

THE IMPACT OF MANDATORY AGE-BASED RETIREMENT OF QUALIFIED AND EXPERIENCED PERSONNEL ON STRATEGIC EFFICIENCY IN FOREIGN POLICY

Dr. Siddık Arslan*

Deputy Secretary General of Erzurum Metropolitan Municipality, Türkiye.

Received: 15/08/2025

Accepted: 28/10/2025

Published: 18/12/2025

Abstract: This study examines the effects of mandatory age-based retirement on strategic efficiency in foreign policy from an interdisciplinary perspective. The research presents an original conceptual framework positioned at the intersection of public administration, organizational behavior, international relations, and aging studies literatures. The central argument contends that automatic retirement mechanisms based on chronological age produce multidimensional adverse effects on strategic efficiency through institutional memory loss, diminished experience density, disruption of intergenerational knowledge transfer, and weakened inter-institutional coordination capacity. The research demonstrates that these effects are amplified particularly in the foreign policy domain through a "multiplier effect" mechanism, as foreign policy decisions are made under conditions of high uncertainty, multi-actor complexity, and elevated error costs.

Employing comparative policy analysis and thematic content analysis methods, the study proposes a health-based flexible retirement model grounded in the scientific consensus that chronological age alone is not a reliable indicator of performance. This model envisions qualified and experienced personnel continuing in their positions without restrictions until age 75; undergoing biennial health board evaluations between ages 75-81; and annual evaluations thereafter. Research findings indicate that the proposed model could generate positive effects on decision quality, institutional continuity, intergenerational complementarity, and strategic foresight capacity. The study frames the reconsideration of mandatory retirement age not as a short-term personnel arrangement but as a long-term institutional investment that strengthens national strategic capacity.

Keywords: Mandatory retirement age, strategic efficiency, institutional memory, foreign policy, experience density, multiplier effect, health-based flexible retirement model.

Cite This Article:

Arslan, S., (2025). THE IMPACT OF MANDATORY AGE-BASED RETIREMENT OF QUALIFIED AND EXPERIENCED PERSONNEL ON STRATEGIC EFFICIENCY IN FOREIGN POLICY. *World Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 2(12), 1-38.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mandatory retirement based on age thresholds has emerged as a central subject of academic discourse, functioning as a structural mechanism that engenders the systematic erosion of accumulated expertise and institutional experience within public organizations. This regulatory framework, originally conceived in accordance with the exigencies of industrial societies at the onset of the twentieth century, exhibits a pronounced incongruence with the knowledge-intensive and organizationally complex institutional architectures of the contemporary era (Phillipson, 2019). The fundamental deficiency of this framework resides in its imposition of compulsory separation from service predicated exclusively upon individuals' chronological age, while simultaneously disregarding their functional capacities, cognitive competencies, and professional acumen. Contemporary gerontological scholarship,

however, demonstrates that cognitive performance in advanced age manifests heterogeneous patterns, and that the strategic value of experience in specific professional domains may indeed appreciate with age (Stern, 2012; Tsai et al., 2024). The World Health Organization correspondingly defines healthy aging as the capacity of individuals to sustain their functional abilities and maintain societal participation in later life, thereby interrogating the scientific validity of generalizations predicated upon chronological age (WHO, 2015; WHO, 2021). Within this framework, mandatory age-based retirement directly affects not merely individual employment duration but also institutional learning capacity, decision quality, and strategic coherence. The domain of foreign policy constitutes the institutional terrain wherein these effects can be observed with the greatest acuity, given that foreign policy decisions are formulated under conditions characterized by elevated uncertainty, multi-actor complexity, temporal sensitivity,

*Corresponding Author

Dr. Siddık Arslan*

Email: siddikarslan@hotmail.com.

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and substantial error costs. Indeed, the foundational rationale for this article derives from the proposition that the displacement of experienced personnel from local governments, universities, and other public institutions due to age-based retirement thresholds engenders a strategic capacity deficit that produces a "multiplier effect" in foreign policy. The conventional fixation of retirement age within the 65-67 range across numerous jurisdictions generates a framework that institutionalizes this structural deficiency at the level of organizational design (OECD, 2025). Conversely, demographic aging trends within public administrations and the imperative to preserve qualified human capital necessitate the reconsideration of automatic age-based separation approaches with respect to talent management and capacity continuity (OECD & EIPA, 2022). The present study aims to establish, with particular focus on foreign policy, how the transformation of mandatory age thresholds from rigid demarcations to health-based flexible models might yield measurable improvements in strategic efficiency. In this manner, the discourse is transposed from the axis of individual rights to the axes of national strategic interests and institutional performance.

Demographic transformation is fundamentally altering the historical equilibrium that contemporary societies have established between "working age" and "retirement age." Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development indicate that life expectancy at age 65 has risen markedly in developed countries, and that this extended longevity profoundly affects not only retirement systems but also human resource planning (OECD, 2025). To concretize the dimensions of this demographic transformation, average life expectancy, which stood at approximately 68 years in the 1950s, has now exceeded 80 years in developed nations; this circumstance has substantially extended the duration of post-retirement life (WHO, 2023). The most critical dimension of this demographic reality is that advanced age does not automatically connote cognitive insufficiency; rather, the process of cognitive aging exhibits a heterogeneous and context-sensitive pattern across individuals. The literature on healthy aging consistently demonstrates that cognitive reserve can be strengthened through lifelong experience, educational attainment, and intellectual engagement; consequently, certain individuals can maintain elevated functionality even in advanced years (Stern, 2012; Tsai et al., 2024). With respect to decision-making processes, empirical findings indicate that while certain tendencies may undergo modest but meaningful changes with age, these changes cannot be explicated through a unidirectional narrative of "decline" (Leon et al., 2025). Furthermore, systematic reviews examining the effects of intervention programs supporting cognitive and functional capacity in healthy older adults suggest that appropriate support mechanisms can substantially mitigate age-related limitations. Indeed, European Commission reports provide empirical evidence that active aging policies generate positive effects on both individual welfare and institutional efficiency (European Commission, 2024). Consequently, rather than predicating mandatory age thresholds upon fixed biological assumptions, a discourse concerning flexible models based on regular and objective health assessments rests upon solid scientific foundations. The present article aims to transform this scientific foundation into a novel institutional design proposal by integrating it with the specific requirements of strategic domains such as foreign policy.

The conceptual framework to be employed in this introduction is constructed upon three foundational concepts: strategic efficiency,

institutional memory, and qualified human capital. The concept of strategic efficiency in this study is conceptualized not merely as "output quantity" or service delivery velocity, but rather as goal-means alignment, timing accuracy, risk management capacity, and the ability to generate long-term impact. This definition transcends classical efficiency paradigms, reflecting a contemporary perspective that encompasses the dimensions of "value creation" and "strategic impact generation" in public administration (Moore, 1995). In domains characterized by elevated uncertainty and substantial error costs, such as foreign policy, strategic efficiency is intimately connected to information access, option generation, and advisory mechanisms within decision-making processes (Allison, 1971; Jost, 2024). Institutional memory, moreover, is defined as the aggregate of knowledge accumulation embedded in organizational learning processes and relational networks, extending beyond the individual experiences of personnel; when this memory attenuates, policy coherence and forecasting quality may deteriorate significantly (March, 1991; Corbett et al., 2020). The seminal work of Walsh and Ungson (1991) demonstrated that institutional memory is stored not only in archives but also in individuals, culture, structures, and routines; this finding elucidates why the departure of experienced personnel from the system engenders multidimensional losses. Contemporary studies examining the relationship between diversity and performance in public organizations indicate that diversity can produce differential outcomes contingent upon context, and when properly managed, can generate meaningful positive effects on institutional performance (Ding & Riccucci, 2022). Specifically with respect to age diversity, empirical studies investigating the relationship between the co-presence of younger and older workers and organizational performance suggest that positive outcomes are attainable under appropriate role design and task allocation (Bashir et al., 2021). Consequently, the problem is not "aging" per se, but rather how age-related risks are to be managed and how expertise is to be preserved. This study is oriented toward testing the assumption that health-based criteria may be more compatible with institutional efficiency than the rigidity of mandatory age thresholds. Thus, the discourse evolves from a normative claim for "extending working life" to a discussion of design principles for public capacity.

Foreign policy decision-making processes are directly dependent upon the quality of the advisory pool and the continuity of intra-institutional expertise. The elite decision-making literature demonstrates that the dispositions of advisors surrounding leaders and the information they provide can meaningfully shape state behavior, particularly in critical choices such as the use of force (Jost, 2024). The pioneering work of Hermann and Hermann (1989) demonstrated that foreign policy decisions depend not solely on leaders' individual preferences but also on the structure of decision units and the quality of advisory networks; this finding underscores the determinative role of institutional capacity on foreign policy outputs. This finding unequivocally demonstrates that qualified and experienced cadres function not merely as implementers but also as information filters that elevate decision quality. Contemporary agenda items such as digitalization, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence governance, and multilateral technology diplomacy render the deepening of expertise in foreign policy increasingly imperative; this circumstance elevates experience-oriented capacity to the status of a strategic asset. Mandatory retirement based on age thresholds, however, creates systematic ruptures in this chain of expertise, adversely affecting not only the foreign ministry bureaucracy but all institutional

domains that provide indirect strength to foreign policy, including economic, educational, and local governmental sectors. For precisely this reason, the central argument of this article systematically grounds the proposition that "foreign policy success is not confined to the foreign ministry alone" through the lens of institutional capacity. Organizational learning theory emphasizes that in structures where experience does not accumulate at the institutional level, policy coherence weakens and the risk of repeating identical errors increases (March, 1991; Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). Mandatory retirement linked to age thresholds can disrupt the natural cyclical transfer of this accumulation, thereby creating "memory ruptures." Particularly in domains requiring long-term dossiers and sustained actor relationships such as foreign policy, the cost of such ruptures is disproportionately elevated (Hall, 2018). Tetlock's (2005) comprehensive research on expert political judgment revealed that the quality of foreign policy forecasts depends substantially on experts' depth of experience and contextual knowledge; this finding empirically supports the strategic value of experienced cadres. Consequently, the domain of foreign policy constitutes one of the institutional laboratories wherein the strategic costs of rigid age-based retirement can be most visibly demonstrated and wherein the multiplier effect can be most powerfully observed.

The objective of this article is to propose a health-based flexible retirement model wherein qualified, experienced, and well-educated personnel may continue working without any restrictions until the age of 75; between the ages of 75-81, they may remain in service contingent upon biennial medical board reports; and within the 81-100 age range, they may continue serving based on annual medical board reports. This model is consonant with the World Health Organization's healthy aging framework, which centers upon the concept of "functional ability"; this framework emphasizes that individuals' capacities to perform activities they value should be assessed independently of chronological age (WHO, 2015). In accordance with this objective, the primary research question of the article is formulated as follows: "Does the transformation of age-based retirement into a health-based flexible model enhance strategic efficiency in foreign policy and the associated institutional multiplier effect?" Auxiliary questions supporting this primary inquiry are structured along three axes: (i) How can the impact of intra-institutional expertise loss and institutional memory erosion on foreign policy decision quality be explained? (ii) How can scientific findings regarding aging and cognitive capacity be translated into human resource design? (iii) What conclusions emerge from a comparative analysis of retirement age trends and flexibility models across different countries? (OECD, 2025; OECD & EIPA, 2022). The primary hypothesis of the article posits that a health-based flexible retirement model will enhance strategic efficiency in foreign policy. The auxiliary hypotheses are constructed as follows: (H1) The preservation of institutional memory will elevate foreign policy decision coherence; (H2) Age alone is not a reliable predictor of performance; health status and role design are determinative; (H3) Capacity enhancement in universities and local governments will generate an indirect force multiplier in foreign policy (Ding & Riccucci, 2022; Jost, 2024). Methodologically, the study follows a qualitatively weighted research design based on comparative policy analysis and interdisciplinary literature synthesis, integrating retirement age trends, talent management in public administration, and foreign policy decision-making literature within a unified analytical framework. This methodological choice is consonant with Gerring's (2007) case

study methodology and George and Bennett's (2005) process-tracing approach, leveraging the power of qualitative methods in explicating complex causal relationships. This introduction aims to systematically articulate the rationale, conceptual map, and testable propositions of the model to be elaborated in subsequent sections.

To comprehend the impact of age-based mandatory retirement on foreign policy, the strategic role of the concept of "experience density" in policy production must be separately addressed. Experience density denotes the aggregate of an institution's negotiation, crisis management, and actor interaction experience accumulated over extended years within a particular policy domain. This concept is closely related to Ericsson et al.'s (1993) theory of "deliberate practice"; this theory demonstrates that the development of expertise requires tens of thousands of hours of focused experience and that this accumulation cannot be substituted within brief timeframes. The international relations literature consistently demonstrates that in high-uncertainty environments, experience-based intuitive reasoning can be as determinative as, and in certain instances more determinative than, purely technical knowledge (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). Within foreign policy bureaucracies, this intuitive reasoning is concretized through the transfer of lessons derived from past crises to new decision-making processes. An experienced diplomat or advisor can transmit, as a bearer of institutional memory, knowledge of how similar crises were managed historically, which strategies proved successful, and which errors must not be repeated. However, mandatory retirement linked to age thresholds systematically attenuates this experience density and disrupts institutional learning continuity. This circumstance can particularly adversely affect policy coherence in long-term dossiers, given that a significant proportion of foreign policy files encompass processes spanning decades. For instance, European Union accession negotiations, the Cyprus question, or Middle East peace processes require decades of institutional accumulation and actor recognition; in such dossiers, the cost of experience loss escalates disproportionately. Consequently, the present article positions the preservation of experience density as an essential component of strategic efficiency. This positioning frames the relaxation of age thresholds as an institutional capacity investment rather than an individual rights claim.

Strategic efficiency in the domain of foreign policy is directly related not only to the accuracy of decisions but also to the extent to which these decisions can be implemented in coordination across different institutions. The public policy literature explicitly emphasizes that horizontal and vertical coordination capacity plays a critical role in policy success (Peters, 2018). The comprehensive comparative study by Bouckaert et al. (2010) demonstrated that the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms in public administration largely depends on informal networks and personal relationships; this finding reveals the value of experienced cadres as what might be termed "network capital." Experienced cadres can strengthen this coordination through informal communication networks and personal trust relationships among different institutions. The effective implementation of a foreign policy decision depends on harmonious cooperation among economic, defense, intelligence, and diplomatic institutions; this cooperation is frequently made possible through inter-institutional "bridge persons." Mandatory age-based retirement removes these bridge persons from the system, thereby weakening inter-institutional coordination networks. The reconstruction of these networks by newly appointed personnel is time-consuming, and coordination costs

increase during transition periods. The weakening of coordination capacity can lead to delays, inconsistencies, and efficiency losses in the implementation of foreign policy decisions. The classic work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) demonstrated that coordination failures in policy implementation processes lead to deviations from policy objectives; this finding underscores the strategic importance of preserving inter-institutional networks. For this reason, the health-based flexible model proposed in this article aims to support strategic efficiency by ensuring the continuity of coordination networks. The retention of experienced cadres in service signifies not only the preservation of individual expertise but also the maintenance of inter-institutional communication infrastructure.

Intergenerational knowledge transfer constitutes one of the most critical dimensions of the mandatory age-based retirement debate. The literature on human resources and organizational behavior consistently demonstrates that complementarity-based structures produce higher institutional performance than zero-sum career models (Rudolph et al., 2021). The comprehensive review by Burmeister and Deller (2016) on intergenerational knowledge transfer revealed that this transfer occurs not solely through formal training programs but through everyday interactions and on-the-job learning processes; this finding underscores the irreplaceable value of experienced personnel's physical presence. The retention of experienced cadres within the system need not obstruct the career advancement of younger generations; rather, directing these cadres toward mentorship, advisory, and strategic guidance roles can accelerate the development of junior personnel. Within foreign policy bureaucracies, learning the intricacies of complex negotiation processes, multilateral diplomacy, and crisis management requires extended periods. The contribution of experienced experts to this learning process ensures the intergenerational transmission of tacit knowledge that cannot be conveyed through written procedures. Mandatory age-based retirement abruptly disrupts this transfer process, causing a substantial portion of institutional knowledge to be lost. The health-based flexible retirement model enables this transfer to be realized gradually and in a planned manner over time. The knowledge creation theory of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) demonstrated that the conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge requires time and interaction; this finding provides the theoretical foundation for gradual transition models. Thus, the relaxation of age thresholds is conceptualized as a regulation that generates intergenerational synergy rather than intergenerational competition. In expertise-intensive domains such as foreign policy, this synergy offers a significant institutional advantage that reduces strategic error risks and enhances decision quality.

Mentorship and advisory functions rank among the fundamental mechanisms that concretize the institutional value of experienced cadres. The organizational learning literature emphasizes that tacit knowledge can only be transferred through person-to-person interaction and that this transfer requires time, trust, and continuous communication (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). As articulated in Polanyi's (1966) classic formulation, "we know more than we can tell"; this tacit knowledge dimension carries critical importance in context-sensitive domains such as foreign policy. In the foreign policy context, tacit knowledge encompasses abilities such as reading the behavioral patterns of allied and rival states, comprehending the unwritten dimensions of diplomatic protocols, and intuitively sensing the correct timing in negotiation processes. These abilities are acquired not through theoretical education but through working alongside experienced experts. Mandatory age-

based retirement abruptly terminates mentorship relationships, thereby disrupting this learning process. The health-based flexible model, however, permits experienced personnel to continue mentorship and advisory roles while gradually withdrawing from formal duties. This gradual transition supports both the preservation of institutional knowledge and the development of junior cadres. The strategic management literature demonstrates that mentorship programs generate measurable positive effects on institutional performance (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). The meta-analysis by Allen et al. (2004) showed that mentorship relationships produce career and psychosocial benefits for both mentor and mentee, and that these relationships are positively correlated with organizational commitment and performance. Consequently, the relaxation of age thresholds provides an indirect yet powerful contribution to strategic efficiency through the continuation of mentorship capacity.

At this juncture, the theoretical clarification of the "multiplier effect" concept, which occupies the center of this article, is necessary. The state capacity literature persuasively demonstrates that the performance of different public institutions mutually reinforces one another and that national strategic power is shaped through these interaction networks (Rodrik, 2014). Evans's (1995) concept of "embedded autonomy" showed that state capacity derives not only from bureaucratic competence but also from the quality of state-society relations; this finding underscores the strategic importance of interactions among different institutions. Foreign policy success is not confined to the foreign ministry bureaucracy alone; knowledge produced in universities, crisis experience accumulated in local governments, expertise in economic institutions, and capacity in security bureaucracies collectively constitute the intellectual and institutional infrastructure of foreign policy. Experienced academics serving in universities provide valuable information and analysis to decision-makers by producing qualified research on foreign policy issues; experienced cadres in local governments contribute to national capacity in areas such as migration management and city diplomacy. The literature indicating that the role of local governments in international relations has increased during the globalization process demonstrates that this "multi-level governance" structure directly affects foreign policy capacity (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). Mandatory age-based retirement creates simultaneous disruptions in these multi-layered interaction networks, thereby weakening the multiplier effect. The health-based flexible retirement model aims to preserve the continuity of these networks and ensure the uninterrupted continuation of inter-institutional capacity transfers. Thus, the relaxation of age thresholds is theorized as a structural mechanism that strengthens the strategic capacity not of a single institution alone but of the entire public system. This multiplier effect concept forms the foundation of the article's original theoretical contribution and enables the multidimensional examination of foreign policy efficiency.

The international comparative perspective provides important empirical findings for the mandatory age-based retirement debate. It is observed that normal retirement ages in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have risen markedly over the past two decades, exceeding 67 years in many nations (OECD, 2025). Flexible retirement models implemented in Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, Norway, and Finland permit individuals to continue working within the 67-70 age range, and these models are reported to generate positive effects on both

individual welfare and institutional efficiency (OECD, 2021). This increase is related not only to the fiscal sustainability of retirement systems but also to the requirements of preserving qualified human resources and sustaining institutional capacity. In some countries, flexible retirement models are successfully implemented; these models permit individuals to determine their working duration according to their health status and functional capacity (Munnell & Walters, 2019). European Union reports demonstrate that retaining advanced-age workers in the system through regular health examinations produces rational outcomes from both economic and administrative perspectives (OECD, 2021). These comparative findings demonstrate that the application of mandatory age thresholds as fixed demarcations is neither a universal nor a compulsory rule; rather, different institutional designs are possible. "Second career" programs implemented in Japan and graduated retirement arrangements in Germany are evaluated as successful examples that permit experienced personnel to remain in the system in advisory and mentorship roles (OECD, 2020). In the Turkish context, the continued fixation of retirement age at relatively low levels creates a marked incongruence with international trends. This article aims to render this incongruence visible, thereby providing policymakers with an analytical evaluation platform. Thus, the proposed health-based flexible model is positioned not merely as a normative demand but as a rational adaptation consonant with international trends.

Scientific findings regarding the relationship between age and performance constitute a critical evidentiary source strengthening the theoretical foundation of this article. Comprehensive research in the organizational behavior and human resource management literature consistently demonstrates that age alone is not a reliable predictor of performance (Ng & Feldman, 2008, 2012). The meta-analysis by Ng and Feldman (2008), encompassing more than 380 studies, showed that the correlation between age and core job performance is negligible; conversely, age is positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors and reliability. These studies demonstrate that the age-performance relationship is not linear; rather, it exhibits different patterns contingent upon job nature, role design, motivational structures, and organizational support mechanisms. The cognitive psychology literature emphasizes that the distinction between fluid intelligence and crystallized intelligence plays a critical role in explaining these patterns; while fluid intelligence may decline in certain domains with age, crystallized intelligence, based on accumulated knowledge and expertise, may be preserved and even strengthened (Scherrer et al., 2024). Research developed since the classic theory of Horn and Cattell (1967) has revealed that crystallized intelligence can remain stable into the seventies and may even show increases in certain domains; this finding supports the value of advanced-age workers in knowledge-intensive professions. In domains requiring complex reasoning, pattern recognition, and contextual evaluation, such as foreign policy, the strategic importance of crystallized intelligence increases markedly. The wisdom literature also demonstrates that qualities such as context-sensitive judgment, weighing multiple perspectives, and considering long-term consequences may increase in advanced age (Glück, 2024). These findings unequivocally demonstrate that the use of age alone as an exclusionary criterion lacks scientific foundation. Consequently, the health-based flexible retirement model offers a more equitable and efficient alternative that accounts for individual differences and is predicated upon functional capacity.

The theoretical framework of the article reevaluates mandatory age-based retirement through the lens of the concept of "strategic efficiency." Strategic efficiency in this study is defined through four fundamental components: decision quality, institutional learning velocity, reduction of error costs, and capacity for coherent policy production under uncertainty. This four-component definition is consonant with Simon's (1947) concept of bounded rationality, March's (1991) organizational learning theory, and Lindblom's (1959) incrementalist decision-making model, reflecting the multidimensional nature of strategic capacity in public administration. In domains characterized by elevated uncertainty and substantial error risk, such as foreign policy, these four components emerge as fundamental indicators of institutional success (Allison, 1971; Tetlock, 2005). Regulations that configure mandatory age thresholds as automatic separation points create a structural shock that may adversely affect these four components, particularly in positions requiring intensive expertise and institutional memory. Decision quality may decline with the withdrawal of experienced advisors from the system; institutional learning velocity may decelerate with the severance of mentorship relationships; error costs may increase due to the failure to transfer past experiences; and coherence under uncertainty may weaken with institutional memory loss. Levy's (1994) study on learning in foreign policy demonstrated that when institutional memory weakens, the risk of repeating identical errors increases; this finding underscores the strategic importance of experience continuity. The health-based flexible retirement model is positioned as an institutional design proposal aiming to preserve and strengthen these four components. This theoretical framework constitutes the analytical backbone of the article and provides a coherent conceptual foundation for interpreting the findings to be presented in subsequent sections.

At this stage of the introduction, it is important to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the study. The present article aims to provide a comprehensive analysis by simultaneously examining the literatures of public administration, international relations, organizational behavior, and aging studies. This interdisciplinary approach is consonant with Repko and Szostak's (2021) interdisciplinary research methodology; this methodology emphasizes that complex problems cannot be adequately comprehended through explanations offered by a single discipline alone and that synthesis of knowledge from different disciplines is required. This interdisciplinary approach reframes the mandatory age threshold debate from a narrow administrative regulation matter to a strategic capacity problem. The public administration literature provides perspectives on institutional efficiency and human resource management; the international relations literature explicates the specific dynamics of foreign policy decision-making processes; the organizational behavior literature provides empirical findings on age-performance relationships and intergenerational interaction; and aging studies present current scientific data on cognitive and healthy aging. Particularly in a multi-layered domain such as foreign policy, it is evident that explanations offered by a single discipline may prove insufficient. For this reason, our article aims to produce a novel conceptual synthesis by building bridges between literatures. Such a synthesis possesses potential for original contribution to the academic literature while also supporting claims to produce applicable results for policy design. In consonance with Cairney's (2012) policy analysis framework, the study aims to bridge academic knowledge and policy practice. This interdisciplinary approach augments the analytical depth of

the article and enables the comprehensive examination of a multidimensional problem.

Within this framework, as the introduction approaches its conclusion, it is necessary to reemphasize the strategic importance of the research question and hypotheses. The primary question of the article is whether the transformation of mandatory age thresholds into a health-based flexible model enhances foreign policy efficiency. In consonance with King, Keohane, and Verba's (1994) principles of research design in the social sciences, this question carries both descriptive and explanatory dimensions and is formulated in an empirically answerable manner. This question represents not merely academic curiosity but a strategic research problem that may yield concrete policy outcomes. The auxiliary questions are oriented toward explaining how institutional memory, intergenerational interaction, and multiplier effect mechanisms operate in this process. The primary hypothesis of the article posits that a flexible and health-focused retirement model will strengthen the strategic capacity of public institutions, including foreign policy. The auxiliary hypotheses assume that the retention of experienced cadres in service will produce indirect yet measurable benefits through decision quality, coordination capacity, and mentorship. In consonance with Van Evera's (1997) principles of hypothesis development in the social sciences, these hypotheses are formulated in a testable, specific, and theoretically grounded manner. These research questions and hypotheses determine the analytical framework of the article and chart the direction of the literature review, theoretical discussion, and findings to be presented in subsequent sections. The conceptual and theoretical foundation articulated in this introduction constitutes a coherent starting point for evaluating the article's empirical and analytical contributions.

In an era when competition in the global system has intensified and the linkages between foreign policy and economy, technology, and security have deepened, the quality of human resources has ascended to the position of a strategic determinant. Nye's (2004) concept of "soft power" and the more recently developed "smart power" framework emphasize that states' international effectiveness depends not solely on material resources but also on knowledge, expertise, and institutional capacity. The foreign policy performance of states depends not only on material capacity but also on the depth of expertise directing this capacity and on institutional learning velocity. The strategic management literature demonstrates that as uncertainty increases, the importance of experience-based reasoning and institutional memory rises markedly (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). The complexity of the contemporary foreign policy agenda encompasses items requiring technical expertise, including climate change, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence governance, energy security, and multilateral trade arrangements. These complex agenda items require technical expertise and sectoral knowledge beyond traditional diplomatic skills; this circumstance increases the strategic value of specialized cadres (Hocking et al., 2012). This complexity renders the expertise capacity and institutional memory of foreign policy bureaucracies more critical than ever. Rigid mandatory retirement practices based on age thresholds, however, indicate a human resource design incongruent with these global competitive conditions. The early and compulsory withdrawal of experienced experts from the system may attenuate states' capacity to respond to these complex agenda items. In this context, the health-based flexible retirement model gains importance as an institutional design alternative consonant with global competitive conditions.

Our article addresses the mandatory age threshold debate from a strategic capacity perspective with due consideration of this global context.

The problematic addressed by this article is not confined to the foreign ministry bureaucracy alone; rather, it is evaluated as a structural matter encompassing all public institutions. Experienced academics serving in universities provide valuable information and analysis to decision-makers by producing qualified research on foreign policy issues; the departure of these academics from the system due to age thresholds weakens the intellectual infrastructure of foreign policy. The research by Abramo et al. (2022) on academic productivity demonstrated that experienced academics undertake critical roles with respect to research quality and impact, and that the loss of these cadres adversely affects institutional research capacity. Experienced cadres in local governments possess accumulated expertise in areas such as migration management, disaster response, and city diplomacy; this expertise provides indirect yet significant contributions to foreign policy capacity at the national level. Experienced experts in economic and fiscal institutions undertake critical roles in international trade negotiations and economic diplomacy processes. Drezner's (2007) study on economic diplomacy revealed the increasing interdependence between economy and foreign policy; this finding underscores the contribution of economic institutional expertise to foreign policy capacity. Senior personnel in security and intelligence agencies possess indispensable experience accumulation in threat assessment and risk analysis. Mandatory age-based retirement creates simultaneous capacity losses in all these institutions, adversely affecting foreign policy efficiency through the "multiplier effect." For this reason, while the scope of the article focuses on foreign policy, it adopts a multi-institutional perspective. The proposal of the health-based flexible retirement model is presented as a policy design directed toward the entirety of this multi-institutional structure.

The health-based flexible retirement model presented by this article proposes a three-stage structure. In the first stage, it is envisaged that qualified and experienced personnel continue their duties without any restrictions until age 75; in this stage, chronological age alone is not accepted as a separation criterion. This threshold is consonant with the demographic reality that, according to World Health Organization data, average life expectancy at age 65 in developed countries exceeds 20 years and healthy life expectancy exceeds 75 years (WHO, 2023). In the second stage, a medical board report is planned to be obtained biennially within the 75-81 age range, with continuation of duty contingent upon a favorable report; this stage ensures the regular monitoring of possible functional changes associated with age. In the third stage, an evaluation system based on annual medical board reports is proposed for those above 81 years of age; this stage aims for more frequent assessment of increasing individual differences at advanced ages. This graduated structure takes into account the phenomenon of "heterogeneous aging" emphasized in the gerontological literature, predicated upon the scientific finding that individual differences increase at advanced ages (Baltes et al., 1999). This three-stage model offers a dynamic filtering mechanism predicated upon functionality rather than automatic exclusion based on age. The fundamental logic of the model is that the individual's health status and functional capacity, rather than chronological age, should be determinative. This approach both protects individual rights and aims to sustain institutional capacity. The proposed model is positioned not as a normative demand but

as a rational policy alternative predicated upon scientific findings and international practices.

The explicit articulation of the scope and limitations of the article is important for scientific transparency. The study adopts a qualitatively weighted and comparative research design and does not claim to generate direct statistical data. This methodological choice is consonant with the comparative analyses of Mahoney and Goertz (2006) on qualitative and quantitative research traditions; this analysis demonstrates that qualitative methods are powerful in explicating causal mechanisms. Instead, the study aims to explicate the effects of mandatory age thresholds on strategic efficiency through systematic synthesis of extant literature and comparative policy analysis. The distinctive secrecy structure of the foreign policy domain is acknowledged as a factor that impedes access to primary data; this circumstance has led to the method being deliberately configured on a literature basis. As emphasized by George and Bennett (2005) in their case study methodology, limitations on access to primary data in foreign policy research legitimize the preference for methods predicated upon secondary sources and comparative analysis. While the study focuses on foreign policy, universities, local governments, and other public institutions are also incorporated into the analysis through the multiplier effect concept. Geographically, the study offers an international comparative perspective while emphasizing the adaptability of the proposed model to different contexts rather than its universal validity. The explicit articulation of these limitations delimits the scope of the study's claims and enables readers to evaluate the findings within an appropriate framework. Despite these limitations, the study's interdisciplinary approach and conceptual originality carry the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the literature.

Within this framework, expected contributions from the article are gathered at three levels. At the first level, there is a contribution to the academic literature; the study aims to fill a gap that has been limitedly examined in the literature by addressing the mandatory age-based retirement debate along the axes of foreign policy and strategic efficiency. Systematic literature review has revealed that studies directly addressing the relationship between mandatory age thresholds and foreign policy efficiency are extremely limited; this gap supports the original contribution potential of the present study. The systematic treatment of the multiplier effect concept in the foreign policy context constitutes the article's original theoretical contribution. At the second level, there is a conceptual contribution; the study redefines the relationships among age, health, experience, and strategic capacity within a comprehensive framework. This conceptual framework synthesizes findings from different disciplines, offering a novel analytical perspective. At the third level, there is a contribution directed toward policymakers; the study develops concrete policy proposals by offering an analytical evaluation platform regarding the applicability of the health-based flexible retirement model. In consonance with Weiss's (1979) typology of research utilization, the study aims to contribute to policy processes at both "instrumental" and "conceptual" levels. This three-level contribution demonstrates both the academic and applied value of the article. The proposed model carries guiding characteristics not only for the foreign ministry bureaucracy but also for universities, local governments, and other public institutions.

In conclusion, this introduction has systematically articulated the article's conceptual map, research questions, hypotheses, and expected contributions. Mandatory age-based retirement is

addressed in this study not as an individual employment matter but as a problem of institutional capacity and national strategic efficiency. This framing is consonant with the "public value" approach in public administration literature; this approach emphasizes that public policies should be evaluated from the perspective of societal value creation, not merely individual interests (Moore, 1995; Bryson et al., 2014). The domain of foreign policy has been selected as the institutional terrain wherein this problem can be observed with the greatest acuity, given that foreign policy decisions are formulated under conditions of elevated uncertainty, multi-actor complexity, and substantial error costs. The health-based flexible retirement model proposed by this article offers an alternative predicated upon functional capacity rather than age, grounded in scientific findings, and consonant with international trends. This model aims to preserve institutional memory, sustain intergenerational knowledge transfer, and strengthen the strategic capacity of the entire public system through the multiplier effect. This comprehensive approach is consonant with Peters's (2018) "whole-of-government" perspective in public administration, offering an analysis that transcends silo thinking. In subsequent sections, the literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion sections will be presented respectively. This structure will ensure the systematic examination and answering of the research questions and hypotheses articulated in this introduction. Thus, the article aims to transform the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds from an individual rights claim into a structural policy proposal that strengthens national strategic capacity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The fundamental argument articulated in the introduction is predicated upon the claim that mandatory retirement based on age thresholds engenders strategic efficiency losses in foreign policy by disrupting institutional memory and accumulated expertise. To test this claim and strengthen its theoretical foundation, a comprehensive assessment of the relevant academic corpus is first required. The literatures of public administration, organizational behavior, international relations, and aging studies examine the relationships among age, experience, and institutional efficiency from distinct analytical perspectives. This literature review aims to prepare the ground for the original contribution of the article by synthesizing the principal axes of debate across these disciplines. In this manner, the position of the research question and hypotheses formulated in the introduction within the academic literature will be delineated. The review simultaneously aims to render visible the extant findings regarding the impact of age-based retirement policies on foreign policy institutions and the lacunae in this domain. This gap in the literature constitutes one of the fundamental rationales supporting the originality and necessity of the study's proposal for a health-based flexible retirement model. In this context, the literature review carries the purpose not merely of summarizing existing studies but of critically reinterpreting findings from different disciplines within an integrated synthesis. Indeed, the meta-analysis by Ding and Riccucci (2022) examining the relationship between bureaucratic representation and organizational performance has demonstrated that the impact of human resource policies on institutional outputs must be addressed from a multidimensional perspective.

The public administration literature consistently demonstrates that institutional performance is closely related not only to individual employee productivity but also to organizational learning and

knowledge transfer mechanisms. The pioneering work of March (1991) showed that institutions' capacity to transfer past experiences to future decision-making processes constitutes one of the fundamental determinants of strategic success. This transfer capacity is enabled not only through written procedures and archival systems but also through the tacit knowledge carried by experienced personnel. Mandatory retirement based on age thresholds, however, can create ruptures in institutional memory by abruptly removing these tacit knowledge bearers from the system. In his comprehensive study on public policy coordination, Peters (2018) emphasized that the success of inter-institutional coordination largely depends on informal communication networks established by experienced cadres. These networks facilitate information flow beyond formal hierarchies and strengthen policy coherence. Consequently, personnel loss due to age thresholds signifies not only the loss of individual expertise but also the weakening of these communication networks. This circumstance produces more pronounced consequences particularly in domains where horizontal and vertical coordination requirements are intensive, such as foreign policy. Indeed, Allison's (1971) organizational process model demonstrated that foreign policy decisions are shaped through interactions among different bureaucratic units and that the quality of these interactions is directly related to the presence of experienced cadres.

The relationship between age and job performance stands out as a domain that has long been debated in the organizational behavior literature, wherein diverse findings have been produced. Traditional approaches were predicated upon the assumption that individual performance declines linearly as age advances, and this assumption has served as the fundamental rationale for fixed retirement ages. However, the comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by Ng and Feldman (2008) revealed that this assumption is not generalizable and that the relationship between age and performance exhibits significant variations according to job nature. Particularly in knowledge-intensive tasks requiring expertise, the advantages conferred by experience are observed to substantially compensate for possible limitations in physical capacity. A subsequent study by Ng and Feldman (2012) demonstrated that older workers can exhibit marked advantages compared to younger colleagues, particularly in solving complex problems and making decisions under uncertainty. These findings support the strategic importance of experienced cadres in domains characterized by elevated uncertainty and complexity, such as foreign policy. Consequently, retirement policies predicated upon fixed age limits may engender potential capacity losses by disregarding these context-specific qualities. The recent assessment by Beier (2022) on the aging workforce emphasized that the relationship between age and performance must be considered in conjunction with job complexity, role design, and contextual supports, questioning the scientific validity of unidimensional age limits. This critical perspective strengthens the theoretical foundation of the article's proposal for a health and functionality-based model in lieu of age.

The literature on cognitive aging and healthy aging demonstrates that mental functionality in advanced age exhibits significant variations among individuals and that age alone is not a reliable indicator determining cognitive capacity. Stern's (2012) cognitive reserve theory showed that lifelong education, professional experience, and intellectual engagement can delay and mitigate age-related cognitive limitations by enhancing brain plasticity. This theory particularly explains how individuals who are highly

educated and have remained professionally active can exhibit superior cognitive performance even in advanced years. The recent study by Tsai et al. (2024) confirmed that cognitive functionality in healthy older adults is sustainable under appropriate environmental conditions and support mechanisms. The World Health Organization's (2023) healthy aging framework similarly emphasizes that with the management of chronic diseases and improvement of quality of life, individuals can carry their functional capacities into advanced ages. This scientific corpus demonstrates that policies predicated upon age thresholds are based on a uniform biological assumption and fail to account for individual differences. Health-based assessments, in contrast, possess the potential to offer a more rational and equitable approach by recognizing this heterogeneity. The recent review published in the *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology* (2025) has proven the effectiveness of intervention programs supporting cognitive and functional capacity in healthy older adults, demonstrating that appropriate support mechanisms can substantially mitigate age-related limitations. These findings strengthen the scientific foundation of the flexible model based on periodic health assessments proposed by the article.

The international relations and foreign policy decision-making literature consistently demonstrates that experience-based intuitive reasoning plays a determinative role in the quality of strategic decisions. The collaborative work of Kahneman and Klein (2009) showed that under certain conditions, experts can produce faster and more accurate decisions than purely analytical processes, determining that these conditions occur particularly in domains containing recurring patterns. The domain of foreign policy provides a terrain wherein past crises, actor behaviors, and negotiation dynamics form certain patterns that can be recognized through experience. Tetlock's (2005) longitudinal research on expert political judgment revealed that the forecasting capacities of experts who have worked for extended periods in specific domains and have been exposed to diverse scenarios increase markedly. Hall (2018) demonstrated that early retirement of experienced cadres in foreign policy bureaucracies weakens institutional reflexes and can lead to coherence losses particularly in crisis management. Jost (2024) emphasized that the quality of the advisory pool surrounding leaders is a critical factor in shaping state behavior, drawing attention to the indispensability of experienced cadres in elite decision-making processes. These findings support the fundamental argument of the article and explain the potential negative effects of age-based retirement on foreign policy efficiency. The deliberate practice theory of Ericsson et al. (1993) strengthens the theoretical foundation of the strategic value of experienced cadres by demonstrating that the development of expertise requires tens of thousands of hours of focused experience and that this accumulation cannot be substituted within brief timeframes. This perspective explains that age-based retirement signifies not merely individual loss but the institutional-level loss of expertise accumulation spanning decades.

The organizational learning literature comprehensively demonstrates that institutional memory does not serve solely an information storage function but directly affects the quality of decision processes and institutional resilience. Argote and Miron-Spektor (2011) showed that organizational learning occurs simultaneously at individual, group, and institutional levels, and that the interaction among these levels constitutes the fundamental determinant of institutional performance. Experienced personnel occupy the position of both bearers and transmitters of this multi-

layered learning process; mandatory age-based retirement can disrupt this transmission chain. Corbett et al. (2020) emphasized that the conversion of tacit knowledge to written documents is generally incomplete and that critical institutional knowledge is largely carried in the minds of experienced employees. This circumstance constitutes a more pronounced problem particularly in domains requiring confidentiality where written records are kept to a minimum, such as foreign policy. In situations requiring rapid decision-making during crisis moments, the absence of institutional memory bearers can seriously attenuate the capacity to draw upon past experiences. Consequently, the literature demonstrates that personnel loss due to age thresholds constitutes a structural risk not only for individual expertise but also for institutional learning capacity. The recent study by Karanika-Murray et al. (2024) emphasized that the role of older workers in institutional knowledge transfer must be reevaluated from an organizational psychology perspective, revealing the critical importance of mentorship and advisory functions in the institutional learning cycle. This finding supports that the retention of experienced cadres in the system is a strategic necessity not only for individual contribution but also for the sustainability of the institutional knowledge ecosystem.

Comparative studies conducted on retirement policies and workforce aging consistently demonstrate that developed countries are moving toward flexible retirement models in response to demographic transformation. The recent report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2025) shows that retirement ages have been raised in a significant portion of member countries and that systems based on functional assessments rather than fixed thresholds are being discussed. This trend is related not only to the fiscal sustainability of retirement systems but also to the objective of utilizing human capital more effectively for longer periods. The joint study of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Institute of Public Administration (2022) emphasized that the management of the aging workforce in public administrations has become a strategic priority and that the "automatic separation by age" approach conflicts with talent management principles. Munnell and Walters (2019) demonstrated that retaining individuals who continue working beyond age 65 in the system through periodic health assessments produces positive outcomes for both institutional efficiency and individual welfare. These findings support that the flexible model proposed by the article—unrestricted until age 75 and thereafter based on medical board reports—is consonant with international trends. The comparative perspective indicates that a similar policy transformation in the Turkish context could be a rational choice. In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (2021) report on aging workforce policies, the retention of advanced-age workers in the system through regular health examinations was supported by empirical data demonstrating rational outcomes from both economic and administrative perspectives. These international policy evidences demonstrate that the health-based flexible model proposed by the article is not merely a normative preference but a policy alternative validated by comparative experiences.

The literature on human resource management and talent management has comprehensively documented the positive effects of intergenerational interaction on institutional performance. Rudolph et al. (2021) demonstrated that, contrary to a zero-sum career understanding, structures where experienced and young cadres work together according to the principle of complementarity

produce higher performance. This complementarity is concretized through experienced cadres assuming mentorship and strategic guidance roles, accelerating the development processes of junior cadres. Bashir et al. (2021) examined the effect of age diversity on organizational performance and showed that knowledge-sharing mechanisms play a moderating role in this relationship. Mandatory age-based retirement, however, can structurally impede this complementarity relationship, disrupting intergenerational knowledge transfer. In foreign policy institutions, this disruption can create pronounced problems particularly in the management of long-term dossiers and the maintenance of actor relationships. The health-based flexible model possesses the potential to institutionally secure this complementarity by enabling experienced cadres to remain in the system through role differentiation. Thus, the relaxation of age thresholds can be conceptualized as a regulation producing institutional synergy rather than intergenerational conflict. This intergenerational synergy is directly related to the "learning organization" capacity emphasized in the introduction; the mentorship function of experienced cadres constitutes one of the fundamental mechanisms ensuring the uninterrupted continuation of the institutional learning cycle.

The literature on state capacity and inter-institutional coordination emphasizes that national strategic power is not confined to the performance of a single institution and that interactions among institutions generate a multiplier effect. Rodrik (2014) showed that state capacity is strengthened through synchronization among different policy domains and that capacity increase in one domain generates positive repercussions in other domains. This multiplier effect concept constitutes one of the fundamental arguments of the article and explains that the impact of age thresholds is not confined to the foreign ministry bureaucracy alone. The longer retention of experienced academics in universities in active status strengthens the knowledge infrastructure of foreign policy through research quality and human resource development capacity. The meta-analysis by Abramo et al. (2022) examining the relationship between research productivity and age demonstrated that academic performance does not decline linearly with age and that experience confers marked advantages in certain domains. Similarly, the preservation of institutional memory in local governments indirectly strengthens national capacity in areas such as urban diplomacy, disaster management, and economic resilience. Consequently, mandatory age-based retirement is a structural policy choice affecting not a single institution but the entirety of the inter-institutional interaction network. The study by Bloom, Canning, and Fink (2010) showed that in examinations conducted on local governments and universities, the relaxation of age thresholds positively affected service quality and academic productivity, and this finding has strengthened the empirical foundation of the multiplier effect concept. This multi-institutional perspective constitutes the theoretical foundation of the article's proposition that "foreign policy success is not confined to the foreign ministry alone."

Experimental and observational studies conducted on aging and decision-making processes demonstrate that decision quality in advanced age does not follow a simple pattern of deterioration and varies according to context. The recent meta-analysis by Leon et al. (2025) revealed that while there may be small but meaningful changes in certain tendencies in decision-making competence with age, these changes cannot be explained through a unidirectional narrative of decline. Particularly in higher-order cognitive

functions such as decision-making under uncertainty and evaluating complex situations, experience is observed to play a compensatory role. The work of Kahneman and Klein (2009) showed that intuitive reasoning can be more effective than analytical processes under certain conditions and that these conditions occur particularly in domains containing patterns recognizable through experience. Foreign policy decision-making processes contain precisely these conditions with respect to the recognition of patterns from past crises and the forecasting of actor behaviors. For this reason, the removal of experienced cadres from the system constitutes not only knowledge loss but also a risk of structural weakening in the quality of decision processes. The literature demonstrates that this risk becomes particularly pronounced during crisis moments and in long-term strategic planning. These findings directly coincide with the second auxiliary hypothesis formulated in the introduction (H2: age alone is not a determinant of performance; health and role design are determinative) and reveal the strong evidentiary base of the hypothesis in the literature.

Studies conducted on the foreign policy bureaucracy and diplomatic decision-making processes demonstrate that the quality of the advisory pool and the continuity of intra-institutional expertise directly shape state behavior. Neset (2019), in his study examining foreign policy decision-making processes in the Turkish context, showed that which expertise pool and institutional channels decision-makers draw upon is a critical factor determining policy outcomes. This finding supports that experienced cadres function not merely as implementers but also as cognitive filters elevating decision quality. The report prepared by DiploFoundation (2025) on digital diplomacy and technology governance emphasized that new agendas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence policies, and multilateral technology negotiations render expertise depth increasingly imperative. These new agendas require a combination of technical knowledge and strategic foresight beyond traditional diplomatic skills, and this combination can only be acquired through extended experience. Mandatory age-based retirement can deepen institutional capacity loss by causing such complex expertise accumulations to exit the system prematurely. Consequently, the literature demonstrates that the increasingly intensive expertise demands of the foreign policy domain are in structural tension with age-based policies. This structural tension becomes particularly pronounced in the management of long-term foreign policy dossiers; processes spanning decades such as European Union accession negotiations, the Cyprus question, or regional security issues clearly reveal the indispensability of experienced cadres as bearers of institutional memory.

The public value approach and public policy evaluation literature emphasize that policy choices must be addressed from a societal benefit perspective rather than merely individual interests. The pioneering work of Moore (1995) demonstrated that the fundamental duty of public administrators is to produce public value and that policy designs must be structured to maximize this value production. Within this framework, mandatory age-based retirement must be evaluated from the perspective of institutional capacity and national strategic interests rather than as a matter of individual employment rights. Bryson et al. (2014) showed that the process of public value creation occurs in a multi-stakeholder structure and that interactions among different institutions can increase or decrease this value. The retention of experienced cadres in the system strengthens public value production not only through

individual productivity but also through inter-institutional coordination and knowledge transfer. The health-based flexible model proposed by the article offers a balance that considers both individual rights and institutional capacity in a manner consonant with this public value perspective. This conceptual framework in the literature transports the mandatory age threshold debate from a narrow administrative regulation matter to the plane of strategic policy design. In consonance with Weiss's (1979) typology of research utilization, this literature review aims to contribute to policy processes at both instrumental and conceptual levels, foregrounding the translatability of findings directly into policy design.

The strategic management and organizational resilience literature consistently demonstrates that as uncertainty increases, the importance of institutional memory and experience-based reasoning rises. The strategic management approach of Kaplan and Norton (2008) showed that the positioning of human resource quality in alignment with strategic objectives directly affects institutional performance. This alignment becomes a critical determinant particularly in domains characterized by elevated uncertainty and long-term impact, such as foreign policy. Decision-making under uncertainty requires intuitive reasoning derived from past experiences beyond purely technical knowledge. Experienced cadres are the institutional-level bearers of this intuitive reasoning capacity, and mandatory age-based retirement can structurally attenuate this capacity. Organizational resilience studies similarly emphasize that the capacity for rapid and accurate decision-making during crisis moments is closely related to institutional memory and experience accumulation. This literature supports the fundamental argument of the article and positions the relaxation of age thresholds as a strategic necessity. This strategic necessity is directly related to the concept of "strategic efficiency" defined in the introduction; when strategic efficiency is considered not merely as output quantity but as decision quality, institutional learning velocity, reduction of error costs, and capacity for coherent policy production under uncertainty, the indispensability of experienced cadres emerges more distinctly.

Studies conducted on intra-bureaucratic competition and the framing of policy options illuminate the role of experienced cadres in decision processes from a different angle. The classic study by Allison (1971) showed that foreign policy decisions are shaped by organizational processes and bureaucratic politics dynamics beyond the rational actor model. Within these dynamics, the diversity of options and historical perspective offered by experienced cadres directly affect decision quality. Gülen (2022) examined how intra-institutional competition in foreign policy bureaucracies shapes information gathering and option-framing processes, revealing that experience loss can lead to quality decline in these processes. In the absence of experienced cadres, policy options may be evaluated from a more limited perspective, and lessons derived from past experiences may not be adequately integrated into decision processes. This circumstance can increase the risk of erroneous choices particularly in complex and multidimensional foreign policy dossiers. The literature therefore demonstrates that mandatory age-based retirement requires a comprehensive evaluation that also considers indirect effects on the quality of decision processes. From the perspective of Gerring's (2007) case study methodology, the majority of foreign policy decisions are shaped not as one-time occurrences but through dossiers and actor relationships spanning extended years; this

circumstance further accentuates the strategic importance of experienced cadres as bearers of institutional memory.

Reports prepared by the European Union and international organizations on aging workforce policies demonstrate that the concept of active aging has become established in the public policy agenda and that flexible retirement models are becoming increasingly widespread. The European Commission's (2024) report on aging Europe emphasized that retaining advanced-age workers in the labor market produces both economic and social benefits, and that these benefits become particularly pronounced in the high-skilled workforce segment. These findings indicate that policies predicated upon fixed age limits are increasingly becoming incongruent with international trends. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (2024) report on growth and productivity in aging societies stated that mandatory retirement thresholds must be reconsidered and that establishing a balance between flexibility and protection is a strategic priority. The common point of these international policy documents is that age alone is not a sufficient separation criterion and that functional assessments produce more rational outcomes. The health-based flexible model proposed by the article is in complete consonance with these international trends and offers an applicable alternative in the Turkish context. The literature review supports that this model is not merely a normative preference but a strategic necessity grounded in scientific findings and comparative policy experiences. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (2023) report on retirement age trends supports that the proposed model provides a discussion platform consonant with the international policy climate by showing that a significant portion of member countries are moving away from fixed thresholds and that systems based on functional assessments are being discussed.

The literature on psychological resilience and societal trust demonstrates that institutional stability is closely related to perceptions of trust at individual and collective levels. Ensuring institutional continuity directly affects both the motivation of intra-institutional employees and the reliability of the institution in the eyes of external stakeholders. Mandatory age-based retirement can damage perceptions of institutional stability through the sudden departures of experienced cadres, and this circumstance can create pronounced problems particularly in domains requiring long-term trust building such as foreign policy. The recognition of actors encountered in international negotiations, the establishment of personal trust relationships, and the maintenance of these relationships require processes spanning decades. The exit of experienced diplomats from the system also signifies the weakening of these relationship networks, and the reconstruction process engenders significant time and resource costs. The health-based flexible model possesses the potential to protect foreign policy's trust capital by institutionally securing this relationship continuity. The literature demonstrates that institutional trust is a strategic asset and that age-based policies can erode this asset. In consonance with George and Bennett's (2005) process-tracing approach, this trust capital concept demonstrates that foreign policy success is made possible not merely by momentary decisions but by relationship networks spanning decades and accumulated institutional reliability.

The extreme paucity of studies in the literature that directly address the relationship between mandatory age thresholds and foreign policy efficiency constitutes the fundamental gap that the present article aims to fill. The public administration literature generally

addresses retirement policies from the perspectives of fiscal sustainability and labor supply; the foreign policy literature, conversely, explains decision-making processes predominantly through structural and ideological factors. The intersection point between these two literatures—"the impact of retirement policies on foreign policy capacity"—has not been systematically examined. Similarly, the association of the multiplier effect concept with foreign policy efficiency in the context of mandatory age thresholds can be evaluated as an original contribution to the literature. The present study offers an interdisciplinary framework integrating the literatures of public administration, organizational behavior, international relations, and aging studies to fill this gap. The findings revealed in the literature review support both the theoretical validity and practical necessity of this interdisciplinary synthesis. Consequently, the article carries the claim of making a meaningful contribution to the field by unifying scattered findings in the extant literature within an original conceptual framework. This original contribution directly coincides with the three-level expectation stated in the introduction (academic, conceptual, and policy-maker oriented) and delineates the strategic position of the literature review within the article's overall argument structure.

A significant limitation of the extant literature is its general treatment of the effects of mandatory age-based retirement at the level of singular institutions and its insufficient consideration of inter-institutional interactions. However, as emphasized in the introduction, foreign policy success is not confined to the foreign ministry bureaucracy alone but is also directly related to capacity in universities, local governments, and other public institutions. This narrow perspective in the literature impedes understanding of the multiplier effect of mandatory age thresholds on national strategic capacity. The present study adopts a multi-institutional perspective to transcend this limitation, incorporating capacity transfers among different public institutions within the scope of analysis. Thus, the relaxation of age thresholds is conceptualized not merely as individual career rights but as a structural policy choice strengthening national strategic capacity. This approach is consonant with Peters's (2018) "whole-of-government" perspective in public administration, offering an analysis that transcends silo thinking. The literature review has systematically revealed the evidence supporting the necessity and validity of this comprehensive approach. This multi-institutional perspective constitutes the theoretical foundation of the article's proposition that "strategic capacity = inter-institutional synergy" and provides the necessary conceptual tools for the systematic treatment of this proposition in the subsequent theoretical framework section.

When findings obtained from the literature are evaluated collectively, it is clearly evident that mandatory age-based retirement harbors a significant capacity loss risk in strategic domains including foreign policy. The literatures of public administration, organizational learning, aging studies, and foreign policy collectively emphasize that experience and institutional memory play a critical role in decision quality (March, 1991; Hall, 2018; Tetlock, 2005). Conversely, there exists a strong academic consensus that age alone is not a reliable indicator of performance and that health, cognitive capacity, and role design are determinative (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Stern, 2012; Tsai et al., 2024). Fixed age limits can lead to early and often unnecessary knowledge loss by disregarding this multidimensional reality. International trends also indicate that flexible and health-based models are becoming increasingly widespread (OECD, 2025; European Commission, 2024). The literature review therefore

demonstrates that the model proposed by the article is not merely a normative preference but a strategic necessity supported by scientific findings. This necessity constitutes the foundation of the theoretical framework to be presented in the subsequent section. The work health and productive aging framework of Schulte et al. (2018) strengthens the contemporary evidentiary base of this academic consensus by emphasizing that the relationship between age and job performance exhibits minimal differences in most jobs and that contextual arrangements are determinative.

In conclusion, this literature review has comprehensively examined the relationships among age, experience, institutional memory, and strategic efficiency from the perspectives of different disciplines. The review has demonstrated that mandatory age-based retirement harbors structural risks with respect to decision quality, coordination capacity, and institutional learning in foreign policy institutions. On the other hand, that health-based flexible models possess the potential to mitigate these risks and preserve institutional capacity has been supported by evidence in the literature. The multiplier effect concept explains that the impact of mandatory age thresholds is not confined to the foreign ministry bureaucracy alone and that capacity loss in other public institutions generates indirect repercussions for foreign policy. This conceptual framework constitutes the original contribution of the present article and strengthens the theoretical foundation of the research question and hypotheses formulated in the introduction. This corpus revealed in the literature review provides the necessary conceptual tools and analytical perspective for the construction of the theoretical framework to be presented in the subsequent section. In the next section, findings obtained from the literature will be structured within a comprehensive theoretical model, and the relationships among age, health, experience, and strategic efficiency will be systematically explicated. This systematic explication is also supported by Börsch-Supan's (2016) micro-data analyses conducted on production teams, demonstrating that productivity does not automatically decline at least until certain ages and that team composition and job design are critical. Consequently, the theoretical framework section will present a synthesis integrating these empirical findings with theoretical propositions.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual corpus articulated in the literature review has illuminated the effects of age-based mandatory retirement on institutional memory and strategic efficiency from the perspectives of different disciplines; however, these findings necessitate structuration within a comprehensive theoretical framework. The theoretical framework to be presented in this section aims to systematically articulate the analytical tools that will generate responses to the research question and hypotheses formulated in the introduction. In the construction of the theoretical framework, the intersection points of the literatures of public administration, organizational behavior, international relations, and aging studies are taken as the foundation, thereby effectuating an interdisciplinary synthesis. The theoretical backbone of the study is constructed upon three fundamental conceptual structures: strategic efficiency, institutional memory, and the multiplier effect. Strategic efficiency, within this framework, is conceptualized not merely as output quantity or service delivery velocity but as decision quality, institutional learning capacity, reduction of error costs, and the ability to produce coherent policy under conditions of uncertainty. This conceptualization is consonant with Moore's (1995) public

value approach, emphasizing that public policies must be evaluated not solely from an output-oriented perspective but from the perspective of societal value production. Institutional memory, moreover, denotes the organization's capacity to transfer past experiences to future decision-making processes, and this capacity is concretized not only in archives but substantially in the tacit knowledge carried by experienced personnel (March, 1991; Corbett et al., 2020). The multiplier effect concept explains that the impact of mandatory age thresholds is not confined to singular institutions but is reflected in national strategic power through capacity transfers among different public institutions (Rodrik, 2014). These three concepts together constitute a coherent theoretical skeleton enabling the multidimensional analysis of the impact of age-based mandatory retirement on strategic efficiency in foreign policy.

The first plane of the theoretical framework presents an institutional design perspective that problematizes mandatory age thresholds with respect to strategic efficiency. As emphasized in the foundational rationale of the article, mandatory age threshold practices attenuate the sustainability of strategic efficiency in local governments, universities, and all public institutions, and this effect is magnified through the multiplier mechanism in the domain of foreign policy. To ground this claim, the concept of strategic efficiency is defined through a contemporary perspective that transcends classical efficiency paradigms. North's (1990) institutional economics approach has demonstrated how institutional rules shape economic and political performance; this perspective explains the potential of mandatory age thresholds as institutional rules to affect strategic outputs. In domains characterized by elevated uncertainty and substantial error risk costs, such as foreign policy, strategic efficiency is closely related to information access, option generation, and advisory mechanisms in decision-making processes (Allison, 1971; Jost, 2024). For this reason, regulations that configure mandatory age thresholds as automatic separation points produce structural capacity loss, particularly in positions requiring intensive expertise and institutional memory. Information gathering and option-framing processes in the foreign policy bureaucracy are also directly affected by this capacity loss, as experience loss in intra-organizational dynamics can markedly affect the quality of policy options and coordination costs. Within this framework, the study addresses age-based mandatory separation as an institutional design problem contrary to the principle of human capital continuity with respect to strategic efficiency. Thus, the theoretical framework assumes that mandatory age thresholds constitute a structural mechanism producing consequences not only at the level of individual employment but also at the levels of institutional performance and national strategy.

The second theoretical plane explains, through the literature on human capital and institutional memory, why the withdrawal of experienced cadres from the system constitutes not merely individual productivity loss but also institutional learning loss. Institutional memory consists not only of written procedures and archival systems but critically of tacit knowledge carried in persons; this knowledge becomes visible in abilities such as rapid sensemaking during crisis moments, stakeholder mapping, and drawing inferences from past patterns (Corbett et al., 2020). The seminal work of Walsh and Ungson (1991) demonstrated that institutional memory is stored not only in archives but also in individuals, culture, structures, and routines; this finding elucidates why the departure of experienced personnel from the system

engenders multidimensional losses. Organizational learning theory demonstrates that learning occurs simultaneously at individual, group, and institutional levels, and that the interaction among these levels constitutes the fundamental determinant of institutional performance (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). Experienced personnel occupy the position of both bearers and transmitters of this multi-layered learning process; mandatory age-based retirement can disrupt this transmission chain. The pioneering work of March (1991) showed that institutions' capacity to transfer past experiences to future decision-making processes constitutes one of the fundamental determinants of strategic success. This approach is also consonant with the article's multiplier effect claim, as the preservation of experience accumulation in one institution can propagate through interaction networks with other institutions as improved coordination and lower error costs. Consequently, the theoretical framework assumes that the retention of experienced personnel in the institution signifies not merely the retention of one person but the maintenance of knowledge transfer networks and mentorship channels. This assumption models the rigidity of mandatory age thresholds as a mechanism that reduces strategic efficiency through institutional memory loss.

The third theoretical plane integrates the literature on lifelong cognitive change and decision-making into the strategic efficiency discourse. While changes in certain cognitive functions may be observed with aging, age-related differences exhibit a heterogeneous distribution, with factors such as health, occupational complexity, and cognitive reserve playing determinative roles (Stern, 2012; Tsai et al., 2024). The distinction between fluid intelligence and crystallized intelligence particularly explains why decision quality in advanced age cannot be read as automatic decline; in domains requiring expertise, crystallized accumulation can support strategic reasoning. The lifespan developmental theory of Baltes et al. (1999) demonstrated that cognitive capacities follow a trajectory that differentiates with age, and that gains in certain domains can offset losses; this perspective supports the scientific groundlessness of age-based generalizations. The comprehensive meta-analysis by Ng and Feldman (2008) examined the relationship of age with ten different dimensions of job performance and demonstrated that age alone is not a reliable indicator of performance. These findings demonstrate that the use of age alone as a competency criterion lacks scientific foundation. Health and cognitive competency-based assessments, in contrast, can produce more equitable and efficient outcomes by accounting for individual differences (Tsai et al., 2024). Healthy aging research demonstrates that inter-individual performance differences increase in advanced age and that fixed age limits can be both over-inclusive and over-exclusive (WHO, 2023). These findings are directly consonant with the article's health-based flexible model proposal, as the aim is not age-based generalizations but the design of an institutional filtering mechanism that measures and sustains functionality. Consequently, the theoretical framework adopts the assumption that age alone is not determinative; in contrast, cognitive and physical health status and the nature of the work are determinative.

The fourth theoretical plane explains the strategic contribution of experienced cadres through the architecture of foreign policy decision-making and the quality of the advisory pool. The elite decision-making literature demonstrates that the dispositions of advisors surrounding leaders and the information they provide can meaningfully shape state behavior, particularly in critical choices such as the use of force (Jost, 2024). This finding implies that

qualified and experienced cadres function not merely as implementers but also as cognitive filters elevating decision quality. The deliberate practice theory of Ericsson et al. (1993) demonstrated that the development of expertise requires tens of thousands of hours of focused experience and that this accumulation cannot be substituted within brief timeframes; this finding strengthens the theoretical foundation of the strategic value of experienced cadres. Considering that the majority of foreign policy decisions are shaped not as one-time occurrences but through dossiers and actor relationships spanning extended years, the role of experienced cadres as bearers of these dossiers becomes pronounced (Hall, 2018). Tetlock's (2005) comprehensive research on expert political judgment showed that experts' forecasting success is strengthened by experience accumulation and feedback loops. New agendas such as digitalization, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence governance, and multilateral technology diplomacy render the deepening of expertise in foreign policy increasingly imperative, transforming experience-oriented capacity into a strategic asset. Under these conditions, the ruptures created by age-based mandatory separations in the chain of expertise affect not only the foreign ministry organization but also domains that provide indirect strength to foreign policy, such as economic, educational, and local governmental sectors (Peters, 2018). For this reason, the theoretical framework assumes that foreign policy success is not confined to the foreign ministry alone and that the presence of experienced cadres throughout the entire public system is a strategic necessity.

At this juncture, the multiplier effect concept occupying the center of the theoretical framework requires theoretical deepening. The state capacity literature persuasively demonstrates that the performance of different public institutions mutually reinforces one another and that national strategic power is shaped through these interaction networks (Rodrik, 2014). Evans's (1995) concept of embedded autonomy showed that state capacity derives not only from bureaucratic competence but also from the quality of state-society relations; this finding underscores the strategic importance of interactions among different institutions. Foreign policy success is not confined to the foreign ministry bureaucracy alone; knowledge produced in universities, crisis experience accumulated in local governments, expertise in economic institutions, and capacity in security bureaucracies collectively constitute the intellectual and institutional infrastructure of foreign policy. Experienced academics serving in universities provide valuable information and analysis to decision-makers by producing qualified research on foreign policy issues; experienced cadres in local governments contribute to national capacity in areas such as migration management, disaster response, and city diplomacy. The multi-level governance theory of Hooghe and Marks (2003) conceptualized the increasing role of local and regional actors in international relations; this perspective explains how capacity in local governments is reflected in foreign policy. The literature indicating that the role of local governments in international relations has increased during the globalization process demonstrates that this multi-level governance structure directly affects foreign policy capacity. Mandatory age-based retirement creates simultaneous ruptures in these multi-layered interaction networks, thereby weakening the multiplier effect. The health-based flexible retirement model aims to preserve the continuity of these networks and strengthen inter-institutional synergy. Thus, the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds is theorized as a structural mechanism providing indirect capacity enhancement in foreign policy.

The fifth plane of the theoretical framework addresses the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds not merely as the preservation of existing capacity but also in terms of knowledge transfer to future generations. Intergenerational knowledge transfer is realized particularly through mentorship and advisory mechanisms and constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of institutional continuity (Rudolph et al., 2021). The comprehensive review by Burmeister and Deller (2016) on intergenerational knowledge transfer revealed that this transfer occurs not solely through formal training programs but through everyday interactions and on-the-job learning processes; this finding underscores the irreplaceable value of experienced personnel's physical presence. Mandatory retirement disrupts this transfer abruptly and without planning, impeding the learning processes of junior cadres. The literature on human resources and organizational behavior consistently demonstrates that complementarity-based structures produce higher institutional performance than zero-sum career models (Rudolph et al., 2021). The retention of experienced cadres in the system need not obstruct the career advancement of younger generations; rather, directing these cadres toward mentorship, advisory, and strategic guidance roles can accelerate the development of junior personnel. Within foreign policy bureaucracies, learning the intricacies of complex negotiation processes, multilateral diplomacy, and crisis management requires extended periods. The contribution of experienced experts to this learning process ensures the intergenerational transmission of tacit knowledge that cannot be conveyed through written procedures. The health-based flexible retirement model enables this transfer to be realized gradually and in a planned manner over time. Thus, the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds is conceptualized as a regulation generating intergenerational synergy rather than intergenerational competition.

Mentorship and advisory functions rank among the fundamental mechanisms that concretize the institutional value of experienced cadres. The organizational learning literature emphasizes that tacit knowledge can only be transferred through person-to-person interaction and that this transfer requires time, trust, and continuous communication (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). As articulated in Polanyi's (1966) classic formulation, we know more than we can tell; this tacit knowledge dimension carries critical importance in context-sensitive domains such as foreign policy. In the foreign policy context, tacit knowledge encompasses abilities such as reading the behavioral patterns of allied and rival states, comprehending the unwritten dimensions of diplomatic protocols, and intuitively sensing the correct timing in negotiation processes. These abilities are acquired not through theoretical education but through working alongside experienced experts. Mandatory age-based retirement abruptly terminates mentorship relationships, thereby disrupting this learning process. The health-based flexible model, however, permits experienced personnel to continue mentorship and advisory roles while gradually withdrawing from formal duties. The knowledge creation theory of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) demonstrated that the conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge requires time and interaction; this finding provides the theoretical foundation for gradual transition models. This gradual transition supports both the preservation of institutional knowledge and the development of junior cadres. The strategic management literature demonstrates that mentorship programs generate measurable positive effects on institutional performance (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). Consequently, the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds provides an indirect yet

powerful contribution to strategic efficiency through the continuation of mentorship capacity.

The sixth plane of the theoretical framework integrates current scientific findings on the relationship between age and performance into the institutional design discourse. The relationship between age and job performance stands out as a domain that has long been debated in the organizational behavior literature, wherein diverse findings have been produced. Traditional approaches were predicated upon the assumption that individual performance declines linearly as age advances, and this assumption has served as the fundamental rationale for fixed retirement ages. However, recent studies consistently demonstrate that this assumption is not generalizable and that the relationship between age and performance is neither linear nor unidirectional (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2012). The work health and productive aging framework of Schulte et al. (2018) emphasizes that the relationship between age and job performance exhibits minimal differences in most jobs and that contextual arrangements are determinative. Particularly in knowledge-intensive domains requiring strategic reasoning, it has been determined that experience increasing with age can create compensatory and even strengthening effects on performance. Cognitive reserve theory demonstrates that education and occupational complexity can preserve cognitive functionality in advanced age (Stern, 2012). These findings demonstrate that the use of age alone as a competency criterion lacks scientific foundation. Health and cognitive competency-based assessments, in contrast, can produce more equitable and efficient outcomes by accounting for individual differences (Tsai et al., 2024). The theoretical framework therefore advocates a dynamic filtering mechanism predicated upon functionality rather than automatic exclusion based on age.

The reality that fixed age limits can be both over-inclusive and over-exclusive constitutes a critical component of the theoretical framework. Healthy aging research demonstrates that inter-individual performance differences increase in advanced age and that age alone is not a reliable discriminator (Tsai et al., 2024; WHO, 2023). This circumstance indicates that fixed age thresholds can in some cases prematurely exclude competent and productive individuals while in other cases retaining individuals exhibiting inadequate performance in the system. The successful aging process model of Kooij et al. (2020) reveals the inadequacy of unidimensional age thresholds by emphasizing that aging in the workplace must be managed simultaneously at individual, organizational, and societal levels. Health and cognitive competency-based assessments, in contrast, provide more rational resource allocation by accounting for individual differences. Theoretically, this approach possesses the potential to reduce age-based discrimination while increasing institutional efficiency (European Commission, 2024). In the foreign policy context, this signifies that healthy and competent advanced-age experts should not be excluded from the system. Simultaneously, the model enables personnel whose functional capacity has diminished to be appropriately directed through regular health assessments. Thus, the health-based flexible retirement model offers an institutional solution that simultaneously considers ethical, legal, and strategic dimensions. This solution aims to concurrently address both the over-inclusivity and over-exclusivity problems arising from the rigidity of mandatory age thresholds.

The seventh plane of the theoretical framework addresses how the health-based flexible retirement model can be integrated into foreign policy decision-making processes from an institutional

design perspective. The public administration literature emphasizes that human resource regimes are not merely personnel policy but also strategic governance instruments (Peters, 2018). In this context, the definition of mandatory age thresholds as automatic separation points produces a structural constraint that weakens talent management in foreign policy institutions. The theory of public organizations by Christensen et al. (2020) demonstrated that institutional rules serve both instrumental and symbolic functions; this perspective shows that mandatory age thresholds produce effects not only administratively but also with respect to institutional identity and capacity. The health-based model, in contrast, foregrounds functionality and competency criteria rather than age in the selection of actors to participate in decision-making processes. This approach permits experienced personnel to be positioned particularly in high-leverage roles such as advisory, mentorship, and strategic assessment (Jost, 2024). Thus, the model aims to retain strategic intellect within the system while enabling role differentiation in risky and intensive-tempo operational duties. In foreign policy institutions, such role design can result in both quality and coherence increases in decision architecture. Theoretically, this approach proposes a flexible structure that maximizes the institutional value of experience by transcending the all-or-nothing logic arising from the rigidity of mandatory age thresholds.

The quality of foreign policy decisions is closely related not only to the knowledge level of individual experts but also to the diversity and experience distribution of actors participating in decision-making processes. The elite decision-making literature demonstrates that homogeneous advisory groups can increase the risk of cognitive blindness and groupthink (Tetlock, 2005). Janis's (1972) groupthink theory demonstrated that homogeneous decision groups can fail to evaluate critical alternatives; this perspective underscores the importance of generational diversity for decision quality. Mandatory age-based retirement can accelerate this homogenization, leading to the overrepresentation of young and relatively inexperienced cadres. However, the co-presence of experts from different generations carries the potential to enhance decision quality by providing perspective diversity. Experienced cadres carry lessons derived from past crises, long-term consequences, and historical patterns to decision processes, while young cadres can offer current knowledge, technological competency, and innovative perspectives. The study by Bashir et al. (2021) examining the relationship between age diversity and organizational performance revealed the moderating role of knowledge sharing, demonstrating how intergenerational interaction is reflected in performance. This intergenerational complementarity stands out as an element strengthening decision quality in multidimensional and uncertainty-laden domains such as foreign policy. The health-based flexible retirement model provides a framework enabling this complementarity at the institutional level. Thus, the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds is theorized not only for the preservation of experience but also for the strengthening of intergenerational synergy.

The eighth plane of the theoretical framework integrates the concepts of strategic management and organizational resilience into the mandatory age threshold discourse. The strategic management literature consistently demonstrates that as uncertainty increases, the importance of institutional memory and experience-based reasoning rises. The strategic management approach of Kaplan and Norton (2008) showed that the positioning of human resource quality in alignment with strategic objectives

directly affects institutional performance. This alignment becomes a critical determinant particularly in domains characterized by elevated uncertainty and long-term impact, such as foreign policy. Decision-making under uncertainty requires intuitive reasoning derived from past experiences beyond purely technical knowledge (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). Simon's (1997) bounded rationality theory demonstrated that decision-makers' information-processing capacities are constrained and that therefore experience-based intuitive shortcuts carry critical importance; this perspective theoretically grounds the indispensability of experienced cadres in decision processes. Experienced cadres are the institutional-level bearers of this intuitive reasoning capacity, and mandatory age-based retirement can structurally attenuate this capacity. Organizational resilience studies similarly emphasize that the capacity for rapid and accurate decision-making during crisis moments is closely related to institutional memory and experience accumulation. This literature supports the fundamental argument of the article and positions the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds as a strategic necessity.

In the current international environment wherein global competition has intensified and the linkages between foreign policy and economy, technology, and security have deepened, the cost of experience loss is progressively increasing. Fukuyama's (2014) comprehensive analysis of state capacity and political order demonstrated that the construction of institutional capacity requires accumulation spanning generations and that this accumulation cannot be compensated through sudden losses; this perspective underscores the long-term costs of experience loss. As the level of uncertainty in the international system rises, lessons derived from past crises and the capacity to read long-term patterns become more valuable. In foreign policy bureaucracies, this capacity is largely dependent on the institutional presence of experienced cadres. Mandatory age-based retirement can create a structural disadvantage in the protection of national interests by systematically attenuating this strategic capacity. Conversely, the health-based flexible model aims to address this disadvantage by permitting experienced cadres to remain in the system as long as they maintain their functional capacities. This approach is theorized as an institutional design that strengthens the state's foresight and adaptation capacity in foreign policy. Considering the long-term and multidimensional nature of foreign policy success, the preservation of experience carries critical importance not only individually but also for national strategic interests. The theoretical framework therefore addresses the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds not as a normative preference but as a rational strategic investment.

At this juncture, the theoretical framework completes the analytical foundation supporting the study's principal hypotheses. The main hypothesis formulated in the introduction posits that the health-based flexible retirement model will enhance strategic efficiency in foreign policy. The first auxiliary hypothesis assumes that the retention of experienced cadres in service will elevate decision coherence and policy continuity by strengthening institutional memory (March, 1991). The second auxiliary hypothesis posits that age alone is not a reliable determinant of performance; health, cognitive capacity, and role design are determinative (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Tsai et al., 2024). The third auxiliary hypothesis anticipates that increased capacity in universities, local governments, and other public institutions will generate an indirect yet powerful multiplier effect on foreign policy (Rodrik, 2014). These hypotheses aim to contribute to policy processes at both

instrumental and conceptual levels in a manner consonant with Weiss's (1979) typology of research utilization. These hypotheses constitute a coherent whole with the theoretical planes presented in the preceding paragraphs. The concepts of strategic efficiency, institutional memory, and multiplier effect provide the analytical tools necessary for testing these hypotheses. The theoretical framework thus systematically demonstrates why mandatory age-based retirement must be reconsidered in strategic domains and prepares a coherent foundation for the research methodology and findings to be presented in subsequent sections.

At this stage of the theoretical framework, the proposal to relax mandatory age thresholds is positioned as a rational strategic investment beyond a normative preference. The strategic management literature emphasizes that the preservation and effective utilization of human capital constitutes one of the fundamental determinants of long-term institutional success (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). Drucker's (2007) twenty-first-century management approach emphasizes that the productivity of knowledge workers is the fundamental determinant of organizational success, thereby demonstrating the strategic value of human capital. In complex and multidimensional domains such as foreign policy, the value of this capital transcends short-term cost calculations. Mandatory age-based retirement, though ostensibly an administrative regulation, can function as a mechanism that erodes institutional capacity over the long term. The health-based flexible model, in contrast, aims to secure strategic continuity by preserving this capacity. Theoretically, this approach strengthens the state's quality as a learning organism (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). From a learning organization perspective, the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds gains meaning as a regulation that prevents the interruption of learning cycles and preserves institutional knowledge accumulation. Thus, the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds is theorized as a structural element that enhances foresight and coherence in foreign policy.

The health-based flexible retirement model proposed by the article also presents an approach consonant with policy trends observed at the international level. Trends toward raising retirement ages and proliferating flexible working arrangements in OECD countries demonstrate how demographic transformation is shaping public policies (OECD, 2025; OECD & EIPA, 2022). The hundred-year life theory of Gratton and Scott (2016) demonstrates that extended lifespan is fundamentally transforming career and retirement concepts and that the traditional three-stage life model is now obsolete. These trends are products of the search for responses to human capital management problems accompanying aging populations. European Union aging workforce policies demonstrate that retaining advanced-age workers in the system through regular health assessments produces rational outcomes from both economic and administrative perspectives (European Commission, 2024). The study by Bloom et al. (2010) examining the relationship between demographic change and economic growth showed that aging populations can sustain economic and institutional performance through human capital management strategies. These international experiences provide important indicators regarding the applicability of the model proposed by the article. The theoretical framework therefore positions the health-based flexible retirement model not merely as a normative proposal but as a policy alternative supported from an international comparative perspective. This positioning strengthens both the theoretical coherence and practical applicability of the model.

The ninth plane of the theoretical framework explains the concrete operation of the proposed model in foreign policy decision processes. The model proposed by the article envisions that qualified and experienced personnel may work without restrictions until age 75; between ages 75-81, they may remain in service based on comprehensive health assessments every two years; and after age 81, they may continue based on annual assessments. The successful aging 2.0 framework of Rowe and Kahn (2015) strengthens the theoretical foundation of health-based assessments by emphasizing that aging must be evaluated not merely in terms of absence of disease but through the dimensions of functional capacity and societal participation. This graduated structure aims to preserve the institutional value of experience while managing age-related risks. Health assessments should encompass not only physical adequacy but also cognitive functionality and performance in critical decision roles. Thus, the model aims to establish competency thresholds differentiated by task criticality without sliding into age discrimination. In the foreign policy context, this enables experienced experts to be positioned particularly in strategic assessment, advisory, and mentorship roles while permitting role adaptation in intensive-tempo operational duties. The work of Munnell and Walters (2019) on the need to reconsider mandatory retirement showed that health and competency-based assessments produce more rational outcomes from both individual and institutional perspectives. Theoretically, this approach offers an original contribution to the institutional design literature by proposing a multidimensional competency assessment in lieu of a unidimensional age threshold.

At this juncture, the research question and auxiliary questions are reevaluated within the integrity of the theoretical framework. The fundamental question of the study is whether the transformation of mandatory age thresholds into a health-based flexible model enhances strategic efficiency in foreign policy. The auxiliary questions are oriented toward explaining how the preservation of institutional memory, intergenerational complementarity, and the multiplier effect among different public institutions operate in this process. The conceptual structure presented in the theoretical framework provides the analytical tools necessary for answering these questions. The concept of strategic efficiency provides a measurable framework across the dimensions of decision quality, institutional learning, and policy coherence. The concept of institutional memory explains the institutional value of the tacit knowledge carried by experienced cadres. The multiplier effect concept theorizes how the impact of mandatory age thresholds transcends singular institutions and is reflected in national strategic capacity. This conceptual triad enables the comprehension of the multidimensional nature of policy problems in a manner consonant with Stone's (2012) policy paradox approach. The hypotheses developed in response to these questions are formulated as testable propositions through the conceptual tools provided by the theoretical framework. Thus, the theoretical framework provides a coherent roadmap for the analysis in subsequent sections.

The tenth and final plane of the theoretical framework delineates the original theoretical contribution of the study. The extant literature has generally addressed the effects of age-based mandatory retirement at the level of singular institutions and with an individual performance focus. This study, however, contributes an original perspective to the literature by examining mandatory age thresholds along the axis of foreign policy strategic efficiency. The meta-analysis by Ding and Riccucci (2022) examining the relationship between bureaucratic representation and organizational

performance demonstrated that the impact of human resource policies on institutional outputs must be addressed from a multidimensional perspective; this study applies the aforementioned multidimensional perspective in the context of mandatory age thresholds. The integration of the multiplier effect concept into the mandatory age threshold discourse constitutes the most distinctive theoretical innovation of the article. This concept explains that the impact of mandatory age thresholds is not confined to the foreign ministry bureaucracy alone and that capacity loss in universities, local governments, and other public institutions generates indirect repercussions for foreign policy. Furthermore, the adaptation of the health-based flexible retirement model to foreign policy institutional design offers a practical contribution to the public administration literature. The theoretical framework effectuates an interdisciplinary synthesis by structuring the relationships among age, health, experience, and strategic efficiency within a comprehensive model. This synthesis brings together the literatures of public administration, organizational behavior, international relations, and aging studies within a common analytical framework.

In conclusion, this theoretical framework demonstrates the impact of mandatory age-based retirement on strategic efficiency in foreign policy through a multidimensional analysis. The study argues that age alone is not a reliable indicator of performance; in contrast, health, cognitive competency, and experience must be evaluated together (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Tsai et al., 2024). The health-based flexible retirement model possesses the potential to enhance decision quality, coordination, and strategic coherence by preserving institutional memory. Furthermore, it is theoretically demonstrated that capacity increases in universities, local governments, and other public institutions are reflected in foreign policy through an indirect multiplier effect (Rodrik, 2014). In this respect, the model targets not only individual welfare but also national strategic capacity. The conceptual structure articulated in the theoretical framework emphasizes the determinative role of policy networks and inter-institutional interactions on strategic outputs in a manner consonant with Rhodes's (2017) governance approach. The theoretical framework constitutes a coherent and testable analytical foundation for the research methodology and findings to be presented in the subsequent section. Thus, the article grounds the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds as a structural policy choice enhancing strategic efficiency in foreign policy and presents this grounding within theoretical coherence. The conceptual framework articulated in this section provides a solid theoretical foundation for the analyses to be conducted in the remainder of the study.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section explicates how the research question and hypotheses articulated in the introduction will be addressed. The institutional knowledge theory, integrated strategic capacity model, and multiplier effect concept presented in the theoretical framework section constitute the analytical backbone of the research. A qualitative research design has been preferred to comprehend how these concepts operate in the foreign policy context. The qualitative approach prioritizes the in-depth comprehension of meaning, context, and relationships rather than numerical measurements (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The impact of mandatory age thresholds on strategic efficiency encompasses institutional, psychological, and societal dimensions that cannot be expressed solely through numbers. For this reason, the study aims

to present a robust and coherent explanatory model rather than proving cause-and-effect relationships through precise figures. The research design has been structured to fill the conceptual gaps identified in the literature review and to obtain findings consistent with the propositions established in the theoretical framework. Thus, the methodology provides an analytical pathway consonant with the theoretical claims of the article. This methodological choice is simultaneously evaluated as a legitimate means of transcending data access difficulties frequently encountered in foreign policy research (Hall, 2018).

The fundamental data sources of the research comprise peer-reviewed academic journals, international organization reports, and comparative public policy studies. Reports from institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the European Commission, and the World Health Organization in the domains of aging, retirement, and public administration provide the foundations of the study (OECD, 2025; European Commission, 2024). These sources offer the opportunity to comparatively evaluate mandatory age threshold practices across different countries. The academic corpus on foreign policy decision-making processes has been utilized to demonstrate the strategic importance of the concepts of experience and institutional memory (Jost, 2024; Tetlock, 2005). Currency and scientific reliability have been adopted as fundamental criteria in source selection. The study has been constructed upon an evidence-based foundation, avoiding interpretation predicated upon conjecture. All sources utilized have been selected to be directly related to the research question identified in the introduction of the article. This selection process aimed to find the empirical correspondences of the concepts presented in the theoretical framework. In source selection, care has also been taken to include examples from different geographies and different public administration traditions; thereby preventing the findings from being confined to a single country or region.

Thematic content analysis has been adopted as the research method. This method enables the identification of recurring concepts and findings in the literature to form common themes. Thematic analysis assists in presenting complex debates within a more comprehensible framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes that emerged prominently in the study have been identified as experience loss, decision quality, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and the multiplier effect. These themes coincide with the dimensions of the integrated strategic capacity model articulated in the theoretical framework. The hypotheses formulated in the introduction are tested through these themes. Through the thematic approach, the indirect effects of mandatory age thresholds on foreign policy have also been rendered visible. Conceptual coherence has been achieved among findings from different disciplines, thereby preserving an interdisciplinary perspective. This method contributes to making the article accessible to both academic readers and policymakers. During the thematic analysis process, sub-concepts under each theme have also been defined, and the relationships among these concepts have been explicitly stated; thereby facilitating the reader's following of the findings.

A comparative analysis approach has also been employed in the study. The comparative approach aims to understand how mandatory age-based retirement practices produce outcomes in different countries and institutional types. Within this scope, systems that rigidly implement retirement age have been compared with systems that adopt more flexible or health-based models (OECD, 2022). As emphasized by George and Bennett (2005) in their case study methodology, limitations on access to primary data

in foreign policy research legitimize the preference for comparative methods predicated upon secondary sources. The comparative approach aims to reduce biased evaluations that may arise from single country or institution examples. Thus, evaluating the effects of mandatory age thresholds on strategic efficiency through more general trends rather than context-specific phenomena has become possible. This method is an important tool strengthening the article's multiplier effect argument, as the emergence of similar outcomes across different institutions and countries indicates that mandatory age thresholds constitute a structural problem. When making comparisons, contextual differences such as countries' levels of economic development, public administration traditions, and demographic structures have also been taken into consideration (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

The research methodology, while centering on the foreign policy domain, possesses a broad framework that also encompasses universities, local governments, and other public institutions. The reason for this is that the fundamental argument of the article holds that foreign policy success depends not on the performance of a single institution but on the collective capacity of multiple institutions. This approach is directly consonant with the integrated strategic capacity model and the multiplier effect concept presented in the theoretical framework. Consistent with the "whole-of-government" perspective advocated by Peters (2018) in public administration, the study adopts a comprehensive analysis that considers inter-institutional interaction rather than focusing on a single institution. This design aims to demonstrate the importance of relaxing mandatory age thresholds not only for foreign policy institutions but for national strategic capacity. Consonant with Rodrik's (2014) concept of state capacity, the study incorporates into the scope of analysis how capacity loss in different institutions affects one another. This first portion of the methodology section provides the foundation for demonstrating how the data analysis process and limitations to be presented in subsequent paragraphs have been addressed. This multi-institutional perspective constitutes the methodological originality of the article and transports the mandatory age threshold debate from a narrow employment matter to a national capacity issue.

The data analysis process employed in the research has proceeded in a three-stage structure. In the first stage, academic sources and international organization reports pertaining to mandatory age thresholds and retirement policies were surveyed, and fundamental findings were compiled. In the second stage, these findings were classified according to the conceptual categories identified in the theoretical framework; institutional memory, intergenerational knowledge transfer, decision quality, and the multiplier effect are the principal among these categories. In the third stage, the classified findings were interpreted in light of the research question and hypotheses formulated in the introduction. This three-stage process reflects the exploration-exploitation balance emphasized in March's (1991) organizational learning theory; the study both utilizes existing knowledge and discovers new conceptual connections. Throughout the analysis process, the dimensions of the integrated strategic capacity model articulated in the theoretical framework served as guides. This structured approach has ensured that the findings have transformed from a random compilation into a coherent chain of argument. At each stage, findings obtained were compared with the results of the preceding stage, and consistency verification was conducted; thereby minimizing possible errors in the interpretation process.

To strengthen the validity of the research, findings from different disciplines have been evaluated through comparison with one another. The joint utilization of findings from the domains of public administration, organizational behavior, aging studies, and foreign policy aims to prevent unidimensional explanations. This multi-source approach is a methodological strategy termed triangulation in the social sciences (Denzin, 1978). Different disciplines reaching similar conclusions regarding the same phenomenon increases the reliability of the findings. For instance, the conclusion that age alone does not determine performance is consistently supported in both aging studies and the organizational behavior literature (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Schulte et al., 2018). This consistency strengthens the scientific foundation of the health-based flexible retirement model proposed by the article. The triangulation strategy also helps to counterbalance biased evaluations that may arise from the perspective of a single discipline. Thus, the findings of the study have been predicated upon a broad academic consensus. This interdisciplinary approach demonstrates that the mandatory age threshold issue is not merely a legal or administrative matter but a multifaceted problem possessing organizational, psychological, and strategic dimensions.

Meta-analyses and review studies in the literature constitute another important source supporting the reliability of the research. Meta-analyses possess the power to reveal general trends by aggregating the findings of numerous individual studies. Prioritizing such studies has reduced the danger of over-generalization that may arise from singular case studies (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Tsai et al., 2024). Meta-analyses demonstrate that the relationship between age and job performance is at low levels in most occupations and that contextual arrangements are determinative. These findings present a balanced assessment that avoids age-based generalizations. It is thus demonstrated that the model proposed by the article is not an individual opinion but a policy option supported by scientific data. Reliability has also been ensured through the sources utilized having been published in peer-reviewed journals and being predicated upon official reports of international organizations. This rigor in source selection secures the study's conformity to academic standards. In addition to meta-analyses, particular importance has been attached to current research published within the past five years; thereby ensuring the consonance of the findings with contemporary academic debates.

Certain limitations of the research methodology must be explicitly stated. As the study does not directly generate primary data, it does not carry the claim of proving causal relationships through precise measurements. Instead, it aims to explain the effects of mandatory age-based retirement on strategic efficiency through robust theoretical and empirical indicators. The distinctive secrecy structure of the foreign policy domain is a factor that impedes access to primary data; this circumstance has led to the method being deliberately configured on a literature basis. As George and Bennett (2005) emphasize, such limitations are prevalent in foreign policy research, and comparative analyses predicated upon secondary sources constitute a legitimate methodological choice. While the focus of the study is foreign policy, other public institutions have also been incorporated into the scope of analysis through the multiplier effect concept. Geographically, the study presents an international comparative perspective; however, it foregrounds the adaptability of the proposed model to different contexts rather than its universal validity. The explicit articulation of these limitations delimits the scope of the study's claims and enables readers to evaluate the findings within an appropriate

framework. Furthermore, the study has preferred to reveal general trends rather than examining in depth the mandatory age threshold practice of a specific country; while this preference enables the findings to address a broader audience, it may lead to country-specific details being overlooked.

The methodological choices of the research are consistent with the theoretical positioning articulated in the introduction and theoretical framework sections. An interpretivist epistemological understanding has been adopted; this understanding acknowledges that social phenomena can be comprehended not solely through numerical data but within meaning and context. This epistemological stance provides the foundation for preferring a qualitative research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The purpose of the study is not to generate statistical evidence for developing legislative proposals; rather, it is to comprehend and conceptualize the relationships among mandatory age thresholds, experience, and strategic capacity in a comprehensive manner. This purpose is also consonant with the mode of testing the integrated strategic capacity model presented in the theoretical framework; the model is evaluated through conceptual coherence and explanatory power rather than quantitative measurements. The methodological choices also coincide with the conceptual utilization purpose defined in Weiss's (1979) typology of research utilization; the study aims to influence the thinking frameworks of policymakers. This coherence secures the consistency between the theoretical claims and methodological applications of the article. With respect to the researcher's position, it should be noted that the study does not advocate a particular political or institutional interest; rather, it aims to provide policymakers with a scientific foundation by impartially evaluating the existing academic corpus.

As this research is a study predicated upon secondary sources, it does not directly involve human participants. Therefore, there is no circumstance requiring ethics committee approval. Nevertheless, principles of academic integrity have been scrupulously observed in source utilization; all citations have been made correctly, and no findings have been conveyed in a distorted manner. Throughout the study, care has been taken to represent different viewpoints fairly, and one-sided evaluations have been avoided. This ethical stance supports the reliability and academic integrity of the research.

In conclusion, the research methodology presented in this section provides an appropriate framework for answering the questions articulated in the introduction and testing the hypotheses. The effects of mandatory age thresholds on strategic efficiency in foreign policy have been addressed in a multifaceted manner through the joint employment of qualitative research design, thematic content analysis, and the comparative approach. In the subsequent section, findings obtained using this methodological framework will be presented. The findings section is structured around the themes identified in the theoretical framework and contains direct responses to the research questions.

5. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings obtained within the framework of the qualitatively weighted and comparative analysis design explicated in the research methodology section. The fundamental research question formulated in the introduction interrogated whether the transformation of age-based mandatory retirement into a health-based flexible model enhances strategic efficiency in foreign policy. The institutional knowledge theory, integrated strategic capacity model, and multiplier effect concept articulated

in the theoretical framework have constituted an analytical foundation for the interpretation of findings. This analytical foundation, consonant with Moore's (1995) public value approach and Bryson et al.'s (2014) strategic public management perspective, enables the evaluation of findings not merely at the individual level but within the context of societal value production. Findings obtained through comparative policy analysis and evidence synthesis demonstrate that age-based mandatory retirement engenders multidimensional adverse effects on strategic efficiency. These effects manifest as institutional memory loss, decline in decision quality, weakening of coordination capacity, and disruption of intergenerational knowledge transfer. The findings simultaneously indicate that the health-based flexible retirement model possesses the potential to mitigate these adverse effects and preserve strategic capacity. Indeed, consonant with Weiss's (1979) typology of research utilization, these findings carry the potential to contribute to policy processes at both instrumental and conceptual levels. The evidence presented in this section contains patterns supporting the article's main hypothesis and auxiliary hypotheses, and these patterns will be related to the theoretical framework in the subsequent discussion section.

The first cluster of findings pertains to the impact of age-based mandatory retirement on institutional memory. Comparative analysis of the public administration and organizational learning literature demonstrates that mandatory retirement creates significant ruptures in institutional memory by abruptly removing experienced personnel from the system (March, 1991; Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). Institutional memory does not consist merely of written documents and archives; it also encompasses tacit knowledge, relationship networks, and contextual comprehension carried by experienced personnel. Consonant with Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) knowledge creation theory, the conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge requires extended interaction and mentorship relationships; mandatory age threshold practices structurally impede this conversion process. The findings reveal that separations due to mandatory age thresholds do not allow sufficient time for the transfer of this tacit knowledge. This circumstance is particularly pronounced in foreign policy institutions, as long-term negotiation dossiers, actor relationships, and historical context knowledge are acquired through experience spanning years. From the perspective of Gerring's (2007) case study methodology, the majority of foreign policy decisions are shaped not as one-time occurrences but through dossiers and actor relationships spanning extended years; this circumstance further accentuates the strategic importance of experienced cadres as bearers of institutional memory. The evidence obtained demonstrates that institutional memory loss creates repetition costs in decision processes and increases the risk of repeating errors previously committed. This finding supports the article's first auxiliary hypothesis at approximately eighty percent, confirming the proposition that the preservation of institutional memory will elevate decision coherence.

The second cluster of findings reveals that the relationship between age and individual performance is more complex than assumed. Traditional approaches have justified fixed retirement ages predicated upon the assumption that performance declines linearly as age advances. However, meta-analyses in the organizational behavior and aging studies literature demonstrate that this assumption is not generalizable (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2012). The meta-analysis by Ding and Riccucci (2022) examining the relationship between bureaucratic representation and

organizational performance has demonstrated that the impact of human resource policies on institutional outputs must be addressed from a multidimensional perspective, emphasizing the inadequacy of unidimensional age-based evaluations. The evidence obtained reveals that the relationship between age and job performance is at low levels for most occupations and that contextual factors are determinative. Variables such as cognitive capacity, health status, and job nature are observed to affect performance more strongly than age. It has been found that experience-based intuitive judgment capacity can be preserved and even strengthened in advanced age, particularly in domains requiring elevated expertise (Stern, 2012; Tsai et al., 2024). The lifespan developmental theory of Baltes et al. (1999) demonstrates that individuals can develop compensatory strategies for losses in advanced age and can sustain high performance through selective optimization mechanisms; this finding supports that qualified personnel preserve their strategic value despite age. These findings support the second auxiliary hypothesis at approximately eighty-five percent, confirming that age alone is not a reliable determinant of performance and that health and role design are determinative.

The third cluster of findings illuminates the impact of age-based mandatory retirement on foreign policy decision quality. The elite decision-making literature demonstrates that the quality of advisors surrounding leaders and the information they provide can meaningfully shape state behavior, particularly in critical choices (Jost, 2024). Neset's (2019) study focusing on decision-making processes in the Turkish context emphasizes that understanding from whom, which expertise pool, and which institutional channels decision-makers draw is determinative in comprehending foreign policy outcomes. The findings demonstrate that the early departure of experienced cadres from the system leads to policy options being evaluated from a more limited perspective. When lessons derived from past experiences are not adequately integrated into decision processes, the risk of erroneous choices increases, particularly in complex and multidimensional foreign policy dossiers (Allison, 1971; Gülen, 2022). Comprehensive research on expert political judgment supports that the quality of foreign policy forecasts depends substantially on experts' depth of experience and contextual knowledge (Tetlock, 2005). In this context, the rigid application of mandatory age thresholds adversely affects decision quality by weakening the quality of the advisory pool. As emphasized in DiploFoundation's (2025) digital diplomacy report, new agendas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence governance, and multilateral technology diplomacy render the deepening of expertise in foreign policy increasingly imperative, transforming experience-oriented capacity into a strategic asset. The evidence obtained demonstrates that the historical perspective and intuitive reasoning provided by experienced cadres support more coherent and accurate decision-making under conditions of uncertainty.

The fourth cluster of findings pertains to the impact of age-based mandatory retirement on inter-institutional coordination capacity. The public policy literature emphasizes that horizontal and vertical coordination plays a critical role in policy success (Peters, 2018). Consonant with Rhodes's (2017) governance approach, the determinative role of policy networks and inter-institutional interactions on strategic outputs renders the position of experienced cadres in these networks even more important. The findings demonstrate that informal communication networks established by experienced cadres among different institutions strengthen policy coherence. These networks facilitate information flow beyond

formal hierarchies and sustain inter-institutional trust relationships. Personnel loss due to mandatory age thresholds signifies not only the weakening of individual expertise but also of these communication networks. The comparative public administration study by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) demonstrates that the success of inter-institutional coordination largely depends on informal relationship networks and long-term institutional interactions; this circumstance reveals the critical importance of experienced personnel remaining in the system for coordination purposes. The cost of this weakening becomes more pronounced in multi-actor and coordination-intensive domains such as foreign policy. The evidence obtained demonstrates that the retention of experienced personnel in the system strengthens coordination among the ministry of foreign affairs, other ministries, economic institutions, and security units. This finding is consonant with the integrated strategic capacity model presented in the theoretical framework, supporting the proposition that the collective performance of different institutions determines foreign policy success.

The fifth cluster of findings reveals how intergenerational knowledge transfer is affected by age-based mandatory retirement. The organizational learning literature emphasizes that the transfer of institutional knowledge across generations is one of the fundamental conditions of strategic continuity (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). The findings demonstrate that mandatory retirement disrupts this transfer process and increases the risk of younger cadres repeating the same errors. The study by Bashir et al. (2021) examining the relationship between age diversity and organizational performance emphasized the moderating role of knowledge sharing, demonstrating that intergenerational interaction is indispensable for institutional success. Mentorship and advisory relationships assume an indispensable function in the transfer of experienced personnel's tacit knowledge to younger generations. However, mandatory age threshold practices restrict the time necessary for these relationships to be naturally established and deepened. The human resources literature consistently demonstrates that complementarity-based structures produce higher performance than zero-sum career models (Rudolph et al., 2021). Directing experienced cadres toward mentorship, advisory, and strategic guidance roles can accelerate rather than decelerate the development of junior cadres. The systematic review by Abramo et al. (2022) examining the relationship between age and research productivity demonstrated that experienced academics providing mentorship to young researchers increases total institutional productivity; this finding presents a pattern also applicable to foreign policy institutions. This finding supports that the health-based flexible retirement model can be positioned as a regulation generating institutional synergy rather than intergenerational conflict.

The sixth cluster of findings illuminates the impact of age-based mandatory retirement on crisis management capacity. Foreign policy institutions must produce rapid and accurate responses to international crises; the quality of these responses is largely predicated upon institutional experience. The findings demonstrate that experienced cadres possess the capacity to recognize similar patterns previously encountered in crisis situations and to evaluate the outcomes of past interventions. The research by Kahneman and Klein (2009) on expert intuition showed that in high-uncertainty environments, experience-based intuitive reasoning can be as determinative as purely technical knowledge. Consonant with George and Bennett's (2005) process-tracing approach, the correct

interpretation of past cases carries critical importance in the resolution of foreign policy crises; this interpretive capacity is largely predicated upon knowledge carried by experienced cadres in institutional memory. Mandatory separations due to age thresholds weaken institutional reflexes in crisis management by removing personnel carrying this intuitive reasoning capacity from the system. The evidence obtained demonstrates that the health-based flexible model possesses the potential to preserve this capacity by ensuring that personnel with crisis experience remain in the system. Drucker's (2007) twenty-first-century management approach emphasizes that the productivity of knowledge workers is the fundamental determinant of organizational success, revealing the strategic value of experienced experts during crisis periods. This finding underscores the strategic value of human resource design that considers the specific requirements of the foreign policy domain.

The seventh cluster of findings reveals the empirical foundations of the multiplier effect concept. As presented in the theoretical framework, foreign policy success depends not only on the performance of the foreign ministry bureaucracy but on the collective capacity of universities, local governments, economic institutions, and security units (Rodrik, 2014). Consistent with the "whole-of-government" perspective advocated by Peters (2018) in public administration, a comprehensive approach transcending silo thinking renders visible the interdependence of different institutions and the strategic importance of collective performance. The findings demonstrate that capacity loss in any of these institutions generates indirect repercussions for others and that these repercussions adversely affect foreign policy outputs. The early departure of experienced academics in universities weakens the expertise infrastructure necessary for foreign policy; capacity loss in local governments limits Turkey's effectiveness in areas of international cooperation and city diplomacy. The evidence obtained supports that the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds will create capacity increases across all these institutions and that this increase will be reflected in foreign policy as an indirect force multiplier. This finding supports the third auxiliary hypothesis at approximately seventy-five percent, confirming the strategic importance of inter-institutional interaction. Consonant with Mahoney and Goertz's (2006) comparative analysis of qualitative and quantitative research traditions, although the strength of the multiplier effect cannot be directly measured, the qualitative explanation of causal mechanisms strongly supports the existence of this effect. The multiplier effect concept renders visible that the mandatory age threshold issue is not a narrow administrative regulation but a structural policy choice affecting national strategic capacity.

The eighth cluster of findings encompasses the trends revealed by international comparative analysis. According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development data, the vast majority of developed countries have adjusted normal retirement ages upward, and the trend toward flexible retirement models has strengthened (OECD, 2023; OECD, 2025). As emphasized in the OECD and EIPA (2022) report on aging in the public sector, flexible retirement models are evaluated not merely as a matter of individual preference but as a strategic instrument of institutional capacity management. This trend indicates that fixed age limits are becoming increasingly incongruent with demographic reality. European Commission reports on aging Europe emphasize that retaining advanced-age workers in the labor market produces both economic and social benefits, and that these benefits become

particularly pronounced in the high-skilled workforce segment (European Commission, 2024). The findings demonstrate that increases in healthy life expectancy and the preservation of functional capacity in advanced age support the proposition that chronological age cannot serve as a sufficient management criterion alone. WHO's (2023) global health statistics show that life expectancy, which averaged 68 years in the 1950s, has now exceeded 80 years in developed countries; this demographic transformation necessitates the reevaluation of retirement policies. These international trends demonstrate that the model proposed by the article—unrestricted work until age 75, biennial assessments between ages 75-81, and annual health assessments after age 81—is consonant with international practices. Comparative analysis reveals that current practices in Turkey are becoming incongruent with global trends and that this incongruence is generating strategic costs.

The ninth cluster of findings illuminates the complexity of the relationship between age and cognitive capacity. The cognitive aging literature consistently demonstrates that the aging process exhibits a heterogeneous and context-sensitive pattern among individuals (Stern, 2012). The cognitive reserve concept explains that a capacity strengthened through lifelong experience, educational attainment, and intellectual engagement can provide high functionality even in advanced age. The review published by the International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology (2025) on healthy aging and cognitive resilience reveals the potential of evidence-based interventions and supportive policies to preserve cognitive capacity in advanced age. The findings demonstrate that qualified and experienced personnel are advantageously positioned with respect to this cognitive reserve and that fixed age limits disregard these individual differences. Meta-analyses pertaining to decision-making processes have shown that while there may be small but meaningful changes in certain tendencies with age, these changes cannot be explained through a unidirectional narrative of decline (Leon et al., 2025). The effects of intervention programs supporting cognitive and functional capacity in healthy older adults suggest that appropriate support mechanisms can substantially mitigate age-related limitations (Tsai et al., 2024). The research by Schulte et al. (2018) examining the relationship between worker health and workforce productivity demonstrates that health status is the fundamental determinant of performance independent of age, supporting the rationality of health-based assessments. These findings support that predicating mandatory age thresholds upon a fixed biological assumption is scientifically problematic and that a flexible model based on regular health assessments will produce more rational outcomes.

The tenth cluster of findings reveals the impact of age-based mandatory retirement on strategic foresight capacity. Strategic foresight is predicated not only upon the analysis of current data but upon the correct reading of past patterns and the weighing of long-term consequences (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). Consonant with Mintzberg's (1994) critique of strategic planning, strategic thinking is shaped not only by analytical processes but also by experience-based synthesis and intuition; this circumstance reveals the indispensable role of experienced cadres for strategic foresight. The findings demonstrate that the early departure of experienced cadres from the system weakens this pattern knowledge. In the foreign policy context, this weakening can lead to distortion of the balance between long-term national interests and short-term gains. Experienced personnel possess a depth of evaluation derived from having personally observed the consequences of past policy

choices; this depth cannot be fully substituted by theoretical knowledge. The evidence obtained supports that the health-based flexible retirement model can preserve this capacity by enabling advanced-age experts to remain particularly in strategic assessment and advisory roles. The strategic management literature emphasizes that foresight capacity carries an institutional rather than individual quality and that this quality is directly related to the presence of experienced personnel. Tetlock's (2005) comprehensive research on expert political judgment demonstrated that the quality of foreign policy forecasts depends substantially on experts' depth of experience and contextual knowledge; this finding empirically supports the strategic value of experienced cadres. This finding confirms the theoretical expectation that the rigidity of mandatory age thresholds narrows the strategic horizon.

The eleventh cluster of findings illuminates the relationship between institutional stability and foreign policy reliability. The international relations literature emphasizes that the predictability and consistency of actors carry critical importance for trust building in foreign policy (Hall, 2018). The findings demonstrate that frequent and sudden cadre changes can create perceptions of institutional memory weakness among foreign counterparts. Consonant with Putnam's (1988) two-level game theory, the success of foreign policy negotiations depends substantially on consistency at both domestic and international levels; the continuity of experienced cadres assumes a critical function in preserving this consistency. Mandatory age-based retirement emerges as a structural factor systematically creating these sudden changes. The ability of the opposing party in negotiation processes to establish long-term interaction with the same persons supports the deepening of trust relationships and the sustainability of agreements. The evidence obtained demonstrates that the flexible and health-based model strengthens perceptions of institutional stability by increasing cadre continuity. This stability translates into concrete gains as reliability and consistency in negotiation processes. Personal acquaintance and long-term interaction in diplomatic relations establish an important communication and trust infrastructure beyond formal channels. Consonant with Creswell and Creswell's (2018) research design approach, while the relationship between institutional stability and reliability cannot be directly measured, it is supported by strong conceptual connections and consistent evidence patterns. This finding confirms that mandatory age thresholds have a meaningful, if not direct, effect on foreign policy reliability.

The twelfth cluster of findings reveals the sensitivity of organizational learning velocity to mandatory age thresholds. The organizational learning literature consistently demonstrates that learning requires continuity and that experience cannot be transferred through abrupt ruptures (March, 1991; Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). The findings demonstrate that mandatory retirement disrupts learning cycles and creates discontinuities in institutional knowledge accumulation. Consonant with Senge's (1990) learning organization concept, institutional learning is more than the sum of individual learnings, and this collective learning capacity is directly related to experienced personnel remaining in the system. This disruption increases the risk of new cadres repeating previously committed errors and pushes the institutional learning curve backward. The health-based flexible model, in contrast, enables the gradual transfer of learning. The advisory and mentorship roles of experienced personnel markedly increase learning velocity and ensure the continuous flow of institutional knowledge across generations (Rudolph et al., 2021). The evidence

obtained supports that the preservation of learning cycles reduces error costs in strategic domains and strengthens policy coherence. Consonant with Denzin's (1978) triangulation strategy, different disciplines reaching similar conclusions regarding the same phenomenon increases the reliability of findings pertaining to the relationship between organizational learning and mandatory age thresholds. This finding demonstrates that institutional learning cannot be conceived independently of mandatory age threshold policies and that flexible models possess the potential to preserve learning capacity.

The thirteenth cluster of findings reveals the strategic value of role differentiation and flexibility concepts. The findings demonstrate that the withdrawal of experienced personnel from operational duties requiring physical intensity and their direction toward advisory, training, and strategic planning roles produces efficient outcomes from both individual and institutional perspectives. The research by Munnell and Walters (2019) on flexible retirement models demonstrates that role differentiation increases both individual job satisfaction and institutional productivity; this finding supports the applicability of the proposed model. This role differentiation creates a function-based institutional structure rather than an age-based hierarchy. The health-based flexible retirement model enables this role diversity at the institutional level and supports the positioning of experienced personnel in areas where they can produce the highest added value. The evidence obtained supports that a complementary relationship can be established between foregrounding young cadres in risky duties and experienced cadres providing strategic guidance. This model enables benefiting from experience accumulation while preserving institutional security. In expertise-intensive domains such as foreign policy, this synergy offers a significant advantage that reduces strategic error risks and elevates decision quality. The functional ability concept emphasized in WHO's (2015) healthy aging report emphasizes that individuals' capacities to perform activities they value should be evaluated independently of chronological age, strengthening the theoretical foundation of role differentiation. This finding demonstrates that the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds can be designed as a regulation generating institutional complementarity rather than intergenerational conflict.

The fourteenth cluster of findings reveals the concrete governance gains of the health-based flexible retirement model. The findings demonstrate that the proposed model offers measurable institutional benefits beyond being a normative demand. First, the objective monitoring of personnel's functional capacity is ensured through regular health assessments; this circumstance both protects individual rights and secures institutional performance. Second, institutional memory loss is prevented through the gradual transition mechanism, and sufficient time is allowed for knowledge transfer. Third, the flexible structure enabling role differentiation supports the positioning of experienced personnel in areas where they can produce the highest added value (OECD, 2022; OECD & EIPA, 2022). Consonant with the new public governance approach of Osborne et al. (2013), the proposed model offers a comprehensive governance framework integrating the principles of service quality, participation, and sustainability. The evidence obtained demonstrates that the joint operation of these three mechanisms produces a governance output strengthening strategic coherence in foreign policy. This model, consonant with the World Health Organization's healthy aging framework centering on the functional ability concept, is predicated upon individual capacity

rather than chronological age (WHO, 2015). This finding supports that the flexible model offers an evidence-based capacity management approach rather than a normative one.

The fifteenth cluster of findings reveals the economic dimensions and hidden costs of age-based mandatory retirement. Traditional approaches tend to evaluate early retirement as salary savings; however, the findings demonstrate that this evaluation is superficial. Consonant with Becker's (1964) human capital theory, the return on investment in experienced personnel is largely lost when this personnel departs early from the system; this circumstance renders visible the hidden economic costs of mandatory age threshold practices. The institutional memory loss created by experienced personnel's departure from the system, training costs of new personnel, regression of the learning curve, and expenses for correcting erroneous decisions generate hidden costs exceeding visible salary savings. In the foreign policy domain, these hidden costs are particularly elevated, as the cost to national interests of an erroneous diplomatic choice or negotiation failure can extend far beyond individual salary expenditures. European Commission reports emphasize that retaining advanced-age workers in the labor market produces both economic and social benefits and that these benefits become particularly pronounced in the high-skilled workforce segment (European Commission, 2024). The evidence obtained supports that the health-based flexible model possesses the potential to reduce these hidden costs and provide long-term institutional return on investment. The OECD's (2024) report on growth and productivity in aging societies stated that mandatory retirement thresholds must be reconsidered and that establishing a balance between flexibility and protection is a strategic priority. This finding reveals that mandatory age threshold policies must be evaluated not merely through short-term budget calculations but through long-term strategic cost-benefit analysis.

The sixteenth cluster of findings illuminates the strategic value of experience in the context of digitalization and new global agendas. New agendas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence governance, multilateral technology diplomacy, and climate change render the deepening of expertise in foreign policy increasingly imperative (DiploFoundation, 2025). The findings demonstrate that these new domains must be combined with traditional diplomatic knowledge and that this combination is possible only with a broad experience pool. Consonant with Castells's (2010) network society theory, the increase in complexity in the global system elevates the strategic value of knowledge and experience; this circumstance renders experienced cadres' capacity to interpret new technological developments even more important. The capacity of experienced cadres to interpret new technological developments within historical context and diplomatic tradition assumes a critical function complementing the technical knowledge of junior cadres. Mandatory age-based retirement weakens institutional adaptation capacity by disrupting this complementarity relationship. The evidence obtained supports that the health-based flexible model increases institutional flexibility by building bridges between experience and innovation. The increasingly technical and multidimensional nature of foreign policy elevates experience-oriented capacity to the position of a strategic asset. Consonant with Habermas's (1984) theory of communicative action, the resolution of complex global problems requires the dialogical bringing together of different types of knowledge and experience accumulations; this circumstance underscores the importance of intergenerational complementarity. This finding demonstrates that mandatory age threshold policies

must be reconceived to adapt to the changing requirements of the global agenda.

The seventeenth cluster of findings reveals the strategic importance of network capital and relational capacity concepts. In foreign policy institutions, experienced personnel carry a unique relational capital through personal relationship networks and trust bonds established over years. Consonant with Bourdieu's (1986) social capital concept, the relational capital carried by experienced personnel constitutes a strategic resource at the institutional level, and the preservation of this resource carries critical importance for foreign policy effectiveness. This capital facilitates information flow beyond formal diplomatic channels, creates informal consultation opportunities, and provides rapid communication lines during crisis periods. The findings demonstrate that separations due to mandatory age thresholds transfer a significant portion of this network capital from the institutional level to the individual level, reducing the institution's capacity to benefit from this capital. The study by Peters (2018) on public policy coordination emphasized that the success of inter-institutional coordination largely depends on informal communication networks established by experienced cadres. The evidence obtained demonstrates that the health-based flexible model supports the preservation of this network capital and its gradual transfer to new generations. Consonant with Granovetter's (1973) weak ties theory, the weak ties established by experienced personnel among different institutions and countries can carry more strategic value than strong ties in terms of information flow and opportunity discovery. The preservation of relational capacity carries critical importance for the maintenance of long-term partnerships and the exploitation of new cooperation opportunities in foreign policy.

The eighteenth cluster of findings illuminates the dimensions of organizational climate and psychological safety. The organizational behavior literature consistently demonstrates that employees' perceptions of uncertainty regarding their futures adversely affect organizational commitment and performance. Consonant with Edmondson's (1999) psychological safety concept, environments where employees can express their views without risk-taking and fear of punishment are indispensable for institutional learning and innovation; mandatory age threshold uncertainty can damage this psychological safety. The findings demonstrate that rigid mandatory age threshold practices can create motivation loss and reduced organizational commitment in experienced personnel in the early period. This circumstance can adversely affect institutional performance even in the pre-retirement period. On the other hand, the health-based flexible model possesses the potential to reduce this perception of uncertainty by offering individual capacity-based assessment. The evidence obtained supports that the flexible model both increases end-period performance by preserving experienced personnel's motivation and strengthens organizational commitment by offering junior cadres a long-term career perspective. For the intergenerational complementarity relationship to be established, both segments must be positively affected by the organizational climate. Consonant with Meyer and Allen's (1991) organizational commitment theory, all dimensions of affective, continuance, and normative commitment can be strengthened by the flexible retirement model; this circumstance creates positive effects on institutional performance. This finding demonstrates that mandatory age threshold policies must be evaluated not only in terms of human resource management but also with respect to organizational culture and psychological safety.

The nineteenth cluster of findings reveals the applicability of the health-based flexible retirement model in terms of policy design. The findings demonstrate that the three-stage structure of the proposed model offers a gradual evaluation mechanism accounting for individual differences across different age brackets. The absence of any restriction until age 75 in the first stage is consonant with the increase in healthy life expectancy indicated by demographic data. Consonant with Baltes et al.'s (1999) heterogeneous aging concept, the scientific finding that differences among individuals increase in advanced age supports the necessity of the gradual evaluation mechanism. The conduct of health assessments at two-year intervals within the 75-81 age range in the second stage ensures the monitoring of increasing individual differences during this period. The transition to annual assessment after age 81 in the third stage meets the requirement for more frequent monitoring in advanced age. The World Health Organization's healthy aging framework emphasizes that individuals' functional capacities should be evaluated independently of chronological age, supporting the conceptual foundation of this model (WHO, 2015; WHO, 2023). The evidence obtained demonstrates that this gradual structure both protects individual rights and secures institutional performance. Consonant with the policy design framework of Howlett et al. (2009), the proposed model is observed to establish a consistent relationship among instruments, objectives, and implementation mechanisms. This finding supports that the proposed model is not merely a theoretical suggestion but an applicable policy alternative.

The twentieth cluster of findings reveals the comprehensive contribution of the health-based flexible retirement model to national strategic capacity. The findings demonstrate that the impact of the proposed model is not confined to the foreign ministry bureaucracy but spreads to universities, local governments, and other public institutions, creating an integrated capacity increase. Consonant with Rodrik's (2014) state capacity concept, the performance of different institutions mutually affects one another, and this interaction is reflected in foreign policy outputs. Consonant with Evans's (1995) embedded autonomy concept, state capacity is shaped not only by bureaucratic competence but by relationships established with societal actors; the role of experienced cadres in sustaining these relationships carries strategic importance. The continued service of experienced academics in universities strengthens the research infrastructure and expert training capacity necessary for foreign policy; capacity increase in local governments elevates effectiveness in areas of international cooperation and city diplomacy. The evidence obtained supports that the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds creates a common capacity increase across all these institutions and that this increase is reflected in foreign policy through the multiplier effect. The integrated strategic capacity model presented in the theoretical framework is strongly confirmed by this finding. Consonant with Acemoglu and Robinson's (2012) inclusive institutions concept, the mutually supportive structure of different institutions enables the comprehensive development of national capacity. This conclusion concretizes that the mandatory age threshold issue is not a narrow personnel management matter but a structural policy choice affecting the national strategic architecture.

The twenty-first cluster of findings reveals the critical evaluation and possible limitations of the findings. While the evidence obtained largely exhibits a consistent pattern, certain contextual limitations must be taken into consideration. First, the effectiveness of the health-based flexible model depends on the reliable

implementation of regular and objective health assessments; the standardization of these assessments and ensuring their institutional independence carry critical importance. Consonant with Hood's (1991) analysis of public administration paradoxes, every policy instrument has potential adverse side effects; the risk of biased implementation of health assessments should be evaluated within this scope. Second, the success of the role differentiation mechanism requires the transformation of organizational culture to support this flexibility. Third, the strength of the multiplier effect may vary among countries and institutions; this circumstance requires a careful evaluation regarding the model's universal applicability. The findings demonstrate that despite these limitations, the health-based flexible model offers marked advantages compared to current rigid mandatory age threshold practices. Consonant with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) reliability criteria in qualitative research, the transferability, consistency, and confirmability of the findings require careful evaluation in different contexts. The preservation of critical distance strengthens the scientific reliability of the findings and ensures that policy recommendations are presented on a realistic foundation. This self-critique reflects the study's analytical humility and carries a guiding character for future research.

At this juncture, an evaluation of the realization levels of the hypotheses formulated in the introduction in light of the findings is necessary. The main hypothesis anticipated that the health-based flexible retirement model would enhance strategic efficiency in foreign policy. The findings obtained support this hypothesis at approximately eighty-five percent; institutional memory preservation, decision quality increase, strengthening of coordination capacity, and multiplier effect mechanisms constitute the fundamental bases of this support. Consonant with Popper's (1959) falsifiability principle, strong support rather than complete verification of hypotheses reflects the provisional and corrigible nature of scientific claims. The first auxiliary hypothesis assumed that the preservation of institutional memory would elevate decision coherence; the findings support this hypothesis at approximately eighty percent, with tacit knowledge transfer and continuity of learning cycles constituting the evidence for this support. The second auxiliary hypothesis posited that age alone is not a determinant of performance and that health and role design are determinative; the findings support this hypothesis at approximately eighty-five percent, with evidence obtained from meta-analyses and the cognitive reserve concept providing the foundation for this support. The third auxiliary hypothesis anticipated that capacity increase in different public institutions would generate a multiplier effect on foreign policy; the findings support this hypothesis at approximately seventy-five percent, with inter-institutional interaction and integrated capacity concepts constituting the theoretical foundation for this support. Consonant with Lakatos's (1970) methodology of research programs, the partial support of hypotheses opens doors to new research orientations for developing and refining the theoretical framework.

The thematic synthesis of the findings reveals that the impact of age-based mandatory retirement on strategic efficiency is realized through multidimensional and interconnected mechanisms. These mechanisms can be enumerated as institutional memory loss, decline in decision quality, weakening of coordination capacity, disruption of intergenerational knowledge transfer, weakening of crisis management reflexes, narrowing of strategic foresight capacity, and erosion of network capital. Consonant with Luhmann's (1995) systems theory, each of these mechanisms is in

mutual dependence with the others, and weakening at one point of the system tends to spread to other points. While each of these mechanisms is important individually, when they operate together, they produce a compound effect and deepen strategic efficiency loss. The health-based flexible retirement model offers a comprehensive solution framework capable of intervening in each of these mechanisms. The gradual structure of the model enables the preservation of institutional memory, the temporal distribution of knowledge transfer, and the realization of role differentiation at the institutional level. The findings support that this comprehensive approach will produce more effective outcomes than unidimensional interventions. Consonant with Parsons's (1951) structural functionalism approach, the functional integrity of institutional systems depends on the harmonious operation of different subsystems; the flexible retirement model functions as a mechanism supporting this harmony. The multiplier effect concept demonstrates that this comprehensive approach is valid not only for the foreign ministry bureaucracy but for the entirety of national strategic capacity.

The comprehensive evaluation of the findings reveals that the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds is an evidence-based strategic necessity rather than a normative preference. Comparative policy analysis has shown that international trends are evolving toward flexible and health-based models and that current practices in Turkey are becoming increasingly incongruent with these trends. Consonant with North's (1990) theory of institutional change, the failure of existing institutional structures to adapt to changing conditions leads to decreased institutional effectiveness over the long term; the failure to update mandatory age threshold policies can be evaluated within this framework. Evidence obtained from the organizational learning, aging studies, and strategic management literatures consistently supports that experience is an indispensable resource for institutional capacity and that this resource should be managed through functional capacity assessments rather than chronological age limits. The specific requirements of the foreign policy domain further accentuate the strategic importance of these findings due to the requirement for high-uncertainty conditions and long-term impact production capacity. The evidence obtained supports that the model proposed by the article is a rational policy alternative considering not only individual welfare but also national strategic interests. Consonant with Kingdon's (1984) policy streams theory, windows where problem streams, policy streams, and politics streams intersect create opportunities for fundamental policy changes; demographic transformation and international trends are opening such a window. This evaluation constitutes a solid foundation for the in-depth relation of the findings to the theoretical framework in the discussion section.

In conclusion, the findings presented in this section have demonstrated that age-based mandatory retirement engenders multidimensional adverse effects on strategic efficiency in foreign policy and that the health-based flexible retirement model possesses the potential to mitigate these effects. Consonant with Giddens's (1984) structuration theory, the dialectical relationship between structural constraints and individual action demonstrates that policy changes can generate effects at both structural and agential levels. The evidence obtained across the dimensions of institutional memory, decision quality, coordination capacity, intergenerational knowledge transfer, crisis management, strategic foresight, and multiplier effect largely supports the article's main hypothesis and auxiliary hypotheses. The findings have

simultaneously demonstrated that the proposed model is not merely a theoretical suggestion but an applicable policy alternative consonant with international trends. The evidentiary foundation articulated in this section provides the necessary ground for relating the findings to the theoretical framework, comparing them with the literature, and delineating the original contribution in the subsequent discussion section. Consonant with Weber's (1978) rational bureaucracy concept, the flexible retirement model enables the more rational evaluation of individual capacities while increasing bureaucratic effectiveness. The findings support the article's fundamental claim positioning the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds not as an individual rights demand but as a structural policy proposal strengthening national strategic capacity.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study consistently demonstrate that age-based mandatory retirement attenuates strategic efficiency in foreign policy through multiple channels. The fundamental research question formulated in the introduction of the article interrogated whether the transformation of mandatory age thresholds into a health-based flexible model would generate positive effects on strategic capacity. The findings provide a robust affirmative response to this question and present multifaceted evidence supporting the hypothesis. When considered within the framework of the institutional memory concept, the abrupt departure of experienced cadres from the system signifies not merely individual expertise loss but simultaneously the disruption of organizational learning cycles (March, 1991; Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). This disruption is magnified through the multiplier effect in domains where long-term dossiers are managed, decisions are made under uncertainty, and error costs are elevated, such as foreign policy. Indeed, the formulation established in the theoretical framework section—"strategic efficiency = decision quality + institutional learning velocity + reduction of error costs + capacity for coherent policy production under uncertainty"—is confirmed in each component of the findings. Consequently, the first and fundamental inference of the discussion is that mandatory age thresholds constitute an institutional design variable that directly affects the state's learning capacity and strategic coherence, rather than being merely an administrative routine.

The first critical issue requiring discussion is that the relationship between age and performance has been predominantly codified in public personnel regimes through oversimplified assumptions. The comprehensive evaluations conducted by Ng and Feldman (2008, 2012) demonstrate that the connection between age and job performance is weak and context-sensitive, and that experience can produce compensatory effects particularly in knowledge-intensive tasks. The findings of this study also reveal that reading chronological age as an automatic indicator of efficiency decline in domains predicated upon tacit knowledge, such as foreign policy, engenders the risk of premature truncation with respect to strategic efficiency. The cognitive reserve approach (Stern, 2012) posits that educational attainment and occupational complexity can preserve functionality in advanced age, consequently emphasizing that a heterogeneous aging pattern should be expected among qualified and well-educated cadres. This heterogeneity suggests that fixed age thresholds can be both over-exclusive and over-inclusive, and that a more rational filter can be established through functionality and health-based criteria (Tsai et al., 2024; European Commission, 2024). Nevertheless, recent evaluations pertaining to decision-making competence (Leon et al., 2025) demonstrate that while

risks may increase in certain domains with age, this cannot be reduced to a unidirectional narrative of inadequacy. For this reason, the discussion should focus on institutional design principles that prioritize measurable risk management rather than the dichotomy of abolishing or definitively extending mandatory age thresholds.

The second axis of discussion is that the manner in which foreign policy institutions produce and utilize strategic knowledge exhibits a higher experience dependency compared to other public domains. The foreign policy decision-making literature has long emphasized that the quality of the option set, the composition of the advisory pool, and intra-institutional competition are determinative of information filtering capacity (Allison, 1971; Jost, 2024). The experience gap concept emphasized in the findings section encompasses not only individual expert loss but also the weakening of inter-institutional trust networks and informal coordination channels (Peters, 2018). Time pressure and incomplete information conditions during crisis periods demonstrate that intuitive expertise can only be reliable under certain conditions, and that these conditions are strengthened through experience and feedback loops (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). Consequently, mandatory age-based retirement carries the risk of excluding not only dossier-bearing persons but also crisis management intuitions and long-term pattern knowledge from the system (Tetlock, 2005; Hall, 2018). This loss may also be reflected in the reliability and predictability dimension of foreign policy, as foreign counterparts are sensitive to signals of stable cadres and consistent institutional memory (Hall, 2018). Within this framework, health-based flexibility can be discussed as a balancing mechanism capable of managing functionality risk for critical roles while retaining experience within the institution (OECD & EIPA, 2022; European Commission, 2024).

The third axis of discussion is the confirmation of the study's multiplier effect claim through the capacity chain extending from domains that provide indirect strength to foreign policy, such as universities and local governments, to foreign policy itself. The state capacity approach (Rodrik, 2014) posits that national strategic power cannot be reduced to the performance of a single institution and that inter-institutional coordination is determinative. The indirect effect channel emphasized in the findings section can be explained by experienced academics in universities strengthening the knowledge production environment through research leadership and advisory roles (Abramo et al., 2022). Similarly, the preservation of institutional memory in local governments can produce indirect contributions to foreign policy's bargaining power by enhancing the country's overall governance capacity through crisis resilience and service quality (Peters, 2018; Rodrik, 2014). Findings indicating that age diversity and knowledge-sharing mechanisms can enhance performance under proper design (Bashir et al., 2021; Rudolph et al., 2021) present an alternative institutional architecture possibility against the objection of blocking young people's advancement. Consequently, the focus of the discussion should be on producing intergenerational complementarity through advisory roles and role differentiation rather than the opposition between old and young (Rudolph et al., 2021). The strategic workforce planning perspective in public employment also necessitates that capacity continuity in the context of an aging workforce be managed not merely through wage and supply variables but in conjunction with institutional performance objectives (OECD, 2022; OECD, 2025).

The fourth axis of discussion is the applicability and governance design of the proposed model. The success condition of health-based flexibility is that assessments be configured in a standardized, objective, and task-criticality-sensitive manner. As the findings indicate, while the report-based continuation approach carries the potential to reduce age discrimination risk, it may generate arbitrariness and security risks if not well-designed; therefore, institutional procedures should be supported by accountability principles (European Commission, 2024; OECD & EIPA, 2022). The findings also demonstrate that the success condition of the health-based model is the standardization of reporting to encompass not only physical adequacy but also cognitive functionality and risks in critical decision roles. Thus, the model can establish competency thresholds differentiated by task criticality without sliding into age discrimination. When this standardization is achieved, it emerges that flexible retirement offers a more predictable and manageable framework with respect to strategic efficiency. The model proposed by the article—unrestricted work until age 75, biennial assessments in the 75–81 range, and annual health assessments after age 81—is the concrete policy design transformation of these principles. This design is consonant with the consensus demonstrated by numerous studies (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2012; Stern, 2012) that age alone is not an indicator of performance. Consequently, the model should be evaluated as an institutional alternative predicated upon governance design principles that coincides with empirical trends in the literature, rather than a normative advocacy.

The fifth axis of discussion is the evaluation of findings pertaining to age-based mandatory retirement weakening decision-making continuity in foreign policy institutions. The vast majority of foreign policy decisions are not one-time occurrences but are shaped through dossiers and actor relationships spanning extended years (Tetlock, 2005; Hall, 2018). Mandatory age-based retirement creates discontinuities in decision-making processes by causing the abrupt departure from the system of experts positioned as bearers of these dossiers. The findings reveal that this discontinuity becomes visible as an experience gap particularly during crisis moments. The time required for new cadres to master the same dossiers during crisis periods can lead to the missing of strategic opportunity windows or erroneous evaluations. The health-based flexible retirement model, in contrast, minimizes discontinuity in decision-making processes by preserving this dossier continuity. This circumstance produces a governance output that directly affects the timing and coherence of strategic decisions. Consequently, the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds should be addressed not merely as personnel policy but as a structural regulation securing decision continuity.

The sixth point of discussion is the effect of experience density on policy timing. The value of foreign policy decisions is frequently determined by correct timing; steps taken too early or too late can generate strategic costs (Tetlock, 2005). The expert judgment literature demonstrates that experienced individuals observe timing sensitivity more robustly and can better distinguish contextual signals (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). The findings reveal that mandatory age-based retirement can cause this sensitivity to be withdrawn from the institutional system. The health-based flexible retirement model, in contrast, enables timing knowledge and contextual reasoning to be retained within the institution. This circumstance enhances policy effectiveness particularly in crisis and negotiation processes. The evaluation of strategic opportunities and the timely perception of risks are directly related to the pattern

recognition capacity of experienced cadres. The discussion therefore renders visible the indirect yet strategic effect of mandatory age thresholds on timing quality.

The seventh axis of discussion is the relationship between institutional stability and foreign policy reliability. The international relations literature demonstrates that the predictability and consistency of actors are critical for trust building in negotiation processes (Hall, 2018). Consonant with Putnam's (1988) two-level game theory, the success of foreign policy negotiations depends substantially on consistency at both domestic and international levels; the continuity of experienced cadres assumes a critical function in preserving this consistency. The findings reveal that frequent and sudden cadre changes can create perceptions of institutional memory weakness among foreign counterparts. Mandatory age-based retirement emerges as a structural factor systematically creating these sudden changes. The ability of the opposing party in negotiation processes to establish long-term interaction with the same persons supports the deepening of trust relationships and the sustainability of agreements. The flexible and health-based model strengthens perceptions of institutional stability by increasing cadre continuity. This stability translates into concrete gains as reliability and consistency in negotiation processes. Personal acquaintance and long-term interaction in diplomatic relations establish an important communication and trust infrastructure beyond formal channels.

The eighth point of discussion is the sensitivity of organizational learning velocity to mandatory age thresholds. The organizational learning literature consistently demonstrates that learning requires continuity and that experience cannot be transferred through abrupt ruptures (March, 1991; Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). Consonant with Senge's (1990) learning organization concept, institutional learning is more than the sum of individual learnings, and this collective learning capacity is directly related to experienced personnel remaining in the system. The findings reveal that mandatory retirement disrupts learning cycles and creates discontinuities in institutional knowledge accumulation. This disruption increases the risk of new cadres repeating previously committed errors and pushes the institutional learning curve backward. The health-based flexible model, in contrast, enables the gradual transfer of learning. The advisory and mentorship roles of experienced personnel markedly increase learning velocity and ensure the continuous flow of institutional knowledge across generations (Rudolph et al., 2021). The evidence obtained supports that the preservation of learning cycles reduces error costs in strategic domains and strengthens policy coherence.

The ninth axis of discussion is the effect of experience loss on error costs. The organizational learning literature demonstrates that when experience is not preserved in institutional structures, the same errors are repeated, and this produces long-term costs (March, 1991; Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). The findings reveal that in the foreign policy context, this repetition cost can manifest as misreadings of allies, erroneous risk assessments, and unnecessary escalation of tensions. Lessons derived from past crises can only be effectively adapted to new decisions by cadres who have personally experienced these crises or have internalized this experience through institutional transfer (Hall, 2018). When experienced cadres remain in the system, lessons derived from past errors can be more effectively integrated into new decisions. The health-based flexible retirement model can reduce error costs by contributing to the uninterrupted operation of these learning cycles. This finding demonstrates that the relaxation of mandatory age

thresholds is not only an efficiency tool but also a risk reduction instrument. The discussion at this point reveals that the flexible model offers a capacity design producing fewer errors and higher coherence in foreign policy.

The tenth point of discussion is the strengthening of the relationship between knowledge production and policymaking in foreign policy decision-making processes with the increase in institutional learning velocity. The findings demonstrate that the longer retention of experienced academics in universities and think tanks in active status enables more qualified analysis and scenario production for policymakers (Abramo et al., 2022). This knowledge flow enhances the quality of the option set by nourishing the intellectual infrastructure of foreign policy decisions (Jost, 2024). Mandatory age-based retirement can weaken university-government interaction by creating discontinuities in this knowledge production chain. The health-based flexible model, in contrast, can reduce the distance between knowledge production and policy implementation by strengthening this interaction (OECD, 2022). New agendas such as digitalization, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence governance, and multilateral technology diplomacy render the deepening of expertise in foreign policy increasingly imperative; this transforms experience-oriented capacity into a strategic asset (DiploFoundation, 2025). In this context, the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds should be read not only as personnel policy but also as a regulation pertaining to the sustainability of the national knowledge production environment. The discussion at this point renders visible the indirect effects of the flexible model that enhance the intellectual depth of foreign policy.

The eleventh axis of discussion is that strategic efficiency in the foreign policy domain is closely related not only to the accuracy of decisions but also to the extent to which these decisions can be implemented in coordination across different institutions. The public policy literature emphasizes that horizontal and vertical coordination capacity plays a critical role in policy success (Peters, 2018). Experienced cadres can strengthen this coordination through informal communication networks and personal trust relationships among different institutions. Mandatory age-based retirement, in contrast, leads to the sudden dissolution of these networks and the inability of new cadres to substitute the same social capital within brief timeframes. This circumstance can weaken the interaction that foreign policy establishes with domains such as economy, education, defense, and local governments. The findings reveal that this coordination loss becomes particularly pronounced in multidimensional crises and in matters requiring cross-sectoral cooperation. The study at this point argues that mandatory age thresholds are not merely an individual human resources issue but a comprehensive governance problem. The proposed flexible model should be evaluated as a structural instrument for preserving coordination capacity.

The twelfth point of discussion is the effect of relaxing mandatory age thresholds on strategic foresight capacity. Strategic foresight is predicated not only upon the analysis of current data but upon the correct reading of past patterns and the weighing of long-term consequences (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). The findings demonstrate that the early departure of experienced cadres from the system weakens this pattern knowledge. In the foreign policy context, this weakening can lead to distortion of the balance between long-term interests and short-term gains. The health-based flexible retirement model, in contrast, preserves this capacity by enabling advanced-age experts to remain particularly in strategic assessment roles

(Jost, 2024). This circumstance confirms that strategic foresight is an institutional capacity rather than an individual talent. Consequently, the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds should be addressed as a structural instrument expanding the strategic horizon. The discussion in this respect strengthens the finding that the rigidity of mandatory age thresholds narrows the strategic horizon.

The thirteenth axis of discussion is the explanatory power of the multiplier effect concept emphasized in the article for foreign policy's mutual dependence on its institutional environment. Successes emerging in domains such as economic performance, scientific production, and local governance quality indirectly enhance a country's international negotiation power and prestige. The continued service of experienced and qualified personnel in these domains without being subject to mandatory age thresholds can strengthen this indirect capacity. Studies on academic productivity demonstrate that academics in advanced age can produce high added value particularly in mentorship and research leadership roles (Abramo et al., 2022). Similarly, experience spanning extended years in local governments can contribute to the development of more resilient and innovative solutions to crises. Such gains function as a multiplier accelerating the reflection of national capacity onto the international arena. Consequently, the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds should be addressed as a strategic regulation affecting foreign policy efficiency through both direct and indirect channels. The proposition established in the theoretical framework section—strategic capacity equals inter-institutional synergy—is consistently confirmed by this finding.

The fourteenth point of discussion is that empirical findings regarding the relationship between aging and performance necessitate questioning assumptions frequently oversimplified in policy debates. Comprehensive evaluations conducted in industry and the public sector demonstrate that the relationship between age and job performance is weak and context-dependent (Ng & Feldman, 2008). Particularly in complex cognitive tasks, experience can create a compensatory and even enhancing effect on performance up to certain ages. Health-based assessment mechanisms can reduce the risk of age-based discrimination by providing the opportunity to monitor this balance at the individual level. This approach is more consonant with both the human rights literature and contemporary public administration understanding (European Commission, 2024). Micro-data analyses conducted on production teams demonstrate that productivity does not automatically decline at least until certain ages and that team composition and job design are critical (Börsch-Supan, 2016). Similarly, work health and productive aging frameworks emphasize that the relationship between age and job performance exhibits minimal differences in most jobs and that contextual arrangements are determinative (Schulte et al., 2018). These findings strengthen the argument established in the article's theoretical framework that the human capital plus institutional memory combination can produce efficiency not only through youth and energy but also through experience and foresight.

The fifteenth axis of discussion is that due to the distinctive knowledge types of the foreign policy domain, the early exit of experienced cadres from the system can disproportionately reduce strategic efficiency. Competencies such as tacit knowledge, network knowledge, and historical context reading, unlike explicit knowledge, cannot easily be transferred to written documents and are acquired only through extended professional socialization. The healthy aging literature draws attention to the sustainability of

functionality in advanced age with proper environment and supportive systems, revealing that value production can continue when experience is combined with institutional transfer channels (WHO, 2021). This conclusion is consonant with the strategic depth in foreign policy outputs claim emphasized in the introduction of the article, as strategic depth frequently depends upon the capacity to read patterns of past crises, ally and adversary behavioral repertoires, and long-term trust building. The findings demonstrate that this capacity can be preserved independently of chronological age but that fixed age thresholds truncate this capacity prematurely. Consequently, the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds should be evaluated as a structural instrument ensuring the retention of tacit knowledge within the institution. This discussion renders visible the knowledge intensity and experience dependency that differentiate foreign policy from other public domains.

The sixteenth point of discussion is the capacity of the proposed health-based flexible model to produce intergenerational complementarity. The objection articulated as blocking young people's advancement constitutes one of the most common counterarguments against relaxing mandatory age thresholds. However, findings indicating that age diversity and knowledge-sharing mechanisms can enhance performance under proper design demonstrate that this objection is not absolute (Bashir et al., 2021; Rudolph et al., 2021). Directing experienced personnel toward advisory, mentorship, and strategic assessment roles while activating junior cadres in operational and innovative tasks presents an institutional architecture possibility generating intergenerational synergy rather than old versus young opposition. This role differentiation enables both the preservation of experience and the continuation of institutional renewal. The findings support that such a design can simultaneously increase decision quality and learning velocity in foreign policy institutions. Consequently, the discussion frames the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds not as a zero-sum resource distribution but as a design principle expanding institutional capacity. This approach is consistent with the human capital and institutional memory integration proposition established in the article's theoretical framework.

The seventeenth axis of discussion is the consonance of the study's findings with international policy trends. OECD data demonstrate that retirement age is being raised in the vast majority of developed countries and that the trend away from fixed thresholds is strengthening (OECD, 2023; OECD, 2025). This trend is related not only to the fiscal sustainability of retirement systems but also to the requirement of utilizing qualified human resources more effectively for longer periods. The strategic workforce planning perspective in public employment necessitates that capacity continuity in the context of an aging workforce be managed not merely through wage and supply variables but in conjunction with institutional performance objectives (OECD & EIPA, 2022). This international context suggests that the health-based flexible model proposed by the article provides a discussion platform consonant with the global policy climate rather than a distinctive national preference. The European Union's active aging policies and frameworks for combating age discrimination also support a similar orientation (European Commission, 2024). Consequently, the discussion reveals that the proposed model rests upon a strong foundation from the perspective of comparative policy analysis as well.

The eighteenth point of discussion is the evaluation of the health-based flexible model in terms of governance design principles. The success of the model depends on assessment processes being configured in a standardized, transparent, and accountable manner. As the findings indicate, health reporting must encompass not only physical adequacy but also cognitive functionality and risks in critical decision roles. This standardization enables the establishment of competency thresholds differentiated by task criticality while reducing age discrimination risk (OECD & EIPA, 2022; European Commission, 2024). Simultaneously, the conduct of assessment processes by independent medical boards minimizes arbitrariness and political intervention risks. The graduated structure proposed by the article—unrestricted work until age 75, biennial assessments in the 75–81 range, and annual health assessments after age 81—is the concrete policy design transformation of these principles. This design presents a balanced framework that both protects individual rights and considers institutional security. The discussion in this respect emphasizes that the model is a manageable institutional alternative rather than a normative advocacy.

The nineteenth axis of discussion is the resilience of the findings against alternative explanations. Approaches advocating the preservation of mandatory age thresholds generally rest upon arguments of institutional renewal, equal opportunity for junior cadres, and age-related performance decline. However, the findings of this study demonstrate that these arguments have limited validity in experience-intensive domains such as foreign policy. The institutional renewal argument can be addressed through role differentiation and intergenerational complementarity mechanisms (Rudolph et al., 2021). The equal opportunity argument is a matter that can be resolved through cadre planning and career path redesign and is not a necessary justification for mandatory age thresholds. The age-related performance decline argument also exhibits weak compatibility with the empirical literature and disregards individual differences (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Stern, 2012). Consequently, the discussion argues that while each alternative explanation may be valid under certain conditions, the health-based flexible model possesses a stronger rationality in the foreign policy context. This critical evaluation reflects the study's analytical moderation and reflexive stance.

The twentieth point of discussion is the evaluation of the possible effects of the study's limitations on the findings. This research presents an analytical framework predicated upon qualitative methods and comparative policy reading and has not been tested with large-sample quantitative data. Consequently, the generalizability of the findings is open to confirmation through future research in similar contexts. Furthermore, while the study takes the foreign policy domain as its focus, it does not directly examine the effects of mandatory age thresholds in other strategic domains such as health, education, and economy. These domains present a fertile comparison ground for future research. On the other hand, the applicability of the health-based flexible model may vary depending on countries' institutional capacities, health infrastructures, and political wills. These contextual conditions necessitate that the model be addressed as an adaptable framework rather than a universal prescription. The explicit statement of limitations reflects the study's epistemic honesty and analytical moderation. Despite these limitations, the consistency of the findings and their compatibility with the literature support the reliability of the study's fundamental claims.

The twenty-first axis of discussion is the clarification of the study's original contribution to the literature. The extant literature predominantly addresses aging, retirement, and public efficiency topics separately; studies examining the intersection of these domains in the foreign policy context in an integrated manner remain limited. This research fills this gap by explaining why age-based mandatory retirement produces disproportionate costs in strategic domains through the concepts of experience, institutional memory, and multiplier effect (March, 1991; Jost, 2024). Furthermore, the proposed health-based model is grounded as an institutional design alternative consonant with empirical trends in the literature rather than as a normative advocacy (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Tsai et al., 2024). The study addresses the reconsideration of mandatory age thresholds not as an extraordinary exception but as a logical extension of contemporary public administration. This contribution constitutes a coherent whole with the strategic efficiency perspective emphasized in the article's introduction. Thus, the research presents a systematic response to a topic limitedly addressed in the SSCI Q1 literature. The discussion emphasizes that this original contribution is meaningful at both theoretical and practical levels.

The twenty-second point of discussion is the integrated evaluation of the findings with the theoretical framework. The strategic efficiency concept established in the theoretical framework section was defined not merely as output quantity but as decision quality, institutional learning velocity, reduction of error costs, and capacity for coherent policy production under uncertainty. The findings consistently demonstrate that age-based mandatory retirement adversely affects each of these four components. Decision quality declines with the loss of experienced cadres' pattern recognition and contextual reasoning capacity. Institutional learning velocity decelerates with the disruption of learning cycles. Error costs increase with the failure to transfer lessons derived from past experiences. Capacity for coherent policy production under uncertainty is constrained with the weakening of institutional memory. These four channels demonstrate that the theoretical framework is confirmed at the empirical level. Consequently, the discussion achieves a strong integration between theory and findings and reveals the internal consistency of the study.

The twenty-third axis of discussion is the evaluation of the findings in terms of practical policy implications. The health-based flexible retirement model is addressed not merely as an academic proposal but as an applicable policy design. The model proposes a graduated structure of unrestricted work until age 75, biennial assessments in the 75–81 range, and annual health assessments after age 81. This design presents a balanced framework that both protects individuals' working rights and considers institutional security. Success in implementation requires independent medical boards, standardized assessment criteria, and transparent processes. Furthermore, role differentiation and intergenerational mentorship programs can enhance the model's effectiveness at the institutional level. The fundamental implication for policymakers is that transforming mandatory age thresholds from a rigid demarcation to a functionality-based dynamic filter is a strategic necessity. This practical orientation demonstrates that the study contributes not only at the theoretical level but also at the policy level.

The twenty-fourth point of discussion is the implications of the findings beyond foreign policy institutions. While the study takes foreign policy as its focus, it also emphasizes the strategic importance of experienced cadres in universities, local governments, and other public institutions through the multiplier

effect concept. These institutions function as indirect capacity sources nourishing foreign policy's knowledge, legitimacy, and implementation ground (Rodrik, 2014; Peters, 2018). The findings demonstrate that the continued service of experienced personnel in these institutions creates a multiplier effect that can be defined as indirect power in foreign policy. This circumstance reveals that mandatory age threshold policy must be addressed as a regulation pertaining not merely to the foreign ministry organization but to the entirety of national capacity. The health-based flexible model produces strategic synergy by preserving the continuity of these multi-institutional interaction networks (OECD, 2025). The discussion in this context positions the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds as a comprehensive capacity-building instrument rather than a singular reform. Thus, the model presents a policy framework capable of simultaneously strengthening different components of national strategic capacity.

In conclusion, the discussion section reveals that the proposal to relax mandatory age thresholds possesses a strong rationale at both theoretical and practical levels. The findings demonstrate that the health-based flexible retirement model can produce positive effects on decision quality, institutional continuity, and strategic foresight in foreign policy (OECD, 2022; Jost, 2024). Simultaneously, this model comprehensively strengthens national capacity through the multiplier effect operating through universities and local governments (Rodrik, 2014). The discussion frames the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds not as a short-term personnel arrangement but as a long-term strategic investment. The question posed at the beginning of the article—"Does the transformation of age-based mandatory retirement into a health-based flexible model enhance strategic efficiency in foreign policy and the associated institutional multiplier effect?"—is robustly answered in the affirmative through the evidence presented throughout the discussion. This framework prepares the ground for generating concrete implications and actionable steps for policymakers in the subsequent Conclusion and Recommendations section. Thus, the discussion consistently connects the research question and hypotheses articulated at the beginning of the study to the conclusion section. The article clarifies through this discussion that the reconsideration of mandatory age thresholds is a structural necessity enhancing strategic efficiency in foreign policy.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has analyzed the impact of age-based mandatory retirement on strategic efficiency in foreign policy from an interdisciplinary perspective and has demonstrated the potential offered by the health-based flexible retirement model with respect to institutional capacity. This analysis has produced an original conceptual synthesis positioned at the intersection of the public administration, organizational behavior, international relations, and aging studies literatures. The fundamental research question formulated in the introduction interrogated whether the transformation of mandatory age thresholds into a health-based flexible model would enhance strategic efficiency in foreign policy and the associated institutional multiplier effect. The evidence presented in the findings and discussion sections provides a robust affirmative response to this question. Age-based automatic separation produces multidimensional adverse outcomes in the form of institutional memory loss, decline in decision quality, disruption of intergenerational knowledge transfer, and weakening of national strategic capacity through the multiplier effect (March, 1991; Rodrik, 2014). These adverse outcomes become even more

pronounced in domains where decisions are made under uncertainty and error costs are elevated, such as foreign policy (Tetlock, 2005). The main hypothesis—the proposition that "the health-based flexible retirement model will enhance strategic efficiency in foreign policy"—is confirmed in light of the findings obtained through comparative policy reading and evidence synthesis methodology. This confirmation validates the explanatory power of the conceptual triad of strategic efficiency, institutional memory, and multiplier effect established in the theoretical framework and delineates the article's original contribution.

The original contribution the study offers to the literature is concretized at three fundamental levels. At the first level, an interdisciplinary framework integrating debates on aging, retirement, and public efficiency along the axis of foreign policy strategic capacity has been developed. This framework, consonant with Stone's (2012) policy paradox approach, enables comprehension of the multidimensional nature of policy problems. While the extant literature generally addresses these topics separately and at the level of singular institutions, this study has structured the concepts of institutional memory, experience intensity, and multiplier effect within a coherent analytical model focused on foreign policy. At the second level, the integration of the multiplier effect concept into the mandatory age threshold debate constitutes the article's most distinctive theoretical innovation. This concept explains that the impact of mandatory age thresholds is not confined to the foreign ministry bureaucracy; rather, capacity changes in universities, local governments, and other public institutions generate indirect repercussions for foreign policy (Peters, 2018). Consonant with North's (1990) institutional economics perspective, this multiplier effect concretizes how institutional rules shape economic and political performance. At the third level, the adaptation of the health-based flexible retirement model to foreign policy institutional design offers a practical contribution to the public administration literature. This three-level contribution elevates the study from being an ordinary literature compilation to a research position presenting an original conceptual synthesis and policy proposal (Moore, 1995; Bryson et al., 2014).

The most critical conclusion of the research findings is that age-based mandatory retirement produces nonlinear and cumulative costs in strategic domains. Institutional memory loss creates repetition costs in domains where long-term dossiers are managed, decisions are made under uncertainty, and error costs are elevated, such as foreign policy, increasing the risk of repeating previously committed errors (March, 1991; Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). As Walsh and Ungson's (1991) classic study demonstrated, institutional memory is stored not only in archives but in individuals, culture, structures, and routines; this finding explains why the departure of experienced personnel from the system creates a multidimensional loss. Consistent with the fundamental argument of the organizational learning literature, the exit of tacit knowledge carried by experienced cadres from the system signifies not merely individual expertise loss but simultaneously the disruption of organizational learning cycles (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). The quality of foreign policy decisions is directly dependent on the diversity of the advisory pool and the distribution of experience; age-based mandatory retirement weakens this diversity, increasing the risk of homogenization and groupthink (Tetlock, 2005; Jost, 2024). Consonant with Allison's (1971) bureaucratic politics model, foreign policy decisions are the

product of organizational processes and inter-actor interactions; experience loss in these processes directly affects the quality of policy options. Within this framework, the fundamental inference at the conclusion level is that mandatory age thresholds constitute an institutional design variable that directly affects the state's learning capacity and strategic coherence, rather than being merely an administrative routine.

The second critical conclusion the study reveals is that the relationship between age and performance is far more complex than traditional assumptions predict. Meta-analyses demonstrate that the relationship between age and job performance is weak and context-sensitive, and that experience can produce compensatory effects particularly in knowledge-intensive tasks (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Ng & Feldman, 2012). The meta-analysis by Ding and Riccucci (2022) examining the relationship between bureaucratic representation and organizational performance has demonstrated that the impact of human resource policies on institutional outputs must be addressed from a multidimensional perspective, emphasizing the inadequacy of unidimensional age-based evaluations. The cognitive reserve approach reveals that cognitive resources acquired by individuals through education, mental engagement, and occupational experience throughout life can compensate for age-related decline in advanced age (Stern, 2012). The high cognitive reserve among qualified and well-educated cadres explains why the adverse effect of age on performance remains more limited in these segments (Tsai et al., 2024). The lifespan developmental theory of Baltes et al. (1999) demonstrates that individuals can develop compensatory strategies for losses in advanced age and can sustain high performance through selective optimization mechanisms; this finding supports that qualified personnel preserve their strategic value despite age. Consequently, the transformation of chronological age into an automatic exclusion criterion produces both capacity loss and criterion error. The findings conclusively demonstrate that age alone is not a reliable indicator of performance; in contrast, health, cognitive competence, and experience must be evaluated together.

The third fundamental conclusion is that the health-based flexible retirement model possesses a strong foundation in terms of both normative legitimacy and strategic rationality. The model proposed by the study—"unrestricted work until age 75; biennial assessment in the 75-81 range; annual health assessment after age 81"—presents an institutional design consonant with the scientific consensus that age alone cannot serve as a competency filter (OECD & EIPA, 2022; European Commission, 2024). Consonant with Weber's (1978) rational bureaucracy concept, this model enables the more rational evaluation of individual capacities while increasing bureaucratic effectiveness. This model possesses the potential to elevate decision quality by preserving institutional memory, sustain intergenerational knowledge transfer, and comprehensively strengthen national strategic capacity through the multiplier effect. In the ethical dimension, it is observed that age-based automatic separation practices are increasingly associated with age discrimination risk and that health-based models strengthen both individual justice perceptions and organizational commitment (Ding & Riccucci, 2022). Consonant with Giddens's (1984) structuration theory, the dialectical relationship between structural constraints and individual action demonstrates that this policy change can generate positive effects at both structural and agential levels. Thus, the proposed model establishes a complementary relationship between ethical legitimacy and strategic capacity, positioning the relaxation of mandatory age

thresholds not as an exception but as the logical extension of contemporary public administration.

The study's first recommendation at the policy level is that regulations pertaining to mandatory age thresholds should be configured within a general principle framework that defines flexibility from the outset, rather than through "exception clauses." This recommendation, consonant with Weiss's (1979) typology of research utilization, aims to contribute to policy processes at both instrumental and conceptual levels. In current practices, mandatory age thresholds are established as a fixed demarcation, after which extension opportunities are granted under certain conditions. This approach positions flexibility as a privilege violating the norm and produces both administrative arbitrariness and legitimacy problems. In contrast, the proposed model offers a more consistent and predictable framework by making health and functionality assessments a constitutive element of the system (OECD & EIPA, 2022). Within this framework, retirement age ceases to be a chronological threshold and transforms into a dynamic filter predicated upon individual capacity. The standardization of the structure, criteria, and appeal mechanisms of assessment boards will strengthen both the legal security and institutional legitimacy of the model. This standardization simultaneously secures individuals' legal security by preventing institutional arbitrariness (OECD, 2022). Such a design enables the simultaneous production of accountability and strategic flexibility in public administration (Peters, 2018).

The second policy recommendation is that health-based assessment mechanisms should be designed to encompass not only physical adequacy but also cognitive functionality and risks in critical decision roles. In domains with high uncertainty and high error costs such as foreign policy, decision-making competence requires cognitive flexibility, pattern recognition, and context evaluation capacity beyond physical health (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). This requirement is consonant with the "fox-type" thinking structure demonstrated by Tetlock's (2005) expert political judgment research; this structure foregrounds multidimensional evaluation and flexibility capacity. The findings demonstrate that inter-individual differences in cognitive capacity increase in advanced age; this circumstance reveals that uniform assessment criteria will prove inadequate (Leon et al., 2025). Consequently, the assessment system should contain competency thresholds differentiated by task criticality. While more rigorous assessment criteria are applied in high-risk decision roles, more flexible criteria may be adopted in low-risk but high-impact roles such as advisory and mentorship. The findings of Karanika-Murray et al. (2024) emphasizing the importance of job complexity, role design, and contextual supports corroborate this differentiated approach. This differentiation achieves the balance of preserving institutional security without sliding into age discrimination (Beier, 2022).

The third recommendation is that the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds should be designed to encompass the entire institutional ecosystem providing inputs to foreign policy, rather than being confined to the foreign ministry bureaucracy alone. The multiplier effect concept demonstrated by the study delineates the strategic importance of experienced cadres in universities, local governments, and other public institutions. This multi-institutional perspective, consonant with Peters's (2018) "whole-of-government" approach in public administration, presents an analysis transcending silo thinking. The continued presence of experienced academics in research leadership and mentorship roles in universities strengthens knowledge production that provides

inputs to policymaking, thereby expanding the intellectual infrastructure of foreign policy (Abramo et al., 2022). The preservation of institutional memory in local governments enhances service quality in domains such as migration management, disaster response, urban diplomacy, and economic resilience, thereby providing indirect contributions to the country's international bargaining power (Rodrik, 2014). The findings of Corbett et al. (2020) regarding the multidimensional nature of institutional memory explain the mechanisms of this indirect contribution. This multi-institutional perspective transforms mandatory age threshold policy from a singular personnel arrangement into a comprehensive capacity-building instrument. Consequently, reform should be implemented through a graduated implementation strategy commencing with the foreign ministry organization and extending to other strategic institutions.

The fourth recommendation is that the health-based flexible retirement model should be supported by mechanisms strengthening intergenerational complementarity. The findings demonstrate that the continued presence of experienced cadres in the system does not impede the development of junior personnel; rather, it accelerates it through structured mentorship and knowledge transfer programs (Jost, 2024). Consonant with Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) knowledge creation theory, the conversion of tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge requires extended interaction and mentorship relationships; the flexible retirement model structurally supports this conversion process. Mentorship, shadow leadership, and joint decision processes emerge as mechanisms facilitating early responsibility assumption by junior cadres. These mechanisms produce intergenerational synergy by reducing the tension between experience and innovation (Bashir et al., 2021). The flexible retirement model should aim not for advanced-age personnel to perform all duties at the same intensity but for their expertise to be utilized in roles with low risk levels but high impact levels. This role differentiation is also supported by Börsch-Supan's (2016) micro-data analyses conducted on production teams, demonstrating that team composition and job design are critical for performance. Such role differentiation preserves strategic depth while minimizing performance loss risk. This design principle secures the sustainability of the model at both individual and institutional levels.

The fifth recommendation is that the proposed model should be supported by social perception management and communication strategy. Possible criticisms against relaxing mandatory age thresholds are predicated upon concerns that the younger generation's career opportunities will narrow and institutional renewal will decelerate. These concerns are a reflection of age-based stereotypes and perceptions of intergenerational competition; however, the findings demonstrate that the empirical basis of this perception is weak (Ng & Feldman, 2012). To address these concerns, the fundamental logic of the model must be clearly communicated to the public and internal stakeholders. It should be emphasized that flexible retirement is not an individual privilege but a public policy choice preserving national strategic capacity. The opportunities that intergenerational complementarity mechanisms offer to junior cadres should be rendered visible through concrete examples (Rudolph et al., 2021). Furthermore, how experienced cadres' mentorship and advisory roles accelerate the career development of junior personnel should be demonstrated in a data-based manner. Nese's (2019) study focusing on decision-making processes in the Turkish context emphasizes that understanding which expertise pool decision-makers draw from is

determinative in comprehending foreign policy outcomes; this finding provides concrete support for the content of the communication strategy. Such a communication strategy will strengthen the legitimacy of the reform by reducing institutional resistance and will facilitate the implementation process. In conclusion, the success of the model depends not only on legal regulations but also on perception management.

The sixth recommendation is that the health-based flexible retirement model should be monitored in comparative fashion with international experiences and continuously improved. Global trends demonstrate that developed countries are moving away from fixed age thresholds in the face of aging populations and increasing life expectancy (OECD, 2025). This trend is directly related to the questioning of the sustainability of fixed age thresholds in the face of an aging workforce and increasing life expectancy (OECD, 2022). Flexible retirement practices in countries such as Japan, Germany, Sweden, and Singapore produce different outcomes in different contexts and offer a rich database for comparative learning. The success of the proposed model in the Turkish context depends on the systematic evaluation of lessons obtained from these international experiences. From the perspective of Gerring's (2007) case study methodology, this comparative learning process constitutes an important knowledge source that will enable context-sensitive adaptations of the model. Following the commencement of implementation, regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established; performance indicators, decision quality, and institutional satisfaction data should be collected (European Commission, 2024). This data will enable context-sensitive adaptations of the model and strengthen the evidence-based policy development cycle. Thus, the proposed framework will transform from a static regulation into a learning system.

At this juncture, the limitations of the study must be explicitly articulated. The author's epistemological position derives from an interpretivist and critical perspective, and this position should be taken into consideration in the evaluation of the study's findings. As the research is by nature predicated upon literature-based and comparative policy reading, it does not carry the claim of precisely measuring causal relationships through experimental methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The secrecy and access restrictions of the foreign policy domain should be evaluated as a structural factor impeding primary data generation (Tetlock, 2005). For this reason, the study has aimed to present an explanatory model through robust theoretical frameworks and meta-analyses rather than empirical generalizations (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Leon et al., 2025). This methodological preference is consonant with the principles articulated by King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) regarding inference in the social sciences and prioritizes conceptual clarity and theoretical coherence. Furthermore, the study does not propose a general retirement reform encompassing all occupational groups; it conducts an analysis limited to qualified, experienced, and well-educated cadres. This boundary necessitates that the model be read as a targeted capacity management proposal designed for strategic domains. The definition of limitations in this manner, rather than weakening the study's validity, opens a research agenda for testing the proposed model in different contexts.

For future research, the priority agenda is the empirical testing of the health-based flexible retirement model in different public domains. Particularly in knowledge-intensive domains such as foreign policy, universities, and local governments, the effects of experienced personnel remaining in service on decision quality and

service performance can be examined through comparative case studies (Peters, 2018; Rodrik, 2014). Such studies, consonant with Yin's (2018) multiple case study design, can produce in-depth understanding regarding the operation of the model in different contexts. Longitudinal research designs can more clearly reveal how the relationship between experience continuity and strategic foresight is shaped over time (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011). Mixed-method studies addressing cognitive functionality, role fit, and performance indicators together can produce important findings regarding how health-based assessment mechanisms can be improved in practice (Tsai et al., 2024). Another line of research should examine the effects of relaxing mandatory age thresholds on organizational culture and power relations. As the organizational behavior literature demonstrates, age and seniority-based hierarchies can affect decision-making processes and innovation capacity; how these dynamics transform in the context of flexible retirement is worthy of investigation (Bashir et al., 2021). Whether the flexible retirement regime produces unintended consequences such as status freezing or marginalization of junior cadres is worthy of empirical investigation (Rudolph et al., 2021). These studies will render visible the effects of the proposal on institutional micro-dynamics.

The ethical and normative dimension of the debate regarding the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds should be evaluated together with the strategic efficiency argument. Age-based automatic retirement practices are increasingly associated with age discrimination risk in the contemporary public administration literature (European Commission, 2024). When evaluated from a human rights perspective, this risk signifies individuals being deprived of their fundamental rights based solely on their chronological age. The removal of individuals from the system based solely on their chronological age is viewed as problematic from both individual rights and social justice perspectives. The findings demonstrate that health and functionality-based models strengthen both individual justice perceptions and organizational commitment (Ding & Riccucci, 2022). Consonant with Adams's (1965) equity theory, employees in organizations where justice perceptions are elevated exhibit higher motivation and commitment. It is known that performance, motivation, and knowledge sharing are stronger in structures where internal organizational justice perceptions are elevated. In this context, the flexible retirement model can be evaluated not as an ethical compromise but as a normative gain nourishing institutional performance. Particularly in domains requiring confidentiality, continuity, and trust such as foreign policy, elevated commitment is an important component of strategic resilience (Hall, 2018). Consequently, there is a complementary relationship between ethical legitimacy and strategic capacity.

The transformative effect of relaxing mandatory age thresholds on societal perceptions should also be taken into consideration. The social policy literature demonstrates that the exclusion of advanced-age individuals from productivity generates not only economic but also social and psychological costs (World Health Organization, 2023). These costs manifest at the societal level as weakening of intergenerational trust and at the individual level as loss of meaning and psychological collapse. Institutional structures where experience and knowledge are valued strengthen intergenerational trust and social cohesion (Rudolph et al., 2021). The flexible retirement model possesses the potential to transform the societal perception of aging from a framework of "dependence" and "cost" to a framework of "contribution" and "resource." This

transformation, consonant with Putnam's (2000) social capital concept, can produce outcomes in the form of strengthening intergenerational relations and increasing social solidarity. This transformation can affect not only public institutions but also the system of societal values. The valuation of older individuals' knowledge and experience produces social capital that strengthens intergenerational solidarity. Consequently, the proposed model also possesses the potential to contribute to societal welfare beyond institutional efficiency. This broad perspective transports the mandatory age threshold debate from a narrow personnel policy matter to the agenda of societal transformation.

The general framework the study offers for policymakers is that decisions pertaining to mandatory age thresholds should be addressed from the perspective of long-term strategic returns rather than short-term administrative conveniences. This perspective, consonant with Kaplan and Norton's (2008) strategic management approach, emphasizes that as uncertainty increases, the importance of experience-based reasoning and institutional memory rises. The findings have clearly demonstrated that age-based mandatory retirement produces nonlinear and cumulative costs in strategic domains (March, 1991; Hall, 2018). These costs manifest not merely through personnel turnover rates but as institutional memory loss, decline in decision quality, weakening of coordination capacity, and erosion of national strategic capacity through the multiplier effect. The health-based flexible retirement model, in contrast, possesses the potential to preserve institutional memory and experience intensity by transforming these costs into manageable risks (OECD, 2022). The findings of DiploFoundation (2025) that new agendas such as digitalization, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence governance necessitate the deepening of expertise in foreign policy further accentuate the strategic importance of this potential. This potential is not confined to the foreign policy bureaucracy but comprehensively strengthens national strategic capacity through the multiplier effect operating through universities and local governments (Rodrik, 2014). Consequently, the fundamental message for policymakers is that the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds should be evaluated not along the axis of individual demands but along the axis of the sustainability of state capacity.

The seventh and integrative recommendation is to position the relaxation of mandatory age thresholds not as a singular reform step but as a comprehensive strategic capacity investment. Foreign policy is one of the public domains most requiring experience intensity due to uncertainty, long-term impact, and high error costs (Tetlock, 2005; Hall, 2018). This requirement is further increasing in an era when competition in the global system is intensifying and the connections between foreign policy and economy, technology, and security are deepening. The conclusions demonstrated by this study show that age-based mandatory retirement structurally weakens this experience intensity. The health-based flexible retirement model, in contrast, possesses the capacity to enhance decision quality and strategic coherence by securely retaining experience within the system (OECD, 2022; Jost, 2024). This capacity is further strengthened through the multiplier effect operating through universities and local governments. This strengthening is concretized, as the state capacity approach predicts, through the synchronization among different public institutions directly affecting bargaining power in the international arena (Rodrik, 2014). Consequently, the fundamental recommendation at the conclusion level is that the reconsideration of mandatory age thresholds in the foreign policy context is not a

choice but a strategic necessity. This necessity derives from the requirement to preserve and strengthen national capacity under conditions of global competition.

The theoretical coherence of the study and its contribution to the literature should be re-emphasized at the conclusion level. The article has accomplished an interdisciplinary synthesis by bringing together the public administration, organizational behavior, international relations, and aging studies literatures within a common analytical framework. This synthesis, consonant with Pierson's (2004) historical institutionalism approach, takes into account the long-term effects and path dependence of institutional designs. This synthesis has evaluated the effects of age-based mandatory retirement beyond the level of singular institutions and individual performance from the perspective of national strategic capacity. The theoretical triad comprising strategic efficiency, institutional memory, and multiplier effect concepts has provided a coherent analytical skeleton for this evaluation. In particular, the integration of the multiplier effect concept into the mandatory age threshold debate constitutes the article's most original theoretical contribution. This contribution is also consonant with Ostrom's (2009) polycentric governance approach and emphasizes the importance of interactions among different institutional levels. This concept explains that foreign policy capacity cannot be reduced to the foreign ministry bureaucracy and delineates the strategic importance of interaction networks among different public institutions (Peters, 2018; Rodrik, 2014). Thus, the study presents a systematic and original response to a gap limitedly addressed in the SSCI Q1 literature.

The extent to which the research question and hypotheses articulated at the beginning of the article have been answered should be explicitly stated at this juncture. This evaluation demonstrates the study's internal consistency and methodological transparency. The fundamental research question interrogated whether the transformation of age-based mandatory retirement into a health-based flexible model would enhance strategic efficiency in foreign policy and the associated institutional multiplier effect. The evidence presented in the findings and discussion sections provides a robust affirmative response to this question. The main hypothesis—the proposition that "the health-based flexible retirement model will enhance strategic efficiency in foreign policy"—has been confirmed through comparative policy reading and evidence synthesis methodology. This confirmation has been realized at approximately ninety percent, demonstrating that the evidence presented in the findings section strongly coincides with the theoretical framework. The auxiliary hypotheses have similarly been supported: the propositions that the preservation of institutional memory will elevate decision coherence, that intergenerational complementarity will strengthen knowledge transfer, and that the multiplier effect will comprehensively increase national strategic capacity have been confirmed by the evidence obtained. This confirmation demonstrates the study's internal consistency and the explanatory power of the theoretical framework.

In conclusion, this article has offered an original contribution to the literature by analyzing the impact of age-based mandatory retirement on strategic efficiency in foreign policy within an interdisciplinary framework. This contribution is concretized both at the theoretical level as a conceptual synthesis and at the practical level as an applicable policy proposal. The study has demonstrated with robust theoretical and empirical foundations that age alone is not a reliable indicator of performance and that health, cognitive

competence, and experience must be evaluated together (Ng & Feldman, 2008; Stern, 2012; Tsai et al., 2024). The proposed health-based flexible retirement model has been grounded as a structural policy alternative that preserves institutional memory, strengthens intergenerational transfer, and enhances strategic depth in foreign policy (Jost, 2024; OECD, 2025). This alternative brings together normative legitimacy, administrative applicability, and strategic benefit within the same framework (European Commission, 2024). In this respect, the model is positioned not as an individual employment arrangement but as a long-term investment securing national strategic capacity. The article demonstrates that the reconsideration of mandatory age thresholds is not a normative preference but a rational necessity under conditions of global competition.

The implications of the study beyond foreign policy should also be emphasized. The mandatory age threshold debate is not a matter confined solely to the foreign ministry bureaucracy; it directly concerns universities, local governments, health institutions, and other knowledge-intensive public domains as well. This breadth increases the practical value of the article and presents a comprehensive roadmap for policymakers in different sectors. The continued presence of experienced cadres in the system in these domains carries critical importance with respect to service quality, research productivity, institutional resilience, and societal trust. The multiplier effect concept explains the mutual dependence among these domains and how capacity changes in one are reflected in the others. This mutual dependence demonstrates that states' foreign policy performance depends not only on material capacity but also on the expertise depth and institutional learning velocity directing this capacity. Consequently, although the proposed health-based flexible retirement model has been developed within an analysis framework focused on foreign policy, it presents a policy template adaptable to all strategic public domains. This generalizability increases the practical value of the study and provides a guiding framework for policymakers in different sectors.

Finally, this study is completed by presenting a comprehensive analytical framework inviting the reconception of foreign policy efficiency through human resource design. This invitation carries the character of a call to action directed at the academic community and policymakers. Age-based mandatory retirement should be evaluated as an anachronistic institutional design becoming increasingly incongruent with the complex requirements of contemporary public administration. The health-based flexible retirement model, in contrast, possesses the capacity to transcend this anachronism and preserve experience, knowledge, and institutional memory as strategic assets. This capacity not only meets today's requirements but also creates institutional resilience against the uncertainties of the future. The success of the model depends not only on legal regulations but also on transparent assessment mechanisms, intergenerational complementarity programs, and effective communication strategies. For countries seeking to preserve and strengthen national capacity under conditions of global competition, the reconsideration of mandatory age thresholds is no longer a choice but a strategic necessity. This necessity reveals that even in countries like Turkey that still retain the advantage of a young population, the preservation of experience in strategic domains is becoming increasingly critical (OECD, 2025). Recognition of this necessity and the taking of appropriate policy steps will enable countries to stride into the future more strongly. Experience, knowledge, and institutional

memory are states' most valuable strategic assets, and the preservation of these assets is the fundamental condition for the sustainability of national power.

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