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The Influence of Project Manager's Age on Project Success

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Abstract: The world population is aging rapidly. The United Nations listed aging as one of the main social transformations of the twenty-first century. Aging impacts project managers as well. The most prevalent form of discrimination in workplaces is age discrimination. This study evaluated how project managers' age influences project success. The population was 108 active or former project managers working in Albania or Kosovo. By using quantitative analysis, it was demonstrated that project managers' age did not significantly predict project success. Therefore, there is a need to increase awareness among employers, so older project managers are not discriminated based on age.

Keywords: Project success, project manager, age, Albania, Kosovo.

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1. Introduction

Companies use projects as instruments to run operations and bolster the success of their business (Kremljak et al., 2014). As Ekrot et al. (2016) found, in project-based businesses, a higher project success rate translates into a rise in business profits. Research from Standish Group (2014) reported that more than thirty percent of projects will get shelved before finishing and more than fifty of all projects commenced will cost almost twice the initial estimated cost. The Standish Group (2015) noted that only twenty-nine percent of projects are rated as successful and that a high rate of project failure has a negative impact on business profits.

Allen et al. (2014) and Ekrot et al. (2016) reported that business owners utilize project management to help them increase business success by avoiding project failures, making it a valuable investment for them. Koops et al. (2016) recognized the influence of project managers on project success. Similarly, Blaskovics (2016) noted that project managers are instrumental for project success. Further, Lindebaum and Jordan (2012) suggested that a project's outcome is affected by the project manager's age.

In many countries, the population is aging. This means that older people have increased representation in the entire population and this trend will continue to grow (Irmen, 2017). This phenomenon is occurring in both developed and developing countries (Gentry and Mittelstaedt, 2017). The United Nations (UN) has listed population aging as one of the leading social transformations of the twenty-first century. In the 2017 UN World Prospectus, it is estimated that over 900 million people are aged over 60, which represents 13% of the world's total population. The population aged over 60 is the fastest growing segment and, by 2050, around 25% of the world's population will be over 60 years old (UN, 2017). This increase in the aging population and lower fertility rates are a result of improvements in and availability of healthcare (Higo and Khan, 2015). However, the increase in the aged population places a higher burden on the younger population to provide more support.

The increase in the aging population will have an impact on many social and economic aspects of society (UN, 2017). Increased life expectancy means that people will have more years to spend in retirement, although a new trend is evident whereby older workers choose to continue to work later in life and even after formal retirement (Rappaport, 2015). The field of project management and project managers is not immune to this trend. However, there is a lack of research conducted in this field. Therefore, there is a need to revisit and assess the impact project manager's age has on project success.

This quantitative, correlational study aims to explore if there is a relationship between project managers' age and project success. The research question is: *Does a relationship exist between project managers' age and project success*? The predictor variable was project managers' age, while the dependent variable was project success. The target population was former project

managers working in Albania and Kosovo who are LinkedIn members.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Project Manager's Age

Due to improved wellness and health in developed and developing countries, people are staying longer active and are employed at older ages than before. Several developed nations have eliminated obligatory retirement (Hofstetter and Cohen, 2014; Lain and Loretto, 2016; Zaniboni, 2015). The trend towards older working ages creates a new challenge: the management of a more age-diverse workforce (Lain and Loretto, 2016; Rappaport, 2015). According to Zaniboni (2015), age discrimination is the most widespread form of discrimination in organizations. In this section, the analysis and synthesis of pertinent literature associated with project managers' age will be presented. Main concentrated efforts were to select the most recent literature in the field of project management. The sections below will demonstrate that there is a lack of research regarding how project managers' age influences project success.

Kulik et al. (2014) mentioned the need to redefine how we refer to experience and age as interchangeable attributes because we have an older and more diverse workforce. To do so, we need to distinguish between 'age' and 'experience' (Kulik et al., 2014). However, businesses hesitate about expressing anything about age during the employment process or choosing project team members for projects (Seboni and Tutesigensi, 2015). For instance, age may have an influence in choosing project managers however, it may not be explicitly mentioned because of a potential breach of employment laws and the risk of litigation (Seboni and Tutesigensi, 2015). Age influences individual's performance because younger project managers focus more on technical aptitude in comparison to older project managers (Dulaimi and Langford, 1999). Chipulu et al. (2014) itemized ten project success/failure indicators (PSFIs) required to minimize the project success/failure factors (PSFFs) of project control and extra-organizational objectives. Compared to younger project managers, older project managers allocated greater significance on project control and extra-organizational objectives (Chipulu et al., 2014). In their study, Chipulu et al. (2014) and Ojiako et al. (2015) claimed agreements between stakeholders and project managers are also influenced by age. During project implementation and handover stages, older project managers had more chance of changing their initial judgment (Ojiako et al., 2015). In contrast with Chipulu et al. (2014), Larsson et al. (2015) argued project success is not influenced by project managers' age.

2.1.1. Career

The careers of project managers, managers, professionals, and employees are all impacted by age. Perception of career progression changes as employees get older (Bown-Wilson and Parry, 2013; Visagie and Koekemoer, 2014). Hennekam (2015) found that workers have higher career satisfaction as they age. A positive correlation, therefore, exists between age and career satisfaction (Visagie and Koekemoer, 2014). However, a study investigating career success conducted by Fernando et al. (2014) found age to be the least important career success factor.

There are differing views as to when age begins to have an impact on career success. In their study, Baruch et al. (2014) concluded that career progression and age forms an "inverse U-shaped curve." Baruch et al. (2014) found the highest point of career progression is at age 50 and then starts to decline. Likewise, Bown-Wilson and Parry (2013) discovered the older managers become more conservative regarding the notion of changing jobs, which impacts their career development. Nevertheless, Bown-Wilson and Parry (2013) did not state any exact age when this phenomenon occurs. Similar findings were reported by Henderson et al. (2013), who stated female project managers less than 49 years old are continuing career building, while this phase has been completed by female project managers older than 50.

Career success is described by managers in subjective qualifications, like intrinsic or extrinsic fulfilment. According to Rasheed and Wilson (2014), intrinsic career satisfaction involves perceived workplace thankfulness and progress in career, while extrinsic job fulfillment involves wages, company policies, job security, and overall working conditions at the company. Santos (2016), in interviews with 87 Portuguese academics, and Visagie and Koekemoer (2014) noted age impacted how managers viewed their career achievement. However, varying results have been reported by different researchers in terms of the influence of age on career satisfaction and whether career fulfillment is viewed as extrinsic or intrinsic by managers. Bal et al. (2015) demonstrated employees' intrinsic and extrinsic career fulfillment is affected by whether or not they have a personalized career plan. This phenomenon is less pronounced with younger employees than older ones (Bal et al., 2015).

Employees progress in their career and increase their skills as they get older. Higher salaries are as a result of career progression and increased skills, which act as an extrinsic career satisfaction (Hennekam, 2016). However, in their research on female Lebanese managers, Tlaiss and Mendelson (2014) acquired different results, demonstrating that, as female Lebanese managers aged, they experienced less extrinsic satisfaction in comparison to younger participants. Sturges's (1999) research results accord with that view. Both Tlaiss and Mendelson (2014) and Sturges (1999) claimed that, when evaluating their career success, older managers tend to do so in terms of personal achievement, rather than according to salary or position in a company, which are external assessments. Sturges (1999) writes that, as older managers reach their peak progression in their company and career, they have a greater reliance on career fulfillment gained through personal achievements.

2.1.2. Leadership

According to DuBois et al. (2015), project success rate might be improved by leadership qualities, so these are essential for project managers. Age impacts leadership effectiveness as well (Buengeler et al., 2016). In two separate studies of large, German customer sales and service organizations, Buengeler et al. (2016) surveyed 113 and 121 leaders. According to Spisak et al. (2014), a candidate's age affects the selection of leaders. Amin and Kamal (2016) directed a study to look at the impact of qualities of leadership qualities on performance of project team. Amin and Kamal (2016) determined due to their extensive work experience; older team members impacted more direction of leadership. Conversely, Schreiber (2015)

noted that younger leaders were less accepted, which, in turn, impacted team effectiveness.

The chances for better results might be increased by understanding team preferences for leadership style (Oshagbemi, 2008). According to Oshagbemi (2008), consultative, participative, and delegative leadership styles are positively influenced by age. While younger managers were blunter in ordering employees without much discussions, older managers were more cooperative with employees (Oshagbemi, 2008). However, Oshagbemi (2008) concluded that considering older managers have more experience; they might favor a directive leadership style in application. A different degree of importance is placed on leadership by younger and older general managers (Tavitiyaman et al., 2014). Older managers had less importance on leadership aspects than younger managers (Tavitiyaman et al., 2014).

2.1.3. Performance

Performance of managers and professionals is impacted by age. Younger engineers, as noted by Santoso and Kulathunga (2016), have a higher work performance than older engineers. Similarly, as Verheyen et al. (2016) suggest in their literature review, older employees are perceived to have a lower performance by others. However, Fuertes et al.'s (2013) study on the effect on small and medium enterprises of senior employee management garnered different results. They suggested that managers complain about the performance of employees, not their age. Therefore, Fuertes et al. (2013) came to the conclusion that age is not a detrimental factor, instead it is the performance.

According to Kulik et al. (2014) the difference between older and younger employees would vanish if older employees would have a say regarding the speed of work and would have more control around the job assignments. The age of managers impacted the employee performance whereby an improved performance was delivered by a combination of older employees with an older manager (Verheyen et al., 2016).

2.1.4. Risk

An essential activity in project management is managing risk. de Carvalho and Junior (2014) conducted a literature review regarding how project performance was impacted by risk management in Brazil. However, the impact of project managers' age on project risk is discussed by few researchers. Rolison et al. (2014) researched risk-taking in adults and found that, with age, financial risk-taking is lowered.

The results provided by Fabricius and Büttgen's (2015) contrast with the study by Rolison et al. (2014), noting that older project managers' evaluate projects more optimistically due to their overconfidence. Compared to younger project managers, older project managers took more risks, which could be an explanation of higher project failure rate (Fabricius and Büttgen, 2015). Soltani et al.'s (2015) research in marketing demonstrated that, compared to younger managers, older managers took a more radical approach and demonstrated they were more willing to take risks. According to Henderson et al. (2013), young female project managers, in contrast, were found more reluctant to take risks when than older women. Ding et al. (2015) and Fabricius and Büttgen (2015) reported similar findings. Ding et al., 2015 studied the risk-taking habits of corporate board chairpersons. From the findings can be concluded that middle-aged board chairpersons undertook fewer risks when compared with younger or older board chairpersons (Ding et al., 2015). From the above studies can be concluded that the influences age has on risk tolerance for project managers are unclear.

2.2. Project Success

Although there are plenty of papers published about project success, there is no consensus regarding it (Jiang et al., 2016; Lim and Mohamed, 1999; von Meding et al., 2014; Pinto and Slevin, 1988). According to Pinto and Slevin (1988), who researched project success and introduced Project Implementation Profile (PIP) for measuring project success, project management researchers and project managers themselves are not clear about the definition of project success. Lim and Mohamed (1999) continued on the path of Pinto and Slevin (1988) and reported that the definition of project success differs from the viewpoint analyzed from. Until project management researchers come to agreement regarding the definition of project success, Pinto and Slevin (1988) argue, controlling, monitoring or merely measuring project success will be difficult.

Researchers often use project success and project management success as similar concepts (Munns and Bjeirmi, 1996). Project management success and project success, are different notions, albeit interconnected (Radujkovic and Sjekavica, 2017). When project management is applied, project managers try to control cost, time, and progress, however, when assessing project success other criteria are used (Baccarini, 1999; Munns and Bjeirmi, 1996).

Even if project managers have not reached their goals set from a project management perspective, a project might still be regarded as successful (Munns and Bjeirmi,1996). For stakeholders, the process of finishing the project within time, scope, and budget, is key to project management, while a project can be defined as an activity taken by an enterprize to gain benefit in the long-term (Munns and Bjeirmi, 1996; Radujkovic and Sjekavica, 2017). Numerous factors can influence project success, many of which are outside the project manager's control (Munns and Bjeirmi, 1996). Therefore, Munns and Bjeirmi (1996) argue, sole responsibility for project success should not rest on the project manager.

Shenhar et al. (1997), contrary to Munns and Bjeirmi (1996), promoted the idea that project managers should have an expanded role and have a greater responsibility and therefore a more significant impact on project success. Pinto and Slevin (1988) similarly recommended the responsibility of project managers must continue even after the client approves the project and not end at project handover phase. Project managers face far more challenges in regard to reaching project success than project management success.

3. Method

The theory regarding critical success factors (CSF) for project success was developed by Slevin and Pinto (1987), in which ten critical success factors were listed that project managers should utilize to assess project success. The dependent variable of this study was project success, and it is related to CSF theory. However, CSF theory does not contain the predictor variable, which is project managers'

age. CSF theory, therefore, couldn't be used. Becker's human capital theory (Teixeira, 2014), in which education plays a central role, was also considered. However, human capital theory does not include the project managers' age and, therefore, was not suitable for this study.

Nguyen (2015) posits that there is no general project management theory. This study was centered on the conceptual framework that project success can be predicted by project managers' age. As Blaskovics (2016) writes, project managers play a key part in achieving project success. Furthermore, Dulaimi and Langford (1999) noted that project managers' productivity is impacted by age. Therefore, it was suggested that project managers' age affects project success.

The project implementation profile (PIP) was used as an instrument to design a survey in SurveyMonkey. The data was collected from SurveyMonkey. The participants in this study were project managers working in Albania or Kosovo who were members in LinkedIn. The researcher had no personal connection to these participants; the researcher knew them through the LinkedIn network only. Also, the participants did or do not work directly for the researcher. The researcher works as a project manager and is interested in understanding the impact that project managers' age plays on project success.

The researcher intention was to choose participants that represent the population of the study. The participants had to be over 18 or older, worked or working as project manager in the last five years in Albania or Kosovo, and be a member of LinkedIn. The researcher disqualified any participant that did not meet criteria (a) and (b). The researcher's first connections on the LinkedIn profile, there were 360 project managers from Albania and Kosovo.

This study uses the quantitative research method. Three research methods exist according to Molina-Azorin et al. (2017): quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Since the beginning of the social sciences, there have been disagreements between positivist and interpretive research. In positivist quantitative sociology, as Babones (2016) explained, variables are measured by the researcher who then devises a model linking two of those variables. Researchers, according to Park and Park (2016), should consider the phenomenon of the study before deciding which method to use. Quantitative methods are also used by researchers to find explanations and make predictions (Park and Park, 2016). This study's phenomenon was project success. Cost, time, and quality are essential measurements for project success (Zare et al., 2016). The researcher was able to measure the study's variables easily. A quantitative method was therefore adequate for this study.

The design of the research was correlational. The participants were selected from the population who are adequate for the study, which means the researcher used a purposive nonprobabilistic sampling method. There are weaknesses in the purposive sampling method as well. Etikan et al. (2016) note that sometimes the sample from this sampling method might not be diverse enough in terms of age, background, and cultures. This weakness of purposive sampling was highlighted by Barratt et al. (2015) when accessing a large sample population. The entire population of the study consisted of 1,180 individuals: project managers who were members of LinkedIn. Therefore, the researcher had a small target population.

3.1. Sample Size

To calculate sample size range, the researcher used G*Power 3.1.9.2 software. One predictor variable and large effect size (f^2= .30) were the inputs. The researcher selected a statistical power level of .80 and 29 participants was calculated as the sample size. By increasing the power to .99, it would mean the sample size required needed to be 64. As a result, the researcher needed between 29 to 64 participants. However, compared to mail surveys, web surveys do not produce as many responses (McPeake et al., 2014).

According to Meuleman et al. (2017), the number of responses in the online survey can be increased if incentives are utilized. No incentives were used in this study since the presence of incentives could impact the responder's actions during on online surveys (Meuleman et al., 2017).

3.2. Instrument

To measure project success, it was used the project implementation profile (PIP). PIP was designed by Slevin and Pinto in 1986 to improve measuring results when compared with technical instruments used at that time (Sava Jr, 2016). Pinto and Slevin's 1988 article *Project success: Definitions and measurement techniques* added the use of 12 specific project success questions to PIP's measurement of project success.

The first five questions were regarding age, gender, education, years of work experience in managing projects, and country. While the second part of the survey included 12 questions from PIP. The data was exported using SurveyMonkey services.

4. Results

The study's research question was: *What is the relationship between project managers' age and project success?* The null hypothesis (H_0) for the study was: *There is no significant relationship between project managers' age and project success*; while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was: *There is a significant relationship between project managers' age and project success*.

The response to the invitation was just 138 participants. Of these 138 participants, however, 30 skipped the 12 PIP questions, which were contained on the questionnaire's second page. Those 30 participants were excluded from further analysis. For the remaining 108 participants, the researcher conducted descriptive and inferential statistics.

The total project success score was calculated in SPSS v. 24. A new variable was created to be used in analyzing the data. The project score was from the lowest score of 22 to the highest score of 84, see Fig. 1. As advised by Pinto and Slevin, a result of less than 69 would indicate that the project might be in trouble. Using a project score of 69 as a guide for project success, 55.5% ($n = 60$) of participants rated projects lower than the requirements, while successful projects (above 69 points) were indicated by 44.4% ($n = 48$) of participants.

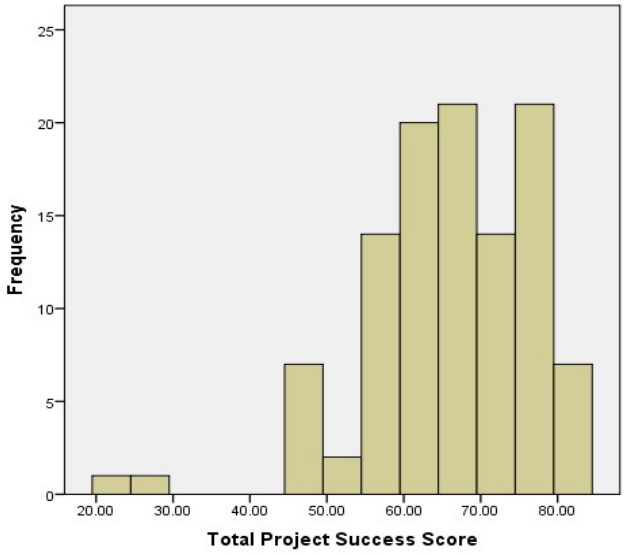

Fig. 1. Project success score

According to the data, 63% (*n = 68*) were male and 37% (*n = 40*) of participants were female. Of the participant population, 6.5% (*n = 7*) were between 18 and 24 years old, while 47.2% (*n = 51*) were between 25 and 34 years old. Thirty-eight percent (*n = 41*) were between 35 and 44 years old, 6.5% (*n = 7*) were between 45 and 54 years old, and finally, only 1.9% (*n =2*) were between 55 and 64 years old. There were no participants in ranges over 65, see Fig. 2 regarding age distribution. As it is shown, there is a higher representation of a younger group age of respondents. The final question was about the location of participants. From 108 respondents, 57 were from Albania, and 51 from Kosovo.

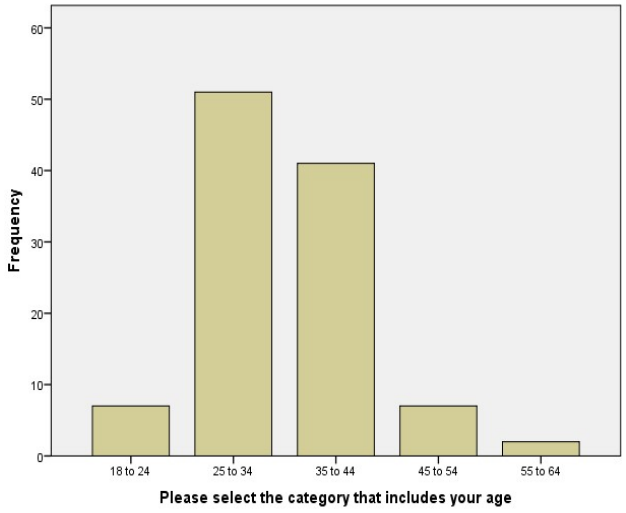

Fig. 2. Frequency of age distribution

In Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 it is demonstrated that data fulfilled the assumption of homoscedasticity.

Based on simple linear regression analysis, project managers' age did not significantly predict project success. The conclusion is that the null hypothesis could not be rejected at an alpha level of 0.05. The null hypothesis was the following: *There is no significant relationship between project managers' age and project success.*

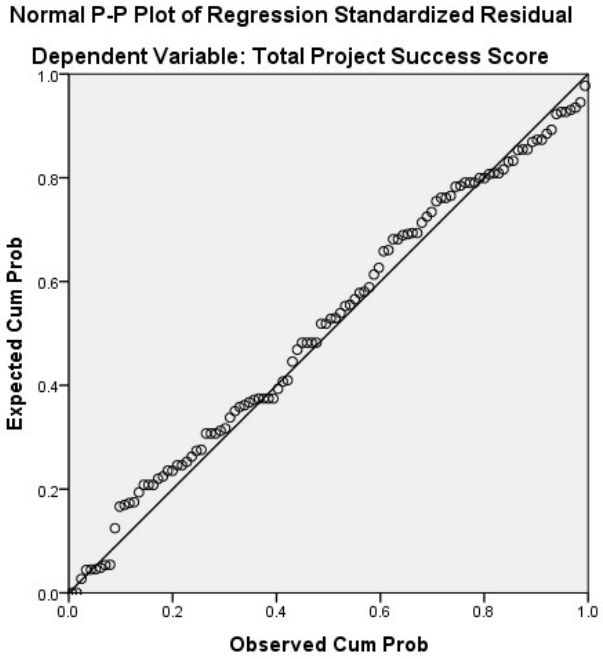

Fig. 3. P-P plot on project success scores

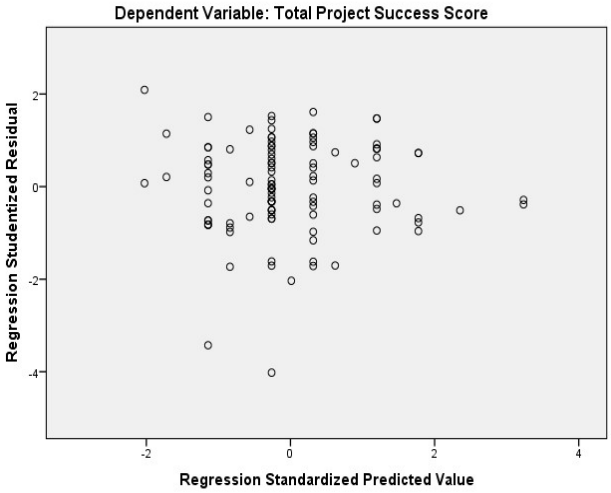

Fig. 4. Scatterplot of project success residual-predicted dependent values

5. Discussions and Conclusions

Project managers' age does not have a critical impact on the success of a project, as shown on simple linear regression analysis in Table 1. Considering the fact that lots of sources used in the literature review have suggested a possible link between project managers' age and project success, these results are startling. Seboni and Tutesigensi (2015) stated that project manager's age was a criteria used in during the selection process. Dulaimi and Langford (1999) noted that performance was impacted by age.

Table 1. Project manager's age predicting project success

Model		*B*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*Sig.*
1	(Constant)	65.618	3.523		18.627	0.000
	Project Managers' age	0.142	1.344	0.010	0.106	0.916

a. Dependent Variable: Project Success Score

This study demonstrates the need to make business owners aware that project success is not impacted by project managers' age. As the literature review shows, studies in project management have reported a range of different results in terms of the impact project manager's age has on project success. However, this study's results have not proven an important impact of project managers' age to project success for an alfa level of 0.05, a high number of studies in the literature review emphasized the impact of age on various project manager's attributes, including learning, risk-taking, performance, etc.

Researchers from the Standish Group (2014), noted a higher rate of project failures, demonstrating the need for additional research to uncover the key aspects for project success. Ko and Kirsch (2017) noted that training project managers in technical and business skills might improve success rates. Decisive information regarding the impact project managers' age have on project success is needed by business owners, so they can make effective decisions about suitable project managers to train and select for future projects to increase project success rates.

Further research should examine a larger population and expand to other countries, as this study's population was a small group of Albania and Kosovo-based project managers. Conducting a similar study by including project managers from different countries might assess if there are differences based on project managers' countries, ethnicities, or cultures. The importance of studying how project success is affected by project manager's age is emphasized by elimination of retirement age and an increased number of people being active in their later years.

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