

*"An exploration of job motivation among the different generations in Ireland's tertiary economic sector"*

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**Dissertation Award:** MA in Human Resource Management – Part-Time

**College:** National College of Ireland

Submitted to the National College of Ireland, May 2021

## Abstract

This research aims to explore the different generations in Ireland's tertiary industry, and the influencing factors behind their job motivation. Because of Generation Z only recently entering the workplace, there is limited research on how this generation may differ from their senior counterparts, especially in terms of Irish studies. With COVID-19 forcing many employees to work from home and reevaluate what is important to them, the topic of what motivates them to work may or may not be different depending on what generation they are from.

This study uses a qualitative inductive approach by conducting semi-structured interviews with eight individuals from the different generations in Ireland's tertiary (service) sector. The researcher took this flexible approach in order for opinions and conversation to flow naturally, while sticking loosely to a set of questions developed from the literature review. Through thematic analysis, interview data was analysed and represented in a number of key themes including work-life balance, financial reward, diversity and travel.

Once themes were identified, the researcher then presented the findings in which the generations' job motivation was comparable or contrasting. This led to the discussion section which looked at the findings on a more philosophical level, explaining the understanding behind certain ideas and topics. Recommendations were then made based on the findings, for HR practitioners to implement in organisations with different generations in the workforce. Timescales and costings were also outlined to give a practical solution for future implementation.

Although there were limitations of the study, including sample size and accessibility issues relating to COVID-19, this study does provide a guide for further research on the intergenerational workforce's job motivation in Ireland's tertiary industry.

## Submission of Dissertation

**National College of Ireland**

**Research Students Declaration Form**

***(Author Declaration Form)***

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**Degree for which thesis is submitted:** MA in Human Resource Management – Part-Time

**Title of Thesis:** “An exploration of job motivation among the different generations in Ireland’s tertiary economic sector”

**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> of May, 2021

**Material submitted for award**

- A. I declare that this work submitted has been composed by myself.
- B. I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.
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- D. I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

**Signed: *Susan Bradley***

## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help and support that I received from many individuals during the completion of this dissertation.

In particular, I would like to thank my supervisor Caitriona Huges who guided me throughout the process. Your advice has improved my work greatly and I sincerely appreciate your guidance.

I would also like to thank all of the participants in this study, my interviewees who not only gave me their time and attention, but also shared their opinions and experiences and really shaped huge parts of my research. It was fascinating to speak with each one of you and this dissertation would not have been completed without you!

Lastly I would like to thank my family and friends who supported me during the ups and downs of the research process, in particular my mother Catherine and Tom. You made this stressful experience of completing a dissertation, while working full time, during a global health pandemic, a lot easier for me in many ways and I cannot thank you enough.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Gloria Steinem attests, “We need to remember across generations, that there is as much to learn as there is to teach.” (Ashby and Ohrn, 1995). As we think about the people in our lives who are older and younger than us, an instinct might be to help our elders with technology or physical tasks and to help our younger counterparts with career advice or with learning how to drive. It is important to remember how much we can learn from these people who have had a different view of the world to us, because of when they were born.

Literature tells us that there are six value-shaping influences that have a deep impact on each generation: family environment, educational background, morality, peers, spirituality and culture (Espinoza *et al.* 2010). When it comes to Ireland specifically, as a country we were impacted also by the rate at which the Catholic Church dwindled in control over society, and in terms of technology bursting into our lives moving us from “field and farm to factory and office” (Zemke *et al.* 2000). Of course, there were also the various booms and busts that Irelands economy witnessed which had lasting effects on the attitudes of generations growing up or starting their early careers during these times.

But what does it mean for a generation to be motivated in the workplace, and why is it important from a Human Resource Management perspective? This study will do a deep dive into the theories of motivation, explaining our journey from being cavemen who were motivated to work (ie. Hunt and gather) to simply survive, to our modern-day outlook on motivation which sees us being just as intrinsically motivated (by feelings within us) than we are extrinsically motivated (by getting something tangible ie. money) (Pink, 2009). This study was conducted via the lens of the tertiary (service) industry in Ireland, as there was a huge shift towards this sector and away from agriculture in the last 50 years (CSO, 2016).

After reviewing relevant literature surrounding the different generations in Ireland and what motivates them, the researcher will carry out primary research on people working in the tertiary sector. This will be done using a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews with the four generations in work in Ireland: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z. As can be seen in the literature review section, while there is a lot of research done on generations in the workplace and workplace motivation, there is not a lot including the Irish context. This gap in the literature prompted the research question “*An exploration of job motivation among the different generations in Irelands tertiary economic sector*” and it’s sub-questions laid out in the Research Question section.

This research study was undertaken during the global COVID-19 pandemic, which effectively impacted every aspect of the study. The researcher and the participants in the study all had their lives turned upside down. There is minimal credible research on how this world crisis has affected the motivation of Irish employees in the tertiary industry. While there are plenty of limitations for this study, not to mention the worldwide devastation that COVID-19 has caused, there were some interesting results in terms work life balance, social life at work, CSR and diversity and the rise and necessity of technology. After interviewing the participants, the researcher laid out the findings and provided a discussion around the various themes which arose.

To comply with CIPD requirements, there is a recommendations section where the researcher outlines possible recommendations that HR practitioners could implement to bridge the gap between the different generations in Ireland's tertiary sector. This includes the potential costings and a timescale. There is also a self-reflection section, where the researcher contemplates the study as a whole with a critical eye, suggesting areas which they felt were their strong or weak points, and gives context on how they found the whole experience.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 1. Introduction

Job motivation is a multifaceted topic, encompassing diverse sub-questions: what is it? What is its significance in a business context and what are its founding theories? When researching intergenerational employees, it is necessary to consider their historical and socio-economic background, in order to explore possible motivators for joining and remaining with companies. The aim of this literature review is to explore intergenerational job motivation through the lens of the tertiary industry in Ireland.

### 2. Definitions: job motivation and tertiary economic sector

The term 'job motivation' attracts a multitude of definitions; this research proposal will employ the definition as a "set of forces that energize, direct, and sustain behavior. These forces can come from the person, the so-called "push" of internal forces, or they can come from the environment that surrounds the person, the so-called "pull" of external forces" (Hitt *et al.* 2014). These internal and external forces underpin motivation factors for employees.

Moreover, the tertiary sector may be defined as "industries which provide a service, such as transport and finance" (Collins English Dictionary 2020). Ireland's shift from Agriculture to the Service Industry is reflected by figures from the CSO (Central Statistics Office), and with increased levels of third level and post graduate level education, career choices in the tertiary industry have surged. (CSO 2016).

### 3. Job motivation in a business context

The majority comprehend personal motivation; however, we infrequently question why humans need to be motivated. The why is traced back to the scientific evolution of humankind and the three-stage motivational need theorized by Pink (2009). Pink chronicles the dawn of motivation during the hunter-gatherer era when we were motivated by "nothing but our urges – grunting, hunting and procreating in caves" (Broughton 2010 p.2) Motivation originated as a survival mechanism in the literal sense. Next, we have Motivation 2.0 which derived from economic development: a reward or punishment system which "depended on manipulating our desires and fears to extract performance" (Broughton 2010 p.2). Pink brings his theory to modern day by introducing motivation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, explaining how we are now just as motivated by intrinsic factors (such as interesting and meaningful work) as we are motivated by extrinsic factors (such as financial gain) (Pink 2009).

Furthermore, although employee job motivation is critical from a well-being perspective, a macro level exploration is vital for employers in order to develop appropriate strategies to optimise employee performance (Mackay 2006). Expanding on this, Stone (2013) attests that discerning employee motivation assists an organisation through increased levels of productivity and improves customer service, resulting in a competitive advantage (Stone 2013).

This concept of dually beneficial motivation is echoed by William Craig of Forbes who suggests that “knowing how to motivate your workforce will help ensure they’re enthusiastically bringing their best efforts each day and helping the company meet its sales and performance goals” (Craig 2017).

#### 4. *Job Motivation Theory*

Literature illustrates that the five workplace motivational needs are basic needs, safety, belonging, ego-status, and self-actualisation (Hall and Williams 2000). These needs change according to the generation, as further expounded by Calk and Patrick (2017, pp. 131-139) that “each generation shares a unique set of significant historical and social life events that shape their attitudes and beliefs, thereby creating generation gaps”. These needs can be derived from theorists who researched content and process theories.

#### 5. *Content and Process Theories*

Content theories are “personal needs that workers attempt to satisfy” whereas process theories can be described as “how different variables can combine to influence the amount of effort put forth by employees” (Hitt *et al.* 2014, p.242) Whilst noting that the following theories were developed by American theorists, they are applicable worldwide, and are considered as a corroborative framework for discussing motivation in the workplace.

The following are three examples of content theories:

- Maslow’s Need Hierarchy attests that there are five motivational needs which are physiological (basic life essentials e.g., Water/food/shelter), security (safety/financial), social/belongingness, esteem (self-respect and respect for others) and self-actualization (to be personally fulfilled, feel a sense of accomplishment/develop talents etc.) (Maslow 1970).
- McClelland’s Acquired Need Theory evolved after Maslow’s; focusing on our learned needs. It highlights three: power, affiliation and achievement (McClelland 1982). This theory argues that high achievers seek realistic challenges.
- Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory focuses on the effects of intrinsic job factors (motivators directly related to the job e.g., the work itself) and extrinsic factors (hygiene elements – working conditions, supervision, policies and procedures etc.) (Herzberg 1966). This theory, the earliest of the three content theories, predicts that intrinsic job factors increase satisfaction whereas extrinsic factors decrease satisfaction (Herzberg 1966). Contemporary examples of this would be individuals changing jobs for salary increases, but discover they preferred their previous job with less pay but a better working culture or more interesting work.

Process theories include the following:

- Equity Theory, developed by psychologist Stacy Adams, is a motivation theory which proposes “individuals will compare their circumstances to those of others and that such comparisons may motivate certain kinds of behavior” (Hitt *et al.* 2014 p.248).
- Another process theory is the expectancy theory developed by Victor Vroom in 1964. He describes the relationship between expectancy (belief that working hard results in desired level of performance), instrumentality (successful performance will be rewarded) and valence (the values someone assigns to the rewards they expect) (Vroom 1964).
- Finally, we look at the Goal-Setting Theory which predicts that if task goals are clarified, they produce successful performance targets (Latham and Locke 1996).

## 6. *Why are generations relevant?*

There is copious literature disputing the need to explore motivation through a generational lens, proposing for example that motivational factors are identical among different generations (Applebaum *et al.* 2004). Similar critique of generational motivation studies suggests that as employees mature, and their social environment changes, their motivational values will adapt to suit their positionality in life (Smola and Sutton 2002).

However, in general, both management practitioners and researchers appear to agree that the subject of motivation regarding different generational cohorts, is worth exploring. Over twenty years ago, American author Ron Zemke wrote “The workplace you and we inhabit today is awash with conflicting voices and views of the most age and value-diverse workforce this country has known since our great-great grandparents abandoned field and farm for factory and office” (Zemke *et al.* 2000, p.9). This opinion is supported by a 2004 study which found that 54% of HR management practitioners revealed there was friction among mature and younger employees in terms of perceptions of work life balance and work ethic (Burke 2004). Understanding the motivational needs of different generations in the workplace is vital for a business to succeed, for example consideration should be given to those of a generation who demonstrate preference for interpersonal communication styles over electronic means. Allowing choice of communication style may act as a motivator for higher performance in a more meaningful way (Glass 2007).

The emerging trends have illustrated that employers will need to incorporate intergenerational management to their existing HR structures (Bencsik *et al.* 2017). If implemented properly; improved HR practices in recruitment and retention may result (Johnson and Johnson, 2010).

## 7. *The Generations Explained*

This study will explore four generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y/Millennials and Generation Z. Although exact dates for these generations vary, we can assume that Baby Boomers were born between 1946-1964, Generation X were born between 1965-1980, Generation Y/Millennials were born between 1981-1996 and Generation Z were born between 1997-2012 (Dimock 2019). It should be noted that not every member of specific generations will fall into the same category when it comes to their job motivation, given individual differences. It is conducive however, to examine these cohorts as they can provide “a way to understand how different formative experiences (such as world events and technological, economic, and social shifts) interact with the life cycle and aging process to shape people’s views of the world” (Dimock, 2019, para 3).

## 8. *Baby Boomers and the Irish Context: born between 1946-1964*

Baby Boomers, or “generation of workaholics,” (Pekala 2001, p.32) possess robust workplace loyalty due to believing they are only able to work in that company and only being able to do that type of work (Strauss and Howe 1991 and Valickas and Jakštaitė 2017). Irish Baby Boomers are the children of the post-WWII era, during which, international trade was affected but agriculture prospered (Fitzpatrick 2015). This generation transferred from the traditional and/or agriculture work their parents undertook, into service-related jobs, due to exposure perchance through the widespread accessibility of television and modern technologies. Figures illustrating a decline for those working in the agriculture sector in Ireland during the course of the last fifty years allied with the steady growth of the service sector from 1966 (CSO 2016), corresponds with this.

Moreover, American and British Baby boomers were advanced in terms of modern attitudes in comparison to their Irish counterparts; education and health services in Ireland were not subsidized at this stage, and operated under a strict religious influence (Kenny 2012). On the other hand, exposure to their American and British counterparts through television, began to influence the Irish. Irish Baby Boomers were eager to acquire employment in the tertiary industry – they still had the “workaholic” tendencies as previously mentioned, due to growing up in economically

unstable post-war times. A subservient attitude due to an appreciation for stable employment in an evolving liberal and modern world, led to employer loyalty, creating lifelong employees (Kenny 2012).

Based on the above, Baby boomers in Ireland have a motivational need for job security and can align with physiological and safety needs proposed by Maslow (Maslow 1970). This is echoed in a study of older workers in Ireland where most of the participants were Irish Baby Boomers and all participants were working in Ireland's tertiary industry (McLoughlin 2016). Unsurprisingly, financial security remained important; however, the reasoning was more specific to the participant's age: paying off a mortgage, pension, and retirement care.

The Baby Boomer stereotype concerned with extrinsic motivation, i.e. motivated by external forces such as money is not a true reflection of the complexities of their work motivation. This generation is proud of the skills and experience they possess and want to utilize them and gain recognition for them, consolidating these skills, and providing a sense of self-actualisation (McLoughlin 2016). Expanding on the theme of Baby Boomers' loyalty and gratitude, McLoughlin's participants noted how they felt motivated by their contribution. One participant mentioned being brought up "with a work ethic, giving something back" and that her contributions to the workplace made her feel motivated as she felt she was "contributing to society" (McLoughlin 2016, p.43). Perhaps in recognition as to what their parents have achieved in leaving legacies of family businesses, farms or other tangible means, Irish Baby Boomers in the tertiary industry feel motivated by leaving their own legacy and making their own mark. Participants in McLoughlin's study described this sense of giving back, for example in the area of mentoring, as providing them with immense satisfaction. They noted how motivating it can be to remind oneself of one's own self-worth and self-esteem through one's contributions in the workplace.

An interesting theme not conventionally associated with this generation of "workaholics" is work-life balance. McLoughlin's participants expressed this as a motivational factor as exemplified in the following quote: "'ten-hour days is just not sustainable and people generally have other interests ... perhaps family ... aging parents ... not that their career is over, but perhaps they are onto the next phase ... so they're on a winding down phase ... so with that perhaps more flexibility, shorter hours, more flexible work" (p.34). Another theme arose in this study regarding social contact. Participants spoke of a cognizance of fulfillment attributed to their interaction with people and workplace engagements, with one participant stating, "getting out of the house" encouraged him to keep his "interest in the outside world" (McLoughlin 2016 p.32). Considering this generation possesses the most experience in the tertiary industry, many individuals are disposed towards consultancy involvement. This can be rewarding financially and provide autonomy in one's work, however it can have negative effects such as a lack of community or belonging and can be demotivating to individuals who need social contact in the workplace and want to be part of an engaging and supporting team (McLoughlin 2016).

Moreover, the shift by Ireland's Baby Boomers towards the tertiary industry (CSO 2016), resulted in the establishing of numerous professional bodies providing support for individuals in the tertiary sector. Members must commit to ongoing education and complete professional development qualifications, a concept overlooked perhaps amongst the older cohort in the workforce due to the closed-minded stereotype sometimes associated with same. Participants in McLoughlin's study expressed how they enjoy the continuous learning and "need to stay current" and "abreast of best practice" (McLoughlin 2016, p.35). This concept of continuous learning extends to IT, with participants recognising that "capacity to understand new and complex ideas gets slower ... it doesn't mean it goes away ... it just gets slower" (McLoughlin 2016, p.36).

#### *9. Generation X and the Irish Context: born between 1965-1980*

As Ireland drew closer to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, social, economic, political, and cultural changes occurred, creating a domino effect on those entering the workforce or experiencing their formative years at the time. Whilst the Irish Baby Boomers were impacted by the Catholic

Church's dominance in society, particularly in the provision of welfare, health and education services, this dominance has since declined, due in part to rising secularism and abuse scandals (Poppowell 2013). Gen X in Ireland saw referenda in the 1980's and 1990's including the legalisation of divorce and contraception (Ranelagh *et al.* 2021). As the country moved towards a modern landscape, agricultural employment further declined and the services sector recorded huge increases, especially in the private Financial and Business Service sector (Quarterly National Household Survey 1997).

Furthermore, another seismic change in Ireland happened during Gen X's formative years and early careers; the computer revolution. Internet use in Ireland rose during the late 1990's and early 2000's, with an increase from 5% of the population having internet access in 1997 to approximately one-third five years later in 2002 (Ranelagh *et al.* 2021). The computer revolution in Ireland coincided with the Celtic Tiger, outlined as a period of economic growth, proposing huge employment opportunities (Fahey *et al.* 2007). Parallely, an "increasing professionalisation of civil society" (Poppowell 2013, p.4) occurred, and Ireland became renowned for "high quality skilled workers from a well-developed education system" and a "very advanced telecommunications infrastructure." (Breathnach 2000, pp.479-481).

Multiculturalism also became increasingly prevalent with this generation recognising the value-added contribution of diversity (Williams 2011). Ireland experienced a "rapid growth in ethnic, religious and cultural diversity" due to the strong net inward migration since 1996 (Honohan *et al.* 2012, p.12). In a previously traditional and homogenous country, Gen X began to see more diversity as 10% of the population were non-nationals in 2006 (CSO 2007).

As Generation X grew up, in the USA they were referred to as "latchkey kids" experiencing independence at an early age; both parents were frequently working or a divorced household was an increased possibility compared to the previous generation (Crumpacker & Crumpacker 2007; Weingarten 2009). This generation has been described as "socially insecure and lacking in solid traditions" (Barford and Hester 2011, p.66 ). It should be noted that while these terms and opinions are coming from a USA perspective, Ireland was experiencing a similar change in domestic life. The Central Statistics Office recorded that 4.87% of children in Ireland in 1981 resided in a lone parent household (CSO 1981) and in 1988, 29% of married women were economically active (Walsh 2002). While these figures appear low, it should be emphasised that these were significant changes in society at the time, where the "lone parent household" figures were the first ever recorded by the CSO, and the marriage bar (which deposited women at home once married) was only removed in 1973 (ICTU 2019). With a higher proportion of mothers in the workplace, for Gen X a work-life balance becomes an important motivational aspect (Valickas and Jakštaitė 2017).

Darach Ó Séaghdha describes how Generation X were Ireland's real Baby Boomers, as they benefited from "the Celtic Tiger, the Peace Process and liberalisations introduced on foot of EU membership" (Ó Séaghdha 2019, para 14) and were less likely to emigrate. As employment was at an historic high and many Gen X individuals had access to free higher education, the ability to change jobs at their convenience became accessible (Bencsik *et al.* 2016). With considerable choice and transitioning than the previous generation, Ireland's Gen X situate within prevalent literature that refers to Generation X as loyal to their profession rather than their organization, and it suggests that parents influenced their approach to work, because they worked extremely hard themselves, but their loyalty to their organisation failed to protect them from losing jobs (Valickas and Jakštaitė 2017).

In terms of job motivation this generational cohort who grew up during the computer revolution are inclined to possess a different perspective (Valickas and Jakštaitė 2017). There appears to be a research gap on Irish Gen X individuals in the tertiary sector with regard to job motivation. However, a virtual event was held by the Museum of Literature Ireland called “Ireland’s Generation X?” where author Paul Murray speaks of how he went to secondary school in a private Catholic rugby school in Dublin, and how it was a “conservative institution for producing men who work in finance” and how “The ethics of Ireland of the Celtic tiger were organised by these guys I went to school with.” (Murray 2021). He talks of 1997 when he returned from doing an MSc in the UK and the high employment rate, and that job opportunities were in finance or technology (Murray 2021). When asked what he sees as the differences in the Irish generations he said “Millennials believe in politics, political statements. Gen X are suspicious – we witnessed so many lies about the Iraq war, politics, the Catholic Church, the financial crash. We were predisposed to extreme skepticism which takes its toll.” (Murray 2021).

It appears while Gen X in Ireland enjoyed a continuously changing society, those employed in the tertiary industry had an increased range of options and could afford to enjoy their life outside work, naturally seeking enhanced work-life balance opportunities. Another key motivational theme for this Irish generational cohort is staying current with technological advancements as they are Digital Immigrants (learning the most about technology in their adult life) as opposed to Digital Natives (growing up with technology since day one) (Prensky 2001).

#### *10. Millennials and the Irish Context: born between 1981-1996*

When discussing Millennials in the Irish context, it is important to note the economic crash of 2008 - most Millennials will have either grown up during this period or will have been in the early stages of their careers. The recession in Ireland had a direct consequence for Millennials; they were recorded as being “the most effected by the economic crisis, with over one quarter of them unemployed during this period” (CSO 2009). Thus, the recurrence of “Ireland’s historical tradition of mass emigration, this time primarily among skilled young people” (Poplewell 2013, p.6) emerges.

Furthermore, literature surrounding the motivational needs of this generation reflects the necessity to “future-proof” themselves, pertinent to the Irish context due to concerns over a future recession, and as an employee you need to be perceived as indispensable (Rich 2016). Millennials, also referred to as “digital natives” (Palfrey 2010, p.381), are motivated in the workplace by attributes which reflect this future proofing, including training on-the-job (Morton 2002), in conjunction with planning their own professional careers and development (Westerman and Yamamura 2007). Valickas and Jaštaitė build on this notion of futureproofing as they established that Millennials are loyal to managers and/or projects and are keen to “achieve and create something that will be meaningful and useful in future” but are not loyal to organisations (Valickas and Jakštaitė 2017, p.111).

They also point out that Millennials are not loyal to their organisations, seeing it as a “temporary stop which is a stage of learning and development” (Valickas and Jakštaitė, 2017). The CIPD support this need of Millennials not only to learn and develop but to place importance on having access to current technologies in their workplace which allow them to be more engaged with stakeholders (CIPD, 2015). While being technologically engaged is vital in order to learn and develop in the workplace, Sinek has identified a risk of social media addiction which illustrates that Millennials have formed varying degrees of superficial relationships (Sinek 2016). He attributes this to a shift from more traditional, face to face communication methods to virtual forms, which may reduce team bonding exercises or active listening opportunities (Sinek 2016).

The work-life balance concept dominates popular literature aimed at Millennials, possibly due to recent awareness regarding mental health issues. Millennials place maximum importance on both personal lives and careers, and if they fail to achieve their highly regarded work-life balance, they will not hesitate to leave their organisation (Buist 2016).

While some might view Millennials as "high maintenance" (Hira 2007, para 9), their ambition to acquire knowledge and progress may be considered an admirable quality and illustrates their need to be motivated in accordance with the higher end of Maslow's scale, requiring self-esteem, self actualisation and belonging (Maslow 1970). Research reveals them as assets to companies, multitasking and taking on extra responsibility to enhance the enthusiasm and variety in their life (Zhu and Graf-Lambsdorff 2017).

In a 2013 study of Irish Millennial newly qualified accountants, findings illustrated that most responses were motivational push factors causing the individuals to want to leave the company rather than pull factors attracting them to another company (Kennedy 2013). This study supports the existing literature on Millennials regarding work-life balance and being "future-proof" - one factor among respondents deciding to remain in their organisation was to gain post-qualification experience; major emphasis was placed on work-life balance, specifically, long working hours emerged as a negative motivational factor (Kennedy 2013). Another theme in the study highlighted that Irish Millennials are motivated by organisational prestige and their team/the people in the organisation, with one quarter of respondents stating they had a good social life in the company, and this contributed towards their job satisfaction (Kennedy 2013). A similar study by Kelly and Barret (2011) supports these findings, reporting that Irish Millennials in the tertiary industry listed long working hours and a negative relationship with colleagues as contributing factors to stress in the workplace, which is problematic and unmotivating (Kelly and Barret 2011).

A positive motivational factor mentioned in Kennedy's study was travel (Kennedy 2013). One participant noted a desire to work outside Dublin or to travel abroad – their company had travel opportunities, however the participant had little to no control over where and when they travelled and were "getting sick of" this lack of control (Kennedy 2013, p.102).

Financial reward is a key motivational theme for Irish Millennials, but specifically, the participants expressed frustration at unpaid overtime hours (Kennedy 2013). This in conjunction with minimum career opportunities for progression, lack of flexible work arrangements and the job role were stated as reasons for leaving the company (Kennedy 2013). It should be noted that many of these individuals performed audit work acknowledging the high volume of overtime associated with same, and this contributed to the fact that the type of work or job role was one of the deciding factors of participants for departing the company, along with associated and job stress, heavy workload, and a lack of guidance from managers (Kennedy 2013). Similarly, Kelly and Barrett's study also mention low pay, a heavy workload and role conflict/ambiguity as negative factors (Kelly and Barrett 2011).

An interesting finding in Kennedy's study which supports previous literature on Millennials shows that 8 out of 12 participants were not committed to the company they worked in but were committed to their career (Kennedy, 2013). It is apparent from these two studies that Irish Millennials in the tertiary sector have comparable mindsets to those represented in Deloitte's 2019 Millennial Survey, where it states the probability of 49% of Millennials departing their organisation in the next two years; reasons being financial reward dissatisfaction, poor career

development opportunities, lack of appreciation, absence of learning and development options, feeling unchallenged and not possessing what they perceive as a good work-life balance (Deloitte 2019).

It should be noted that Millennials are interested in philanthropic orientated businesses, and this includes diversity, with 33% of respondents in Deloitte's 2019 Millennial Survey stating this should be a business priority but only 16% believing businesses actually achieve this (Deloitte 2019).

#### *11. Generation Z and the Irish Context: born between 1997-2012*

The youngest generation entering the workforce today are Generation Z. In terms of the Irish cultural context for Gen Z, Crowley-Henry *et al.* (2020) articulate an excellent synthesis "They face a future working life of collaboration with artificial and augmented intelligence and the rise of the gig economy. They are social activists fighting for their planet and reveling in the Greta Effect, yet fiercely protected by helicopter guardians. They don't know a pre 9/11 world and are heirs of an Ireland that knows social and moral choice like never before." (Crowley-Henry, *et al.* 2020, para 3). These opinions ring true in terms of Ireland's modern attitude for example, the new abortion laws came into effect in 2019, (Irish Family Planning Association 2021) and between the years of 1981-2016 there was a 25% rise in single parent households (CSO 2016).

In conjunction with the Baby Boomers, Irish Gen Zs were born into an Ireland in recession, or witnessed it during their formative years, so stability and security are a key motivational factor for them. They were pre-dispositioned therefore to a "financial focus" (Millier 2018, para 20) and supports the assertion that Irish Gen Zs' careers are inclined to focus on stability and security (Crowley-Henry *et al.* 2020). These assertions align with Bencsik who argues that workplace stability is a central career goal for Gen Z (Bencsik *et al.* 2017). A study on Irish Gen Zs in the tertiary sector suggests that pay is a crucial factor when seeking a new role, however financial reward as a motivator in their current roles was referred to as "not a sole motivator, but it helps" (Collins 2020, p.34). Collins also highlighted Irish Gen Zs' interest and confusion around their company's approach to reward, reporting a belief that personal performance should be the main driver in how the reward management system is structured but demonstrating ambiguity for the policies around it (Collins 2020). This reflects Adecco's views that employers of Gen Z need to be clear and direct with salary and bonus policies (Adecco 2015).

Gen Z, oblivious to a world without the iPhone, are experiencing a "virtual bonding" which provides a sense of escapism from real life issues, both psychologically and emotionally (Brosdahl *et al.* 2011). While technological advancement advantages are abundant, some arising disadvantages regarding the newest entrants to the workforce have materialized. As Sinek discussed Millennial social media addiction in 2016; this issue has become more pervasive in the younger generation (Sinek 2016). Crowley-Henry notes how historically, break times created team member social contact and interaction opportunities, Gen Z are currently employing break times as social media checking opportunities on their digital devices (Crowley-Henry *et al.* 2020). Research shows that Gen Z are cognizant of their technology dependence, and whilst acknowledging the need for face-to-face communication in the workplace, they are unsure of their abilities to develop professional relationships in person (Crowley-Henry *et al.* 2020). This concept is supported by Collins's study of Irish Gen Z tertiary employees who noted the importance of soft skills and preferred in person communication, as well as a wider study by EY

which notes that 90% of Gen Z desire a human element to their team (Collins 2020 and EY 2018). An interesting finding from Collins' study was that Irish Gen Zs are not all as computer literate as perceived by mainstream literature, with a participant outlining experiences of older generation expectations in the workplace for Gen Z employees to have an omniscient knowledge of technology (Collins 2020).

A generation born in a world of technological advancement that has endless opportunities, this cohort need to enjoy the content of their work and feel like it has a purpose (Fratrièová and Kirchmayer 2018). These findings are also noted in Collins's report where "the type of work" performed is a main motivator for Irish Gen Zs in the tertiary sector (Collins 2020). Career progression was also a major theme among the participants, as indicated by 71% of them aspiring to be future workplace leaders, with one participant noting that to gain the experience required for this career progression, they would have to move to another company in Ireland or abroad (Collins, 2020). This gives us an insight into a potential reason the younger generation see themselves making a number of company moves in their lifetime (Collins, 2020). This job-hopping can influence relations between older and younger workers, with the older generation sometimes presuming that their younger colleagues will leave and there is an apparent expendability of Gen Z and it is "reflected in their attitudes towards them" (Collins, 2020, p.39). When talking about the theme of training and learning new skills for Gen Z, they do not like to be lectured, instead favouring learning through guidance from a manager/team member (Desai *et al.* 2017 and Collins, 2020). The content of the training is also important, as Collins's study found participants advising on how training needs to be personalised and varied (Collins, 2020).

An unpleasant work or team environment or too much pressure/workload alienate this generation who are motivated by a supportive team and structure (Fratrièová and Kirchmayer, 2018). Managerial support is a strong motivating factor, with Gen Z employees preferring informal appraisals/feedback reviews (Collins, 2020 and Bencsik *et al.* 2017). While receiving praise and recognition was found as a motivating factor for Irish Gen Z employees, they reported an ideal feedback level should be every three to six months (Collins, 2020). However, research done in the USA in 2018 contradicts this finding, noting that 60% of Gen Z want weekly feedback from their manager and 40% want it daily (Center for Generational Kinetics, 2018).

Organisational prestige is also a motivating factor for Irish Gen Z's, as Collins's study illustrates the emphasis they place on a company's reputation and culture and they enjoy the social aspect of their work, with one participant stating they would like to work among a young workforce and as part of a team (Collins, 2020). An interesting report shows that Generation Z in Ireland are slightly more conservative, abstaining from drugs/alcohol for longer than their predecessors (ESPAD, 2015). While they may be more conservative in their social encounters, they are demanding more from their employers than ever before and need to be motivated in the right way to stay happy and successful in their roles (Irish Times, 2018). Work-life balance is a strong motivator for Gen Z, and they focus their career on lifestyle (Crowley-Henry *et al.* 2020). An increasingly dominant motivational factor for the younger generations is travel, with the participants from Collins's study emphasising this (Collins, 2020). Although employers sometimes offer travel opportunities for work, a participant of Collins's study noted that the location could be small towns in the middle of nowhere, hence the participant would like more control over their location travel choices,

which mirrors Kennedy's study on Irish Millennials in the tertiary industry (Collins, 2020 and Kennedy 2013).

Similar to Millennials, Gen Z place value on diversity, as research from EY shows that 63% of Gen Z want to work with people of different skill and educational level, and a further 20% mention that differences in nationality are important for diverse teams (EY, 2018). Gomez *et al.* (2019) expand further on the different dimensions of diversity, claiming that Gen Z's interest in working in a diverse workplace does not only mean the inclusion of different genders and races, but also identity and orientation (Gomez et al., 2019). These findings are echoed by a participant in Collins's study who states that "working with different types of people and then taking different pieces from all of them" is an effective way to gain experience (Collins, 2020, p.35). Self-awareness and critical consciousness are traits of Gen Z as research presents them as being motivated by social justice; they judge employers not only on service or product quality, but also on the social impact and organisational ethics embodied by the company (Lanier, 2017 and Gomez *et al.* 2019). Grow and Yang (2018) attribute this recent surge in social issues interest such as climate change, to information accessibility through internet sophistication and social media (Grow and Yang, 2018). Research shows that CSR, or Corporate Social Responsibility is a way for companies to show their dedication to these societal issues, however Collins's study notes how participants do not actually place much significance on CSR initiatives (Fordham and Robinson, 2018 and Collins, 2020). Furthermore, the participants mentioned how their employers CSR initiatives were not in fact genuine efforts and were in place merely as an optical exercise, as opposed to a genuine will for change (Collins, 2020).

## Chapter 3: Research Question and Sub-Questions

*"An exploration of job motivation among the different generations in Ireland's tertiary economic sector"*

This study will explore, assess and interrogate the complexities and ramifications relating to the above topic by employing the following sub questions:

1. What is job motivation and why is it important?
2. What if any are the intergenerational differentiations in job motivation?
3. How does this pertain to the Irish context and the tertiary economic sector?

## Chapter 4: Methodology

### 1. *Research Philosophy*

According to Saunders *et al.* (2015) research philosophy may be defined as "a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge" (p. 106). When research is undertaken, ontological assumptions (realities encountered in research), epistemological assumptions (human knowledge influences) and axiological assumptions (subjective position of researcher) are encountered. These assumptions influence how we comprehend research questions, the methods used, and how findings are interpreted (Crotty 1998). Although there are five primary types of research philosophies (positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism and pragmatism), this research project will adopt an interpretivism approach. A positivist approach was discounted due to the infeasibility of measuring intention, thoughts or attitudes of humans through this approach (Hammersley 2013), and the aim of this study is exploratory, therefore positivism would not help my approach. Interpretivism focuses on stories, perspectives and interpretations, it is inductive and uses small samples and in-depth investigation through qualitative methods, therefore interpretivism is a superior approach for exploratory studies (Saunders *et al.* 2015).

Moreover, in Inductive research, data is collected to explore a phenomenon which is then built into a theory or "observing the world and coming to a generalisation about it" as Adams *et al.* (2014, p. 29) attests. This method contrasts with deductive research which merely tests theories already in place and is less exploratory, therefore deductive research will not derive the desired results. This study will aim to reach conclusions and theories based on existing literature and the data collected in the interview process.

### 2. *Research Methods and Approach*

As part of this interpretivism approach, qualitative research is conducted (Sanders *et al.* 2015). Considering the aim of the research study is to determine job motivational factors, a quantitative method such as a survey may not achieve an in-depth and fully formed answer. Quantitative research collects "numerical data" using "mathematically-based methods", which often lacks personal detail and leaves little room for discussion, potentially missing opportunities to build on themes or let new themes emerge (Sukamolson 2007, p. ). Alternatively, qualitative research methods are conducive towards social relations exploration and reality is based on the respondent's experiences (Adams, Khan and Raeside 2014). Therefore, there is a justification to employ qualitative methods for the proposed topic, and in this instance, individual semi-structured interviews were carried out. This method has been applied successfully by previous researchers (Suomäki *et al.* 2019) and was analysed as a research method by Bristow (2017) whereby themes were situated and synthesised into a prepared questions configuration providing a guide and semi-structure to the interview as opposed to a strict step framework. Issues and themes emerged inductively since the interviewees were prompted to discuss each subject at length (Bristow *et al.* 2017). A similar study, albeit with questionnaires, conducted by the International Journal of Business and Social Science again used a qualitative approach and achieved favourable results (Beyhan Acar 2014). Questionnaires and surveys were discounted as

methods of research however, due to the limitations they would present, for example respondents may choose random answers rather than genuine ones, or have a lack of flexibility and space in order to explain their answers.

### 3. *Data Collection Methods*

As stated previously, this research study will carry out semi-structured interviews as a form of data collection. The rationale for semi-structured interviews was decided due to the researcher's competency in workplace interviewing, in conjunction with the employment of the theories and concepts of Bristow (2017). The literature review section provided an abundance of themes and issues. Questions were then synthesized by the researcher by drawing on these themes. Through critical analysis of the literature review chapter, the researcher identified the pervasive themes in each generation. It was found that while some themes were prevalent in all generations (financial security, work-life balance), there were some themes which were mostly prevalent in one generation (for example CSR in Gen Z). By identifying each theme in each generation, the researcher could then decipher to what extent that generation may or may not be motivated in their work by that particular theme. This led to the forming of questions based on each theme. The research instrument was developed as a set of open-ended questions, which would form the semi-structure framework of the interview. A grid displaying each theme and which generation found it important, according to literature, can be found at the end of this chapter.

### 4. *Research Sample*

Small sample sizes are recommended for interpretivism approaches (Saunders *et al.* 2015). There are many ways to develop a research sample, however this research adopts a purposeful judgement sample approach, in which "The researcher actively selects the most productive sample to answer the research question." (Marshall 1996, p.523). A random sample would not have worked for the purpose of this study, as the participants had to either be working or have worked in the tertiary sector in Ireland. Picking random interviewees would be taking too much of a chance and would take too much time to find out their line of work. Purposeful quota sampling was originally adopted, in order for the research to have an even split in gender and a larger number of participants, however this was discounted when the researcher was unable to meet the quotas due to time and accessibility constraints.

For this research study, the researcher analysed the selection criteria for the judgement sample: the participants needed to be working or have worked in the tertiary industry in Ireland and be a member of one of the four generations studied in this research project. As previously mentioned, quota sampling was abandoned and purposeful judgement sampling was carried out, which led to a gender imbalance in some generations. The sampling process produced two participants from each of the four generations in the workplace in Ireland's tertiary industry. Out of the eight participants, six were previously known to the researcher. Two were obtained using snowball sampling, where confirmed participants suggest another interested party. Timeframe and access issues affected interviewee gender equality, for example both Baby Boomers interviewed were male, both Gen X were female, the Millennials were a mix of male and female and the Gen Zs were both females.

### 5. *Research Procedure*

This dissertation was completed during the global COVID-19 pandemic which saw the closure of all offices, education centers and retailers and forced anyone that could to work and study at home. As a result, the entire interview process was virtual. Interviewees were initially contacted via text/phone call for participation consent. Once confirmed, they provided an email address and received a Consent form. Time and date arrangements were confirmed via text and the interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams. This was chosen as the medium of interview as the interviews could be recorded and downloaded for later review. Interviewees were informed that once consent was given, it could be withdrawn at any time. They were also informed the video recording downloads would be kept confidential. Each interview lasted 40-50 minutes. The researcher asked the prepared questions in a relaxed and informal style, and the interview was conversational with open ended questions and prompts. This provided a comfortable and safe space for the interviewees to talk freely about each subject matter. As the interviewees spoke, the interviewer took notes.

## 6. *Data Analysis*

Data analysis was conducted via a reviewing of the interview content by the researcher. Additional notes were constructed. Thematic analysis then took place, in which the researcher coded the notes of each interviewee and allocated them to one of the pre-identified themes from the literature review section. This was achieved through the application of a colour coding framework to each theme which provided a concise visual, highlighting any commonalities and differences.

Sub-themes emerged through this process, for example under the theme of work-life balance, it was found that Baby-Boomers were the only generation not to place value on work-life balance before the COVID-19 pandemic. The key themes were then referenced back to the findings in the literature review, to give a rounded analysis of each theme reflecting each generation's opinions and perspectives.

## 7. *Ethical Research Considerations*

Cohen (2017) states that as researchers, we have a responsibility to our participants to act in a way that preserves their dignity as human beings (Cohen *et al.* 2017). With this in mind, in order to ensure ethical considerations were strictly adhered to in this research study, the researcher applied a rigorous approach in complying with the National College of Ireland Ethical Guidelines and Procedures for involving Human Participants. In terms of Ethical Risk, the participants belong to a cohort which is relevant for Research Category A, i.e., participation involves a very low ethical risk. Each participant filled out a consent form, in which they consented to voluntarily participate with the option of withdrawing consent at any stage. They were informed that the interview data would be stored on the researcher's personal laptop for the sole purpose of research and that strict guidelines with regard to confidentiality of information would be adhered to. Interviewees were given context of the research topic, encouraged to ask any questions, and assured they would remain anonymous. This anonymity was achieved by identifying participants as P1-P8. They were also notified that the information would be retained until the National College of Ireland exam board confirms the result of the dissertation. Finally, to ensure clarity and supply any additional communication required, participants were provided with the researcher's phone number and email address.

### 8. Research Limitations

According to Saunders and colleagues, all research has limitations (Saunders *et al.* 2015). In the case of this research study, it should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had a considerable effect on the research methodology. Interviews had to be conducted virtually, from people's homes, where in some cases there were distractions and noise. It should also be noted that all interviewees are now working from home, and their motivation has been affected by the impact of COVID-19, so it is difficult to determine how they would have felt in a pre and post COVID world unless they explicitly said so.

A limitation that occurs when interviewing a small sample size is availability and access. The researcher would have preferred twelve interviewees; however, only access to eight was feasible. Due to the limited number of participants, diversity in nationality was also affected as all the participants were Irish.

<b>KEY THEMES</b>	<b>GENERATION (ACCORDING TO LITERATURE)</b>
Work-Life Balance	Baby-Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z
Financial Security	Baby-Boomers, Millennials, Gen Z
CSR	Millennials, Gen Z
Diversity	Gen X, Gen Z
Type of Work	Baby-Boomers, Millennials,
Training and Development	Baby-Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z
Career Progression	Gen Z
Travel	Millennials, Gen Z
Company Culture/Organisational Prestige	Millennials, Gen Z
Supportive Team	Millennials
Social Aspect to Work	Baby-Boomers
Technology	Baby-Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z
Societal Change	Baby-Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z
Communication	Gen Z
Managerial Support and Feedback	Gen Z

## Chapter 5: Findings

### 1. Work-life balance

Work-life balance was a huge motivational factor for all participants, albeit in divergent ways. Both of the Baby Boomers (P2 and P6) interviewed, revealed the COVID-19 pandemic factor of working from home as a significant epiphany for work-life balance, as can be seen from the quotes below. Both P2 and P6 feel that a work-life balance is vital now, and working from home permits them to substitute their commute for exercise or family time. Preceding literature echo's this need for more "downtime" in the Baby Boomer Generation who have previously been referred to as "workaholics" (McLoughlin, 2016 and Strauss & Howe, 1991).

- *"..it's huge now, it would have been less so in the past. There was more of an acceptance in the past that you just had to get on with it. You didn't have the opportunities that you have today..for instance working from home due to COVID, which has been fantastic. So I think work-life balance has gone much higher up my agenda than it would have been in the past". (P2).*
- *"it's taken covid for me to see it.. I used to work a 12 hour day.. The last 12 months have caused me to look at work-life balance.. The last year has been an eye-opener for me.. I was constantly on the go but being busy doesn't mean you're being effective, so I am looking more at the quality side now than the quantity" (P6).*

For Generation X in Ireland, literature illustrates numerous reasons for work life balance necessity. The 1973 removal of the marriage bar, resulted in additional employees in the workforce requiring greater work life balance (ICTU, 2019). The Gen X interviewees in this study (P1 and P4), both women, exemplify this need for a work life balance as can be seen below.

- *"At the moment it's hugely important and I couldn't do my job if I didn't have a work-life balance because I have other priorities including children, partner, extended family, friends and personal time" (P1).*
- *"when I was starting off and trying to get into more senior positions, it was all work work work... that's just the way it had to be.. I tried to create balance and I certainly wasn't off playing golf or spending time with friends, there was no time for hobbies or even personal time.. I wanted to be there at the weekend for the kids but it was definitely more work at that stage.. I made a decision to work hard so I could retire early and now I have a much better work-life balance" (P4).*

Work life balance was considered a strong motivator for the Irish Millennials in this study (P7 and P3) and this aligns with previous literature such as Buist (2016) and Kennedy (2013).

- *“..I’m not getting up at stupid o’clock anymore.. It’s definitely important to me, the work-life balance thing, it’s nice knowing with flexitime I can have control over my day” (P7).*
- *“It’s nice to work at your own pace and have balance in your life” (P3).*

The Gen Z interviewees for this study (P8 and P5) had contrasting views on work life balance. While Gen Z in Ireland tend to focus their career around lifestyle and describe work-life balance as a strong motivator (Crowley-Henry *et al.* 2020), P8 had a different opinion in that she was unsure of her own work-life balance, as can be seen from the quote below.

- *“as a junior you are expected to work overtime, and once you move up you can be more flexible in your work-life balance..it’s hard to know if you are doing enough... At the start I didn’t understand how to have a work-life balance as I have only ever worked online, but now I am more comfortable.. When I have my own family, work-life balance will be really important”. (P8).*

P5 agrees to an extent, as she says,

- *“further in my career I see myself doing a mix of home and office work, but right now I would “like to be in the office and meeting people, as I haven’t met anyone in person yet!” (P5).*

## 2. Financial security

Most participants place importance on financial security, however the timelines of when it is most significant differ. The Baby Boomers highlighted money as a primary motivator, however they had alternative outlooks. P2 simply describes money as “the starting point” of why we work and his prime motivator, while P6 talks of the change in his financial motivation as can be seen in the quote below. This importance of financial security in Irish Baby Boomers in the tertiary sector also appears in McLoughlin's 2016 study. One differentiating factor between the two interviewees here was that P6 “could have travelled to make more money if it was the single most important thing” to him, whereas P2 made that choice to travel for a higher salary.

- *“The motivation behind financial security for me has changed over time, it used to be providing for my family but now it’s to provide for my pension” (P6).*

Although the economy began to boom in Ireland in the mid 90’s- early 2000’s, Gen X started in the workforce before the Celtic Tiger began. Literature refers to Gen X being skeptics, and suspicious (Murray, 2021). This suspicion was supported perhaps by a parental influence, because they worked extremely hard themselves, but their loyalty to their organisation failed to protect them from losing jobs (Valickas and Jakštaitė, 2017). Gen X participants in this study echo the insecurity mentioned in literature, with P4 saying “money was the main motivator”. P1 has a similar view to P4, as described in the following quote:

- *“I remember my father being made redundant after years of hard labour.. So I worried about financial security.. I used to work long and hard as it was all about the mortgage.. money is not important now because I am comfortable, but growing up I was risk adverse.. I moved from the manufacturing industry to the tertiary industry” (P1).*

When it comes to financial rewards, Irish Millennials in this study had conflicting views with each other as well as with previous literature. Kelly and Barrett (2011) found that poor pay is a negative factor on job motivation which P7 echoed saying that for him, money “is a necessity, and the main motivator to work”. P3 had a different view, as can be seen from, the quote below. Neither participant from the Millennial group expressed frustration at not getting paid overtime, as suggested by Kennedy (2013).

- *“it’s not as important now as it will be in the future.. In my next job I’ll look for a decent base salary..right now I am blessed not to have to pay rent in Dublin.. But I will have to think of money more when I am settling down in the future”* (P3).

The Irish Gen Zs in this study had antithetical attitudes towards financial reward. P8’s views concur with literature when she states “money is my main motivator”, as Crowley-Henry *et al.* found that Irish Gen Z’s career focus inclines towards stability and security and Miller comments on Gen Z’s “financially-focused and entrepreneurial attitude” (Crowley-Henry *et al.* 2020 and Millier, 2018). P8 states she wants to be “financially independent. To make money first then travel”. She remarks on her reliance on parents through college but now “wants to feel like more of an adult”. P5 has a different outlook in terms of pay, as can be seen from the following quote:

- *“I am fine now, I just need money for rent, travelling and social life.. at the beginning of college I thought money was going to be the only real important thing but I see now there’s much more to a role”.* (P5).

### 3. CSR

When analyzing the theme of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), it became evident that CSR awareness has increased in recent years, however many question the sincerity of corporations in their CSR activities. Considering 1996 saw the introduction of computers and the growth of the tertiary economy in Ireland, it is unsurprising that there is limited research on Irish Baby Boomers in the tertiary industry attributing importance to carbon footprint reduction (CSO, 2016). P2 and P6, both from this generation, had different levels of motivation and viewpoints regarding CSR. Reflecting the research gap above, P2 felt indifferent to CSR issues in terms of job motivation: it should be “taken as a given” and there is a “difference in the engineering of it and the lived practices”. He concludes there is a “green agenda” in many companies and the younger generation are “idealistic”. Contrastingly, P6 believes that his company conduct CSR activities “for the right reasons” and vigorously attests the company’s active involvement with social issues, as opposed to it being an optical exercise.

Furthermore, Gen X in Ireland witnessed societal changes including “the Celtic Tiger, the Peace Process and liberalisations introduced on foot of EU membership” (Ó Séaghdha, 2019). Although P4 states that CSR was “not a big topic back then” and that “it’s not a personal motivator”, P1’s view differs, as she says:

- *“our company culture is quite progressive.. Theres loads of vegans!.. They do loads of recycling, beach clean ups and community work. I never pursued CSR in a company but am now a passionate advocate for it.”* (P1)

During previous research on Millennial's job motivation, CSR did not feature prominently; however, findings revealed they enjoy extra responsibility in the workplace (Zhu and Graf-

Lambsdorff, 2017). Also apparent were Millennial's desire to "achieve and create something that will be meaningful and useful in future" (Valickas and Jakštaitė, 2017). These motivations were shared by P7, interviewed as an Irish Millennial in the tertiary industry, although he found the reality to be more pessimistic, and P3 who felt the same pessimism towards CSR. Their views can be seen below.

- "I set up an LGBT society for high level employers in Ireland.. But then realised it was a bit surface level.. I'd rather companies just treat people with respect instead of pushing loads of money at a problem.. It seems to be more of a visual priority" (P7).
- *"I actually feel strongly that it's just a marketing scheme to attract grads..companies should focus on current employees wellbeing, in terms of parental leave for example.. We did a CSR day and the cost was crazy.. They should have just given to money to charity! It's a nice add on but not a huge motivator". (P3).*

Both Irish Gen Z interviewed expressed interest in CSR, with P8 saying "I thought (my company) were just jumping on the bandwagon, but I am happy to see they actually do good work". She adds that it "would be naive to say all companies are perfect when it comes to CSR". P5 appreciates she "has an environmentally friendly team" and that through CSR in her company, she has "more of an awareness of different areas my career could go, using tech for environmental or social issues". P5 added that she is "interested in the ethics of technology" and "wants to see the bigger impact on society", as she "has a moral compass". These opinions corroborate with previous literature from Lanier (2017) and Gomez *et al.* (2019) who found that Gen Z are motivated by social justice and critique employers on their social impact and organisational ethics.

#### 4. Diversity

A theme related to CSR is diversity, which was "not on the radar" for Irish Baby boomers twenty years ago (P2). As preceding literature cites, Ireland was governed via a church and state dominance; public health and education services were nonexistent at this time, impacting therefore diversity in the workplace (Kenny, 2012). P2 views diversity as "not something I would overtly look for in a company, I would just expect it's there. And I wouldn't be hanging around if it wasn't". Although P6 says he "doesn't think about it", he elucidates on how he requested additional team diversity as there was only one woman. He says, "it's already in the (company's) culture" and emphasises the "need to facilitate and provide opportunities".

Both Gen X interviewees show the change in Ireland's diversifying landscape through time. P1 describes working in Ireland in the 80's and 90's where diversity was "almost non-existent", where "women were in the workplace, but it wasn't as prolific as it is now". P4 reiterates this view as she says diversity was "minimal in Ireland" as she grew up with "only one black family in the town". According to previous literature, there was a "rapid growth in ethnic, religious and cultural diversity since 1996 (Honohan *et al.* 2012). P1 talks about her company treating LGBTQ+ individuals with respect and providing support in tangible ways, advocating for improved female to male ratios (Tech). However, P1 remarks on the lack of encouragement her daughters received in school to take Honours maths or science subjects. P4 states they had "60+ nationalities working in a 1000 people workforce"; while acknowledging it as "great", the "language issue" resulted in a need to ensure employees spoke English in work as it was the primary language of the country.

When it comes to Irish Millennials, diversity is a factor that effects job motivation. P3 perceives her current team "has a good split" in terms of gender diversity but "would definitely feel weird if it was all white males". P7 places higher importance on diversity as a job motivator; he speaks

of a personal affect due to a lack of diversity in organisations, stating “I’ve tried to be not as gay, so I don’t seem like a fish out of water”. P7 also referenced the “glass cliff” where companies give women leadership positions in times of crisis, setting them up for failure while trying to look progressive. Deloitte’s Millennial Survey indicates that these opinions are common in previous literature, where it found that 33% of respondents said social issues such as diversity should be a business priority but only 16% believed businesses achieve this (Deloitte, 2019).

Diversity in the workplace was discussed at length by both Irish Gen Z interviewees. Research shows that this generation desire to work with people possessing divergent skills, education levels, and nationalities but the inclusion of gender, identity and orientation was equally important (EY, 2018, and Gomez et al. 2019). P8 and P5, both Gen Z’s working in Ireland’s tertiary industry, reflect these views as follows:

- *“I went from a diverse environment in college to a workplace with mostly white Irish people and it feels a little like going backwards. There’s not a lot of diversity and no one states their pronouns, and I think the older generation in my company would be surprised if I did..I’d love to see it, but not seeing diversity wouldn’t stop me from taking a role. I wonder are we supposed to be talking about social issues in work? I also wonder, what can I really do about it. I can’t do much to change my current organisation but when I get to a leadership position I can. Of course, if I saw discrimination, I would be reluctant to work somewhere, but I feel ignorance is bliss and, in my generation, it’s very self-service”. (P8)*
- *“I feel like I have white privilege. I like working with people from different backgrounds and I don’t think it should be a question.. When I applied for a job recently, they asked very personal questions like my financial background, my sexuality, race etc., it was obviously a way to fill quotas, like positive discrimination.. The job I ended up taking had an anonymous skills assessment as part of a screening process, which showed that I deserved the job, and wasn’t just getting it because I am a woman in tech”. (P5)*

##### 5. Type of work

The type of work that someone performs can have a huge impact on their job motivation (Maslow, 1970). Both Baby boomers in this study align themselves with similar themes of previous literature, wanting to consolidate their skills and contribute (McLoughlin, 2016). P2 aspires to “influence and shape a company” and P6 said he “won’t just do any job” and “needs to create something”, wanting a “challenge and to make a difference”.

Gen X, according to literature, are “loyal to their profession rather than their organization” (Valickas and Jakštaitė, 2017). In the case of Gen X interviewees, both had changed companies but continued to use the same set of skills throughout most of their careers, as can be seen in the following quotes:

- *“I like influencing and having responsibility, I always have an opinion... I like to lead and develop people”. (P4).*

- *"I need to be in a customer or people facing role and I would be strong and confident in that area.. I find networking with people exciting and I think it's a subtle and inherent skill". (P1).*

Millennials interviewed revealed views consistent with literature in relation to the type of work they do. Literature demonstrates job role or type of work as a reason for Millennials to leave a company (Kennedy, 2013) and that Millennials want to "achieve and create something that will be meaningful and useful in future" (Valickas and Jakštaitė, 2017). The Millennial interviewees (P7 and P3) proved this is true, as seen in the following quotes:

- *"it needs to be enjoyable work.. I like to be contributing something positive and have interesting and challenging work".(P7).*
- *"it would effect my mood if I wasn't being exposed to new things or not learning.. I like a challenge and interesting, stimulating work.. There needs to be a balance as you don't want too much stress or pressure".(P3).*

When it comes to previous literature and Irish Gen Zs in the tertiary sector, the type of work performed is a main motivator (Collins, 2020). The participants from this generational cohort (P8 and P5) concur, stating:

- *"the type of work is important, I like to feel valued and like lots of responsibility and taking the lead on projects, although it can bring nervousness too". (P8)*
- *"the type of work I do is one of my main motivators, as it gives me self-gratification. I like a challenge but only in areas I am interested in. I like picking projects in areas I like for example the ethics of technology. It's interesting to see the bigger impact on society and I feel like I have a sort of moral compass in that area". (P5)*

This expression of being motivated by the type of work she's doing and linking it to ethical topics is very similar to the Crowley-Henry *et al.* quote about Irish Gen Zs: "They face a future working life of collaboration with artificial and augmented intelligence. They are social activists fighting for their planet ... and are heirs of an Ireland that knows social and moral choice like never before." (Crowley-Henry, *et. al* 2020).

## 6. Training and Development

Both Baby Boomer participants of this study articulated that whilst their formal training participation in work is low, on the job training is high. As a member of a professional body, Professional development courses are a requirement for P2, thus he is continuously progressing; he self-educates through reading, echoing McLoughlin's study which found that Baby Boomers enjoy continuous learning and "need to stay current" and "abreast of best practice" (McLoughlin 2016). P6 also states he "never stops learning" and has volunteered for a mentoring program in his company, which correlated with McLoughlin's finding that Baby Boomers acquire motivation from mentoring and "giving something back" (McLoughlin, 2016).

With regard to the training and development of Gen X in Ireland, literature demonstrates that early in their careers, an "increasing professionalisation of civil society" (Poplewell 2013) occurred, and Ireland was perceived as a provider of "high quality skilled workers from a well-developed education system" and a "very advanced telecommunications infrastructure" (Breathnach 2000). Both P1 and P4 considered upskilling valuable. P4's employer supported her post graduate course and P1 recognized a need to upskill during the recession, both echoing the themes of previous literature. Although P1 recognises her company's learning initiatives she "is

more of a visual learner and would like an adjustment to the training" on offer. P4 now trains others and describes herself as "an educator" in the workplace, practicing self-teaching.

According to current literature (Deloitte 2019 Millennial survey), training and development are strong motivators for Millennials. Millennials interviewed for this study reflected this, with P7 saying "you have to do training" and P3 stating "I am hugely motivated by training and want to accumulate as much knowledge as possible". P3 specified that she thinks "teams-based training works really well, as we are all close in age and level, but then you also have some senior people on the team, so the interaction is there". P7 notes that he would like "training to be more personalised" and that "companies are bad at gauging the levels of understanding". These views reflect the findings of Morton which find that Millennials are interested in futureproofing themselves and this includes on-the-job training (Morton, 2002).

Literature shows that Gen Z dislike learning through a lecture format, instead favouring on the job training and colleague guidance (Desai *et al.* 2017 and Collins, 2020). P5 and P8 hold similar views, stating:

- *"I prefer to learn on the job. 2-3 training courses don't work.. I had a good supervisor who was approachable and give a context as to why you are doing certain pieces of work.. Because I work in technology, I am constantly learning.. Our lecturer in college told us that our job in 20 years time doesn't exist yet".(P5).*
- *"I feel like it's (training is) not real work..if they had designated training times it would be better.. It would be great to have a sort of open day for new people in terms of what training is on offer.. I know training will eventually help you get promoted and is good for career progression... It's also a great way to conquer your fears". (P8)*

This "fear" of tech is not something we associate with Gen Z however previous literature shows that not all of Gen Z are tech savvy and older generations expect them to know it all (Collins 2020). It further substantiates Collins's findings that the content of Gen Z's training needs to be personalised and varied (Collins 2020).

### 7. Career progression

Career progression is a theme which derives from training and development. Due to Baby boomer's life stage, retirement considerations tend to take precedence over career progression. Previous literature on Irish Baby Boomers indicates a propensity for indebtedness and gratitude towards employment, resulting in a loyalty to employers, thus remaining in the same company for life (Kenny 2012). P2 and P6, both Irish Baby Boomers, had differing paths when it came to career progression, although both articulated ambition desires. P6 aligned with Kenny's theory; he has remained with the same employer but "moved sideways to move up". He notes that "the younger generation don't tend to stay on as much even though the company offers opportunity to move around into different areas".

P2 contradicts previous literature in terms of Baby Boomers as he says:

- *"I've always moved around job wise..if you are ambitious, you will go to where the good jobs are..career progression was my focus initially but now work-life balance is much more important for me.."* (P2).

Generation X in Ireland saw increased women in the workforce, and were less liable to emigrate (Walsh, 2002 and Ó Séaghdha, 2019). The two Gen X interviewees both refused promotions citing the consequence of less time with families as the reason (P1, P4). P4 states that after maternity leave, she “stepped back to be with family” and worked as a consultant, which integrated with her work-life balance and provided increased choice for interesting projects. P1 says career progression is “not hugely important now”. An insightful finding should be noted that findings would likely differ regarding career progression if males from Gen X were interviewed interested of females.

Career development and progression is a salient theme for Millennials as manifested in previous literature, where 49% of Millennials would leave an organisation due to lack of career development opportunities and they like to plan their own professional careers and development (Deloitte 2019 and Westerman and Yamamura 2007). Millennial participants in this study have conflicting views, with P3 stating she is “starting to think about career progression a bit more now” and P7 stating that he “doesn’t have a 5-year plan”. P7 expands, stating

- *“My work needs to be useful.. But I want my free time... I don’t see myself moving the full way up the ladder, I don’t need that. If I wanted a standard nuclear family, maybe, and I might change my mind...”*. (P7).

P3 mentions how she is “motivated to stay in this company until I qualify”, and summarises she will “be more employable if I’ve stayed in one company during the qualification process”. This view of basing the timeline of your career on your qualification is similar to findings from Kennedy (2013) who found that some Irish Millennials stayed in companies to gain post-qualification experience.

Gen Z interviewed for this study had similar values to previous research when it came to career progression. Literature shows that Irish Gen Zs are interested in career progression with 71% aspiring to be future workplace leaders, and express the opinion that the experience necessary for these leadership roles, necessitates a move to other companies. (Collins 2020). P8 and P5, the Gen Z participants, reflect these attitudes in the following statements:

- *“career progression is on my mind all the time..I am constantly overthinking my next step as opposed to enjoying what I’m doing, because I was taught to set myself up for the future..it’s not as linear as I thought though, and I see myself moving laterally, moving company, I want to explore my possibilities and try everything! I might leave and come back, as I feel if you go in as a grad you’re always seen as a grad”*. (P8).
- *“I might leave and come back again. Now it’s time to find my feet and see all areas, but eventually I want to specialise in a manager or team lead role, or potentially be an entrepreneur..I’m not interested in a stable job, I know I am not here for life, and I am employable. If it’s not a good fit or if I want to travel, I will move on. I think it’s a generational thing as my parents and grandparents think “oh great you have a job, now you’re sorted!””*. (P5).

## 8. Travel

Robust analysis of preceding literature highlights little evidence concerning travel as a motivator amongst Irish Baby Boomers in the tertiary industry. This study however exposed an interesting trend with regard to viewing travel as a means to progress in your career. Both Baby Boomers in the study echoed this, exemplifying varying amenability to travel. They said that:

- *"I moved to Dublin from Cork for work and have been here ever since.. I have thought about travelling for work.. I would advise people to do it early.. I probably would travel if I had my time over, but now the world is more global so there's not much need". (P6).*
- *"everyone should travel.. I've travelled extensively throughout my career and would probably have to travel again for future career progression.. Young people that need to travel for work should remember that it's not two years on the beach" (P2).*

Moreover, according to literature, Gen X in Ireland were less inclined to emigrate (Ó Séaghdha, 2019). The findings of this study demonstrate that while Irish Gen Xers "travelled a lot at the start" of their careers (P4) and "loved it before children" (P1), both interviewees ceased travelling for work after their children were born as they desired a healthier work life balance.

Travel becomes a more prominent theme once it comes to the Millennial generation in Ireland's tertiary industry. Both Millennial interviewees mentioned travel as a motivational factor, with P7 stating he accepted his first job "because there was a chance to travel to New York" and P3 states "I always wanted a job that could facilitate travel". This desire to travel for work among the Millennial generation is reflected in Kennedy's (2013) study where travel was found to be a positive motivational factor. There is a caveat reflected both in previous literature and the interviewees for this study however, in that there needs to be individual autonomy regarding travel. P3 states she would like "a central base and to be tied to somewhere" and Kennedy (2013) had a participant who referred to the lack of control over logistical travel decisions and were "getting sick of it" (Kennedy, 2013). P7 also notes that his company offers career breaks where "you can go off travelling and come back to your job", which was a positive motivational factor for him.

Irish Gen Zs interest in travel combines both work and fun (Collins 2020). This amalgamated view is reflected in the findings of Irish Gen Zs interviewed for this study, as seen in the following quotes:

- *"I'd like to find a job that would allow me to relocate, hopefully to the UK.. I'd also like to take maybe a six-month career break to travel before settling down in future... but I fear there won't be jobs here when I get back". (P8).*
- *"at this stage I just want to travel for fun.. I think I need to travel while I am young before family come into the picture... My current company do offer a 2-week holiday to India where you do some training..companies need to find the balance between training people properly and keeping them on the team but allowing them to explore other locations or offices if they want to". (P5).*

## 9. Company culture/Organisational Prestige

In terms of company culture, or organisational prestige, the study discovered a gap in the literature surrounding Baby Boomers in Ireland. Reasons for this may relate to timeline. The shift towards work in the tertiary industry began during this generation's lifetime, so company culture was not a priority (CSO 2016). Both Baby Boomers interviewed, mentioned at the beginning of their career, they “just tried to get a job” (P6) and “you took the first job you were offered” (P2). Currently in their career however, company culture has gained importance and both Baby Boomer interviewees spoke about their organisations with a sense of pride. P2 “likes that they have a strong brand” as he feels it “draws a baseline under the expectation” of how you will be treated. P6 noted the difference in culture between teams in the company and spoke of a culture of innovation. He also said that “culture can kill a company” (P6).

When it comes to Gen X, literature suggests this generational cohort who grew up during the computer revolution are likely to look at things differently (Valickas and Jakštaitė, 2017). Regarding company culture, P4 echoes this alternative view, stating that “rules are made to be broken” and that she encourages others to “find better ways of doing things”. P1 states that she is “really proud” to be part of her company due to their culture of innovation and specifically their “contribution to the HSE COVID Tracking system, and the fact that they are an Irish company”. P1 recalls her opinion on company culture at the beginning of her career, where there was a “decimation line”, whereas now there are “no egos and everyone is equal”.

The culture of a company, or organisational prestige, is an important motivational factor for Millennials (Kennedy 2013). While the Millennials interviewed in this study agreed that a company's reputation for its culture or prestige was important, there were some conflicting thoughts as follows:

- *“it is important to have a good name on your CV as it makes you more employable..there is more security in a good company...it's a safety net”.* (P3).
- *“my motivation definitely used to be reputation based, but from actual experience I was just chasing prestige and didn't actually have a good experience in a reputable company.. Now I am much more interested in learning and being engaged”.* (P7).

The Irish Gen Zs had differing opinions on company culture as a motivating factor on their work. Literature shows that Gen Zs are motivated by organisational prestige and place importance on a company's reputation (Collins 2020). P8 has mixed view on this viewpoint, as she states that:

- *“just because a company is well known that doesn't make it a great company to work for.. I actually already knew my current company was good before joining and that was a big pull factor”.* (P8).

P5 says that “how big a company is” is one her of main motivators, although agrees with P8 when she says “you can only really see what a company is like once you're working there”. Building on the findings that Irish Gen Zs are more conservative and less interested in alcohol than their elders were at their age (ESPAD, 2015), P5 talks highly of an organisation having perks that don't include discounts at bars or booze-fueled staff nights out, but instead offer benefits such as:

- *“sleeping pods and video game rooms for employees to hang out when they aren’t working”*. (P5).

#### 10. Supportive team

Vigorous emphasis was deposited on having a supportive team for the Baby boomers in Ireland’s tertiary sector, both in previous literature and in this study. McLoughlin (2016) found this group desired to be part of an engaging and supportive team which corroborates with P2’s views, as he notes “having a supportive team makes you work more efficiently”. P6 states that:

- *“people are my main motivator.. I can’t work alone.. I’ve found remote working a struggle in that sense, not being able to go for coffee with people.. I miss that”* (P6).

P6 and P2 had differentiating opinions on team members working from home, with P2 stating “the non-contributors become obvious” and P6 expressing “you can’t really see how people work”, in reference to new recruits.

As Gen X enter the workforce in Ireland, we see a rise in technological advancements (Ranelagh *et al.* 2021). This alludes to less teamwork, and P1 recalls an isolating task at work of “manually transcribing files from physical to digital”. She asserts “you are only as good as the people around you;” that “we are not robots; we need human connection”. P1 states that “a good working relationship with my boss and colleagues” is critical to her. P4 has a different opinion on working in teams, as she believes that “good people can work independently”. She states the benefit of consulting in that she is “not a big people person”, and the constant change in team environment suited her.

With regard to teamwork and having supportive colleagues; a multivariate view materialized in the findings of the Millennials interviewed. P3 stated that “team support is hugely important... It helps to build rapport”, which is consistent with findings that Millennials are motivated by teams and the people in their organisation (Kennedy 2013) and that a negative relationship with colleagues would be demotivating (Kelly and Barret 2011). P7 had diverging opinions from literature and P3, as he attests:

- *“I’m more productive at home.. I don’t miss interactions in the office... I have my friends outside work.. I did like taking lunch breaks with colleagues because it breaks up the day, but now working from home it just all blends into one”*. (P7).

Literature pertaining to team motivation for Gen Zs reveals that an unpleasant team environment is alienating for them, and they are motivated by a supportive team and structure (Fratrìèová and Kirchmayer 2018). Irish Gen Zs in the tertiary industry interviewed for this study concur with this finding, as they say:

- *“some colleagues explain things perfectly, but others just let me figure it out myself, I think there needs to be a balance. I get a sense of accomplishment if I can do something on my own, but I love team work too, it helps with social politics of the workplace especially when you’re new.”* (P8).

- *"I prefer teamwork, but I do like having some work delegated to me so I can prove what I can do! So, a combination is great". (P5).*

### 11. The social aspect to work

The social aspect to work was a key theme in previous literature, with McLoughlin's Baby Boomer participants getting fulfillment due to their interactions with people and workplace engagements (McLoughlin, 2016). The Baby Boomer participants in this study had different views on the social aspect to work, as can be seen in the following quotes:

- *"It is important as long as it's not forced.. We do have social initiatives in work and it keeps a buzz for the juniors.. It's not a huge motivator for me work wise, I just can't do the same volume of socialising.. There are no more watercooler chats because of COVID" (P2).*
- *"the fun has to be there.. I would socialise a lot in work.. I miss that social aspect to work now and am struggling with it a little since COVID..I think it will be tough for the younger generation, especially if they are trying to get promoted and they don't know anyone" (P6).*

P6 also speaks of the Irishness of our attitude to socialising in work when he says:

- *"Irish people should be aware that not everyone would enjoy a drink after work.. You need to be careful.. Maybe some prefer a lunch in order to get to know their team as opposed to drinking or going out in the evenings" (P6).*

With insufficient previous literature on Ireland's Gen X and their social life in work, this study found the Gen X interviewees share similar views to the Baby Boomers. In younger years, P1 and P4 were proactive in work social activity participation. However, P4 recalls being "conscious" when she was socialising, and P1 reiterates this saying there could be issues with "knowing personal lines" when it comes to work colleagues. P1 continues to be of the opinion that it is "important to meet socially out of a professional setting", however P4 now reflects she "doesn't need loads of social interaction".

Previous literature shows that 25% of Irish Millennials enjoy a favorable company social life and this contributes towards their job satisfaction (Kennedy 2013). Interestingly, this view is both shared and contested by the Irish Millennials interviewed in this study. Both Irish Millennials interviewed had differing views on socialising in work, as follows:

- *"I do enjoy bonding and chatting with people you don't work with.. I want people to see me outside work so I can show a different side.. It's important for your wellbeing too.. I was shy when I first joined but have definitely broken the ice over a couple of drinks". (P3).*

P7 has a different take, saying that

- *"it can sometimes feel cliquy and like you are given an automatic friend group..I would go to an organised thing, but I have my friends outside of work and I do like to keep work strictly professional". (P7).*

Irish Gen Zs interviewed for this study had diametrically opposed opinions regarding the social aspect to work. P5 aligns with previous research that found Irish Gen Zs to enjoy the social aspect of their work and working amongst a young workforce (Collins 2020) as she states

- *“the social side is great as there are drinks and even ski trips! I didn't realise it until I joined. I like that there's loads of other young grads too”. (P5).*

P8 has the opposite view as she says,

- *“I don't want to leave my guard down on my team and I'm not in work to make friends, I am there to put my stamp on something”. (P8).*

Unlike P5 wanting to socialise and go for a few drinks with colleagues, P8 shows more commonalities with reports such as ESPADs report on Gen Z in Ireland being slightly more conservative (ESPAD 2015). P8 goes on to say that “I realise that life is easier if people like you but at the end of the day it is work... it's also tough because of COVID, it's hard to find a balance”.

### 13. Technology

McLoughlin found that when it comes to Irish Baby Boomers and technology, they are continuously learning and though the capacity to understand new and complex ideas desecrates, it doesn't go away (McLoughlin, 2016). The Baby Boomers interviewed in this study referred to the development and transformation of technology throughout their careers with P2 calling his grasp of technology “evolutionary”. He says it “has had a massive influence” on his life. He has performed a substantial amount of informal learning regarding technology out of necessity, including basic Excel courses and currently stays updated with work systems. P6 recalls the introduction of broadband and notes that now you “have to have broadband in new houses”. He believes “the older gang have to get digital” and sees the importance of technology for working from home. P6 notes however that technology could take away from some in person opportunities, like going for coffee or meeting people in the office.

According to literature, Gen X are described as Digital Immigrants which saw them learning the most about technology in their adult life, (Prensky 2001). This is true of the Irish Gen X interviewees as we see P1 describe the evolution of technology in her own lifetime:

- *“Growing up, we had one phone in the hall, then in the 90's when PCs came in, there was work in admin.. It was really boring work.. I am amazed that now with the click of a button it's all made much easier.. And there's no time wasted”. (P1).*

P1 adds that she is “not as quick” as her daughter with technology, who is a Digital Native (Prensky, 2001), however the more she uses tech the more she thinks “there's nothing to it”. She also believes there is a “fear of learning” in her generation and that she “surprised herself”. When asked about technology P4 stated:

- *“I love it but struggle with some of it.. now that I am working for myself there is no one to help home.. Technology is brilliant for working from home but can invade personal life”. (P4).*

Both Irish Millennials interviewed in this study mentioned a lack of substantial training in technology as something they found difficult in their job. P7 recalls joining his company and not

knowing how to use the technology, but his manager “had been promoted so much that he didn’t know either” so there was “a gap there for sure”. P3 says she

- *“didn't get much training and it took a while to get up to speed, but maybe it's just my brain!.. I would have liked more personalised training... Some people coming in at the same level as me were fine with tech so there are different levels of skill”. (P3).*

The CIPD found that Millennials place importance on having access to relevant technologies that allow them to be more engaged with stakeholders, which could have been a reasoning for the interviewees placing importance on tech training (CIPD 2015). A concept which did not arise in the findings of this study was Sinek’s (2016) theory of technology causing superficial relationships and a reduction of team bonding and active listening opportunities.

The Irish Gen Zs interviewed encountered different technology experiences, as P5 did a technology focused course in college and is currently beginning her career in tech. She thinks she “takes it for granted” and talks of helping relatives with tech issues especially during COVID as “everyone has to use it now”. P8 also “feels confident” about technology as she had to execute college work online. She thinks:

- *“if you can read you can use tech, just Google it! There is way more to learn of course but I am capable of using it”. (P8).*

P5 wonders “how far we can take technology without being deceptive” as she speaks about the ethical considerations for care-bots for the elderly.

## Chapter 6: Discussion

### 1. COVID-19

One enormous factor that has affected not only this research study but also those participating, is the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to an obvious gap in the literature surrounding the effects of COVID-19 on job motivation; comparing findings proved problematic. During the interview process, the pandemic and its effect on workers, emerged as a dominant theme. The generations who have experience being in the office environment, i.e., Baby boomers, Gen X and Millennials were relieved at the break from commuting and spoke of increased productivity, whereas the Gen X’s are eager to experience the workplace environment. A baby boomer interviewee noted the future difficulty for juniors from a visibility aspect as a result of working from home, highlighting promotion opportunity difficulties citing it may be more onerous if you have not been exposed to people face to face. COVID-19 has afforded those in the tertiary industry a chance to work from home full time, and it will be interesting to discern how employers respond to remote and flexible working post-pandemic.

Another interesting topic was travel. Millennials and Gen Z were predominantly concerned with travel, and learnings from this survey demonstrate that after COVID, we may see a resurgence of the roaring ‘20s which brought “manic joy that comes after a year when the world became very small and quiet” (Hemmer 2021). This may cause those with a previously ambiguous interest in travel, to now make tangible plans.

## 2. *Genders*

Another interesting theme surrounding the generations in Ireland at work is gender. Limitations of this study due to time and access constraints resulted in female interviewees for both Gen X and Gen Z cohorts. Subsequently, there was a constant referral in interviews with Gen X to spending time with family and a desire to be home as much as possible. Due to similar limitations, the Baby Boomers interviewed were both male. However interestingly, in their deliberations, there was increased emphasis on providing financially for their families as opposed to physically being with them. In terms of career progression, the Baby Boomers (male) did not foresee further progression as retirement was within view, however both Gen X interviewees (female) had already drawn back from their careers, to spend time with their partners and children. This theme spanned right through the generations, as the female Millennial and both Gen Zs (female) all remarked upon settling down and having a family which would impact their working life. The male Millennial does not foresee a “standard nuclear family” in his future, hence the inclination to advance to a senior position is not strong. Previous literature would suggest that, with more women entering the workforce in Generation X due to the lifting of the marriage bar (ICTU 2019,) in conjunction with Millennial and Gen Zs modern views on diversity (Deloitte 2019 and EY 2018), confirmation of a more progressive answer to this issue should be evident. This research study however, reveals insight into how gender equality still has a long way to go in terms of how career is affected by family life and vice versa depending on your gender, in terms of work-life balance, career progression, pay and travel. A suggestion of how to fix this issue may be to eradicate the culture of over-working, so that everyone is on the same playing field from the start.

## 3. *Technology*

The findings of this study principally aligned with previous literature on technology and generations. A general consensus among Baby Boomers and Gen X interviewed revealed that albeit for minimal minor technical difficulties, they enjoy a general proficiency around technology and enjoy learning about it, as previous literature has noted (Mcloughlin 2019 and Prensky 2001). One topic however that did arise in this study which wasn't mentioned much in previous literature, was social media in the workplace and how much Irish Baby Boomers and Gen X's knew. The rise of social media over the last 20 years has meant that businesses will most likely use social media in some form – it could be a WhatsApp group for a certain team, social media marketing for customers across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, or a company LinkedIn account. During interviews, there were comments from both a Baby Boomer and a Gen X about how their generations needed help with understanding social media and that they shy away from it. While previous literature would suggest that as generations get younger, they become more digitally literate (Prensky 2001), an interesting finding from this study was that Millennials spoke the most about struggling with technology. While Baby Boomers and Gen X are expected to need more guidance with technology, Millennials seem to be painted with the same brush as Gen Z who are tech fluent, but this is not the case. Both Millennials in this study expressed difficulties in the workplace in terms of technology, as it was expected that they had a certain innate ability and didn't need specific training. Perhaps individuals should be assessed on their technology skills and then provided training specific to their understanding level, as opposed to presumptions being made based on what generation they come from or even what course they did in college.

#### 4. *Communication based on generation*

The way we communicate has obviously evolved massively over time, but there are micro changes among generations of the same century which effect workplace relations. Literature attributes technology as a reason for Millennials creating “superficial relationships” (Sinek, 2016) and for Gen Zs under confidence in developing professional relationships in person (Crowley-Henry et al., 2020). These are real issues it seems, as one of the Gen Z interviewees suggested a desire to be formally trained on workplace etiquette. Another Gen Z interviewed spoke of how, when dealing with someone from an older generation in work, she waits for them to set the tone of the conversation. She believes attests her generation (Gen Z) are more “business-casual” which would suggest a more relaxed approach to the workplace, however a Gen X interviewee recalls teaching a Gen Z about soft skills and talking as opposed to typing. It appears the relaxed approach does not extend to actual prosaic verbal communication; however written communications can be too casual as described by a Baby boomer interviewed who believes that the younger generations need to be more professional in terms of writing reports and emails. Meanwhile, both Gen X interviewees concurred that their generation and the one above them (Baby Boomers) need to be guided on political correctness but one mentioned Gen Zs being overly sensitive. There is an evident difference therefore, in the methods as to how individual generations communicate, as older generations will recall a common phrase in Irish households for children to be “seen and not heard”, while Gen Zs were conventionally encouraged to share their feelings from an early age, and more recently to share everything on social media. Millennials appear to situate somewhere in between, as one Millennial interviewed talks of how she will regularly speak up in meetings, but would never approach a Partner of the firm.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

To conclude this research study, the researcher will revisit the original research questions outlined and produce the key findings of the study. Future research suggestions will also be made, in an attempt to look critically at the research undertaken by both previous authors and this researcher.

### 1. *Research Questions Revisited*

1. What is job motivation and why is it important?
2. What if any are the intergenerational differentiations in job motivation?
3. How does this pertain to the Irish context and the tertiary economic sector?

### 2. *Key Findings - job motivation*

In answering the research questions above, key findings were made about job motivation among the different generations in Ireland’s tertiary economic sector. The first question was answered in the Literature Review, as job motivational theory was discussed and explained how employees have basic workplace motivational needs (Hall and Williams, 2000). When it came to the research conducted for this study, it became clear that job motivation is vital to employees of all generations. All participants shared a general view of needing to feel like they were contributing, were valued and that they were availing of the best possible opportunity in front of them.

### *3. Key Findings – work-life balance, financial reward, job role, future-proofing, and travel*

Intergenerational differences and similarities do exist and can be viewed through the lens of the various themes which were developed throughout the research study. The two most important themes to the participants in terms of how motivated they were in their job were work-life balance and financial reward. A sub-theme of work-life balance emerged, as it was found that the Baby Boomers didn't value work-life balance as much until recently due to COVID-19. It forced them to work from home, eliminating commutes and business trips etc., however all other generations valued a work-life balance pre-COVID. Financial reward was a main motivator for every interviewee, however different individuals placed varying degrees of importance on it regardless of generation. There seems to be a difference in attitude between Baby Boomers and Gen X versus the two younger generations in the workplace when it comes to the job role and how motivating the actual work is. Baby Boomers and Gen X participants all mentioned how they entered the workforce in Ireland at a time where the aim was simply to get a job, no matter where that job was, what work you would be doing or how much you would be trained or developed. Millennial and Gen Z interviewees want more from employers at the beginning of their careers. They are motivated not only by the job security and a work-life balance but by learning new skills and future-proofing themselves (including having a prestigious organisation on their CV), doing meaningful work, getting support and feedback and having potential travel opportunities. If HR practitioners can provide these desirable workplace benefits, all generations will likely be more motivated in their work resulting in a more productive and successful company.

### *4. Key Findings – Corporate Social Responsibility and Diversity*

There were a lot of similarities between the generations in terms of how motivated they might be by a company's CSR activities. Although one might think from literature that the younger the generation, the more they care about these social issues, a theme emerged from this study in that there is a suspicious narrative around CSR among Millennials. The Baby Boomers and Gen X were aware of CSR activities in their company's but were not hugely motivated or involved in them personally. Gen Zs were very interested in what their company were doing and seemed to be involved in teams and projects to do with internal CSR activities. Millennials interviewed, however, felt it was all simply smoke and mirrors and would much prefer that resources be spent on current staff members well-being. This is perhaps reflective of the middle ground that some Millennials find themselves in between the older and younger generations in work – being more interested in social issues than Baby Boomers and Gen X, but with enough organisational context to see the sometimes disappointing side to Corporate Social Responsibility.

A particularly interesting finding in terms of intergenerational differences which relates to CSR is diversity. There was a commonality among all participants in this study, regardless of generation, where each interviewee believed diversity was important but not necessarily their main motivator for work or something they explicitly look for in a job. The difference, however, was that both Gen Z interviewees and a Millennial spoke at length about their opinions on diversity in the workplace, giving anecdotes and showing their depth of knowledge and insight on the topic. This is compared to the other participants in different generations who showed less interest or experience of diversity/lack of diversity in the workplace. It seems the younger the generation, the more in depth conversation regarding diversity took place. Both of these findings about CSR and Diversity

should be noted as important for HR. CSR should be an honest and transparent activity to all employees, and diversity needs to be raised as an issue at all levels in the workplace.

#### *5. Key Findings – Social contact in work, technology and communication style*

Opinions on social contact in work and how motivating it is to the job were completely varied, with a 50/50 split in each generation interviewed. Half of each generational cohort enjoyed their social scene in work and missed that aspect of office life, while the other half liked to keep work and socialising separate. It seems to be a matter of personal preference as opposed to a generational trait.

Technology was actually more of a stressful subject for the Millennials and Gen Z, as they are expected to know everything to do with tech and to teach their elders. In all cases bar one, interviewees weren't as knowledgeable as their older counterparts perceived them to be. HR practitioners should take heed of this finding, and perhaps develop more in depth personalised training on technology for all employees.

One clear difference between Baby Boomers and Gen Zs was communication style. The older generation prefer professional communication and want Gen Z to be more diligent in their reports and emails, and Gen Z prefer a more relaxed, business casual approach but would like to be made aware of the office etiquette from day one. This is another emerging themes which HR should note, as employees will feel more comfortable when they know the status quo on how to conduct oneself in the office.

#### *6. Key Findings – COVID-19 and the tertiary industry*

It is noteworthy that this research study focused on the tertiary economic sector. This sector has grown exponentially over the last 50 years and in most cases, workers will have some form of formal education possibly extending to a college degree and further qualification to a professional body. This sector provides the most choice to employees as their skills in IT and business acumen are transferrable across different sectors within the tertiary industry. Interviewees for this study should all be in offices at the moment, but are forced to work from home due to COVID-19. While the global pandemic has pushed many to unemployment and uncertainty, there are thousands of Irish employees of the tertiary industry in a safe and secure environment. Apart from hospitality workers and other personal services, and of course office workers whose home environment does not allow for a calm and quiet workspace, tertiary workers are successfully working from home and seeing benefits. Interviewees (all of whom are working from home) speak of gaining an extra hour or two due to lack of commute, being able to do household chores or personal errands on lunch hours and having more control over their day. Many companies who didn't value flexible and home working before the pandemic are now revisiting policies and implementing strategies on how to make this a long-term option.

#### *7. Future research*

Due to the limitations of this study as well as some interesting findings, there is some future research to be done on the topic of job motivation across generations relating to Ireland's tertiary industry. Further research is needed on Gen Z, as they are only in their first year or two of work so may not have a well rounded view of what motivated them. There also needs to be more research done on the Irish tertiary industry and of course, what it will look like in a post-COVID world.

Lastly a topic for future research could be the different attitudes among gender in each generation. This study interviewed men only from the Baby Boomer generation and women only from generation X and Generation Z. It would be interesting to do a more in-depth focus on gender and for example attitudes towards work-life balance, staying in the family home etc.

## Chapter 8: Recommendations

### 1. *Flexible working policies*

The first recommendation is for employers to adopt updated flexible working policies. Its clear that all generations enjoy flexible working arrangements, albeit for different reasons, and it would help with employee motivation overall. It should be a practical and simple recommendation, as any company that is able to have employees working from home has had to do so over the last year due to COVID. The Irish Government have also made moves on new laws which allow employees to request remote working (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021). Either development of or an update to flexible working policies should only take a couple of hours for an employer to lay out in an employee handbook. In order to ensure complete understanding, the employer should communicate the changes to the entire workforce through a companywide email, and if employees have any questions regarding specific circumstances, they can discuss them with their direct line of report.

In terms of timelines, this should only take one day. The cost could include the couple of hours wages of the person making the changes to the Employee Handbook, and offering to pay for home office equipment, however in reality flexible working policies could save a company money. An example of this is if more employees work from home there is less office space needed and less electricity and other bills to pay. This recommendation should be the first priority for employers as it is the fastest, most cost-effective way to make a positive change due to the monumental changes in how we have been working over the last year.

### 2. *Centralised office etiquette and communication style*

This recommendation could take slightly longer to develop and implement. If there is a companywide policy on how the employer expects the employees to act in the workplace as well as a company communication style, there could be less friction between older workers who prefer a more professional setting and younger workers who can default to a business-casual approach. The first step would be to look at the branding, and how employers want to be perceived by their customers. If the target audience or content being showcased to customers is or a serious nature, a more professional approach should be taken as opposed to if the branding is light-hearted and fun, in which case business casual would be fine. Once this is decided upon, there needs to be specific details laid out in the Employee Handbook on how professional or casual employees should be, both with each other in person and through email/phone. This should also be communicated through HR in induction, so everyone who joins the company knows from day one how to navigate the workplace.

In terms of time, it will likely be a continuous action, initially taking around a week to decide on the style and then draft specific documentation. Then it will simply be a case of constant updating

and revising as suggestions are made or questions are asked. Cost wise it will take a week of labour initially and then could cost the company an hour or so of each new employee's first day.

### *3. Personalised technology training*

The final recommendation for employers is perhaps the most difficult and costly to implement, so it is last on the list of recommendations in terms of priority. It is clear from this study that there is an assumption by employers that younger generations of workers will pick up the technology or internal systems quicker than they do in reality. By personalising training for each employee in the technology they need to use in work, everyone should feel comfortable and at the same level, therefore given an equal chance of success. This could be done by a companywide survey asking employees (both old and new) level of ease on each internal software ie. Basic, intermediate, expert. It should then be ascertained which employees need to be at what level in terms of technology in order for the business to succeed. If an employee needs extra help, there should be a dedicated function for example HR or IT, to organise one on one training.

The time scale to develop this recommendation should be a couple of months in terms of first ascertaining who needs what training, and then developing a training program for various user levels. This will likely be costly, as it may involve multiple employees and multiple training sessions, however in the long run it could serve the company well due to the increase speed at which employees could work once trained properly.

## Chapter 9: Self Reflection

Completing this dissertation has been one of the most difficult, insightful and rewarding experiences of my life so far. I completed it during the COVID-19 global pandemic, as a full time Recruitment Consultant. During this time I have been working and studying/completing the dissertation from home. I chose the topic as it related directly to my work as a recruiter. During the research process I was actually able to speak about some of my findings to clients and candidates alike, which was a testament to the knowledge I have gained. I felt very proud of myself to be able to apply my studies to the workplace.

My favourite part of the process was conducting the interviews. Because I carry out interviews daily in my work, I was not nervous and already knew how to structure an interview, prompting interviewees to expand on answers while remaining neutral and open. Because I knew all of the interviewees personally, they divulged a lot of information and each interview took a more conversational tone. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing what the interviewees had to say and have received some feedback to say the feeling was mutual.

The biggest struggle I faced while undertaking this research study was my style of writing. I have a Bachelors degree in English, however when I joined the workforce as a recruiter for an agency, I had to re-train my brain to change my writing style completely, from an academic style to a business style. Through advice from my supervisor and family members, I had to review my work with a critical eye on how to change the language to make it more academic. Another challenge I faced was sticking to the word count, as there was simply so much interesting material both in

previous literature and from the interviewees. Again I had to use a critical lens to condense my work, keeping it as academic and concise as possible.

Overall this dissertation was extremely beneficial to many aspects of my life, including my work and education but also in terms of time management. Keeping to a study plan was key in completing the dissertation and I had to make constant adjustments to this plan as time went on and obstacles presented themselves. The process also gave me an insight into the various other studies done on generations in the workplace and it furthered my interest in the subject.

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