

PERSPECTIVES ON WORKFORCE AGE DIVERSITY IN NOWADAYS TEAMS

Article history: Received: October 31, 2022; Reviewed: November 21, 2022; Accepted: December 5, 2022; Available online: December 15, 2022; Available print: December 30, 2022.

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ABSTRACT. The diversity of employees, in general, respectively age diversity is a reality at the level of the current organizational environment, knowing that currently there are five generations in the labor market. The added value brought by this research is the proposed case study, which has in its center six different teams, at age level (age diverse teams) but not only, which are part of the administrative part of a company, present in Romania. The aim of the research is to identify the dimensions of diversity at the team level, according to the perception of the team leaders and team members, the emphasis being on age diversity. The desired research objectives to be achieved are: (1) identifying the types of workforce diversity perceived by managers and their team members. (2) identifying how the age diversity of team members is managed by managers. The proposed case study is based on a documentary and a primary research. A series of internal documents of the company are analyzed. The qualitative research carried out at the team level of the leaders of the six administrative teams is complemented by a quantitative research. The survey conducted has as target population the employees of the teams that are led by the interviewed managers. A conclusion of this research is that at the level of the interviewed managers and members of their teams there is a medium to low level of awareness of the

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aspects involved in the diversity of the workforce. Another conclusion is that the age diversity of the members of the analyzed teams is associated by the managers with the different characteristics of the employees belonging to different age generations. The aspects mentioned to differentiate the members of the teams that are part of different age generations are in terms of skills and behaviors in the workplace.

Keywords: workforce diversity, workforce age diversity, team diversity, team age diversity, case study.

JEL Classification: O39, M14

Recommended citation: Racolta-Paina, N.D., Madularu, A.E., *Perspectives on workforce age diversity in nowadays teams*, Studia UBB Negotia, vol. 67, issue 4 (December) 2022, pp. 23-44, doi: 10.24193/subbnegotia.2022.4.02

Introduction and review of literature

Diversity is a topic of interest in the field of organizational management, the human resource management and follows an upward trend in terms of its awareness in contemporary companies. There have been more than 30 years since the term workforce diversity was coined, with Roberson (2019) noting the context of the 1990s which was characterized by a series of socio-economic trends that changed the number and type of people who made up the workforce in organizations. According to Jones & George (2011, p. 165) diversity in the workplace is related to a number of visible and less visible personal traits (such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, education, professional experience, physical appearance, socio-economic past, personal abilities) or any other characteristic that may represent a difference between individuals. So, “workforce diversity has characterized most contemporary organizations in recent times with its attendant challenges and increasing complexity” (Inegbedion et al., 2020, p.2). The workforce diversity, in itself, does not bring value to the organization. The way diversity is managed at the level of organizations and implicitly by teams, leads to a series of benefits but also challenges for companies characterized by a

diverse workforce. In fact, “any type of diversity can have both positive and negative consequences, depending on contextual and moderating variables” (Meyer, 2017, p. 153). Moreover, van Knippenberg et al (2020) underline that the benefits of workforce diversity do not arise automatically, they require systematic and integrated interventions. According to the aforementioned source, the effects of diversity at the team level on the performance of the team can be seen from two perspectives, namely the perspective of the information resource respectively that of the intergroup tension. In this context, van Knippenberg et al (2020) propose the theory that the existence of synergy as a result of team diversity occurs when managers minimize the tensions that may arise as a result of diversity, respectively to encourage the integration of divergent perspectives. Basically, it is about diversity management, defined by Barak (2017, p. 9) as confronting differences and capitalizing on them, in order to be able to achieve positive results both for the individual and for the team and the organization as a whole. The implementation of this process involves many challenges, which can be answered by following the next actions: “to identify all potential challenges and take corrective actions either to remove them, to diminish their negative effects, or to turn these obstacles into organizational advantages” (Irimi, 2021b, p.1185).

There are studies with an applied component on the diversity of the workforce and its management that have as their subject companies located in countries of South-Eastern Europe. The main topics analysed in these studies are extremely diverse, as can be seen below. Lančarič et al (2015) study the effect of the size, legal form and share of foreign capital as corporate ownership on the level of implementation of diversity management in companies located in Slovakia. Gross-Gołacka (2017) researches the level of implementation of the concept of diversity management in companies as well as the benefits (if any) brought to the level of firms in The Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. The I.D.E.A.S project team (2018) produces a report on the actions on workforce diversity adopted in different companies in Croatia, Romania, and Slovenia. The document refers to the adoption of the so-called Diversity Charter for the three countries, on September 4, 2017 in Croatia, on November 14, 2017 in Slovenia and on April 18, 2018 in Romania (I.D.E.A.S., 2018, pp. 5,8,10) respectively presents a series of good practices

from the level of different companies present in the three countries. Mateescu (2020) studies the management of cultural diversity, proposing three case studies at the level of SMEs with foreign capital in Romania, working in the field of production and operating in a Lohn system. Michalicka et al. (2021) analyse the factors influencing the process of implementing diversity management in companies in Slovakia. Irini (2021a) researches the discourse on diversity, equality and inclusion communicated on the websites of the first 20 companies in Romania, according to the annual net turnover criterion. Mihail et al. (2022) examines the impact of diversity at the management level of the firm, CEOs and management committees on the financial performance of companies listed on the Bucharest Stock Exchange (BSE).

The above studies are complemented by research on team diversity and diversity management at team level. The topics covered are diverse, as presented below. Dahlin et al. (2005) study the impact of diversity on the way information is communicated in firms. van Knippenberg (2004) researches the impact of diversity on team performance and Fay & Guillame (2007) refers to the effects of team diversity, in terms of cohesion, performance and member satisfaction. van Knippenberg et al. (2020) propose a set of actions that should be taken by team leaders in order for the diversity of the team to lead to synergy. Lurdes & Franco (2022) identifies 3 thematic clusters of articles on the topic of team diversity, following the analysis of 80 articles (from 1996 to 2020). The identified clusters are called "Team Knowledge Diversity, Diversity Effects and Desirable Outcomes of Diversity" (Lurdes & Franco, 2022, p. 6). Homburg & Bui (2013) studies the diversity of top management teams, the literature review leading to the conclusion that "diversity variables do not have a meaningful influence on the performance measures" (p. 470). Nearly ten years later, a new literature review supports "the inconsistent nature in which board member age diversity predicts financial and non-financial outcomes" (Gardiner, 2022, p. 23).

The age diversity of the workforce is a reality at the level of today's firms, knowing that there are currently five generations in the labour market. This reality is a real challenge for HR specialists and managers, respectively, because of the challenges they have regarding "retaining experienced and highly skilled older workers, maintaining

the work motivation for middle-aged workers, and recruiting high-potential younger workers” (Gordon, 2018, p. 38). In fact, all employees find themselves facing a challenge, namely to learn “how to collaborate with and appreciate the unique preferences, habits, and behaviours of colleagues who grew up in different times than ourselves” (Waldman, 2021).

According to the research conducted by MKOR (2020), at the level of 77 companies in Romania, the benefits brought by diversity and inclusion management are “increasing the well-being of employees, due to the creation of a collaborative climate; ... a direct impact in increasing motivation and satisfaction at work” (p. 7). According to that source, for nearly a third of the study participants, “diverse teams mean a greater diversity of ideas, thus representing a potential for growth for organizations.” (p. 7)

According to human resources specialists, generation Z employees in Romania are “dynamic, transparent, creative, innovative, involved, tolerant, socially responsible, emotional, knowledgeable and individualistic” (Racolța-Paina & Irini, 2021, p. 83). According to the aforementioned source, in order to adapt to this generation of employees, in the processes of attracting, motivating and keeping, companies have adopted transparency, “both in terms of communication and the way in which activities are carried out” (p. 83). Another conclusion of the mentioned research refers to a set of factors that motivate generation Z employees, namely “power of example, mainly of the leader (in terms of qualities and behaviours), public recognition, tolerance of failure of the leader, involvement in challenging projects, the delegation of activities, a personalized career plan, salary, and a flexible work schedule” (p. 83).

This research, through the case study carried out, analyses the diversity of the workforce as it is perceived by the employees from the administrative part of a production company (herein after referred to as Company A, for confidentiality reasons), located in Romania. We opted for this approach knowing that “attitudes of employees in relation to workplace diversity is a relatively new focus in the diversity management discourse” (Irini & Borza, 2020, p. 754). The proposed case study consists of analysing the situation at the level of six diverse teams from the administrative part of Company A. The aspects pursued in the proposed case study are the perception of how diverse the team

they lead/to which they belong is, the dimensions of the diversity of the team, the importance of the diversity of the team, the management of the age diversity of the team.

Material and Method(s)

As a research methodology, we chose the case study, conducted at the level of a company located in Romania. The case study involves “one case (single case study) or a small number of cases (comparative case study) in their real life context are selected, and (b) scores obtained from these case are analyzed in a qualitative manner” (Dul & Hak, 2008, p. 4). The proposed case study is a descriptive one (Yin, 2009) with a research question defined by the type “how?”, the central theme analyzed being diversity at team level. As mentioned earlier (see Introduction and Literature Review), the research question of this study is “How is the diversity of the workforce perceived by team leaders and team members respectively?”. The desired research objectives to be achieved are: (1) identifying the types of workforce diversity perceived by managers and their team members. (2) identifying how the age diversity of team members is managed by managers.

The proposed case study is based on desk research and field research. We analyzed a number of internal documents belonging to Company A, one of the authors being an employee of the organization. The primary research consisted of a qualitative research complemented by a quantitative one. This approach is recommended by Irini & Borza (2020), who appreciates that in this way access to complete information from the research environment is ensured. The qualitative research involved interviewing (by the author of this study who is an employee of Company A) six team leaders, in fact middle managers, all from the administrative side of Company A. Data collected was supplemented by data obtained from participatory observation, conducted by the author of this study, who works in Company A.

The proposed case study focuses on six teams from the administrative part of Company A, which has as its main activity the production. Company A is located in Romania and has a history of 60 years, over time going through several changes, especially related to the

shareholders. Company A has around 1100 employees, of which less than 100 people are part of the teams of the administrative departments, the rest being part of the production, engineering and logistics teams. Although the company's profile is specific to the production activity, the present study focuses on the analysis of the teams in the administrative area of the company, due to time and data volume constraints, but also because we expect a more pronounced diversity in these departments, compared to those directly involved in the production activity.

An interview guide (which included 12 open questions) was prepared and used to provide a structure so that the information obtained from the interviews could be compared and so that the interview remained focused. The selection of the middle managers interviewed was made based on three criteria, namely, to be part of one of the administrative departments of the company, the number of members of the team led to be at least 5 and his/her willingness to respond to the interview. The interviews with the six middle managers were taken face-to-face, between the 5th and the 9th of June, 2022, within Company A, by the author of this study who is an employee of Company A. Interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees and subsequently transcribed, so that they can be analyzed and compared. Each interview lasted about 20-25 minutes. The interviews were conducted in a pleasant and professional way, which allowed the researcher to know the perspective of the interviewed managers and to collect information on the diversity of the teams led. The profile of the interviewees as well as some data on the composition of the teams led are presented below (see Table 1).

It can be noted (see Table 1) that the six interviewed middle managers are diverse in terms of gender, seniority in the company and seniority on the job. In terms of age, they are homogeneous, 5 of the 6 being between 41 and 50 years old. Regarding the seniority of the managers in Company A, it can be noted that most of the respondents have a considerable number of years spent, namely more than 15 (three of the six managers). According to the interviews' responses, for three of the six managers interviewed, Company A is the only one they have worked for so far. This can be both an advantage, through the accumulation of experience and specialization in the field and activity they carry out, and a disadvantage through the lack of exposure to other visions, ways of working or mentalities. For most interviewees (four out of six) seniority

in their current role is 5 years or more. According to some internal company documents, to which we had access, all the interviewed persons advanced within the company to the role of middle manager, currently occupied. As a result of this situation, it can be appreciated that they had experience in the department they are currently coordinating, they knew the activities and the way people work, but also the organization and its objectives. The number of subordinates of the interviewed middle-managers varies between 5 and 14 employees, and their age ranges are quite extensive, the most homogeneous team in terms of age being that of the respondent A.C. (see Table 1). Based on the responses that were summarized in Tabel 1, there is age diversity within the teams of the interviewed managers, respectively in each team there is a dominant gender. There are two teams where there is only one gender in the team, including the manager. As a result, it can be mentioned that the teams led by the interviewed managers are poorly diversified according to gender, although the organization is diverse from this perspective, something mentioned by L.H. during the given interview.

Table 1. Profile of the middle managers interviewed and their teams

Initials of the name and surname of the middle manager	Characteristics of middle managers				Characteristics of the members of the teams led by middle managers				
	Gender	Age (years)	Seniority in Company A (years)	Seniority in the current position (years)	Number of team members	Minimum age	Maximum age	Number of female employees	Number of male employees
P.M.	F	41-50	26	5	12	23	60	10	2
A.C.	M	41-50	14	5	7	32	50+	0	7
R.N.	M	41-50	7	2	9	27	67	1	8
M.O.	F	31-50	12	4 1/2	14	23	60+	13	1
L.H.	F	41-50	28	11	5	30	55	5	0
S.M.	M	41-50	17	14	7	20+	50+	6	1

Source: authors' work

Quantitative analysis was used to find out the perception of the members of the teams led by the six middle managers interviewed regarding the diversity of the workforce in their team. We opted for an opinion poll, because we wanted to collect measurable data, given the large number of team members (54 people). We chose to use the questionnaire as a data collection tool for quantitative research because it is an efficient way to collect data, it is useful for collecting sensitive information and it does not involve high costs (Patten, 2016). According to the cited source, this data collection tool has the disadvantage of usually having a low response rate and not providing in-depth information. The questionnaire included 18 questions, their type being as follows. The first question was an open, introductory question. There were 6 closed Likert questions, one open question and the last 8 closed questions, to establish the profile of the respondents (see Table 2) The questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous, and the respondents could choose whether to fill in the proposed fields. To maintain the confidentiality of the data, not to be in a situation where people do not answer truthfully for reasons of further identification, and not to risk that there are people who do not want to answer because they can be identified by their answer, we chose not to use any question related to the department or team the respondents belong to. To achieve a good response rate, the questionnaire was distributed both online and physically in June 2022. The responses received were collected and centralized in a single database in excel. All 54 employees in the teams led by the interviewed managers received the prepared questionnaire. In the end, 32 valid questionnaires were received, resulting in a response rate of 60%. The profile of the employees participating in the opinion poll is presented below (see Table 2).

By analyzing the profile of the participants in the study (see Table 2), one can notice the diversity of the respondents, in terms of gender, age, level of education and seniority in Company A, seniority in the current department and seniority in the current position.

Table 2. Characteristics of survey participants (sample volume = 32 employees)

Criterion	Sample profile
1. Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • female (56.25%) • male (37.50%) • people who preferred not to answer (6.25%)
2. Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31-40 years (28.125%) • 41-50 years (28.125%) • 51-60 years (25%) • 26-30 years (15.625%) • 21 – 25 years (3.125%)
3. Most recent level of education completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher education – undergraduate level (50%) • high school (25%) • higher education – master level (18.75%) • post-secondary education (6.25%)
4. Work experience in other companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • yes (65.60%) • no (34.40%)
5. Seniority in Company A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 – 3 years (28.10%) • over 20 years (25%) • 11-15 years (18.80%) • 4 - 6 years (9.40%) • 16-20 years (9.40%) • 7 – 10 years (6.175%) • less than one year (3.125%)
6. Experience in other departments of Company A than the current one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no (53.10%) • yes, in 1-2 departments (37.5%) • yes, in 3-4 departments (9.4%)
7. Seniority in the current department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • over 6 years (43.80%) • 1-3 years (37.4%) • under 1 year (9.40%) • 4 - 6 years (9.40%)
8. Seniority in the current post	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-3 years (46.9%) • over 6 years (34.40%) • under 1 year (9.40%) • 4 - 6 years (9.40%)

Source: authors' work

Results and Discussions

According to the data collected through participatory observation (conducted by the author of this study who is an employee of Company A), the Analyzed Company has as its main characteristics tradition, competence, and experience. The values of Company A are passion, trust, responsibility, and excellence. As an observation, we mention that the organization must increase the efforts to instill in its employees these values and make them ambassadors in relation to individuals not linked to the company. Within Company A there are professional training programs for technical positions, training programs for employees, internship or recent college graduate programs, through which people are encouraged to experience new things, to accumulate new knowledge and skills, to interact with new people. There are partnerships with educational institutions and promotional campaigns among pupils and students to attract young people to the team. Company A participates in career fairs in various cities of the country to attract new talented people.

The human resource is diversified. First, there is a balanced proportion between women and men. Secondly, the age of the employees starts from 19-20 years (students participating in internship programs) and reaches until after the age of retirement (there are also re-employed pensioners). Thirdly, the area in which Company A operates is characterized by an ethnically mixed community. Thus, cultural aspects complement the idea of diversity (language, religion). Fourthly, education differs (from employees who have minimal education to employees who have completed the master's level of higher education). The personal experience gained both within the company and outside it is another form of diversity of employees. There are employees who have moved from other counties or countries to work at Company A, who have worked for several companies or industries, who have faced situations that marked or changed their course of life and thinking.

The diversity at the team level is studied from the two perspectives, one of the middle managers and the other one of the respective managers' team members. The primary data collected refer to the perception of the study participants regarding the diversity of the team (the aspects pursued being dimensions of the diversity of the team,

the importance of the diversity of the team, the level of appreciation of the diversity of the team) respectively the way of managing the diversity of the team, a great attention being paid to the diversity of age.

A) The diversity of the team he/she is a part of

For the six middle managers interviewed, diversity, both at the firm level and at the team level has multiple meanings. Three of the respondents (specifically A.C., R.N., and M.O.) see diversity as a way to have everything and to be able to choose from, P.M. associates it with openness to anything, and L.H. and S.M. have mentioned types of diversity. None of the respondents associated age with diversity at first contact with this topic, instead, P.M., R.N. and S.M. referred to diversity at the level of character, thinking, and personality when they answered the question of diversity in their team. The gender has also been mentioned as a diversity criteria by A.C., R.N., and M.O.

It is worth noting that four of the six middle managers interviewed asked for clarification when asked what diversity means to them. The uncertain way of approaching these initial and general questions, may also indicate that diversity is not a topic discussed and analyzed at the company level, therefore the level of familiarity with this topic is low. The moments of thought or hesitation of managers before answering these questions can also be an indicator of the low level of awareness of diversity within the organization. This result is in line with a research carried out at the level of 77 companies in Romania, the result indicating that “45% of the organizations participating in the study adopt an informal, punctual approach to diversity and inclusion practices” (MKOR, 2020, p. 4).

With the question *Do you think you have a diverse team?* addressed to the six middle managers, the attributes of diversity began to be better highlighted. Except for M.O., all other interviewees consider that they have different teams, the most common attributes mentioned being the age and personality / character of the employees. M.O. believes that his team is not diverse because apart from age, no other attribute is met. During the interviews, ethnicity, training, thinking/ideas, education, culture, way of working or sexual orientation were also mentioned as existing or awareness-raising types of diversity. The situation described

by the interviewed managers is consistent with the responses of the participants in the survey, all members of the teams led by the interviewed middle managers. Thus, almost 70% of respondents (22 people) considered to a large and very large extent that they were part of a diverse team (see Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of survey participants after the answer to the question “To what extent do you consider yourself part of a diverse team?”

	Response scale				
	1 (not at all)	2 (small)	3 (average)	4 (large)	5 (very large)
Number of responses received (% of the sample given by 32 employees)	2 (6.3%)	3 (9.4%)	5 (15.6%)	11 (34.4%)	11 (34.4%)

Source: authors' work

One aspect to keep in mind is S.M.'s opinion, namely “that he does not believe that people intuitively think that they are part of a diverse team or of the degree of diversity existing in the team to which they belong”. As a result, although most of the employees participating in the study consider that they are part of a diverse team (see Table 3), it is not certain how much they were thinking or were aware of this before completing the questionnaire used in the conducted survey.

Regarding the forms of diversity in the team to which they belong, at the level of the studied sample, the answers were in terms of seniority (87.5% of respondents), age (84.4% of participants), gender and level of education (both with 53.1%), respectively, culture, ethnicity, and religion (each with a percentage of over 30% of the participants). Other dimensions of diversity in their team, mentioned by the survey participants were, in terms of ideas, personalities, level of involvement, responsibilities (the data being collected with the help of two open questions). So, age and ethnicity are dimensions of the diversity of the teams analyzed, mentioned by both team leaders and employees.

In terms of the level of appreciation of the team diversity, the situation is described a little differently by the employees compared to their managers. Thus, to the question of whether diversity is appreciated by their team members, managers' responses were unanimously affirmative,

but focused on the diversity of ideas and the fact that team members appreciate the experience, knowledge, and different ways to approach a situation. It is worth mentioning that this type of diversity has not been mentioned from the beginning by managers in response to the question about the degree of diversity of the teams they coordinate, which may indicate a limited exposure to the subject of diversity at the level of managers. In terms of employees, 46.875% considered that diversity is appreciated in the team to a large and very large extent while 34.375% chose the middle variant (i.e., to an average extent).

B) Managing the age diversity of employees at the level of the team led / of which he is a member

Managing diversity from the perspective of the age of employees, involves the awareness of different skills at the level of generations. On this issue, all six middle managers interviewed said that young people have obvious skills on the technology side and that it is easier and faster for them to adapt to new systems. A.C. stated that “More mature generations have not benefited from the same exposure to technology and some tasks are being carried out at a slower pace.” Also, four of the six managers said that the older generation has the advantage of the experience accumulated over time and the knowledge they can share with the younger ones. In addition, P.M. pointed out that young employees lack patience and quickly get bored at a job, and R.N. appreciated that more mature employees have a greater leaning towards humans, compared to young ones who have a more technical approach. None of the six middle managers interviewed said they felt less comfortable talking to subordinates who are younger or older than him/her. Instead, R.N. and S.M. referred to the differences in the way of communication at the generational level, namely that those with experience first analyze and only then respond or are more reluctant, and the younger ones are more impulsive, more open. Related to this topic, A.C. mentioned that he sometimes adapts his discourse to the characteristic (from the perspective of age) of the interlocutor.

To the open question *How do you collaborate with younger/older colleagues?* addressed to the participants in the survey, no answer was received that included negative aspects (the sample was 31 employees,

one employee did not answer the question). All the responses received were between the 'good' and 'very good' responses. One of the respondents added that he sometimes gets along with the younger or older ones better than with those similar in age. This can also be explained by the competitive relationship you can feel towards a colleague similar in age, if you want to prove that you are better and you deserve to get promoted.

When asked if they are doing anything to manage the relationship between the generations within the led team, the six managers participating in the study unanimously responded that they do not do anything special, but only communicate or try to communicate with all subordinates in the same way (the exception being A.C.). The majority also stated that they do not consider that they need to do anything specific to lead diverse teams from an age perspective and that in general things happen by themselves. Waldman (2021) appreciates that to reduce the differences between employees given by belonging to different generations, there are several ways, namely permanent communication, humility and a real curiosity about the strengths and limits of personal and colleagues in the team. This does not happen at the level of the studied teams, although at the level of the company there was interest and action for a better self-knowledge at the employee level, the information being then transmitted to the managers. According to internal data at the Company A level, personality tests, called Predictive Index, have been conducted to identify the personality and working style of employees. But the data collected as a result of participatory observation (conducted by the author of this study who is an employee of the studied firm) and based on the responses of the interviewed managers, show that not all employees benefited from this test, nor did all the teams in the area of Administration of Company A performed this test. Moreover, when asked to the managers participating in this study whether they performed this test with their team members and whether they implemented the test results, they vaguely remembered the test.

Survey participants' responses are diverse about the need to see managers do more for team diversity management (see Table 4). It can be noted that team members believe that more needs to be done for diversity management (62.5% of the sample considering "to an average and large extent"). The response of employees indicates that in the short or at least medium term, their managers must adopt to a greater extent practices related to diversity management.

Table 4. Distribution of survey participants after answering the question “To what extent do you think more should be done for diversity management in the team?”.

	Response scale				
	1 (not at all)	2 (small)	3 (average)	4 (large)	5 (very large)
Number of responses received (% of the sample given)	3 (9.4%)	6 (18.8%)	8 (25%)	12 (37.5%)	3 (9.4%)

Source: authors' work

Conclusions

Diversity in organizations is a current and complex topic. Society being a diverse one, diversity in organizations is a reality, regardless of whether it is perceived or not, respectively if policies and strategies regarding the diversity of the workforce are defined and implicitly implemented. Diversity at team level is a very topical topic, the analyzed aspects referring to a wide range of aspects, such as the impact of diversity on team performance (van Knippenberg et al., 2004), the impact of diversity on the way information is transmitted in companies (Dahlin et al., 2005), effects of team diversity, in terms of cohesion, performance and satisfaction of members (Fay & Guillaume, 2007) actions that should be taken by team leaders in order for team diversity to lead to synergy (van Knippenberg et al., 2020).

This research, through the case study carried out, analyzes the diversity of the workforce as it is perceived by the employees of the administrative part of Company A, located in Romania. The value of this research emerges knowing that the analysis of employee attitudes regarding workforce diversity is a relatively new topic in the framework of studies on diversity management (Irimi & Borza, 2020). The proposed case study includes the analysis of the situation regarding the diversity of the workforce, with a focus on the age diversity and its management by the manager, at the level of six diverse teams from the administrative part of Company A.

We mention that the research question of this study is “How is diversity perceived by team leaders and team members respectively?”. As a result, the desired research objectives to be achieved are: (1) identifying the types of diversity perceived by managers and their team members. (2) identifying how age diversity in teams is managed by managers.

The proposed case study is based on desk research and field research. Having access to data, one of the authors being an employee of Company A, the secondary research was carried out by analyzing some series of internal documents of the analyzed company. The primary research consisted of a qualitative research complemented by a quantitative one, in fact an approach recommended by Irini & Borza (2020), who appreciate that in this way access to complete information from the research environment is ensured.

Analysis of the primary data collected at the level of the six studied teams, teams from the administrative area of the Company A, lead us to achieve the two research objectives of the present study.

Thus, in the case of the first research objective, namely (1) the identification of the types of workforce diversity perceived by managers and their team members, the following can be mentioned. At the level of the interviewed middle managers there is a medium to low level of awareness of the issues involved in the diversity of the workforce. The arguments are that these managers asked for clarifications when asked what diversity means to them, respectively they had moments of thought and hesitation during the given interview. The situation identified is consistent with what is specific to Company A, namely that diversity is not a topic discussed and analyzed at the company level, therefore the level of familiarity with this topic is low. At the level of led teams, an answer stands out, according to which no other attribute of diversity except age is present in his team. Two other middle managers interviewed mentioned the personality of the individuals as an aspect of the diversity of the team being led. During the interviews, ethnicity, training, thinking/ideas, education, culture, way of working or sexual orientation were also mentioned as existing or awareness types of diversity. It is worth noting the response received from five of the six managers interviewed, namely that they have diverse teams. The

situation described by the interviewed managers is consistent with the responses of the participants in the survey, all members of the teams led by the interviewed middle managers. Thus, almost 70% of respondents (22 people) considered to a large and very large extent that they were part of a diverse team (see Table 3).

Regarding the second research objective, namely (2) identifying how the age diversity of team members is managed by managers, the situation identified is as follows. At the level of the six middle managers interviewed, there is a high level of awareness of different skills at the generational level, in terms of relationship with technology, accumulated experience, behavior at work (level of attention, orientation towards the human versus technology, etc.), mode of communication, etc. From the perspective of managing age diversity at the team level, the six managers participating in the study mentioned that they do not do anything special, but only communicate or try to communicate with all subordinates the same (there is an exception to this aspect). Moreover, the middle managers interviewed mentioned that they do not consider that they need to do anything specific to lead diverse teams from an age perspective and that in general things happen by themselves. The situation is different from the one recommended by Waldman (2021), according to whom, in order to reduce the differences between employees given by belonging to different generations, there are several ways, namely permanent communication, humility and a real curiosity about the strengths and limits of personal and colleagues in the team.

Considering the above mentioned in relation to the research objectives assumed, the answer to the research question “How is the diversity of the workforce perceived by the team leaders respectively by the team members?” is as follows. According to the secondary and primary data collected, at the level of the six teams in the administrative area of Company A, the diversity of the workforce is made aware at a medium to low level by the managers respectively at a good level by the team members (here it is necessary to note that probably the answer was influenced by the fact that a closed question was used, the dimensions of workforce diversity being practically listed and the participants in the survey had to choose from these variants). As for the age diversity at the level of the six teams studied, it is associated by managers with the different characteristics of employees belonging to different generations.

The issues mentioned are in terms of skills and behaviors in the workplace. It can be mentioned that most of the middle managers interviewed do not do something specific, nor do they consider that they would need to do anything to manage various teams. This is confirmed by the opinion of the team members, who mentioned that more needs to be done for diversity management (62.5% of the sample considering “to an average and large extent”). The response of employees indicates that in the short or at least medium term, their managers must adopt to a greater extent practices related to diversity management.

Another conclusion of this research is that the importance of workforce diversity and the benefits it brings is recognised by middle managers. This conclusion should be remembered in the context of general and slightly uncertain answers of them, at the beginning of the interviews, which indicates a low level of approach to the subject of diversity both at team and organizational level. According to the participatory observation, these managers are not involved in actions to promote or manage diversity in teams.

The theme of workforce diversity at the level of teams and age diversity of team members is an up-to-date one that involves a sustained and constant research effort. As a result, this research is intended to be a “window of opportunity” for new research, carried out by teams of researchers and employees of contemporary firms.

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