

**THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE ELDERLY EMPLOYEES ADAPTING
TO CHANGES: STUDY ON SOES OF CHINA**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how the resistance to change of elderly employees and decision-making impact the organizations based in the Mainland of China, and how the personalities, education level and organizational culture as factors affect the elderly employees' decision making on adapting to changes and learning the new skills. Based on the published literature, there is a research gap in studies of the behavior of elderly employees in China. Therefore, this study intends to provide empirical evidence towards the selected variables, where a questionnaire was used as the instrument for collecting the needed data. There were 312 participants aged over 55 years, both female and male working in government-owned organizations, who had filled up the questionnaire. The findings indicate that elderly employees are still beneficial for the organizations, whereas personalities and education were found to have little impact on adapting to changes and learning abilities. Meanwhile, the organizational culture has a positive effect on encouraging employees adapting changes and learn new skills. This study might have several limitations, e.g., the sample size only covered a small number of elderly employees in State Owned Enterprises (SOE). Furthermore, this study only covered three variables as the factors affecting the elderly employees on adapting to changes and learning new skills. Further work might consider more variables such as motivation, employees' engagement as variables as well.

JEL classification: M54.

Keywords: Elderly employees; behavior change; impact on organization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The world population is going through an important demographic change: from young to increasingly aged society. A report by (Smaliukiene, 2014) points out that due to the decrease in fertility and rise in life expectancy, by 2050, the population of the world aged above 50 years old will be more than 2.4 Billion. Table 1 below shows the percentage of

elderly people increasing after the year 2019, and it will continue growing until 2100. Meanwhile, the population aged between 25-64 is expected to decrease after 2040 (Elgohary & Abdelazyz, 2020). According to a worldwide report about populations, this leads the whole world to an “ageing society”¹. An ageing society will cause economic and social issues (Peterson, 2017) as well as the labor market issues. In order to solve the problems, many governments have delayed the age of retirement to encourage elderly workers to continue to work (Phillips & Siu, 2012).

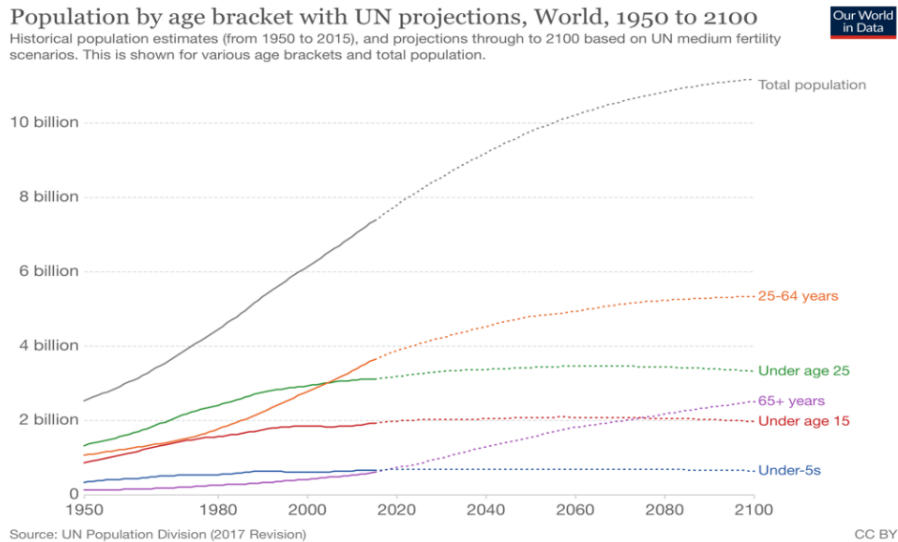


Figure 1: Population by age brackets with UN projections, World 1950-2100.

China is facing the same issue as other countries. There are many reasons for China turned into an ageing society. One child policy and improving life expectancy could be the main reasons:

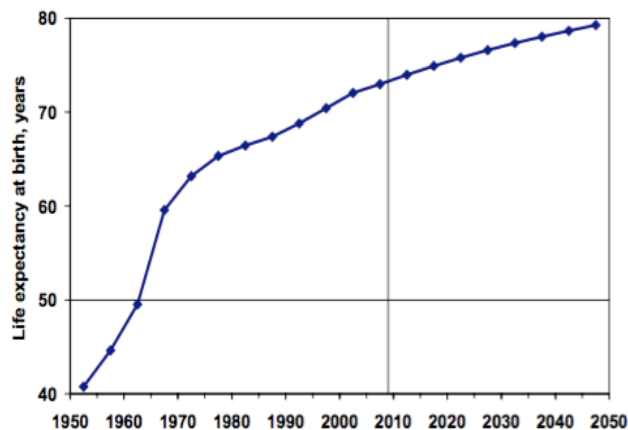


Figure 2: China's life expectancy.

¹ “Aging Society” Is defined as a process that raises the proportion of elderly individuals in the overall population.

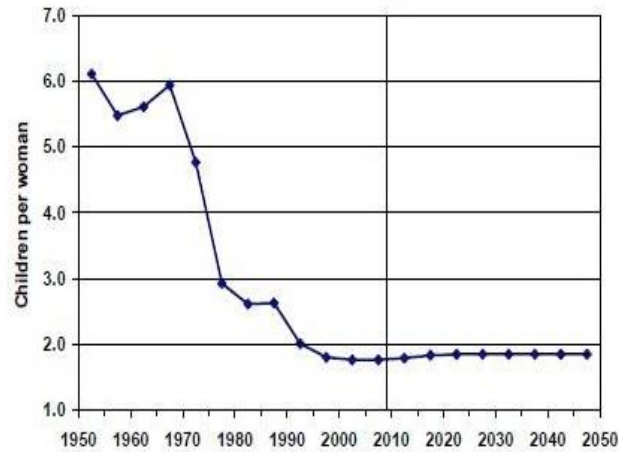


Figure 3: China's total fertility rate.

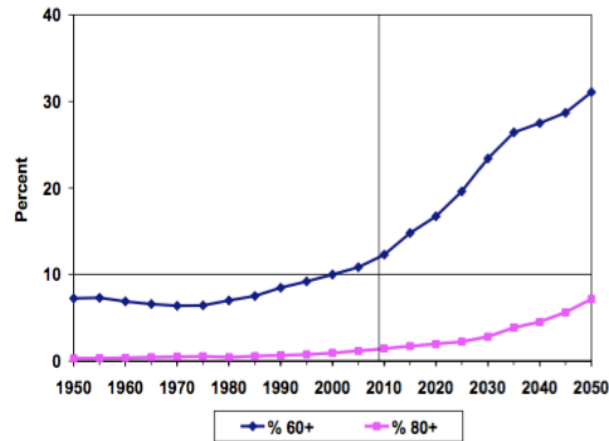


Figure 4: China's population ageing

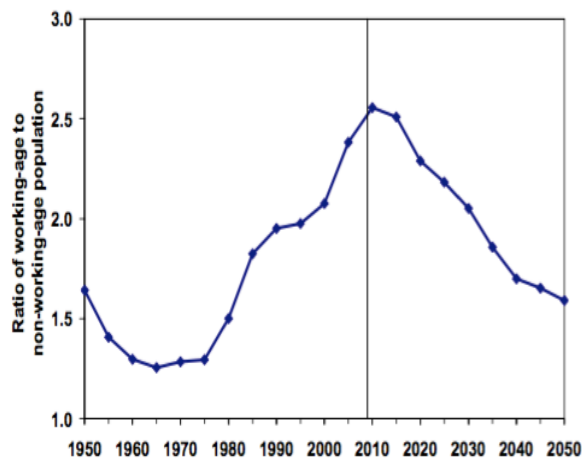


Figure 5: China's ratio of working-age to non- working age population.

According to each of the graphs shown above, we can figure out that life expectancy is rising up after the 1980s. By 2050, life expectancy could reach 80 years. Meanwhile,

the total fertility rate dropped sharply during the 1990-1995 to 2 children per female. By 2050, the number of children is expected to keep decreasing to below 2 children for each family.

Indeed, as a result, China's population growth rate has dropped sharply. It is worth noting that by 2050, the population of ages 60+ and 80+ will reach more than 30 million (60+) and almost 10 million (80+) as well, as the working age (between 15-64) to non-working age population was growing rapidly since 1970s. It was ranking at the highest point in 2010 and then is projected to decline nearly to 1.5 million in 2050. This ratio is important because it is seen as the direct indicator of the number of dependents for each person of working-age who will need support on average. People older than 64 might still well contribute in many ways, such as in the economical ways and to their families as well, but many people are concerned about the future ability of China's working-age population to support the large older, dependent population (Cooper et al., 2019).

Since the population in China is decreasing, and the number of older adults is rising. Liu & Sun (2015) pointed out that after 2016 the number of labor in the market was started to decline sharply due to the increase of the elderly people, and this caused serious damage to the economic growth of China. He also claimed that in the past three decades, China's fast-growing economy was mainly led by exports that depended on an abundant and cheap labor supply, as the results of a decline in the active labor force will lead to an increasing shortage of the labor and rising in wages (Liu & Sun, 2015). Another challenge the organizations need to face is the percentage of elderly employees² will be risen, which will affect the organization's performance in the market. Therefore, to achieve such challenging goals, the main issues will focus on how the elderly employees make decisions and the ability to adapt to changes or new technologies (Rafferty & Jimmiesons, 2017).

In order to fix the issues has been caused by the ageing society, the Chinese government has launched a new regulation to encourage the elderly employees who work in State Owned Enterprise to delay the age of retirement to female 60 male 65, and this will be applied to the entire labor market by 2025 (Ritchie & Roser, 2019).

Various research works show that hiring elderly employees is a benefit for the SOEs in China in some way, such as the elderly employees are considered to be fully experienced, high in loyalty, dedicated and less training cost, etc (Smaliukiene, 2014). However, there are also some disadvantages of keeping the elderly employees, such as they are considered to be stubborn, having difficulties adapting to changes and learning new technologies (Gaylor, n.d.). Calzavara et al. (2020) claim that employees' resistance to change will affect the organization's performance.

The state-owned sectors are becoming increasingly important in the Chinese economy. In 2000, there were 27 SOEs in the market; by 2017, there were 102, with profits of RMB52,200 billion (approximately US\$7,676). This shows that China's SOEs are important not only for the domestic Chinese market, but also for the global market (Lin et al., 2020).

² Elderly employees: means the employees age over 55 female, 60 male according to Chinese Labor Law

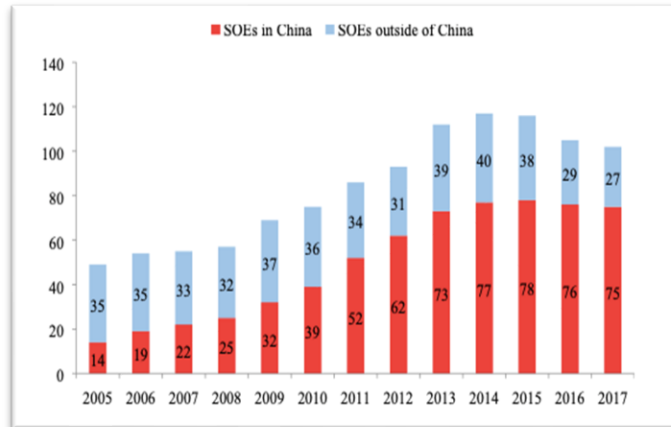


Figure 6: SOEs in Fortune Global 500.

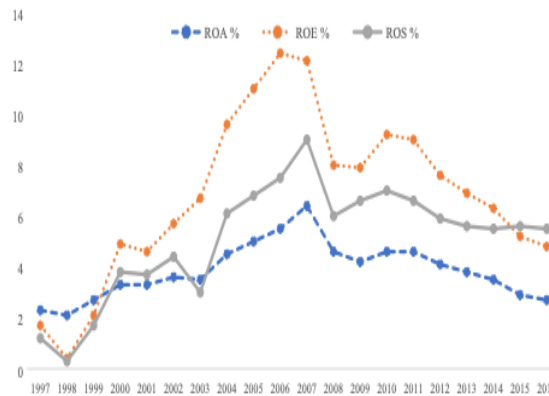


Figure 7: Performance of SOEs of China.

The figures above show the distribution of the SOEs of China in Fortune Global 500 and the performance of SOEs. We can see that from 2005 until 2015, the number of SOEs, both domestic and overseas, was booming. It grew from 49 to 116, its more than doubled. However, after 2016, it started to drop to 102, and it dropped both in domestic and overseas markets. Meanwhile, the situation refers to the performance of SOEs was the same, the ROE, ROS and ROA of SOEs started to drop in 2007, and in the year 2011, it started to drop dramatically until 2016. Based on these data, the following conclusions can be made. Firstly, China’s economy relies heavily on SOEs. Secondly, the performance of the SOEs is dropping after 2011; the reasons could be the policy burdens, the information asymmetry and the cost of hierarchy, and most importantly, the lack of training of employees. As everyone knows that the employees working in SOEs normally will not change their job or working environment easily, because SOEs considered being more “stable” than other non-SOEs. Therefore, the employees stay in their comfort zones until they reach the age of retirement. Many of them are resistant to change, especially the elderly employees. This can affect the performance of the organizations in serious ways (Lin et al., 2020).

In order to improve the organizational performance of the SOEs in China, this paper will look into the job performance of elderly employees from the perspective SOEs in the mainland of China. The paper focuses on the factors affecting the elderly employees’

adaptation to changes. Ayub et al. (2017) point out that personality could be more of a reason one gets employed, and personality plays an important role in driving people’s decisions. Organizational culture is the tool that dictates the employees’ behavior, the good organizational culture has a good impact on employee satisfaction and committed the employees to the organization (Daniels, n.d.); level of education will be one of the main reasons affecting people’s adapt changes suggested by Kunze et al. (2013).

The purposes of this paper are: to explore the existing research on defining the factors that affect the elderly employees on adapting changes in SOEs in China; to find out the economic impact of hiring elderly employees and improving the profits of the organization; to examine the relationship between the elderly employees and organizations.

2. RELATED STUDIES

The keywords in this paper are elderly employees, behavior, decision making and impact on organizations. This paper also focuses on English written documents only.

2.1 Eligibility criteria

All the articles listed in the table below were selected. The articles were selected based on the time period from 2010-2020. All the selected articles must be in English, and the keywords are elderly employees, behavior changes, decision making and impact on organizations.

2.1 Information sources and select paper

Harvard Business Publishing, Scopus, Google Scholar and Ingenta are the four databases that were selected to conduct the search for review articles. During the selection process, the four databases mentioned above were used for searching for related scholarly papers. The iteration for documents and filtering extraction were the two stages involved. Unrelated and duplicated papers were extracted during the extraction process. The filtering process was carried out after reading the whole papers.



Figure 8: The selections of the literature review papers

Figure 8 shows the selection of literature review papers. Resistance of change, resistance to change, personalities, organization culture and education level are the keywords used to search for the articles the journals in human resource management are, it was focus on business management the papers published with English only, within each

of the key words, the detailed words were selected. Resistance to change was focused on organization cultural, personalities and education level, the journals were published between 2017-2022 related to these areas were selected; within personalities were focused on the characteristics of the employees; impact of the organization cultural will be pay attention in this part, because the different environment will be affecting employees choices; with different education level, the behavior and understanding will be different as well, so the impact of education level will be taken close look in education level.

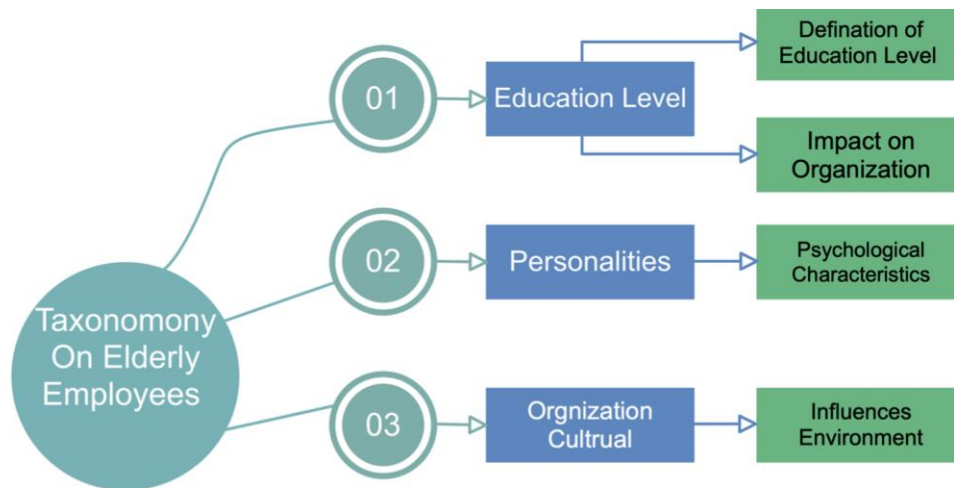


Figure 9: Reasons affecting the elderly employees.

Figure 9 shows that education level, personalities and organization culture are the three main reasons affecting the elderly employees adapting to the changes in the workplace both in decision making and learning new technologies. In each of the reasons, there are some other factors that need to be addressed in detail, such as, how we define the education level and how the impact on organization according to a different level of education; there are some certain psychological characteristics, and it will drive the employees with its own way, finally, employees will influence by the organization cultural, different organization cultural will influence the employees with different ways.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Personality

Personality normally plays a very important role in people's whole life, especially in their working period. There are some arguments suggest that employees' personality changes when they get old (Kunze et al., 2013) they point out that in negative point of view it suggest that older employees have certain personality characteristics, it described as they are stubborn, stick with what they are used to it, and so afraid of taking any risks. Competing with the positive point of views suggest that, old employees are full of grace and dignity, compassionate, and wise. However, there are still some studies argue that, the personality are pretty much influenced by the cultural, beyond the cultural conceptions, it is often believe that elderly employees are lonely and depressed; on the other hand, old workers are often seen as carefree and satisfied (Knez et al., 2019).

3.1.1 Psychological characteristics

Historically, many psychological characteristics such as intelligence, learning ability of people were decline when the age growing (Sharma et al., 2021). However in recent decades some studies has been done by the psychologists have showed that different personality will acting differently with the intelligence and learning ability, different types of personalities will adapt different actions and taking things differently, it is might not true to say that, all the old employees are stubborn and hard to change, it much depends on the education level and cultural differences as well as the environment Kozako et al (2013) point that it is not true that personality are changing during the life span, it can be changed depends on how they sees the change. Nikolaou (2003) claimed that the personality has been divided into “big five” personality characteristics which are: Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Openness, Extroversion; it also has been found out that, on average people are willing to take risks and changes when they were in the younger life, when they reach to the older age they becoming more responsive and more caring (Elley-Brown & Pringle, 2021). With the five different personalities people who has openness characters are more willing to take changes and risks, on the opposite side people with neuroticism characters becoming worried, more stubborn than others and ability of adopt new tasks is decline with their age; Agreeableness people can make the biggest improvement in their age of 30s and 40s, when it comes to late 50s the ability of adapting new task will decline and becoming stubborn (Kelly et al., 2019).

3.2 Organization cultural

3.2.1 Definition of the organization cultural

The organization cultural here defines as the personality of the organization. It comprised of the assumptions, values, norms and tangible sign of organization members and their behaviors. Emphasize what’s important, reward employees, discourage behaviors that do not reflect what’s important are the four primary ways to influence the culture of an organization (Hanaysha & Hussain, 2018; Kelly et al., 2019). Such as emphasize what’s important, reward employees, and discourage behaviors that don’t reflect what’s important.

3.2.2 Influences environment

The organization could handle the influences from the environment where they act, but organizations also target shaping and reshaping the environment for themselves and the organization cultural plays most important role in this part, it could reshape the organization in many ways, most of the employees will follow what the cultural has created to them (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). Diamantidis & Chatzoglou also suggests that organization cultural keeps the organization together, but on the other hand, culture may become a barrier in innovation process. Lund (2003) stressed that the organization that has the positive motivation for employees to encourage them to learn and accept the new things and new technologies that will improve their productivity. Joseph (2009) has the same opinion with Lund saying that organization cultural can influences the behavior and ability of changing of the employees in many ways. Pang & Lu (2018) argued that motivation can influencing the employees in some ways but is not the key to that, he claimed the organization cultural is an open system, which are dependent on their environment and employees are much influenced by others behavior rather than the motivation.

3.3 Educational level

3.3.1 Definition of education level

Although there are not so many literatures specially emphasize the employees' educational level to their resistance to adapt a change, it is widely acknowledged that higher the education improves employees' personal management, time management, self-development, communication skills and as well as problem solving skills (Muller, 2021). Higher education defined as the instruction that was obtained at university or colleague (Grima, 2011). According to the research done by Aboazoum et al. (n.d.) showing that no significance relationship between the educational level and ability of adapt to the changes. However, the research was based on 286 police officer from two North Texas Police departments, it was lack of variation in respondent's education level. Nevertheless, from the research has been done it can be found that higher education of employees will be more likely to open for a change and to understand why and when they need to change even in which way to change (Law et al., 2008).

3.3.2 Impact on organization

There are no much literatures showing that how the elderly employees who are working in the high job position resistance to change will affect organizations. However, according to Kitterlin & Yoo (2014) point out that the elderly employees who are working in the high job position resistance to change would affect the productive of the organization, in general, the employees who are younger and in the lower position would much looking up to the old ones, they will see them as the models and intend to copy and follow them, if the organization is in the industry of need the new technology consistently, the resistance of change will lead the organization with lower productivities; Belcher suggest that when employees resist a change taking place at work environment, people around them might feel less optimistic and hopeful about their future with the organization, this is particularly for the employees who are reached to certain age and play an important role in the organization, if there is a lack of communication regarding the change, it will cause the organization with lower morale, and this feeling will spread through the whole organization among other employees.

4. OPTIMISTIC AND HOPEFUL

The Belcher suggest that, the people who are in the management level resistance to change will create a negative effect over other employees and cause the organization with lower productivities and high turnover of the employees, and for the future it will cause the issues for recruiting the new staffs. Mohamad (n.d.) also comments point out that although staff members resist to change, they are becoming less focused while doing work on time, but that will result in lower productivity, another bad impact on fear of changes among staffs will cause a disruptive working environment, feelings among employees may spread the same negativity among other employees and start encouraging the others to behave in the same kind of way. The research has point out that in recent years many countries has start to delay the age of retirement and suggest that hiring the elderly employees is actually beneficial to the organization. However elderly people are hard to change, and this will affect the organization in many ways. All the researchers noted many factors including personality, motivation and educational level are the main reasons for elderly people resistance to change.

Hence the research intends to do further evaluation with different samples on the relationship of personality, educational level and organizational cultural to elderly employee resistance to change since there are the logic factors that those factors will affect elderly employees to adapt any changes. For the organizations that require the elderly staffs who are still remain in the higher job position, but resistance to change will cause the organization serious of issues such as lower productivities, lower moral, and disruptive work environment and meanwhile will cause the difficulties for recruiting new staffs.

Table 1: Summary of views regarding the factors.

Author	Years	Factors	Supporting Views
Kunze et al.,	2013	Personality	Negative: The personalities change when they get old; the elderly employees are described as stubborn and afraid of taking any risks.
Sharma et al.	2021	Personality	Negative: Many psychological characteristics such as intelligence and learning ability of people decline when the age grows.
Knez et al.,	2019	Personality	Positive: When employees get old, they are easy to be satisfied, full of grace, dignity, compassionate, and wise.
Kozako et al.,	2013	Personality	Positive: It is might not true to say that all the old employees are stubborn and hard to change. It much depends on the education level and cultural differences as well as the environment.
Nikolaou,	2003	Personality	Personality has been divided into “big five” personality characteristics which are: Conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness, and extroversion.
Elley-Brown & Pringle,	2019	Personality	On average, people are willing to take risks and changes when they are in the younger life. When they reach the older age, they become more responsive and caring.
Kelly, Mrengqwa, & Geffen	2019	Personality	With the five different personalities, people who have openness characters are more willing to take changes and risks. On the opposite side, people with neuroticism are becoming worried, more stubborn than others and the ability to adopt new tasks declines with their age. Agreeableness people can make the biggest improvement in their age of 30s and 40s. When it comes to the late 50s, the ability to adapt new tasks will decline, and they become stubborn.
Hanaysha	2018	Organization Cultural	The organization culture defined by the personality of the organization.
Kelly	2019	Organization Cultural	The organization culture defined by the personality of the organization.
Diamantidis & Chatzoglou	2019	Organization Cultural	Organizational culture plays the most crucial role in shaping and reshaping the organization. It could reshape the organization in many ways. Most of the

			employees will follow what the cultural has created to them.
Lund	2003	Organization Cultural	An organization with a positive motivation for employees will encourage them to learn and accept the new things and technologies that will improve their productivity.
Joseph	2009	Organization Cultural	Organizational culture can influence the employees' behaviour and ability to change in many ways.
Pang & Lu	2018	Organization Cultural	Organization culture is an open system, which is dependent on their environment and employees are much influenced by others' behavior rather than the motivation.
Muller,	2021	Educational level	Higher education improves employees' personal management, time management, self-development, communication, and problem-solving skills.
Aboazoum et al.,	n.d	Educational level	No significant relationship between the educational level and the ability to adapt to the changes.
Law et al.,	2008	Educational level	Employees' higher education will be more likely to open for a change and understand why and when they need to change, even in which way to change.
Kitterlin & Yoo	2014	Impact on Organization	The elderly employees in high job positions resist change, which would affect the organisation's productivity.
Mohamad,	n.d	Impact on Organization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When employees resist a change in the work environment, people around them might feel less optimistic and hopeful about their future with the organization. 2. Will lead the organization to low productivity and high turnover. 3. Fear of changes among staff will cause a disruptive working environment, and the same negative feelings may spread to other employees.

5. OPEN ISSUES AND CHALLENGES WITH POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

5.1 Limitation and bias

Ageing society is a very complex social phenomenon, especially as it deepens the diverse economic impact on society and also the preservation of future cultures and nations. This issue needs to be addressed in an attempt to face more variables, particularly in a real social context, attempting to cover all implications with solutions to their problems. To increase the accuracy of comprehensive diagnosis and treatment to the appropriate and more data are needed for the same benchmarking from government or reliable databases. It is difficult to collect multiple samples of the same from an individual company or organization or to carry from different ages to study as a single impact. Quality approaches are expected to respond to the problems presented by immersive social and economic strategies. The challenges emerge as a result of the difficulties emerge due to the increasing level of human error in direct proportion to changes in age estimate. It is possible to concentrate on human annotators to identify it in the sense of ageing management issues in related databases information with their identical actual age.

6. CONCLUSION

Due to the significant decline in new birth rate and rise in life expectancy, China is facing the problem called “ageing society”. The first issue the government needs to face is the lack of labor source. When the government introduce the regulation of delaying the age of retirement, the organizations need to come over the difficulties of keeping elderly employees. As we all know, elderly employees are often associated with less technical knowledge, less creativity, innovation, flexibility, hard to accept the new technology, and physical and psychological resilience. However, some research works show it is still beneficial for organizations to keep elderly employees because they are more experienced and loyal, and have a higher quality conscience and working morale. This paper explored the relationship between the organizations and elderly employees from SOEs perspectives to highlight the economic impact of hiring elderly employees. We also explained that personalities and education levels affect the ability to adapt to changes differently. Most importantly, the organization’s culture plays a very import role in influencing the employee to adapt to changes and learn new skills. This study only focuses on three variables that affect the elderly employees adapting to changes. Future studies will have to consider more variables.

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