



# **Retaining the next generation of workers post-COVID**

## **Exploring Effective Strategies for Enhancing Generation Z Employee Retention in the Post-COVID Workplace Environment**

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## Abstract:

This thesis explores the retention of Generation Z employees in the post-COVID-19 workplace, examining key factors that influence their career decisions. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with Generation Z employees and recruitment experts, the research identifies work-life balance, comprehensive benefits, professional growth opportunities, flexible work arrangements, inclusive hiring practices, a positive company culture, and strong DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives as critical for attracting and retaining this demographic. Integrating Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory with current empirical findings, the study underscores the dynamic and diverse motivations of Generation Z. It emphasizes the need for flexible, inclusive, and personalized retention strategies that align with Generation Z's values and aspirations. The research provides practical recommendations for organizations to enhance their recruitment and retention strategies, ensuring a supportive and engaging work environment that fosters the well-being and professional growth of Generation Z employees in the evolving post-pandemic landscape.

**Keywords:** Generation Z, Post-COVID, Employee Retention, Work-Life Balance, Professional Growth, Flexible Work Arrangements, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

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# 1 Introduction

The proportion of people of working age in the population will diminish in the years to come. This will in due course lead to a deficit in available workers and might ultimately result in a scenario where some companies might find it difficult to find and retain enough suitable employees to keep operating.

According to OECD, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the population of the European Union will continue to grow older (OECD, 2023). The EU's projected old-age dependency ratio, i.e. the ratio of the number of elderly people at an age when they are generally economically inactive (i.e. aged 65 and over), compared to the number of people of working age (i.e. 15-64 years old), will be 59,7 % by 2075, which is significantly higher than that of 2024 (35,5 %) (OECD, 2024). In plain terms this means that there will be more than 1,5 times as many elderly persons in the population as there are persons of working age, and the composition of the population as we know it will be turned on its head. This inevitably leads to a much stiffer competition for younger employees as they will start to become an even more scarce commodity.

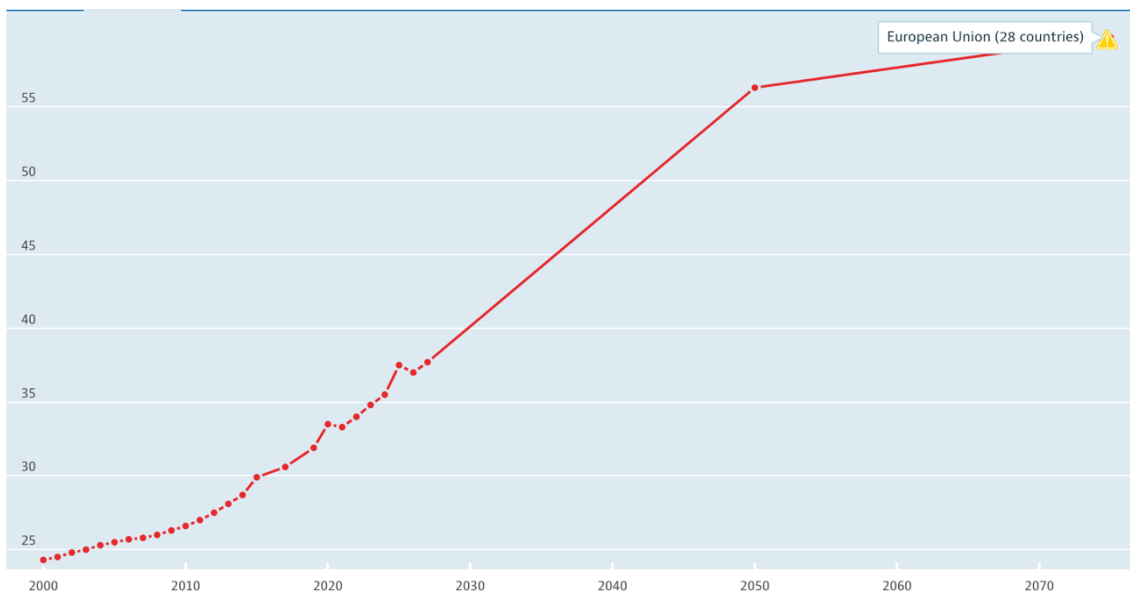
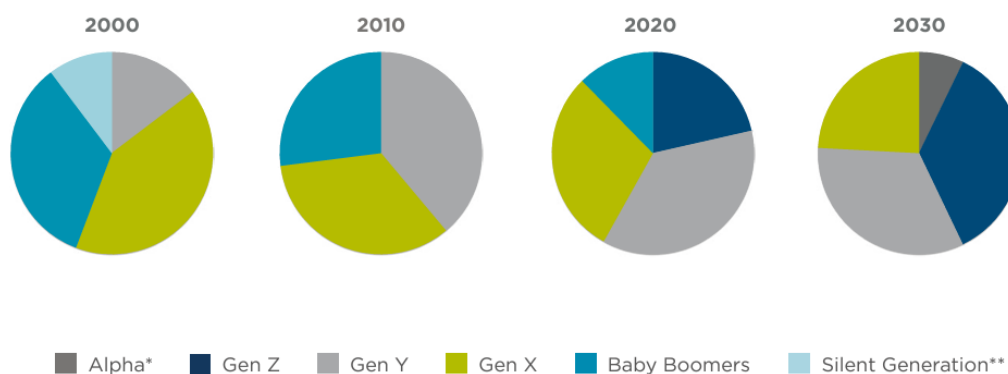


Figure 1. Old-age dependency ration growth from 2000 to 2075 in the EU.(OECD, 2024)

The next big generation to enter the workforce en masse is Generation Z. This generation, born after the invention of the Internet and the mobile phone, and coming of age during the advent of the smartphone and social media, is also the first fully digital-native

generation, and has unique expectations for their work environment. According to a report by the Cushman & Wakefield, Generation Z will account for one-third of the global population by 2030, which makes them a vital demographic for organizations to attract and retain (Cushman & Wakefield, 2020). According to the same report they prioritize flexibility, work-life balance, as well as opportunities for growth and development (Cushman & Wakefield, 2020). They also value meaningful work and respond well to a positive company culture (Cushman & Wakefield, 2020). Organizations that fail to meet these expectations risk losing their top talent to competitors that offer a more attractive work environment.

The retention of these young workers is therefore essential for the long-term success of any organization as they bring fresh ideas, energy, and innovation to the workplace, which can lead to increased productivity and profitability. Losing them not only diminishes this productivity and profitability but is also detrimental for companies as the hiring process is both expensive and time consuming.



Source: United Nations, Cushman & Wakefield  
 \* Generation Alpha: Born from 2013 to present  
 \*\* Silent Generation: Born from 1928 - 1945  
 † Working age population defined here as aged 15-64 years

Figure 2. Proportion of working age1 population 2000-2030. (Cushman & Wakefield, 2020)

As if the changing demographics were not enough, 2020 brought with it a global pandemic not seen since the Spanish Flu in the beginning of the last century. The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant changes to the workplace, forcing many organizations to adopt new technologies, implement remote work policies, and learn how to work with

a workforce not physically present in the office (Villa et al., 2020). Companies had to start trusting their employees to continue doing their work, even if managers were unable to keep tabs on them from home. While this change was of course not as huge for all companies, as hybrid teams tend to be predominant in contemporary knowledge work settings, it nevertheless changed how many companies conducted their business (Villa et al., 2020).

Not all companies managed this transition as well as others. One of the most significant impacts the pandemic had was on the workforce, with many employees re-evaluating their career paths and seeking new opportunities (Akkermans et al., 2020). The pandemic created unique challenges for organizations in retaining their employees. These challenges include increased stress and anxiety brought on by a global pandemic, social and emotional isolation due to remote work, and economic uncertainty due to companies not being able to survive the global economic panic from the pandemic (Akkermans et al., 2020). Additionally, the pandemic highlighted the need for organizations to prioritize the health and well-being of their employees (Akkermans et al., 2020; Villa et al., 2020). As organizations have adapted to the new normal, they have also had to consider how best to retain their employees. This is especially true for the next generation of workers, as retaining Generation Z employees has become increasingly challenging due to their unique preferences and expectations in the workplace (Schroth, 2019). As we move beyond the pandemic, companies will face a new challenge in retaining this generation of workers.

To address these challenges, organizations must adopt new strategies and adapt their existing ones. This may include a focus on employee well-being, flexible work arrangements, and career development opportunities. In addition, organizations may need to invest in new technologies and training programs to help their employees adapt to the changing work environment.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the factors contributing to the retention of the next generation of workers in a post-COVOD world it will focus on identifying strategies that can be used to overcome the challenges mentioned in the paragraphs above. A particular emphasis will be placed on the ever-smaller generation sizes and future lack of workers. This thesis will also explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the



retention of younger workers and offer strategies for companies to retain and attract younger workers in the post-COVID era.

This research is important because the retention of employees is critical to the success of organizations. Retention can lead to increased productivity, reduced costs, and greater employee engagement and satisfaction. Additionally, as the labor market becomes increasingly competitive, organizations that can retain their employees are more likely to attract top talent and maintain a competitive advantage.

The research will be conducted through a review of relevant literature on motivational theories as well as employee retention, the impact of COVID-19 on the workforce, and strategies for retaining the next generation of workers. Additionally, interviews with employees belonging to Generation Z as well as with recruitment professionals will be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and strategies associated with retaining the next generation of workers post-COVID.

Overall, the findings of this research will provide valuable insights into the challenges that organizations face in retaining the next generation of workers post-COVID and the strategies that can be used to overcome these challenges. The research will contribute to the development of best practices for employee retention, which can be used by organizations to maintain a competitive advantage in the years to come.

To achieve this purpose, the thesis will begin by reviewing the literature on the retention of younger workers, with a particular focus on the challenges companies face in retaining this demographic. The thesis will then examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the retention of younger workers and explore the potential long-term effects of the pandemic on the workforce. Any previous research concerning the retention of Generation Z in the workplace prior to the pandemic will also be analyzed, as will a sample of current post COVID-19 research. Finally, this thesis will offer strategies for companies to retain and attract younger workers, including career growth opportunities, flexible work arrangements, and competitive compensation packages.

## **1.1 Research question**

### **How can organizations retain Generation Z employees in the workplace post-COVID?**

As the global workforce continues to evolve in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations face the critical challenge of retaining Generation Z employees within the new dynamics of the workplace. This research seeks to delve into the multifaceted realm of employee retention strategies, focusing specifically on the unique characteristics and preferences of Generation Z individuals. By investigating the factors that contribute to the engagement, job satisfaction, and commitment of Generation Z employees, this study aims to provide valuable insights for organizations aiming to cultivate a resilient and loyal workforce in the post-pandemic era.

## **1.2 Expected outcomes**

The expected outcomes of this research are:

- To identify the factors that influence Generation Z employees to remain at their current place of employment post-COVID.
- To determine the strategies that organizations can use to retain Generation Z employees post-COVID.
- To provide recommendations to organizations on the most effective strategies for retaining Generation Z employees post-COVID.

## **2 Literature review**

In this chapter, we focus on understanding what motivates us by analysing two fundamental theories in motivational research: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. These theories have played pivotal roles in shaping our understanding of motivation within organizational psychology and management studies. Maslow's theory proposes a hierarchical arrangement of human needs, while Herzberg's theory distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivators in influencing job satisfaction. By scrutinizing the assumptions, strengths, and limitations of these theories, we aim to gain deeper insights into their applicability and relevance in the context of retaining the next generation of workers post-COVID.

### **2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

One of the prominent theories that sheds light on human motivation is Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Taormina & Gao, 2013; Velmurugan & Gomathi, 2017). This theory offers valuable insights into understanding and addressing human motivation (Velmurugan & Gomathi, 2017). Maslow proposed this psychological theory in the mid-20th century, and it remains a valuable framework for understanding what motivates people even today.

Maslow's hierarchy is structured into different levels of needs, with each level building upon the one below it. This hierarchy outlines a progression of human needs, starting from the fundamental requirements for survival at the base and ascending to more complex and abstract needs. At the foundational level are physiological needs like food and shelter, essential for basic survival. As individuals move up the hierarchy, they transition to higher levels that include psychological and self-fulfilment needs. This upward progression signifies a shift from fulfilling basic survival needs to pursuing aspirational goals and personal growth.

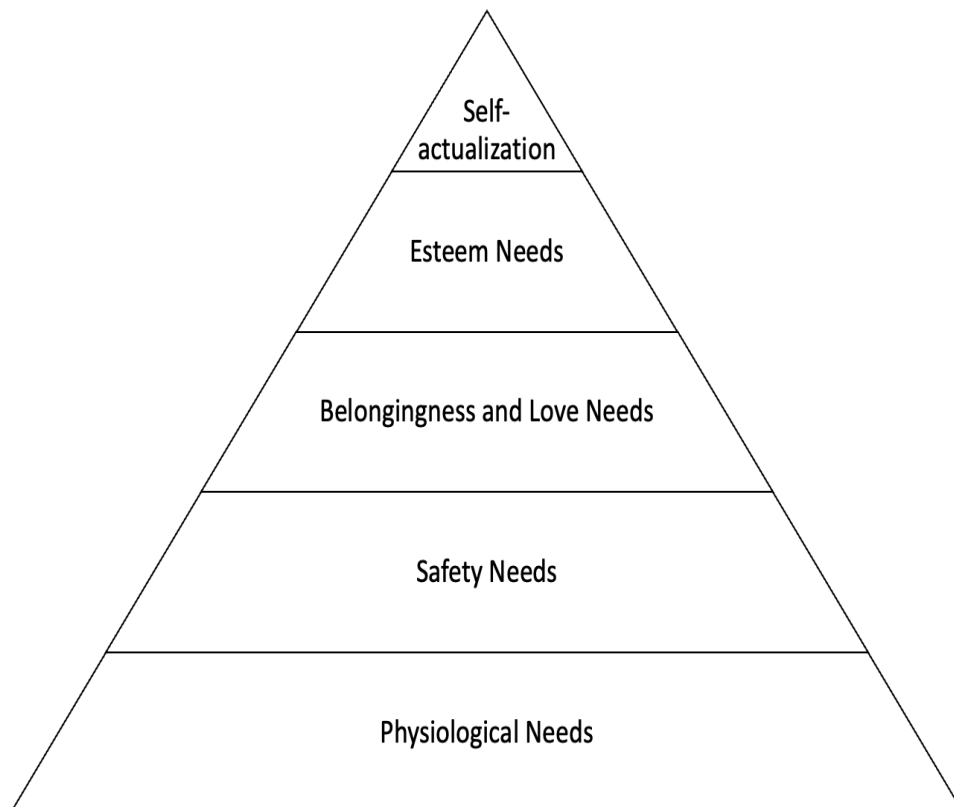
Recognizing where individuals are positioned within this hierarchy can be instrumental in understanding and effectively motivating them (Maslow, 1943b). By addressing and satisfying their basic physiological and safety needs, we can provide a stable foundation upon which higher-level motivations can be built. In essence, Maslow's framework offers

a holistic perspective on motivation that considers the multifaceted nature of human needs and aspirations.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is commonly depicted as a pyramid, divided into five distinct levels, with the basic psychological needs at the bottom and the more ethereal needs nearer to the top (Bridgman et al., 2019). These levels represent the basic human needs that drive behaviour:

1. **Physiological Needs:** At the base of the pyramid are physiological needs, such as air, water, food, and shelter. These are the most fundamental requirements for human survival. When these needs are unmet, they become powerful motivators. For example, a person who is hungry or lacking shelter will be primarily motivated to fulfil these basic needs before focusing on anything else (Maslow, 1943b).
2. **Safety Needs:** Once physiological needs are satisfied, individuals seek safety and security. This includes personal safety, financial stability, and protection from harm. In a workplace context, employees who feel physically safe and financially secure are more motivated to focus on their tasks and contribute positively (Maslow, 1943b).
3. **Belongingness and Love Needs:** The next level comprises social needs, such as the need for belonging, friendship, and love. Humans are inherently social creatures, and the desire to connect with others can be a powerful motivator. In the workplace, building positive relationships with colleagues and feeling a sense of belonging within a team can enhance motivation (Maslow, 1943b).
4. **Esteem Needs:** Beyond social connections, individuals also seek esteem and recognition. This includes both self-esteem (confidence, self-respect) and the esteem of others (recognition, respect, and appreciation). In a professional setting, employees who receive acknowledgment for their contributions are more likely to be motivated and engaged (Maslow, 1943b).

5. **Self-Actualization:** At the top of the pyramid lies self-actualization, which represents the realization of one's full potential and pursuit of personal growth, creativity, and fulfilment. This level is about achieving one's dreams, becoming the best version of oneself, and making a meaningful impact. Individuals motivated by self-actualization often seek roles and tasks that align with their passions and values (Maslow, 1943b).



*Figure 3. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pyramid. Adapted from Maslow's A Theory of Human Motivation. (Maslow, 1943b)*

Understanding Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs reveals how various levels of motivation influence human behaviour. As individuals progress from satisfying lower-level needs to higher-level ones, such as personal growth and career advancement, their motivations evolve (Johnson et al., 2018). In a workplace for example, ensuring employees have job security satisfies safety needs, allowing them to focus on self-actualization.

Recognizing where individuals are positioned within this hierarchy can be instrumental in understanding and effectively motivating them. By addressing and satisfying their basic physiological and safety needs, we can provide a stable foundation upon which

higher-level motivations can be built. In essence, Maslow's framework offers a holistic perspective on motivation that considers the multifaceted nature of human needs and aspirations.

### **2.1.1 Critique of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory**

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, while celebrated as a seminal motivational theory, has also faced significant critique. This critique spans its applicability, universality, and practical implications for understanding human motivation.

Critics argue that Maslow's theory lacks applicability due to its emphasis on a rigid progression from lower-order to higher-order needs, overlooking the dynamic nature of human motivation (Ihensekien & Joel, 2023). Evidence suggests that individuals may prioritize higher-order needs even in the absence of lower-order ones, as was expressed even by the creator of this theory himself (Ihensekien & Joel, 2023). One such critic is the American psychologist Clayton P. Alderfer who argued that the rigid assumptions of a linear progression through these levels fails to capture the complexity of human motivation (Alderfer, 1969). Alderfer, who developed his own ERG theory (existence (E), relatedness (R), and growth (G)) based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, posited that individuals often pursue multiple needs simultaneously across different levels, thereby challenging Maslow's hierarchical structure (Alderfer, 1969). Another critic is the researcher Douglas McGregor, whose Theory X and Theory Y also challenge traditional hierarchical models of motivation (Kopelman et al., 2008; McGregor, 1960).

Additionally, Maslow's focus on individual needs neglects the influence of social and environmental factors, such as social relationships and organizational culture, on shaping motivation (Velmurugan & Gomathi, 2017). This critique has been explored in various studies, including those by authors like Frederick Herzberg, whose Two-Factor Theory emphasizes the role of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in motivating employees (Velmurugan & Gomathi, 2017).

Another notable concern that has surfaced pertains to the theory's universality. According to among others the Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede Maslow based his observations primarily on Western cultures, raising doubts about its relevance across

diverse cultural contexts (Hofstede, 1980). The hierarchy may therefore not accurately reflect the needs of individuals from non-Western cultures or marginalized populations (Hofstede, 1980).

When it comes to the practical implications of Maslow's theory, with its hierarchical structure, it presents a standardized model for understanding human motivation. In practical application however this framework may overlook the diverse and multifaceted nature of individual motivations (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). Human beings are complex creatures, each with unique needs, preferences, and circumstances that influence their behaviour and responses. When applied in real-world settings, Maslow's hierarchy may encounter challenges in effectively addressing the individual needs of employees (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). The hierarchical nature of the theory implies a linear progression from lower-order to higher-order needs, suggesting that individuals must satisfy lower-level needs before progressing to higher-level ones (Maslow, 1943). However, in practice, individuals may prioritize different needs at different times, and their motivations may be influenced by a variety of internal and external factors (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). For organizations seeking to motivate their employees, relying solely on Maslow's hierarchy may result in a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to account for individual differences. Tailoring motivational strategies to accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of employees is essential for fostering engagement, satisfaction, and productivity in the workplace.

## **2.2 Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation**

Frederick Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation, also known as the Motivation-Hygiene or Dual-Factor theory, is a seminal framework in the field of motivational psychology (House et al., 1967). Herzberg drew influences from among other Maslow's Hierarchy of needs when he developed his own theory in 1959, but he expanded upon Maslow's ideas by introducing the concept of two distinct sets of factors driving employee satisfaction. (Velmurugan & Gomathi, 2017). These two sets of factors, which impact job satisfaction and motivation in the workplace, are extrinsic, or hygiene factors, and intrinsic, or motivational factors (Ihensekien & Joel, 2023; Yusoff et al., 2013). In the next chapters we will delve deeper into these two factors.

### 2.2.1 Hygiene factors in workplace satisfaction

Hygiene factors play a pivotal role in shaping employee satisfaction within the workplace. These elements, although necessary for maintaining a satisfactory work environment, do not inherently lead to increased motivation, which is something Herzberg expressed himself in the Harvard Business Review article “One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?” (Herzberg, 2003). Herzberg's identification of hygiene factors encompasses several key aspects which are outlined in the table below.

*Table 1. Hygiene Factors Driving Workplace Satisfaction. Adapted from various sources. (Herzberg, 2003; House et al., 1967)*

<b>Hygiene Factor</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Salary and Compensation</b>	Fair and competitive pay is crucial for employees. Dissatisfaction can arise if compensation is perceived as unfair or inadequate.
<b>Working Conditions</b>	Comfortable and safe working environments are essential. Poor conditions, such as inadequate lighting or excessive noise, can lead to dissatisfaction.
<b>Company Policies</b>	Clear and fair organizational policies and practices are necessary. Inconsistent or unfair policies can demotivate employees.
<b>Supervision</b>	Effective and supportive leadership is crucial. Overbearing or unhelpful supervision can lead to dissatisfaction among employees.
<b>Interpersonal Relations</b>	Positive relationships with colleagues and supervisors are essential for a satisfying work experience. Conflicts or lack of camaraderie can contribute to dissatisfaction.

In summary, while hygiene factors play a crucial role in preventing dissatisfaction and establishing a baseline level of workplace morale, their impact on driving employee motivation and engagement is limited when considered in isolation. Hygiene factors primarily address the basic needs and expectations of employees, such as adequate compensation, job security, and safe working conditions. These factors are essential for ensuring that employees feel comfortable and satisfied in their roles, thereby preventing potential sources of discontentment.



However, it is important to recognize that hygiene factors primarily focus on mitigating negative feelings rather than actively fostering positive attitudes and behaviours (Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017). While addressing hygiene factors can prevent dissatisfaction and create a conducive work environment, they may not necessarily inspire employees to go above and beyond in their roles or feel deeply connected to their work and the organization.

### 2.2.2 Motivational factors driving workplace satisfaction

Motivational factors, alternatively termed intrinsic or growth factors, on the other hand significantly contribute to cultivating job satisfaction and stimulating motivation among employees (Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017). Herzberg's meticulous identification and examination of these factors provide valuable insights into the fundamental drivers that underpin employee engagement and commitment within the workplace.

*Table 2. Motivational Factors Driving Workplace Satisfaction. Adapted from various sources. (Herzberg, 2003; House et al., 1967)*

<b>Motivational Factor</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Achievement</b>	Employees derive a sense of satisfaction from setting and accomplishing challenging objectives. Recognizing and celebrating achievements further fuels motivation and commitment to excellence.
<b>Recognition</b>	Acknowledgment and appreciation for employees' contributions serve as potent motivators. When employees feel valued and recognized for their efforts, they are more likely to remain engaged and motivated in their roles
<b>Work Itself</b>	Meaningful and engaging tasks that offer opportunities for creativity and autonomy inspire motivation. Employees who find their work intellectually stimulating and fulfilling are inherently more motivated to excel.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Granting employees a sense of ownership and accountability in their roles cultivates motivation. Empowering individuals to make decisions and take charge of their responsibilities fosters a sense of pride and commitment to their work.

<b>Advancement and Growth</b>	Opportunities for career progression, skill development, and personal growth are key motivators. Providing clear pathways for advancement and skill enhancement enables employees to envision a future within the organization, driving sustained motivation and engagement.
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As stated in the previous chapter hygiene factors, when lacking in the workplace, can result in job dissatisfaction among workers. Their role primarily lies in averting discontent among employees. In essence, while hygiene factors alone may not enhance motivation, their absence can lead to dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 2003). Conversely, motivation factors play a pivotal role in inspiring employees to excel in their work and derive fulfilment from their roles (Osemeke & Adegboyega, 2017). These factors are related to the inherent aspects of job tasks and should be integrated into job design to foster intrinsic motivation among employees. In essence, emphasizing these motivational factors not only diminished employee dissatisfaction but also fuels their intrinsic drive to excel and contribute to organizational success (Herzberg, 2003).

*Table 3. Herzberg Two-Factor Theory Structure. (Ihensekien & Joel, 2023)*

<b>Hygiene Factor (External of Job Context)</b>	<b>Motivator (Inherent in work of Job Content)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salary</li> <li>• Supervision</li> <li>• Status</li> <li>• Security</li> <li>• Working conditions</li> <li>• Organization policies</li> <li>• Interpersonal relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work itself</li> <li>• Recognition</li> <li>• Career Advancement</li> <li>• Job enlargement</li> <li>• Self-actualization</li> </ul>

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory suggests that satisfaction and dissatisfaction at work are not on a single continuum (Pardee, 1990). Instead, they are influenced by distinct sets of factors. Improving hygiene factors can prevent dissatisfaction, but it doesn't necessarily lead to motivation. To motivate employees, organizations must focus on enhancing motivational factors.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory provides valuable insights into understanding the complex dynamics of employee motivation and satisfaction. By addressing both hygiene and motivational factors, organizations can create a work environment that not only prevents dissatisfaction but also fosters intrinsic motivation, leading to higher job satisfaction and performance.

### **2.2.3 Critique of Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation**

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation, while a seminal contribution to the field of organizational behaviour, has been subject to critical examination regarding its applicability and limitations in contemporary workplace contexts (Yusoff et al., 2013). Herzberg's reliance on a limited sample of professionals, primarily engineers and accountants, raises questions about the generalizability of his findings to diverse industries and job roles, thereby undermining the theory's universality (Stello, 2011).

Furthermore, the theory's classification of factors into hygiene factors and motivators has been criticized for its lack of clarity and its failure to account for the nuanced nature of employee motivation (House et al., 1967). As the distinction between these factors is not always straightforward in practice it can lead to ambiguity in their interpretation within the theory. Herzberg's focus on external factors, such as salary and working conditions, as hygiene factors, also overlooks the broader array of influences on employee satisfaction and motivation, including factors related to for example organizational culture, job design, and work-life balance. Herzberg's theory assumes that all employees have similar needs and will respond to the same workplace factors in the same way. However, it overlooks the fact that individuals have different personalities, values, and preferences. As a result, the theory fails to account for the diversity among employees and how they may respond differently to various aspects of their work environment.

Herzberg's theory also presents a static view of motivation, implying that hygiene factors and motivators remain constant over time and across different contexts (Yusoff et al., 2013). This perspective overlooks the dynamic nature of motivation and its predisposition to change in response to evolving external and internal factors (Yusoff et al., 2013).

Finally, while Herzberg's theory emphasizes the need to address factors that cause dissatisfaction in the workplace (hygiene factors) to prevent demotivation, it doesn't give enough attention to the significance of promoting satisfaction and intrinsic motivation (motivators). In other words, the theory focuses more on avoiding negative outcomes rather than actively fostering positive ones. This limited focus overlooks the importance of enhancing overall employee engagement and performance by cultivating a work environment that encourages satisfaction and intrinsic motivation.

Although Herzberg's Two-factor Theory of Motivation has contributed valuable insights to our understanding of workplace motivation, its critiques underscore the need for a more nuanced and comprehensive approach that considers individual differences, dynamic factors, and the broader organizational context in shaping employee motivation and satisfaction.

## **2.3 Motivation in the workplace**

As we have learned in the previous chapters, motivation is a fundamental driver of human behaviour. In the workplace, it plays a pivotal role in employee engagement, job satisfaction, and overall productivity. One especially fascinating aspect of motivation lies in its diversity across various groups of individuals. Shaped by distinct historical, cultural, and technological influences, each group brings its own set of motivational factors to the workplace. In this chapter, we will examine the fundamental motivational drivers that contribute to the dynamics among different segments of today's workforce. Although subsequent chapters will focus on the specific motivations of specific generational groups or cohorts, this overview establishes a groundwork for understanding motivational factors in the workplace.

However, amidst the differences mentioned above, it is important to recognize that there are fundamental motivational elements that resonate across generations, transcending the boundaries of age or era. While each generation may prioritize certain factors differently based on their unique experiences and values, which we will explore in later chapters, there are core motivations that remain constant across all individuals regardless of their generational affiliation. These common motivators include:

Table 4. Universal Motivational Factors in the Workplace. Adapted from various sources. (Bălan & Vreja, 2018; Baldonado, 2018; Brooks, 2007; Ferincz et al., 2010)

<b>Motivational Factors</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Recognition and Appreciation</b>	Regardless of the generation, employees appreciate recognition and acknowledgment for their contributions. Feeling valued and appreciated enhances motivation and job satisfaction.
<b>Professional Growth and Development</b>	Most employees, regardless of age, are motivated by opportunities for career advancement and skill development. They seek workplaces that offer training, mentorship, and clear paths for growth.
<b>Work-Life Balance</b>	Achieving a healthy balance between work and personal life is a universal aspiration. Flexibility in work arrangements, such as flexible hours or remote work options, appeals to employees of all generations.
<b>Meaningful Work</b>	The desire to find meaning and purpose in one's job transcends generational boundaries. Employees are motivated when they can connect their work to a larger mission or see the positive impact they make.
<b>Financial Rewards</b>	Compensation, bonuses, and benefits are vital motivational factors for employees across generations. Financial security, competitive salaries, and attractive benefit packages are universally appealing.
<b>Autonomy and Empowerment</b>	Employees value autonomy in their work, the ability to make decisions, and the freedom to innovate. Feeling trusted and empowered motivates individuals to excel.
<b>Positive Work Environment</b>	A positive workplace culture, characterized by collaboration, inclusivity, and respect, is motivating for employees of all ages. A harmonious work environment fosters job satisfaction and productivity.
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	Effective leadership and management play a crucial role in motivation. Employees appreciate leaders who provide clear direction, open communication, and support for their professional growth.

Motivation is a complex and evolving facet of the workplace, shaped by various factors including individual values and preferences. Organizations aiming to cultivate inclusive and dynamic work environments must acknowledge the diverse motivations among their employees. By comprehending these motivations, employers can customize strategies to enhance employee satisfaction and engagement, thereby promoting organizational success. Subsequent chapters will explore in-depth the distinct motivational factors prevalent across different segments of the workforce.

## **2.4 Generations**

Before embarking on an exploration of the unique characteristics and motivations of different generations in the workplace, it is essential to establish a foundational understanding of what constitutes a generation. Traditionally, a generation has been described as “the average time between the birth of parents and the birth of their offspring”, or roughly 20-25 years (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009). According to the influential Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim a generation on the other hand is defined as all the people born and living around the same time, defined as a group (Mannheim, 2023).

When discussing differences between generations these definitions however quickly become too narrow, especially when considering differences between the last two or three generations. While the definition of a generation, such as one of those mentioned above, may have been sufficient in the past, generational cohorts are changing so rapidly in response to e.g. the introduction of new technology that two or three decades is far too long a span for a generation (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009). Besides, as childbirth is pushed back later than ever before defining a generation purely from a biological point of view would mean that a generation today would span an even larger time than before (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009). The time between the birth of parents and the birth of their progeny has on average stretched from two decades to three (Comolli et al., 2021). This is further evidenced by the fact that the mean age of women giving birth in OECD countries has risen from 27,5 years in 1970 to almost 31 years in 2021 (Comolli et al., 2021). The OECD average mean age at first birth has in the last 20 years risen by 3 years, from 26.4 in 2000 to 29.4 in 2021 (Comolli et al., 2021). It is therefore more accurate to define a generation from a sociological point of view rather than from a biological one.

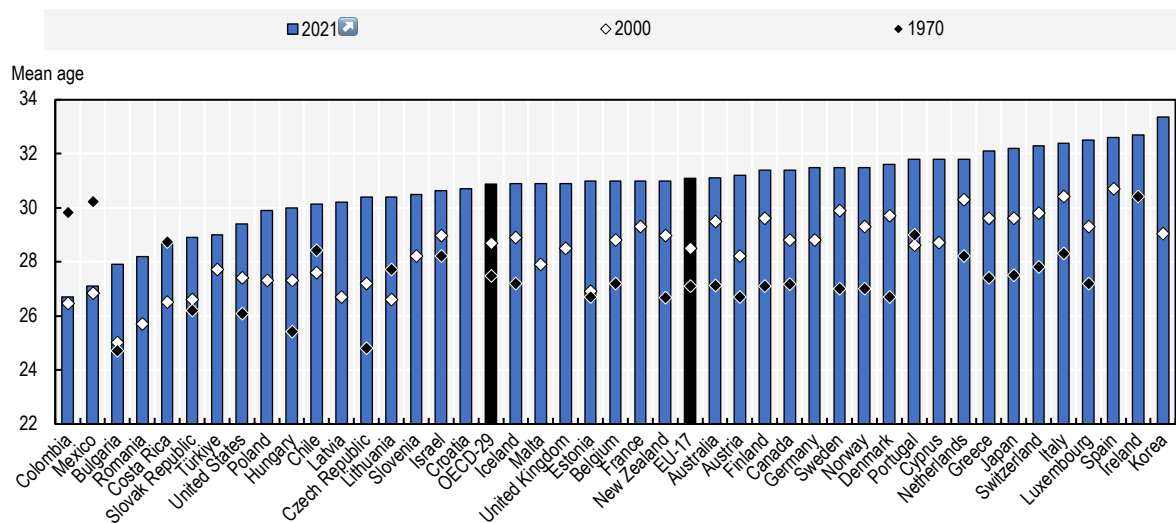


Figure 4. Mean age of women at birth, 1970, 2000 and 2021 or latest available. (Comolli et al., 2021)

An additional issue when discussing generational differences, when the definition of a generation is a biological rather than a sociological one, is that in a 20- to 30-year generational cohort the extreme ends of a specific generation are quite far removed from each other from a cultural perspective (Woodward et al., 2015). Assumptions based on the membership of any one individual in a chronological generational cohort is therefore unjustified as a person born in e.g. 1948 has vastly different characteristics than a person born in 1962, although they belong to the same Baby Boomer generation. Indeed, most experts argue that generations are shaped more by history and similar cultural experiences than by chronological dates, and that birth years are but one factor to consider in distinguishing among generations (Reeves & Oh, 2008).

According to the Strauss-Howe generational theory, developed by William Strauss and Neil Howe in 1991, a generation defined not only by its location in time but also by its shared cultural experiences is called a social generation (Strauss & Howe, 1991). A social generation is defined in their theory as the aggregate of all people born over a span of approximately twenty years, or about the length of a phase of life: childhood, young adulthood, midlife, and old age (Strauss & Howe, 1991). According to their theory it is possible to identify a persona of a generation by looking at three attributes: perceived membership, common beliefs and behaviors, and common location in history (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Perceived membership, as explained in Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity

Theory, denotes the aspect of an individual's self-concept, encompassing their personal set of beliefs and self-perceptions, which arises from their declared association with a significant social group. (Reeves & Oh, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). It begins during adolescence and coalesces during young adulthood, usually taking full shape during and immediately after college, military service, marriage, or initial work experience (Strauss & Howe, 1991). According to the Strauss-Howe generational theory members of a generation share common experiences and traits with their peers and thus feel a belonging to a specific generation (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Common beliefs and views comprise of the attitudes (toward career, personal life, religion, family etc.) and behaviors (choices made regarding marriage, health, children, jobs etc.) that characterize a generation (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Key historical events and social trends, such as e.g. World Wars I and II, the Vietnam War, or 9/11, shared by peers of a generation, define the common location in history of a generation (Reeves & Oh, 2008). In light of the above-mentioned theories, it quickly becomes apparent that when discussing definitions of generations, we should view them through the lens of social generations rather than traditional generational frameworks.

## **2.5 Current generations in the workplace**

Currently, the workplace comprises four substantial generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y (also known as Millennials), and Generation Z. Each generation brings its unique perspectives, values, and expectations to the workplace, which can significantly influence organizational dynamics and employee engagement.



## The generations defined

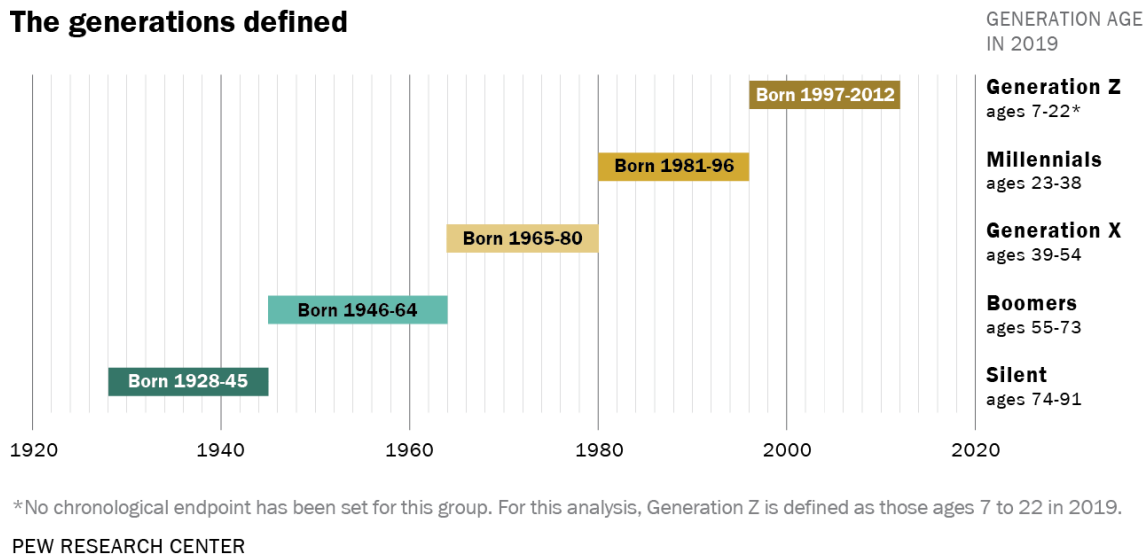


Figure 5. Definition of current generations according to Pew Research Center. (Dimock, 2019)

As the workplace becomes increasingly multigenerational, organizations must navigate the unique characteristics and preferences of each generation to foster an inclusive and supportive work environment. Understanding the diverse perspectives and motivations of Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z is essential for effective talent management, employee engagement, and organizational success in the modern workforce.

Before delving into an in-depth analysis of the subject of this thesis, namely Generation Z and their unique characteristics, it is essential to provide an overview of the other generations currently present in the workplace. Understanding the motivations, preferences, and challenges faced by these generations is crucial for contextualizing the discussion on Generation Z and identifying potential areas of convergence or divergence in workplace dynamics. By briefly examining the distinct characteristics and contributions of each generation, we can gain valuable insights into the evolving landscape of intergenerational dynamics in the modern workplace.

Table 5. Timeline of generations currently in the workforce. Adapted from various sources. (Dimock, 2019; McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009; Strauss & Howe, 1991)

<b>Generations</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Baby Boomers	1946 - 1964
Generation X	1965 - 1980
Generation Y/Millennials	1981 - 1996
Generation Z	1997 - 2010

## **2.6 Older generations in the workplace**

### **2.6.1 Baby Boomers**

The Baby Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964, comprising approximately 30 percent of the workforce in 2019, has left an indelible mark on workplace dynamics and culture (Appelbaum et al., 2022; Fry, 2019). Shaped by significant historical events such as the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and the cultural shifts of the 1960s and 70s, Baby Boomers developed distinct values and attitudes that continue to shape their approach to work and leadership (Berkup, 2014).

Growing up in a period of relative prosperity and optimism, Baby Boomers embraced an "anything is possible" attitude and believed in their ability to effect change (Appelbaum et al., 2022). This optimism, coupled with a strong work ethic instilled by their formative years, led them to prioritize hard work and dedication in the workplace (Appelbaum et al., 2022). Loyalty to employers and a willingness to put in long hours were common traits among Baby Boomers, reflecting their belief in the value of self-worth tied to professional achievement (Berkup, 2014).

Despite initial skepticism towards authority, Baby Boomers' attitudes in the workplace have evolved towards respecting seniority and tenure. They value public recognition and tangible evidence of their contributions, such as awards or certificates, and prefer working in flat organizational hierarchies that offer opportunities for career advancement (Venter, 2017). The Baby Boomer generation's emphasis on personal growth and idealism also shaped their engagement in social and political movements, advocating for civil rights, gender equality, and environmental conservation. This idealism extended to their

workplace ethos, as they sought to create positive change within established institutions through their dedication and long-term commitment to their employers (Riggs & Turner, 2000).

### **2.6.2 Generation X**

Generation X, as defined by Oblinger and Oblinger, refers to the generational cohort born between 1965 and 1980, which at the time of writing this thesis puts them between their forties and their late fifties (Oblinger et al., 2005). This generation is slightly smaller than the preceding Baby Boomer generation and make up approximately 27 percent of the current workforce, compared to 30 percent of Baby Boomers (Tulgan, 2016). They are the children of the older Baby Boomers and came of age in a period of financial, familial, and societal instability (Tolbize, 2008).

Many of Generation X entered the workforce in an era of economic turmoil when the job market was as bad as during the Great Recession (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2008). They experienced large scale redundancies and saw the cutting of long-term benefits that their parents had taken for granted (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2008; Green et al., 2005). Generation X is therefore not unsurprisingly less loyal to their employer than the previous generation, although they display strong feelings of loyalty towards their family and friends (Tolbize, 2008). They place a high importance on work-life balance and are constantly seeking a balance between work, family, and free time (Dole et al., 1965; Huybers, 2011). They are less likely to be concerned with advancement than the preceding generations and are not willing to sacrifice their free time even if their careers would benefit from it (Dole et al., 1965).

Generation X appreciates organizations that grants flexible working schedules or a chance to work remotely, a high degree of autonomy, a casual work environment, meaningful and innovative work, and a continuous opportunity for professional growth (Berkup, 2014; Kian Tan, 2012). They expect to be able to influence both the terms and conditions of their work, and when given a task they prefer to do it their own way (Huybers, 2011). Members of the Generation X cohort are also technologically knowledgeable, having grown up in an era when technology flourished and became available to all (Huybers,

2011). This technological prowess, coupled with the previously mentioned yearning for a work-life balance, has led Generation X to prefer a technologically advanced working environment that allows them to carry out their tasks independently and at the time of their own choosing (Dole et al., 1965). Compared to the previous generation, Generation X is also more focused on their career development in terms of enhancing their professional skills in order to increase their market appeal for future career opportunities (Berkup, 2014; Kian Tan, 2012).

Compared to previous generations Generation X is less likely to remain with one employer for their entire career and are due to this, perhaps wrongly, accused of being disloyal (Green et al., 2005). This generational cohort does not perceive this as disloyalty, rather they see it as being loyal to themselves (Dole et al., 1965). As previously mentioned in this chapter Generation X has experienced economic depression and have as a result of this developed a low level of trust towards their organization, which most likely plays a role in their perceived lack of loyalty towards their employer (Kian Tan, 2012). Their decision to remain or leave an organization is largely based on the opportunity for professional development within an organization, how well the core values (known as CSR, which stands for Corporate Social Responsibility) of an organization line up with their own, the possibilities of advancement, and adequate compensation (Green et al., 2005; Reeves & Oh, 2008). Perhaps paradoxically, while members of Generation X are generally perceived to be certain of their abilities, they seem to crave confirmation of their abilities in the form of frequent and meaningful feedback (Green et al., 2005).

### **2.6.3 Millennials**

Millennials, or Generation Y, is generally perceived as a generation of individuals who thrive on working together with other people (Leidner et al., 2010; Thompson, 2011). This behaviour was learned already in school where Generation Y as children were encouraged to work in groups (Leidner et al., 2010). When this generation reached university, this behaviour was reinforced, where they were not only encouraged but even required to work together on projects. The group work was then evaluated not only on the final product itself but also on the collaboration of the group (Leidner et al., 2010). They have therefore absorbed this collaborative style of working from an early age and perceive success as the result of a common effort (Bencsik et al., 2016; Thompson, 2011).

Generation Y is also set to be the first generation to challenge traditional racial categories (Leidner et al., 2010). Worldwide, over 39 percent of Generation Y belongs to a racial or ethnic minority, compared to 27 percent of Baby Boomers and 20 percent of the Silent Generation (Thompson, 2011). The family setup of Generation Y is also more racially and ethnically diverse than in previous generations (Oblinger et al., 2005). The number of both ethnic and racial minorities, as well as the number of mixed families, naturally largely depends on the number of immigrants in a country, and therefore no conclusions can be drawn simply based on the general region. For example, the number of immigrant parents in e.g. Finland is much lower than in its closest neighbor Sweden (6 percent and 16,5 percent, respectively) (OECD, 2017). Despite the multicultural setup of Generation Y, they do not, at least on the surface, seem to value diversity as highly as Generation X when choosing a job. According to Thompson (2011) it does however not appear likely that Generation Y value diversity less than the previous generation. They have rather just become so used to living in a diverse society that they do not think about it as much (Thompson, 2011).

Studies have shown that the motivational characteristics of Generation Y do not gravitate towards a career, but rather to a situation where they are able to pursue activities also outside the job (Leidner et al., 2010). They are not ready to sacrifice their private lives, and as a consequence place a high value on flexible working hours and the possibility of deciding on their own work methods (Tolbize, 2008). As they have aggressively, in many cases successfully, pursued for contracts allowing for this control of work-life balance, this attitude has given Generation Y a reputation of being too entitled (Rendell, Michael, 2011; Thompson, 2011). This is however not true, as most Millennials are perfectly content with working long hours as long as they have the freedom to decide when to complete these hours (Thompson, 2011).

One reason for the quest for freedom could be the importance Generation Y places on family life. Generation Y has grown up as the focus of the family and are transferring this attitude towards their own families. Generation Y is in fact 40 percent less likely to self-identify as “work-centered” than the Baby Boomers, and 10 percent more likely to describe themselves as “family-centric” (Thompson, 2011). This attitude towards their careers is also evident when questioned about collegiality in the workplace. Being the social creatures they are, Generation Y places “Good people to work with” and “Good

people to report to” as the second and third most important work-related attribute (Thompson, 2011).

Loyalty to their employer is significantly lower among Generation Y compared to previous generations. While 65 percent of Baby Boomers and 40 percent of Generation X stated that they would like to stay with the same employer for the rest of their working lives, only 20 percent of Generation Y were willing to stay with their current organization until retirement (Tolbize, 2008). This could however also be explained by the fact that older people tend to prefer familiarity and stability, which should be considered when discussing generational loyalty towards their employers. As a matter of fact, Generation Y’s do not change jobs more frequently than previous generations did at the same age (Tolbize, 2008). Additionally, the economy also plays a role in the frequency with which people change jobs. When the economy is booming people tend to switch jobs more frequently as there are more jobs available (Tolbize, 2008). People also tend to hold several jobs when they are younger and still studying (Tolbize, 2008).

Just as they place a high degree of emphasis on their work environment, Generation Y is very particular when it comes to the quality of their supervisors (Thompson, 2011). According to Tolbize the preferred leadership attributes for Generation Y are managers who listen well (68 percent), is dependable (66 percent), and is dedicated (63 percent) (Tolbize, 2008). They further want a manager who acts more like a mentor, and in an ideal world would like to see their boss as a coach who is there to also support them in their personal development (Rendell, Michael, 2011).

## **2.7 Generation Z**

Having laid the groundwork by exploring the characteristics and dynamics of preceding generations in the workplace, namely Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials, we now turn our attention to Generation Z. Generation Z, also referred to as the post-millennial generation, is the first cohort to grow up entirely in the digital age, exhibiting distinct characteristics, experiences, and challenges as a result (Nieżurawska et al., 2023). The oldest members of this generation have entered the workforce in recent years, and it is projected that they will make up approximately 27 percent of the workforce by 2025 (Koop, 2021). As the newest cohort entering the workforce, Generation Z brings with it

their own distinct set of values, expectations, and behaviors shaped by unique societal, technological, and economic influences. Understanding the motivations, preferences, and challenges of Generation Z is essential for organizations seeking to adapt and thrive in an ever-evolving professional landscape.

### **2.7.1 Workforce expectations**

As Generation Z makes their entrance into the workforce, they bring with them a set of distinctive expectations and preferences that shapes their approach to professional life. This generation seeks more than just a job; they aspire to find meaningful work that aligns harmoniously with their deeply held values and allows them to contribute positively to society (Bencsik et al., 2016). Unlike preceding generations, Generation Z places a significant emphasis on work that resonates with their principles and allows them to make a substantial impact on the world around them. One of the hallmark traits of Generation Z is therefore their fervent desire for work that transcends the mere pursuit of a paycheck, although that is still high on the list of material motivators (Nieżurawska et al., 2023). They are driven by a need to find employment that aligns closely with their personal values and aspirations (Bencsik et al., 2016).

Despite sharing similarities with prior generations, notably Generation Y/Millennials, Generation Z displays unique differences (Nieżurawska et al., 2023). Consequently, companies must reassess and adapt their recruitment and management practices to effectively attract, retain, and manage Generation Z employees. The significance of understanding generational differences is underscored by the wealth of online resources dedicated to managing generations in the workplace, evidenced by over 26 million hits on Google using the search terms "managing generations in the workplace." These resources range from scholarly articles in management journals to posts on platforms like Pinterest, with many research companies, such as Pew Research Center, Randstad, and Deloitte conducting generational surveys. A common theme across these articles is the identification of generational attributes and their impact on recruitment and retention strategies, often through comparisons with adjacent generations.

The trajectory of motivational factors for employees, particularly within the context of Generation Z, has undergone a significant evolution catalyzed by the global pandemic

(Nieżurawska et al., 2023). The post-pandemic era presents a distinctive opportunity for scholars and organizational leaders to delve into the intricacies of this paradigm shift, shedding light on the recalibrated motivational landscape that now defines the contemporary workplace.

### **2.7.2 Technological influence**

The digital age has brought significant changes to how society operates, affecting people of all ages. Generation Z, in particular, has grown up in a world where technology plays a central role in everyday life. Unlike previous generations, they are accustomed to living in a world where technology is seamlessly integrated into various aspects of daily activities, blurring the lines between the virtual and physical realms (Nieżurawska et al., 2023).

Generation Z has earned the moniker "digital natives" for a reason (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020). They have been immersed in technology almost from the day they were born, with smartphones and tablets becoming their childhood playmates. As a result of significant advancements in digital technology, Generation Z is born into a world where nearly every physical aspect, including facts, locations, individuals, actions, and processes, already has a digital counterpart (Bălan & Vreja, 2018; Nieżurawska et al., 2023). The omnipresence of the internet, social media platforms, and digital devices has shaped their formative years in ways that set them apart from previous generations (Cain et al., 2022). They possess an instinctive aptitude for technology, and they have seamlessly integrated it into every facet of their lives, from how they communicate, learn, and work to how they engage with entertainment, politics, and social issues (Cain et al., 2022). As the first truly digital generation that lives in a world where everything physical has a digital equivalent, Generation Z likely does not see a difference between the physical and digital reality, but rather sees them as one (Sladek & Grabinger, 2016). Generation Z is also more adaptable and learns technology more rapidly than their preceding generations (Mosca et al., 2019). Easy access to information has also made Generation Z more creative (Sladek & Grabinger, 2016). As Generation Z, unlike previous generations, does not have to spend time searching for information as it is readily available online, they can use the rest of their time to analyze information and come up with creative solutions (Sladek & Grabinger, 2016).



Understanding the technological landscape that Generation Z inhabits is therefore paramount to comprehending their worldviews, values, and aspirations. While technology has bestowed unprecedented advantages upon Generation Z, it has also posed unique challenges (Knapp et al., 2017). The pervasive presence of technology has significantly shaped the development and behaviors of Generation Z. They possess strong skills in navigating various digital platforms, consuming extensive amounts of information, and communicating through diverse digital channels (Nieżurawska et al., 2023). However, this digital environment has also altered how they interact, socialize, learn, and engage with the world around them (Bencsik et al., 2016). Additionally, Generation Z is more inclined to acknowledge that they are easily distracted by various technological platforms, with social media being a prominent source of distraction (Siebers et al., 2022). Research indicates that young adults who devote greater amounts of time to social media tend to experience higher levels of distraction compared to their peers (Aalbers et al., 2022; Xie et al., 2021).

Understanding the technological landscape that Generation Z inhabits is crucial for grasping their worldviews, values, and aspirations. Technology has granted Generation Z unprecedented advantages while also presenting unique challenges (Knapp et al., 2017). The pervasive presence of technology has significantly influenced the development and behaviors of Generation Z. They demonstrate adeptness in navigating various digital platforms, consuming vast amounts of information, and communicating through diverse digital channels (Nieżurawska et al., 2023).

Moreover, this digital environment has reshaped their interactions, socialization, learning, and engagement with the world around them (Bencsik et al., 2016). Despite their proficiency, Generation Z acknowledges that they are easily distracted by various technological platforms, with social media being a notable source of distraction (Siebers et al., 2022). Research suggests that young adults who spend more time on social media tend to experience higher levels of distraction than their peers (Aalbers et al., 2022; Xie et al., 2021).

### 2.7.3 Education and learning

In the field of education, Generation Z is showing promising signs of surpassing previous generations in terms of academic achievement. This trend of increasing educational attainment across generations continues, with over 40% of Generation Z individuals having at least one parent with a bachelor's degree or higher (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). This marks a significant increase from the 32% of Millennials whose parents had reached this level of education (Cain et al., 2022).

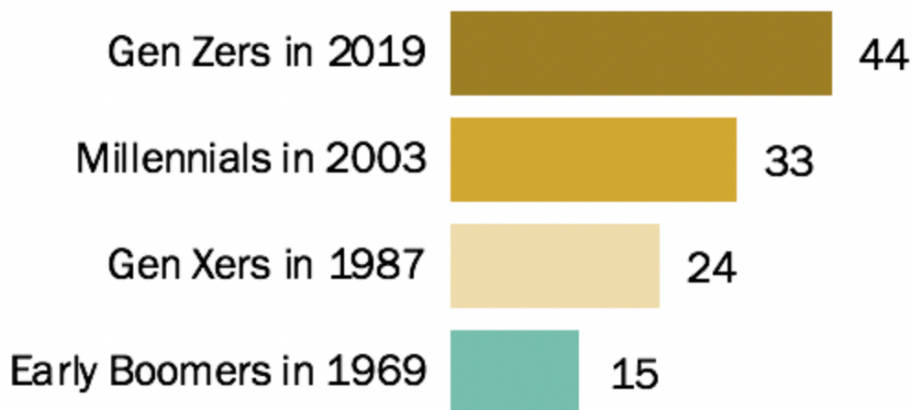


Figure 6. Percentage of 7- to 17-year-olds living with a parent who has at least a bachelor's degree. (Parker & Igielnik, 2020)

The availability of information has however changed the learning habits of Generation Z. Unlike previous generations, who were required to memorize historical events, dates, and periodic tables during their education and likely still retain some of this information, Generation Z does not feel the need to commit such details to memory as they have instantaneous access to this information (Sladek & Grabinger, 2016). Rather than dedicating time to memorizing information readily available online, Generation Z can prioritize learning how to effectively locate, interpret, and utilize information to their advantage (Sladek & Grabinger, 2016). According to a study by Randstad, 38 percent of Generation Z says that technology allows them to get answers to questions faster, and 24 percent mention that technology helps them develop their skills (Tull, 2015).

As mentioned, Generation Z's educational approach is distinguished by their adeptness at accessing information instantly, fostering a preference for rapid learning and immersive multimedia experiences (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020; Sladek & Grabinger, 2016). The widespread availability of smartphones, tablets, and constant internet

connectivity has empowered them to seek knowledge at their fingertips, leading to a shift in traditional pedagogical models towards on-demand learning and immediate answers (Sladek & Grabinger, 2016). This generation responds enthusiastically to visually engaging digital media, which they have been exposed to since childhood, shaping a learning style that thrives on dynamic engagement (Cain et al., 2022). They exhibit a marked affinity for educational materials presented in formats such as videos, infographics, and interactive simulations, which facilitate deeper comprehension and engagement compared to traditional text-based approaches (Cain et al., 2022). As a result, technology plays a pivotal role in Generation Z's education, manifested through a diverse array of virtual tools and platforms that have become integral to modern educational institutions. Online learning environments, virtual classrooms, and digital resources have become ubiquitous, offering versatile and accessible means of knowledge dissemination while enabling educational institutions to transcend geographical constraints and adapt to contemporary learning expectations (Cain et al., 2022).

Moreover, Generation Z's familiarity with rapidly changing technological environments has made them aware of the importance of being adaptable and has instilled in them a recognition of creativity as a crucial aspect of education (Cain et al., 2022). Consequently, they are drawn to educational models that nurture imaginative thinking, problem-solving, and innovative approaches to complex challenges (Cain et al., 2022). An inherent aspect of Generation Z's educational philosophy also lies in their inclination towards personalized learning experiences. Their digital upbringing has accustomed them to tailored content consumption, leading to an individualized approach to education. They advocate for a flexible curriculum that accommodates diverse learning paces and preferences, seeking learning environments that allow for customization to suit their individual strengths and interests (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020).

#### **2.7.4 Diversity and inclusion**

Generation Z emerges as the most diverse generation in history, with their identity intricately woven from various races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and cultural backgrounds (Appelbaum et al., 2022). This diversity serves as a defining feature that shapes their worldviews, values, and interactions, moving beyond mere tolerance to become a cornerstone of their identity and a driving force behind their advocacy for

inclusivity (Broadbent et al., 2017). This rich tapestry of diversity within Generation Z has sparked a transformation in societal attitudes and expectations. Growing up in an interconnected world, they have been exposed to a multitude of perspectives from an early age, fostering an inherent acceptance of differences (Broadbent et al., 2017). This exposure cultivates their ability to empathize and understand the experiences of others, regardless of their background, fostering cross-cultural understanding and collaboration while challenging preconceived biases (Broadbent et al., 2017).

Generation Z's commitment to inclusivity also extends into social activism, as they passionately advocate for equality and social justice (Harrison, 2019). Actively engaging in conversations surrounding systemic inequalities and discrimination, they feel a profound responsibility to uplift marginalized groups and foster equitable opportunities (Kimball, 2019). Leveraging their strong digital presence, Generation Z amplifies voices that have historically been marginalized, utilizing social media platforms as tools for disseminating information and sparking change (Kimball, 2019). A notable characteristic of Generation Z is their inclination to challenge established norms and conventions. They critically examine societal traditions that perpetuate inequality or exclusion, sparking dialogues about gender roles, heteronormativity, and cultural biases (Kimball, 2019). By reimagining these norms, Generation Z actively dismantles barriers and forges paths toward a more inclusive future.

Generation Z's strong commitment to diversity and inclusivity carries significant implications for workplaces and society. Recognizing the value of diverse teams, organizations aim to foster innovation and align with societal shifts toward equality. Shaped by their diverse upbringing, Generation Z champions diversity and advocates for equality, challenging norms and driving change as they step into leadership roles. As a result, their impact will reshape the narrative of progress and transformation in the future.

### **2.7.5 Work-Life balance**

The current conversation about balancing work and life has become more prominent, reflecting changes in societal values and work patterns (Kossek & Lautsch, 2018). In this context, Generation Z has unique views on this balance, shaped by their values, goals, and experiences. Research suggests that nearly half of graduating Generation Z members

are open to working outside conventional hours, while also expecting flexibility from their employers in return (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018). Rather than adhering to traditional notions of career progression and rigid work schedules, they advocate for a personalized employee experience that encompasses competitive compensation, work-life balance arrangements, ongoing learning opportunities, mentorship, career advancement prospects, and rotational job roles (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018).

The emergence of digital technologies has fundamentally altered how Generation Z manages their work-life balance (Twenge, 2017b). With the proliferation of devices like smartphones and laptops, coupled with high-speed internet access, members of Generation Z have unprecedented flexibility in how they approach their professional obligations. They can now work remotely from virtually any location, granting them greater control over their schedules and fostering a sense of independence.

While offering newfound opportunities for balancing work and personal life, the prevalent presence of digital connectivity also poses challenges that Generation Z must navigate. The blurring of lines between work and personal time requires Generation Z to actively establish boundaries to protect their well-being and ensure holistic life satisfaction (Twenge, 2017b). While technology offers unprecedented flexibility, it also necessitates a conscious effort to maintain a healthy balance between professional obligations and personal pursuits. This delicate balance is essential for preserving mental health and overall life satisfaction in the contemporary workforce landscape, as the constant accessibility facilitated by technology can lead to a sense of obligation to be perpetually available.

*Table 6. Challenges to Work-Life balance. Adapted from various sources. (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018; Kossek & Lautsch, 2018; Twenge, 2017a, 2017b)*

<b>Challenges to Work-Life balance</b>
<p>1. <b>Digital Intrusion:</b> The constant connectivity that technology offers can result in Generation Z feeling an obligation to remain plugged into work even during non-working hours, potentially eroding personal time.</p>

2. **Pressure for Continuous Achievement:** The pursuit of ambitious career goals and the desire to stand out in a competitive job market may lead Generation Z to neglect their well-being and personal lives.

3. **Workplace Norms:** Despite advocating for work-life balance, organizational cultures and expectations can inadvertently create an environment where long work hours are perceived as indicators of dedication and commitment.

## 2.8 Understanding Generation Z's motivations in a post-COVID world

As the world adjusts to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding what drives Generation Z has become crucial. As we have learned this cohort brings unique characteristics and expectations to the workplace. This section presents a selective review of three pivotal articles that explore the motivational factors influencing Generation Z in a post-COVID-19 world. Although the existing academic literature is limited, these studies were chosen for their rigorous methodologies and significant contributions to understanding how the pandemic has reshaped Generation Z's motivations. By examining these key works, this section aims to provide a concise summary of current insights and guide future research directions. Each article offers a unique perspective, combining theoretical and empirical data to clarify the shifts in workplace expectations and career aspirations among Generation Z, helping stakeholders develop effective strategies to engage with this evolving cohort.

### 2.8.1 Shifting motivations in a post-pandemic world

The pandemic has fundamentally altered the landscape of work and personal values for Generation Z. The study by Chala, Poplavska, Danylevych, Ievseitseva, and Sova (2022) provides a thorough grasp of these changes. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study blended focus groups and sociological surveys with 287 participants aged 17-22, capturing both subjective experiences and objective data (Chala et al., 2022).

The study found that despite increasing digitalization, Generation Z remains open to communication and highly adaptable to changing circumstances. Material values such as career and income are predominant, reflecting a pragmatic outlook on life (Chala et al.,

2022). However, there's also significant awareness of global issues like climate change, though their focus tends to be on personal rather than societal concerns (Chala et al., 2022). This study highlights a shift towards valuing freedom of choice and flexibility in work arrangements, aligning with broader trends of individualization and self-responsibility intensified during the pandemic. Interestingly, there is a noted decrease in emphasis on social responsibility, indicating a reevaluation of priorities among young people (Chala et al., 2022).

Recognizing its limitations, such as a focus on wealthier areas and varying pandemic effects, the study underscores the need for ongoing research to understand how Generation Z's values and motivations evolve post-pandemic. Local events, like the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia, might also influence young people's priorities, necessitating a review of motivational strategies and talent management approaches.

### **2.8.2 Practical insights: navigating the new workforce**

In contrast to theoretical frameworks, practical investigations provide tangible evidence of Generation Z's motivations. In their article from 2021 Donna Pendergast and Kyrra Wilks explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Generation Z's work and education domains through a meticulous literature review and conceptual analysis (Pendergast & Wilks, 2021).

The article found that the pandemic has brought significant challenges and opportunities. Generation Z is navigating a complex, rapidly changing landscape marked by disruptions in work and education (Pendergast & Wilks, 2021). Their strengths - digital literacy, creativity, innovation, and collaboration - are invaluable in coping with these challenges. However, these skills need to be complemented with guidance, mentoring, and feedback from older generations (Pendergast & Wilks, 2021). The study emphasizes the necessity for flexible, personalized, and relevant learning and working environments tailored to Generation Z's needs (Pendergast & Wilks, 2021).

Although the article lacks empirical data and grapples with the diverse nature of the issues at hand, it provides a comprehensive overview and practical, evidence-based suggestions

for enhancing Generation Z's work and education outcomes. It serves as a valuable resource for understanding and addressing the nuanced challenges and opportunities this generation faces amid the ongoing global health crisis (Pendergast & Wilks, 2021).

### **2.8.3 Broader workforce dynamics: a bibliometric perspective**

To gain a broader view of Generation Z's roles and influences within the workforce, María Dolores Benítez-Márquez, Eva María Sánchez-Teba, Guillermo Bermúdez-González, and Emma Sofía Núñez-Rydman employed bibliometric analysis in their article *Generation Z Within the Workforce and in the Workplace: A Bibliometric Analysis*, published in 2022. This systematic tool maps and analyzes the academic landscape, enhancing our understanding of Generation Z as employees and their interactions within the workplace (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022).

By scrutinizing scholarly publications, citations, and thematic trends, the study uncovers complex aspects defining Generation Z's presence, behaviors, and influence in the workforce (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). The authors aim to expand scholarly discourse and shed light on Generation Z's nuanced roles and contributions within contemporary employment (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). This timely examination reflects the importance of understanding Generation Z's impact on organizations today, guiding future research directions (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022).

However, the study's scope is somewhat restricted, focusing solely on research trends concerning Generation Z in the workplace (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). Consequently, other influential factors shaping Generation Z's impact might remain unexplored. These could include the role of socio-economic background, cultural differences, the influence of educational systems, family dynamics, and broader societal changes such as political climate and environmental concerns. Additionally, the rapid advancement of technology and its varying accessibility across different regions could also play a significant role in shaping Generation Z's workplace behaviors and expectations.

The bibliometric approach, while robust, relies on publication quantity and citations, potentially overlooking nuanced quality and impact aspects of research (Donthu et al., 2021). The ongoing debate surrounding generational differences complicates



understanding these dynamics. Some researchers argue that generational differences significantly shape work values and behaviors, asserting that each generation brings unique perspectives and expectations to the workplace (Twenge et al., 2010). Conversely, others contend that these differences are overstated, suggesting that individual personality traits and broader socio-economic factors play a more critical role in shaping workplace behaviors (King et al., 2019). Additionally, there is a lack of consensus on optimal integration strategies for Generation Z in the workplace, leaving room for further exploration (Grensing-Pophal, 2013).

Together, these three articles paint a comprehensive picture of how Generation Z's motivations have evolved in a post-COVID-19 world. They highlight the need for ongoing research and adaptation in engaging with this generation effectively. By understanding both theoretical insights and practical applications, stakeholders can develop strategies that resonate with Generation Z, navigating the complexities of today's evolving workplace. This section underscores the importance of contextualizing findings within the broader socio-economic changes brought about by the pandemic, ensuring a holistic approach to managing this pivotal generation.

### **3 Methodology**

This chapter explains the methodologies used to explore retention strategies for the next generation of workers post-COVID. Employing an inductive approach, the study relies on semi-structured interviews with two recruitment professionals and six Generation Z employees. The subsequent sections detail the research design, data collection, sampling strategy, ethical considerations, data collection procedure, and data analysis. This structured approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of how the research insights were obtained and analysed.

#### **3.1 Research design**

The research design followed an inductive approach. Rooted in data-driven exploration, this methodology emphasizes allowing insights to naturally arise from empirical evidence rather than imposing preconceived notions onto the research process (Thomas, 2003). By taking an inductive approach, the study began with an open mind, ready to explore the complexities of the research problem without any preconceived ideas. This method helps

uncover new connections, patterns, and themes in the data, allowing for the development of fresh perspectives and insights (Thomas, 2003).

### **3.2 Data collection**

The data collection methodology of this thesis was carefully chosen to maximize insight into the research topic. The decision to use semi-structured interviews, instead of e.g. surveys or other more static data collection methods, was driven by the goal of achieving a deeper level of exploration. The methodology was also chosen to maximize insight into the research topic. In contrast to e.g. surveys, which do not allow participants the freedom to express nuanced thoughts and detailed experiences, semi-structured interviews provide a platform for more extensive and in-depth discussions, enabling participants to elaborate fully on their perspectives. This method enhances the researcher's ability to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). The interviews incorporated probing techniques, which are essential for clarifying any ambiguous answers provided by the participants. Probing allows the interviewer to delve deeper into specific topics, ensuring that responses are fully understood and capturing more detailed insights. This approach is particularly useful for exploring interesting or unexpected topics that emerge during the conversation, providing a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Synchronous communication was used for these interviews to facilitate real-time engagement. Unlike asynchronous methods, such as email or online surveys, synchronous interviews allow for immediate clarification of responses and deeper probing into participants' thoughts and feelings. This immediacy is particularly valuable for exploring complex topics like motivational factors, as it enables the interviewer to ask follow-up questions and adjust the conversation flow based on the participant's responses. Synchronous interviews also help build rapport and trust between the interviewer and the participant, fostering a more open and candid discussion (Nehls et al., 2014). This real-time interaction encourages participants to share more detailed and nuanced insights. Additionally, the flexibility of synchronous communication allows the interviewer to adapt questions dynamically, ensuring a richer and more responsive data collection process. For instance, if a participant mentions an unexpected but relevant topic, the

interviewer can explore this further immediately, something that asynchronous methods would not easily allow (Opdenakker, 2006).

Central to the research methodology was the intention to engage two distinct groups of participants: recruiters with comprehensive insights into the motivational factors shaping the decisions of a significant cohort of Generation Z employees, and employees belonging to Generation Z who had embarked on their careers amidst the backdrop of the pandemic. Including both perspectives aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the drivers influencing Generation Z's choices regarding prospective employers and the potential impact of the pandemic on these decisions.

All recruitment expert interviews were conducted in English. Of the Generation Z interviews, five were in Swedish and one in Finnish. These non-English interviews were translated into English for consistency and easier data analysis during coding.

The goal of the semi-structured interviews was twofold: to identify the primary factors influencing Generation Z employees' decisions regarding their choice of employer and to expose the pandemic's potential ramifications on these decisions. By engaging directly with participants and eliciting their candid perspectives, the research aimed to unearth valuable insights contributing to a deeper understanding of the interplay between individual motivations, external influences, and organizational dynamics.

### **3.3 Sampling strategy**

The research employed purposeful sampling, a deliberate selection process aimed at recruiting participants who could offer diverse and insightful perspectives on Generation Z employees' experiences in the post-COVID workforce. This sampling method ensured the inclusion of individuals with relevant knowledge and experiences, enhancing the data's richness and depth (Suri, 2011).

Six Generation Z individuals who had recently entered the workforce were recruited. These participants represented a crucial demographic relevant to understanding the pandemic's impact on retention factors and decision-making processes. Additionally, two recruitment professionals with extensive industry experience were included. Their

insights into organizational practices, trends, and strategies provided a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with retaining Generation Z workers.

The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, ensuring enough participants were included to explore and analyse the research questions thoroughly (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation occurred when no new information or insights emerged from additional interviews, indicating a sufficient understanding of the phenomenon under study.

### **3.4 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, guaranteeing their voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity. Measures were taken to comply with relevant data protection regulations. Potential biases and conflicts of interest were acknowledged and minimized to ensure the research findings' integrity.

### **3.5 Data collection procedure**

The data collection process began with identifying and recruiting suitable participants based on established sampling criteria. Potential participants were contacted, and informed consent was obtained before the interviews. All interviews were conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams due to geographical constraints and the need for recording. Although Microsoft Teams features a direct transcription service, it was not sufficiently accurate for non-English interviews, necessitating manual transcription and translation.

During the interviews, open-ended questions allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences, perceptions, and opinions related to employee retention factors and Generation Z's engagement in the post-COVID workplace. Probing questions delved deeper into emergent themes and encouraged participants to reflect on their thoughts.

Participants were given the opportunity to share their insights and provide detailed accounts of their experiences, contributing to the data's richness and depth. The interviews

were conducted with sensitivity and respect for participants' perspectives, ensuring their voices were heard and valued throughout the process.

### 3.6 Data analysis

Thematic analysis, drawing from Gioia's methodology (Gioia et al., 2013), was employed to examine the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews. This analytical process involved systematically exploring the transcripts to uncover recurring patterns, themes, and categories in the participants' narratives. Although both groups of interviewees mentioned similar themes, they differed enough to merit separate themes in the results.

The data analysis involved several stages to move from raw data to results:

1. **Transcription:** Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to capture the exact spoken dialogue. This ensured that all verbal nuances were preserved for comprehensive analysis.
2. **Translation:** Non-English transcripts were translated to maintain consistency across the dataset. This step was crucial for ensuring that all data could be analysed using the same coding framework.
3. **Open coding:** During this initial phase, the transcripts were meticulously broken down into discrete units of meaning. Each segment of text was examined and coded independently, allowing significant statements and patterns to emerge without imposing any preconceived categories (Gioia et al., 2013).
4. **Axial coding:** In this phase, the initial codes from the open coding phase were grouped into broader themes and categories. This process identified connections and relationships between different codes, facilitating a deeper understanding of the data's underlying patterns (Blair, 2015; Gioia et al., 2013). The axial coding stage involved clustering similar codes together, which helped to refine and condense the data into coherent themes.
5. **Aggregating themes:** Finally, the identified themes were combined into overarching dimensions. This step involved organizing the themes into a clear framework that guided the interpretation and analysis of the data. Aggregating the themes helped to clarify the key findings from the interviews, providing insights into the research questions (Gioia et al., 2013).

Each step, from transcribing the interviews to combining the themes into dimensions, was crucial in creating a detailed and thorough narrative of the findings. This systematic approach ensured that the transition from raw data to results was methodical and transparent, allowing the researcher to build a comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's motivational factors in the post-COVID workforce.

The detailed steps of the analysis involved developing data analysis through three key stages, as outlined by Gioia et al. (2013):

1. **Creation of analytic codes and categories:** This stage involved developing a data structure with 1st-order informant-centered codes, focusing on the participants' experiences and viewpoints as they described them, rather than imposing predefined categories. The process began with open coding to capture significant statements directly linked to participants' words, followed by axial coding to identify broader categories by finding connections among the initial codes. These categories were then refined into a structured framework for analysis.
2. **Development of a grounded theoretical model:** This phase employed the constant comparison method, where data was continuously compared over time and across different informants. This iterative process ensured that the emerging theory was firmly rooted in empirical data, allowing for the identification of patterns, relationships, and variations within the themes. Additionally, this phase involved the development of 2nd-order theory-centered themes, which interpreted the data through theoretical constructs, thereby connecting empirical findings with broader theoretical understandings. This approach ensured that the theoretical model accurately reflected participants' lived experiences and insights, maintaining both rigor and validity.
3. **Presentation of findings:** The final stage presented the study's findings through a detailed, data-based narrative. This narrative used 2nd-order themes and aggregate dimensions for theoretical interpretation, frequently referencing informants' 1st-order quotations. By combining theoretical insights with direct quotations, the study provided a nuanced and comprehensive portrayal of the findings. This ensured that conclusions were deeply informed by empirical data,

offering both theoretical and practical insights into Generation Z's motivational factors in the post-COVID workforce.

This structured approach, as outlined by Gioia et al. (2013), emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance between empirical data and theoretical insights. By following these detailed steps, the research aims to produce a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Generation Z's motivational factors in the post-COVID workforce, grounded in empirical evidence and enriched by the participants' diverse experiences and perspectives. This meticulous process of moving from data collection to analysis and interpretation ensures that the insights derived are robust, valid, and deeply informed by the empirical data gathered during the study.

In the following coding diagram, the hierarchical structure of motivational factors for Generation Z employees and recruitment experts post-COVID is illustrated. The diagram integrates insights from both Generation Z employees and recruitment experts to provide a comprehensive view of the key factors influencing retention and engagement in the workplace. Statements from recruitment experts are marked with "RE:" to indicate the additional emphasis these factors received from industry professionals.

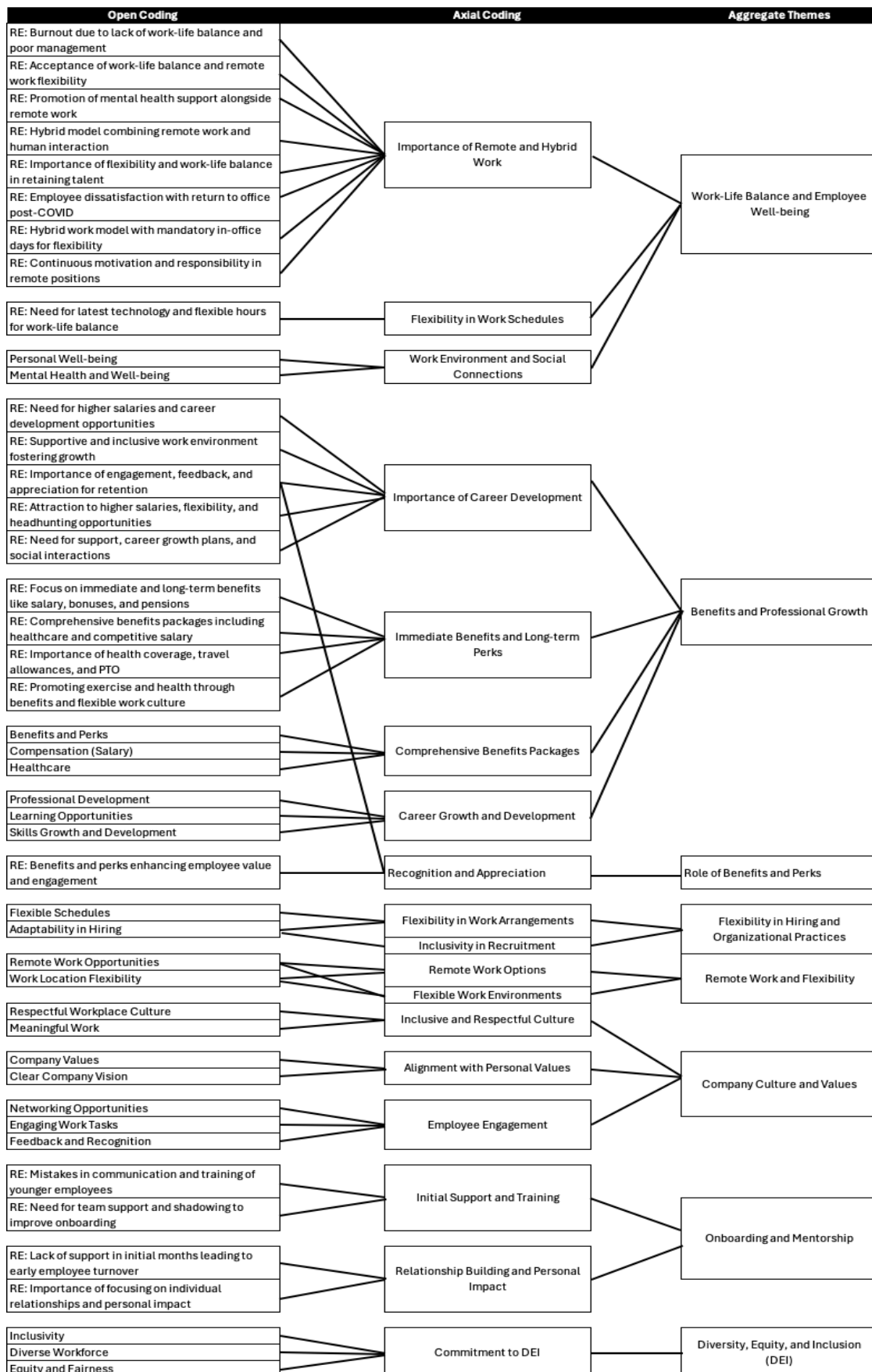


Figure 7. Coding diagram illustrating the hierarchical structure of motivation factors for Generation Z employees and recruitment experts post-COVID.



## **4 Results**

### **4.1 Employee interviews**

In today's rapidly evolving workforce landscape, understanding the factors that influence the career decisions of Generation Z employees is paramount for organizations striving to attract and retain top talent. As we have seen in previous chapters Generation Z, born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, represents a cohort of digital natives characterized by their distinct values, preferences, and expectations in the workplace. As this generation increasingly enters the workforce, it brings with it a unique set of considerations and priorities that shape its career choices.

This study set out to explore the key factors that influence the career decisions of Generation Z employees after the COVID-19 pandemic. By gaining insight into the perspectives and priorities of this demographic, organizations can adapt their recruitment and retention strategies to align with the preferences of Generation Z employees.

#### **4.1.1 Work-Life balance and employee well-being**

The quest for work-life balance is an essential aspect of the modern workplace, particularly for Generation Z employees who prioritize holistic well-being alongside professional success. Work-life balance encompasses the equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal pursuits, ensuring individuals can effectively manage their time and energy to maintain physical, mental, and emotional health. When asked, recruitment professionals who interviewed for this thesis actually said that some of the most common reasons for younger employees leaving their jobs include burnout and lack of work-life balance.

For Generation Z, achieving work-life balance is therefore not merely a desirable perk but a fundamental requirement when evaluating career opportunities. Flexible working arrangements, including options for remote work and flexible hours, are highly sought after by this demographic (more on this in a later section). The ability to work from home, or choose alternative work locations, provides employees with autonomy and control over their schedules, enabling them to optimize productivity while accommodating personal commitments. In the words of three of the respondents:

- "Free time is very important so that one can handle the workload. Floating working hours are quite important for me."
- "Given I travel frequently, 'life' sometimes has to be adapted around this fact."
- "Your work should serve you just as much as you serve your work."

In addition to flexible work arrangements, employers can support work-life balance by promoting a culture of respect for personal time and boundaries. Encouraging employees to disconnect from work outside of designated hours, implementing policies to limit after-hours communication, and providing resources for stress management and mental health support are essential steps in fostering a healthy work-life balance. Recognizing the importance of work-life balance in employee satisfaction and retention, organizations must prioritize initiatives that promote well-being and support a harmonious integration of work and personal life.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed a paradigm shift in work arrangements, with remote work emerging as a viable option for many industries (although some companies are now apparently starting to require their employees to come back to the office). The flexibility offered by remote work has enabled employees to achieve greater work-life balance by eliminating commuting time, reducing work-related stressors, and providing more control over their work environment. As organizations adapt to the new normal, embracing remote work as a long-term strategy can further enhance work-life balance and employee well-being in the post-pandemic era.

Work-life balance is a fundamental aspect of employee well-being and organizational success. By prioritizing flexible work arrangements, promoting a culture of respect for personal time, and embracing remote work options, employers can create a supportive environment that enables Generation Z employees to thrive both personally and professionally.

#### **4.1.2 Benefits and professional growth**

Comprehensive benefits packages and opportunities for professional growth are paramount considerations for Generation Z employees when evaluating potential employers. Beyond competitive salaries, benefits such as healthcare coverage, retirement

plans, and paid time off play a pivotal role in attracting and retaining top talent. Moreover, opportunities for skill development, career advancement, and ongoing learning are essential for nurturing the potential and ambition of young professionals. The recruitment professionals interviewed agree and mentioned that benefits and perks are viewed as important for making employees feel valued and recognized, as well as driving engagement. They however emphasized that the effectiveness of certain perks may vary based on age group preferences.

Healthcare coverage stands out as a critical component of employee benefits, providing individuals with access to medical services, preventive care, and financial protection against unexpected health expenses. Comprehensive health insurance plans that cover medical, dental, and vision care ensure that employees can prioritize their health and well-being without facing financial burdens. As three of the respondents noted when questioned about their preference for company provided health care: "Good work healthcare is important as well as insurance.", "Good health coverage, reasonable travel allowance, PTO.", and "I like things promoting to exercise and health either in a monetary benefit or through company culture/work time flexibility."

In addition to healthcare benefits, employers must prioritize professional growth opportunities to attract and retain Generation Z talent. Access to training programs, mentorship initiatives, and career development resources empowers employees to enhance their skills, expand their knowledge, and progress in their careers. Organizations that invest in the professional development of their workforce demonstrate a commitment to their growth and success, fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation. In the words of one respondent: "[The] possibility to develop in my role/learn new skills is important, whether through practical experiences at work or through extra-curricular studies provided by the company."

In conclusion, comprehensive benefits packages and opportunities for professional growth are essential for attracting, engaging, and retaining Generation Z employees. Employers who prioritize employee well-being, offer competitive benefits, and invest in ongoing learning and development initiatives are better positioned to attract top talent and drive organizational success in today's competitive job market.

### **4.1.3 Flexibility in hiring and organizational practices**

Flexibility in hiring and organizational practices is a pivotal consideration for Generation Z employees seeking employment opportunities that align with their values and preferences. Traditional hiring processes characterized by rigid job requirements and stringent criteria are increasingly viewed as outdated and ineffective in attracting diverse talent. Generation Z employees advocate for more inclusive and adaptable hiring practices that prioritize skills, potential, and cultural fit over arbitrary qualifications. As one respondent put it: "I think companies in Finland need to ease up on some of the rigidity in their hiring practices and encourage a more international workspace, albeit some of this work should be done on the political front."

Unrealistic job requirements and inflated expectations seem to present significant barriers to entry for young professionals entering the workforce. Generation Z employees often face job postings that demand extensive experience or specialized skills beyond their reach, limiting their ability to secure employment opportunities. As one respondent aptly stated, "The criteria have somehow become excessive. So, if it is said that for an entry-level job in software production, you need over 3 years of experience, I don't think that can be a requirement."

In response to these challenges, forward-thinking organizations should reimagine their hiring practices. By adopting competency-based assessments, conducting skills-based interviews, and providing training and development opportunities, employers can identify talent based on potential and aptitude rather than arbitrary qualifications. Moreover, promoting transparency and inclusivity throughout the recruitment process can enhance the candidate experience and attract a more diverse pool of applicants.

Flexibility in hiring and organizational practices are therefore crucial for attracting and retaining Generation Z talent in today's competitive job market. By prioritizing and adopting adaptable recruitment strategies, employers can create a workplace culture that values individual contributions and promotes collective success.

#### **4.1.4 Remote work and flexibility**

The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped the landscape of work, accelerating the adoption of remote work and flexible work arrangements across several industries. For Generation Z employees, the ability to work remotely has emerged as a key factor in evaluating job opportunities and fostering work-life balance. Remote work offers numerous benefits, including increased flexibility, autonomy, and productivity, while also addressing concerns related to health and safety in the workplace.

The transition to remote work has been met with widespread acceptance and enthusiasm among Generation Z employees, who appreciate the freedom and convenience it affords. Remote work eliminates the need for daily commutes, providing individuals with more time to focus on their work, personal pursuits, and family responsibilities. As one respondent emphasized, "I would say that to work remotely is something that I want to be possible. That I get to choose when I work from the office and when I work from home. Gives me a sense of freedom to choose where to work from and that I also can prioritize and better plan my time off work."

Moreover, remote work enables employees to create personalized work environments that enhance their comfort, concentration, and creativity. By allowing individuals to choose their preferred workspaces and schedules, employers can empower employees to optimize their productivity and well-being. Remote work also fosters a culture of trust and accountability, as employees are evaluated based on their output and results rather than their physical presence in the office.

However, remote work is not without its challenges, particularly in terms of communication, collaboration, and social connection. While remote work is mostly seen as a positive trend, especially with younger employees who value flexibility, there's a need to balance remote work with opportunities for human interaction and support. Maintaining effective communication channels, leveraging collaboration tools, and fostering virtual team cohesion are essential for overcoming these obstacles and ensuring the success of remote work initiatives. Employers must also address concerns related to digital fatigue, work-life balance, and mental health to support the well-being of remote employees.

Remote work and flexibility have become integral components of the modern workplace, offering numerous benefits for both employers and employees. By embracing remote work as a long-term strategy, organizations can attract top talent, enhance employee satisfaction, and drive business success in the post-pandemic era. However, they need to make sure that it isn't done in a way that diminishes human interaction.

#### **4.1.5 Company culture and values**

Company culture and values seem to play a paramount role in shaping the employee experience and influencing job satisfaction among Generation Z workers. A positive and inclusive work culture fosters a sense of belonging, trust, and camaraderie among employees, contributing to their overall well-being and engagement. Generation Z employees seek workplaces where they feel valued, respected, and supported in pursuing their personal and professional goals.

A supportive work environment is defined by transparent communication, teamwork, and mutual respect. Organizations that prioritize transparency, fairness, and equality in their policies and practices create a foundation for trust and loyalty among employees. As one interviewee articulated, "The feeling that I am accepted as I am and that I am one of the team is important. It's also important that the company has values that I can stand behind. This also adds to the feeling of doing and working with something meaningful."

As seen in previous research a strong company culture promotes work-life balance and recognizes the importance of employee well-being beyond traditional metrics of productivity and performance. Employers that offer wellness programs, mental health support, and flexible work arrangements demonstrate a commitment to the holistic well-being of their workforce. By prioritizing employee happiness and fulfillment, organizations can enhance retention, reduce turnover, and cultivate a positive employer brand. Furthermore, company values that align with those of Generation Z employees are essential for attracting and retaining top talent. Organizations that demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility, environmental sustainability, and ethical business practices resonate with young professionals who prioritize purpose-driven work. By

integrating corporate social responsibility initiatives into their operations, employers can create a sense of purpose and meaning in the workplace.

In conclusion, company culture and values are critical determinants of organizational success and employee satisfaction in today's competitive labor market. By fostering a positive and inclusive work environment, prioritizing employee well-being, and aligning with the values of Generation Z, organizations can attract, retain, and empower top talent to drive business growth and innovation.

#### **4.1.6 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are foundational principles that underpin a thriving and resilient workplace culture. Generation Z employees already place a high value on diversity and inclusivity in their day to day lives, and also recognize them as essential components of a progressive and forward-thinking organization. Companies that prioritize DEI initiatives demonstrate a commitment to fairness, equality, and respect for all individuals, regardless of their background or identity.

A diverse workforce brings together individuals with unique perspectives, experiences, and talents, fostering creativity, innovation, and problem-solving. By embracing diversity in all its forms, organizations can leverage the collective strengths of their employees to drive business success and achieve sustainable growth. As one interviewee highlighted, "This is quite important. It's important that the company reflects on these and understands which aspects they need to work at and develop. It's also important that this is an open discussion."

Additionally, equity and inclusion are critical for creating a workplace where all employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed. Employers that implement inclusive policies and practices, address systemic barriers, and promote equal opportunities for advancement create a culture of belonging and fairness. By fostering a sense of community and belonging, organizations can enhance employee engagement, retention, and productivity.

DEI initiatives are therefore not only morally imperative but also strategically advantageous for organizations seeking to attract and retain top talent. Generation Z employees are more likely to seek out employers that prioritize diversity and inclusion in their hiring practices, workplace policies, and corporate culture. By championing DEI as a core organizational value, companies can differentiate themselves as employers of choice and strengthen their reputation as socially responsible and ethical leaders in their respective industries.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are fundamental principles that drive organizational excellence, innovation, and resilience. By fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion, prioritizing equity and fairness, and championing DEI initiatives, organizations can create a workplace where all employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to thrive.

## **4.2 Recruitment expert interviews**

To comprehensively understand the complexities of employee retention, it was essential to adopt a multifaceted approach that considered various viewpoints and expertise. This involved not only examining the perspectives of the workforce themselves but also seeking insights from seasoned professionals in the field of recruitment and talent acquisition. These specialists, operating within the Nordic region and requesting to remain anonymous, bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table, particularly in recruiting and retaining young talent. Recognized for their innovative approaches and successful outcomes, they navigate the challenges of attracting and retaining top talent in this dynamic and competitive landscape. Through interviews with these experts, the goal was to uncover additional valuable insights and best practices that could inform and enhance the understanding of employee retention strategies.

### **4.2.1 Remote work and flexibility**

The seismic shift triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the landscape of employee retention strategies, thrusting remote work into the spotlight as a key determinant. This transition represents a paradigmatic change in organizational dynamics, necessitating a re-evaluation of traditional approaches to retention. As one expert aptly noted, "The shift to remote work has not only accentuated the importance of flexibility but has also underscored the critical need for robust mental health support



mechanisms." Continuing on this tangent the expert reiterated that employers who adeptly navigate these transformative shifts by offering flexible work arrangements and prioritizing the mental well-being of their employees have witnessed tangible benefits, including heightened levels of job satisfaction and improved retention rates. This underscores the imperative for organizations to adapt their retention strategies to align with the evolving needs and preferences of their workforce in the post-pandemic era.

Simultaneously, the advent of remote work has ushered in a transformative era in workplace dynamics, characterized by unprecedented flexibility and autonomy. However, amid these advantages arise distinctive challenges in sustaining employee engagement and cohesion within a dispersed work setting. In response to this paradigm shift, hybrid work models have emerged as a pragmatic solution, offering a balanced blend of remote and in-office work alternatives. This innovative approach not only empowers employees to select their work environment but also cultivates avenues for collaboration and assistance, as highlighted by one expert: "Creating hybrid work models affords employees the freedom to choose while fostering opportunities for collaboration and support."

Indeed, by embracing hybrid work arrangements, organizations can accommodate diverse work preferences and lifestyles while promoting a sense of belonging and teamwork. Employees have the flexibility to tailor their work environment to suit their needs while also benefiting from structured opportunities for interaction and collaboration with colleagues. This hybrid approach strikes a delicate balance between individual autonomy and team cohesion, fostering a conducive environment for employee engagement and productivity.

Moreover, hybrid work models offer organizations the flexibility to adapt to evolving workforce trends and external circumstances. As the landscape of work continues to evolve, organizations must remain agile in their approach to talent management and retention. By embracing hybrid work practices, organizations demonstrate their commitment to meeting the changing needs and expectations of their workforce, thereby enhancing employee satisfaction and retention in an increasingly dynamic and competitive environment.

### **4.2.2 Benefits and professional growth**

Effective retention strategies rely on a holistic approach that integrates competitive compensation packages with clearly delineated paths for career progression. As underscored by recruitment experts, augmenting salary offerings and establishing transparent avenues for professional advancement are pivotal in nurturing employee loyalty. One expert emphasized the significance of these measures, stating that "raising salaries and creating opportunities for career development have been essential." Furthermore, providing employees with the flexibility to work remotely and entrusting them with meaningful responsibilities emerged as pivotal factors in bolstering retention rates. Granting autonomy and engaging tasks, especially resonate with younger employees, instilling a profound sense of ownership and commitment to their roles.

Effective retention of young talent also relies heavily on fostering a work environment that not only encourages active participation but also provides ample opportunities for professional development and acknowledgment. According to insights shared by recruitment specialists, initiatives aimed at engaging employees through interactive programs, mentorship platforms, and consistent feedback mechanisms are pivotal in nurturing a culture where continuous learning and career advancement thrive. As one expert emphasized, "Engaging with employees is imperative, especially among younger cohorts, as it instils a sense of purpose and belonging." Additionally, facilitating social connections through team-building exercises and events centred around career growth not only fosters stronger relationships among team members but also reinforces the organization's commitment to supporting employees throughout their professional journey. Or as one of the recruitment experts put it: "I think engaging with employees is really important, especially with younger people as it helps motivate them. Not also does it offer growth and development but also recognition and appreciation with regular feedback. It creates a positive, engaging but supportive culture for them to stay."

### **4.2.3 Role of benefits and perks**

In the endeavour to retain top talent, it is imperative to customize benefit packages to align with the distinct needs of employees across different age groups. Recruitment experts advocate for a strategic blend of immediate advantages, such as competitive salaries and bonuses, complemented by enduring incentives like stock options and

pension plans. As emphasized by one recruitment expert, "Balancing present and long-term benefits is crucial in catering to the varied priorities of employees across different life stages." This nuanced approach to benefits not only recognizes the diverse needs of younger workers but also underscores the organization's dedication to nurturing a supportive and inclusive environment that prioritizes employee well-being throughout their career journey.

Moreover, tailoring benefit packages to accommodate the evolving needs and aspirations of younger workers fosters a culture of inclusivity within the organization. By offering benefits that resonate with the preferences of younger employees, such as flexible work arrangements and professional development opportunities, employers demonstrate their commitment to supporting the growth and success of their workforce. This proactive approach not only enhances employee satisfaction and retention but also contributes to a positive employer brand, attracting top talent in the competitive job market.

Furthermore, by considering the varying life stages and priorities of employees, organizations can design benefit packages that promote financial security, career progression, and overall well-being. For younger employees, benefits like student loan assistance, wellness programs, and opportunities for skill development may hold particular significance. Meanwhile, older employees may prioritize retirement planning options and health benefits. By offering a comprehensive range of benefits that cater to the diverse needs of employees across different age brackets, organizations can create a workplace culture that values and supports all members of the workforce.

#### **4.2.4 Onboarding and mentorship**

One common oversight highlighted by recruitment experts is the lack of patience and support provided to younger employees during their onboarding process. Implementing mentorship programs and offering structured guidance can mitigate feelings of overwhelm and enhance employee retention. As one expert emphasized, "Relationship-focused retention strategies, supported by personalized mentorship, are crucial in fostering a sense of belonging and purpose."

Furthermore, prioritizing individualized attention and providing clear career progression pathways demonstrate the organization's commitment to nurturing enduring relationships with its employees. By investing in mentorship initiatives and offering tailored support, organizations can empower younger employees to navigate their professional journey with confidence and resilience. This personalized approach not only fosters a sense of belonging but also cultivates a supportive environment conducive to long-term employee engagement and retention.

## **5 Discussion**

This chapter combines the findings from the semi-structured interviews with Generation Z employees and recruitment experts, contextualized against established motivational theories and contemporary research. By bridging the gap between historical theoretical insights and current empirical data, this discussion offers a thorough analysis of Generation Z's influence on workplace culture and retention strategies. The integration of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory with recent studies offers a robust framework for understanding the dynamic and diverse motivations of Generation Z employees.

### **5.1 Aligning findings with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests that individuals progress through levels of needs, from physiological to self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). The findings from this research, particularly regarding the importance of work-life balance and professional growth, align well with Maslow's framework. Generation Z's emphasis on flexible work arrangements and comprehensive benefits reflects their need for safety and belongingness (Maslow, 1943). The desire for professional growth opportunities and meaningful work aligns with Maslow's higher-order needs, such as esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

The pandemic has intensified the need for safety and security, as evidenced by Generation Z's heightened focus on job stability and health benefits. This heightened focus is reflective of Maslow's safety needs, which become paramount when individuals face uncertainty and potential threats to their well-being (Maslow, 1943). Generation Z employees are particularly concerned with job stability and health benefits, underscoring

their need for a secure foundation that allows them to address more advanced personal and professional goals.

Furthermore, the research findings illustrate that Generation Z values opportunities for professional growth and meaningful work. These desires align with Maslow's higher-order needs of esteem and self-actualization. Generation Z seeks recognition and a sense of accomplishment in their roles, which corresponds to the esteem needs within Maslow's hierarchy. Additionally, their pursuit of meaningful work that contributes to personal and societal goals reflects the self-actualization level, where individuals strive to realize their fullest potential and achieve personal growth (Maslow, 1943).

The pandemic has also underscored the necessity for organizations to address both basic and higher-level needs to retain this generation effectively. As the need for safety and security becomes more pronounced, organizations must ensure that their policies and practices provide a stable and supportive environment. This includes offering comprehensive benefits, promoting job security, and fostering a positive company culture that supports mental health and work-life balance.

Moreover, to meet Generation Z's higher-order needs, organizations should create opportunities for continuous learning, career advancement, and roles that offer a sense of purpose and impact. By addressing these multifaceted needs, companies can create an environment that not only attracts Generation Z employees but also fosters their ongoing dedication and contentment. This comprehensive approach is crucial for leveraging the full potential of Generation Z in the post-COVID workforce, ensuring that they are motivated and committed to their roles within the organization.

## **5.2 Integration with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory differentiates between hygiene factors, which prevent dissatisfaction, and motivators, which drive satisfaction (Herzberg, 2003). The findings indicate that Generation Z values both types of factors. Flexible work arrangements and comprehensive benefits serve as hygiene factors that prevent job dissatisfaction. For instance, the ability to work remotely and have flexible hours addresses their need for work-life balance and autonomy, preventing feelings of being overwhelmed or burnt out.

Comprehensive benefits, including healthcare and retirement plans, ensure a sense of security and well-being, reducing anxiety about future uncertainties.

Conversely, opportunities for professional growth and a positive company culture act as motivators. Generation Z employees seek roles that offer continuous learning, skill development, and clear career progression paths. They are driven by intrinsic factors such as meaningful work that aligns with their values and allows them to make a positive impact. A supportive and inclusive company culture further enhances their engagement and satisfaction, fostering a sense of belonging and community.

The semi-structured interviews revealed that Generation Z employees are particularly motivated by intrinsic factors such as meaningful work and opportunities for personal development, echoing Herzberg's motivational factors (Herzberg, 2003). They expressed a strong desire for jobs that not only provide financial stability but also fulfil their need for personal growth and societal contribution.

However, the pandemic has also brought hygiene factors to the forefront, making aspects like job security and work-life balance more critical than ever. The increased uncertainty and economic instability have heightened the importance of stable employment and supportive work environments. Generation Z employees now place greater emphasis on the reliability of their job and the ability to manage their work alongside personal commitments effectively. This shift underscores the necessity for employers to address both hygiene factors and motivators comprehensively to attract and retain Generation Z talent in the post-pandemic workforce (Herzberg, 2003).

By integrating flexible work arrangements, comprehensive benefits, opportunities for professional development, and fostering a positive company culture, organizations can effectively meet the needs of Generation Z. This balanced approach ensures that both the foundational aspects of job satisfaction and the elements that drive engagement and motivation are addressed, leading to a more satisfied and productive workforce.

## **5.3 Comparing with research on Generation Z**

This section combines the findings of this research with existing literature from before and after COVID-19 to provide a clear understanding of Generation Z's changing motivations and expectations. By comparing insights from interviews with Generation Z employees and recruitment experts with recent studies, we can see how their workplace values have shifted. The analysis covers aspects like work-life balance, technology use, diversity and inclusion, and career growth. It shows how the pandemic has strengthened existing priorities and introduced new ones for Generation Z. This helps organizations understand the key factors that drive Generation Z's engagement and retention, offering practical advice for adapting their strategies to meet these evolving needs.

### **5.3.1 Workforce expectations and shifts post-COVID**

Prior to the pandemic, research highlighted Generation Z's emphasis on meaningful work, digital fluency, and diversity and inclusion (Bencsik et al., 2016; Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020). These studies underscored the generation's desire for work that aligns with their personal values and their comfort with technology. This research extends these findings by demonstrating how the pandemic has intensified these desires, particularly the need for job stability and flexible work arrangements.

From the semi-structured interviews, it was evident that Generation Z's emphasis on work-life balance and professional growth has become more pronounced. The pandemic underscored the importance of flexible working conditions, with many participants valuing remote work and flexible hours as crucial factors in their career choices. This aligns with pre-pandemic insights but highlights an increased urgency and prioritization of these aspects due to the pandemic's disruptions.

### **5.3.2 Technological influence and adaptability**

The interviews confirmed Generation Z's digital fluency and adaptability to remote work environments, echoing pre-pandemic research findings. Participants expressed a high level of comfort with digital tools and remote communication platforms, which became essential during the pandemic. This adaptability not only facilitated their transition to remote work but also highlighted their ability to maintain productivity and engagement

in a virtual environment. This supports Hernandez-de-Menendez et al.'s (2020) depiction of Generation Z as "digital natives."

### **5.3.3 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**

Commitment to diversity and inclusion remains a strong theme, consistent with both pre-pandemic and recent post-pandemic research. The findings from the interviews showed that Generation Z continues to prioritize inclusive workplaces that respect diverse perspectives and promote equality. This is in line with Appelbaum et al.'s (2022) findings that Generation Z values DEI initiatives and seeks employers who embody these principles.

The pandemic has further emphasized the need for inclusive practices as remote work blurred geographical boundaries and brought about more diverse hiring opportunities. Participants highlighted the importance of transparent and inclusive hiring processes, which align with their values of fairness and equity.

### **5.3.4 Work-Life balance and well-being**

The research findings underscored the importance of work-life balance, a critical factor identified in both pre- and post-pandemic studies. Participants expressed a heightened awareness of mental health and well-being, advocating for flexible work schedules that allow for personal time and stress management. This reinforces Kossek and Lautsch's (2018) emphasis on work-life flexibility and highlights how the pandemic has brought these issues to the forefront of career considerations.

### **5.3.5 Impact on professional growth and job stability**

The interviews revealed that Generation Z places a high value on professional growth and job stability. This is consistent with Chala et al. (2022), who noted a pragmatic approach towards career and income among Generation Z. The pandemic has heightened the need for job security, with participants expressing a desire for clear career progression paths and opportunities for skill development. This shift reflects an adaptation to the uncertain job market caused by the pandemic, where stability and growth have become even more critical.



### **5.3.6 Mentorship and guidance**

Pendergast and Wilks (2021) highlighted the importance of mentorship and personalized learning environments for Generation Z, a theme echoed in the current research. Participants emphasized the need for guidance from experienced colleagues and mentors to navigate their career paths effectively. The interviews underscored the value of mentorship programs in providing support and fostering professional growth, aligning with the broader trend of seeking structured yet flexible career development opportunities.

## **5.4 Summary of key findings**

The findings from this research, when integrated with existing literature, provide a comprehensive view of Generation Z's evolving motivations and expectations. Organizations must adapt their retention strategies to address both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, ensuring that basic needs are met while also providing opportunities for professional growth and personal fulfilment.

The pandemic has reinforced the importance of flexible work arrangements, comprehensive benefits, and a positive company culture. Organizations should embrace remote work options, offer robust mental health support, and create inclusive environments to meet Generation Z's expectations. Additionally, clear communication, job stability, and opportunities for career advancement remain paramount in retaining this dynamic workforce.

## **6 Conclusion and recommendations**

The research question aimed to explore how organizations could retain Generation Z employees in the workplace post-COVID, focusing on their unique characteristics and preferences. The insights derived from the semi-structured interviews conducted with Generation Z employees and recruitment experts offer valuable illumination into the multifaceted considerations driving the career decisions and workplace preferences of the youngest generation in the workforce. Across dimensions such as work-life balance, benefits structures, flexible scheduling, organizational culture, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, it becomes increasingly evident that this cohort places

significant emphasis on holistic well-being, individual growth, and a profound sense of inclusion within their professional environments.

Generation Z individuals demonstrate a more pronounced preference than pre-COVID for work settings that afford them flexibility in structuring their work schedules, advocating strongly for options such as remote work arrangements and a conducive balance between their professional and personal lives. They place particular value on benefits packages that extend beyond mere remuneration, comprising comprehensive healthcare coverage, generous paid time off allowances, and robust avenues for ongoing professional development, all of which are deemed integral components of an enticing employment proposition.

Furthermore, Generation Z underscores the importance of organizational practices that prioritize inclusivity and adaptability in recruitment processes and operational frameworks. They advocate for hiring practices that transcend traditional boundaries, seeking employers who actively cultivate a globalized workforce and embrace diverse perspectives. In tandem with this, they express a strong affinity for workplace cultures anchored in transparency, fairness, and a staunch commitment to fostering an environment of mutual respect and equal opportunity among colleagues. Although these factors have also played a role in pre-COVID research this holistic approach to well-being as a retention factor may have gained prominence in post-COVID research.

Generation Z still place significant emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as foundational pillars within their ideal workplace constructs. They are drawn to organizations that champion DEI initiatives, recognizing them as catalysts for innovation and fostering collaborative environments conducive to individual and collective growth. Employers who demonstrate a steadfast commitment to promoting diversity and ensuring equitable access to opportunities stand poised to attract and retain top-tier talent within this demographic, thereby cultivating environments characterized by creativity, collaboration, and sustained success.

In summary, by attuning themselves to the nuanced preferences and priorities of Generation Z, organizations can cultivate workplaces that not only nurture individual well-being and professional development but also drive sustained growth and innovation.

Prioritizing flexibility, inclusivity, and a positive organizational culture enables employers to position themselves as employers of choice, fostering resilient, high-performing teams equipped to navigate the evolving landscape of the modern workforce with confidence and agility.

Based on this summary, various strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z employees emerge:

- **Provide clear development opportunities for their career and growth:** Offer structured career paths, mentorship programs, and ongoing training opportunities to support their professional advancement and skill development.
- **Create an inclusive and flexible work culture that aligns with their personal values and purpose:** Foster an environment where diversity, equity, and inclusion are embraced, and where employees feel empowered to bring their authentic selves to work. Provide flexible work arrangements to accommodate their diverse lifestyles and preferences.
- **Implement efficient time management and technology that improves efficiency:** Leverage technology solutions and agile work practices to streamline workflows and enhance productivity. Provide access to tools and resources that facilitate efficient collaboration and communication.
- **Make wellbeing a priority and demonstrate care for their health and happiness:** Offer wellness programs, mental health resources, and initiatives that promote work-life balance. Show genuine concern for their overall well-being and create a supportive work environment where employees feel valued and supported.
- **Lighten up on qualification requirements and focus on candidates who show potential and fit the organization:** Look beyond traditional qualifications and credentials and prioritize candidates who demonstrate a strong cultural fit and alignment with the organization's values and mission. As the saying goes, skills can be taught, but personality is innate.
- **Brand yourself as an employer of choice, focusing on your values and on the 'employee experience':** Showcase your company culture, values, and commitment to employee satisfaction through employer branding efforts.

Highlight the unique aspects of your workplace culture and the positive experiences of current employees.

- **Highlight the work environment by sharing pictures:** Use visual storytelling to showcase your workplace environment, team dynamics, and company culture. Share photos and videos that give prospective employees a glimpse into what it is like to work at your organization.
- **Be transparent and share the salary range or pay details:** Provide transparent information about salary ranges, compensation packages, and benefits upfront. Transparency builds trust and helps set clear expectations from the outset.
- **Offer peer coaching programs and foster a sense of teamwork:** Encourage collaboration, knowledge sharing, and peer-to-peer learning through coaching and mentoring programs. Create opportunities for employees to connect, collaborate, and support each other in their professional growth and development.
- **Promote a healthy work/life balance and respect their personal time:** Encourage boundaries between work and personal life, and support employees in prioritizing their well-being outside of work. Offer flexible scheduling options, remote work opportunities, and policies that respect personal time and commitments.

Building upon these recommendations, it is imperative for future research to explore the effectiveness of these strategies across diverse organizational contexts and geographical locations, thereby augmenting their applicability and efficacy. These avenues of inquiry will not only enrich our understanding but also contribute to the refinement and optimization of retention strategies for Generation Z employees in various professional settings.

## **6.1 Limitations of the study**

In exploring the dynamics of Generation Z's career decisions and workplace preferences, this study acknowledges several limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the geographical scope of the research is confined to Helsinki, Finland, introducing a potential bias towards the experiences and perspectives prevalent within this specific region. Consequently, the generalizability of findings to broader geographical contexts

may be limited, highlighting the need for future studies to adopt a more diverse sampling approach encompassing varied cultural and geographical backgrounds.

The homogeneity of the sample, comprising respondents solely from one socioeconomic background, restricts the representation of diverse perspectives within Generation Z. Future research endeavors should aim to address this limitation by incorporating participants from a broader range of educational institutions, industries, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, given the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the healthcare sector, future studies could benefit from examining the career decisions and workplace preferences of healthcare professionals within Generation Z.

Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the study, centered around semi-structured interviews, may limit the depth of analysis by overlooking quantitative insights and statistical trends. While qualitative approaches provide rich narrative data, incorporating quantitative methodologies could offer a more comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's preferences and behaviors.

A longitudinal approach would enable researchers to track shifts in preferences and behaviors of Generation Z over time, providing deeper insights into the evolving dynamics of this demographic cohort. The study's cross-sectional design, where data is collected from a group at a single point in time, limits its capacity to observe longitudinal trends and transformations in their attitudes and behaviors.

Lastly, the study does not explore the influence of external factors, such as global events or technological advancements, on Generation Z's career decisions and workplace preferences. Considering the rapidly evolving nature of the global landscape, future studies should strive to examine these external influences to provide a more nuanced understanding of Generation Z's behavior.

While this study offers valuable insights into Generation Z's career decisions and workplace preferences, it is essential to acknowledge these limitations to inform future research endeavors and enhance our understanding of this dynamic demographic cohort.

## 6.2 Recommendations for future research

Reflecting on insights from semi-structured interviews with Generation Z employees and recruitment experts primarily in Helsinki, Finland, several recommendations for future research emerge. Future studies should broaden their geographic scope beyond Helsinki to capture diverse perspectives from various regions and cultural contexts. This expansion enables exploration of regional variations in workplace preferences, providing a more comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's career decisions.

Diversifying the participant pool to include individuals from various sectors and industries allows for a comparative analysis of workplace preferences. Investigating how preferences differ across sectors informs tailored retention strategies suited to different professional environments. Additionally, targeting healthcare professionals, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, is crucial given the unique challenges and demands they face. Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of Generation Z's career decisions and workplace preferences offer insights into their developmental trajectories. Observing changes in priorities as they progress through different life stages informs targeted interventions for talent retention.

Comparing the preferences of Generation Z with other generational cohorts post-COVID allows for a deeper exploration of generational differences in the workforce. Understanding variations across generations informs nuanced retention strategies tailored to diverse age groups. Supplementing qualitative insights with quantitative surveys provides a comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's preferences. Large-scale surveys validate qualitative findings and uncover statistically significant trends within the demographic.

Including voices from underrepresented or marginalized groups within Generation Z would foster a more inclusive understanding of workplace experiences. Exploring how intersectional identities (i.e. race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation) intersect with career decisions informs strategies for fostering diversity and inclusion. Integrating insights from organizational leaders and HR professionals could also offer a holistic view of retention challenges and opportunities.

Furthermore, examining the influence of external factors such as global events and technological advancements on Generation Z's career decisions could offer context for retention strategies. Investigating organizational practices aimed at retaining Generation Z talent, alongside case studies of effective management strategies, would further provide practical insights for employers seeking to attract and retain young talent.

In conclusion, interdisciplinary collaboration among academia, industry, and government stakeholders plays a vital role in developing innovative talent management strategies. By combining diverse knowledge and resources, this collaboration yields practical solutions for overcoming workforce challenges. Pursuing these avenues for future research aims to deepen our understanding of Generation Z's career decisions and workplace preferences, ultimately contributing to the creation of inclusive, supportive, and engaging work environments conducive to the success of this demographic cohort.

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## 8 Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### **Generation Z employee interview questions.**

1. What factors do you consider when deciding whether to stay at a job or look for a new one?
2. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your career aspirations and expectations for your employer?
3. What benefits or perks do you value most in a job, and how important are they to your decision to stay with a company?
4. How do you balance your work and personal life, and what role does work-life balance play in your decision to stay with a company?
5. How important is a company's culture and values to you, and what aspects of culture do you find most appealing?
6. How do you prefer to receive feedback and recognition at work, and how does this impact your decision to stay with a company?
7. What role do opportunities for growth and development play in your decision to stay with a company, and what kind of growth opportunities are most important to you?
8. What kind of work environment do you thrive in, and how does this impact your decision to stay with a company?
9. How important is a company's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion to you, and what specific actions do you look for in this area?
10. What steps do you think companies should take to retain and engage younger workers post-COVID, and how can they better meet the needs of younger generations in the workforce?

## Appendix 2

### Recruitment expert interview questions

1. In your experience, what are the top reasons why younger (Gen Z) employees leave their jobs?
2. What strategies have you seen work well for retaining young employees in the current job market?
3. How have you seen the COVID-19 pandemic impact employee retention, and what strategies have you seen companies use to address this challenge?
4. Are there, in your opinion, any differences here between older and younger employees?
5. In your opinion, what are the most effective methods for attracting and retaining younger workers?
6. How can companies create a culture that values and prioritizes specifically younger employee retention?
7. What role do benefits and perks play in retaining employees, and which ones do you think are most effective?
  - i. Differences between age groups?
8. How do you measure the success of employee retention programs?
  - i. Do you use any metrics to measure this & in that case what are they?
9. How do you see the trend of remote work impacting employee retention, and what strategies can companies use to address this challenge?
  - i. Differences between age groups?
10. What are the most common mistakes companies make when it comes to retaining younger employees, and how can they avoid them?
11. How do you see the future of employee retention evolving post-COVID, and what strategies do you think will be most important in the coming years?

### Appendix 3

#### Example of Non-English Interview with Generation Z employee.

Haastattelija: Jees. Elikkä aloitetaan. Kerro ihan ensin sun syntymävuotes niin saadaan se paperille.

Vastaaja: Jo eli 1997.

Haastattelija: Hieno homma! Kiitoksia! Kysymys 1. Minkä tekijöiden perusteella harkitset pysytkö nykyisessä työssäsi vai etsitkö uutta?

Vastaaja: No tottakai palkka. Palkka ehkä se suurin tekijä, mutta sit kun lähetään taas siihen, että jos palkkamuuotos ei oo niin suuri niin sit se työympäristö ja työtehtävät on tosi tärkeitä.

Haastattelija: Onko jotain tiettyä? Tiettyä niinkuin siinä työympäristössä mikä kiinnostaa tai joku sellainen showstopperi minkä johdosta jos siellä on tätä niin en todellakaan lähde. Tai toisinpäin?

Vastaaja: No ehkä ei semmosta showstopperia niinkään. Lähinnä se, että saa tehdä etänä töitä ja sit on semmonen, että on työkavereita, joiden kanssa voi puhua ihan muustakin kuin työasioista. Ja se on aina bonusta.

Haastattelija: Ja miten tota tää COVID pandemia on vaikuttanut sun ura- ja työnantaja odotukseen? Onko ne muuttunu jollain tavalla?

Vastaaja: No ei, ehkä ei muuttunut sinänsä odotukset, mutta voin sanoa, että tarjonta on kyllä, tarjontaa kyllä notkunut laidasta laitaan aika kovastikkin. Silloin kun aloitti hakemaan näitä töitä niin oli vähän erilaista tarjolla kuin mitä nyt tällä hetkellä on.

Haastattelija: Jep kyllä. Mitä tota niinku sanot tossa, että on niinku muitakin asioita kun palkkaa mitä arvostat. Mitä etuja tai etuuksia sä arvostat eniten ja kuinka tärkeää on, että yrityksessä pysymisen kannalta?

Vastaaja: Ehdottomasti arvostan sitä, että saa tehdä etänä töitä silleen, että ei tarvi ihan viis päivää viikossa olla toimistolla ja that's it vaan et voi olla vaikka pari päivää etänä tai sitten koko viikon mahdollisesti jos niin tarvitsee.

Haastattelija: Ja mites muut tämmöset edut, mitä saat saattaa työpaikalta saada?



Vastaaja: No siis tottakai ne ei oo välttämättömyyksiä mun mielestä, mutta tottakai sitten aina jos semmoinen mahdollisuus on, että niitä saa, niin tietenkin saa antaa, ja antaa kyseessä olevalle työpaikalle paljon plussaa mun silmissä.

Haastateliija: Miten sä tasapainotat työtä ja henkilökohtaista elämää? Oikeastaan jos jatkan tota niin kuinka suuri rooli työn ja henkilökohtaisen elämän tasapainolla on siinä, tai oikeastaan kuinka suuri rooli mahdollisuudella tasapainottaa työtä ja henkilökohtaista elämää on sun valintaan auttaa päätöksessä pysyä nykyisessä yrityksessä?

Vastaaja: No on, se on itsensä aika suuri, vaikka mä en välttämättä sitä aina ehkä henkisenä, henkisesti niinno henkisesti myönnäkään. Eli tota tosi tärkeää. Tavallaan et saa sen, että työpäivä on selkeä, että työpäivä päättyy tiettyyn kellonaikaan tai tiettyyn pisteeseen, että ei tavallaan menee siihen, että tekee iltaan asti töitä ja sitten ei jää aikaa syödä suurinpiirtein. Sen itse huomasi kiireisinä päivinä, että semmosen stressin alaisena, että se ei ole, se ei ole mukavaa yhtään.

Haastateliija: Kun mietitään työnantajan tai työnantajan ja yrityksen muita kulttuureja ja arvoja, niin mitkä kulttuurin osa-alueet vetoaa sinuun eniten?

Vastaaja: Mitä tarkoittaa kulttuuri?

Haastateliija: Kulttuurit ja arvot. Eli sanotaan vaikka työkuulttuuri, että kten sanoit tuossa että ei pakoteta tekemään ylitöitä tai että kun on mahdollisuus tehdä muutakin kuin vain tehdä töitä. Ja sit taas arvot enimmäkseen semmoset niinku että mitkä ne yrityksen arvot on. Jos mietitään vaikka siitä siitä tota, että kohdellaan kaikkia tasa-arvoisesti. Ja niin päin pois.

Vastaaja: Niin että onko nämä niinkuin tärkeitä?

Haastateliija: Niin, että miten, miten tärkeänä osana pidät tai mitkä näistä osa-alueista vetoaa suuhun eniten?

Vastaaja: No siis etenkin toi, että on niin kuin kaikkia kohdellaan silleen tasa-arvoisesti, eli ei vähätellä toista työtehtävää, vaikka se olisikin erilainen. Se on tosi key point mun mielestä.

Haastateliija: Ja mitä tämä yhdessä tekemisen kulttuuri, onko se susta tärkeää?

Vastaaja: Se on erittäin. Erittäin vahvasti minulla.

Haastattelija: Jos mietitään yhdessä tekemistä ja sitä, että varmaan halutaan myös kuulla, jos tehdään hyvää työtä ja palautetta niinku muutenkin. Millä tavalla sä haluat saada palautetta ja tunnustusta työssäsi? Ja sit taas, että kuinka tää vaikuttaa tähän valintaan pysyä nykyisessä yrityksessä?

Vastaaja: No siis tottakai haluan jollain tavalla kuulla tota palautetta eli tota, olkoon se sitten, no harvemmin ehkä, mutta rahallisena palkkana tai sit silleen että. Tyyliin, saat aplodit tai jotain vastaavaa. Ihan silleen kehit työkavereilta.

Haastattelija: Mutta niin kuin silleen että kun haluatko että sulla sanotaan suoraan one to one, vai ehkä jonkun ryhmän edessä vai kirjallisena?

Vastaaja: Ihan vaan suoraan one to one riittää. Eli siis kunhan se vaan ilmenee jollain tavalla. Siten että tulee ilmi, että muut otetaan huomioon, niin se on ja mun mielestä ihan mulle riittävä.

Haastattelija: Nyt tota jos miettii jos on nykyistä työnantajaa niin tota niin niin onko tää semmonen asia joka on vaikuttanut siihen että sä pysyt niinku nykyisessä yrityksessä? Eli tunnetko että sä saat tarpeeks tunnustusta työstä se?

Vastaaja: Joo kyllä.

Haastattelija: Ja tapa millä sitä annetaan, niin onko sulla sopiva?

Vastaaja: Joo kyllä mun mielestä tapa on sopiva, ainakin tähän asti ollut. Ja sitte kyllä musta tuntuu et mä oon saanut ja saan tunnustukset ihan siinä missä pitääkin. Tähän mennessä, että siihen olen tyytyväinen. Se on vaikuttanut todellakin siihen, että miks mä oon edelleenkin täällä työnantajalla töissä.

Haastattelija: Ja entä tota, millainen merkitys kasvu ja kehitysmahdollisuuksilla on sun päätöksessä pysyä nykyisessä yrityksessä ja mitkä kasvumahdollisuudet on sulle tärkeimpiä? Miten uraa, koulutusta ja jne.

Vastaaja: Tottakai tärkeää ois, tai siis tärkeätä on kehittyä aina siinä mitä tekee. Eli tota kyllä se vaikuttaa mut ehkä huomattavasti vähemmän kuin mitä sen pitäisi. Eli tota niin. Vähemmän, vähemmän kuin muut asiat, sanotaan, mutta vaikuttaa.

Haastattelija: Minkä tyyppiset kasvu ja kehitysmahdollisuudet ois sulle tärkeimpiä?

Vastaaja: No ehkä just se, että tavallaan se monipuolisuus siitä osa alueesta mitä itsekin tekee eli ei ihan pelkkää sitä yhtä boxia vaan just sillä että pikkasen outside the box. Niin

tavallaan käytäisiin. Olkoon se sitten ohjelmistokehityspotkea tai sit ihan asiakkaan päässä hommia. Niin, se on monipuolista. Osaamisen laajentaminen eri osa alueille on ainakin itsellä oon huomannut että semmonen on tosi tärkeä.

Haastateliija: Jos mietitään työympäristöä, niin minkä tyyppisessä työympäristössä sä menestyt parhaiten ja kuinka työympäristö vaikuttaa sun päätökseen pysyä yrityksessä?

Vastaaja: No tääkin on semmonen, että tää ei ehkä ole niin kriittinen mun osalla, koska pystyn työskentelemään sellaisessa ympäristössä missä on esimerkiksi hälinää. Ja myönnän sen, että itsekin välillä aiheutan hälinää ympäristössä [nauraa]. Joo siis ehkä, ehkä just semmonen työympäristö missä menestyy on se, että tavallaan ei olla ihan kokoajan nokka siinä työn ääressä vähän välillä myös jutellaan jne. Ei ei ihan niinkuin sataprosenttista keskittymistä kokoajan siihen työhön.

Haastateliija: Tää oikeastaan tuo takaisin tohon neloskysymykseen työn ja henkilökohtaisen elämän tasapainottamiseen, koska tuo on oikeastaan osa sitäkin jos miettii, että työpaikallakin saa olla hauskaa. Siellä pitää viihtyä.

Vastaaja: Juurikin näin se on ainakin omalla kohdalla huomannut. Se edesauttaa erittäin paljon mun työmotivaatiota.

Haastateliija: Miten tota, miten sit jaksaminen, auttaako siinä?

Vastaaja: Ehdottomasti, ehdottomasti. Ja just se että on tulee iloisena työpaikalle aamulla. Niin se on, tämä on osasy siihen myös.

Haastateliija: No miten tota sitten jos miettii sitä, että työympäristöönkin kuuluu se, että millä tavalla tehdään töitä? Se, että teet sä yksin, ryhmässä, pareittain, mikä on sulle optimi toimintatapa? Tai kun joku hybridiratkaisu näistä?

Vastaaja: Se on ehkä näistä hybridiratkaisu, koska se vähän riippuu mitä mä teen. Lähinnä jos koodataan, niin mä sanon, että parikoodaus on ollu aina mun lemppari ihan sen takia, että kaksi silmäparia kun katsoo koodia niin huomaa pienet virheet huomattavasti nopeammin. Mut sit taas jos sanotaan että tekee jotain second line roolin, jotain supporttihommia, niin silloin ihan yksin pystyy tekemään. Tottakai se, että mahdollisuuksien mukaan ja tarpeiden mukaan pystyy kysymään apua.

Haastateliija: Nooh, tota onko sitten tällaisessa ryhmäparityöskentelyssä miten tärkeänä näet, että tehdään samassa fyysisessä tilassa töitä?

Vastaaja: Kyl mä nään, että se auttaa. Kyl mä nään et se auttaa, mutta tota, se ei oo mun mielestä mitenkään välttämätöntä, ainakaan niinku omalta kantilta. Mut mun mielestä se kyl auttaa siinä työnteossa.

Haastattelija: Jes. Sit tota jos miettii tämmösiä ehkä vähän enemmän eteerisiä asioita. Mutta kuinka tärkeänä sä pidät yrityksen sitoutumista monimuotoisuuteen, tasa-arvoon ja sisällyttämiseen? Ja mitä muita toimia sä etsit tällä saralla yritykseltä? Miten tää manifestoituu?

Vastaaja: Kyllä pidän sitä tärkeänä. Tota no yks hyvä esimerkki on tämä missä mistä sinäkin olet tietoinen. Tämä meidän kick off keissi eli tota koska kaikki eivät päässeet niin peruttiin tämä tapahtuma ja tehtiin jotain muuta mihin kaikki pääsivät. Ja se on kyllä mun mielestä erittäin tärkeätä.

Haastattelija: Kyllä totta.

Vastaaja: Niin no aina on. En mä oo ikinä pitänyt syrjimisestä, ei se ole hyvä juttu työpaikalla tai ihan vapaa aikanakin.

Haastattelija: No se on aika normaali nykyään [naurahtaa].

Vastaaja: Totta [naura]

Haastattelija: Voisitko olla sellaisessa yrityksessä, missä näitä asioita ei sanota ääneen, eli missä tämmöisiin asioihin ei satsata oikeastaan millään tavalla.

Vastaaja: Niin no, ehkä mä voisin olla, mut en mä välttämättä haluaisi olla. Eli tää riippuu kaikki ihan siitä, että mikä mun taloudellinen tilanne siinä tapauksessa olis.

Haastattelija: Okei, elikkäs se raha kuitenkin menee edellä.

Vastaaja: Kyllä. Tietyn pisteen jälkeen se kyllä joo riittää.

Haastattelija: Ja miten tota jos sun pitäis luokitella nää jutut tärkeysjärjestyksessä niin mitkä asiat jos miettii niinkun rahaa, luontaisetuja? Ei ehkä niin välttämättä näkyviä asioita kuten työn ja henkilökohtaisen elämän tasapaino. Jos voisit laittaa tärkeysjärjestykseen niin mitkä asiat ovat tärkeimpiä ja mitkä taas ehkä vähän vähemmän tärkeitä?

Vastaaja: No, tärkemäksi mä laitan sen palkan, koska sen takia töitä tehdään. Mutta tota, ehkä yläpäähän menee just se työympäristö. Töiden ja vapaa ajan tasapaino. Just nää asiat joista joista totta puhuttiin osa aikasemmin.

Haastattelija: Joo.

Vastaaja: Sit siihen keskivaiheille menee kaikki tällainen tasa arvo ja inklusiivisuus ja tämmöinen. Ja sitten ne ihan työpaikkaedut ehkä siellä jälkipäässä sinänsä.

Haastattelija: Joo.

Vastaaja: Viimeisimpänä vaan ei sinänsä vähäisimpänä.

Haastattelija: Joo ei, kaikkihan on jollain tavalla tärkeitä, mä nimenomaan pyysin laittamaan tärkeysjärjestykseni. Joku järjestys pitää olla siinä tapauksessa. Tota jos miettii noita luontaisetuja, niin mitkä luontaisedut on sulla tärkeimpiä?

Vastaaja: No sanotaan näin, että jos eduista puhutaan, niin tärkein ois se että saisi lounasedun. Se ois ihan kiva, ja kun siihen kuitenkin menee rahaa kyllä aika paljon. Aika paljon kyllä. Ja sit ehkä noi matkat, matkakuluihin joku vaikuttava etu ois ihan todella nice to have.

Haastattelija: Mitäs muut tommoset? Tota vaikka joku terveystuolto?

Vastaaja: Totta, toi on hyvä pointti! Työterveys on erittäin, erittäin tärkeä. Mä laitan itseasiassa sen sinne ylimmäksi lounaan edelle.

Haastattelija: No niin.

Vastaaja: Sitä en tullut ajatelleeksi.

Haastattelija: Sitä harvemmin tulee ajatelleeksi, koska se kuuluu jo nyt lakisääteisesti mukaan ainakin jollain tasolla. Mitä sitten joku liikunta- tai kulttuuri? Mites ne?

Vastaaja: Mä en niistä oo ikinä oikeastaan perustanut ihan sillä perusteella, että yleensä kun näitä tämmöisiä tukia on ollut tai etuja, niin ne on keskittynyt johonkin tiettyyn ennalta valittuun mestan tai palveluun, niin sit se on silleen että se rajoittaa erittäin paljon sitä hyötyä, mitä sä saat siitä irti mahdollisesti. Eli jos sun paikkakunnalla ei oo kyseistä kyseisen yhtiön salia tai jotain vastaavaa liikuntamahdollisuutta, niin se on aika silleen että no kiva että mulla on tää, mutta olisin voinut käyttää sen jotenkin muuten et.

Haastattelija: Hyvä pointti.

Haastattelija: Se tota ihan viimesenä. Niin tota, jos miettii nyt sitten tätä, että millä tavalla yritysten pitäis ottaa huomioon teidän sukupolven edustajat työympäristössä. Kysymyksenä on siis, että mitä toimia yritysten tulisi mielestäsi toteuttaa säilyttääkseen

ja sijoittaakseen nuoret työntekijät COVID-19 jälkeen ja miten ne voivat paremmin vastata nuorempien sukupolvien toivomaan työtyövoiman tarpeeseen?

Vastaaja: Tämä on erittäin kinkkinen kysymys, koska tota, tässä on niin paljon kaikkea puolia, jotka vaikuttaa tietenkin. No, hmm. Pitää ihan oikeasti miettiä tätä kysymystä. No mitä tulee nyt itellä mieleen tota mistä on ollut oma samanlainen graippi ja semmonen tosi kivi kengässä. Tässä nyt tässä firmassa on ollut se, että kun firmaan astui virkaan niin tota toivotettiin, että dokumentaatio on tosi tärkeätä. Kaikki pitää olla dokumentoituina mitä teet ja kaikki muu on aikasemmin dokumentoitua. Sitten kun firman entiset työntekijät lähtivät pois niin huomattiinkin että ahaa asioita ei olekaan dokumentoitu ja tästä ei ole mitään tietoa ja sen johdosta jouduin itse selvittämään ja itse dokumentoimaan asiat, niin mun mielestä se oli tosi väärä toimintatapa. Tietenkin hyvä, hyvä että he toimittivat minulle, koska minä tein kaiken dokumentaation sitten. Mutta tota you reap what you sow.

Haastattelija: Mut sulle nyt ollut tärkeätä se, että on työnantajan puolesta niin siellä on tietyt asiat, tietyt prosessit oikeastaan kunnossa?.

Vastaaja: Juuri näin.

Haastattelija: Koska tämä tuottaa sulle turhaa periaatteessa turhaa työtä. Koska sä haluat niinkuin keskittyä johonkin muuhun.

Vastaaja: Kyllä, varsinkin jos siitä siitä asiasta sanotaan minulle, että sen pitää olla minun osaltani sitten kunnossa. Jos se ei muiden osalta kunnossa, niin miksi? Miksi on eri säännöt.

Haastattelija: Aivan, elikä tässä puhutaan nyt tasa-arvosta ja tasapuolisuudesta

Vastaaja: Kyllä, tasa-arvoa.

Haastattelija: Eli kaikilta pitää vaatia samoja asioita?

Vastaaja: Kyllä

Haastattelija: Ja eikä myöskään pidä tuhlaa aikaa turhaan, kun sitä aikaa pitää käyttää johonkin järkevään. Ymmärsinkö oikein?

Vastaaja: Just näin.

Haastattelija: Mielenkiintoista. Toi on mielenkiintoinen vastaus. Toi on erittäin mielenkiintoinen vastaus. Missä muussa tapauksessa kun dokumentoinnissa on sun

mielestä hieman turhanpäiväistä? Nyt siis nykyistä työnantajan mollaamatta. Ja siis työnantaja ei siis tietenkään tule tässä esille, kuten ei sun nimikään eikä mitkään muutkaan tiedot. Niin tota niin onko siellä mitään muuta semmosta mitä olet pannut huomiolle? Niin kuin että tää ei välttamatta oikein nyt ole ok. Joko tai niinku tätä pitäisi jollain tavalla kehittää toiseen suuntaan ja tää on semmonen asia mitä välttämättä monet muut jaksais niinkun kuunnella.

Vastaaja: Ehkä just se, että jos prosessit ei oo kunnossa ja sit se, että tavallaan jos asiat luvataan, asioita joita on luvattu niin sit se ois ihan kiva että kaikki jotka ovat siinä prosessissa mukana niin pitäis siitä kiinni. Ja ei, nyt ei puhuta asiakkaista tietenkään, se on vähän eri asia. Mutta siis jos firman sisällä puhutaan niin se ois ihan kiva että kaikki ois, niin sanotusti pistää saman panoksemsa siihen

Haastattelija: Toi on muuten toinen kerta kun mainitsit sanan luvata. Miten tärkeitä sulla on se, että kun työnantaja sanoo jotain, elikä lupaa jotain, niin siitä pidetään sitten myös kiinni niinku kaikissa asioissa?

Vastaaja: Kyl se on. Kyl se on erittäin tärkeää mun mielestä. Koska tota mä tiedän sen itse henkilökohtaisesti, että multa edellytetään tiettyjä asioita ja asioita mitä mä oon luvannut, niin mä pidän niistä kiinni. Niin kyllä pidän sitä erittäin tärkeänä, että vice versa tapahtuu myös.

Haastattelija: No tota, näetkö sä jotain muuta mitä yritysten, ehkä ei välttämättä niinkun sun nykyisen työnantajan, vaan yritysten muutenkin, asioita mitä heidän pitäis tehdä, jotta jotta niinkun sun sukupolven edustajat näkisi nää työpaikat kiinnostavina ja haluaisi olla siellä töissä, mitkä on semmosia asioita? Tää on taas vaikea kysymys [nauraa]. Tää on aika yleistävä juttu, mutta sun oma henkilökohtainen näkökulma.

Vastaaja: Sanotaan näin, että mitä mä oon huomannu. Ainakin niin on totta osassa työpaikoista on erittäin epärealistiset rekryt. Kriteerit on nyt jotenkin paisunut yli äyräiden. Eli jos sanotaan, että entry tason työ entry tason ohjelmistotuotanto työpaikkaa haetaan, niin mun mielestä vaatimuksena ei voi olla yli 3 vuotta kokemusta.

Haastattelija: No tuo hyvä pointti. Toi on taas sitä, että että se luottamus työnantajaan. Tässä oli taannoin tästä uutisissakin näistä asioista. Työpaikka jossa vaadittiin ihan ihmeellisiä asioita. Mut toi on hyvä pointti, toi herättää mielenkiintoa. Mielenkiintoinen pointti on myös se, että kun tuot totuuden mukaan rekrytointiprosessiin, kyllä minusta se myös kuvastaa sitä että se työpaikka vastaa sitä rekrytapahtumaa.

Vastaaja: Kyllä ja sit se, että työtehtävät vastaa sitä kuvausta myös.

Haastateliija: Just noin.

Vastaaja: Vaikkakin tietyssä tapaukset, varsinkin ohjelmistotuotannossa. Niin no ehkä IT alalla yleensäkin niin ne kriteerit ja tavallaan työtehtävät niin ne saattaa muuttua sit myöhemmin. Mutta siis jos entry level paikasta puhutaan niin sit se ois ihan kiva että ois myös realistiset ne työtehtävät.

Haastateliija: Kyllä, hyvä. Kiitos, tää riittää mulle. Mä sammutan tän nauhoituksen nyt.