

Fostering Workplace Supports and Success Among Older Workers: A Scoping Review

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Abstract

Background: The aging demographic in the workforce continues to grow and holds significant implications at individual, familial, and societal levels. Legal frameworks such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 have been put in place to call for advocacy in the workplace. Yet, barriers persist for those with disabilities, especially the aged.

Goal: This study addresses critical issues such as workplace participation to foster an inclusive workplace for older workers.

Method: A literature review was performed after selecting articles surrounding the scope of accommodations for older workers in the workplace. Using the FSU Library database and Zotero to find and store/sort relevant articles and remove any duplicates, we were able to compile a list of pertinent articles, which we further narrowed down using our selection criteria: involving working participants aged 50 and older, accommodation request, usage and provision, and a published empirical study from January 1, 1990 to December 1, 2023.

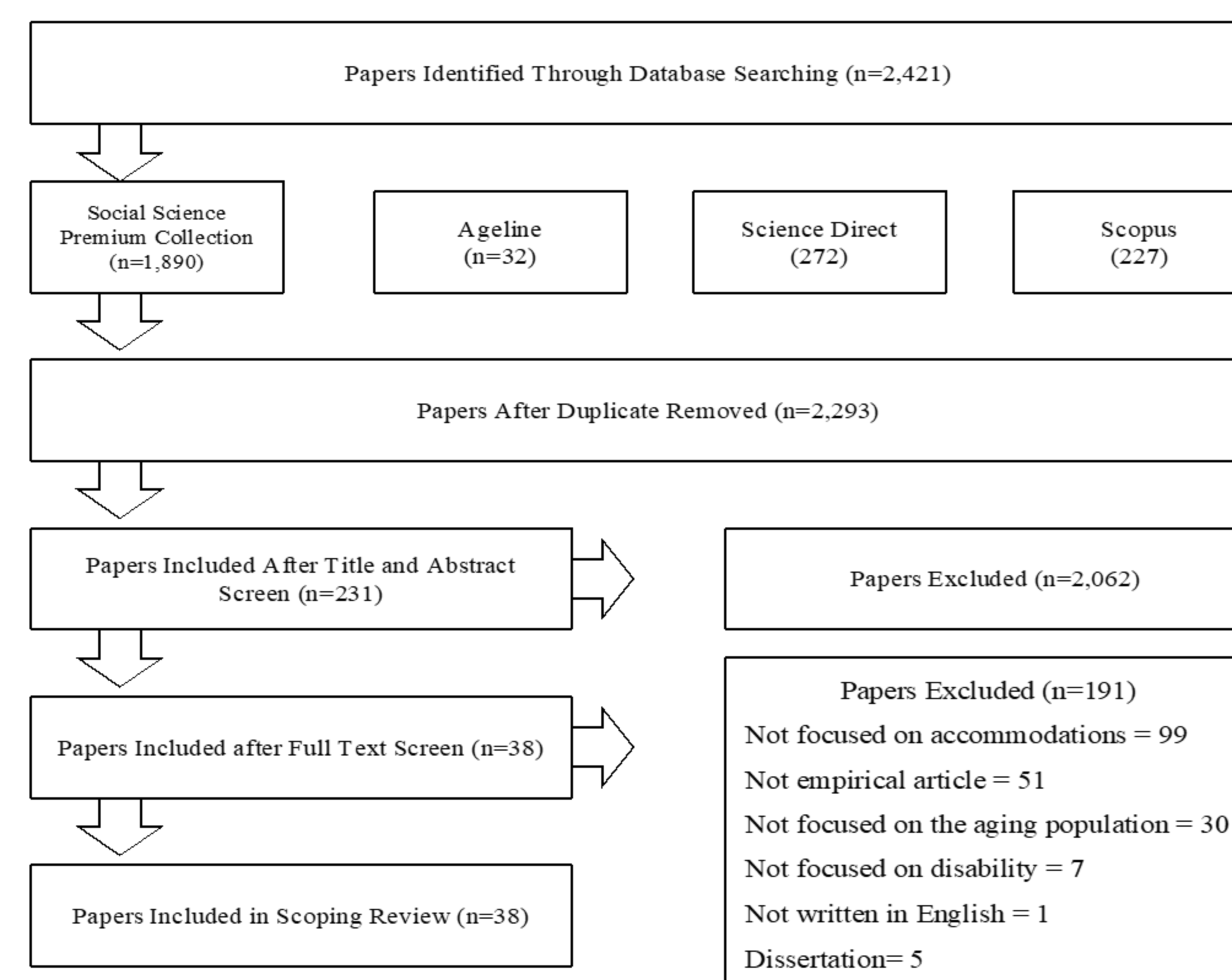
Results: Aging workers may receive accommodations, including flexible schedules, assistive programs, and longer absences from work. Challenges, including misconceptions and limited awareness about disabilities, were identified as barriers for workers seeking accommodations.

Conclusion: Our results were consistent with that of previous research, and intersectionality frameworks show how factors such as age, race, and gender can shape one's experience, allowing us to explore lived experiences further. However, relying on literature limits the study's scope, as gaps in research and potential biases in published studies may affect our findings.

Background

- As the overall population ages due to factors such as increased life expectancy, improved health, and policy changes, the workforce is also aging, creating functional and physical difficulties associated with aging for employers which may require the application of workplace accommodations (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety [CCOHS], 2020).
- Common workplace accommodations can include assistive technology, flexible work schedules, and access to wellness programs (RESNA, 2020).
- It was expected that by 2024 roughly 1 in 4 American workers will be over the age of 55 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2019).
- Thus, this research is crucial for policy development and workplace adaptations that promote healthier work environments and the overall well-being for aging employees (Lecours et al., 2022).
- Through an intersectionality framework, this research aimed to examine policy impacts and barriers like bias and technology to reveal how overlapping identities like age, disability, and socio-economic status shape lived experiences.

Methods



- The research group discussed several research questions regarding request/receipt rates, disclosure factors, and available resources for older workers with disabilities and searched for articles relevant to the latter.
- Searches were conducted on Ageline, Science Direct, Scopus, and Social Science Premium Collection using relevant keywords.
- Studies were selected based on criteria: published empirical study in English from January 1, 1990, to December 1, 2023, participants included a sample of older workers with a mean age of 50+.
- Zotero was used to remove duplicates and the team screened remaining articles for eligibility
- The final reference list of articles were used to conduct a scoping review, examining key themes, methodologies, and findings to draw conclusions

Conclusion

- Workplace accommodations are essential for supporting aging workers, especially as this demographic continues to grow, but employer hesitations, lack of awareness, and stigma continue to pose challenges.
- Given the growing aging workforce, organizations should implement policies and support programs that proactively address age-related disabilities, promote an inclusive work environment, and reduce stigma through education and training. Strengthening advocacy efforts can help bridge existing gaps in the workplace.
- There is limited research specifically on accommodations for workers aged 50 and above. Future research should explore the long-term career trajectories of aging workers who do or do not receive accommodations. Investigating how accommodations impact job satisfaction, career longevity, and financial security post-retirement could provide valuable insights.

Results

- As older individuals remain active in the workforce, they are increasingly likely to request accommodations to address challenges associated with aging.
- These accommodations often include flexible work schedules, extended leave options, and the integration of assistive technologies tailored to age-related disease such as screen magnifiers, text-to-speech software, and ergonomic workstations.
- Many employers have limited awareness of age-related disabilities which can lead to hesitation in granting requests or failure to provide appropriate support. Beyond resource limitations, many aging workers also fear the stigma associated with requesting accommodations, worrying that it may be perceived as a sign of declining productivity.
- Our findings align with previous research, reinforcing the idea that aging workers may benefit from accommodations; however, challenges such as misconceptions about disabilities and a general lack of knowledge about resources act as a barrier in the request or receipt of accommodations.
- These challenges highlight the need for improved workplace policies, better education on age-related disabilities, and stronger advocacy efforts to ensure wholistic inclusivity and safety in the workplace. This study addresses a critical yet unexplored area by focusing on accommodations for older workers, filling a gap in research where empirical studies remain scarce. It also reinforces prior literature while utilizing an intersectionality frameworks to provide a more nuanced understanding of workers' lived experiences.
- As a literature-based study, findings may be influenced by publication bias and gaps in existing research. Future studies should incorporate elements of practical implementation, rather than focusing on legal frameworks in order to more closely assess the experiences of employees.

References



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