

'The role of career expectations on employee engagement among Generation Y in Ireland'

Paula Thornton

Masters in Human Resource Management

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the relationship between career expectations and employee engagement. It focuses on the engagement levels among Generation Y in Ireland and if their career expectations impact on those levels.

The main objective of this research is to investigate if there is a link between high career expectations and low engagement levels. The research will also examine if Generation Y in Ireland have the low engagement levels expected of this generation, and if Generation Y in Ireland value the same workplace attributes as the literature suggests.

The researcher conducted the study with the use of a quantitative online survey. The survey was divided into three parts. The first part was demographic questions, about age, length of service, gender, employment status and industry and level of education. The second section used the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) to measure engagement. The third part of the survey included the questions about career expectations and work attributes, these items were taken from previously used scales by Westerman et al (2010) and Ng et al (2011). The subjects of this dissertation were Generation Y in Ireland.

The findings suggest that there is no significant relationship between employee engagement and career expectations. The results did not support the expectation that Generation Y in Ireland would be disengaged it found the opposite to be true. The findings did indicate the work attributes most important to Generation Y are opportunity for advancement, good people to work for and good people to work with.

The research contributes to the literature review and to the area of employee engagement in Ireland and Generation Y in Ireland. The limitations of this study are; the sample is not random and the number of responses is low. Further research is recommended.

Keywords: Generation Y, Employee Engagement, Work Attributes, Career Expectations

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This section includes the framework for the research including the background of the research and the reason for undertaking research in this area. This section will outline the aims of objectives of the study and the research question.

i. Background and context

In recent years there has been interest in the generational differences that exist in society. We categorize individuals by generation and use this distinction to predict their needs and behaviors. These generational differences are especially obviously in the working environment as almost every company will employ individuals from different generations. For the purposes of this study we will define the generations as follows; Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) Generation X (born 1965-1979) and Generation Y (Born 1980-2000). Each generation has their own influences and experiences that create differences in attitudes and expectations. When a new generation enters the workforce it creates new difficulties for managers. These differences have proved to be a concern for management as they try to meet the needs of multiple generations in the same workforce.

The area of employee engagement has garnered much attention in recent decades. This is because engagement is important for the success of a business. There are research studies that show a correlation between employee engagement and service, quality, safety, retention, sales, profit and total shareholder returns (Kruse, 2012). Engaged employees show emotional attachment to their organization (Markos and Sridevi, 2010), they are enthusiastic about their work, and more productive (Seijts and Crim, 2006), more focused (Albrecht, 2010), deal better with the demands of their job (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2006) they give better service, and they stay in their jobs longer (Kruse, 2012). Research suggests that the more engaged employees are, the more likely their employer is to exceed the industry average in its revenue growth (Markos and Sridevi, 2010).

The second area of interest in this study is Gen Y. Gen Y has come under a barrage of scrutiny in recent years. In a popular online article Tim Urban describes Gen Y as 'delusional,' 'arrogant,' 'entitled,' 'not special' . They are also sometimes referred to as 'GenMe' (Twenge et al, 2010). According to Amble (2003) Generation y have limited loyalty, and they are single minded in their pursuit of career

advancement. Similarly, Budd (2008) refers to Gen Y as ‘fussy job-hoppers’. Tulgan (2009) describes Gen Y as ‘maddening and difficult to manage.’

The rise in attention for Gen Y is no doubt due to their entry into the workforce. According to the literature Generation Y ‘want it all’, they want rapid career advancement, they want responsibility and respect but also guidance and mentoring, they want a good salary and benefits and a good work-life balance and they don’t want to wait around for it. Are Gen Y painted in this light because they have unrealistic expectation for their career and advancement or are they simply a generation that want the best for themselves? I am interested to study if this generation has expectations that clash with reality and if that clash contributes to poor employee engagement. According to research Gen Y have lower levels of engagement then older generations (Maxwell et al, 2010; Boone et al, 2011; Gallup, 2012).

Paul Harvey a University of New Hampshire professor who has researched Gen Y says that ‘a great source of frustration for people with a strong sense of entitlement is unmet expectations. They often feel entitled to a level of respect and rewards that aren’t in line with their actual ability and effort levels, and so they might not get the level of respect and rewards they are expecting’ (cited in Kruse, 2012).

Much of the research into the area of employee engagement focuses on organizational factors that affect engagement such as work environment, leadership, compensation, training, team-work and organizational policies (Anitha,2014). There are very few studies that test if a generation’s career expectations have an effect on an employees’ ‘self-investment’ in an organization. This study wishes to test to what extent expectation has an impact rather than factors determined by the management or organization.

Previous generations of employees valued the security of a job for life, in more recent decades employees have developed different goals. According to Albrecht (2010) employees are moving towards self-reliance rather than reliance on their employers. They place a high value on work-life balance, flexible working arrangements and other employee lead schemes that would have been unheard of in previous generations. These values are especially important to Gen Y. This poses a problem for employers, how can you keep the loyalty of a generation who ‘want it all.’

ii. Research Method

The research method chosen by the researcher will be quantitative research. The researcher chose to use an online questionnaire as the method of research. To measure employee engagement the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) will be used. The literature pertaining to career expectations does not give an appropriate scale that can be replicated by the researcher for the purpose of this study. In the absence of a reliable scale for career expectation the researcher will use a scale unique to this study using a modified

version of two scales. The modified scales that will be used are from research papers by Ng et al (2010) and Westerman et al (2011).

ii. Research Aims

The aim of the study is to determine if there is a link between an employee's career expectation and their engagement levels. The researcher wishes to determine if Generation Y in Ireland have unrealistically high expectations when it comes to their career and if this contributes to poor engagement levels.

iii. Research Question

The research question of the study is 'Do career expectations affect the level of employee engagement in Generation Y?'

Further Research Objectives:

- 1: Is there a difference in expectations between the younger and older members of Generation Y?
- 2: Is there a difference in engagement levels between the younger and older members of Generation Y?
- 3: Do Generation Y in Ireland value the same work attributes commonly favored according to the literature on Generation Y?

iv. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the background and context of the research, the research methods, aims and objectives. The next chapter will review the academic literature and other researcher into the area of employee engagement and career expectations in Generation Y.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

i. Introduction

The literature review will examine the concept of engagement and the benefits to an organization of an engaged workforce. Kahn's (1990) definition of employee engagement is widely used. He defined employee engagement as the 'harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employee and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances' (Kahn, 1990; 694). The review will also explore the research into engagement in Ireland. Secondly this literature will examine Generation Y and their strengths, weaknesses and stereotypes, and how they differ from other generations when it comes to engagement and what workplace attributes they put emphasis on. 'Generation Y' (hereafter referred to as Gen Y) or 'Millennials' refers to anyone born between the 1980s and late 1990's the exact years vary in the literature.

The review will demonstrate how Gen Y has different attitudes and expectations than other generations in the workforce. The review will also show that employee engagement is of vital importance to any organization and that of all the generations Gen Y has the poorest levels of engagement. This is a problem that requires attention by HR professionals as Gen Y will soon be the majority in the workforce.

ii. Employee Engagement

There has been much interest in the topic of employee engagement in recent years. A simple online search of scholarly articles will bring up over 200,000 results for 'employee engagement.' Employee engagement has many definitions. All of which incorporate the employees job satisfaction and how his related to their enthusiasm for their role and commitment to their organization. Employee engagement shows 'the two-way relationship between employer and employee compared to the three constructs: job satisfaction, employee commitment and organizational citizenship behavior' (Markos and Sridevi, 2010). Engagement is seen as a positive and ideal state for employees. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2006) 'engagement is characterized by energy, involvement and efficacy.' 'Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior' (Schauflei and Bakker, 2006; 702).

According to Anitha (2014) ‘when an employee is engaged, he is aware of his responsibility in the business goals and motivates his colleagues alongside, for the success of the organizational goals’. There is plenty of literature on the benefits of an engaged workforce. Engaged employees are; emotionally attached to their organization (Markos and Sridevi, 2010), enthusiastic about their work, more productive (Seijts and Crim, 2006), more focused (Albreact, 2010), deal well with the demands of their job (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2006), and engaged employees have ‘a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities’ (Schaufeli et al, 2003; 3). Not only are engaged employees happier and more productive, it has the knock on effect of increased profitability, growth and customer satisfaction’ (Markos and Sridevi, 2010; 94).

Engagement has become a focus since the relationship between employer and employee has changed over time. In the past the employer had all the power and took little notice of the need of the employee. This has changed since labour has become more skilled, now employers need employees with specific skills and training. ‘These knowledge workers cannot be managed with old styles of totalitarian management’ (Markos and Sridevi, 2010). In the world of business today it is vitally important not only to find employees with the skills needed but to retain them and engage them. Managers now have to keep employees engaged in their job or face reduced productivity, absenteeism or employee turnover.

According to Gallup (2012) there are three types of people in the workforce: engaged employees, not engaged employees, and actively disengaged employees. Engaged employees are ‘enthusiastic and committed, ‘disengaged employees are ‘checked out ‘and ‘they show up but little or no concern about customers, productivity, profitability’ and actively disengaged are distributive and damaging to the company, they ‘monopolize managers’ time; have more on-the-job accidents and have more sick days’ (Gallup, 2012;21). According to Gallup (2012) 70% of workers in the U.S are disengaged and they estimate these employees cost the U.S. between \$450 billion to \$550 billion each year in lost productivity.

iii. Drivers of Engagement

According to Kruse (2012) ‘Employee engagement is the emotional commitment an employee has to the organization and its goals, resulting in the use of discretionary effort’. Employees will only use this discretionary effort when they care about the company they work for and feel valued and engaged. The Corporate Leadership Council (2004) 76% of employees are ‘agnostics’ meaning they are neither engaged or disengaged, they don’t put in any extra effort nor do they slack off their work commitments. There are many factors that affect employee engagement. According to Anitha (2014) these are; compensation, team-work and co-workers, workplace well-being, work environment, training and career development, leadership, and organization policies.

Penna (2007) created a pyramid model that shows engagement as a “Hierarchy of engagement” which is similar to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (see Figure 1.1). At the bottom of the pyramid are our basic needs -pay and benefits. As with Maslow’s theory once an employee satisfied these basic needs, they look to satisfy the needs higher up on the pyramid. Such as development opportunities, promotion and then leadership style and respect and trust from their manager. Finally, when all the lower levels are satisfied the employee will look for meaning and purpose in their work.

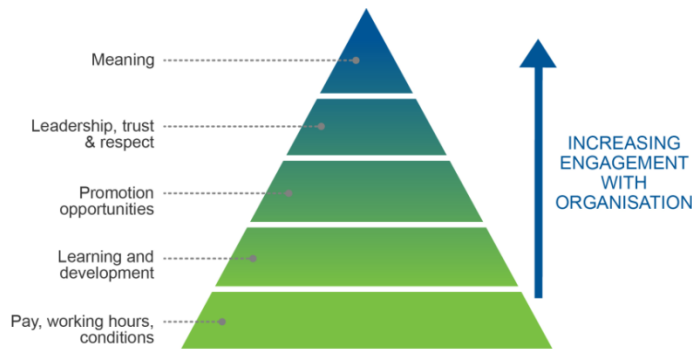


Figure 1.1 Hierarchy of Engagement (Penna, 2007).

Focusing on the factors that determine engagement is mutually beneficial for employee and management. The Corporate Leadership Council (2004) competitive compensation and benefits packages are important in order to attract and retain talent it is in fact other drivers of engagement are better at driving employees to make that extra effort. The top 5 drivers of engagement according to their findings are; connection between work and organizational strategy, importance of job to organizational success, understanding of how to complete work projects, internal communication, and the organization demonstrates strong commitment to diversity (The Corporate Leadership Council, 2004).

iv. Engagement in Ireland

There is little literature available on employee engagement in Ireland. There are two notable studies that had thousands of respondents, by IBEC and HRM Recruit. According to data collected by Towers Watson and IBEC (2011) engagement in Ireland has been increasing in Ireland since 2009 despite the recession. The IBEC (2011) report contains other positive findings about engagement in Ireland; it found that 9/10 respondents are willing to put in extra effort to help their company succeed. However, the research found that while engagement is high, well-being is low. This means that the engagement will not be sustainable and may be forced engagement due to the need to do well at work due to financial commitments and concern over job security. This mismatch between engagement and well-being will eventually lead to disengagement. HRM Recruit conducted a study of engagement among professionals in

Ireland. The study divided respondents by industry; Science, Engineering, IT, HR, Banking, Legal, Marketing etc. When asked 'how to keep me engaged at work' the respondents rated the following statements as most important 'The leadership listening to employees opinions when making decisions' 'The person to whom I report or would be reporting to,' and 'the leadership being calm under pressure'(HRM Recruit,2015). The statement that was rated least important was 'opportunity to travel as part of my role' (HRM Recruit, 2015).

v. **Generation Y**

The Oxford dictionary defines a generation as 'a cohort of people born into and shaped by a particular span of time; including events, trends and developments.' According to Twenge et al (2012) Generational differences are cultural differences; As cultures change over time, the youngest members of society are socialized with new and different values 'Generation Y' (Gen Y) or 'Millennials' refers to anyone born between in the 1980s and late 1990's. The exact years vary in the literature. For the purposes for this study we define Gen Y as those born between 1980 and 2000 (Deloitte, 2011). Gen Y is a generation that has grown up in a time of economic stability, globalization, rapid technology advancement, social media, mobile phones and the internet. They have grown up with the rise of convenience. Online shopping, fast food, google, mobile internet, online banking, just about everything can be done faster.

This generation has more education and career opportunities than any previous generation. It is well known that Gen Y are a highly educated generation but it is not known if high education level has an effect on employee engagement .The Gallup (2013) report found some differences; those with the least formal education were the most engaged, those who had no high school diploma (34% engaged) and those who had completed college (28%) and postgraduate (30%). This could have an implication on career expectations; those with the higher levels of education could have higher expectations for their career and from their employer.

The characteristics of Gen Y in the literature are largely negative, some common descriptions are that they are; 'self-centered' and 'demanding' (Maxwell et al, 2010), 'they have limited loyalty' (Amble, 2003; cited in Treuren and Anderson, 2010), they are 'fussy job-hoppers' (Budd, 2008; cited in Treuren and Anderson,2010) they 'expect immediate reward and gratification' (Kerslake, 2005) and they 'disregard authority figures' and are 'maddening and difficult to manage' (Tulgan, 2009). It is clear that older generations find it difficult to understand and work with Gen Y.

There is a lot of discussion relating to Gen Y's wants and needs, and the list is long. According to the literature Gen Y wants; Regular feedback, coaching and mentoring, meaningful work, training, work-life

balance, swift promotions and reward. There is feeling that this shows unrealistic work expectations and entitlement. According to Ng et al (2010) many of the career goals and expectations among Gen Y are “supersized,” unrealistic, and disconnected between reward and performance. Many feel that Gen Y has a heightened and unwarranted self-esteem. A study by Chao and Gardner (2007) found that nearly 50% of young adults held moderate to high superiority beliefs about themselves. This is no doubt frustrating to previous generations who worked hard for years to gain a promotion. Gen Y expects so much more from their employer than a stable job and a paycheck and if they don’t get it they will go elsewhere.

To manage Gen Y to the best of their abilities we must understand them. Gen Y is the technology and social media generation. They have grown up in the age of globalization, world travel, the internet, Facebook, celebrity, and rapidly changing technology that has made everything happen ‘now’. ‘They have come of age in an era where there is little job security, a competitive environment, and no employment guarantees and so they have just played to the new rules of the employment world’ (Dinnell, 2007; 4). Gen Y attitudes indicate the future of workplace attitudes and trends. This group will be in the workforce for the next 40-50 years. Every generation to come after them will share their expectations and probably expect more and more from their employer. Growing up during a booming economy where information is available instantaneously, Gen Y is often accused of demanding immediate reward and gratification (Kerslake, 2005). According to Kay Ellis a recruitment consultant in New Zealand, Gen Y ‘don’t just want to achieve, they want to be seen to achieve’, Gen Y are more focused on how their career is perceived by peers - working for a glamorous or desirable company- then the job itself (Kerslake, 2005).

Some studies have shown that there are differences between what each generation find important when it comes to work. The Hidden Brain Drain task force conducted a survey in 2008 which asked Generation Y and Baby Boomers to rate the types of rewards at least as important as compensation (Hewlett et al, 2009). The Baby Boomers rated high quality colleagues, an intellectually stimulating workforce and autonomy regarding work tasks as their top 3, Gen Y rated high quality colleagues, flexible working and prospects for advancement as their top 3 (Hewlett et al, 2009). Generation Y have strengths that differ from other generations they are well educated, technology savvy, confident, able to multi-task, and have plenty of energy and Baby Boomers identify their strengths as organizational memory, optimism, and their willingness to work long hours (Gilbert, 2011).

vi. Generation Y Stereotypes

Why does Gen Y expect of much? It is suggested they were probably given too much, too easy and they think they deserve it all. This generation has a sense of entitlement not held by previous generations. The

literature on Gen Y often points to the generations' collective narcissism. According to Westerman et al (2011) this collective narcissism can be attributed to a combination of parenting and cultural or societal conditioning. Economic factors, high advancement in technology, and having 'helicopter parents' contribute to Gen Y's characteristics and to the mentality that they can accomplish or obtain anything they want (Alexander & Sysko, 2013).

There are some theories as to why Gen Y has gained this sense of entitlement. Some suggest that constant praise from parents and 'everyone gets a prize' for participation at school has encouraged this generation to believe they are good at everything. 'Many of these individuals were raised under child-centric parental and educational philosophies that encouraged the development and protection of self-image' (Holt et al., 2012; Twenge et al., 2012 cited in Laird et al, 2014). This increase in self-esteem was not always linked with an actual increase in skill level, giving children a false sense of achievement (Twenge et al, 2001). This has conditioned Gen Y into expecting 'automatic admiration and praise' (Westerman et al, 2011; 5).

Twenge et al (2012) examined self-perceptions of academic ability, writing skill, self-confidence, and leadership potential among 6.5 million US undergraduates between 1966 and 2009. The authors found that Generation Y members rated themselves more favorably than previous generations, but scored worse on aptitude tests. A study by Pitcher and Purcell (1998) found that over one third of students expected to obtain a career related position immediately after graduating, with more males (42%) than females (30%) expecting this. In actuality, expectations are met about 5 or 6 years after graduation (Mabey et al, 1996). Although it would be unjust to say all Gen Y members have this inflated sense of entitlement and self-esteem there is clear evidence to say that this generation view their worth as higher than previous generations. This could be one of the factors that have led to high Gen Y employee turnover- as they may not be getting the recognition and praise they expect.

One of the characteristics that come up frequently when it comes to Gen Y is their 'lack of loyalty'. According to Twenge and Campbell (2007) Gen Y have little loyal to the company they work and change from one company to another due to their heightened level of self-esteem and narcissism. Is it fair to accuse this generation as being disloyal? There are some findings that would suggest that it is. Chao and Gardner (2007) found that nearly 65% of the young adults they studied would likely engage in job surfing behaviors during their early careers. Gallup (2012) says that Gen Y are the most likely of all generations to say they will leave their company in the next 12 months. The Ultimate Software (2015) study also found that Gen Y's idea of loyalty is quite different to older generations, they found 25% of Gen Y think that working somewhere for as little as seven months shows that you are a loyal employee, in contrast 14% of Baby Boomers believe you have to work somewhere more than five years to be a loyal employee.

‘Research implies that older workers may represent a generation of employees who believe that they will be rewarded for their loyalty’ (D’Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008 cited in Boone et al, 2011; 188). According to Alsop (2007) Gen Y don’t move out of the family home until later they have they don’t have the financial responsibility that would hold them back from job-hopping. According to Chao and Gardener (2007 young adults consider job hopping useful gain different experiences in order to decide on a career path.

However, not all find fault with Gen Y’s loyalty, according to Tulgan (2009) they possess a different kind of loyalty than previous generations. They don’t have ‘blind-loyalty’ but rather ‘transactional loyalty,’ meaning they lack an emotional connection but will be loyal to their employer as long as it is their best option. One reason for this lack of loyalty may be traditional and often slow promotional avenues which can leave Gen Y frustrated and restless ‘rather than experience career advancement as a result of years of seniority, Millennials seek advancement based on performance’ (Alsop, 2008;2). ‘This ‘‘impatient to succeed’’ attitude has resulted in an expectation for instant rewards rather than ‘‘paying dues’ (Ng et al, 2010; 292).

Although the literature and media coverage about Gen Y is substantially negative there are some that find positive characteristics in this generation. They are ambitious and driven (Deloitte, 2011) optimistic and socially responsible (Alsop, 2008) confident and assertive (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). ‘Generation Y are becoming more career savvy, they know what they want, they believe they can achieve it and they are actively planning to do just this’ (Deloitte, 2011; 2). According to Kerslake (2005) Gen Y demand a good work life balance however, ‘They will put in extra time for worthy and necessary cause as an exception but not as the rule.’ They are career orientated but they are prepared to work hard, at the expense of their work–life balance, at the early stages in their career when they have fewer commitments (Maxwell et al, 2010). They are a huge asset to an organization and efforts should be made to keep these employees engaged.

vii. Generation Y in Ireland

Does Gen Y in Ireland have the same characteristics and expectations as other countries? The stereotype of Gen Y as well as research in Gen Y is much attributed to American’s young adults (Tulgan, 2009; Gallup, 2012; Alsop, 2008). There is little research into Gen Y in Ireland. However there are a few studies that create an insight into Gen Y in Ireland. In 2011, Deloitte conducted a survey of Gen Y in Ireland. The survey had 500 respondents. They had some interesting findings. They found that 79% of respondents were strategically planning for their future; this % had increased drastically from their 2007 survey when only 32% had a detailed career plan (Deloitte, 2011). However, a GradIreland survey in 2014 found that

only 39 per cent of students surveyed said they had a definite career plan made out for the future (Newenham, 2014). The GradIreland survey (2014) found that over 60% of students surveyed in Ireland stated salary was a major factor in their choice of company. According to this study Irish students do have realistic expectations when it comes to salary. The average salary students expected to earn was €28,313 just is just above the real average graduate salary paid by employers is €27,960 (GradIreland, 2014).

Generation Y use their youth to explore possibilities and gain new experiences, they don't want to jump into life with major responsibility such as marriage, children and home-owning and a steady job (Alsop, 2007). According to Deloitte (2011) 43 per cent of 20-22 year olds in Ireland stated they have plans to emigrate in the near future, while only 27 per cent of 27-28 year olds have plans to emigrate. This shows differences in the attitudes of younger and older groups within Gen Y. This can be seen again within the Deloitte study which found that 89 per cent of the older generation (26-31 year olds) are the most concerned about job security, in comparison with 67 per cent of the 23-24 year olds surveyed (Deloitte, 2011).

viii. Generation Y in the Workforce

In recent years there has been much discussion in the media of the negative characteristics of Gen Y. There are many articles about Gen Y and how they are narcissist, entitled and have unrealistic expectations. This has raised concern from employers about how the attitudes held by Gen Y will affect all aspects the organization. Will this generation cause problems for managers and co-workers and upset organization dynamics. According to Westerman et al (2011) 'managers see this current generation of employees as wanting to do less work for more pay, while expecting more flexibility, work-life balance, and praise'.

Generation Y account for a huge percentage of the current working population. According to Gallup (2012) Gen Y already accounts about one-third of the working population. The expectation and attitudes of this generation show us what is coming in subsequent generations. If we think Gen Y have high expectations 'Generation Z' will be even higher. According to a study by De Has and De Vos (2010) Gen Y expectations are largely unchanged even during times of recession- expectations regarding job content, training, career development, and financial rewards remain high, suggesting that these expectations among young adults are here to stay.

So what can an organization do to improve engagement among the Y generation? According to Maxwell et al (2010) we need to understand Gen Y better. If they are understood the gap between employee expectations and company offering will be reduced. The list of Gen Y needs and expectations is long. As

mentioned previously Gen Y want rapid advancement, work-life balance, meaning to their work, regular praise and feedback, recognition and reward, and training and development. If these expectations are not met a company may find that Gen y become disengaged and restless. Not only do employers have to deal with high expectations in the workplace they have to deal with all the other life options Gen Y have today. There are more options than ever for young people, further education, travelling, working abroad, and training for another career are commonplace (Dinnell, 2007).

According to Knight et al (2006) expectations must be understood, communicated, and consistently measured. There are many suggestions on how companies can manage Gen Y expectations and strengthen their engagement. According to Ng et al (2010) Gen Y placed the greatest importance on individualistic aspects of a job. ‘They had realistic expectations of their first job and salary but were seeking rapid advancement and the development of new skills, while also ensuring a meaningful and satisfying life outside of work’ (Ng et al, 2010;281). One of the attributes ranked highly with Gen Y is training and development. ‘When the employee undergoes a training and learning development programme, his/her confidence builds up in the area of training that motivates them to be more engaged in their job’ (Anitha,2014;312). Not only does training increase the abilities of the employee, it reduces the need for supervision from their immediate managers which will further lead their self-efficacy and commitment to the organization (Markos and Sridevi, 2010).

ix. Criticism of the Literature

Much of what research is available on career expectation has been conducted using the Hospitality and Retail Industries (Knight et al, 2006; Kim, 2008; Hurst and Good, 2009; Maxwell et al, 2010) and undergraduates (Schaufeli et al ,2001; Hurst and Good,2009; Ng et al, 2010; Maxwell et al, 2010; Westerman et al,2011; Armenio et al, 2012; GradIreland, 2014). There is a distinct lack of literature that focuses on career expectation of Gen Y in the workforce. Just measuring expectations of college students before they enter the workforce doesn’t give an accurate measurement of the expectations of this group. Undergraduate age students do not account for the whole generation. Generation Y encompasses current undergraduate age individuals (late teens/early twenty’s) and those up to the age of 35. The Deloitte study (2011) found differences between the younger and older groups within Gen Y. They found that 89 per cent of the older generation –those aged 26-31 was more concerned about job security, in comparison with 67 per cent of the 23-24 year olds surveyed (Deloitte, 2011). Therefore, it can be misleading to assume that the same career expectations are held by individuals aged 15-35.

There are countless studies into the area of engagement worldwide. However, there is a lack of information available about engagement among employees in Ireland. Much of the research into

employee engagement in Ireland is in the form of unpublished dissertations. There are only two notable published studies into employee engaged in Ireland that don't focus on a small group or specific company or industry. Those studies are IBEC (2011) and HRM Recruit (2015). The HRM Recruit study asked employees what would keep them engaged rather than measuring their engagement using an engagement scale. Therefore the study was more about what work attributes employees favour than how engaged they are at work.

x. Conclusion

There is a clear gap in the research when it comes to employee engagement and Gen Y. While there is ample evidence that employee engagement is highly beneficial to business performance there is little to say how different generations fare when it comes to engagement. Failing to recognize the differences between generations can lead to a fragmented workforce. It is evident form the literature that Gen Y is a generation that divides opinion. Some say they are narcissistic, entitled and hard to manage, while others believe they are ambitious, socially responsible and goal oriented. Regardless of opinion this generation is unlike previous generations and will soon be the largest generation in the workforce. Generation Y put heavy importance on work-life balance, training and advancement and regular feedback. Organizations need to use this information to put policies in place that ensure the needs of Gen Y are met. If the needs of Gen Y are ignored they will become disengaged and will be more likely to find employment elsewhere. Research shows that Gen Y has low levels of engagement compared with older generations. This may be due to their unrealistic expectations about the workforce. Gen Y expect a lot from their employer, failing to meet these expectations regardless of feasibility will lead to disengaged and dissatisfied employees. These expectations need to be managed. Employers should make it clear to Gen Y what is expected of them and what they can expect in return.

Gen Y is a highly skilled generation and a huge asset to business. Companies must keep up with the changing times and prepare for the future. 'The key to business success therefore is to understand these human traits, attitude shifts, social trends, and the mindset of the ever-changing customer and employee' (Dinnell, 2007; 3). Although Gen Y is proving difficult to manage they are the future and employers should make the effort to engage them. Their expectations for their careers may be high and sometimes unrealistic but ignoring these expectations will have a negative impact of their engagement. According to Tulgan (2009; 2) 'Gen Y will be more difficult to recruit, retain, motivate and manage than any previous generation, however if managed correctly they have the potential to be the highest performing generation in history'.

Chapter Three

Research Objectives

The objective of this dissertation is to explore the relationship between employee engagement and career expectations in Generation Y.

Employee engagement is an important area for business. The topic of employee engagement has been around since the 1990's. Therefore there are an abundance of research papers into employee engaged and various variables such as industry or geographical area. As the literature shows engaged employees are more productive and are more committed to their organization. There is limited research available into age group as a topic itself and it is usually just a minor exploration in studies into other topics. There is evidence from these papers that the younger age groups in the workforce are less engaged than the older groups. The age group of interest in this dissertation is Generation Y (Gen Y) as mentioned previously Gen Y is anyone aged between 15-35 years of age. Gen Y has become an area of interest in recent years, since the group has entered into the workforce. From the research available on Generation Y it is clear they have attitudes and expectations not held by previous generations. The aim of the dissertation is to determine if there is a relationship between employee engagement and the career expectation of Gen Y.

i. Research Objectives

The research objectives of this research are;

- Research Question: Do career expectations affect the level of engagement in Generation Y?
- Sub Objective 1: Is there a difference in engagement levels between the younger and older members of Generation Y?
- Sub Objective 2: Do Generation Y in Ireland value the same work attributes commonly favored according to the literature? Are preferred work attributes related to Age or Gender?

To address the overall research question we must also look at objectives within the overall question. We are interested in the relationship between age and engagement. The research is interested only in the engagement scores of Generation Y. However, as there is a difference between larger age groups and engagement there may be some difference in engagement and smaller age groups within Gen Y. Secondly

the researcher is interested in the work attributes favored by Gen Y in Ireland. The research sets out a number of attributes generally preferred by Gen Y in general.

ii. Hypotheses

Based on the literature review the following hypotheses are the basis of this research;

- Those with high career expectations will have low engagement scores.
- Generation Y in Ireland will have a low engagement score.
- Generation Y Women are more engaged than men
- The higher age groups within Generation Y will have higher engagement level than the younger groups.
- Generation Y in Ireland will have the same preferred work attributes the previous research suggests.

Chapter 4

Methodology

i. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the research conducted the study and the reasons behind their method choices. The researcher decided on a research method that best suited the topic of study and which was most practical given the time frame and resources available. It is vitally important that the researcher choose the appropriate data collection method to gather the data needed for analysis. For this research quantitative methods were used in line with previous research. The quantitative method chosen was a questionnaire that was created using Google Docs and distributed via email. The questionnaire contained the 17-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) to test employee engagement and a combination of indicators taken from research carried out by Ng et al (2010) and Westerman et al (2011). The data collected from the online questionnaire used will be displayed graphically in chapter 5: Results and Analysis.

ii. Research Philosophies

Research is ‘‘ the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions’ (Oxford Dictionary, 2015). Research is divided into two main types; quantitative and qualitative. Both quantitative and qualitative methods have their own theories, ontological and epistemological positions to consider.

Aliaga and Gunderson (2000) describe Quantitative Research as ‘Explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics),’ (cited in Sage Publications, 2010;1). Quantitative research is a strategy that emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data, it entails a deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research (Bryman, 2012). A deductive approach is aimed at testing a theory while an inductive approach such as qualitative methods are concerned with creating a new theory from the data collected. With deductive theory ‘the researcher, on the basis of what is known about a particular domain, deduces a hypothesis that must then be subjected to empirical scrutiny (Bryman & Bell, 2011. There are four main types of quantitative design; descriptive, correlational, quasi-experimental, and experimental. Quantitative methods use statistics and mathematics to analyze data collected via experiments, questionnaires and polls.

Quantitative methods are rooted in ‘realism’ or ‘positivism’. Positivism the epistemological position that; ‘advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond’ (Bryman & Bell, 2011; 15). Realism is similar to positivism in its view of application of natural science methods to social sciences; it also believes that research uncovers an existing reality not yet discovered. There are some criticisms of a quantitative method of data collection. These include its separation from everyday life by its commitment to controlling situations and variables for validity, there is some doubt over whether the measure developed by researchers are accurate but rather are assumed to be accurate and it creates a static reality with its findings that are removed, again from everyday lives of participants (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

‘Qualitative research can be construed as a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data’ (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Qualitative research uses an inductive approach. An inductive approach is concerned with the generation of new theory whereas deductive approach is concerned with the testing on an existing theory. There are four main types of qualitative research; phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and case study. Qualitative data is commonly collected using interviews face to face or over the telephone and focus groups. Qualitative

methods are rooted in ‘interpretivism’. Interpretivism is the view that a strategy is required that acknowledges the differences that exist between people and the objects of the natural sciences; the research should look outside their own preconceptions (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

After considering the competing paradigms in research the researcher decided that a pragmatic approach was best. Considering the research question and methods used by previous researchers in the area that the study would be conducted using quantitative research. It is the goal of the research to find answers to the research question that can be generalized to the population.

By using an existing questionnaire such as the UWES the research can insure the items are both reliable and valid. Reliability is concerned with if the study is repeatable and consistent and validity is concerned with whether the conclusions made in the study have integrity (Bryman, 2012).

iii. Previous Research

The topic of engagement has been very popular in research in recent years. Therefore, there are many quantitative engagement scales that have been tested for reliability and validity. Some notable researchers on the topic include Boone et al (2011), Robinson et al (2004) and Gallup (2011) Schaufeli et al (2001). Boone et al (2011) used a quantitative survey that included 27 indicators ‘related to several known aspects of job quality, such as supervisor support, the extent to which the employee has autonomy on the job and/or too much red tape, schedule input and flexibility, career development opportunities, and perceptions of fairness in the treatment of different types of employees’ (Boone et al, 2011; 182). They used a Likert scale from 1-5 to determine how much each participant agreed or disagreed with the statements. Similarly Robinson et al (2004) used a scale containing 12 indicators. The respondents were asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with statements eg. ‘I speak highly of this organization to my friends’ or ‘I always do more than is actually required’.

The research with the largest number of respondents was conducted was by Gallup (2011). They devised a set of 12 questions the ‘Q12’ based on years’ worth of research into the workplace. The survey has been administered 25 million employees in over 195 countries worldwide since the late 1990’s (Gallup, 2011). The respondents are asked whether they agree or disagree with the statements such as; ‘I know what is expected of me at work’, ‘In the last 7 days I have received recognition or praise for doing good work’, ‘My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person’, ‘This past year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow’ (Gallup, 2011; 19).

iv. Research Design

The engagement portion of this study will be conducted using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Schaufeli et al (2001) created the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) to measure the opposite of employee burnout - employee engagement. The UWES is divided into 3 parts that each measures an aspect of engagement. These three aspects are vigor, dedication and absorption. The UWES scale is comprised of 17 items. All items are scored on a 7-point frequency rating scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). The UWES scale is widely used and has proven validity (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2006).

According to Schaufeli et al (2001; 4) ‘Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties’. ‘Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge’ (Schaufeli et al, 2001; 4). And finally absorption ‘is characterized by being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work’(Schaufeli et al,2001 ;4). (For list of items in each section see Appendix 2).

The literature pertaining to career expectations does not give an appropriate scale that can be replicated for the purpose of this study. Stephen et al (1998) created a ‘Career Success Expectations Scale’ however, this scale only contains questions relating to expectation an MBA will have on participant’s careers. Wan et al (2014) created a scale ‘Expectations of Future Careers in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry Questionnaire’ which includes some relevant items such as ‘Five years after graduation from this school, what level of position do you expect to have?’ and ‘What salary do you expect to be paid upon graduation?’ however the scale strongly related to the tourism industry and is aimed at undergraduates.

In the absence of a career expectation scale for generation y in the workforce we will use a scale unique to this study using a modified version of two scales. The modified scales that will be used are from research papers by Ng et al (2010) and Westerman et al (2011).

Ng et al (2010) conducted a study of career expectations among Gen Y undergraduates in Canada using data collected by consulting firms. They used only the data given by Gen Y respondents and only used the indicators that related to career expectations and advancement, pay and benefits, and work attributes. For career expectations the indicators used were 1. Are you willing to accept a job that is not ideal, but is a good starting point for your career? and 2. Would you like to find an organization where you could spend your whole career? For career advancement they were asked how soon they expect to be promoted after they have found employment after graduating college. For pay expectation they were asked to enter a

dollar amount of what they expect to earn in their first job after graduating college and secondly what amount they expect to earn 5 years after graduation. To measure work the importance of work attribute the asked the respondents to rate the importance of 16 items on a scale 1-5. Some examples of the items respondents were asked to rate are; job security, work life balance, challenging work, good people to work with and good variety of work.

Westerman et al (2011) conducted research on narcissism and career expectations among millennial students. They surveyed undergraduate business and psychology students in the U.S. to measure expectations the respondents were asked to rate 8 items on a 7 point scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' The questions were phrased as such "It will be difficult for me to find a career job after graduation" and "Consider your search for a career job after graduation; do you think your job search will be easier or harder than that of your classmates." For salary expectations the respondents were asked to rate 4 items about starting salary and salary 5 years after graduation similar to Ng et al (2010). To measure promotion expectations the respondents were asked 2 items. These items were the following: "In the first 5 years of your career, how many times do you expect to be promoted?" "How quickly do you expect to be promoted in the first few years of your career?"

The scales used by Ng et al (2010) and Westerman et al (2011) were developed for use of undergraduates. Therefore, for the purposes of this study we must adapt some of the indicators to be used on those who have entered the workforce and have possibly been in the workforce for some years. Not all the indicators in each of these is relevant to this study so therefore we will be using parts of each scale and modifying some items. For example, items from the Westerman (2010) study such as 'It will be difficult for me to find a career job after graduation' and "Consider your search for a career job after graduation; do you think your job search will be easier or harder than that of your classmates' are not relevant. UWES and Westerman et al all use a 7 point Likert scale and, Ng et al uses a 5 point Likert scale.

v. Research Strategy

This combination of three above mentioned scales were used to generate quantitative survey to measure employee engagement and career expectations in Gen Y. The online survey was created using Google Docs. This web-based survey generator was economical and easy to use and suited the needs of the researcher. The survey had three parts. The first part was demographic questions, about age, length of service, gender, employment status and industry and level of education. The survey then included the 17 point UWES scales to measure engagement. The third part of the study included the questions about career expectations and work attributes. To ensure anonymity the respondents were not asked any

identifiable or personal questions. The survey was distributed via email. The email contained some information about the study as well as assurances about anonymity and a link to the online survey which they could click on if they consented to take part. When an acceptable number of surveys had been completed the data was analyzed using the statistical analysis tool SPSS.

vi. Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to ensure the online questionnaire worked as it was supposed to. The participants in the pilot study were asked to check if the link to the questionnaire worked, that the questions were easy to understand, instructions for answering the questions were clear, and to check for grammar and spelling mistakes.

vii. Sampling

Sampling is concerned with the selection of a subset of individuals from a population. The population in this case is Generation Y in Ireland. This population has over a million individuals. Therefore, a much smaller subset of this population should be selected. Due to the resources available and time frame the research shoes to avail of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a method on non-probability sampling. It was chosen as it is time and cost effective and takes advantage of an easy accessible group. The researcher contacted individuals in the National College of Ireland to take pat via email. The questionnaire was forwarded to approx. 64 distribution lists within the college. The questionnaire was also send via email to a contact in an IT company, a Financial Services company and a Pharmaceutical company. Due to the methods undertaken there was no control over the response rate for the questionnaire.

viii. Ethical considerations

By using a quantitative survey method we could illuminate any uninformed consent issues. The survey contained a disclaimer which informed potential participants about the nature of the study. The disclaimer also mentioned that the information gathered was anonymous and will be used solely for the purpose of this research. Participation in the survey was not mandatory; participants were invited to take part only if they wished.

By using convenience sampling there are ethical considerations with regard to who we selected to sample. To avoid any bias we included every course on the National College of Ireland email distribution lists. This would target those in undergraduate and postgraduate, full and part time courses. No students were

deliberately excluded from taking part. By using social media we were directly targeting contact of the researchers which shows bias. To combat this we asked that the survey be shared with others unknown to the researcher to create a 'snowball' sampling effect.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study are; the sample is not random and the number of responses is low. The sample is not random as the study was conducted using convenience sampling methods. We were unable to sample the total population of Generation Y in Ireland as this group has potentially a million or more individuals. Therefore, it would be impossible to access a list of the population to use in probability sampling methods. The use of convenience sampling means that the study cannot be generalized for the total population. The study received 124 responses. This number is low considering the total population is so high. However, due to the resources available that number was what was achievable in the time frame of the study.

Chapter Five

Results and Analysis

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodology that was used to gather the data needed to answer the research question. This chapter will present the results of the data collected using the quantitative survey designed for this research. The data was gathered using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 17 questions and was answered by 124 respondents. As the questionnaire was distributed via email and passed on by initial recipients the response rate is unknown. The data analyzed in this chapter was gathered purely from the online questionnaire used. The results will be displayed graphically.

The results are as follows;

Demographics

Questions 1-7 were aimed at gathering background information on the participants. These questions were concerned with age, gender, employment status, length of service, industry of employment and education level. As the study is concerned with only those in Ireland Question 3 asked if the participant was

currently living in Ireland. Those who answered no to Question 3 were removed from the data. After those not living in Ireland were removed there were 107 participants. **See Table 1.1.**

Table 1.1 Are you currently living in Ireland?

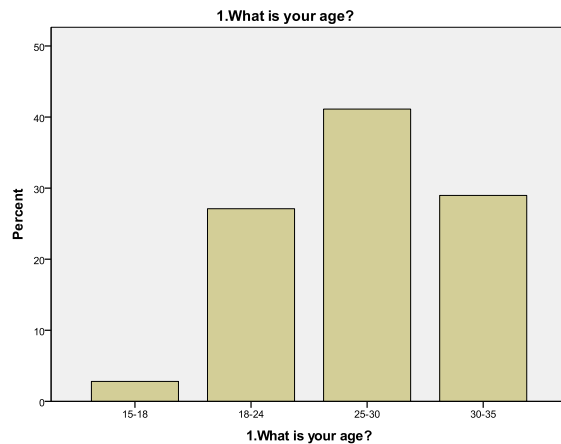
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	107	86.3	86.3	86.3
	No	17	13.7	13.7	100.0
Total		124	100.0	100.0	

For **Figures 1.2-1.7** the x-axis displays the independent variable and the y-axis displays the percentage frequency of respondents. **Figure 1.3** shows the frequency of each age group that took part in the study. As the study is concerned only with those individuals within Generation Y (Gen Y) the age target range is 15-35 years of age. Respondents were not given the option to select an age not within this range. The most common age of respondent was 25-30 years old. Due to the researcher's interest in the working population of Gen Y the poor response rate for the age group 15-18 is inconsequential. **Figure 1.2** shows the number of male to female respondents was almost equal. There were 51 male and 56 female respondents in this study.

Figure 1.2: Gender



Figure 1.3: Age



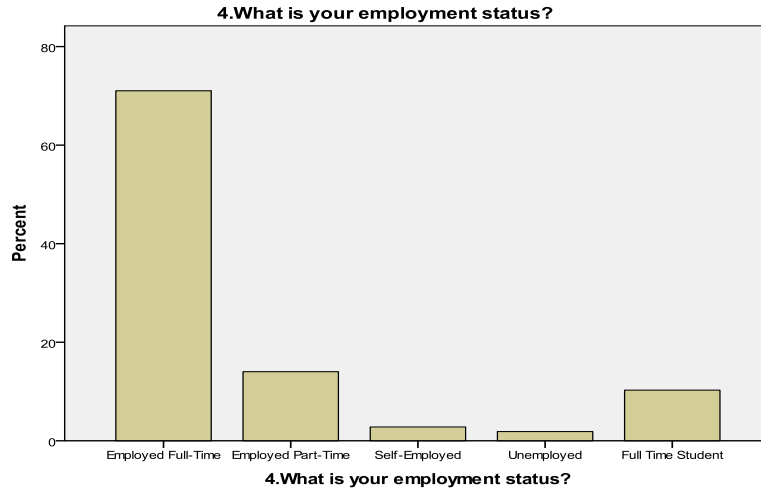


Figure 1.4:Employment Status

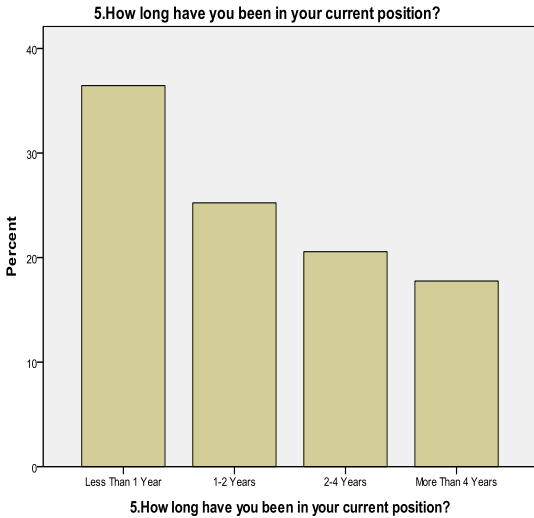


Figure 1.5: Length of Service

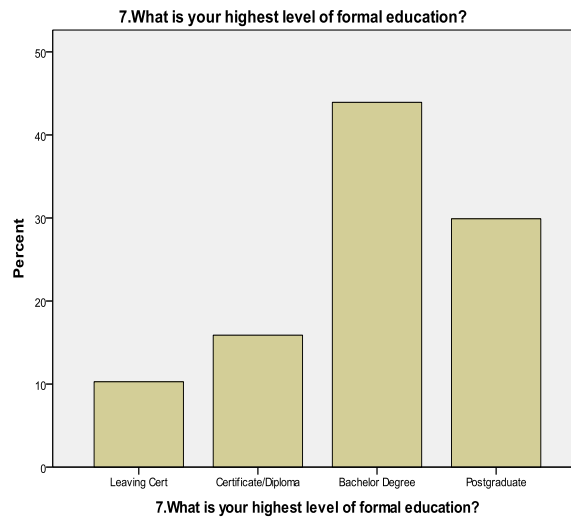
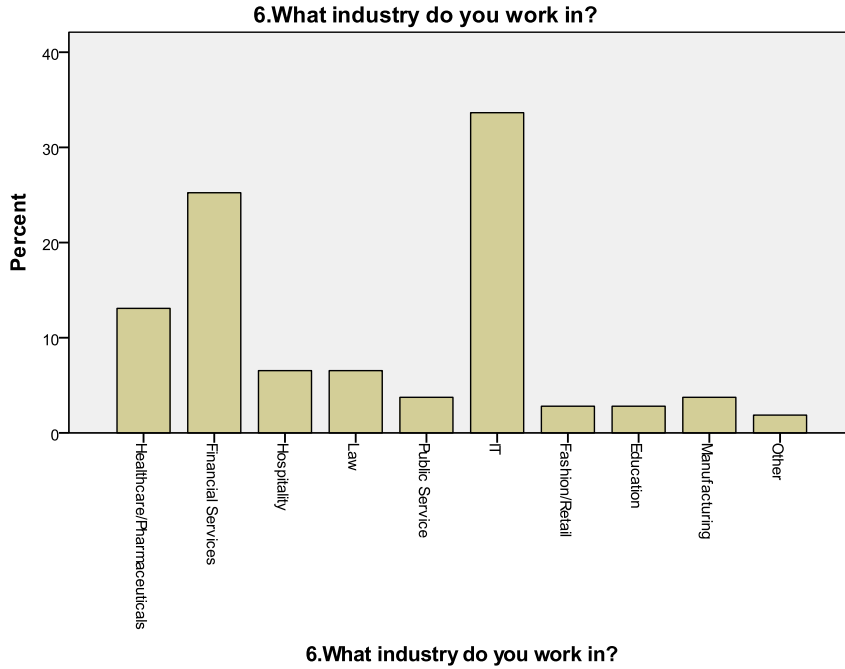


Figure 1.6: Education Level

Figure 1.4 illustrates the employment status of respondents. The graph shows that 70% of respondents are employed full-time. **Figure 1.5** displays the length of service of the respondents. And finally **Figure 1.6** shows the education level of respondents and **Figure 1.7** show the percentage of respondents by industry.

Figure 1.7: Industry



Reliability Tests

In order to test the hypotheses a number of tests were performed on the data. The test used to check reliability in research is the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency, or how closely related a group of items are. The three different scales used in the questionnaire were tested for reliability: The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), Work Attributes and Career Expectations. The results of the Cronbach's Alpha tests are depicted in the **Tables 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4**. A score over 0.70 indicates high internal reliability.

The UWES is the only scale that demonstrates high internal reliability in this case. The UWES has been proven to be reliable and replicated many times unlike the other scales which indicators are from a combination of scales and therefore unique to this research. The alpha coefficient for the UWES's 17 items is **0.944** (See **Table 1.2**). The score demonstrates high level of reliability. The low scores for career

expectations and work attributes (**Table 1.4**) could be due to low number of items or poor reliability between the items.

Table 1.2: Reliability Statistics: UWES

	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Cronbach's Alpha	.944	17

Table 1.3: Reliability Statistics: Work Attributes

	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Cronbach's Alpha	.595	16

Table 1.4: Reliability Statistics: Career Expectations

	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Cronbach's Alpha	.346	9

Work Attributes

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of 16 work attributes; opportunity for advancement, good people to work with, good people to for work for; training, challenging work, work-life balance, good variety of work, good health and benefits, good initial starting salary, opportunity to make a social impact, opportunity to make a personal impact, organizations leader in field, organization is committed to diversity, organization is committed to social responsibility, job security and opportunity to travel.

The means of each work attribute were calculated to show the most and least popular. The results show that the rated highest attributes were opportunity for advancement, good people to work with and good

people to work for. See **Table 1.5**. The attributes rated least favourably were opportunity to travel, Organisation is committed to diversity and organisation is committed to social responsibility. See **Table 1.6**. Other attributes that rated highly but were not in the top three were good variety of work, training opportunities and work/life balance. **Tables 1.7, 1.8 and 1.9** show the gender differences in attribute preferences.

Table 1.5: Highest Rated Attributes

		Opportunity for advancement	Good people to work with	Good people to work for
N	Valid	107	107	107
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		4.45	4.54	4.48

Table 1.6: Lowest Rated Attributes

		Opportunity to Travel	Organisation is committed to diversity	Organisation is committed to social responsibility.
N	Valid	107	107	107
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		2.93	3.29	3.15

Table 1.7: Other Preferred Attributes

		Good variety of work	Work/life balance	Training
N	Valid	107	107	107
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		4.27	4.35	4.24

Table 1.8: Gender differences-Attributes

		Organisation is committed to Diversity	Organisation is committed to social responsibility	Opportunity to make a social impact	Opportunity to make a personal Impact
Mean	Males	3.08	2.90	3.00	3.67
Mean	Females	3.48	3.38	3.55	4.13

Table 1.9: Highest rated attributes/Gender

		Good variety of work	Opportunity for advancement
Mean	Males	3.70	4.57
Mean	Females	4.70	4.34

Employee Engagement- The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)

To measure engagement the research used the 17 item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The scale is broken down into three sections; vigor, dedication and absorption. The respondents answer each item on a 7-point Likert scale. The respondents were asked to rate how often they felt this way at work by choosing an option from the following; never, almost never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often or always. In addition to scorings of never =1, almost never=2, rarely=3, sometimes=4, often=5, very often=6 and always=7. The scores can be interpreted as the below in terms of time.

- 1 to 1.99 (once a year or less)
- 2 to 2.99 (at least once a year)
- 3 to 3.99 (at least once a month)
- 4 to 4.99 (at least a couple of times a month)
- 5 to 5.99 (at least once a week)
- 6 to 7 (a couple of times per week or daily),(Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

The UWES is divided into three parts vigor, dedication and absorption (See appendix 2). However, for this study we are only interested in the engagement level as a whole. Engagement Level was tested by computing the 17 item scale into one variable. The overall mean can be seen in Table 1.10. The mean score is 74.99. The minimum score is 17 and maximum is 119. This shows a high overall level of engagement.

Table 1.10: Engagement Score

N	Valid	106
	Missing	1
Median		77.0000
Minimum		17.00
Maximum		112.00

UWES and Gender

The hypothesis is ‘there is a relationship between engagement level and gender’. There were 51 male respondents and 55 female respondents. The mean engagement level for men is 72.11 and for women is 77.65 (See Table 1.11). This shows a difference between the engagement level of males and females, the following statistical test will determine if the difference significant.

Table 1.11: Group Statistics Gender

2. What is your gender?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
UWES	Male	51	72.1176	16.75667	2.34640
	Female	55	77.6545	20.21937	2.72638

Normality Tests

Tests of normality compare the sample distribution to a normal curve. For tests of normality on samples of (n = 3- 2000) we use the Shapiro Wilks test. The sample for this research (n=107). The Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to examine if the distribution of the UWES variable had normal distribution. The histogram (Figure 1.10) illustrates the distribution curve.

Shapiro-Wilk results are presented in Table 1.12. The third column shows the significance of the result. The Shapiro-Wilk test shows the sig. is 0.19. This proves that the distribution is normal for UWES. When

distribution is normal we use the Independent Sample T-test to test for significance. The second column of **Table 1.13** shows the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances. The Levene's value is **p=0.74** which indicates that the variance between the two groups, males and females is the same. Column 5 indicates the significance between the two groups (**sig-two tailed**). To do this we check the p-value, which is the probability of a Type 1 error. If the p-value is (**<0.05**) we do not reject the null hypothesis. If the p-value is (**>0.05**) we can assume there is a relationship between the variables. The Independent Samples T-Test (**Table 1.13**) shows a **sig. 2-tailed value of 0.129**. Therefore, we can assume that the relationship between engagement level and gender is insignificant.

Table 1.12: Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
UWES	.056	106	.200*	.983	106	.191

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

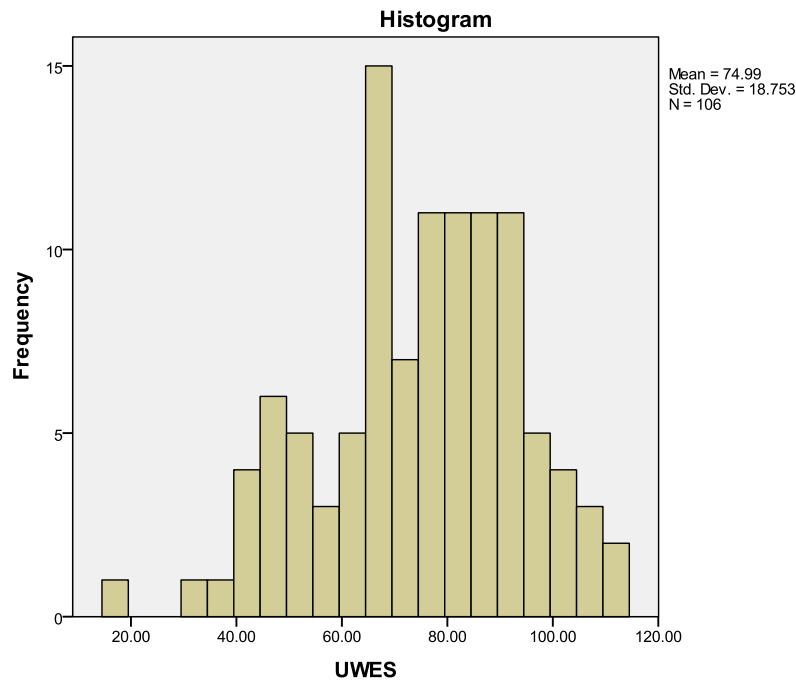


Table 1.13:Independent Samples Test: UWES & Gender

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
UWES	Equal variances assumed	3.251	.074	-1.528	104	.129	-5.53690	3.62258	-12.72061	1.64681
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.539	102.743	.127	-5.53690	3.59705	-12.67101	1.59721

UWES and Age

The hypothesis is ‘there is a relationship between engagement level and age’. For more information on frequency of age see **Figure 1.3**. The mean for each age group are as follows; 15-18 (82.66), 18-24 (75.24), 25-30 (72.83) and 30-35 had a mean score of (77.00). Due to the very low number of respondents for the 15-18 age group (N=3) the results are likely to be skewed. Therefore we will take the highest score to be that of the 30-35 age groups. Although there is some variation of scores between the age groups we must test for significance.

1. What is your age?			Statistic	Std. Error
UWES	15-18	Mean	82.6667	7.33333
	18-24	Mean	75.2414	3.96309
	25-30	Mean	72.8372	3.22194
	30-35	Mean	77.0000	2.22401

Table 1.14: Engagement By Age Group

The Shapiro-Wilk test shows the value is **p=0.191** (See **Table 1.12**) therefore the distribution is normal. When distribution is normal and there are more than 2 variables such as age we use an ANOVA test.

The third column of **Table 1.15** shows the Levene's Test for Homogeneity of Variances. The Levene's value is **p=0.009** which indicates that the variance between the 4 age groups is not the same. Column 5 in **Table 1.19** indicates the significance between the two groups (**sig**). To do this we check the p –value, which is the probability of a Type 1 error. If the p-value is (**<0.05**) we do not reject the null hypothesis. If the p-value is (**>0.05**) we can assume there is a relationship between the variables. The ANOVA (**Table 1.16**) shows a **sig. value of 0.704**. Therefore, we can assume that the relationship between engagement level and age is insignificant.

Table 1.15: Test of Homogeneity of Variances

UWES

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
4.074	3	102	.009

Table 1.16: ANOVA

UWES

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	503.153	3	167.718	.470	.704
Within Groups	36423.837	102	357.096		
Total	36926.991	105			

Career Expectations

The results of the items relating to career expectations can be seen in Table -show Generation Y in Ireland have high levels of confidence in their abilities to find work, 68.2% believe they would have no difficulty in being hired in a new role (See **Table 1.18**). Not only do they have confidence in their ability to find work, overwhelmingly 46.7% believe they would be hired over their peers (See **Table 1.17**).

Table 1.17: Do you think it is easier or harder for you to find a new role than it is for your peers?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Easier	50	46.7	46.7	46.7
Harder	17	15.9	15.9	62.6
Don't Know	40	37.4	37.4	100.0
Total	107	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.18: Do you think it would be difficult for you to be hired in a new role?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	16	15.0	15.0	15.0
No	73	68.2	68.2	83.2
Don't Know	18	16.8	16.8	100.0
Total	107	100.0	100.0	

The results of the questions on salary expectations can be seen in Tables **1.19-1.21**. The results show that 44.9% was less than they expected to receive. 47.7% feel they do not receive the salary they deserve and 41.1% expect their salary to increase by over €10,000 in the next 5 years.

Table 1.19: Was your initial starting salary more or less than you expected?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid More	39	36.4	36.4	36.4
Less	48	44.9	44.9	81.3
Dont Know	20	18.7	18.7	100.0
Total	107	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.20: Do you believe you receive the salary you deserve?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	46	43.0	43.0	43.0
No	51	47.7	47.7	90.7
Dont Know	10	9.3	9.3	100.0
Total	107	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.21: By how much do you expect your salary to increase in the next 5 years?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1000-2000	4	3.7	3.7	3.7
2000-5000	20	18.7	18.7	22.4
5000-10,000	19	17.8	17.8	40.2
Over 10,000	44	41.1	41.1	81.3
Don't Know	20	18.7	18.7	100.0
Total	107	100.0	100.0	

Figures 1.9-1.11 show the promotion expectations of the respondents. The results show that the majority expect two promotions in the next 5 years. 14% expect three or more promotions. In a new role most of the respondents expect a promotion in the first 1-2 years. Only about 5% expect a promotion in the first 6

months. Finally when asked if they believe they are more likely to be promoted over their peers 68.2% said they would be more likely. The final question was if respondents would like to find a company to spend their whole career. **Figure 1.12** shows that 45% would like to find a company where they could stay long term.

Figure 1.9: Promoted next 5 Years

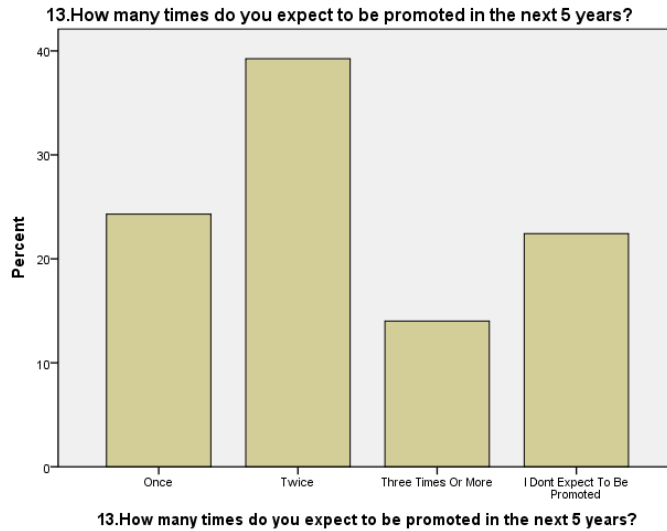


Figure 1.10: Promoted New Role

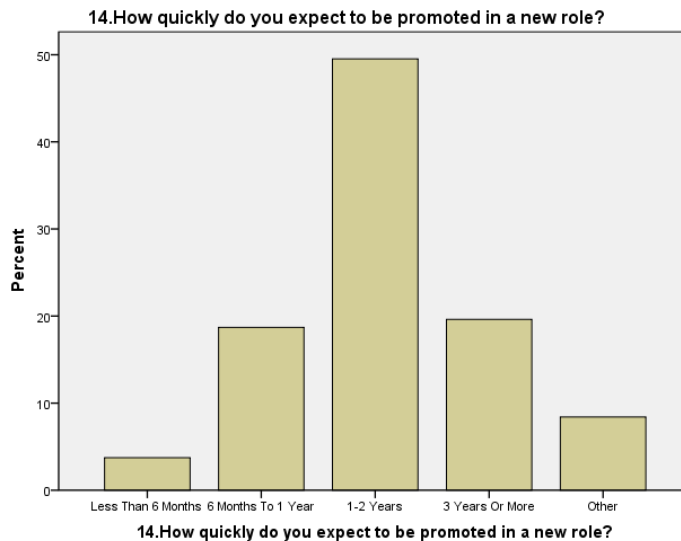


Figure 1.11: Promoted Over Peers

15. Do you believe you are more or less likely to be promoted over your peers?

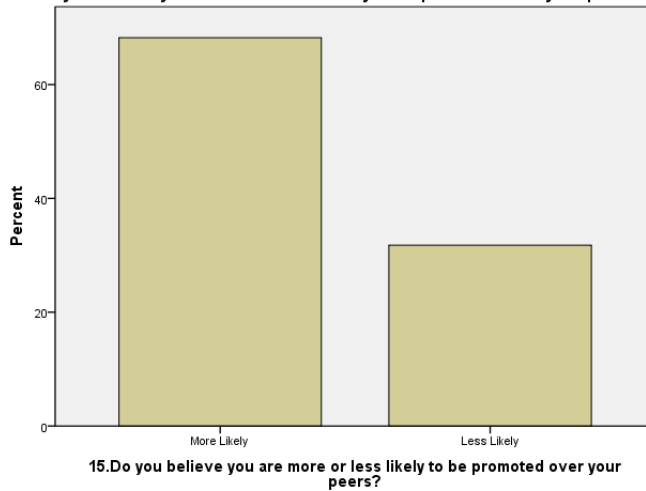
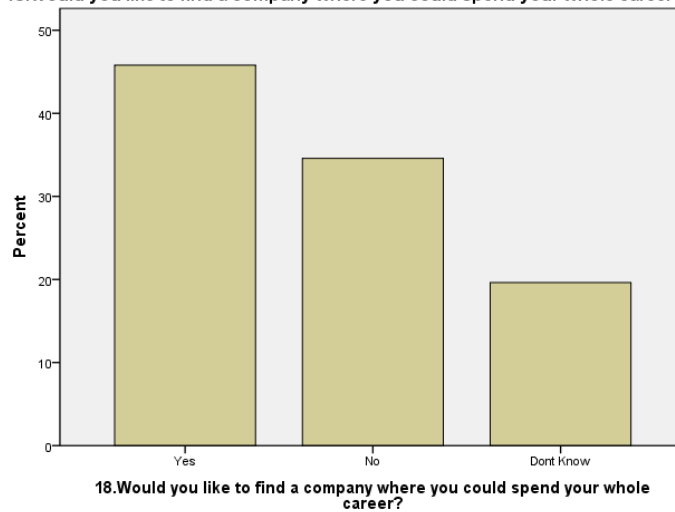


Figure 1.12: Whole Career

18. Would you like to find a company where you could spend your whole career?



UWES and Career Expectations

This section will compare the UWES and individual items from the career expectation scale to determine if any significant relationships exist between engagement and aspects of expectation. Due to the poor reliability of the overall scale for career expectations (See Table 1.4) we will compare each individual indicator with the UWES scale.

Q. How many times do you expect to be promoted in next 5 years?

Table 1.22 illustrates the mean engagement score in respect to promotion expectations in the next 5 years. The results show those who don't expect promotion had the lowest engagement level.

Table 1.22: UWES and Promotion in the next 5 years.

17. How many times do you expect to be promoted in the next 5 years?	Statistic	Std.Error
UWES Once Mean	79.8462	3.36941
Twice Mean	73.7317	2.88246
Three or more Mean	74.2082	3.97637
Don't Expect promotion Mean	77.2082	3.97637

The Shapiro-Wilk test shows the p-value is 0.191 (See **Table 1.12**) therefore the distribution is normal. When distribution is normal and there are more than 2 variables we use an ANOVA test.

The ANOVA (**Table 1.22**) shows the **Sig is 0.487**. If the sig value is less than 0.05 we reject the null hypothesis. Therefore we can assume that there is no relationship between employee engagement level and how many times a person expects to be promoted in the next 5 years.

Table 1.22: ANOVA

UWES

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	867.866	3	289.289	.818	.487
Within Groups	36059.125	102	353.521		
Total	36926.991	105			

Q. Do you think you are more or less likely to be promoted over your peers?

For frequency of responses see **Figure 1.9**. The mean engagement levels vary slightly between those who believe they are more or less likely to be promoted over their peers (See **Table 1.23**).

Table 1.23: UWES and Promoted Over Peers

15. Do you believe you are more or less likely to be promoted over your peers?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
UWES	More Likely	72	75.7361	18.03517	2.12547
	Less Likely	34	73.4118	20.38139	3.49538

The Shapiro-Wilk test shows the **p-value is 0.191** (See **Table 1.12**) therefore the distribution is normal. When distribution is normal and there are two variables we use an Independent Samples T-Test. If the p-value is high (<0.05) we do not reject the null hypothesis. If the p-value is (>0.05) we can assume there is a relationship between the variables. **Table 1.23** shows the **Sig two-tailed is 0.554**. Therefore we can assume that there is no significant relationship between employee engagement level and whether they think they are more or less likely to be promoted over their peers.

Table 1.23: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
UWES	Equal variances assumed	.341	.561	.594	104	.554	2.32435	3.91442	-5.43810	10.08679
	Equal variances not assumed			.568	58.216	.572	2.32435	4.09088	-5.86379	10.51248

Q. How quickly do you expect to be promoted in a new role?

For frequency of responses see table **Figure 1.10. Table 1.24** shows the mean engagement score for this question. The results those who expect promotion within 6 months in a new role have lower engagement than those with more realistic expectations.

Table 1.24: UWES and Promotion in New Role

How quickly do you expect to be promoted in a new role?			Statistic	Std.Error
UWES	less than 6 months	Mean	63.7500	10.66439
	6 months to 1 year	Mean	77.2632	4.30740
	1-2 years	Mean	74.1321	2.30478
	3 years or more	Mean	78.1429	4.93447
	Don't Expect promotion	Mean	72.8889	6.80164

The Shapiro-Wilk test shows **the p-value is 0.191** (See **Table 1.12**) therefore the distribution is normal. When distribution is normal and there are more than 2 variables we use an ANOVA test.

The ANOVA (**Table 1. 25**) shows the **Sig is 0.646**. Therefore we can assume that there is no significant relationship between employee engagement level and how quickly they expect to be promoted in a new role.

Table 1.25:ANOVA

UWES

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	891.021	4	222.755	.624	.646
Within Groups	36035.970	101	356.792		
Total	36926.991	105			

Q. Do you think it would be difficult for you to be hired in a new role?

For Frequency of responses see **Table 1.18**. **Table 1.24** illustrates the mean UWES score for each response. The results show that those who think it would be hard for them to be hired in a new job had the lowest engagement score.

Table 1.26: UWES and New Role

17. Do you think it would be difficult for you to be hired in a new role?	Statistic	Std.Error
UWES Yes Mean	68.9375	6.56345
No Mean	76.4521	2.05519
Don't Know Mean	74.4118	3.67329

The Shapiro-Wilk test shows **the p-value is 0.191** (See **Table 1.12**) therefore the distribution is normal. When distribution is normal and there are more than 2 variables we use an ANOVA test.

The ANOVA (**Table 1. 27**) shows the **Sig is 0.646**. Therefore we can assume that there is no significant relationship between employee engagement level and whether they think it would be difficult to be hired in a new job.

Table 1.27:ANOVA

UWES

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	891.021	4	222.755	.624	.646
Within Groups	36035.970	101	356.792		
Total	36926.991	105			

Q. Do you think you receive the salary you deserve?

For frequency of responses see **Table 1.20**. As illustrated in **Table 1.27** those who believe they receive the salary they deserve (77.73) have a higher engagement level than those who don't think they receive the salary they deserve (72.66).

Table 1.28: UWES and Salary Deserved

17. Do you think you receive the salary you deserve?	Statistic	Std.Error
UWES Yes Mean	77.7333	3.11957
No Mean	72.6667	2.06078
Don't Know Mean	74.5000	8.30830

The Shapiro-Wilk test shows the **p-value is 0.191** (See **Table 1.12**) therefore the distribution is normal. When distribution is normal and there are more than 2 variables we use an ANOVA test.

The ANOVA (**Table 1.29**) shows the **Sig is 0.420**. Therefore we can assume that there is no significant relationship between employee engagement level and whether they think they receive the salary they deserve.

Table 1.29: ANOVA

UWES

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	616.357	2	308.179	.874	.420
Within Groups	36310.633	103	352.530		
Total	36926.991	105			

Q. How much do you expect your salary to increase in the next 5 years?

For frequency of responses see **Table 1.21**. **Table 1.30** shows that those who expect their salary to increase the least have the lowest engagement level. Those who expect 5000-10,000 have a much higher level.

Table 1.30: UWES and Salary Increase

17. By How much do you expect your salary to increase in the next 5 years?			Statistic	Std.Error
UWES	1000-2000	Mean	66.7500	9.75000
	2000-5000	Mean	74.7500	3.68916
	5000-10,000	Mean	87.4737	3.14686
	Over 10,000	Mean	72.6512	2.82292

The ANOVA (**Table 1.31**) shows the **Sig is 0.021**. Therefore we can assume that there is a significant relationship between employee engagement level and how much they expect their salary to increase in the next 5 years.

Table 1.31: ANOVA

UWES

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3957.036	4	989.259	3.030	.021
Within Groups	32969.954	101	326.435		
Total	36926.991	105			

Q. Was your initial starting salary more or less than you expected?

For frequency of responses see **Table 1.19**. As illustrated in **Table 1.32** there is some difference in engagement level and initial salary expectation. Those who expected a larger salary then they received scored lower on the UWES engagement scale.

Table 1.32: UWES and Initial Salary

17. Was your initial starting salary more or less than you expected?		Statistic	Std. Error
UWES More	Mean	79.6175	3.29778
Less	Mean	72.7892	2.12403
Don't Know	Mean	71.1500	5.05298

The Shapiro-Wilk test shows the **p-value is 0.191** (See **Table 1.12**) therefore the distribution is normal. When distribution is normal and there are more than 2 variables we use an ANOVA test.

The ANOVA (**Table 1.33**) shows the **Sig is 0.145**. Therefore we can assume that there is no significant relationship between employee engagement level and whether their starting salary was more or less than they expected.

Table 1.33: ANOVA

UWES

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1357.337	2	678.669	1.965	.145
Within Groups	35569.653	103	345.336		
Total	36926.991	105			

Q. Do you think it would be easier or harder for you to find a new job over your peers?

For frequency of responses see **Table 1.17**. **Table 1.34** shows that there is very little difference in engagement scores and if the respondent thinks they would find it easier or harder than their peers to find a new job.

Table 1.34: UWES and new job over peers

Do you think it would be easier or harder for you to find a new job over your peers?	Statistic	Std.Error
UWES Easier Mean	75.7000	2.86417
Harder Mean	74.2353	4.96867
Don't Know Mean	74.4103	2.60611

The Shapiro-Wilk test shows the **p-value is 0.191** (See **Table 1.12**) therefore the distribution is normal. When distribution is normal and there are more than 2 variables we use an ANOVA test.

The ANOVA (**Table 1.35**) shows the **Sig is 0.935** . Therefore we can assume that there is no significant relationship between employee engagement level and whether they believe it would be easier or harder to be hired in a new job than their peers.

Table 1.35: ANOVA

UWES

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	47.996	2	23.998	.067	.935
Within Groups	36878.995	103	358.048		
Total	36926.991	105			

Q. Would you like to find a company where you could spend your whole career?

For frequency of responses see **Figure 1.12**. Those who were unsure if they wanted to find a company for their whole career scored the highest on engagement (See **Table 1.36**).The difference in scores between those who said yes or no was only slight.

Table 1.36: UWES and company for your whole career.

Would you like to find a company where you could spend your whole career?	Statistic	Std.Error
UWES Yes Mean	73.5000	2.75056
No Mean	74.7291	3.19220
Don't Know Mean	78.8571	3.73611

The Shapiro-Wilk test shows the **p-value is 0.191** (See **Table 1.12**) therefore the distribution is normal. When distribution is normal and there are more than 2 variables we use an ANOVA test.

The ANOVA (**Table 1.37**) shows the **Sig is 0.552**. Therefore we can assume that there is no significant relationship between employee engagement level and whether they want to find a company for their whole career.

Table 1.37:ANOVA

UWES

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	423.122	2	211.561	.597	.552
Within Groups	36503.869	103	354.406		
Total	36926.991	105			

Chapter 6

Discussion of Findings

i. Introduction:

This section will discuss the findings from the questionnaire presented in Chapter 5: Findings. The researcher will discuss the findings in relation to the hypothesis and objectives outlined in Chapter 3: Research Objectives.

The main objective of this research was to examine Generation Y in Ireland. The researcher was interested in the overall engagement level of this group. As we can see from the literature employee engagement is provides many benefits for an organisation and disengagement can be damaging to the performance and profitability of an organisation. Although an important area for business there is a clear lack of research into both overall employee engagement in Ireland and into Gen Y. As Gen Y will fast become the largest generational group in the workforce it is essential that organisations understand the differences between generations. This research was interested in Gen Y's career expectations and if high expectations related to low employee engagement. The literature and the media perpetrate stereotypes of Gen Y with regard to their high self-esteem and high expectations and this research will discover if this is true in Ireland. Further, if they have the same expectations from their employer when it comes to work attributes. Finally, if there are any factors within the generation such as age group, gender or education level that affect their engagement level.

ii. Discussion of findings

Work Attributes

It was hypothesized that Generation Y in Ireland would have the same preferred work attributes as previous research conducted in other countries. This research found the highest rated work attributes overall were opportunity for advancement, good people to work for and good people to work with. Ng et al (2010) also found opportunity for advancement as the highest rated attribute. The high importance

placed on advancement shows Gen Y's need for rapid advancement and their impatience to succeed. The research suggests that training would be very high rated among Gen Y (Markos and Sridevi, 2010; Anitha, 2014). However, in this research training was ranked 6th overall out of 16 items. The other items that rated higher than training were work-life balance and good variety of work.

The Harvard study (2013) found that compensation was quite low on the list for Gen Y (Newenham, 2014). They found that 75% of the 150,000 Gen Y surveyed rated as the most important thing when picking a place to work is how well they feel they would fit with the people and culture. Similarly, this research found initial salary to be low on the list of preferred attributes and good people to work for and good people to work with scored highly.

Previous research indicates that Gen Y is a socially responsible generation (Alsop, 2008). Newenham (2014) writes that Gen Y in Ireland is very concerned with corporate social responsibility. Contrary to previous research this research found corporate social responsibility to be one of the second lowest ranked attributes. Other attributes that rated poorly were opportunity to travel, organizations' commitment to diversity and opportunity to make a social impact.

There were some slight differences in work preferences between men and women. Most notably when it came to social work attributes. Men rated diversity, social responsibility and opportunities for social and personal impact some of the lowest importance. Men rated organisation's committed to social responsibility lowest overall. The highest rated attribute for men was opportunity for advancement. Women rated these attributes higher but still not highly overall. The highest rated attribute among women was good variety of work. The lowest was opportunity to travel. The research found no notable differences between age groups and preferred work attributes.

Employee Engagement

Gallup (2013) research shows that Generation Y is the least engaged in the workforce in the U.S. According to their report Gen Y are 28% engaged followed by Gen X at 30%, baby boomers 32% and Traditionalists at 42%. Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) also found that older employees have higher levels of employee engagement. Due to the literature available the hypothesis is that Generation Y in Ireland would have low levels of engagement. The results of the UWES show that Generation Y in Ireland had a mean engagement score of 74.99. This gives an average score of 4.4 per statement. 4 to 4.99 can be translated to

‘at least a couple of times a month.’ The minimum score is 17 and maximum is 119. This shows a high overall level of engagement. Although there is little research available about engagement in Ireland as a whole the IBEC (2011) study shows engagement in Ireland has been increasing in Ireland since 2009.

One of the sub-objectives of this research was to determine if there was a relationship between employee engagement level and gender or age group in Gen Y. According to the literature review women were slightly more engaged than men at 33% and 28% respectively (Gallup, 2013). The hypothesis is that women are more engaged than men. The results of the research show that the mean engagement level for men is 72.11 and for women are 77.65. This shows a small difference in engagement level between men and women of Generation Y in Ireland. Although there is a small difference in mean score the Independent Samples T-Test showed a p-value of 0.129 which is too high to show significance between the two variables.

As mentioned previously research suggests that age is a factor when it comes to employee engagement and that younger people are less engaged than older people. Therefore the hypothesis is that younger members of Gen Y would be less engaged than the older members. The mean for each age group are as follows; 15-18 (82.66), 18-24 (75.24), 25-30 (72.83) and 30-35 had a mean score of (77.00). Due to the very low number of respondents for the 15-18 age group (N=3) the results are likely to be unreliable. As we can see there are differences in engagement scores between the age groups within Gen Y. The age group 25-30 had the lowest score and the oldest group 30-35 had the highest score if we disregard the 15-18 age group. However the ANOVA for these variables shows a sig. value of 0.704. Therefore, we can assume that the relationship between engagement level and age is insignificant.

The main objective of this research was to investigate the relationship between career expectation and engagement level in Gen Y. It was hypothesized that a relationship would exist between the measures of career expectation and employee engagement and that those with high career expectation would have lower levels of engagement. Before we look at these relationships we will first look at the findings in respect of career expectations.

It was hypothesized that Generation Y in Ireland would have similar attitudes towards their abilities and high expectations for their career as seen in previous research. Twenge et al (2012) found that Generation Y overestimate their abilities when it came to academic ability, writing skill, self-confidence, and leadership potential. The results of the items relating to career expectations show Generation Y in Ireland

have high levels of confidence in their abilities to find work, 68.2% believe they would have no difficulty in being hired in a new role. Not only do they have confidence in their ability to find work, overwhelmingly 46.7% believe they would be hired over their peers.

The results also show that 44.9% stated that their initial starting salary was less than they expected it to be. This is unlike the GradIreland study (2014) which found that Irish students had realistic expectations about their initial salary; the average salary students expected to earn was €28,313 which is just above the real average graduate salary paid by employers at €27,960. The reason for this could be explained by Ng et al. Ng et al (2011) suggest that students may have lower expectations about salary as they are likely to have researched graduate salaries online or, received salary information from peers. Salary information for non-graduate jobs is not as easy to predict and therefore may be subject to unrealistic expectation. The findings also show that 47.7% felt they don't receive the salary they deserve. Finally, when asked how much they expect their salary to increase in the next 5 years, the majority (41.1%) chose over €10,000.

When it came to promotion expectations, the results show that the majority of respondents expect to gain a promotion twice in the next 5 years. About 15% show high expectation with 3 or more promotion in 5 years. When asked if they believe they would be more or less likely to be promoted over their peers, the results show that 73% of respondents believe they would be more likely to be promoted over their peers. This leads the researcher to believe that the respondents show high level of self-confidence and high expectations. When asked how quickly the respondent expected to be promoted in a new role, the results show that only 25% expect to be promoted in less than 1 year. The majority expect to be promoted within 1-2 years.

Half of the respondents surveyed did not want, or were not sure if they wanted, to find an organization in which they could stay long term. This shows Gen Y's reluctance to stay too long in one company. As the research suggests Gen Y only stay where they believe they are progressing, and if they do not feel they are gaining enough experience and value for their time they will find work elsewhere. As Martin (2005; 41) states 'A year is long-term to a Gen Yer and three years is just a mirage'.

Engagement and Career Expectations

The main hypothesis of this research is that those with high career expectations will have low engagement scores. The researcher compared the engagement scores with the responses from the career expectation indicators.

The respondents were asked various questions to do with salary expectations, promotion expectations and their attitude to their abilities over their peers. First we will look at the results for salary expectations. The engagement score for those who believe they receive the salary they deserve was 77.7 and those who believe they don't receive what they deserve were 72.6. This shows that those who feel they deserve a higher salary were less engaged. However, this difference is not enough to show a statistically significant relationship between the two items as the ANOVA sig value was $p=0.420$. The next indicator was if the respondent's initial starting salary was more or less than they expected. Respondents who felt their salary was less than expected scored 72.7 whereas those who felt it was more than expected scored 79.6. The ANOVA test for this item also showed no significant relationship $p=0.145$. The final salary item was concerned with how much the respondents expected their salary to increase in the next 5 years. Those who expected only a €1000- € 2000 increase had the lowest engagement score of 66.7, those who had an expectation of € 5000- €10,000 had the highest score of 87.4 and those who expected the most increase (over €10,000) had a score of 72.6. This shows those with low expectations had the worst engagement and those with a reasonable engagement had the highest engagement. Unlike what was predicted in the hypothesis it is the group with low expectations that has the lowest engagement. The ANOVA shows a p-value of $p=0.021$ which shows that a significant relationship exists between expectation of salary increase and engagement.

There were two indicators for assessing confidence in finding a new role. The questionnaire asked if respondents would think it would be difficult for them to be hired in a new role and if they believe it would be easier or harder for them to find a new job over their peers. The engagement score for those who felt it would be easy for them to get a new job was 76.45 and easier over their peers was 75.7. Those who felt it would be difficult for them to get a new job scored 68.9 and 74.2 was the score for those who felt it would be harder for them to get a job than their peers. This shows those with less confidence in finding a new role had lower engagement. This too contradicts the hypothesis as those with lower expectations had lower engagement. The ANOVA results for these items both show no significant relationship.

The results in respect of promotion expectations show slight differences in engagement scores. Those who expect to be promoted within 6 months of starting a new role had the lowest engagement level in that group. Those who expect to be promoted after 3 years had a higher engagement score. The results of the ANOVA tests showed no significant relationship between any of the promotion expectation indicators and engagement level.

Results Summary

The results are summarized below in relation to the hypotheses of this dissertation;

- Those with high career expectations will have low engagement scores.

This hypothesis was disproved. The results show that in some cases that those with low expectations had lower engagement levels than those with higher expectations.

- Generation Y in Ireland will have a low engagement score.

The results showed that Gen Y in Ireland has an overall engagement score of 74.99, this is considered to be moderate to high engagement level.

- Generation Y Women are more engaged than men

Although the results showed that women had a higher engagement level. This difference was not proven to be statistically significant.

- The higher age groups within Generation Y will have higher engagement level than the younger groups.

The results showed that the 30-35 age group had a higher engagement level then the younger age groups. The difference was also proven to be insignificant.

- Generation Y in Ireland will have the same preferred work attributes the previous research suggests.

The results showed that Gen Y in Ireland did prefer some of the work attributes predicted, such as, opportunity for advancement, good people to work for and good people to work with. However, other attributes mentioned as important to Gen Y in the literature such as corporate social responsibility were rated very low by Gen Y in Ireland.

Implications of the research

This dissertation explores the relationship between employee engagement and career expectations. As no significant relationship was found between engagement and expectations in Gen Y we can assume that the high expectations that Gen Y have do not affect their engagement at work. This is a positive finding for managers. More good news for managers is that Gen Y in Ireland appear to have good engagement levels. The favored work attributes preferred most and least by Gen Y in Ireland show what is important

to this generation. If these attributes are considered by organizations and managers this could be the key to attracting and retaining Gen Y.

Conclusion/Recommendations

In conclusion this research has examined employee engagement and career expectations in Ireland among Generation Y. Employee engagement has been garnering more and more attention in the recent years. Employee engagement has proven to be extremely important for not just employee performance but for overall business performance. The lack of literature available shows that employee engagement among Gen Y is not given the consideration necessary. Although the results of this dissertation indicate that Gen Y are engaged, further research with a much larger sample size should be undertaken into this generation and their engagement levels.

It is important for organizations to consider not only the engagement level but what drives it. If we consider Penna's "Hierarchy of engagement" (2007) as a guide we can see at the bottom of the pyramid are our basic needs -compensation and benefits. Once these are met the employee moves higher up the pyramid. The next levels contain drivers such as development opportunities, promotion and then leadership style and respect and trust from their manager. Finally, when all the lower levels are satisfied the employee will look for meaning and purpose in their work. There is a common misconception that compensation and benefits are the most important factor to an employee. In fact, this dissertation found that pay and benefits was only the 6th most important work attribute. The other drivers that were rated more important were opportunity for advancement, good people to work for and good people to work with.

Organizations would benefit from considering that drivers of engagement vary from individual to individual. However, they may be predicted by generation. According to research by Hewlett et al (2009) Baby Boomers rated high quality colleagues, an intellectually stimulating workforce and autonomy regarding work tasks as their top 3 drivers of engagement, Gen Y rated high quality colleagues, flexible working and prospects for advancement as their top 3. The research shows that Gen Y place high importance on advancement. When Gen Y feel they are not advancing within a company they will be very difficult to retain. Generation Y want to climb the corporate ladder while older employees may place more emphasis on job security and health benefits. The evidence shows that there are differences in attitudes and expectations between generations in the workforce. Employees at different life-stages will have different engagement drivers. Therefore, there should not be a one size fits all approach to employee engagement.

This research set out to discover if any link existed between the high expectations that are associated with Gen Y and the poor engagement level associated with Gen Y. What we discovered was that Generation Y in Ireland does not fall in with the same stereotypes and disengagement level seen in other research. Generation Y in Ireland would appear to be engaged at work. While the results show high confidence levels among respondents they do not show a response that would demonstrate narcissism or entitlement. We conclude that Gen Y have great expectations for their careers but this does not impact their engagement at work, what appears to be of importance is the prospect of advancement and having a good manager and a good team.

The researcher would recommend a large scale study into Generation Y in Ireland in order to gain an understanding of their attitudes, expectations and engagement. Understanding Gen Y is the key to maximizing their performance and value to any organization. Such a study would be a huge contribution to the literature. However such a large study would be costly and time-consuming. I would recommend individual organizations conduct internal surveys of their staff and look at the results in terms of generational differences, expectations and employee engagement. Once an understanding is gained policies and procedures can be drawn up that benefit all in the workforce.

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire

Career Expectations and Employee Engagement in Generation Y

This questionnaire is being completed as part of my MA in HRM at the National College of Ireland. The aim of the study is to investigate if Generation Y's career expectations have an effect on their engagement levels at work.

The survey should take approx. 5 minutes to complete. All data will be kept strictly confidential and used for the purpose of this survey only. If you have any questions please contact me at paula.thornton@student.ncirl.ie

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

The items used for this survey were taken from the following; The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), and surveys created by Ng et al (2010) and Westerman et al (2011).

Q.1 What is your age?

- 15-18
- 18-24
- 25-30
- 30-35

Q.2 What is your gender

- Male
- Female

Q.3 Are you currently living in Ireland?

- Yes
- No

Q.4 What is your employment status?

- Employed full-time
- Employed part time
- Unemployed

- Self employed
- Full-Time Student

Q.5 How long have you been in your current position?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 2-4 years
- Over 4 years

Q.6 What industry do you work in?

- Healthcare/Pharmaceuticals
- Financial Services
- Law
- Public Service
- IT
- Fashion/Retail
- Education
- Manufacturing
- Other

Q.7 What is your highest level of formal education?

- Leaving Certificate
- Certificate/Diploma
- Bachelor's Degree
- Post-Graduate Diploma or Master's Degree
- PhD

Q.8 Select how often you feel this way at work.

Rating on a scale 1-7

- 1- Never
- 2- Almost Never
- 3- Rarely
- 4- Sometimes
- 5- Often
- 6- Very Often
- 7- Always

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy
2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous
3. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work
4. I can continue working for very long periods at a time
5. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally
6. At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well
7. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose
8. I am enthusiastic about my job
9. My job inspires me
10. I am proud on the work that I do
11. To me, my job is challenging.
12. Time flies when I'm working
13. When I am working, I forget everything else around me

14. I feel happy when I am working intensely
15. I am immersed in my work
16. I get carried away when I'm working
17. It is difficult to detach myself from my job (Schaufeli et al, 2001).

Q.9 Please rate how important these work attributes are to you.

Rating on a scale 1-5

1. Essential
2. Important
3. Neutral
4. Not important
5. Not at all important

1. Opportunity for advancement
2. Good people to work with
3. Good people to report to
4. Good training opportunities
5. Work life balance
6. Good health and benefits plan
7. Work variety of work
8. Job security
9. Good initial salary level
10. Challenging work
11. Opportunities to have a personal impact
12. Opportunity to have a social impact
13. Commitment to social responsibility
14. Organization is a leader in its field
15. Strongly commitment to employee diversity
16. Opportunity to travel (Ng et al, 2010).

Q.10 Was your initial starting salary more or less than you expected?

- More
- Less
- I Don't Know

Q.11 How much do you expect your salary to increase in the next 5 years?

- 1000-2000
- 2000-5000
- 5000-10,000
- Over 10,000

Q.12 Do you believe you receive the salary you deserve?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q.13 How often to you expect to be promoted in the next 5 years?

- Once
- Twice
- Three times or more
- I don't expect to be promoted
- Other

Q.14 How quickly do you expect to be promoted in a new role?

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months to a year
- 1-2 years
- 3 years or more
- Other

Q.15 Do you believe you are more or less likely to be promoted over your peers?

- More Likely
- Less Likely

Q.16 Do you think it is easier or harder for you to find a new role than your peers?

- Easier
- Harder
- I Don't Know

Q.17 Do you think it would be difficult for you to be hired in a new role?

- Yes
- No
- I Don't Know

Q.18 Would you like to find a company where you could spend your whole career?

- Yes
- No
- I Don't Know

Appendix 2 –UWES

Vigor

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy
2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous
3. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work
4. I can continue working for very long periods at a time
5. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally
6. At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.

Dedication

1. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose
2. I am enthusiastic about my job
3. My job inspires me
4. I am proud on the work that I do
5. To me, my job is challenging.

Absorption

1. Time flies when I'm working
2. When I am working, I forget everything else around me
3. I feel happy when I am working intensely
4. I am immersed in my work
5. I get carried away when I'm working
6. It is difficult to detach myself from my job. (Schaufeli et al, 2002).

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CIPD Reflection

When I decided to undertake my Masters in HRM while working full-time I did not truly understand the time and effort involved. This process had taught me invaluable lessons in time-management and hard work. Although it was hard sacrificing evenings and weekends the sense of achievement I have now makes it all worthwhile.

The dissertation process was harder and longer than I expected. I found it difficult to choose a topic and get started. Once I did I found I enjoyed finding out more and more about the topic. If I could have the time again I would make better use of it. The process of writing and researching the literature review also made me aware of the gaps that still exist in Human Resources research. I would love to see more research that focuses on my generation (Generation Y). I believe there is a lot to be learned and an understanding of the generation would be a huge benefit to Human Resources professionals and organizations in general.

Although the results of my research did not align with my hypotheses I found the process an invaluable learning experience that will stand to me both personally and professionally.