood of over/underreporting across people and contexts. Measurement tools for ageism in social institutions and the wider public, such as those compiled by Wilson et al. (Wilson et al.,

2019: 79-80) from almost 1060 print articles, reveal that 17 out of 25 indexes have no associated studies. Among the remaining eight tools that were deployed in research outputs, the majority of studies use convenience sampling and survey questionnaires, which yield drastically varying results from context to context. For instance, slightly below half of a 2013 sample of 816 South Korean older persons reported experiencing ageist behavior from others, while more than 90% among 375 Canadian older persons did so in a 2001 survey (in Wilson et al., 2019: 82). Population researchers of aging and ageism, then and now, agree that there is a need to go beyond small convenience samples—as informative and useful as narrative stories are—to develop reliable trackers of age-identified discrimination at broader national scales. Social analysts in the moment are aware of ageist attitudes, prejudice, and unfair outcomes related to others' and their own age identity, but compared to other topics, measurement tools for ageism are nascent and as yet unable to yield significant results that can inform country or occupation-level decisions.

While there is some evidence to suggest that Eastern cultures have a positive bias toward older adults than Western cultures, we suggest that in a rapidly modernizing world and especially in workplace interactions, cross-cultural frameworks of age discrimination are an urgent, timely direction to direct future studies toward. Globally, regardless of national context, older persons aged 50 and above face prolonged struggles to access meaningful employment opportunities vis-à-vis their younger counterparts (Rudman & Aldrich, 2021: 5). From current trends, we gather that the bulk of emphasis tends to be on instrumental, mechanical processes of retaining and/or regaining employment rather than substantial organizational efforts to meet older persons where they are. Older job seekers, as numerous studies find, tend to experience lower rates of appreciation for their so-called outdated skill sets, especially with regard to an (assumed) absence of digital literacy and comfort with technology. Such generational or cohort stereotypes about one's working habits and ingrained skill sets need to be unpacked and discussed collectively rather than pre-defined as an inherently positive or negative trait. The importance of addressing ageism from the interpersonal to institutional level goes beyond specific issues of digital usage in daily life, as broader dynamics of age relations, intergenerational relationships, and cooperating across age diversity in the population's imminent future are at stake.

The field of research on ageism within population studies appears to be evolving. While there seems to be a growing recognition of ageism's potential impact on health, well-being, and economic participation, further research

may be needed to fully understand the complexities of age-based discrimination across diverse cultural contexts. Studies might also explore the intersection of ageism with other potential forms of discrimination, such as gender and race, to provide a more comprehensive perspective (Kuper & Jivraj, 2022). In addition, there could be a need for more research to examine the effectiveness of potential interventions aimed at combating ageism and promoting age-inclusive societies (Burnes et al., 2020). The term “aging of aging” is commonly used to refer to the exponentially growing numbers of “advanced aging” persons aged 80 or over in the world population, which will triple by 2050 (Wilson et al., 2019: 78). In the Asia-Pacific region where Singapore is located, 59% of the total population will cross this life stage mark by 2050. Despite being a young nation, Singapore is the world’s second-fastest aging society, poised to become superaged by 2030; almost one-quarter of the city-state’s population will be 65 years or older (Ching, 2023: 3). In Canada, centenarians are already the fastest growing sub-population followed by those aged 85–99 years.

In many cases, ageism in the family, society, and institutions is a form of social death (e.g., Herron et al., 2021). We have drawn on a local example of age discrimination from an underrepresented location in mainstream acknowledgements of ageist behavior in population studies to suggest that researchers should unpack existing cultural assumptions of positive bias toward older adults in Eastern cultures, which are, in all likelihood, overblown. In an increasingly liberal marketized world order, the workforce composition is changing faster than the pace of human skills adaptation and education programs can. This dizzying rate of shifting occupational landscapes and prerequisites on the job in a digital era provides strong reason to foster intergenerational creativity through careful cooperation rather than falling back on simplistic age, cohort, or generation stereotypes that reduce peoples’ complex individuality. On that note, there are broader trends of competitive, individualizing imperatives of coping with increasing precarity in the labor market that can also be observed in collective and familial-oriented cultural contexts of family care in East Asia (Bae & Choi, 2023; Marcus, 2022; North, 2022). From this relational (and transnational) perspective, inquiring into the deeper psychological underpinnings of ageist attitudes—in which encourage a society to endorse individual solutions to structural constraints of age discrimination—is a necessary next step to improving current understandings of ageism by way of strategizing to combat its pitfalls.

Keeping in mind that there can be no one-size-fits-all solution, we suggest that policymakers strive toward culturally appropriate and attentive approaches to address

ageism. Singapore’s approach to an aging population reflects its decades-long pragmatic governance in a complex landscape where explicit respect of elders (social norm) coexists with implicit workplace discrimination in a broader cultural emphasis on economic productivity. Although varying in degree, both implicit and explicit ageism are present from Singapore to Canada, which warrants more holistic, integrated strategies that strike an optimal balance between intangible norms and tangible outcomes. At the bare minimum, employers and policymakers must move beyond legal formality alone and implement culturally informed, multi-layered positive interventions to foster age inclusivity. These include investing in lifelong learning and digital literacy programs that pay special attention to the creeping aspects of patronizing speech to counter stereotypes about older adults’ adaptive capacity, and flexible working arrangements that recognize diverse caregiving responsibilities and family circumstances. In this sense, upcoming enforcement plans such as Singapore’s Workplace Fairness legislation must be complemented by a range of safeguards, including but not limited to: accessible complaint channels; company-wide investigation resources; compulsory age-diversity training in corporate progression and/or organizational development; and protection against retaliation (e.g., retrenchment). In wider society, public awareness campaigns should advocate for intergenerational collaboration and shared decision-making that foster collective action to challenge social constructs of older adults’ dependency and/or decline. Such steps will go a long way toward embedding age equity as a relational and institutional goal.

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