



# **Exploring Gen Z Preferences for Hybrid Versus In-Office Work in Early Career Roles**

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## **Declaration**

I, Betty Luna Doens, declare that the dissertation titled “Exploring Gen Z Preferences for Hybrid Versus In-Office Work in Early Career Roles” is my own original work and has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree. I confirm that all sources used and quoted have been properly acknowledged and referenced, in accordance with academic norms. This dissertation complies with the Dublin Business School’s academic integrity and ethics guidelines. I further declare that any assistance obtained during the research and writing process has been adequately recognised. This dissertation is submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the Master of Science in Human Resources Management at Dublin Business School.

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## **Abstract**

This study analysed the workplace preferences of Generation Z employees, focusing on hybrid versus in-office work models, and explored the impact of intrinsic motivation, relational support, and organisational alignment on engagement, satisfaction, and retention. Early-career Gen Z individuals were surveyed through the utilisation of a structured survey to obtain insights into their experiences and expectations regarding hybrid work environments. The results demonstrate a pronounced inclination towards hybrid models that integrate autonomy with structured in-person interaction, mentorship, and constructive feedback. Intrinsic motivators, including autonomy, purpose, and competence, were key drivers of engagement, but relational support and alignment with organisational values augmented satisfaction and commitment. Challenges associated with reduced informal interactions and ambiguous work-life boundaries were also identified. The study concludes that organisations can effectively attract, retain, and engage Generation Z by adopting flexible hybrid arrangements that prioritise psychological safety, relational support, and cultural alignment, thus promoting well-being, motivation, and long-term organisational loyalty.

## 1. Introduction

The global workforce is experiencing a generational transformation as Generation Z (born from 1997 to 2012) increasingly enters professional environments. In 2025, this cohort comprises individuals aged 13 to 28 who are in the early stages of their careers (Beresford Research, 2025). In contrast to earlier generations, Gen Z exhibits different workplace expectations, prioritising flexibility, autonomy, mental health support, and prospects for swift professional development (Waworuntu et al., 2022; Anggapradja & Marianti, 2024). The shifting priorities create both opportunities and challenges for human resource management (HRM), especially in the design and management of hybrid and in-office work arrangements.

The COVID-19 pandemic hastened the implementation of hybrid work models, compelling organisations to reevaluate conventional methods of collaboration, performance management, and organisational culture. Previous generations frequently esteemed long-term job security and hierarchical frameworks, whereas Gen Z prioritises autonomy, psychological safety, and trust (Jancourt, 2020; Aggarwal et al., 2020). Companies that do not fulfil these expectations may experience elevated turnover, diminished engagement, and difficulties in attracting high-potential talent (Desai, 2018; Osorio & Madero, 2024). Despite the significant increase in research on remote and hybrid work since the pandemic, much of the literature predominantly addresses the general workforce or experienced employees. Empirical evidence regarding the specific experiences and preferences of early-career Gen Z employees is relatively scarce. Current research predominantly investigates general trends in job satisfaction and retention (Kalyanamitra et al., 2020; Memon et al., 2010) without analysing the impact of work model preferences on these outcomes for this generation during its early career phase. This deficiency in focused insight constrains HR leaders' ability to develop customised retention and engagement strategies. Rectifying this deficiency is essential.

Comprehending Gen Z's work model preferences and their correlation with job satisfaction, perceived organisational support, and retention intention can guide HR policies that enhance employee well-being and organisational efficacy. Saraiva and Nogueiro (2025), utilising the Job Demands-Resources model and Self-Determination Theory, underscore that unfulfilled needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness lead to disengagement, especially among younger employees. Failure to address these needs may lead to increased turnover, decreased morale, and reduced productivity.

This study therefore examines the workplace model preferences of Generation Z employees in entry-level positions, concentrating on hybrid versus fully in-office arrangements. It explores the determinants affecting these preferences and assesses their influence on job satisfaction and retention intentions. The study focuses on Gen Z employees aged 21 to 28, possessing one to three years of post-graduate work experience, who are currently employed in hybrid or in-office environments.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

01. What are the preferences of Generation Z employees about hybrid versus in-office work arrangements for entry-level roles?
02. What factors influence these preferences, and how do they affect job satisfaction and perceived organisational support?
03. What is the relationship between work model preferences and the retention intentions of Generation Z employees towards their current employer?

The importance of this study resides in its potential to tackle a critical organisational issue. With Gen Z anticipated to constitute over 30% of the global workforce in the forthcoming years (Osorio & Madero, 2024), understanding their workplace expectations can assist businesses in improving engagement, minimising turnover, and establishing a competitive edge. The results will be especially relevant for high-turnover industries such as advertising, marketing, and technology, where organisational culture and adaptability are crucial for talent retention.

Following this introduction, this dissertation is structured as follows: The Literature Review analyses prior research on Generation Z's work values, hybrid and in-office work configurations, and employee retention. The Theoretical Framework introduces Self-Determination Theory as the lens for analysing the motives of Generation Z. The Methodology outlines the research design, sampling method, and data analysis procedures. The Results chapter presents the survey findings, followed by the Discussion, which interprets them within the framework of existing research and practical implications. The Conclusion summarises the key findings, while the Recommendations section outlines HR strategies aimed at enhancing Gen Z satisfaction and retention. Supplementary materials, including the Reference List and Appendices, are provided at the end.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Introduction to the Literature Review**

The arrival of Generation Z (born approximately 1995-2010) in the workforce has compelled organisations to evaluate traditional work models. Gen Z employees, as digital natives, emphasise flexibility, purpose-driven roles, and continuous professional growth (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021; Mărginean, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic expedited the adoption of hybrid work, increased focus on well-being, and transformed organisational culture (Osorio & Madero, 2024; Chomałowska & Janiak-Rejno, 2022). Hybrid models combine the advantages of remote and in-person work; however, studies indicate that preferences differ based on career stage, role, and personal circumstances. This review analyses the literature regarding Generation Z's work expectations, emphasising hybrid arrangements and their implications for talent acquisition, retention, and workplace design.

### **Gen Z Preferences and the Hybrid Work Model**

Generation Z, the latest cohort in the workforce, demonstrates a pronounced preference for hybrid work models that emphasise flexibility, autonomy, and work-life integration (Bulut & Maraba, 2021; Osorio & Madero, 2024). While remote work is valued, in-person interaction is essential for social connection, mentorship, and early career development (Mărginean, 2021; Chomałowska & Janiak-Rejno, 2022). Well-designed physical spaces that support collaboration, feedback, and informal learning are important. Furthermore, Generation Z prefers hybrid work arrangements in both corporate and entrepreneurial contexts, highlighting their desire for autonomy and compatibility with organisational culture.

Businesses should implement flexible models that integrate the collaborative advantages of in-person work with the autonomy provided by remote options to attract and retain this demographic (Bulut & Maraba, 2021; Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021; Osorio & Madero, 2024). Hybrid environments must promote inclusivity and learning by providing social spaces in addition to areas designed for focused tasks (Mărginean, 2021).

The observed patterns closely correspond with the fundamental values of Generation Z, including purpose, flexibility, development, and career advancement. Roles that provide meaningful work, opportunities for advancement, and explicit feedback are especially attractive (Mabaso & Manuel, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the integration of hybrid work, transforming organisational frameworks and expectations. What started as a temporary measure has evolved into a permanent change, closely aligned with the values of autonomy and flexibility characteristic of Generation Z (Lawrence Xavier & Porwal, 2024). Xavier and Porwal (2024)'s study lacks comprehensive methodological details, including sample size and statistical analysis. As a student project, its generalisability and rigour are limited. The research provides valuable insights into hybrid work practices and their significance for younger employees, despite existing limitations.

Research grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlights that intrinsic motivators such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, are significant predictors of engagement among Gen Z employees. Nwoko and Yazdani (2023) found that intrinsic rewards, including meaningful work and personal growth, are prioritised by this cohort over extrinsic incentives such as financial compensation. Hybrid models facilitate engagement by addressing these intrinsic needs. This next section explores the evolution of hybrid work post-pandemic to contextualise the preferences of Generation Z.

The COVID-19 pandemic expedited the adoption of hybrid models, transforming organisational frameworks and employee anticipations. A crisis response has evolved into a lasting transformation in work practices and locations, notably aligning with Generation Z's values of autonomy and flexibility (Lawrence Xavier & Porwal, 2024).

### **The Evolution of Hybrid Work Models Post-Pandemic**

The global shift to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic catalysed the widespread adoption of hybrid work models, as employees increasingly demanded flexibility in time and location (Krajčák, Schmidt and Barath, 2023). While originally implemented as a crisis response, hybrid arrangements have gained prominence as a permanent solution, offering advantages such as increased productivity, reduced commuting, and greater autonomy. However, they also present challenges including blurred work-life boundaries and reduced opportunities for social interaction (Krajčák, Schmidt and Barath, 2023). Cross-cultural studies in regions such as Slovakia and Kuwait highlight the importance of aligning hybrid work designs with employee preferences to enhance satisfaction and organisational resilience. Together, these broader developments in workplace flexibility create a foundational context for understanding the specific preferences of Generation Z employees as they enter early career roles. These developments help explain why Gen Z early-career workers lean more towards hybrid models.

### **Gen Z Workplace Preferences and the Shift Toward Hybrid Models**

As Generation Z becomes a larger proportion of the global workforce, their expectations around flexibility, mental well-being, and autonomy are reshaping organisational strategies. Gen Z employees show a strong preference for hybrid working models that support work-life balance and offer control over when and where they work (Osorio and Madero, 2024).

In response, employers are rethinking their physical and cultural workplace environments, prioritising elements such as mindfulness, collaboration, and inclusivity to appeal to Gen Z's values (Pataki-Bittó and Kapusy, 2021; Jancourt, 2020). These employees also seek environments that support personal connection, technology, integration, and a sense of place, factors that contribute to satisfaction and engagement (Knapp et al., 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for adaptive work models, further highlighting the importance of employee well-being and enterprise-wide learning (Jancourt, 2020). With Gen Z expected to comprise 30% of the workforce by 2030, aligning workplace models with their preferences is crucial for effective talent retention and performance (Jancourt, 2020).

A recent study by Aggarwal et al. (2020) examined Gen Z's workplace behaviour and discovered that various HR policies significantly impacted job satisfaction and organisational commitment. These included adaptable work arrangements, rewards and recognition frameworks, salary and benefits, and feedback-seeking behaviours. Job satisfaction was identified as a mediator in the association between these HR practices and both task performance and affective commitment, underscoring its pivotal role in influencing workplace outcomes. Contrary to expectations, digital innovation and career development did not substantially affect job satisfaction, likely due to Gen Z's ongoing career exploration phase rather of a long-term commitment (Aggarwal et al., 2020).

### **Generation Z and Remote Work: Ambivalence & Adaptation**

Generation Z, the first true digital-native generation, commenced their professional careers amid the COVID-19 pandemic, thus encountering remote work as the standard rather than option (Chomałowska & Janiak-Rejno, 2022). As a result, numerous young employees swiftly acclimated and indicated stable or enhanced productivity.

Nevertheless, they encountered obstacles, including reduced interpersonal engagement, restricted mentorship prospects, and extended screen exposure. This combination of favourable and unfavourable experiences highlights their ambivalence regarding remote work: they appreciate flexibility and autonomy, while simultaneously desiring in-person interaction to foster professional development and organisational cohesion (Chomałowska & Janiak-Rejno, 2022).

In response to these varied preferences, hybrid work models provide a pragmatic solution, reconciling remote flexibility with opportunities for in-person interaction. By acknowledging and addressing the specific needs of Generation Z, organisations can improve retention, satisfaction, and long-term performance among their youngest workforce (Chomałowska & Janiak-Rejno, 2022). Given Generation Z's mixed experiences with remote work and their distinct demands for flexibility, businesses are progressively implementing hybrid work models. These models have the ability to accommodate diverse employee requirements while sustaining productivity; however, they also present novel challenges and risks that necessitate meticulous management and strategic planning.

### **The Rise of Hybrid Work: Risks & Opportunities**

To mitigate the limitations of entirely remote work while avoiding a return to conventional office structures, organisations have progressively adopted hybrid models. Research indicates a wide array of advantages linked to hybrid employment, such as increased flexibility, heightened concentration, better work-life balance, and elevated job satisfaction (Albreiki et al., 2023; Lawrence Xavier and Porwal, 2024). These characteristics notably attract Gen Z employees who prioritise autonomy, digital proficiency, and purpose-oriented involvement.

However, hybrid models present distinct challenges. Williams and Shaw (2024) and Bhauryal (2024) highlight that reduced informal connection, high performance expectations, and the potential for burnout stemming from indistinct boundaries are critical issues. Furthermore, the implementation of hybrid models is more complex than that of fully remote or completely in-office systems. Optimal hybrid arrangements necessitate a strong technological infrastructure, clearly articulated communication techniques, and inclusive collaborative behaviours. Although preliminary research indicates favourable results for hybrid work settings, academics warn that the enduring effects on productivity and performance assessment are yet uncertain.

Bhauryal (2024) emphasises the necessity for additional empirical research to guide evidence-based design and management of hybrid work practices. The research conducted by Mabaso and Manuel (2024) substantiates this perspective, emphasising that digital oversight may erode trust and exacerbate nuanced types of micromanagement. Although technology facilitates accountability, excessive dependence may undermine morale and the perception of autonomy.

### **Bridging Gen Z Needs with Hybrid Work Design**

This section will explore a theoretical framework, specifically Self-Determination Theory (SDT), to understand why hybrid models are popular among Generation Z. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), serves as a valuable framework for understanding Generation Z's involvement in hybrid work. This motivational theory emphasises the importance of fulfilling three essential psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Importantly, hybrid models can be deliberately constructed to fulfill these requirements.

The inherent flexibility of hybrid work promotes autonomy; organised development and feedback systems improve competence; and intentional in-person collaboration cultivates relatedness. To expand upon this theoretical foundation, Nwoko and Yazdani (2023) experimentally substantiate this application of Self-Determination Theory, revealing that intrinsic motivators such as meaningful work, skill enhancement, and relational connection, are significantly more predictive of Generation Z's engagement than extrinsic rewards. These insights offer a theoretical foundation for the strategic development of hybrid work models customised for younger employees. In other words, integrating these insights demonstrates the potential of hybrid work to reconcile Gen Z's preferences with organisational goals. Generation Z desires independence, adaptability, and purposeful employment, all fundamental attributes of hybrid models. However, the disadvantages of entirely remote work – such as reduced social learning, absence of mentorship, and feelings of isolation – can be alleviated through purposeful in-person interaction.

Therefore, a meticulously crafted hybrid model, such as three-day in-office and two-day remote arrangement, may provide the balance that Gen Z seeks: flexibility without alienation, and autonomy without disconnection. These environments enable strategic planning for collaborative efforts, onboarding, and social engagement, hence enhancing cohesion and facilitating knowledge transfer (Albreiki et al., 2023; Lawrence Xavier and Porwal, 2024).

From this, it is evident that from a managerial standpoint, hybrid work necessitates a reconfiguration of leadership, communication, and assessment systems. To effectively support Gen Z, organisations must invest in user-friendly digital tools, transparent goal-setting, regular feedback mechanisms, and equal development and advancement opportunities (Williams and Shaw, 2024; Osorio and Madero, 2024).

## **Learning, Mentorship, and Career Development in Hybrid Contexts**

For Generation Z, effective learning and career development are essential elements of job satisfaction and long-term retention. Specifically, studies indicate that Generation Z employees prefer interactive, technology-driven learning environments that provide consistent feedback, collaborative experiences, and organised possibilities for development (Naim, 2021). Strategies including gamification, information dissemination, and contemporary mentoring frameworks encompassing reverse mentoring, group mentoring, and peer mentoring, have demonstrated notable engagement for this demographic (Capello and Al-Khashti, 2020; Saxena, 2023). These strategies facilitate skill learning while fostering a sense of belonging and recognition.

Furthermore, in project-based companies, tailored support systems, including adaptable workloads, readily available mentoring, and allocated time for training, are crucial for facilitating the success of young professionals (Borg et al., 2023). Thus, when organisations synchronise their learning and development plans with the preferences of Generation Z, they not only augment employee engagement but also secure enhanced workforce sustainability (Naim, 2021; Borg et al., 2023). In hybrid work environments, where informal learning is less spontaneous, systematic mentoring and digital learning platforms are essential for sustaining developmental progress and enhancing organisational commitment. Beyond development and learning, performance management significantly influences Gen Z's experience in hybrid environments.

## **Performance Management and Trust in Hybrid Work**

As mentioned in the previous section, in hybrid contexts, performance management is essential for Generation Z employees, especially those in early-career roles, due to the importance of trust, transparency, and regular feedback. According to research, Gen Z prioritises participatory leadership styles that encourage growth and transparent communication over hierarchical evaluation systems (Mabaso & Manuel, 2024). In order to maintain motivation and commitment, performance frameworks that are effective in hybrid environments must prioritise relational trust and consistent feedback loops. However, Agostino and Arnaboldi (2015) and Rajala et al. (2021) have observed that traditional performance systems, which are often based on New Public Management, are unable to accommodate remote and hybrid teams, which may compromise collective objectives and unity. Gen Z is notably affected by these issues, as they depend on mentorship and collaborative feedback in the absence of physical proximity. Companies are more likely to retain younger talent when trust is integrated into performance expectations and aligned with opportunities for learning.

Nwoko and Yazdani (2023) argue that the engagement of Gen Z is limited by extrinsic motivators or rigorous control. Rather, intrinsic factors, including autonomy, meaningful work, and opportunities for growth, are more predictive of performance and satisfaction. This is particularly crucial in early career positions, where retention can be significantly influenced by alignment with purpose and continuous development opportunities. Accordingly, a compelling approach to engaging this generation is provided by participatory performance systems that emphasise relational support, skill recognition, and autonomy. To be effective in hybrid environments, performance management must encompass more than just monitoring outcomes.

It must also incorporate customised support structures that cater to the motivational requirements of younger employees. The efficacy of hybrid models is contingent upon interpersonal and psychological factors, as well as technology itself, as emphasised by scholars such as Chomałowska and Janiak-Rejno (2022), Bhauryal (2024), and Williams and Shaw (2024). These performance considerations coincide with overarching workplace preferences related to structure, stability, and environment.

### **Work Preferences and Environment**

Mărginean (2021) discovered that Generation Z prioritises job security, financial stability, and positions inside larger, established organisations, indicating a cautious approach to career development, especially in light of the economic uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Start-ups and entrepreneurial roles were regarded unfavourably due to perceived volatility. The study indicated that over 60% of participants favoured hybrid work models, whereas merely 9% selected entirely remote positions, implying that despite their digital proficiency, Generation Z appreciates physical structure and presence. In terms of workplace design, 47% favoured enclosed offices, while just 16% preferred open or co-working spaces, reflecting a need for autonomy, concentration, and a distinction between social and professional settings.

### **Social Connection, Mentorship and Feedback**

Contrary to clichés depicting Gen Z as socially disengaged because of their extensive internet usage, Mărginean's (2021) findings reveal a profound appreciation for human interaction and relational authenticity in the workplace. Approximately 74% of respondents identified camaraderie with coworkers as an unimportant factor of working satisfaction, whereas 85% emphasised the necessity of feeling secure in expressing themselves candidly.

This focus on psychological safety and emotional transparency shows that Generation Z prioritises emotionally intelligent leadership and inclusive environments. Moreover, the significance of mentorship and systematic coaching was stated: 46% deemed having a mentor as “extremely important,” while 62% prioritised encouragement over scolding following mistakes. These findings illustrate Gen Z’s aspiration for constructive responsibility; they demand the opportunity to develop through experimentation, however within a framework that encompasses affirmation, guidance, and feedback mechanisms. The emphasis on encouragement and transparency corresponds with existing literature indicating that Generation Z prefers sympathetic, coaching-oriented management rather than strict hierarchical oversight (Mărginean, 2021).

### **Career Progression, Learning and Impact**

Opportunities for learning and job progression are significant motivators for Generation Z, with 94% of respondents affirming that access to training and development is either “important” or “extremely important” (Mărginean, 2021). This reflects broader research indicating Gen Z’s pronounced focus on upskilling, especially in rapidly evolving digital work environments. Recognition is vital, with 87% indicating that acknowledgement of accomplishments is a priority, reflecting a yearning for both advancement and affirmation. In addition to advancement, participants underscored the importance of congruence between their professional and personal values, over 80% reported that the ability to express individuality and creativity via their job was essential. Moreover, 61% expressed a desire to “make an impact” in their roles, highlighting the significance of purpose-oriented employment. These findings demonstrate that Gen Z desires employment that provides personal development, recognition, and significant impact, elements that influence their preferences for hybrid or in-office.

### **Professional Prospects and Lifelong Learning**

A significant percentage of Gen Z respondents foresee employment with two to six different employers throughout their careers, with 50% also anticipating a shift in job types within that period (Mărginean, 2021). These findings indicate a pragmatic and adaptable mindset, wherein non-linear career paths are not perceived negatively but are instead embraced as integral to meaningful development. Job mobility is perceived as a method for growth, learning, and adaptation rather than an indication of instability.

In addition, a strong emphasis on lifelong learning highlights this generational perspective, with participants acknowledging the necessity of continually enhancing their abilities in light of digital transformation, automation, and changing industry requirements. Mărginean (2021) argues that this mentality requires organisational talent strategies that facilitate internal mobility, ongoing growth, and flexible career trajectories, essential elements for attracting and maintaining Generation Z in hybrid or in-office positions.

### **Comparison between Gen Y and Z on Workplace Preferences and Motivational Factors**

Research conducted by Baša et al. (2023) reveals that both Generation Y and Generation Z value flexibility in work arrangements; however, Generation Z exhibiting a more pronounced preference for changeable schedules, merely one-third endorse fixed hours. This highlights the increasing desire for hybrid models that support work-life balance and autonomy. Although both generations prioritise motivational aspects such as remuneration, recognition, and a favourable work environment, Gen Z places a heightened focus on creative autonomy and global mobility, thereby reflecting their desire for roles that correspond with personal beliefs and lifestyle flexibility.

Notably, Gen Z demonstrates a heightened interest in smaller or private enterprises, contradicting previous conclusions that linked them to a preference for huge firms. These changes accentuate the changing expectations of Gen Z, reinforcing the necessity for hybrid models that integrate autonomy, purpose, and developmental chances.

### **Employee Motivation and Disengagement**

Saraiva and Nogueiro (2025) delineate various structural and psychological factors contributing to disengagement in Generations Y and Z. These encompass heavy workloads, rigid work arrangements, economic uncertainty, job instability, and organisational transformation. Furthermore, disengagement arises from insufficient leadership, absence of involvement in decision-making, ineffective communication, and perceived inequities in performance rating systems. The authors highlight that disengagement is reinforced when employees' own beliefs, such as sustainability and social responsibility, are incongruent with the organisation's culture.

### **Recent Research Developments on Gen Z and Hybrid Work**

The comprehension of Generation Z's workplace preferences has been significantly enhanced by recent research, particularly in the context of early career roles and hybrid work environments. However, Osorio and Madero (2024) emphasise that Generation Z prioritises flexible work arrangements and work-life balance, with their inclination towards hybrid models influenced by both autonomy and pragmatic factors such as infrastructure, office facilities, and possibilities for social interaction. Similarly, Katsaros (2025) demonstrates that inclusive leadership markedly improves the creativity and adaptive performance of Gen Z employees in hybrid environments, suggesting that leadership style directly affects both job satisfaction and performance outcomes.

Moreover, Gen Z seeks job security and secure employment, typically inside major organisations, although they also demonstrate a strong preference for informal environments that align with their personal interests and values (Mărginean, 2021). This paradox indicates that employers must create hybrid environments that reconcile structure with freedom of expression. Despite becoming digital natives, Gen Z continually expresses a desire for mentorship, interpersonal connection, and psychological safety, valuing circumstances that allow for the open expression of thoughts and the receipt of guidance and encouragement (Mărginean, 2021). In accordance with this, Pataki-Bittó and Kapusy (2021) assert that companies seeking to recruit and retain Gen Z talent must adopt hybrid working models that align with this generation's ideals, such as flexibility, meaningful work, and workplace inclusiveness. These observations therefore emphasise the necessity of formulating hybrid policies that transcend logistical issues to encompass relational, motivational, and cultural requirements.

### **Equity, Psychological Safety, and Environmental Design in Hybrid Work for Generation Z**

Recent studies highlight the ability of hybrid work models to address the general preferences of Generation Z and the specific requirements of marginalised groups within this demographic. For instance, Hybrid arrangements can improve focus, independence, and health provisions for neurodivergent, LGBTQIA+, and disabled Gen Z employees, thereby promoting inclusiveness and enhancing overall well-being (de Souza Santos et al., 2024). These findings align with Generation Z's prioritisation of flexibility, personalisation, and autonomy in configuring their work environments (Osorio & Madero, 2024).

Building on this, Jancourt (2020) contends that this generation places greater value on psychological safety than physical safety, desiring emotionally secure environments that foster respect and empower decision-making. Moreover, Generation Z values aesthetics, comfort, and a connection to nature in workspace design, perceiving these elements as both practical and reflective of their personality. When meticulously executed, hybrid models can provide surroundings that uphold Gen Z's fundamental values: well-being, authenticity, and lifestyle congruence (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021; Osorio & Madero, 2024).

Taken together, these observations indicate that to recruit and retain Gen Z talent, particularly from marginalised groups, companies must transcend flexible hours and prioritise inclusive, psychologically secure, and ergonomically helpful hybrid settings. Environmental design is closely related to the broader topic of work flexibility and its consequences for retention.

### **Generation Z's Workplace Flexibility Preferences and Implications for Retention**

Elaborating on the concept of flexibility, Adams-Harmon, Lewis, and Ah (2024) offer valuable insights into Generation Z's expectations for flexibility in early-career roles. The study discovered that Gen Z participants define flexibility as the ability to work remotely when necessary, manage their own schedules, and maintain work-life balance, using a mixed-method approach. Flexibility was perceived by female respondents as a sign that the employer "values the lives of their employees outside of work" and "treats their employees as human beings" among online students, who are frequently representative of early-career hybrid workers. These perspectives are consistent with the concept of perceived organisational support, which posits that adaptability considerably improves engagement, morale, and satisfaction.

Additionally, gendered interpretations of flexibility were identified in the research. Male respondents affiliated it more with personal autonomy and independence, while female participants frequently associated it with managing caregiving and domestic duties. This distinction emphasises that flexibility is not solely a logistical feature; it is also influenced by more extensive social and cultural dynamics. Notwithstanding these nuances, both groups concurred that flexible arrangements boost productivity, trust, and loyalty, despite these nuances. The increasing expectation that hybrid options are standard in entry-level positions is reflected in the statement made by one participant, “if you are not adaptable, people will not work for you.” It is crucial to note that the study investigated the intersection of structural inequality and flexibility. It found that prominent companies had less diverse employment practices and offered hybrid options less frequently.

The authors contend that the absence of flexible work options in such circumstances can exacerbate stress and decrease retention among Gen Z employees from marginalised backgrounds, basing their argument on Minority Stress Theory. Therefore, the implication for HR is evident: flexibility is no longer a benefit; it is a critical component of employer branding, inclusion, and retention. A key element of any strategy designed to attract and support Generation Z should be equitable access to hybrid and remote work.

### **The Role & Potential of Hybrid Work Preferences Among Generation Z**

Further emphasising the importance of adaptability, Generation Z’s strong preference for hybrid work, especially among early-career professionals, is underscored by recent findings from the Evolution of the Labour Market Organisation (2023). In a survey of 470 students aged 21-25 from 11 countries, 68% indicated a clear preference for hybrid arrangements over fully remote or office-based models.

This decision reflects Gen Z's proficiency in digital technologies and their consistent utilisation of mobile devices, which contribute to their ability to acclimate to flexible work environments. This preference is associated with several key advantages of hybrid work, including increased autonomy, reduced commuting time and costs, and improved work-life balance, all of which contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction and productivity, as the study demonstrates.

During a period of accelerated digital transformation and post-pandemic change, these factors are particularly pertinent for Gen Z workers who are entering the labour market. Furthermore, the transition to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has fortified the digital resilience of Gen Z and influenced their expectations for flexible workplace models. Despite the widespread acceptance of hybrid work, the study recognises the persistent challenges associated with maintaining motivation and cultivating social connections, which are particularly critical for the development of early-career professionals and their long-term retention. Lastly, the research identifies broader implications for workforce planning, pointing out that Gen Z's openness to international relocation (63%) provides employers with expanded recruitment opportunities, provided that hybrid roles are accessible. Nevertheless, in order to effectively implement this paradigm, organisations must assure the presence of dependable digital infrastructure and supportive communication systems. This growing demand prompts reflections on how cultural values and workplace standards influence expectations.

## **Gen Z's Work Preferences & Cultural Considerations**

Alongside structural concerns, recent research highlights Gen Z's strong preference for hybrid work arrangements, which is primarily motivated by their aspirations for social engagement, enhanced work-life balance, and flexibility (Osorio & Madero, 2024). These preferences reflect deeper generational values, which combine informal, purpose-driven roles with employment security and financial stability (Mărginean, 2021).

Pataki-Bittó and Kapusy (2021) introduce a work value model that emphasises the importance of flexible work structures and visually enticing physical environments in attracting post-pandemic Gen Z talent. These results indicate that hybrid work is not a temporary trend, but rather an enduring transformation that is consistent with the workplace values of Generation Z. Despite the fact that certain scholars have identified cultural disparities in leadership expectations (Zehetner et al., 2022), these factors may be secondary unless they are fundamental to the study. In general, it is essential to comprehend the preferences of Gen Z in order to develop HR strategies that improve job satisfaction and retention. This is linked to leadership expectations, which differ markedly across cultural contexts.

## **Cultural Influences on Gen Z's Leadership Expectations**

The cultural context profoundly influences Generation Z's expectations for leadership, affecting both perceived organisational support and overall job satisfaction. Zehetner et al. (2022) performed a cross-cultural analysis of Generation Z employees in Ukraine and Austria, demonstrating that leadership preferences are significantly influenced by cultural values including collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance.

Ukrainian respondents, originating from a post-Soviet, high power-distance environment, favoured structured, change-oriented leadership, while Austrian participants preferred employee-centered leadership consistent with individualistic values. Both groups prioritised non-monetary transactional incentives, such as recognition and constructive feedback, rather than financial rewards or punitive measures.

However, the study conducted by Zehetner et al. (2022) possesses limitations. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference, and the sample sizes for each country were comparatively small, which raises concerns regarding generalisability. Furthermore, although the study emphasises national cultural influences, it neglects to consider organisational culture, which may occasionally moderate cultural norms (Westover, 2024). Integrating findings from various studies, these results correspond with Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and extensive research indicating that culturally attuned leadership improves employee engagement and retention (Jancourt, 2020; Vieira et al., 2024). Nonetheless, further research is required to examine the interplay between cultural factors and hybrid work models, as well as organisational practices in multinational contexts, a void this dissertation aims to fill. Understanding these cultural nuances is essential for designing HR strategies that accommodate diverse Gen Z workforces. In hybrid environments, leadership strategies must reconcile structured guidance for high power-distance contexts with autonomy-supportive practices for individualistic cultures.

### **Retention and Recruitment Strategies for Gen Z in a Hybrid Work Environment**

Considering these preferences, organisations are increasingly adapting workplace practices to align with the values of Generation Z employees to attract and retain them.

Flexibility, professional advancement, and social impact are key considerations, leading to the implementation of hybrid models, tailored work experiences, and ongoing educational opportunities (Westover, 2024; Siagian & Anisa, 2024). In sectors such as the built environment, hybrid configurations that integrate fieldwork with office-based activities are becoming increasingly prevalent (Ling & Lew, 2024).

Moreover, workplaces are undergoing restructuring, both in terms of physical layout and cultural dynamics in order to promote mindfulness, collaboration, and a sense of belonging, hence enhancing engagement (Knapp et al., 2017). Westover (2024) observes Generation Z distinguishes itself from prior generations by prioritising flexibility, knowledge, and social impact over stability and loyalty. As a result, organisations have adopted mentorship programs, hybrid work models, and purpose-oriented positions to enhance employee retention. Case studies from Deloitte, Kickstarter, and Chobani show that aligning organisational frameworks with Generation Z values diminishes attrition and boosts engagement. Traditional 9-5 work models are progressively regarded as obsolete. Research shows that hybrid and remote work models, when combined with outcome-oriented performance assessments, improves employee engagement and retention (Lyons et al., 2019; Morgan, 2020).

Companies such as Deloitte and Patagonia have engaged in development and purpose-driven programs, highlighting the necessity for strategic modifications to attract and retain Gen Z talent. Furthermore, inclusion issues, especially for neurodivergent employees, are becoming increasingly important in developing effective hybrid policies.

## **Motivations behind Gen Z's Workplace Preferences: Remote Work, Work-life Balance, and Well-being**

While remote employment is appealing to Generation Z due to its flexibility and autonomy, recent research uncovers a more complex reality. Generation Z employees adeptly adapted to remote work models during the COVID-19 pandemic and often consider them superior (Chomałowska & Janiak-Rejno, 2022). Nonetheless, many individuals value the potential benefits of in-person employment, especially at the start of their careers, which contributes to the rising popularity of hybrid work models. This indicates that Gen Z's preferences cannot be simplified to a dichotomy of remote versus office work, but instead reflect a quest for equilibrium between autonomy and interpersonal growth. Disengagement within Gen Z often stems from incongruent organisational practices, particularly concerning flexible scheduling, well-being support, and leadership effectiveness (Saraiva & Nogueiro, 2025). These findings underscore the importance of structural flexibility, while also revealing the relational paradox of hybrid work: flexibility can augment autonomy but concurrently diminish opportunities for trust-building and mentorship. This duality highlights why hybrid work is often considered the "compromise model" for balancing autonomy and connectivity.

Robak's (2023) Polish study provides additional complexity, revealing both favourable and unfavourable sentiments regarding remote employment. Respondents noted improvements in autonomy, work comfort, and stress alleviation; however, they expressed significant dissatisfaction regarding the impact of remote work on relationships with supervisors and colleagues. Significantly, over fifty percent of participants indicated a preference for future in-office employment, despite recognising the personal advantages of remote work arrangements.

When juxtaposed with other European findings, this highlights that Gen Z's work model preferences are influenced not solely by logistical factors but also by developmental and relational requirements. Furthermore, demographic differences further complicate the narrative. Robak (2023) indicated that men reported heightened satisfaction with autonomy and work-life balance, whereas women articulated apprehensions regarding weakened relational dynamics and escalated domestic pressures. Likewise, non-managerial employees indicated greater stress relief than managerial staff, implying that hybrid and remote work models may place an undue burden on leaders tasked with maintaining team cohesion. These findings suggest that generational analysis alone is inadequate; gendered and hierarchical disparities substantially influence workplace preferences.

Collectively, these studies illustrate that although Generation Z prioritises autonomy and flexibility, these preferences must be contextualised within relational and situational factors. The outcome is not a singular approval of remote work, but a varied array of expectations influenced by career stage, gender, role, and cultural context. This complexity emphasises the necessity for HR strategies that are both generationally informed and customised to diverse employee situations, ensuring that hybrid models accommodate both structural and psychological requirements.

### **Gen Z focused HR insights**

The entry of Generation Z (born 1997-2012) in the workforce has led to notable transformations in organisational strategies regarding talent management and employer branding (EB). Generation Z, as digital natives, prioritises purpose-driven employment, flexible work environments, ongoing professional development, and alignment with ethical standards, set by employers (Vieira, Gomes & Santos, 2024).

These expectations pose a challenge to traditional talent management frameworks, which typically prioritise stability and long-term loyalty, characteristics that are less prevalent among Gen Z employees.

In a systematic literature review employing the PRISMA method, Vieira et al. (2024) identified that Generation Z demonstrates comparatively low brand loyalty, particularly during the initial stages of their careers. Career choices are significantly shaped by factors such as organisational culture, support for mental well-being, opportunities for growth, and sustainability initiatives. For Generation Z, employer branding prioritises authentic values and practices over corporate image, emphasising inclusivity, transparency, and social responsibility. However, the study indicates that Generation Z increasingly anticipates hybrid or flexible work arrangements and prioritises mental health initiatives and authentic leadership. Recruitment channels are also affected by these expectations; digital presence and peer-recommendation platforms, such as LinkedIn and Glassdoor, play an important role in shaping Gen Z's perceptions of employers.

Furthermore, the study highlights the necessity of aligning talent management practices with Generation Z's requirements for fast feedback, individualised development plans, and flexible career progression. Companies that do not provide these are more prone to early turnover, especially during the initial six months of employment. Despite the abundance of accessible research, current literature offers a fragmented understanding of this cohort. Vieira et al. (2024) advocate for further empirical research to explore how employer branding and talent management strategies can be customised across various industries and job functions.

Their findings reinforce the necessity for organisations to reconsider both the work environments for Gen Z (e.g., hybrid versus office) and the strategies for their engagement and retention. Together, these findings support the idea that hybrid models should address both structural and psychological needs.

### **Conclusion on Literature**

The reviewed literature highlights the growing significance of hybrid work models in satisfying the distinct workplace preferences of Generation Z. In numerous studies, hybrid arrangements are identified as a critical enabler of flexibility, autonomy, and work-life balance, which are highly valued by Gen Z employees (Osorio & Madero, 2024; Adams-Harmon et al., 2024; Evolution of the Labour Market Organisation, 2023).

Importantly, flexibility is not solely a logistical consideration; it is also intricately linked to social and cultural factors, such as gendered disparities in its perception and experience. This nuanced comprehension underscores the importance of hybrid work policies that are designed to accommodate the distinct circumstances of each individual. Additionally enhancing this discussion, De Souza Santos et al. (2024) have also identified psychological safety and well-being as central to Gen Z's engagement and retention. They have a preference for emotionally secure and inclusive work environments that respect individuality and foster autonomy (Jancourt, 2020). Additionally, the value that Gen Z places on authenticity and lifestyle congruence is reinforced by the fact that workspace design that reflects personal identity and connection to nature contributes to employee contentment (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021).

The literature emphasises the importance of organisational culture and employer branding in the recruitment and retention of Gen Z talent. This cohort prioritises transparent leadership practices, ongoing professional development, mental health support, and purpose-driven work (Westover, 2024; Vieira et al., 2024). It is crucial to note that engagement and loyalty are significantly influenced by perceptions of organisational support, including adaptability in work arrangements, particularly during the early phases of a career. Moreover, the leadership expectations and workplace preferences of Gen Z are further influenced by the cultural context, which requires HR strategies that are adaptable and sensitive to local values and norms (Zehetner et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated Gen Z's readiness for hybrid models, while also emphasising the importance of addressing challenges related to social connection and motivation in order to achieve successful workforce integration (Evolution of the Labour Market Organisation, 2023; Robak, 2023).

In general, the literature suggests that hybrid work is not a transient trend, but rather a transformative approach that is consistent with the values and expectations of Generation Z. In order to effectively recruit and retain Gen Z employees, companies must establish HR strategies that are culturally aware, comprehensive, and flexible. These strategies should incorporate psychological safety, inclusivity, and meaningful work experiences. Future research is required to investigate these dynamics across a variety of industries and demographic groups, to provide additional empirical evidence to customise hybrid work models to the changing requirements of the workforce.

### **3. Theoretical Frameworks**

#### 3.1 Introduction

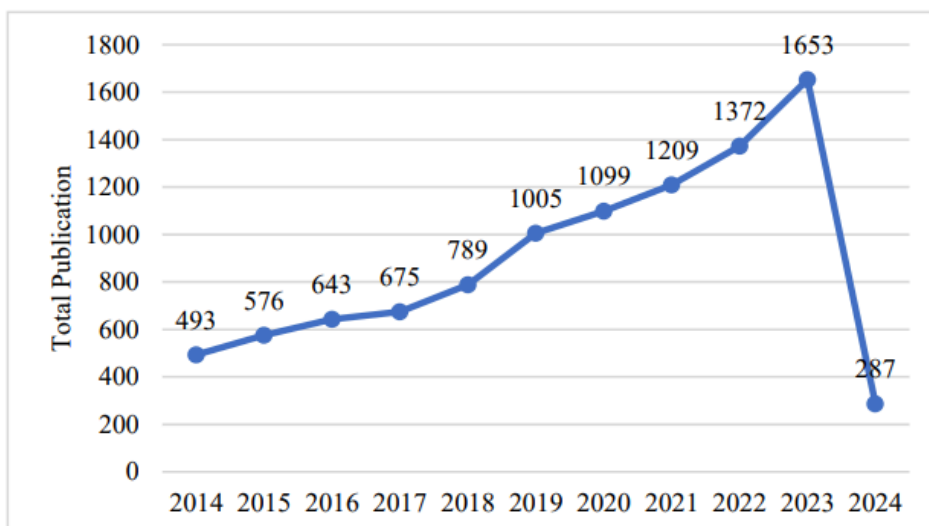
The theoretical foundations of the study are outlined in this chapter, with a primary emphasis on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a lens for understanding the workplace motivations and preferences of Generation Z. SDT provides a robust framework for the analysis of the psychological requirements of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as well as their impact on employee engagement and satisfaction in various work models. The theory is especially relevant to the examination of Gen Z's motivational patterns in hybrid versus in-office environments.

Two complementary perspectives are integrated to enhance the theoretical foundation of the study: Person-Organisation Fit Theory and Social Exchange Theory. Social Exchange Theory offers a perspective on the relational and reciprocal aspects of workplace commitment, whereas Person-Organisation Fit Theory emphasises the alignment between individual values and organisational culture, an increasingly important factor for younger employees. Collectively, these frameworks provide a multidimensional perspective on the ways in which motivational, relational, and cultural factors interact to influence the attitudes and behaviours of Gen Z in the workplace. The chapter concludes with a critical evaluation of the inherent limitations of each framework for the research. The primary theory guiding this research is Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which offers a fundamental perspective for understanding the underlying motivating needs of Generation Z.

### 3.2 Overview of Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan in the 1980s, explains human conduct via the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. At the core of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) lies the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When fulfilled, these requirements augment intrinsic drive, creativity, and psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017; Mario, 2019).

SDT emphasises the influence of social settings on motivation, especially those that foster autonomy. It integrates organismic, phenomenological, ego-psychological, and humanistic traditions to elucidate how optimal functioning arises within need-supportive environments (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). Its significance encompasses domains including education, healthcare, sports, and organisational behaviour (Shofiefany, Kamila & Prihatsanti, 2024), with an increasing focus over the past decade on topics such as self-regulation, autonomy, and goal achievement.



**Figure 1. Growth of the SDT over the past decade**

Source: Crossita Shofiefany, Aisyah Kamila and Unika Prihatsanti, 2024.

### 3.3 Justification for Using Self-Determination Theory in This Research

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasises the significance of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and psychological requirements within the workplace. Saraiva and Nogueiro (2025) utilised Self-Determination Theory to explain how insufficient autonomy in decision-making fosters irritation and emotional detachment among younger employees. They contend that Generations Y and Z especially prioritise surroundings that acknowledge their contributions and independence. When businesses neglect to provide autonomy or fail to connect with employees' personal values, particularly about fairness, inclusivity, and sustainability, disengagement is likely to escalate (Saraiva and Nogueiro, 2025). This makes SDT a particularly suited framework for analysing motivational dynamics among Gen Z workers.

Aggarwal et al. (2020) utilise Self-Determination Theory to examine the impact of contemporary HR policies on job satisfaction among Generation Z employees. Their findings indicate that flexible work practices, recognition and incentive systems, and meaningful feedback substantially improve job satisfaction, which subsequently promotes affective commitment and task performance. The research demonstrates that intrinsic motivators such as the need for autonomy and meaningful contribution, surpass solely extrinsic criteria such as digital innovation or career advancement, both of which showed no significant direct impact on satisfaction. This highlights the importance of Self-Determination Theory as a framework for examining the motivational factors of Generation Z, especially with workplace flexibility, feedback culture, and psychological support (Aggarwal et al., 2020). Considering that the theory is associated with enhanced performance and organisational outcomes, it is suitable for analysing how Gen Z employees manage hybrid and in-office work models, as well as how their psychological demands affect satisfaction and retention.

### 3.4 Application of Self-Determination Theory to Hybrid vs. In-Office Work

#### Preferences

Dwivedula (2024) employs Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to examine the determinants of Gen Z's motivation in the workplace, highlighting intrinsic motivation and identified regulation as the predominant influences. Generation Z employees are primarily driven by experiences that resonate with their personal values, provide opportunities for growth, and foster engagement, rather than by just extrinsic rewards. Dwivedula identifies seven key motivational themes from an analysis of textual responses provided by 317 participants, including the nature of work, support, future opportunities, and career alignment, among others. The research highlights Generation Z's demand for ongoing feedback, meaningful responsibilities, and personal congruence, indicating that hybrid or in-office settings vary in their capacity to fulfil these requirements.

Nugraha et al. (2025) substantiate this claim, showing that hybrid models more effectively fulfil the SDT requirements for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, especially when combined with supportive leadership and collaborative digital tools. Flexible scheduling and remote autonomy boost independence, while feedback and digital development support competence; inclusive virtual teams encourage connectedness. Salvadorinho et al. (2024) enhance Self-Determination Theory by identifying supplementary motivators for Generation Z: purpose, flow, and achievement. They contend that hybrid work, by facilitating focused and independent tasks, may cultivate a greater sense of purpose and involvement than inflexible office environments. These studies collectively demonstrate that well-designed hybrid workplaces can more successfully satisfy the growing motivating demands of Gen Z.

Although Self-Determination Theory provides a robust framework for comprehending individual psychological demands, it inadequately addresses the interpersonal and relational dynamics inherent in workplace motivation. To complement this, Social Exchange Theory (SET) is introduced to examine how reciprocity and organisational support influence Gen Z's engagement in the workplace.

### 3.5 Theoretical Complement: Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET), articulated by Blau (1964), serves as a fundamental framework for understanding workplace behaviours, highlighting reciprocity, relationship dynamics, and mutual benefit. In organisational contexts, Social Exchange Theory suggests that when employees experience equitable and supportive treatment, they are more inclined to reciprocate with heightened dedication, engagement, and retention.

Küçük (2020) identifies that social exchange relationships, defined by mutual trust, respect, and intangible support, exhibit a favourable correlation with both affective and continuous commitment. It additionally suggests that Generation Z employees are inclined to form deeper emotional bonds and a sense of duty towards organisations that foster supportive, non-transactional interactions. Conversely, economic exchange mechanisms, focused on material incentives, yield inconsistent results, implying that only transactional strategies may be inadequate to maintain Gen Z's drive or loyalty.

Shakya et al. (2025) further supports this perspective by integrating the Social Exchange Theory with Herzberg's two-factor theory, demonstrating that soft HRM practices, proactive leadership behaviours, and work-life balance initiatives greatly impact the retention of Generation Z.

These relationships are facilitated by job satisfaction, emphasising that organisational support and relational quality are crucial to Gen Z's commitment to the workplace. Alongside motivation and relational dynamics, the alignment between individual and organisational ideals has become a crucial determinant in Gen Z's work decisions. The Person-Organisation Fit Theory effectively encapsulates the aspect of value congruence, especially within hybrid and digitally mediated environments.

### 3.6 Theoretical Complement: Person-Organisation Fit Theory

The alignment between an individual's values and an organisation's culture has been the primary focus of the Person-Organisation Fit (P-O Fit) Theory. Nevertheless, this congruence is not static; it is contextual, interpretive, and evolving, particularly in response to changes in work arrangements and generational expectations (Graczyk-Kucharska & Erickson, 2020). Recent developments have underscored this fact. The dynamic of how individual and organisational expectations adapt to each other over time is becoming increasingly relevant to Generation Z, as fit is no longer solely about shared traits or values. Gen Z establishes perceptions early on, utilising employer branding, digital messaging, and the psychological contract that is communicated during recruitment, rather than exclusively relying on traditional in-person interactions to evaluate compatibility (Graczyk-Kucharska & Erickson, 2020). Young professionals' interpretations of organisational fairness, trust, and employee expression are influenced by these early-stage perceptions, even prior to the commencement of employment. In this manner, Person-Organisation Fit is experienced proactively and preemptively, determined by the extent to which the organisation's visible and communicated values align with the expectations of potential employees.

Additionally, hybrid and remote work environments present a challenge to traditional organisational fit indicators, including in-person dynamics and office culture. In these circumstances, the consistency of inclusive practices, the accessibility of leadership, and the digital communication styles of Gen Z professionals are essential indicators of their fit (Graczyk-Kucharska & Erickson, 2020). Gen Z employees' perception of cultural congruence is contingent upon the virtual reinforcement and enactment of organisational values, as a significant number of them interact with employers through decentralised or digital channels. These results suggest that Person-Organisation Fit is not longer a simple matter of "fitting in," but rather a process that is mutually co-created and negotiated. In order to retain and engage Gen Z employees, companies must ensure that their values are authentically communicated and lived in both physical and digital contexts, while also remaining responsive to changing expectations (Graczyk-Kucharska & Erickson, 2020).

White (2021) elaborates on Kristof's (1996) Person-Organisation Fit Theory by empirically demonstrating how recruitment marketing rhetoric influences Generation Z's perceptions of fit. Her findings support the theory's relevance in contemporary, digitally-mediated recruitment procedures. Job descriptions rhetorically emphasise key topics such as culture, development, benefits, and flexibility to proactively indicate suitability. Moreover, the distinction between supplementary and complementary fit, in conjunction with the growing Person-Environment Fit framework (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), establishes Person-Organisation Fit as a dynamic and complex term, especially relevant to Gen Z's entry into the workforce and their expectations. Collectively, these three theoretical frameworks; Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Person-Organisation Fit, provide a multidimensional framework for analysing the workplace preferences of Generation Z.

They provide a comprehensive foundation for the analysis of the study by considering psychological needs, relational exchanges, and cultural alignment. However, it is imperative to recognise the constraints of each theoretical approach, which will be addressed in the following section.

### 3.7 Criticism and Limitations of Theories Used

#### 3.7.1 Criticism and/ or Limitations of the Self-Determination Theory

Although Self-Determination Theory (SDT) serves as a fundamental paradigm in motivational psychology, numerous academics have articulated significant critiques that highlight its theoretical and practical limitations. Sugden (2024) critiques the underlying dichotomy of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, contending that this binary classification may exclude important motivating factors, especially the fulfillment individuals gain from being beneficial to others. He posits that such omissions jeopardise the clarity of the moral and relational aspects of workplace and market behaviours, which may not align seamlessly with SDT's internal-external continuum.

Pyszczynski et al. (2000) argue that Self-Determination Theory provides an inadequate explanation of human behaviour, as it fails to recognise the important role of more intricate motivational systems. They contend that Self-Determination Theory is deficient in its ability to elucidate the interaction between defensive and acquisitive impulses, including self-preservation, status anxiety, and existential concerns, which frequently affect behaviour in both personal and professional contexts. Moreover, Fortier et al. (2012) emphasise challenges in applying Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to practical health behaviour interventions.

They specifically identify issues in the design, implementation, and assessment of SDT-based programs, indicating limitations in its generalisability across behavioural situations. These critiques indicate that although Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is instrumental in comprehending human motivation, especially in autonomy-supportive contexts, it may necessitate integration with additional frameworks to comprehensively address the intricate and context-dependent characteristics of motivation.

### 3.7.2 Criticism and/ or Limitations of the Social Exchange Theory

Numerous scholars have identified both conceptual and practical limitations in Social Exchange Theory (SET), which provides a foundational framework for understanding workplace relationships based on reciprocity and mutual benefit. This is particularly true in terms of explaining the motivations of younger generations. Cropanzano et al. (2017) argue that the applicability of SET across a variety of organisational contexts is restricted by its definitional ambiguity. In order to offer a more refined understanding of exchange processes, they suggest a two-dimensional model that integrates work activity and hedonic value. Similarly, Pataki-Bittó and Kapusy (2021) contend that the linear assumptions of input-output reciprocity of SET are challenged by Gen Z's preference for flexibility, autonomy, and hybrid arrangements. SET's contextual generalisability is further complicated by the fact that Gen Z's work modality preferences are contingent upon the organisational context (corporate, family-run, or entrepreneurial), as emphasised by Osorio and Madero (2024).

Katsaros (2025) applies Social Exchange Theory in an empirical study of Gen Z employees in hybrid workplaces, revealing that inclusive leadership boosts adaptive performance indirectly through creativity and work engagement, rather than directly through reciprocity, thereby supporting these critiques.

These results underscore the fact that the conventional assumptions of SET are inadequate to explain the intricate motivational dynamics and emotional resources that are fundamental to the behaviour of Generation Z. Gen Z employees seem to respond to leadership that foster psychological safety, meaning, and co-created value, rather than merely exchanging benefits. Therefore, although Social Exchange Theory continues to be a valuable lens, it is insufficient to adequately convey the dynamic, multidimensional nature of workplace behaviour among emerging workforce demographics, on its own.

### 3.7.3 Criticism and/ or Limitations of the Person-Organisation Fit Theory

Despite its widespread use in organisational research, the Person-Organisation Fit Theory has a number of important limitations and criticisms that require careful consideration. The concept's ambiguity regarding definition and measurement is a significant concern. Kristof-Brown et al. (2023) identify six persistent conundrums in Person-Organisation Fit research, including ambiguity regarding the appropriate level of analysis (e.g., individual, group, or organisational), inconsistent measurement tools, and unclear definitions. Both theoretical development and practical application are impeded by this lack of clarity. An additional critique challenges the notion that Person-Organisation Fit is universally advantageous.

Although fit can have a positive impact on employee satisfaction and retention, it may also hinder diversity. Kristof-Brown et al. (2023) argue that cultural homogeneity may result from strong value alignment between employees and organisations, which could potentially reduce inclusivity and innovation. The scope of Person-Organisation Fit research has also evolved over time. Subramanian et al. (2022) note that the majority of the earlier research concentrated on recruitment and early employment phases, while more recent research has expanded to encompass areas such as ethical behaviour and employee engagement.

Despite its value, this change has resulted in theoretical drift and a weakened alignment with the theory's original foundations. In order to overcome these conceptual constraints, certain scholars have suggested the incorporation of vocational choice theory. For example, Alder (2006) posits that the incorporation of insights from vocational psychology, including interests, identity, and career objectives, could assist in bridging the gaps in current Person-Organisation Fit approaches and offer a more person-centered understanding of fit in the workplace.

An additional challenge is the temporal stability of Fit. Despite the fact that Fit is frequently regarded as a static attribute, both organisational culture and individual values can evolve over time. Kristof-Brown et al. (2023) highlight the necessity of longitudinal research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of Person-Organisation Fit and the impact of these changes on long-term outcomes, including organisational commitment, performance, and attrition. Person-Organisation Fit continues to be a valuable framework for understanding employee attitudes and behaviour, despite these obstacles. However, future research should persist in refining the theory to improve its relevance to the current state of the workforce, particularly in dynamic and increasingly diverse organisational environments.

### 3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study, with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as the main framework for understanding Generation Z's workplace motivations and preferences. Self-Determination Theory's focus on the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness closely corresponds with Generation Z's expectations in hybrid and flexible work environments (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017; Aggarwal et al., 2020; Saraiva & Nogueiro, 2025).

To complement the internal emphasis of SDT, two supplementary frameworks were introduced. Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains relational dynamics and the importance of organisational support in boosting engagement and retention, especially in decentralised hybrid environments (Blau, 1964; Küçük, 2020; Shakya et al., 2025). The Person-Organisation Fit Theory pertains to the cultural congruence between employees and employers, a consideration particularly relevant to Generation Z in digitally mediated contexts (Graczyk-Kucharska & Erickson, 2020; White, 2021; Kristof-Brown et al., 2023).

Each framework, albeit beneficial, possesses distinct limitations. Self-Determination Theory has faced criticism for its inflexible intrinsic-extrinsic dichotomy and inadequate consideration of intricate or socially influenced motivations (Sugden, 2024; Pyszczynski et al., 2000). Social Exchange Theory's premises of linear reciprocity and transactional relationships may inadequately represent Gen Z's inclination towards purpose-oriented, flexible work arrangements (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021; Katsaros, 2025; Osorio & Madero, 2024). The Person-Organisation Theory, while relevant, encounters difficulties related to measurement consistency, definitional ambiguity, and certain disadvantages including reduced diversity and theoretical drift (Kristof-Brown et al., 2023; Subramanian et al., 2022; Alder, 2006).

Notwithstanding these limitations, the integrated utilisation of the three theories provides a comprehensive, multidimensional framework for examining the attitudes and behaviours of Generation Z in the workplace. Together, these perspectives enable the study to explore both motivational factors and social and cultural impacts, thus establishing a strong theoretical framework for the impending empirical analysis.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

This study aims to analyse Generation Z employees' preferences for hybrid versus in-office work models and the impact of these preferences on job satisfaction, perceived organisational support, and retention intentions. To achieve this, primary research will be conducted using a convergent parallel mixed-methods survey design. The survey will be designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from a sample of Gen Z individuals currently employed in early-career roles within hybrid or fully in-office environments.

A mixed methods approach is especially effective for tackling the complex nature of modern workplace encounters. This methodology integrates the generalisability of quantitative data with the contextual depth of qualitative responses, enabling researchers to tackle a broader spectrum of research enquiries and triangulate findings for greater validity (Caruth, 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The convergent parallel paradigm entails the simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data with equal emphasis, facilitating direct comparison and integration of results (David, 2018; Dawadi et al., 2021).

In practice, the quantitative component will comprise closed-ended questions, including Likert-scales, to evaluate attitudes and perceptions concerning work models and their outcomes. To complement these measurements, open-ended questions will be included to obtain more nuanced perspectives and personal experiences from individuals. This combined methodology enables comprehensive data collection that integrates both breadth and depth, a crucial strength for revealing complex, generation-specific workplace dynamics (Mertens et al., 2020).

Theoretically, this study uses a social constructionist perspective, acknowledging that job preferences and experiences are influenced by interpersonal relationships, attitudes, and changing cultural norms (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). This viewpoint supports the inductive and deductive reasoning intrinsic to mixed methods research, wherein theory can both guide and arise from the data.

For participant recruiting, digital platforms such as LinkedIn, university alumni networks, and social media will be employed, focusing on individuals aged 21 to 28 who are at the early stage of their careers. The aim is to collect data from at least 100 respondents to guarantee robust statistical analysis and significant theme interpretation. This digitally driven strategy resonates with Generation Z's technical fluency and supports the study's objective of generating practical insights for HRM initiatives designed for this emerging workforce. With this methodological framework established, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study and maintain coherence between data collection and the study's primary objectives.

#### 4.2 Research Questions

This study is structured around the following research questions, grouped to demonstrate a logical path from preferences to influencing factors to outcomes:

##### **1. Work Model Preferences**

- What are the preferences of Generation Z employees about hybrid versus in-office work arrangements for entry-level roles?

##### **2. Influencing Factors**

- What factors influence these preferences, and how do they affect job satisfaction and perceived organisational support?

### **3. Outcomes**

- What is the relationship between work model preferences and the retention intentions of Generation Z employees towards their current employer?

In order to address these research questions systematically, the study is structured around the following research objectives, which further elucidate the focus and intended outcomes of the research.

#### 4.3 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to examine the preferences of Generation Z employees, born between 1997 to 2012, concerning hybrid versus in-office work arrangements in entry-level roles. The research intends to gather primary data using a quantitatively oriented mixed-methods survey focused on Generation Z individuals presently working in hybrid or in-office environments. It aims to examine the relationship between work model preferences and key factors such as job satisfaction, perceived organisational support, and retention intentions. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative responses, the research will cultivate a thorough comprehension of the underlying factors driving these preferences. The objective is to produce evidence-based suggestions that guide HR strategies in effectively attracting, engaging, and retaining Gen Z talent. To effectively achieve these aims, the chosen study design provides a framework for the collection and integration of both statistical and experiential data.

### 4.3.1 Hypothesis

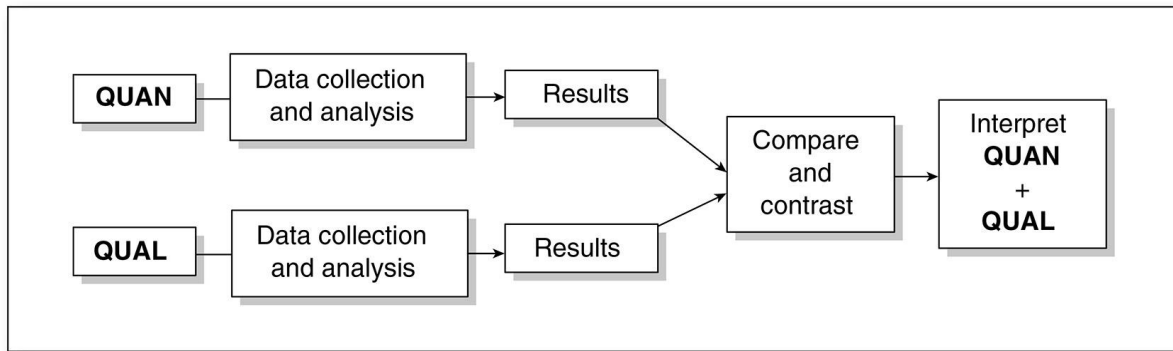
In line with these research objectives, the following hypotheses have been formulated to structure the quantitative analysis and examine the interactions among essential variables.

<b>Hypotheses</b>
Hypothesis 1: Generation Z employees prioritise hybrid work arrangements over fully in-office or fully remote models. Hypothesis 2: Perceived organisational support has a big impact on job satisfaction. Hypothesis 3: The alignment of perceived organisational support and work model serves as a positive predictor for retention intentions.

These hypotheses underpin the statistical testing performed in the results chapter and establish a systematic connection between the research objectives and the methodological design that follows.

### 4.4 Research Design

A cross-sectional, convergent parallel mixed methods study design has been chosen to thoroughly investigate the preferences of Generation Z employees concerning hybrid and in-office work models. Cross-sectional research involves the acquisition of data from a sample at a singular moment, rendering it especially appropriate for contrasting generational attitudes or preferences (Wang and Cheng, 2020). In contrast to longitudinal studies that examine behavioural or attitudinal changes over time, cross-sectional designs provide a contemporary snapshot of perspectives and enable the analysis of patterns within a particular population group (Abu, 2023).



**Figure 2. Convergent Parallel Method Design**

*Source: (Edmonds and Kennedy, 2017).*

This study uses a convergent parallel design, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently via a single survey instrument, which are subsequently analysed individually but interpreted collectively. Thanavathi (2017) asserts that this strategy enables the advantages of one data source to offset the deficiencies of the other, leading to a more nuanced and thorough comprehension of the research problem. Quantitative statistics yield measurable insights from a broader sample, and qualitative responses deliver profound contextual perspectives that enhance result interpretation. The integration of both data types facilitates the validation or enhancement of findings via methodological triangulation. Selecting a cross-sectional and convergent mixed-methods methodology offers a comprehensive knowledge of Generation Z’s work model preferences and workplace expectations. The methodology is suitable and effectively linked with the study’s objective of producing evidence-based insights that guide HR policies through statistical patterns and personal experiences (Wang and Cheng, 2020; Abu, 2023; Thanavathi, 2017).

#### 4.5 Research Method: A Quantitative Approach

Building on this design, the next sections outline the precise methodologies that will be used for data collection and analysis, beginning with the sampling technique.

#### 4.5.1 Sampling Technique

This study utilises a non-probability purposive sampling methodology to recruit individuals who meet inclusion criteria. Generation Z is typically defined as anyone born between 1997 and 2012 (McKinsey & Company, 2024). The study focuses on early-career professionals currently employed, limiting the demographic to individuals born between 1997 and 2004. This ensures that participants are of working age and likely involved in early-career roles, rendering their responses directly relevant to the research aims. Participants will be recruited through personal networks and digital platforms, including LinkedIn, Instagram, and university alumni associations. Given that Gen Z are digital natives nurtured in the internet age (McKinsey & Company, 2024), these platforms function as appropriate and effective mediums for engaging the target demographic. This intentional sample ensures the inclusion of individuals with pertinent experiences, enhancing the research's ability to derive significant insights on workplace preferences, job satisfaction, and retention intentions among Generation Z. Following the identification of participants, a carefully crafted survey was chosen to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

#### 4.5.2 Data Collection Instrument

A self-administered online survey published on Google Forms will be employed to collect primary data for this study. The platform was selected due to its ease of distribution, mobile compatibility, and accessibility, which are consistent with Generation Z's high level of digital fluency. The survey is expected to take approximately ten minutes to complete, and participants will be able to do so at their convenience. In accordance with the convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, the survey will be designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

The quantitative items will consist of multiple choice questions and Likert-scale questions to assess the following key constructs: retention intentions, job satisfaction, and work model preferences. Open-ended questions will be included in qualitative items to elicit the perspectives, experiences, and motivations of participants in their own words.

Furthermore, the survey will include screening questions to verify that participants are 21-28 years old, in early-career roles, and currently employed in hybrid or in-office work environments. Participants must also meet the inclusion criteria. Descriptive and subgroup analyses will also involve the collection of demographic data, including age, gender, industry, and tenure. Moreover, the survey questions will be informed by existing literature on Generation Z's work preferences, job satisfaction, and organisational support. Qualitative and quantitative data will be integrated through the survey design, which will facilitate comprehensive analysis of the research questions and triangulation.

As a result, the mixed-methods design will be employed to prepare and analyse the data collection through the survey. More specifically, quantitative responses will be coded and imported into SPSS for hypothesis testing, correlation analysis, and descriptive statistics. Meanwhile, thematic analysis will be conducted on qualitative responses to identify patterns and insights that are relevant to the work model preferences and experiences of the participants. In conjunction, these methodologies will enable the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings, thereby providing a thorough comprehension of the retention intentions, preferences, and influencing factors of Generation Z employees. Ultimately, this approach will ensure that research questions and objectives outlined in this study are resolved in a systematic and cohesive manner.

#### 4.5.3 Data Collection Procedure

The survey will be distributed through the use of a digital platform that was designed to correspond with the habits and preferences of Generation Z, as outlined below. Data collection occurred over a specified timeframe utilising an online survey disseminated through Google Forms. The survey link will be shared through multiple digital channels, including social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, LinkedIn), university alumni groups, and personal networks. These platforms were selected carefully because of their significant interaction with Generation Z, the study's target demographic. The questionnaire will be self-administered, allowing participants to complete it at their convenience, along with the flexibility typically favoured by digital-native respondents. Before participation, respondents will be presented with an informed consent statement detailing the study's goal, the voluntary nature of participation, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity.

Eligibility criteria encompassed those aged 21 to 28, now engaged in an early-career position, and operating within a hybrid or in-office work environment. Participants failing to match these requirements will be excluded via screening questions at the beginning of the survey. The aim is to gather responses from at least 100 participants, facilitating both rigorous statistical analysis and significant thematic exploration of the qualitative feedback. No incentives will be offered, and all participants engage voluntarily.

#### 4.7 Ethical Considerations

During the research process, ethical considerations were paramount, especially due to the nature of digital data collecting and the demography being examined. In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the standards established by Dublin Business School (DBS), ethical integrity will be prioritised throughout the research process.

The DBS Research Ethics Committee has granted approval for this study, which has been specifically designed to mitigate any potential risks to participants. Participants will be presented with a combined Consent and Information Statement at the beginning of the online questionnaire, which will be incorporated into the Google Forms survey. This will outline the purpose of the research, the estimated time commitment, the voluntary nature of participation, and the data protection procedures. Before the survey can be conducted, participants must provide their informed consent.

Additionally, participants will be informed of their right to withdraw at any stage prior to submission, and participation will be entirely voluntary. No incentives will be offered. Furthermore, they will have the choice to disregard any question that they do not wish to respond to.

The participation of only those who meet the eligibility criteria, Generation Z members born between 1997 and 2012, who are presently employed in an early-career role within a hybrid or in-office work environment, will be permitted. Relevant screening questions will be included. All data will be stored securely and handled confidentially, and no personally identifying information will be collected. The final dataset will be anonymised and utilised exclusively for the objectives of this MSc dissertation. The questionnaire is intended to be minimally risky for participants and will not contain any emotionally sensitive or intrusive content. Participants will be able to complete the survey at their own convenience, which further supports participant autonomy and ethical best practices, as it is self-administered online.

#### 4.9 Limitations

Despite the care taken in research design and execution, several limitations must be recognised to contextualise the findings and guide future research endeavours. While this study seeks to offer significant insights into Generation Z's preferences for hybrid compared to in-office employment models, several limitations must be acknowledged. Initially, the use of non-probability purposive sampling and online recruitment methods may result in a sample that disproportionately includes those who are more digitally engaged or predisposed to partake in online surveys. This may create a participation bias and restrict the generalisability of the findings to the broader Gen Z workforce. In addition, questionnaire-based data collection may be susceptible to participant fatigue or disengagement, especially in the context of open-ended items (Bryman, 2012). Incomplete datasets may result from respondent's superficial responses or their complete omission of queries. Furthermore, even with preliminary testing, ambiguities in question phrasing can lead to misinterpretations that distort participant perspectives (Cohen et al., 2011).

Furthermore, while open-ended questions are incorporated to add depth, the survey format lacks the complexity and probing capability that interviews can bring. This may limit the depth of qualitative findings. The dependence on closed-ended questions may result in response bias, causing participants to select socially acceptable or convenient answers instead of accurately representing their genuine experiences or thoughts. Ultimately, the inclusion of people from varied geographical and cultural origins enhances diversity but may also complicate the development of universal HR advice. The extensive variation may result in outcomes that are more contextually specific rather than generally applicable, particularly when considering different corporate cultures or labour markets.

## 5. Data Analysis

### 5.1 Quantitative Data Preparation

Upon concluding data collection, survey responses will be exported to Microsoft Excel for preliminary organisation. The dataset will subsequently be imported from Excel into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). In SPSS, each survey item will be designated a variable name, label, and measurement level (nominal, ordinal, or scale) based on the nature of the collected data. Demographic variables, including age and gender, will be coded as categorical, whereas Likert-scale questions concerning job satisfaction, organisational support, work-life balance, and retention intentions will be classified as numeric scale variables. This process will ensure that the dataset is precisely structured and ready for analysis.

### 5.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical methods will be applied to summarise the dataset. Frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations will be computed to summarise respondent demographics and key variables, including current work model, work model preferences, job satisfaction, perceived organisational support, and retention intentions. These statistics will provide a fundamental understanding of the sample and the overarching trends within the data.

### 5.3 Correlational Analysis

Correlational analyses will be conducted to explore the relationships between work model preferences and variables including job satisfaction, organisational support, and retention intentions. This will facilitate the identification of patterns, associations, and potential trends regarding respondents' work model choices and key HRM outcomes.

### 5.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

A thematic analysis will be conducted on open-ended survey responses, adhering to the six-phase framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is acknowledged as a versatile and approachable qualitative method, not confined to a singular epistemological perspective, rendering it especially appropriate for research in business and social science domains (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

It offers a systematic yet flexible method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within textual data, beyond mere description to reveal profound insights into participants' views (Nowell et al., 2017). This approach is particularly beneficial for the current study since it facilitates the examination of the rationales and intricate experiences that inform respondents' preferences for hybrid and remote employment, which may be neglected by quantitative analysis alone.

In accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, the study advanced through six separate yet interrelated phases as detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Braun and Clarke's Six-Phase Framework for Thematic Analysis**

Step	Description
Step 1	Familiarisation with the data: perusing and reviewing responses, recording initial observations.
Step 2	Generating initial codes by meticulously identifying notable features within the dataset.
Step 3	Identifying themes by aggregating codes into overarching patterns of significance.
Step 4	Reviewing themes: refining themes by assessing coherence and alignment with the dataset.
Step 5	Defining and naming themes involves precisely describing the scope and content of each subject.
Step 6	Compiling the report by synthesising themes with supporting data excerpts and correlating them with the research questions.

*Source: Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).*

This framework will be employed to methodologically analyse the open-ended responses, ensuring credibility and transparency. The analysis aims to capture both explicit (semantic) meanings and underlying rationales within participants' responses, thereby enriching the interpretation of findings concerning employee perceptions of hybrid work.

### 5.5 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

After finalising independent analyses of quantitative and qualitative data, the results will be synthesised to evaluate convergence or divergence between the two data streams. This integration will enable qualitative insights to contextualise statistical results.

Open-ended responses may elucidate trends observed in the Likert-scale variables, such as the motivations for work model preferences or perceptions of organisational support. The integration of both data strands is anticipated to yield a more nuanced and thorough comprehension of Gen Z employees' workplace preferences and related HRM outcomes.

## 6. Results

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings from the conducted survey aimed at examining Generation Z employees' preferences for hybrid compared to in-office work models, as well as their impact on job satisfaction, perceived organisational support, and retention intentions. The survey was conducted online via Google Forms and disseminated through digital platforms such as LinkedIn, Instagram, and university alumni networks. Participants consisted of early-career Generation Z employees, aged 21 to 28, presently employed in hybrid or fully in-office environments.

The survey utilised a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative questions. Closed-ended questions aimed to quantify trends related to work model preferences, job satisfaction, organisational support, and retention intentions, whereas open-ended questions offered insights into participants' personal experiences, motivations, and perspectives. This method ensures that the analysis captures both quantitative patterns and a deeper contextual understanding.

The chapter is structured to initially present the quantitative survey findings, followed by an analysis of the qualitative responses. The synthesis of these findings provides a comprehensive perspective on Generation Z's workplace preferences and the determinants affecting them, thereby addressing the research questions specified in this study.

### 6.2 Quantitative Analysis

#### 6.2.1 Demographics (Descriptive Statistics)

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the participants, encompassing age, gender, and current work model. The descriptive statistics contextualise the ensuing inferential analysis by outlining the sample's composition.

### 6.2.1.1 Age

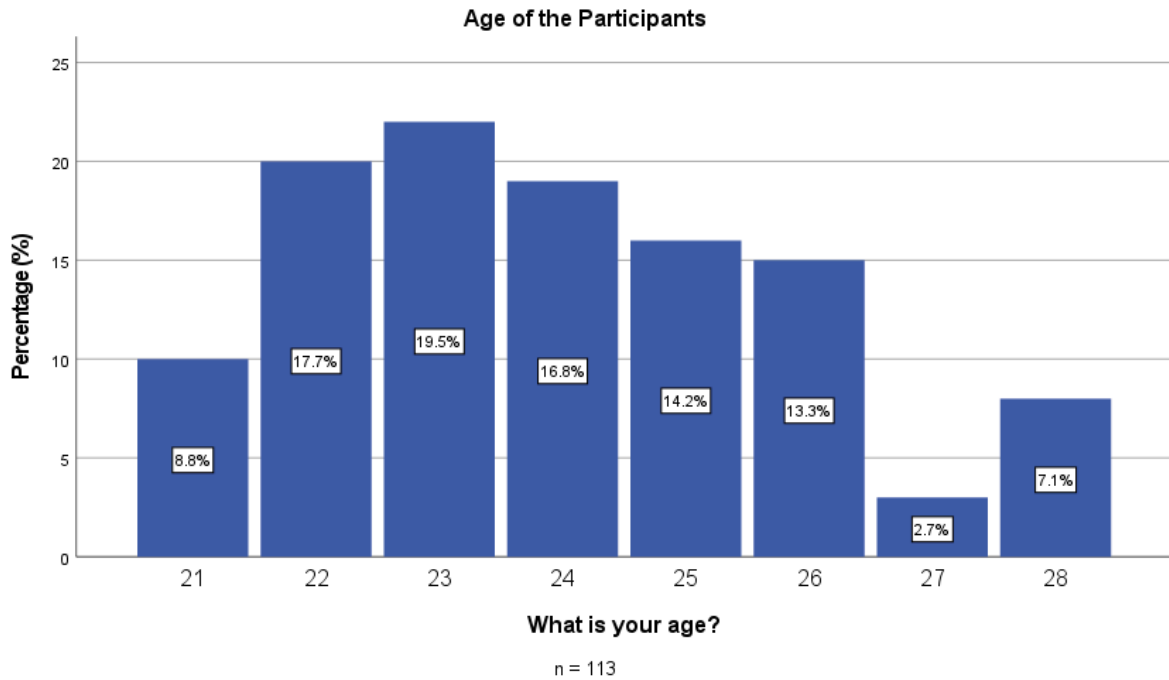
The ages of participants varied from 21 to 28 years (Mean = 23.96, Std. Deviation = 1.94). The predominant age group was 23 years (19.5%, n = 22), followed by 22 years (17.7%, n = 20) and 24 years (16.8%, n = 19). Table 2 and Figure 3 below illustrate that the predominant age group of respondents was in their early twenties.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Age of Participants**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Mode	Minimum	Maximum
Age	23.96	1.94	24.00	23	21	28

*Note: N = 113.*

This aligns with the study's emphasis on early-career Generation Z employees aged 21 to 28. The relatively narrow age range increases the applicability of the findings to this group and ensures that the analysis accurately represents the experiences of employees at the beginning of their professional careers. This demographic positioning is significant, as Gen Z's expectations for flexibility, autonomy, and organisational support diverge from those of preceding generations, as indicated in the literature review.



**Figure 3. Distribution of Participants by Age**

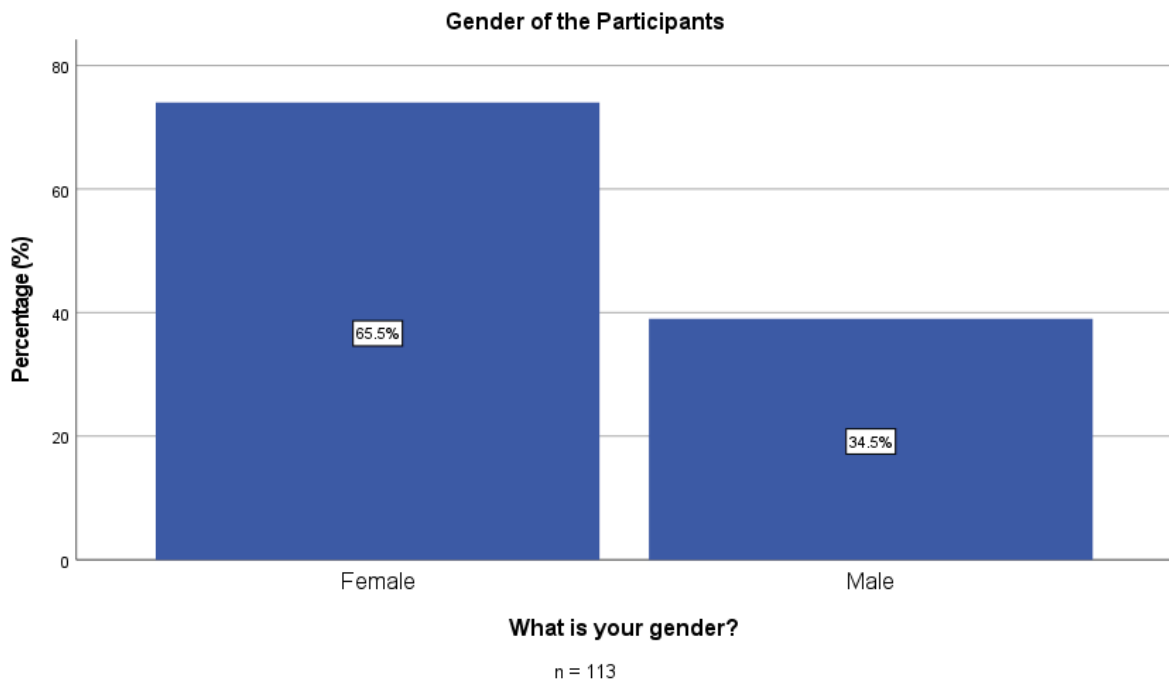
#### 6.2.1.2 Gender

The sample consisted of 113 respondents, with 65.5% (n = 74) identifying as female and 34.5% (n = 39) as male (Table 3; Figure 4). This distribution reveals a female-dominant sample, which is relevant for interpreting subsequent analyses, as gendered experiences frequently influence preferences for flexible or hybrid work arrangements. Existing literature indicates that women may place greater value on hybrid models than men, owing to perceived advantages in achieving work-life balance (Waworuntu et al., 2022). This sample composition offers significant insights into the gendered dynamics of work model preferences among Generation Z employees.

**Table 3: Gender of Participants**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	74	65.49
Male	39	34.51
Total	113	100.00

Note: N = 113.



**Figure 4. *Distribution of Participants by Gender***

#### 6.2.1.3 Participants Current Work Model

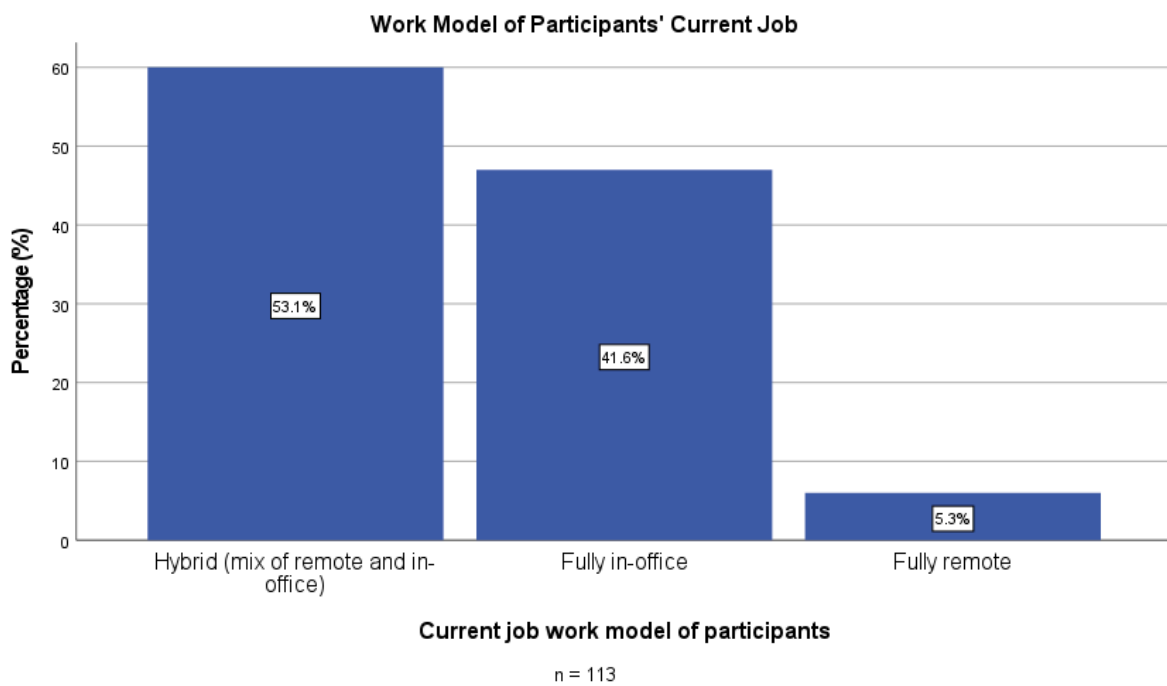
The majority of participants (53.1%, n = 60) indicated they are currently engaged in a hybrid work model, integrating both remote work and in-office responsibilities. An additional 41.6% (n = 47) were entirely in-office, whereas merely 5.3% (n = 6) were completely remote (Table 4; Figure 5).

This distribution highlights that hybrid work is the prevailing model among the surveyed Generation Z employees, with the in-office work still constituting a significant portion. The relatively small percentage of fully remote workers indicates that this arrangement is still less attainable or prevalent for early-career professionals. This corresponds with current research suggesting that although Generation Z prioritises flexibility, organisations may hesitate to provide fully remote positions for entry-level employees, frequently emphasising in-office presence for socialisation, training, and cultural integration (Aggarwal et al., 2020; Osorio & Madero, 2024).

**Table 4: Current Work Model of Participants**

Work Model	Frequency	Percent
Fully in-office	47	41.59
Fully remote	6	5.31
Hybrid (mix of remote and in-office)	60	53.10
Total	113	100.00

Note: N = 113.



**Figure 5. Distribution of Work Models Among Participation**

### 6.2.2 Work Model Preferences (Chi-Square)

A Chi-Square test of independence was performed to analyse the association between gender and work model preference among Generation Z employees. The findings revealed no significant correlation between gender and work model preference,  $\chi^2(4, N = 113) = 4.790, p = 0.310$  (Table 5).

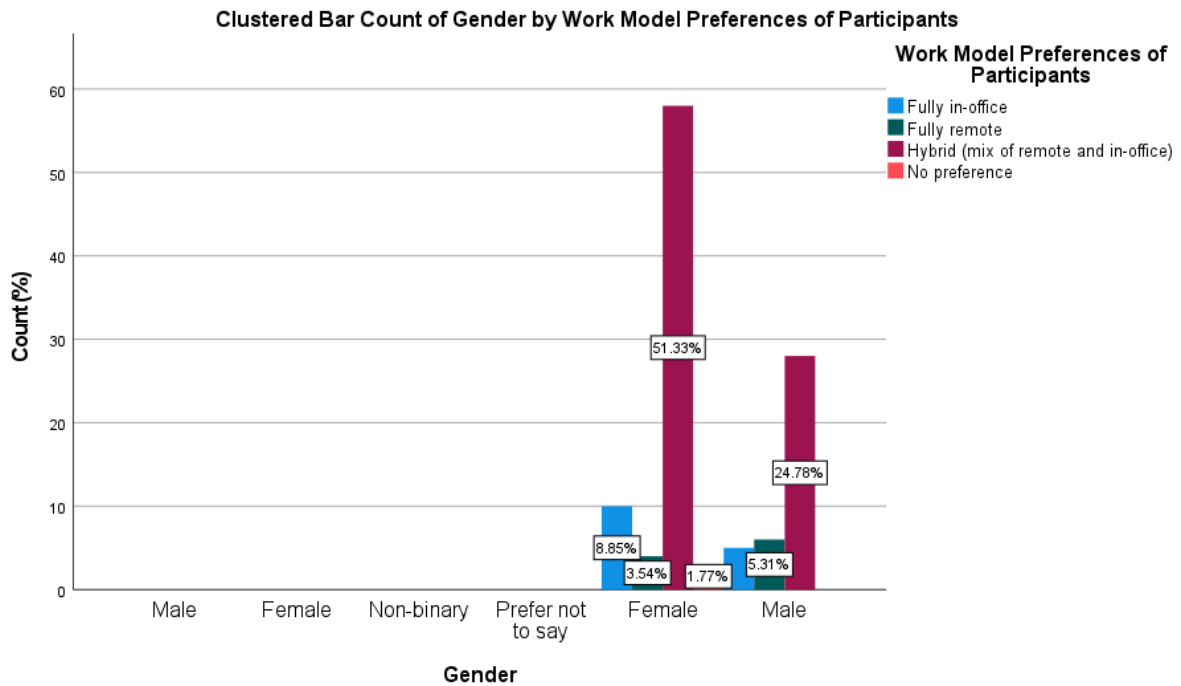
Despite the test output indicating that 3 cells (30%) had expected counts below 5, with a minimum expected count of 0.69, potentially compromising the test’s reliability, the overall results imply no significant difference in preference for hybrid, in-office, or fully remote work models between male and female participants.

**Table 5: Chi-Square Test of Correlation Between Gender & Work Model Preference of Participants**

Gender	Fully in-office	Fully remote	Hybrid	No preference	Total
Female	10 (13.51%)	4 (5.41%)	58 (78.38%)	2 (2.70%)	74 (100%)
Male	5 (12.82%)	6 (15.38%)	28 (71.80%)	0 (0.00%)	39 (100%)
Total	15 (13.27%)	10 (8.85%)	86 (76.11%)	2 (1.77%)	113 (100%)

*Note:  $\chi^2(4, N = 113) = 4.79, p = .310$ . Percentages are within gender.*

Figure 6 below is a clustered bar chart that illustrates the work model preferences of male and female Generation Z employees from the sample. Although hybrid arrangements were the predominant preference among both genders, the chi-square test revealed no significant correlation between gender and work model preference,  $\chi^2(4, N = 113) = 4.790, p = 0.310$ . The findings suggest that preferences for fully in-office, fully remote, or hybrid work models are largely comparable between male and female participants. The percentages displayed on the bars indicate the proportion of each gender opting for each work model.



**Figure 6. Distribution of Gender Across Work Model Preferences Among Gen Z Employees**

### 6.2.3 Overall Job Satisfaction (Descriptives & ANOVA)

Participants rated their overall job satisfaction using a five-point Likert-scale, with options ranging from “Very dissatisfied” (1) to “Very satisfied” (5). The distribution of responses is illustrated in Table 6.

**Table 6: Overall Job Satisfaction (Total Sample)**

Job Satisfaction	Frequency	Percent
1 - Very dissatisfied	1	0.88
2 - Dissatisfied	8	7.08
3 - Neutral	25	22.12
4 - Satisfied	59	52.21
5 - Very satisfied	20	17.70
Total	113	100.00

Note:  $N = 113$ ; 5-point Likert-scale (1 = Very dissatisfied, 5 = Very satisfied); Median = 4, Mode = 4.

The median satisfaction score was 4.00, and the mode was also 4 (Satisfied), indicating that most Generation Z employees from the sample expressed satisfaction with their current employment.

#### Descriptive Statistics by Current Work Model

The overall job satisfaction was analysed according to the current work model of the participants: hybrid (1), in-office (2), and fully remote (3). Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics.

**Table 7: Overall Job Satisfaction by Current Work Model**

Work Model	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Hybrid (mix of remote and in-office)	60	3.85	0.82	2	5
Fully in-office	47	3.70	0.91	1	5
Fully remote	6	3.83	0.75	3	5
Total	113	3.79	0.85	1	5

Note:  $N = 113$ ; Job satisfaction measured on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied).

A one-way ANOVA assessed the variance in job satisfaction across several work models (hybrid, in-office, remote). Levene's test demonstrated homogeneity of variances,  $F(2, 110) = 0.44$ ,  $p = .644$ . The ANOVA yielded no significant results,  $F(2, 110) = 0.40$ ,  $p = .669$ ,  $\eta^2 = .007$ , suggesting no substantial changes in job satisfaction among work models.

**Table 8: Levene's Test for Homogeneity of Variances**

Measure	Levene Statistic	df	df2	p
		1		
Based on Mean	0.44	2	110	0.64
Based on Median	0.09	2	110	0.91
Based on Median with Adjusted df	0.09	2	106.17	0.91
Based on Trimmed Mean	0.38	2	110	0.69

Note: Dependent Variable: "How satisfied are you with your current job overall?"

**Table 9: ANOVA - Overall Job Satisfaction by Current Work Model**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between groups	0.59	2	0.30	0.40	0.669
Within groups	80.31	110	0.73		
Total	80.90	112			

Note: SS = Sum of Squares and MS = Mean Square.

A one-way ANOVA assessed variations in job satisfaction across different work models. The results revealed no significant differences  $F(2, 110) = 0.40, p = .669, \eta^2 = .007$ .

#### Interpretation

The ANOVA results suggest that the job satisfaction of Generation Z employees from within this sample, is not significantly influenced by their work arrangements, which include hybrid, fully in-office, or fully remote.

This implies that the overall job satisfaction of the sample is not significantly influenced by the type of work model, despite the fact that descriptive statistics show slightly higher means for fully remote participants.

#### 6.2.4 Perceived Organisational Support (POS) (Descriptives, Reliability & ANOVA)

##### Descriptive Statistics

**Table 10: Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Organisational Support (POS) Items**

POS Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
POS1. My employer values my contributions.	113	3.88	0.83	1.00	5.00
POS2. I receive the support I need to do my job well.	113	3.94	0.88	1.00	5.00
POS3. My organisation cares about my well-being.	113	3.65	0.97	1.00	5.00
POS4. I feel included and respected at work.	113	4.06	0.86	1.00	5.00
POS5. I have access to the resources and tools I need.	113	4.09	0.99	1.00	5.00
Total	113				

*Note: N = 113. POS items measured on a 5-point Likert-scale ( 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).*

##### Interpretation:

The descriptive statistics for perceived organisational support (POS) reveal predominantly favourable perceptions among participants (Table 10).

The highest mean score was recorded for POS5\_AccessResources: “I have access to the resources and tools I need” (Mean = 4.09, Std. Deviation = 0.99), indicating that employees perceive themselves as adequately equipped with the essential tools and resources for their roles. Likewise, POS4\_InclusionRespect: “I feel included and respected at work” (Mean = 4.06, Std. Deviation = 0.86) received a high score, indicating favourable perceptions of inclusion and respect within the workplace. In contrast, POS3\_Wellbeing: “My organisation cares about my well-being” (Mean = 3.65, Std. Deviation = 0.97) exhibited the lowest mean score, suggesting that employees perceive marginally diminished support concerning their overall well-being. POS1\_Values: “My employer values my contributions.” (Mean = 3.88, Std. Deviation = 0.83) are positioned in the mid-to-high range, demonstrating that employees perceive a moderate to strong level of support and acknowledgement for their contributions.

Overall, these results suggest that Generation Z employees in this sample typically perceive moderate to high organisational support, particularly in resource accessibility and inclusion, whereas wellbeing support may require enhancement.

#### Reliability Analysis

**Table 11: Reliability Analysis Scaled on All Variables**

Scale	N of Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
POS (all 5 items)	5	0.868

#### Interpretation:

The results point out that participants from this sample generally experience support, value, and respect in their professional environments and have access to the requisite resources. The scale's high reliability further confirms its suitability for use in additional analyses, such as the comparison of perceived organisational support (POS) across different work models.

After determining the levels of perceived organisational support among participants and validating the reliability of the POS scale, the next step involves investigating the relationship between these perceptions and overall job satisfaction. Exploring the correlation between POS and job satisfaction will provide insights on whether employees who perceive greater support and value also express higher levels of satisfaction in their roles.

Theoretical Interpretation:

The reliability of the POS scale ( $\alpha = .868$ ) indicates that these perceptions are consistent and strong, thereby enhancing confidence in the findings. The results further substantiate the theoretical frameworks that support this study. According to Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), the allocation of resources and inclusion signifies an organisational investment in employees; which is reciprocated by increased satisfaction and intentions to remain with the company. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) is similarly reflected in the findings: competence (access to resources) and relatedness (inclusion and respect) are supported, while the weaker perception of well-being support suggests an unmet psychological need that could undermine engagement if not addressed. The POS results suggest that organisations fulfil Gen Z's expectations regarding respect and resources, yet they may undervalue the importance of comprehensive well-being initiatives.

#### 6.2.5 Correlation between Job Satisfaction & Perceived Organisational Support

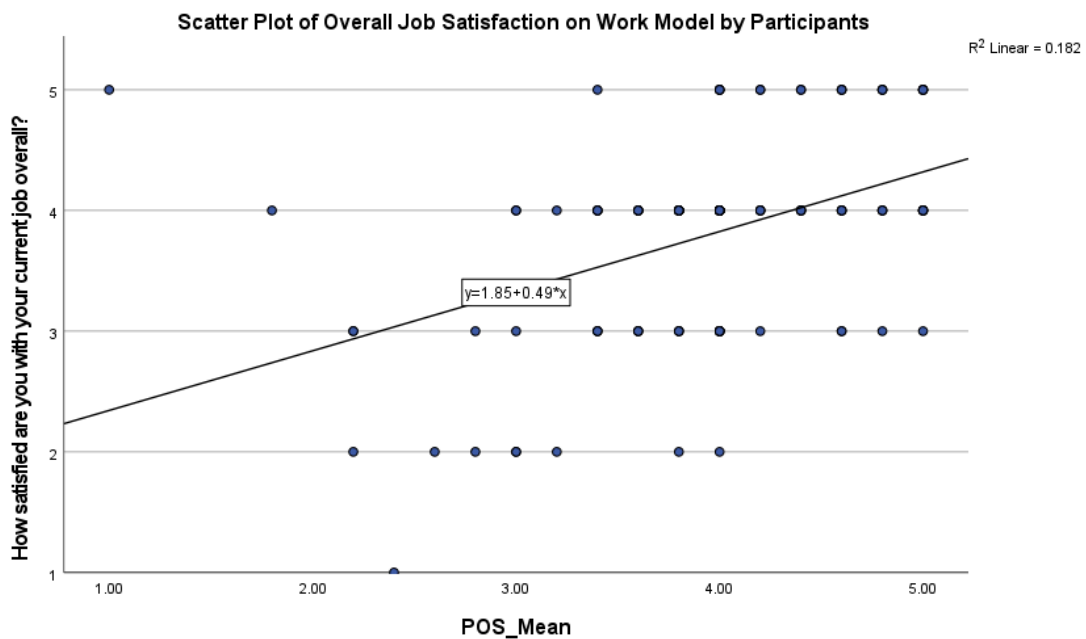
A Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between overall job satisfaction and perceived organisational support. Job satisfaction was assessed using a single five-point Likert scale item, whereas perceived organisational support (POS) was calculated as the average score of five items: values, support, well-being, inclusion/respect, and access to resources. This analysis assesses whether employees who perceive greater organisational support also report elevated levels of job satisfaction, aligning with prior research indicating a positive correlation between support and satisfaction (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 1986).

The findings indicated a moderate positive correlation between job satisfaction and perceived organisational support,  $r(113) = .426, p < .001$ , as illustrated in Table 12. This suggests that individuals who indicated receiving more support from their organisation were also more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction. A scatterplot with a fitted regression line (Figure 7) further demonstrates this positive correlation, indicating an upward trend between POS scores and job satisfaction ratings.

**Table 12: Pearson Correlation between Job Satisfaction and Perceived Organisational Support (POS)**

Variable	1	2
1. Overall Job Satisfaction	—	0.426**
2. POS_Mean	0.426**	—

Note:  $N = 113$ .  $p < .001$ . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



**Figure 7. Scatterplot of the Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Perceived Organisational Support**

The results support the significance of perceived organisational support for Generation Z employees, reinforcing prior assertions that unfulfilled needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness may result in disengagement (Saraiva & Nogueiro, 2025). In this sample, employees who perceived themselves as valued, supported, and adequately resourced reported greater satisfaction, highlighting perceived organisational support (POS) as a pivotal factor in fostering favourable workplace outcomes for this generational cohort.

Expanding on the identified positive correlation between job satisfaction and perceived organisational support, the subsequent section of analysis looks at whether perceived organisational support not only correlates with satisfaction but also predicts retention intentions among early career Generation Z employees. Regression analysis can elucidate the extent to which supportive work environments affect employees' propensity to remain with their current employer.

### 6.2.6 Regression Predicting Retention

Following the analysis of the relationship between Job Satisfaction and Perceived Organisational Support (POS) in Section 5.6, the next phase involved investigating whether POS serves as a predictor of retention intentions among early career Gen Z employees. Retention was quantified as a composite variable (Retention\_Mean) encompassing six components: the 12-month retention intention and five statements pertaining to loyalty, feeling of recognition, alignment with career goals, perceived value, and policy considerations from the participants towards their current job. This composite measure offers a more dependable indicator of retention intention than an individual item.

**Table 13: Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Retention_Mean	113	3.56	0.92	1.00	5.00
LongTermGrowth_Num	113	3.33	1.26	1	5
Loyalty_Num	113	3.58	1.19	1.00	5.00
ValuedRecognition_Num	113	3.91	0.87	1.00	5.00
NeedsConsidered_Num	113	3.38	1.02	1.00	5.00
JobAlignsCareerGoals_Num	113	3.50	1.20	1.00	5.00
Total	113				

*Note: Retention\_Mean is a composite score of six retention-related items.*

Table 13 presents the descriptive statistics for retention-related items among early-career Generation Z employees (N = 113). Participants indicated moderate to high retention intentions overall (Mean = 3.56, Std. Deviation = 0.92).

Among the individual components, the perception of being appreciated and recognised at work exhibited the highest mean (Mean = 3.91, Std. Deviation = 0.87), followed by loyalty (Mean = 3.58, Std. Deviation = 1.19), and the congruence of the current role with career aspirations (Mean = 3.50, Std. Deviation = 1.20). Long-term growth (Mean = 3.33, Std. Deviation = 1.26) and consideration of organisational needs (Mean = 3.38, Std. Deviation = 1.02) were marginally lower, suggesting that these areas may necessitate further assistance to improve retention.

**Table 14: Reliability Analysis for Retention Intention**

Scale	N of Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Retention Intention Composite	6	0.88

*Note: Cronbach's  $\alpha$  shows high internal consistency for the retention intention scale.*

The retention intention scale demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88, signifying that the six items effectively assess the construct of retention intention among early-career Generation Z employees (See Table 14).

#### Regression Analysis

The linear regression analysis demonstrated that perceived organisational support significantly predicted retention intentions ( $F(1,111) = 109.90, p < .001$ ). The model explained 49.8% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.498, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.493$ ). Analysis of coefficients showed that for every one-unit increase in POS\_Mean, Retention\_Mean increased by 0.887 units ( $B = 0.887, SE = 0.085, \beta = 0.705, p < .001$ ), illustrating a strong positive correlation.

**Table 15a: Variables Entered/Removed**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	POS_Mean	–	Enter

Note: a. Dependent variable: POS\_Mean b. All requested variables were entered.

The regression analysis utilised POS\_Mean as the independent variable and Retention\_Mean as the dependent variable. No variables were eliminated, and all specified predictors were included using the normal “Enter” method (See Table 15a).

**Table 15b: Model Summary**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.705	.498	.493	.657

Note: Predictors: POS\_Mean.

The regression model incorporating POS\_Mean as the predictor explained 49.8% of the variance in retention intention,  $R^2 = .498$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .493$ , with a standard error of the estimate of 0.657 (See Table 15b).

**Table 15c: ANOVA for the Regression Model Predicting Retention**

Model	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	47.43	1	47.43	109.90	< .001
Residual	47.91	111	0.43	–	–
Total	95.34	112	–	–	–

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Retention\_Mean b. Predictors: POS\_Mean

SS = Sum of Squares and MS = Mean Square.

**Table 15d: Coefficients**

Model	Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
1	Constant	0.08	0.34	–	0.24	0.81
1	POS_Mean	0.89	0.09	0.71	10.48	<.001

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Retention\_Mean

The results of the analysis suggest that Gen Z employees who recognise greater organisational support are considerably more inclined to stay with their current employer. This aligns with prior research indicating that organisational support strengthens commitment and retention among early-career employees (See Section 5.2).

## 6.8 Qualitative Analysis

### 6.8.1 Thematic Analysis

To complement the quantitative survey data, a thematic analysis was performed on the open-ended responses employing Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. This method allowed the recognition of recurring patterns in participants' narratives regarding workplace preferences and experiences.

The approach is contextualised by Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which asserts that intrinsic motivation is fuelled by the demands for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Dwivedula, 2024; Nugraha et al., 2025). This framework offers a perspective to analyse participants' preferences for hybrid compared to in-office employment, emphasising how workplace structures either satisfy or constrain these essential psychological demands. Social Exchange Theory (SET) is also applied to examine the impact of organisational support and reciprocal relationships on engagement and retention intentions of Generation Z employees (Salvadorinho et al., 2024).

**Table 16: Braun and Clarke's Six-Phase Framework for Thematic Analysis**

Step	Description
Step 1	Familiarisation with the data: perusing and reviewing responses, recording initial observations.
Step 2	Generating initial codes by meticulously identifying notable features within the dataset.
Step 3	Identifying themes by aggregating codes into overarching patterns of significance.
Step 4	Reviewing themes: refining themes by assessing coherence and alignment with the dataset.
Step 5	Defining and naming themes involves precisely describing the scope and content of each subject.
Step 6	Compiling the report by synthesising themes with supporting data excerpts and correlating them with the research questions.

*Source: Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).*

### **Step 1: Familiarisation with the data**

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach for thematic analysis, the initial phase was thoroughly engaging with the dataset to attain a profound comprehension of the responses to the open-ended survey questions. This procedure involved reading and re-reading all participant replies several times, while taking preliminary notes on initial impressions and reoccurring themes.

At this stage, multiple recurring themes were identified, which served as the foundation for later coding. Prominent themes that surfaced in the responses included:

- Flexibility and autonomy: Participants frequently emphasised their preferences for hybrid or remote work arrangements, adaptable schedules, and control over the timing and location of job completion.

- Work-life balance and mental health: Numerous respondents highlighted the significance of stress management, preventing burnout, and sustaining a good equilibrium between work and personal life.
- Career progression and recognition: Opportunities for promotion, performance assessment, equitable acknowledgement, and skill development were identified as important elements affecting satisfaction.
- Social connections and collaborations: Participants often highlighted the value of mentoring, team solidarity, in-person interactions, and the sense of belonging to a supportive professional community.
- Compensation and benefits: Salary, ancillary benefits and holiday entitlements were consistently mentioned as major factors in job preferences.
- Opportunities for learning and development: Access to organised training, certificates, and professional growth were emphasised as key variables influencing engagement and retention.
- Company culture and values: Responses suggested that a respectful, ethical and purpose-driven organisational culture enhances perceptions of an ideal workplace.

The preliminary observations indicate trends recognised in existing literature regarding Generation Z's workplace preferences, notably the significance of autonomy, possibilities for development, and relational support (Bulut & Maraba, 2021; Mărginean, 2021). Aligning these themes with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) facilitates an understanding of how workplace configurations fulfil intrinsic desires, whereas Social Exchange Theory (SET) elucidates the relational and organisational factors affecting participation.

This step laid the groundwork for systematic coding by identifying patterns and recurring themes within the dataset, so ensuring a thorough and nuanced comprehension of the data before formal coding and theme creation.

## **Step 2: Generating initial codes**

In accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework the subsequent stage was the systematic generation of initial codes from the dataset. Each response to the open-ended survey questions was analysed meticulously, and key attributes were coded to encapsulate the core of participants' perspectives. This phase generated an organised collection of descriptive codes that represent repeating concepts without categorising them into overarching themes.

To provide transparency and traceability, responses were coded inductively, using codes derived from the participants' own language rather than imposed by pre-existing categories. Table 16 below presents representative examples of the coding process.

**Table 17: A Selection of the Coded Data Extracts**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Initial Codes</b>
More flexible hours; I'm stuck to a rigid schedule and no work-at-home opportunities.	Flexible hours Remote work opportunities Flexibility
Work I actually want to do	Job alignment with interests
I spend a lot of time on the train. It would be nice if I could work on the train and have this count as working hours.	Commuting counted as work hours
Different type of work, better pay	Role variety Higher salary
Flexibility and work-life-balance	Flexibility Work-life balance
I go to the office once a week, the rest I work from home. I am in IT consulting, my client is abroad so it's very flexible. I only have one mandatory office day a month. Tbh I think a little more would be great to increase engagement but I love my work life balance now.	Hybrid work model option Flexibility More in-person interaction to increase engagement Work-life balance

The full coding framework, with all responses and their corresponding codes, is provided in Appendix C. This guaranteed that the analysis was methodical and rigorous, establishing the groundwork for the following phase of theme identification.

### Step 3: Identifying Preliminary Themes from Codes

After systematically coding all responses, the next phase entailed reviewing the codes and categorising them into preliminary themes that encapsulate overarching patterns of meaning throughout the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme was defined as a significant aspect of the research question, rather than a mere summary of codes.

The theme names were assigned after the codes were compared, aggregated, and refined to identify underlying connections. Each theme was made from a combination of codes to ensure that it captured the recurring issues raised by multiple participants, rather than mere isolated responses. Table

**Table 18: Development of Preliminary Themes from Codes**

Theme Name	Codes
Flexibility and Autonomy	Flexible hours, Hybrid work model option, Remote work opportunities, Flexible scheduling, Autonomy, Trust
Work-life balance and Well-being	Work-life balance, Mental health support, Employee well-being, Stress management, Boundaries of time off, No weekend work
Compensation and Benefits	Higher salary, Fair pay, Better Benefits, Salary transparency, Paid lunch, Mobility package
Career Progression and Development	Career growth opportunities, Structured training, Professional development programs, Fair evaluation, Job variety / challenge, Merit-based promotion, Certification
Workplace Culture and Social Connection	Communication, Guidance / Mentorship, Good work environment, Recognition, Respect, Social interaction, Team cohesion, Company culture, Being valued

#### **Step 4: Reviewing and Refining Themes**

The next phase involved a careful review of the preliminary themes to ensure that they accurately captured recurring patterns across participants' responses and accurately represented the dataset. This stage included assessing the coherence of each theme, verifying that there was no overlap between themes, and ensuring that all codes were grouped appropriately.

Throughout this process:

1. Flexibility and Autonomy: Confirmed as a distinct theme due to the consistent emphasis on autonomy, hybrid work models, remote work, and flexible hours in multiple responses.

Responses that support this theme:

- "More flexible hours; I'm stuck to a rigid schedule and no work-at-home opportunities."
- "I go to the office once a week, the rest I work from home. I am in IT consulting, my client is abroad so it's very flexible. I only have one mandatory office day a month. Tbh I think a little more would be great to increase engagement but I love my work life balance now."

2. Work-life balance and Well-being: Reviewed to ensure that it encompassed both mental health codes and work-life balance. Stress management, weekend work and the establishment of boundaries for time off were among the topics that were emphasised in certain responses.

Responses that support this theme:

- "Mental health support, flexible working hours and opportunities for growth."
- "Finishing early on a friday (or any day) during summer."

3. Compensation and Benefits: Confirmed that all salary, benefits and additional rewards were included consistently. It was refined to incorporate references to salary, benefits, paid meals, and mobility options.

Responses that support this theme:

- "Higher salary."
- "meal vouchers, group insurance, personal laptop, etc."

4. Career Progression and Development: Ensured that this theme captured opportunities for challenging work, promotion, skill development, and structured training. To ensure clarity, overlapping codes from learning and skill development were incorporated.

Responses that support this theme:

- “Opportunities to get certificates in my field of work.”
- “More variation in the work or being able to challenge myself more.”
- “I truly appreciate the opportunities my current employer provides, especially in honing my craft in gin production. However, an ideal employer might also offer more structured professional development programs, such as masterclasses with international distillers or opportunities to experiment with new botanicals and product innovation. This would allow me to expand my skills and contribute even more creatively to the brand.”

5. Workplace Culture and Social Connection: Refined to include mentorship, recognition social interaction, and team cohesion. The recognition and valuation of duplicate codes were combined.

Responses that support this theme:

- “Since my current position is fully remote I have few to no contact to my coworkers other than work-emails. Something that would bring us closer as a team and make the working environment less „serious/strict“ would be nice.”
- “I think being valued and appreciated even in little things is a very important factor!”

6. Opportunities for Learning and Development: This theme was distinct from career progression, emphasising skill-specific learning, formal training, and certificates.

Responses that support this theme:

- “Training program opportunities.”
- “Better training opportunities to explore to develop skills.”

No codes were left unassigned, and the specificity of participants’ voices was meticulously preserved by merging overlapping concepts. The qualitative analysis is now credible and transparent, as each theme accurately reflects the verbatim language of participants.

## **Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes**

In order to accurately represent the recurring patterns observed in the dataset, each theme was clearly defined and named after the preliminary themes were refined. Definitions were developed to represent the precise language of participants and preserve the depth of their responses.

### **1. Flexibility and Autonomy**

This theme encapsulates the participants' aspiration to have control over the timing, location, and manner of work. It includes preferences for autonomy in task management, hybrid or remote work models, and flexible hours.

Supporting quote:

- "Ability to work from anywhere, so you can travel."

This preference illustrates the autonomy aspect of SDT, indicating that the ability to control the timing and location of task completion enhances intrinsic motivation and engagement. Hybrid models effectively address this need by integrating autonomous task management with opportunities for face-to-face cooperation (Dwivedula, 2024; Nugraha et al., 2025).

### **2. Work-life balance and Well-being**

This theme underscores the importance of achieving a balance between personal and professional responsibilities, which encompasses stress management and mental health support.

Supporting quote:

- "More flexibility, more care for mental health."

Work-life balance initiatives foster both autonomy and competence: autonomy by granting employees control over their personal time, and competence by mitigating burnout and enabling successful performance. Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers a framework for understanding organisational support, as employers that promote well-being encourage mutual involvement and commitment (Salvadorinho et al., 2024).

### **3. Compensation and Benefits**

This theme incorporates financial compensation and supplementary benefits such as paid lunch, health benefits, mobility packages, bonuses, and salary.

Supporting quote:

- “This is somewhat Belgium specific, but we get a mobility package that covers commute costs and a company car. My current employer has a very rigid and not very personal mobility package compared to the industry.”

#### 4. Career Progression and Development

This theme highlights the participants’ desire for structured growth, opportunities for promotion, skill development, and challenging work.

Supporting quote:

- “I truly appreciate the opportunities my current employer provides, especially in honing my craft in gin production. However, an ideal employer might also offer more structured professional development programs, such as masterclasses with international distillers or opportunities to experiment with new botanicals and product innovation. This would allow me to expand my skills and contribute even more creatively to the brand.”

The focus on systematic skill development corresponds with the competence requirement of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Participants regard training and mentorship as vital tools for improving proficiency and involvement, especially in hybrid environments where informal learning opportunities are restricted (Naim, 2021; Borg et al., 2023).

#### 5. Workplace Culture and Social Connection

The social and relational aspects of the work environment, such as mentoring, team cohesion, recognition, respect, and a positive work culture, are captured by this theme.

Supporting quote:

- “Better guidance and open communication.”

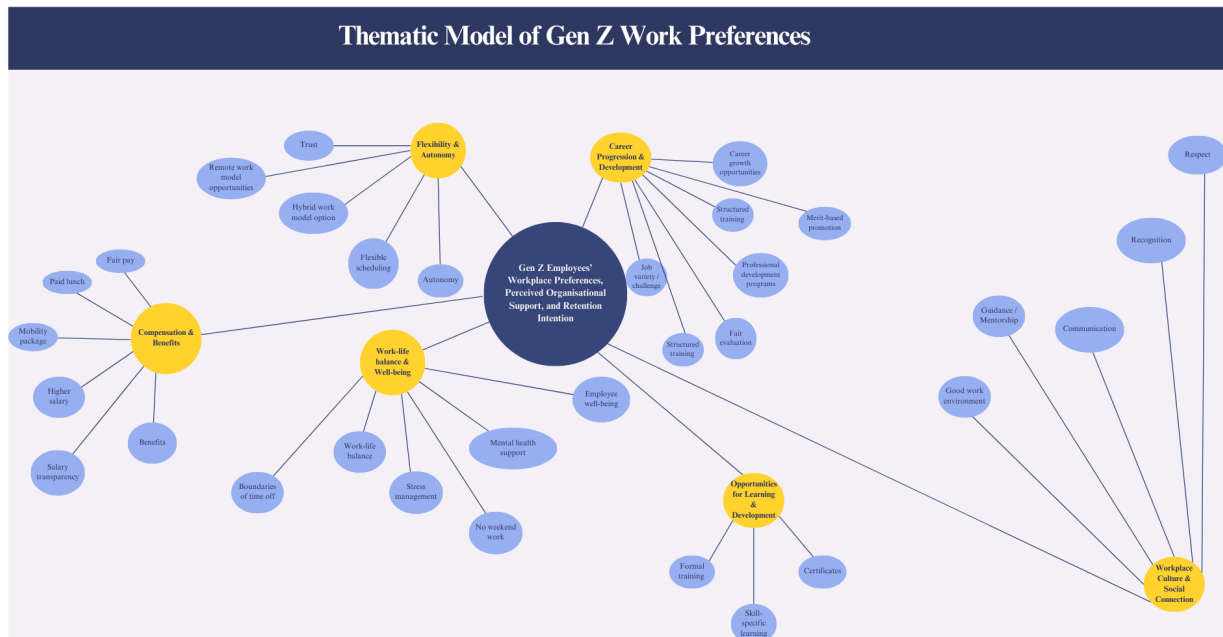
Social connections and mentorship fulfil the relatedness requirement of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Social Exchange Theory (SET) emphasises that a supportive workplace culture, recognition and inclusion foster a sense of reciprocity, hence strengthening employee engagement and intents to remain with the organisation (Mărginean, 2021; Nugraha et al., 2025).

## 6. Opportunities for Learning and Development

This theme encompasses opportunities to obtain certifications, access to structured learning, and skill-specific training.

Supporting quote:

- “Structured professional development programs.”



Source: Built from own Data, Step 5 of Thematic Analysis.

**Figure 8. Thematic Model of Gen Z Preferences**

This thematic model illustrates the six key themes identified through Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase paradigm for thematic analysis. Inductively generated codes from participants’ responses were synthesised into principal themes: Flexibility and Autonomy, Work-life balance and Well-being, Compensation and Benefits, Career Progression and Development, Workplace culture and Social Connection, and Opportunities for Learning and Development. The model visually illustrates how recurrent codes shaped overarching themes, presenting a systematic overview of participants’ workplace preferences.

## Step 6: The Report

In the concluding step, the themes were synthesised with illustrative participant quotations to construct a cohesive narrative linking responses to the research questions. The report ensures that each theme directly pertains to one or more research objectives.

### Research Question 1: Preferences for hybrid versus in-office arrangements

Flexibility and autonomy, work-life balance and well-being, along with opportunities for learning and development, indicate that participants favour hybrid or flexible models to optimise personal time, productivity, and professional growth.

#### Quotes:

- “I go to the office once a week, the rest I work from home. I am in IT consulting, my client is abroad so it’s very flexible. I only have one mandatory office day a month. Tbh I think a little more would be great to increase engagement but I love my work life balance now.”
- “More flexible hours; I’m stuck to a rigid schedule and no work-at-home opportunities.”

The preference for hybrid models embodies the autonomy and competence needs of Self-Determination Theory (SDT): flexibility enables employees to regulate their schedules, yet face-to-face engagement fosters skill development (Bulut & Maraba, 2021; Nugraha et al., 2025).

### Research Question 2: Factors influencing preferences and effects on satisfaction and perceived organisational support

Compensation and benefits, career progression, and workplace culture and social connection indicate that financial rewards, skill development, mentorship, and recognition are essential factors influencing employment satisfaction.

#### Quotes:

- “Opportunities to get certificates in my field of work.”
- “Since my current position is fully remote I have few to no contact to my coworkers other than work-emails. Something that would bring us closer as a team and make the working environment less „serious/strict“ would be nice.”

Compensation, career development, and organisational culture exemplify the interaction between Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Social Exchange Theory (SET). Intrinsic motivators, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, drive engagement, whereas organisational support fosters reciprocal commitment (Dwivedula, 2024; Salvadorinho et al., 2024).

Research Question 3: Relationship between work model preferences and retention intentions  
Responses showed that inflexibility, inadequate work-life balance, or lack of career development chances could adversely impact retention. In contrast, a positive work culture and support enhance employees' propensity to remain with the organisation.

Quotes:

- "Mental health support, flexible working hours and opportunities for growth."
- "I think being valued and appreciated even in little things is a very important factor!"

Positive experiences that fulfil autonomy, competence, and relatedness, along with supportive organisational practices, strengthen retention intentions. Inflexibility or absence of mentorship may diminish involvement, highlighting the combined importance of SDT needs and SET-based reciprocity (Saraiva & Nogueiro, 2025; Nugraha et al., 2025).

The research incorporates direct quotes to provide a transparent and accurate depiction of participants' experiences, highlighting the critical elements that affect Gen Z employees' work preferences, satisfaction and retention intentions.

### 6.8.2 Reflexivity

As the researcher, I acknowledge that my positionality slightly influenced participant recruitment. The survey was mostly distributed via my personal networks. Including LinkedIn, Instagram, and acquaintances, as well as individuals with whom I have no prior connection, sourced from alumni groups of the public facets of these channels. It increases the likelihood that the sample reflects individuals with similar backgrounds and values to my own. However, the study also reached an international audience, including participants from Europe, United States of America, and Asia. This expanded reach reduced the risk of homogeneity, hence promoting diversity in geographic location and perspective.

Concurrently, intentional measures were implemented to reduce personal bias in the analytical process. The survey was structured to ensure anonymity, with no acquisition of names, email addresses, or other identifying information. This ensures that throughout the evaluation of responses, I could not associate them with specific individuals I personally knew, enabling me to concentrate solely on the substance of the participants' answers. I strictly followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis, coding straight from the data instead of relying on preconceived notions. By preserving a transparent coding trail (Appendix C.), I aimed to reconcile the interpretative aspects of qualitative research with a dedication to rigour and reflexive awareness.

### 6.9 Summary of Findings

This study examined the preferences of Generation Z employees regarding hybrid versus in-office work models and their impact on job satisfaction, perceived organisational support (POS), and retention intentions. The survey comprised 113 early-career participants between the ages of 21 and 28, with a majority of them being female (65.5%). The majority of them are presently employed in hybrid work arrangements (53.1%). The patterns observed in the ensuing analyses are contextualised by these demographics.

#### **Work Model Preferences**

The quantitative results suggested that hybrid arrangements were the most preferred work model, while fully remote work was the least prevalent, which was indicative of the limited availability of entry-level roles. Despite the fact that hybrid work became the predominant preference, a Chi-Square analysis did not reveal any significant differences between genders, indicating that the work model preferences of male and female participants are generally similar.

#### **Job Satisfaction**

Participants reported moderately high job satisfaction (Median = 4, Mode = 4). The ANOVA results did not demonstrate any significant differences between hybrid, in-office, and fully remote arrangements when analysed by work model. This suggests that, despite that descriptive statistics suggested a slightly higher level of satisfaction among fully remote participants, the overall satisfaction of the sample is not substantially influenced by work model type alone.

### **Perceived Organisational Support (POS)**

Participants typically reported moderate to high perceptions of organisational support, with the strongest ratings for access to resources and inclusion and relatively lower scores for well-being support. The POS scale exhibited a high level of reliability ( $\alpha = 0.868$ ).

Additionally, the significance of supportive work environments in fostering employee contentment is confirmed by a substantial positive correlation between POS and overall job satisfaction ( $r = .426, p < .001$ ).

### **Retention Intentions**

The most significant factors influencing retention intentions were perceived value and recognition, with participants indicating moderate to high retention intentions overall (Mean = 3.56). Retention intentions were predicted by POS ( $\beta = 0.705, p < .001$ ), representing 49.8% of the variance, as demonstrated by regression analysis. This finding highlights the fact that employees who perceive robust organisational support are considerably more inclined to remain with their current employer.

### **Qualitative Insights**

The quantitative findings were further enriched by the thematic analysis of open-ended responses. Participants' workplace experiences and priorities were reflected in the identification of six key themes:

1. Flexibility and Autonomy  
The ability to determine work hours, location and hybrid/remote options.
2. Work-life balance and Well-being  
The importance of stress management and mental health support in the context of work-life balance and well-being.
3. Compensation and Benefits  
The factors that influence satisfaction, including financial rewards and supplementary benefits.
4. Career Progression and Development  
Structured growth opportunities, skill development, and challenging employment.
5. Workplace Culture and Social Connection  
Mentorship, team cohesion, recognition, and a positive work culture / environment.
6. Opportunities for Learning and Development  
Access to structured training programs, and certifications.

By combining these themes, the quantitative results are complemented, demonstrating that Generation employees prioritise autonomy, flexibility, and supportive work environments.

The results are consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasises autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as well as Social Exchange Theory, which emphasises reciprocal organisational support as a factor in engagement, satisfaction, and retention.

In general, the combined quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests that hybrid work models, in conjunction with strong organisational support and opportunities for growth, are essential for satisfying the preferences and expectations of Generation Z employees in their early careers.

## 7. Discussion

The major objective of this study was to investigate Generation Z's workplace preferences regarding hybrid versus in-office work models and to analyse the impact of intrinsic motivation, relational dynamics, and value alignment on engagement, satisfaction, and retention. The research concentrated on elucidating how the psychological needs, social expectations, and value alignment of Generation Z influence their work preferences, employing Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Person-Organisation Fit Theory as foundational frameworks.

The findings indicate a distinct preference among Generation Z employees for hybrid work models that integrate flexibility with organised in-person interactions. Participants highlighted the significance of autonomy, meaningful work, and honest feedback, alongside the appreciation for mentorship and social engagement opportunities. Hybrid models are regarded as more effective than fully remote or exclusively in-office arrangements in meeting intrinsic psychological needs, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness, in accordance with Self-Determination Theory (Nwoko and Yazdani, 2023; Dwivedula, 2024; Nugraha et al., 2025). This supports the hypothesis that Gen Z employees prioritise autonomy and work-life balance over traditional in-office schedules, addressing Research Question 1 concerning preferred work models.

The findings further contribute to existing research by emphasising the important role of intrinsic motivators in driving engagement and satisfaction. In alignment with the findings of Aggarwal et al. (2020) and Saraiva and Nogueiro (2025), participants reported that autonomy and purpose had a slightly bigger impact on engagement compared to extrinsic factors such as digital innovation or career advancement. The current study suggests that early-career Gen Z employees may have a heightened need for relational support via mentorship and constructive feedback, adding further nuance to the application of Social Exchange Theory (Küçük, 2020; Shakya et al., 2025). Positive reciprocal interactions with supervisors and colleagues enhance commitment and engagement, reinforcing the significance of relational dynamics in modern workplace models.

In addition to intrinsic motivators and relational dynamics, alignment with organisational values has been identified as a crucial factor influencing work preferences, underscoring the role of Person-Organisation Fit in promoting engagement and satisfaction. This will be examined in the next section.

However, the findings revealed several nuances that contribute to the existing literature, specifically addressing Research Question 3 regarding the relational and organisational factors that influence hybrid work preferences. Participants emphasised the psychological safety and constructive feedback in hybrid environments, highlighting the role of relational trust and mentorship for early-career employees (Mărginean, 2021; Mabaso and Manuel, 2024). The findings reinforce and elaborate on Social Exchange Theory by illustrating that positive reciprocal relationships are essential for engagement and for creating a sense of security and inclusion in flexible work arrangements. Moreover, the study further supports the notion that hybrid work can improve inclusivity and well-being for marginalised groups, consistent with the work of de Souza Santos et al. (2024) and Osorio and Madero (2024). It is important to note that flexibility not only serves as a logistical advantage but also as a means to promote equitable workplace experiences. This indicates that hybrid models can address intrinsic psychological needs while also advancing organisational diversity and inclusion objectives. Additionally, the findings suggest that businesses aiming to adopt hybrid models should seek relational and cultural strategies, including mentorship programs and transparent feedback mechanisms, to maximise employee engagement and foster a supportive environment for all staff.

Certain challenges of hybrid work were emphasised, particularly in relation to performance monitoring, informal learning, and sustaining social cohesion (Williams & Shaw, 2024; Bhauryal, 2024). Participants indicated that hybrid arrangements improved autonomy and work-life balance; nevertheless, reduced spontaneous interactions and indistinct boundaries presented risks to engagement and morale, reflecting earlier apprehensions regarding the intricacies of hybrid implementation (Lawrence Xavier & Porwal, 2024; Jancourt, 2020). The findings stress the necessity for deliberate creation of hybrid policies that incorporate mentorship, systematic feedback, and technological assistance to both productivity and employee satisfaction.

Additionally, this research possesses multiple strengths. It synthesises three theoretical frameworks: Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Person-Organisation Fit to offer a comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's workplace preferences. Furthermore, the study also uses empirical data straight from participant responses, ensuring that the findings and discussion are in line. Nonetheless, there are constraints. The sample size and demographic composition may limit generalisability, as the study predominantly examines early-career employees, perhaps failing to represent the preferences of older or more experienced Gen Z workers. Moreover, some subtle elements, such as long-term professional development trajectories, could not be comprehensively evaluated within the study's parameters.

Practically, these findings suggest that businesses seeking to attract and retain Generation Z talent should adopt hybrid work models that harmonise autonomy with organised in-person engagements. Policies must promote mentorship, consistent and constructive feedback, and inclusive leadership to foster relational involvement. Moreover, fostering cultural alignment via purpose-driven work and transparent corporate values can augment dedication and satisfaction. Employers must tackle hybrid-specific problems, such as mitigating the risks of reduced informal connections and ambiguous work-life boundaries, to ensure that hybrid arrangements effectively enhance both productivity and well-being.

In summary, this study illustrates that Generation Z employees show a strong preference for hybrid work models that integrate autonomy, meaningful work, and interpersonal involvement. The results highlight the importance of intrinsic motivators, relational dynamics, and congruence with organisational values in fostering engagement, satisfaction, and retention. Although hybrid arrangements have considerable advantages, issues such as reduced spontaneous interactions and blurred work-life boundaries require careful management. Overall, the research emphasised that flexible work models, supported by mentorship, constructive feedback, and inclusive organisational practices, can improve employee well-being and organisational efficacy.

## 8. Recommendations

The findings of this study regarding Generation Z employees' preferences for hybrid work, relational support, and psychological safety yield the following recommendations for Human Resources (HR). Each recommendation is connected to empirical results and grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Person-Organisation Fit.

### **Continuous Monitoring and Peer Mentorship**

Human Resources should conduct systematic evaluations of hybrid work models for Generation Z employees, employing corporate tools, regular feedback sessions, and other structured methods to gather continuous insights. The findings of the study show that this cohort values autonomy, feedback, and relational support within hybrid work environments (Nwoko & Yazdani, 2023; Küçük, 2020; Shakya et al., 2025). Continuous feedback allows organisations to adjust policies, thereby sustaining flexible and engaging environments that promote commitment, satisfaction, and long-term retention. Establishing a formal peer mentorship program can assist early-career Gen Z employees during their first year of employment. Mentors with comparable age and experience offer guidance, advice, and a direct line of communication with HR, thereby facilitating onboarding, social integration, and professional development. These employees may subsequently act as peer mentors, thereby reinforcing a culture of continuous learning. This approach is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, highlighting the importance of reciprocal relationships in fostering engagement and organisational commitment (Blau, 1964; Küçük, 2020; Shakya et al., 2025). Moreover, mentorship supports Self-Determination Theory by fulfilling the relatedness component, promoting social connection and psychological safety (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

### **Team Cohesion and Social Engagement**

To address the potential decline in spontaneous interactions within hybrid models, HR should actively foster team cohesion and social engagement. Appointing senior team members or leaders to manage group dynamics promotes collaborative coherence, while organised social activities such as team building activities, after-work gatherings, and structured networking events, enhance trust, connectedness, and a positive team ethos (Lawrence Xavier & Porwal, 2024; Jancourt, 2020).

Strong team cohesion supports the relatedness principle of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), while also facilitating motivation and engagement (Nwoko & Yazdani, 2023; Dwivedula, 2024), and simultaneously reinforces reciprocal commitments as outlined by Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Salvadorinho et al., 2024). Cultivating an inclusive and socially supportive environment also aligns with Person-Organisation Fit, as it ensures that employees recognise a congruence between their personal values and the organisational culture (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

### **Structured Feedback and Psychological Safety**

Consistent, transparent, and constructive feedback is crucial for fostering the growth, engagement, and self-efficacy of Gen Z employees. Human Resources should implement regular check-ins, conduct performance evaluations, and utilise digital feedback systems to ensure that employees experience recognition and guidance. Training managers in empathetic communication and promoting open channels for expressing concerns without fear or reprisal can improve psychological safety, which is essential for engagement and well-being (Mărginean, 2021; Mabaso & Manuel, 2024). This recommendation is based on Social Exchange Theory (SET), which asserts that dependable, reciprocal relationships between employees and supervisors strengthen engagement and organisational loyalty (Blau, 1964; Shakya et al., 2025). In addition, structured feedback nurtures the competence requirement of Self-Determination Theory, allowing employees to perceive themselves as effective and supported in their roles (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

### **Integrated Implementation for Retention and Engagement**

These recommendations highlight the necessity of cultural alignment, relational support, and responsiveness in hybrid work environments. Implementing continuous monitoring, mentorship programs, team cohesion initiatives, and structured feedback systems enables HR to foster an environment conducive to attracting, retaining, and engaging Generation Z employees. Theoretical frameworks indicate that positive reciprocal relationships (SET), alignment with organisational values (Person-Organisation Fit), and the fulfilment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (SDT) are central for improving engagement, satisfaction, and retention (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Blau, 1964; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Nwoko & Yazdani, 2023; Shakya et al., 2025).

## 9. Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to investigate the workplace preferences of Generation Z employees, with a particular focus on hybrid versus in-office models, and to investigate the impact of intrinsic motivation, relational support, and organisational alignment on engagement, satisfaction, and retention. The research highlighted a consistent preference for hybrid work structures that balance autonomy with structured in-person interaction, mentorship, and constructive feedback, based on survey data from early-career Gen Z professionals.

Taken together, the results suggest that, although flexibility and independence are highly regarded, relational and cultural dimensions are equally influential in the development of workplace experiences. In this regard, the study provides both theoretical and practical insights. From a theoretical perspective, it illustrates the application of Self-Determination Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Person-Organisation Fit to elucidate the interplay between autonomy, competence, relatedness, and organisational commitment in a hybrid context. In practice, the research converts these insights into actionable HR strategies, such as peer mentorship, structured feedback systems, and initiatives that foster team cohesion and psychological safety.

Concurrently, it is imperative to recognise certain constraints. The study's generalisability may be limited by the fact that it utilised self-reported data from a relatively small sample of early-career employees. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design was able to capture a snapshot in time rather than long-term trends. In the future, research could address these constraints by examining cross-cultural differences in hybrid work preferences among Generation Z, as well as by adopting longitudinal or mixed method approaches.

Ultimately, this study serves as a reminder that Generation Z's retention and engagement necessitate more than just flexible work policies. Organisations that incorporate autonomy with relational support, transparent communication, and value alignment are more likely to foster well-being, motivation, and loyalty among this emerging workforce. In doing so, they not only address the immediate challenges of recruitment and retention but also establish the groundwork for sustainable organisational development in a changing work environment.

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## **Appendix**

### **Appendix A. The Conducted Survey**

#### Section 1:

Title: Exploring Gen Z Preferences for Hybrid Versus In-Office Work in Early Career Roles

Hi there,

My name is Betty Luna, and this is my master's dissertation research on Gen Z employees' preferences for hybrid versus in-office work models. Your participation in my survey would be extremely helpful. Thank you very much in advance:).

Betty Luna Doens

MSc in Human Resource Management at Dublin Business School

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#### Section 2: Consent & Information

##### PROJECT TITLE

Exploring Gen Z Preferences for Hybrid Versus In-Office Work in Early Career Roles

##### RESEARCH BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

You are being invited to take part in a research study exploring the work model preferences of Generation Z employees in entry-level positions. The research focuses on hybrid versus in-office work models and analyses their correlation with job satisfaction, perceived organisational support, and retention intentions. The study specifically focuses on individuals between the ages of 21 and 28 as of 2025. In order to participate in this research, participants must be within this age group.

My name is Betty Luna Doens, and I am conducting this study as part of my Master of Science in Human Resource Management at Dublin Business School (DBS). This research is supervised by Vanessa Hogarty and has received approval from the DBS Research Ethics Committee. The aim of the study is to gain a deeper insight into the experiences of Gen Z employees regarding various work arrangements in the early stages of their careers. Insights from this research may assist organisations in developing work practices that more effectively correspond with the expectations and needs of this generation.

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN

In this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey consisting of multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and short-answer questions pertaining to your current job, work model, job satisfaction, and future aspirations. The questions also encompass fundamental demographic and employment background information.

## TIME COMMITMENT

Completion of the survey should not exceed 10 minutes and necessitate only one session.

## PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or repercussions. You have the option to decline to respond to any question that you do not feel comfortable with, unless the question is marked as required due to its importance for the integrity of the research. To guarantee that the data collected accurately addresses the research objectives, it is imperative to ask these questions. Nevertheless, your anonymity will be fully safeguarded, and no personal identifying information will be collected.

## CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

I do not collect any personally identifiable information, including names, email addresses, or employee IDs. The responses are anonymous and will be maintained in the strictest confidence. The survey does not include any questions that could directly identify you.

The information you provide will be exclusively utilised for the purpose of my MSc dissertation in Human Resource Management at Dublin Business School. The results may be shared in an academic context, such as presentations and submission of my dissertation; however, no participant will be identified in any form of reporting. All data will be securely stored and accessible only to the researcher and supervisor. Data will be disposed of in accordance with DBS ethical guidelines following the completion of the research project.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

I or / and Vanessa Hogarty will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact my supervisor at [vanessa.long@dbs.ie](mailto:vanessa.long@dbs.ie).

## INFORMED CONSENT

By ticking the box below, you are agreeing that you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, that any questions you may have had been satisfactorily addressed, and that your participation is entirely voluntary. You also acknowledge that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. By proceeding, you consent to participate in this research study.

*I confirm that I have read the participant information and agree to participate in this study.*

- Yes, I agree to participate in this study.
  - No, I do not agree. (Exit Page)
- 

### Section 3: Exit Page

In order to proceed you must consent to participate. Thank you for your time.

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### Section 4: Screening & Demographics

1. What is your age?: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are you currently employed in your current role for between 1 & 3 years since graduating?
  - Yes
  - No
3. Is this your first full-time role since graduating?
  - Yes
  - No
4. How long have you been in your current job?
  - Less than 6 months
  - 6-12 months
  - 1-2 years
  - 2-3 years
  - More than 3 years
5. Which work model best describes your current job?
  - Hybrid (mix of remote and in-office)
  - Fully in-office
  - Fully remote

6. What industry do you work in?

- Advertising / Marketing / PR
- Media / Journalism / Publishing
- Information Technology (IT) / Software
- Finance / Banking / Accounting
- Human Resources / Recruitment
- Sales / Business Development
- Customer Service / Support
- Education / Training
- Healthcare
- Engineering / Manufacturing
- Law
- Government / Public Sector
- Retail / E-commerce
- Logistics / Supply Chain
- Real Estate
- Other (please specify)

7. Other - in case your industry was not listed, please specify your industry here.

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8. What country are you currently living in? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

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**Section 5: Work Model Preferences**

10. How satisfied are you with your current work model (hybrid / in-office)?

1      2      3      4      5

Very dissatisfied

Very satisfied



15. To what extent does your current work model make you feel trusted and independent in your role?

1      2      3      4      5

Not at all

Very much

16. Do you feel a sense of connection or belonging to your team in your current work arrangement?

- Yes, strongly
- Somewhat
- Not really
- Not at all
- Not applicable, I work independently

### Section 7: Job Satisfaction & Organisational Support

17. How satisfied are you with your current job overall?

1      2      3      4      5

Very dissatisfied

Very satisfied

18. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your employer?

Statements:                      Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree

18a) My employer values my contributions.

18b) I receive the support I need to do my job well.

18c) My organisation cares about my well-being.

18d) I feel included and respected at work.

18e) I have access to the resources and tools I need.

19. What type or organisational support matters most to you in your current job?

- Flexible working hours
- Open communication with managers
- Opportunities for training and development
- Recognition and reward
- Access to mentors
- Mental health and well-being resources

20. In your opinion what would an ideal employer offer that your current one might not?

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27. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience or preferences regarding your current work model? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section 10: Thank You

Thank You for participating in my study! Your responses are incredibly valuable and greatly assist me in my research on exploring Gen Z's preferences for hybrid versus in-office work models. Thank you once more :)

### **Appendix B. Ethical Consideration & Informed Consent Form Provided By Dublin Business School (Moodle Page) - Blank Version**

#### Information Form and Consent Sheet

#### INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

PROJECT TITLE [Project title goes here]

You are being asked to take part in a research study on...

[Describe the general research background topic and aim(s), say who you are, and who is supervising the research, give the DBS affiliation and, once obtained if required by DBS, that the project has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee]

#### WHAT WILL HAPPEN

In this study, you will be asked to...

(To the extent that it is possible, and in light of your research aims and subject to ethical approval, provide an explanation of the procedures. This explanation must be sufficiently detailed to ensure that participants can provide informed consent. If you cannot fully inform participants (again, subject to ethical approval), you must provide a complete debriefing to participants at the earliest point possible following their participation]

#### TIME COMMITMENT

The study typically takes...

(Let participants know how long their participation is expected to last and, if applicable, the number of sessions)

## PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation required from you. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn / destroyed. You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you. You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study's outcome. A full de-briefing will be given after the study). If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

## CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data I collect does not contain any personal information about you except... [describe as appropriate. Describe your intentions regarding use of the data, for use in your dissertation and e.g., presentation at conferences, publication, etc. In doing so, make clear the extent to which individual participants will or will not be identifiable, as appropriate]

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

I or / and [Supervisor name] will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact my supervisor at .... (provide email and DBS phone].

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE:

PROJECT SUMMARY:

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

## Appendix C. Thematic Analysis on the Qualitative Data

### 6.8 Qualitative Analysis - Detailed coding framework (Step 2)

#### Step 2: Generate Codes

1. Q1 - “In your opinion what would an ideal employer offer that your current one might not?”

Response to Open Ended Question	Codes
More flexible hours; I'm stuck to a rigid schedule and no work-at-home opportunities.	Flexible hours Remote work opportunities Flexibility
Better reward system	Rewards & Recognition
More flexible hybrid working arrangement	Hybrid work model option
In person guidance at the work/ job to be done , in the case If I cannot do a particular task I'd prefer a mentor to help me guide through it .	Access to mentor/mentorship Guidance (on-the-job)
Opportunities to get certificates in my field of work	Recognition Training Certification
More variation in the work or being able to challenge myself more	Variation in workload ( job variety) / Role variety; Challenging work Opportunities for personal growth
This is somewhat Belgium specific, but we get a mobility package that covers commute costs and a company car. My current employer has a very rigid and not very personal mobility package compared to the industry.	Mobility benefits ( flexible mobility package)
Work I actually want to do	Job alignment with interests
Travel opportunities if possible	Travel opportunities

Nothing	/
A recurring session with a business psychologist - can be yearly on the expense of the employer, and thereafter at your own cost. But that would be of great value, for the employee, but also to spot employees who are struggling and are running into a burnout.	Employee well-being
Finishing early on a friday (or any day) during summer	Flexible scheduling; Shorter hours
3 remote work days	Remote work opportunities
Mental health support, flexible working hours and opportunities for growth	Mental health support Flexibility Career growth
More flexible hours and holidays per year	More flexibility in working hours and taking off vacation days
Flexible hours	Flexible hours
More money	Higher salary
more holidays	More vacation days
Can not think of something I don't have right now	/
Since my current position is fully remote I have few to no contact to my coworkers other than work-emails. Something that would bring us closer as a team and make the working environment less „serious/strict“ would be nice.	Social interaction; Team connection
meal vouchers, group insurance, personal laptop, etc.	Benefits
More insights concerning the salary development and access to further education.	Salary Transparency Opportunities for further education
Flexible Workmodel (hybrid)	Hybrid work model (Flexibility)

Proper evaluation. My ideal employer should evaluate us properly regardless of age. Promotion going should be based on performance not age.	Fair evaluation Merit-based promotion
Hybrid work	Hybrid work model (Flexibility)
Ability to work from anywhere, so you can travel	Remote work model
More money	Higher salary
Some way to prevent people from doing less than others.	Better management and overview on employees work
Better training opportunities to explore to develop skills	Training opportunities; Skill development
/	/
Independence	Autonomy
Be positive about your current employer	Employer positivity
Better pay and wfh	Benefits
Paid lunch	Meal benefits / Subsidized lunch
An ideal salary that reflects respect towards our contributions at the workplace, and acknowledgement of concerns that arise due to the same.	Fair pay Respect/recognition
Stability, communication, respect, value, challenge, growth, flexibility, encouraging	Stability Respect Growth Flexibility Communication
better communication	Communication
Better guidance and open communication.	Guidance Open communication

Flexible work hours, the choice to work from home or in the office	Flexible working hours Hybrid work model option
Learning	Opportunities for continuous learning
More flexibility, more care for mental health	Flexibility Care for employees' mental health / well-being
Depends upon the background experience	/
Structured training program	Training program opportunities
more money	Higher salary
I truly appreciate the opportunities my current employer provides, especially in honing my craft in gin production. However, an ideal employer might also offer more structured professional development programs, such as masterclasses with international distillers or opportunities to experiment with new botanicals and product innovation. This would allow me to expand my skills and contribute even more creatively to the brand.	Structured professional development programs Opportunities to expand; production innovation
More access to training to develop	Training program
A faster opportunity for promotion. In my current workplace, these moments are fixed.	Faster promotion opportunities
Facilities better suited for my role, more equipment in office	Better equipment
Salary representing the efforts and performance	Fair pay
N/A	/
A little more compensation	Higher salary
Basic information and guidance, I have been working there	Guidance (on-the-job)

for a longer time, it's a big company with weeks of training but I'm working in a specific shop, every shop has their own rules and that was difficult to manage	
Full remote and more money	Remote work model Higher salary
Higher salary	Higher salary
There is nothing	/

2. Q2 - What could your employer change to make you more likely to stay?"

<b>Response to Open Ended Question</b>	
More availability of mentors, to be able to learn more from experienced colleagues.	Access to mentor/mentorship
Increase wage	Higher salary
More net salary.	Higher salary
More flexibility with time and not restricting to 40 hours a week but 160 hours in 4 weeks.	Flexible working hours / scheduling
Offer any other sort of flexibility at work .	Flexibility
I spend a lot of time on the train. It would be nice if I could work on the train and have this count as working hours.	Commuting counted as work hours
Work that is more challenging	Role variety; Challenging work
Higher pay.	Higher salary
Different type of work, better pay	Role variety Higher salary
Open communication	Open communication

Imbalance between hard working young people and complaining slowworking older people.	Perceived fairness among staff
Increased pay or more employee benefits eg. Pension / health insurance	Higher salary Benefits
Salary improvement	Higher salary
New manager	Change in management
Improve salary and benefits (health insurance etc.)	Higher salary Better salary
Higher salary & more Growth opportunities	Higher salary Growth opportunities
Give more benefits, more fairness with job opportunities and distribution and growth opportunities	Benefits Equal job opportunities Growth opportunities
Lower workload, less manuality in tasks and more flexibility	Flexibility
More responsibilities	More responsibility
More money and increased benefits e.g. health insurance	Higher salary Benefits
Offer a higher salary, more remote work	Higher salary Remote work model
Increased pay and career development	Higher salary Career development opportunities
No work in the weekends	No weekend work
More salary	Higher salary
Increase whatever the reason is that you want to leave	Retention strategies within policy

(within company policy)	
Being young and having the possibility to explore various positions and companies doesn't actually mean my employer could do something.	Career exploration outside employer's control
Nice work environment	Good work atmosphere/ environment
More money and benefits	Higher salary Benefits
Better work ethic among all staff and respect on personal boundaries such as breaks, holiday leave	Better work ethic Respect for boundaries and time off (personal time)
Nothing	/
More personal development	Personal development opportunities
Freedom to choose the projects	Autonomy (in choice of projects)
high evaluation, high salary	High performance evaluation Higher salary
Career development	Career development opportunities
Higher pay. Possibility to change departments	Higher pay Flexibility in changing departments within company
Offer a fully remote position	Fully remote option
More trust and flexibility to employees who show great performance and results	Trust Flexibility
Higher salary + better advantages	Higher salary Benefits
Give me more money	Higher salary

/	/
No Sure	/
More consultation and information about the possibilities for holiday leave.	Consultation on holiday entitlements
Increase in pay and independence	Higher salary Autonomy
Better pay	Higher salary
Increase my salary	Higher salary
Provide a salary in accordance with the recent economy	Fair pay - salary in equivalent to recent economic changes
More home office opportunity	Hybrid model option
Increase in salary, better communication, hybrid office	Higher salary Better / open communication Hybrid work model option
More stability and better communication	Stability Better / open communication
Recognition of work, guidance/training and higher income.	Recognition Guidance Training opportunities Higher salary
Flexible work hours and more growing opportunities	Flexible working hours Personal / career growth opportunities
Benefits	Benefits
Offer more flexibility, improved salary, more independence	Flexibility Higher salary More autonomy

Not really something, for me is it the people's & if I don't have a match with them or feel that I can be myself then it just stops for me.	Good working environment - match with colleagues
Option to work 4/5	4-day week option
Money	Higher salary
Management process	Management practices
More money please	Higher salary
Structured training	Structured training opportunities
Increase pay	Higher salary
more responsibility	More responsibilities
/	/
To make me even more likely to stay long-term, I would appreciate more opportunities for skill development and innovation	Opportunities for Skill development and innovation
Higher position	Advancement opportunities
A higher salary	Higher salary
Nothing for now	/
Promotion/raise	Promotion Raise in salary
He will be changing jobs, so if he stays I would have that security.	Job security
Pay grade	Higher salary
The salary/benefits had to be high	Higher salary Benefits

I'd stay anyways :)	/
Rise wage	Higher salary
Salary	Higher salary

3. Q3 - In your view, what do you think Gen Z most values in a workplace today?"

<b>Response to Open Ended Question</b>	
Work life balance, learning opportunities, career path.	Work-life balance Opportunities for continuous learning Career path opportunities
Work life Balance	Work-life balance
Flexibility	Flexibility
Mental health.	Employee mental health / well-being
Most of them are very much casual.	Casual workplace culture
Flexibility to work comfortably yet still ensuring targets are reached and ensuring communication is still made between employer and employee.	Work flexibility with accountability Maintaining good communication while flexible
Friendly environment - Gen Z are less concerned about the work	Positive / friendly work environment
Flexible working hours, recognition and mental stress awareness .	Flexible working hours Recognition Stress management
Inclusivity	Inclusion / Inclusivity
Flexibility and work-life-balance	Flexibility Work-life balance
Flexibility in all aspects	Flexibility

My generation is not as willing to endure bad conditions out of loyalty for a company. We are looking out for ourselves first and foremost.	Low tolerance for bad / poor work conditions Self-prioritisation over company loyalty
Values, flexibility and visibility	Flexibility Recognition Transparency
Open discussion about topics, opportunity to share personal opinions, openness to innovation	Open communication
Flexibility, Nice/fun colleagues	Flexibility Good relationship with colleagues
Flexibility	Flexibility
The freedom and flexibility to do their job correctly and the sense that they can do it in an independent way without having to be in the office 24/7	Flexibility (hybrid) Autonomy
Flexibility	Flexibility
Flexibility and income	Flexibility Good salary
Flexibility and valuable work	Flexibility Meaningful work
Hybrid option, sports and social activities, positive office culture	Hybrid work model option Positive working environment Sports / social activities
Flexibele hours en location	Flexible hours Flexibility in location (hybrid)
Remote work and flexibility	Remote work Flexibility

Supportive environment, considerate of mental health and the rising pressures.	Positive / Supportive work environment Employee mental health / well-being
Flexibility	Flexibility
Growth, and development opportunities more understanding culter and more flexibility	Opportunity for growth and development Flexibility
Flexibility	Flexibility
Remote work and fringe benefits	Remote work Benefits
Work-life balance	Work-life balance
High salary, remote work	High salary Remote work
Work life balance. The expectation that the work day ends and you are not expected to be available 24hrs a day	Work-life balance
Same values and good salary	Shared values Good salary
-Less fixation on fixed working hours, more focus on results -Hybrid working or being able to work fully remotely is often a must -Mental health & work-life balance	Flexible scheduling Results focused Hybrid work model option Employee mental-health / well-being Work life balance
The flexibility and trust you get in a flexible and modern working environment	Flexibility Autonomy Trust Modern work environment
Honest answer: I believe our generation wants to work as few as possible for as much salary as possible. Not that we are lazy but rather influenced by the possibilities of	Desire for high pay with low workload / minimal work Work-life prioritisation (experiences over

everything we can do. That said, we want to less work an more experiencing/traveling/partying etc. Other than that i guess it is about growth, leadership, responsibility and being in a position where you decide if you take the day off.	work) Growth, leadership autonomy
Flexibility	Flexibility
Having a pleasant work environment with enough pay	Positive / Good work environment Good salary
Flexibility	Flexibility
Mutual respect and consistent communication between employee and employer	Respect Consistent communication / open communication
I think that the extra legal benefits (company car, meal vouchers, etc.) and a good salary will be decisive factors.	Benefits Good salary
Technology	Technology
Flexibility, open communication, money and respect	Flexibility Open communication Good salary Respect
Flexibility, Work Life balance	Flexibility Work-life balance
Flexible hours	Flexible hours
Work-life balance or career	Work-life balance Career development opportunities

Space to give ideas and opinions	Employee Input
Work culture, office environment, flexibility,	Work culture Good office environment Flexibility
I don't think if my thought is typical in Gen Z. For me, evaluation based on performance let the motivation and fulfilling increase.	Evaluation based on performance
Hybrid working, work- life balance, mental health facilities, strong communication and community	Hybrid work model option Work=life balance Employee mental health / well-being care Strong communication Community feeling
Work life balance	Work-life balance
Flexible working hours and remote positions	Flexible working hours Remote work option
Proper evaluation for work done. Not just a steady climb of the corporate ladder by predefined increments, rather, increased salary, bonuses , perks, etc. based off of real performance and deliverables. Also trust to work remotely in a hybrid model. Initiatives for employee well being and mental health. But also financial incentives. Commuting cost time and money for everyone.	Evaluation based on performance Benefits Trust Hybrid / Remote work options Initiative for employee mental health / well-being Coverage of commute time
Flexible hours and being able to work from home (definitely in the marketing sector)	Flexible hours Hybrid work model option
Flexible working hours.	Flexible working hours
Flexibility/Recognition	Flexibility Recognition

Wellbeing	Employee well-being
Better option to do work in their way	Autonomy / flexibility in work methods / task approach
New ways of working based on newly acquired scientific information.	Innovation in work practices
Sense of self	Self-expression at work
Growth & Development	Growth & development opportunities
Good vibes, wfh and no formal clothes	Positive work environment Hybrid work model option Casual dress code
Trust and independence	Trust Autonomy
Flexibility and work-life balance. A need to value our personal space and time just as much as the work we put in towards our survival.	Flexibility Work-life balance
Positive working environment.	Positive work environment
Flexibility, company culture, feeling valued	Flexibility Feeling valued Good company culture
Boundaries, balance, growth	Work-life balance Personal growth opportunities Boundaries
respect and consideration	Respect Consideration

Open-minded approaches of management and leadership, flexibility, and adaptability to a team's requirements and responsibilities.	Open-minded mindset / approaches of management and leadership Adaptability to a team's requirements and responsibilities
Flexible work hours	Flexible working hours
Well being, balance between job and personal life, benefits	Employee well-being Work-life balance Benefits
Better work-life balance, recognition and more opportunities to grow and develop. Pay is also a factor	Work-life balance Recognition Personal growth and skill development opportunities Good salary
Feeling good at work (wellbeing), growth	Employee well-being Positive work environment Opportunities for growth
Not sure, because nowadays people are very fast forward with their upcoming works it's all depends upon the activities	/
Being valued! Not being micromanaged	Being valued No micromanagement
salary, flexibility	Good salary Flexibility
Money	Good salary
Mental health	Employee mental health care
salary, flexibility and recognition	Good salary Flexibility

	Recognition
I think the social aspect	Social interaction / connections
I think Gen Z values a workplace that combines purpose, flexibility, and opportunities for growth. They want to feel that their work contributes to something meaningful, whether that's sustainability, innovation, or social impact. They also appreciate open communication, work-life balance, and environments where their ideas are heard, regardless of age or title. In industries like gin production, this could mean involving younger employees in product innovation, marketing concepts, or sustainability initiatives from an early stage.	Flexibility Opportunities for growth Recognition and feeling valued Meaningful work Open communication Work-life balance Employee input (ideas)
Loyalty and hard work	Loyalty Hard work
Flexibility. I think we have had enough with following a true 9 to 5 job. This generation will redefine the working hours and habits. I value flexibility more than a bigger salary.	Flexibility
A challenge but also recognition	Recognition Job variation; challenge
Hybrid working hours	Hybrid work model option
Challenging tasks	Job variation; challenge
Nice company culture	Good / positive work environment
Hybrid opportunities, not too stressed of a work environment , no off-work duties	Hybrid work model option Stress management at work No outside office hours workload
A good wage which matches with the cost of living in	Good salary

Ireland. Freedom and trust to be able to do your job without constant micro-management. The option of hybrid or fully remote jobs works really well for most people and has been a great introduction which was developed across more companies in Ireland since Covid-19.	Flexibility Autonomy No micromanagement Hybrid or fully remote option
Less stress	Stress management
Flexibility and work-life balance	Flexibility Work-life balance
Recognition and alignment with personal values	Recognition Job alignment with personal values
Work-life balance and relations with people around	Work-life balance Good relationship with colleagues
Remote working and flexibility	Flexibility Remote work option
What any gen Z should value should be a conducive work environment, good pay, career growth and flexibility.	A conducive work environment Good salary Career growth opportunities Flexibility
Respect, understanding, being able to have a say or opinion in decisions. The workplace has an understanding about work/life balance and caters to mental health and well-being.	Respect Employee input Work-life balance Employee mental health / well-being care
Flexibility	Flexibility

4. Q4 - Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience or preferences regarding your current work model?"

Response to Open Ended Question	
I go to the office once a week, the rest I work from home. I am in IT consulting, my client is abroad so it's very flexible. I only have one mandatory office day a month. Tbh I think a little more would be great to increase engagement but I love my work life balance now.	Hybrid work model option Flexibility More in-person interaction to increase engagement Work-life balance
I'm an outlier at my workplace and very much an outsider profile that doesn't typically belong there	Feeling of exclusion
I think being valued and appreciated even in little things is a very important factor!	Being valued and seen as an employee
No everything was listed in previous questions	/
/	/
I focus better at home on administrative tasks with little to no distractions	Hybrid work model option - for better task performance with no to little distraction
I have the option to work remotely 1 day per week but I always go to the office because I don't like to work remotely.	Hybrid work model option
No	/
No	/
I'm working at my families company so this might not be the best example for your survey...	/
It's just too mentally taxing having to go there everyday on days I didn't bargain for because I work on weekends	Hybrid work model option - not having the option could affect an employees' mental health

No	/
Having a (secondary) office near to where you live is a big upside.	Office location option
N/a	/
It's helped me build strong time management and problem-solving skills. Looking ahead, I'd be interested in a model that offers more cross-team interaction, exposure to innovative tools, and opportunities to work on projects that span different regions or industries, as I enjoy learning from diverse perspectives	Skill development Cross-team interaction opportunities
No	/
No thank you bettyluna	/
I currently work part time while doing my higher studies as a teacher-translator, a job I have been a part of much before continuing my studies. I wish the workplace takes more accountability for their employees and offers support in better ways instead of plainly stating their inability to fulfil needs - a sense of « It cannot be helped, it is how it is » which permeates the establishment. It isn't just a matter of hearing us out - the willingness to listen and take action towards uplifting us is lacking. I seek a hybrid model to ensure communication happens on a face to face basis, to be a reminder of our role in the establishment and to respect convenience. I would like to have a workplace where I know my time and work is being respected, and where work ethics are practiced and not simply preached.	Need of employer accountability Lack of employee support Need for active listening and responsiveness Hybrid work model option Respect employees' time and contributions Recognition for the work Authentic work ethics
I think this style of culture is more so about control instead of actual productivity	Control-oriented culture

no	/
Work hard to maintain poor (joking——kinda)	Hard work
-	/
No	/
NA	/
No	/
Few companies have the time or money to train staff and I think it is the biggest contributor to gen z leaving	Lack of training opportunities
No	/
I appreciate the camaraderie among the team and the sense of pride in creating a high-quality product.	Team camaraderie Pride in quality level of work
No	/
It's a large company so the rules are fixed for everybody. This makes it clear how the system works but not always fair when you work harder then other people.	Rigid company rules - Perceived unfairness
No	/
N/A	/
No	/
It's a great job, some might say the salary is minimum but it's fun and that's what counts. Having to work at a shop and not at home also helps with client connections and having fun with colleagues, less distractions than being at home.	Job satisfaction despite pay
Self development is endless, never stop investing in	Continuous self-development

yourself.	
No	/
//	/