An Investigation into Generational Differences in the Irish Labour Market

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

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Abstract

An Investigation into Generational Differences in the Irish Labour Market

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This research project seeks to examine generational differences in the labour market in Ireland, and encompasses the four generations which are working in the current Irish workforce. This research examines if Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z who has only began to enter the workforce any different to each other with respect to their attitude, motivations and job satisfactions.

Using a quantitative method a sample of the Irish labour marker were examined to ascertain if differences between generations occurred not only with job satisfaction, motivation but to where the different generations worked and desired to work and what factors would entice them to change jobs.

Primary and secondary research were used to examine if there are any actual generational differences present in the labour market. While secondary research focuses on perceived differences between generations, and found that there is little evidence to confirm this assumption. While generational differences are present with respect to life experiences such as socio-economic conditions there are very little differences if any in attitudes and values of workers. These assumptions were tested by way of primary research across a number of hypotheses to also confirm that there were very little differences except for where generations work, desire to work and their motivation for leaving a job.

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1.1 Outline of the thesis

Chapter 2 explores the research objective and which areas the research study focused on.

Chapter 3 consists of the literature review where the researcher will examine the current literature on the current theories on generational cohorts. The researcher will examine historical generational theory along with current theory and research on the subject.

Chapter 4 outlines the research questions that the research study focuses on and the rationale for selecting the research questions.

Chapter 5 outlines the research methodology and the research instrument. This chapter also explores details on the sample (participants), their background and demographics. Also explored in this chapter is information on the strategy used to collect the data for the research study, and ethical considerations for data collection and storage.

Chapter 6 outlines the findings and analysis of the research, and brings the data from the survey into meaningful results.

Chapter 7 compares and discusses the results of the research along with current theory and discusses recommendations.

Chapter 2

Research Objective

2.1 Introduction

Today's workforce consists of several generations working together across a range of industries all working together in a mixed multi-generational workforce. Modern terminology stratifies these generations into named groups, Baby Boomers (1947-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Generation Y or Millennials (1981-1995) and Generation Z (1996-2015) (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005).

Generation	Birth Year	Age in 2020
Baby Boomers	1947-1964	73-56
Generation X	1965-1980	40-55
Generation Y	1981-1995	25-39
Generation Z	1996-2015	5-24

Table 1: Descriptive table illustrating age range of Generations (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005).

Modern theory on the subject stratify generations into approximately 20 year periods, and theorise that each generation shares common sets of characteristics imprinted by their common experiences such as economic and social conditions along with shared historical events. While there is general agreement in segmenting generations disagreement among various authors about which span of years should be encompassed utilised to create specific generational segments, and varying terminology used to define generations (Oh and Reeves, 2011).

Shifting demographics have been the subject of many studies for the past seventy years with characteristics placed on generations with each new generation categorised and assigned a set of common characteristics. Current and recent studies seem to focus on younger generations and how different they are from their older counterparts.

Generation Z who are the newest generation entering the workforce are described as more achievement orientated than its predecessors (Barna Group, 2018), and have grown up in an era of economic wellbeing (Fry and Parker, 2018), and in a culture of safety (Haidt and Lukianoff, 2018). The conditions in which generation Z have grown up in have resulted in this generation having less jobs during their teenage years than any other generation before them (Morisi, 2017), and this has had an effect on an unrealistic expectation of work and the psychological contract (Sherman & Morley, 2015). Generation Z are digital natives and have soft personality characteristics which may influence the type of occupation they may work in (Morisi, 2017).

The slightly older Generation Y or Millennials as they are also known as, were the first generation born into a wired world where they are connected twenty fours a day (Ryan, 2000). This generation seen the advances of the internet and the rise of social media in its growing years. Generation Y prefer to work in teams, are active learners and seek innovation but they also expect use of technology to get the job done (Arellano, 2015). This generation also committed and seeks meaningful work (Debard, 2004).

Generation X grew up with financial and social insecurity in a time of rapid change (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). This is a practical generation in its approach to problem solving and are technically competent (Kupperschmidt, 2000) but only with technology that they grew up with (Lester, et al., 2012). This generation want clear information with a practical value, are self-directed learners and work on teams (Arellano, 2015). Work/life balance is important to this generation and want to balance work with other parts of their lives (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

The oldest of the generations in today's workplace are Baby Boomers, and this group is shrinking year after year as they retire. Boomers are said to have an optimistic outlook and will work hard in their jobs although the seek gratification for their efforts (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Baby Boomers seek to build a stellar career and be rewarded for it (Debard, 2004), as this generation values material success (O'Bannon, 2001). By in large this generation has positive work abilities and like consensus building, mentoring and effecting change (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

2.2 Research Objective

The purpose of this research is to analyse the attitudes in what is in a multi-generational workforce and what their attitudes and expectation is towards work. Also, the research is to investigate what factors that would influence workers of different generations are and is there a difference between generational groups. This study proposes to examine the type of work that generations prefer over other types of work and what are their expectations, and what are the personality traits that drive organisational commitment.

H1: There is a difference between Baby Boomers and Millennials approach and attitude to work.

H2: Different generations are associated with specific industries or professions.

H3: Different generations have different levels of commitment to organisational commitment.

H4: Different generations are interested in different types of work and have a desire to work in different industries or professions.

H5: Different generations have different motivations to work in varying degrees.

H6: Different generations have varying degrees of job satisfaction.

H7: Different generations have different motivations for leaving jobs.

Chapter 3

Literature review

3.1 Literature review

Today's workforce is changing demographically as the natural cycle of workers retiring and new workers entering the employment market is continually cycling through generations. Across todays workforce there has been a predominant increase in millennials who in 2016 made up 21.3% (1,011,714) of Irelands workforce (O'Neill, 2018), and are projected to make up 75% of the workforce by 2025 (Deloitte, 2019).

Generation	Definition	Number 2016	Percent 2016
Gen Alpha	2013 >	260,544	5.5%
Gen z	1997-2012	1,046,172	22.1%
Gen Y (Millennials)	1981-1996	1,011,714	21.3%
Gen x	1965-1980	1,111,437	23.5%
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	925,196	19.5%
Pre-War	< 1945	384,534	8.1%

Table 2: Generational Segments in the Irish Population 2016, Source: Amárach Research.

Workforces consisting of a diverse age range can have benefits, corporations and its employees have observed have made observations in how the different generations function in the workforce (Hansen & Leuty, 2012). While there can be benefits to generations working together if they are not properly managed it can lead to conflict, have an influence on productivity and may lead to employee increased and unnecessary turnover (Smith, 2013). This can present an increased workload for managers and can increase the complexity of the workplace (Jiří, 2016), however, Wasserman (2007) states that these differences can actually increase collaboration and ignite creativity.

While there is currently a large focus on the millennial generation when comparing generations in the workforce, and this is largely too their current emergence and entrance into the workforce. This has altered the workforce and has replaced previous generations as they exit the workforce, thus altering the structure of the labour market. According to Weinbaum, Girven, and Oberholtzer (2016) millennials are not only the most educated, most interconnected and the most informed generation in today's workforce. Millennials are especially prevalent at graduate and entry level roles (Bolelli & Durmus, 2017; Seago, 2016) within the labour market.

3.2 Generational Theory

Mannheim (1952) described in a theory of generations that generations are somewhat stratified by their position and experience relative to a set of events, and that those experiences are imposed on a similarly stratified consciousness, where this experience does not include similarity of location. While older generational groups or different generation groups do experience a shared historical event, this does not influence them to form the same views and values due to stratification. Mannheim (1952) outlined that older generations that did share historical events with younger generations did not have the structure of their consciousness or view changed due to their natural view or 'inner dialect' having already being firmly formed during their early life. While they did experience further events of importance their early childhood experience had formed their world view and every following experience would take meaning from its original set, and Mannheim (1952) described that each new experience did not overwrite the earlier experiences but were grafted on to them in summation or agglomeration but were stratified in a 'dialectical' experience and that first impressions lasted throughout life changing relatively little (Rokeach, 1968; Rokeach, 1973); Inglehart, 1977; Inglehart, 1997).

Edmunds & Turner (2005) conveyed that the study of generations lacked a global scope and that there needed to be reflection on how globalisation has altered contemporary society. Furthermore, generational change has been largely understood in national terms and this was a limited view, and that Mannheim's (1952) analysis was prior to increased globalisation.

Edmunds & Turner (2005) illustrated that in a globalised world, events could be experienced globally and not just nationally thus influencing global generations.

Some authors have driven the further development of this theory and conclude that generational belonging is also from a sociological perspective where cultural phenomena and historical events (Noble & Schewe, 2003; Twenge, et al., 2010) help to form a collective memory and identity. Furthermore Caspi, *et al* (2005) illustrate that those who share these events in a shared context are influenced by them and this influences their development with respect to attitudes, values and personality traits. This is aligned with Generational Theory (Howe & Strauss, 1991) which outlines that in each new generational persona there is unleashed a new era, associated with historical events. In each new era lasting 20 -22 years is the existence of a new social, political, and economic climate.

The socialization hypothesis (Inglehart, 2008) also proposes that each generation's values change along with the conditions that prevail during their formative years. Shifts in generational values occur gradually as each generation becomes more prevalent over time, and the values that prevail reflect the conditions that prevailed in the years before adulthood (Wils, et al., 2011). To give this a sense of perspective the past several decades generations have grown up in better conditions than preceding generations with a divergence from hunger and economic insecurity to better economic security, and this has led to a shift in needs from physiological and safety needs (Maslow, 1943) as the predominant force in motivation to a need for belonging, esteem and intellectual and self-expression as being the forefront value (Inglehart, 1971; Maslow, 1943). A society's standard of living including its income level and its welfare system influenced the general sense of security in society. This hypothesis indicates that prolonged periods of high prosperity will tend to boost the spread of post-materialist values, but also that an enduring economic decline will have the opposite effect on society.

Likewise, Inglehart's (2008) scarcity hypothesis is likened to the principle of diminishing marginal utility, and is reflective of the distinction of human need for physical survival and safety its need for needs such as self-expression and aesthetic satisfaction. Scarcity hypothesis outlines that everyone places the highest value on their most pressing needs.

Inglehart (2008) illustrated that when the physical security and material needs are scarce that they are the needs that people are most likely to prioritise. Likewise, in times of prosperity 'post-materialist' aspirations such as belonging, self-esteem and aesthetic and intellectual satisfaction are emphasised more. Abramson and Inglehart (1992) proposed a Generation Theory to describe the changes in values between young and old to their experiences while growing up. And that younger people in a society have grown up in different conditions and that will shape the values of older and younger generations, and that with the generational replacement gradually taking place over time the values of that society would also change.

As people spend a considerable amount of time at work over the course of their lifetime, the workplace is likely to see the manifestation of generational differences as multiple generations interact with each other in occupational roles (Cucina, et al., 2018) and differences in work ethic may arise (Meriac, et al., 2010). Generational differences at work can have implications for businesses and how employees are managed, as each generation has their own specific value system and motivators (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Debard (2004) and Lancaster and Stillman (2002) summarised the differences in generational values and how different generations view and react to situations in the workplace.

Much of the available research focuses on behaviours and values, and these are most likely to emerge in the workplace as attitudes and values (Cucina, et al., 2018). These workplace attitudes and values are reflective of employees evaluations, feelings and beliefs concerning different aspects of their workplace (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012), and these attitudes in turn influence a person's behaviour (Cucina, et al., 2018).

3.3 Generational Segments

There are many versions and labels used by various sources to define what is a generation and what range of years they span, and while they are not in total agreement there is general commonalities within the theories from the 1940s (Boom Generation) onwards. Generational segments have been stratified into generational cohorts and are bound by their shared experiences (economic conditions, technological advances and political climate) and these conditions can apply a generational imprinting (Parry and Urwin, 2011).

Managers and organisations today not only have to understand how to best manage a wide range of employees, but also the unique characteristics of the generation shaped by their experiences.

Howe and Strauss (2000)	Silent Generation (1925-1943)	Boom Generation (1943-1960)	13th Generation (1961-1981)	Millennial Generation (1982-2000)	-
Lancaster and Stillman (2002)	Traditionalists (1900-1945)	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	Generation Xers (1965-1980)	Millennial Generation: Echo Boomer: Generation Y: Baby Busters: Generation Next (1981-1999)	-
Martin and Tulgan (2002)	Silent Generation (1925-1942)	Baby Boomers (1946-1960)	Generation X (1965-1977)	Millennials (1978-2000)	-
Oblinger and Oblinger (2005)	Matures (<1946)	Baby Boomers (1947-1964)	Gen-Xers (1965-1980)	Gen-Y: NetGen: Millennials (1981-1995)	Post Millennials (1995-Present)
Tapscoot (1998)	-	Baby Boom Generation (1946-1964)	Generation X (1965-1975)	Digital Generation (1976-2000)	-
Zemke et al. (2000)	Veterans (1922-1943)	Baby Boomers (1943-1960)	Gen-Xers (1960-1980)	Nexters (1980-1999)	-
Oh and Reeves (2014)	Mature Generation (1925-1945)	Boom Generation (1946-1964)	Generation X (1965-1980)	Millennial Generation (1981-2000)	Generation Z (2001-present)

Table 3: Differences within generational segments (Oh & Reeves 2014), with aditional segment by Oh & Reeves included.

3.3.1 Baby Boomers

The oldest generation in the labour market presently and reducing in size yearly. Baby Boomers seen many changes in the workplace such as an increasing number of women entering the workforce and an increased change in workplace practices such as gender equality, work/life balance, and family friendly policies (Ng, et al., 2018).Baby Boomers show a preference for achieving individual goals and receiving any subsequent individual credit (Dokadia, et al., 2015). Baby boomers also do not like do not like changes in the workplace (Jiří, 2016).

This generation protested against power in its youth but are now in positions of power themselves (Miniter, 1997) and can be driven by material success (O'Bannon, 2001). This generation is geared toward consits building and mentoring (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

3.3.2 Generation X

Generation X grew up in the years between 1965 and 1980 and developed a sense of individualism shaped by financial, family and social insecurity (Brown & Jurkiewicz, 1998; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Gen X are therefore a fiercely independent generation that are more sceptical and less loyal than generations before them and favour individualism over collectivism (Glass, 2007), and can be described as independent and autonomous according to Jurkiewicz (2000).

This generation values a balance between work and time off (Bennett, et al., 2012; Brown, et al., 2007), and are inclined to change jobs for one that offers more flexible working hours (Glass, 2007). Additionally workers of Generation X are motivated by flexible working patterns and an informal work environment (Salahuddin, 2010). They seek to find a balance between doing a good job and pursuing their own personal goals (Johnson & Johnson, 2010), and they feel strongly that their worth is measured by how hard they work (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Miller and Yu (2005) put forward that Xers tend to be more loyal towards their profession than their employer, and the reason for this is loyalty to their own profession may be that they are motivated by personal satisfaction and seek opportunity to improve their skillset (Brown, et al., 2007). Generation Xers are described as being technologically competent

(Kupperschmidt, 2000), but lack somewhat when it comes to technology that they did not grow up with such as social media (Lester, et al., 2012).

Generation X are according to Glass a results orientated generation and focus on the outcome of the tasks at hand, and prefer a practical approach to problem solving (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

3.3.3 Generation Y (Millennials)

The Millennial Generation born between 1981 and 1995 are according to Weinbaum, *et al (2016)*, this generation are not only the most educated ant the most interconnected but are the most informed generation present in today's labour market. This is mainly due to their exposure to technology at a level never seen before and their exposure to economic wellbeing during their formative years. Millennials are the first generation to grow up in a technology based world (Smola & Sutton, 2002), and have never known a world without technology and have never experienced life without laptops, smartphones and social media (Patterson, 2007). This generation is most likely to be early adaptors to new technology (Glass, 2007), and use technology in almost every aspect of their lives (Martin, 2005).

According to Howe & Strauss (2000) millennials are inclined to be rule followers than their predeceasing generations. Generation Y seem less independent in the workplace and require more guidance, structure and supervision than other generational cohorts, although they have the right amount of flexibility and autonomy to get the job done (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009). (Bennett, et al., 2012; Martin, 2005). Members of this generation tend to expect constant feedback from their superiors (Patterson, 2007), and this is likely to be due to parental direction during their childhood years (Glass, 2007). They like collective action and are working for companies that promote a collaborative decision process (Glass, 2007), and seek out opportunities for mentoring and learning from others (Patterson, 2007) which leads to increased productivity and satisfaction (Bennett, et al., 2012).

Generation Y are different to its predecessors as in that they are affluent, educated and ethnically diverse (Howe and Strauss, 2000), and are also the first generation to become a worldwide group due to technology and opportunities to travel (Jeffries & Hunte, 2004).

Millennials typically have a different relationship with their parents than previous generations and have often received less discipline and more praise than its predecessors, but incidentally have parents that are more involved in their adult lives which have high expectations of them (Bartley, et al., 2007). This generation has been exposed to economic unrest and as a result they are more equipped to deal with organisational change (Gong, et al., 2018).

3.3.4 Generation Z

Generation Z have been characterised as digital natives who have soft personality characteristics which may influence the type of work they are interested in (Sherman & Morley, 2015). This generation has grown up knowing a relative culture of safety (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2018), and have also grown up with exposure to economic wellbeing (Fry & Parker, 2018) in contrast to preceding generations.

Generation Z have had less jobs in their teenage years than its generational predecessors, giving them less exposure to the act of labour (Morisi, 2017), this can lead to an unrealistic perception of the workplace and an unrealistic expectation of work and the psychological contract (Sherman & Morley, 2015). Schroth (2019) illustrates that in 1979 60% of teens had jobs, but that this figure is predicted to be 25% in 2024, and that this has limited this generation's ability to manage the social aspect of work in the corporate world, and that this had denied them important opportunities for growth, interactions and experience that other generations naturally had access to. These conditions have perhaps contributed to this generation being the most likely to suffer from both anxiety and depression (American Psychological Association, 2018). While this generation is proficient in technology and spend much of their time immersed behind computer screens, this can have an effect of social interaction and face to face communication and this may put Generation Z at a disadvantage with respect to interacting in the workplace (Schroth, 2019).

3.4 Criticisms and disagreements with theory

While theories group generations together groups defined by birth year ranges, Lancaster and Stillman (2002) made a distinction that this was not clear cut and that some people were caught on the edges of two generational sections these were labelled these as 'cuspers' who

were on the cusp of both generations. Oh and Reeves (2011) outline that this is a limit to generational generalisations and that a person born at the start of a generational segment would not have the same characteristics as a person born at the opposite end of the generational segment. Oh and Reeves (2011) further state that birth years are only one factor that should be considered when attempting to distinguish between generations. The existence of 'cuspers' limit the generational generalisation and the attribution of generational traits based solely on birth year (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). It would be inaccurate to assume that for instance a person born towards the later end of Generation X would not be as technologically sophisticated and a person born into the defined birth bracket for Generation Y or the Millennial Generation (Oh & Reeves, 2011). There are further attributes that more clearly the nature and inclination of a generation far more clearly than birth years, such as: Perceived membership of a generation, common beliefs and behaviours and common location in history influenced by events (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Likewise, Arsenault (2004) described the same phenomenon where persons on the 'cusp' of generational segments may have experienced the same memorable events as one generation, but because of their birth year are categorised as a different generational cohort. Within this crossover effect these persons on the cusp are referred to as 'tweeners', due to the proximity to being almost in between two generational cohorts. Schewe and Noble (2000) describe that significant events can be shared collectively across generations and can affect everyone. Arsenault (2004) and Kraus (2017) state that this serves to illustrate that there are similarities between the different generations. While it is useful to segment generational differences by age it does not assist in creating an understanding motivation (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2012). There are also aspects to note while considering defining a generation, and that is predicated on an individual's reflection and that it is mutable (Young, 2009). There is no clear boundary between generational segments and there is an argument to broaden these segments to account for boundary issues such as 'cuspers' (Campbell, et al., 2017).While these boundaries are generally defined by age or birth year, but current research is inconclusive as to where one generation starts and one begins (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015).

Another criticism the generalising of generational characteristics as stereotyping face is that every human is different and it cannot be assumed that people of a generational cohort all

act the same way or think the same way (Jeffries & Hunte, 2004; Kapoor, et al., 2011), and that generational stratification and cohort effect cannot account for whether a cohort difference is due to experience or maturity (Alwin & McCammon, 2003). Furthermore generational theory does not consider competitive situations such as the maturational theory (Sessa, et al., 2007) where a child's social and cultural environments also play an important role in their development, and that generational theory is more applicable to affluent populations (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2004).

3.5 Generations at work

Different generations have been assigned different characteristics built on their life experiences and upbringing, these characteristics also manifest in a work environment as attitude and values (Cucina, et al., 2018), and these values and attitudes form some of the research questions within this research study. These attitudes and values are an evaluation on how they perceive their workplace and their job (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012).

Chapter 4

4.1 Research Question

The aim of this research study is to test some common hypotheses concerning generational differences and to ascertain whether there are any statistically significant differences across generations.

There has been multiple literature reports that there are generational differences between Generations and their attitude to work, so much that many companies have introduced accommodations and perks that will not only attract but to retain younger employees (Twenge, et al., 2010). Studies have also noted that there is a significant difference between Generation Y and Baby Boomers work life balance, freedom at work and work values (Cennano & Gardner, 2008; Twenge, et al., 2012). This research study will test the hypothesis that there are differences between two of the largest generations in the workforce namely the oldest generation (Baby Boomers and the larger of younger generations (Generation Y).

> H1: There is a difference between Baby Boomers and Millennials approach and
>
> attitude to work.

Generation Y and Generation Z have been in particular labelled with an aptitude and desire for technology and are more likely to work in this sector (Morisi, 2017). Baby Boomers are trailing other generations in measures of technology adaption just behind Generation X (Jang, 2019)

> H2: Different generations are associated with specific industries or professions.

> H4: Different generations are interested in different types of work and have a desire
>
> to work in different industries or professions.

While each generation has been labelled with its own set of values and characteristics and motivators (Oh & Reeves, 2011; Twenge, et al., 2010), this research will examine the organisational commitment, attitudes and motivations towards work across multiple generations in the Irish labour market. By examining the motivations and attitudes of a sample of the Irish workforce, the researcher will be able to examine if there are different attitudes and motivations that are more prevalent in some generations than in others, and do these motivations have an effect on job satisfaction.

> H3: Different generations have different levels of commitment to organisational
>
> commitment.

> H5: Different generations have different motivations to work in varying degrees.

It has been suggested that there are differences between generations expectations in the workplace, and that younger workers have higher expectations in the workplace (Saba, 2009), and that these expectations have an impact or influence on job satisfaction. The research study gathered information to ascertain if there is a statistically significant difference in job satisfaction across generations.

H6: Different generations have varying degrees of job satisfaction.

This research also examines which motivators and values would influence different generations to leave a job for another (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016) and to ascertain if there is a statistically significant difference across generations.

H7: Different generations have different motivations for leaving jobs.

Chapter 5

Research Methodology

5.1. Introduction

Within this chapter the research methods conducted within this research dissertation be outlined along with justification for choosing these methods. This will include the approach, strategy and methods to analyse and interpret the chosen research questions on generational differences. This section will also outline how the data used was collected, and the methods used to analyse the collected data to reach a statistical conclusion.

5.2 Methodology

5.2.1. Research Methods

While designing research methods for this dissertation the researcher considered both a qualitative and a quantitative approach to gathering the desired data.

5.2.1.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is research that is expressed in words and is used to understand concepts, experiences and thoughts on a given subject. Qualitative Research is used to gather insights into topics and theories. Qualitative Research is analysed by summarising, categorising and interpreting data gathered, and focuses on exploring ideas and formalising a theory or a hypothesis.

5.2.1.2 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is research that is expressed in numbers and graphs and is used to test or confirm assumptions and theories. Quantitative research can be used to establish facts on a given topic. Quantitative Research is analysed by statistical analysis and is expressed of presented in graphs, numbers and tables, and focuses on testing theories and hypotheses.

5.2.1.3 Mixed Method Research

Some scholars propose a mixed methods approach where qualitative and quantitative data is used to answer their research question (Onwuegbuzie, et al., 2010). The mixed method approach has gained favour because it demonstrates that there is a complementary nature of qualitative and quantitative methods (Hesse-Biber, 2015; Christ, 2009).

5.2.1.4 Selecting a research method

As the researcher wanted to test hypotheses regarding differences between generations in the workforce a quantitative method was selected. The researcher also choose a quantitative approach to gathering data for the research due to the amount of participants that could be involved was far greater and enabled greater accuracy. The researcher also choose a quantitative research method as it allowed the researcher to gather data from a greater number of respondents.

5.3 Survey Research

Research data gathered by way of survey distributed to participants and the data is correlated to produce numerical results. Surveys can take the form of face to face surveys, via phone/video call or an online survey which can be distributed by email or social media.

Cross-sectional surveys are observational surveys and are conducted where the researcher collects data from a sample of the target population at a given point in time. Data from cross-sectional surveys is used to examine variables which are considered for research, and these variables will remain constant throughout the research. Longitudinal research is a research instrument that involves repeated observations over a period of time and often used to developments or changing results across time. In the context of similar studies longitudinal research would revisit the participants and recollect data on the subject matter for statistical analysis, and comparison to previously collected data.

5.4 Research Instrument

The researcher collected quantitative data for the purpose of analysing that data to reach an objective conclusion. Epistemological orientation is a positivism based on the study of knowledge used to deduct the relationship between theory, research and strategy with a focus on testing theories.

A macro-approach was taken for the research, and validated questionnaires were used to gather data. Data from the questionnaires will show if there are differences across generations with respect to their views attitudes and motivations towards work. The purpose of the survey is to describe the characteristics of groups and to understand present conditions (Park & Park, 2016). Adequate quantitative data gathered by the questionnaire will be used

to establish relationships and differences between generational cohorts and to generate a conclusion

The research method used Primary Data collection through methods of quantitative data collection and used methods of correlation and mean analysis by reliable and validated questionnaires.

The quantitative method has ability to examine phenomena to predict and control outcomes, thus allowing the researcher to evaluate the findings by measuring and generalising the data collected. Making comparisons with types of data and its findings is easier due to the type of research conducted in this instance, and the quantitative method is more suited. It is also a less expensive and less time consuming method to apply in relation to qualitative research, however this does not mean that the analysis of the data is overly simplistic (Park & Park, 2016). While this research dissertation focuses on the current labour market at this given time, quantitative research has been selected as the appropriate method. While epistemology and ontology are connected through methods of research, these methods do not determine the research method in general and methods for research can be more fluid and autonomous (Bryman, 2012).

5.4 Sampling

Sampling is an important factor when completing research, and needs to be representative of the population that the research is applied to (Park & Park, 2016). Participants were acquired by a 'call for participants' across social media platforms namely LinkedIn and Facebook, WhatsApp messaging service was also used to garner participants. To be selected to participate in this study the participants needed to be active in the Irish labour market. No restrictions were applied to age, gender, geographical location in Ireland, stage at career or to hours worked. In total 73 participants agreed to complete the survey and all were eligible to be included in the research study.

5.6. Ethical considerations

Each participant will be fully informed the purpose for which their data will be collected. Also each participant will be also fully aware that the information collected will be used in the completion of a Master's Degree in Human Resource Management dissertation and will only

be used for this expressed purpose. All participants will be assured that they will remain anonymous in their responses and participation except towards the researcher, supervisor and the examiner if deemed necessary.

Each participant will be informed that they can decline to participate of continue to participate at any stage of the research study up until the date of the submission of the dissertation. Participants can also decline to answer any particular question of any particular set of questions they so choose

The researcher fully accepts that they under the provisions of the Data Protection Acts and GDPR they are a data controller and accept all responsibilities associated with this role. Participants will be advised that they are entitled to any copy of their data that is stored by the researcher including a copy of the completed dissertation. There are no special ethical considerations that apply to this research.

5.7 Questionnaire

Participants were presented with 54 questions across 5 sections, through an electronic questionnaire on Google Forms. This survey form was completed entirely online and completely anonymously.

5.7.1 Section 1: General information

In section 1 participants were introduced to the study and its purpose. Potential participants were informed that identifiable data would not be collected during the research, and that participation was entirely voluntary. Participants were given the option to withdraw at any stage during the process and were asked to agree to participate in the study prior to commencement.

In the remainder of the section participants were asked to provide data on themselves such as their birth year range to identify which generation they belonged to, their gender education level, skill level of their role and their position in their current employment. Participants were also asked what sector worked in and what sector that they desired to work in.

5.7.2 Section 2: Organisational commitment

Section 2 consists of 5 questions about organisational commitment measured on a 5 point Linkert scale ranging from "never" 1 to 5 ''always''.

5.7.3 Section 3: Job motivation

Section 3 consists of 19 items are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale: "not at all" 1 to 7 "completely".

Job motivation questionnaire measures Amotivation, Extrinsic regulation (social), Extrinsic regulation (material), Introjected regulation, Identified regulation and Intrinsic motivation.

5.7.4 Section 4: Work Attitudes Measure

Questions 1-6, Job satisfaction is measured on a 5-point scale "very satisfied"   1 to 5 "very dissatisfied".

Questions 7-11, Organizational commitment is measured using a 7-point scale "strongly disagree" 1 to 7 = strongly agree. This scale is later reversed.

Questions 12-17, Job motivation is measured on a 5-point scale "always" 1 to 5 "never".

5.7.5 Section 5: Your future

This final section consists of five questions which ask participants about their future, such as what their next position will be and in what sector. It also asks how long they see themselves in their role and what factors would motivate them to move job.

5.8 Hypothesis testing and analysis of data

A combination of software was used to analyse the data collected, the primary data was collected from Google sheets where it was propagated from Google forms. The data was then transferred to both Microsoft Excel and IBM's SPSS Statistics to analyse the data. Several statistical tests were applied to the collected data to test hypotheses and to extract useful information to which conclusions can be drawn.

Chapter 6

Findings and Analysis

6.1 Background of participants

A total of 73 participants completed the survey, all of which were eligible for the research. The participants consisted of a sample across the Irish labour market.

6.2 Descriptive analysis of participants.

The first step in the primary research was to conduct a descriptive analysis of all the variables and to categorise them. Descriptive analysis is necessary for to examine the sample size for each section of the research, as the higher the sample size the greater the accuracy of the results and is more reflective of the entire population.

- Generational were in the birth year range 1981-1995 (43.8%), the second largest group was in the range of 1965-1980 (37%), 12.3% were born between the years 1947-1964 and 6.8% were born after 1996.
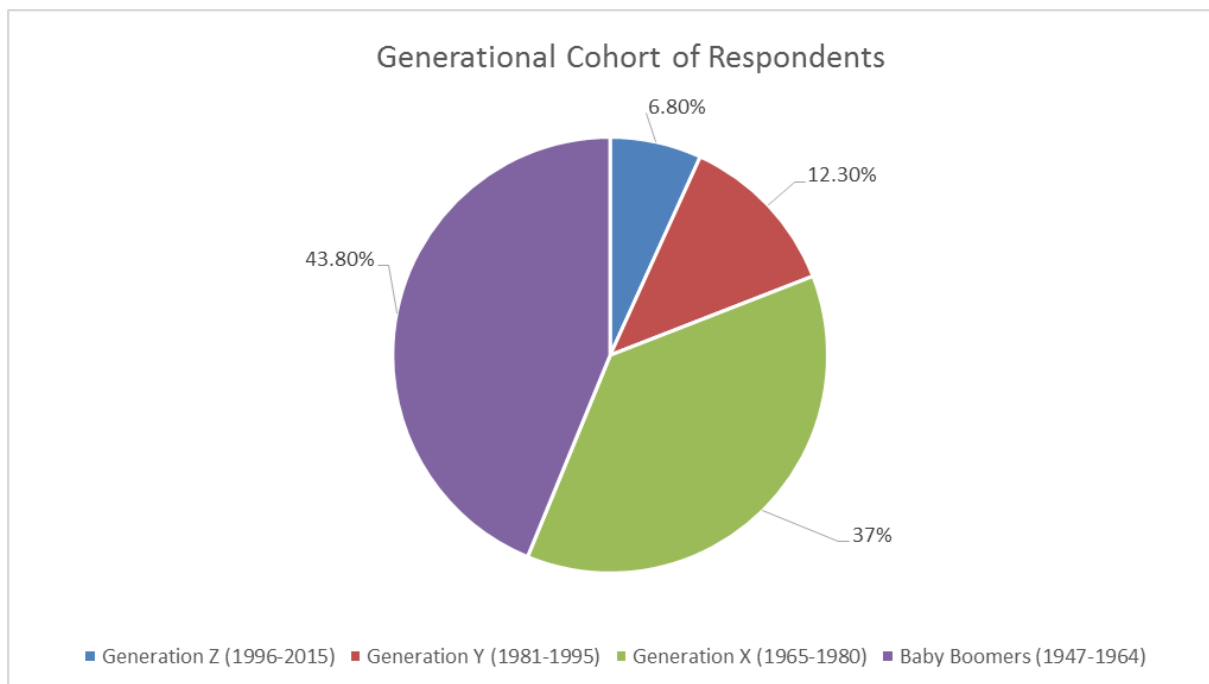
Figure 1: Pie Chart illustration of Generational Cohort of participants.

- Gender distribution across participants was that 49.3% of the participants were male, 46.6% were female, 4.1% preferred not to reveal their gender.

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Male	9.6%	15.1%	23.3%	1.4%
Female	2.7%	17.8%	20.5%	5.5%

Table 4: Demographic of participants.

- Participant's employment ranged across 14 different sectors.

Employment Sector	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Construction	0	1	0	0
Education	3	1	2	0
Entertainment	0	1	0	1
Finance	1	1	4	0
Government	0	0	1	0
Healthcare	0	1	2	0
Hospitality	0	1	0	1
Manufacturing	0	2	3	0
Pharmaceutical	0	1	1	0
Property	0	1	0	0
Retail	0	7	4	1
Self-employed	1	0	0	0
Services	1	8	8	0
Technology	3	2	7	2
Total	9	27	32	5

Table 5: Table representing employment sectors across generations.

- Educational experiences of participants ranged from 39.7% were educated to a NQF level 8 (Honours Degree/Higher Diploma), 21.9% were educated to a NQF Level 9 (Master's Degree), 19.2% were educated to secondary school level, 13.7% were educated to NQF Level 7 (Ordinary Degree) and 5.5% were educated to NQF Level 10 (Doctorate). All participants were educated past primary school level.

- Participant's skill level for their role ranged from 58.9% skilled, 30.1% graduate, 11% non-skilled and 0% apprenticed.

- Positions held across the participants were recorded as 38.4% full-time staff, 37% Manager, 11% Supervisor, 9.6% Director/owner and 4.1% were Part-time staff.

- The sample size for the research dissertation (n=73) was divided into generational cohorts, Baby Boomers (n=9), Generation X (n-27), Generation Y (n=32) and Generation Z (n=5).

6.3: Testing Hypothesis for collected data.

Responses from research participants were statistically analysed to test hypothesis and research active generations across the current labour market in Ireland.

6.3.1: H1: There is a difference between Baby Boomers and Millennials approach and attitude to work.

Hypotheses: There is no statistical difference between Baby Boomers and Millennials approach and attitude to work.

Alternative hypotheses: There is a statistical difference between Baby Boomers and Millennials approach and attitude to work.

6.3.1.1: Descriptive Statistics for approach and attitude to work for Baby Boomers and Generation Y.

Generation	N	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	Range
Total	41	8.92	2.8	2.55194	.39855	10.5
Generation Y	32	7.9481	7.1333	2.22823	.74274	10.5

Baby Boomers	9	9.1979	9.4333	2.60152	.45989	7.3667

Table 6: Group Statistics for approach and attitude to work for Baby Boomers and Generation Y.
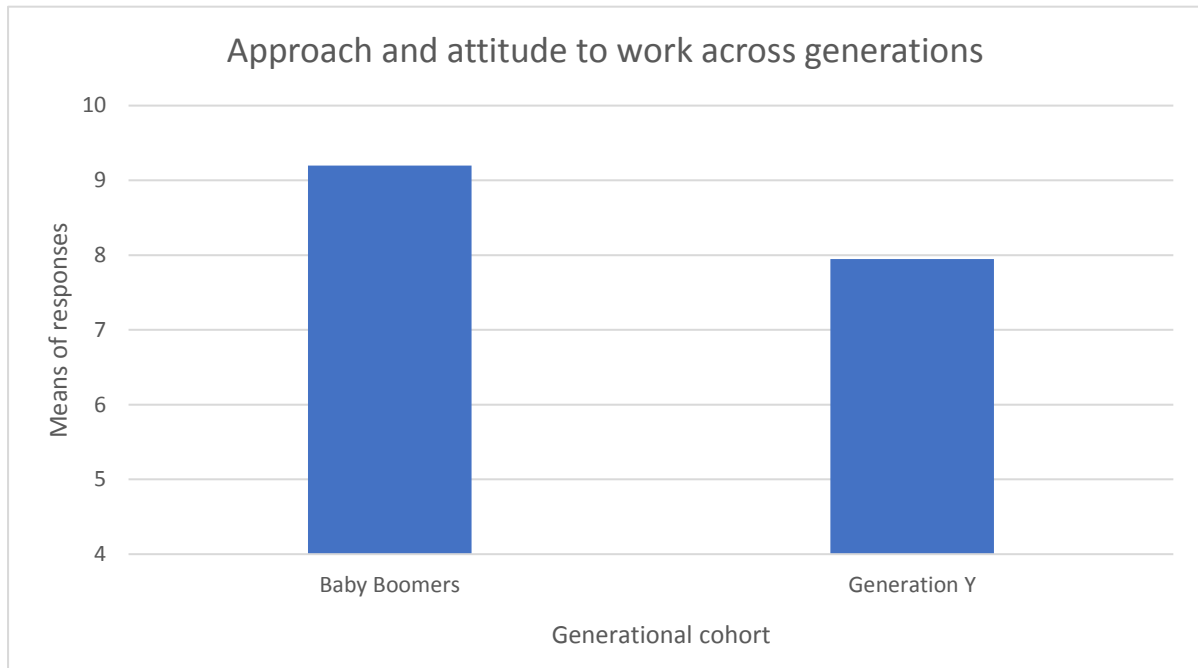
Figure 2: Bar graph of means for approach and attitude to work for Baby Boomers and Generation Y.

6.3.1.2: Interpretation of independent sample t-test.

An independent sample t-test was carried out to investigate the effect of the work attitudes of Baby Boomers and Generation Y. No statistically significant difference was observed (*p*= .198) between Baby Boomers (M= 9.1979, SD= 2.6015) and Generation Y (M= 7.9481, SD= 2.2282).

6.3.2: H2: Different generations are associated with specific industries or professions.

Hypotheses: There is a statistical difference between generation's gravitation towards different industries and types of work.

Null hypotheses: There is no statistical difference between generation's gravitation towards different industries and types of work.

6.3.2.1 Chi Square for occupations across generations

A Chi Square test was carried out to investigate whether different generations gravitated towards different industries. A significant event was observed (X2 = 51.747, p = .083) indicating that there was a statistically significant difference in occupations across generations.

6.3.2.2: Bar graph for occupations across generations.
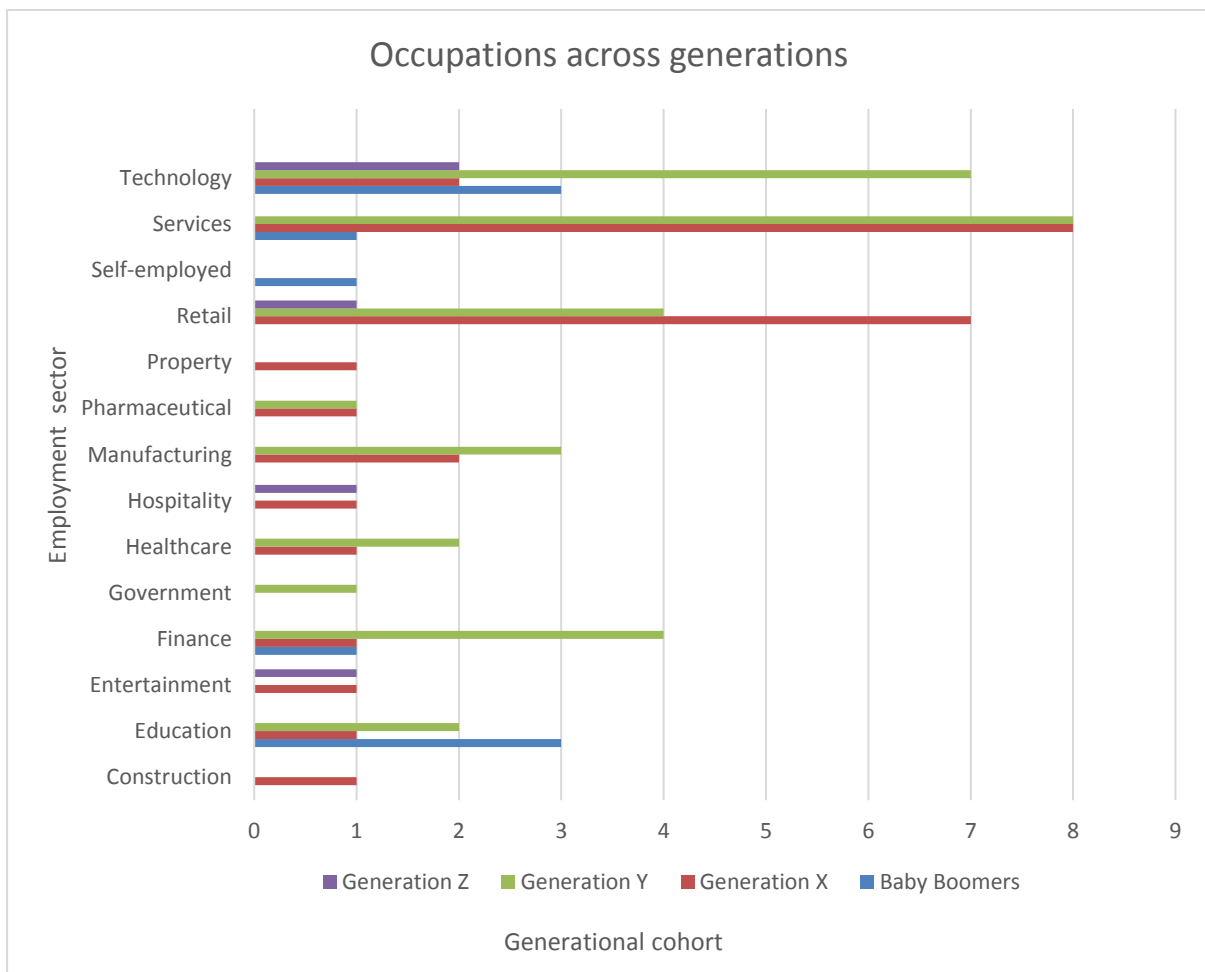
Figure 3: Bar graph of occupations across generations.

6.3.3: H3: Different Generations have different levels of organisational commitment.

Hypotheses: There is a statistical difference between generational levels of organisational commitment.

Alternative hypotheses: There is no statistical difference between generational levels of organisational commitment.

6.3.3.1: Descriptive Statistics for levels of organisational commitment between generations.

	N	Mean	Mode	Median	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Range
Total	73	3.1397	3.8	3.2	.76135	.08911	3
Generation Z	5	2.8400	2.8	2.8	.49800	.22271	1.4
Generation Y	32	2.9000	2.2	2.8	.65648	.11605	2.2
Generation X	27	3.3111	3.2	3.2	.76928	.14805	2.8
Baby Boomers	9	3.6444	2.6	4	.90982	.30327	2.2

Table 7: Group Statistics for levels of organisational commitment between generations.

6.3.3.2 One way Anova for levels of organisational commitment between generations.

A one way between groups Anova was carried out to investigate the effect of the different generation types to organisational commitment. A significant main effect was observed (F(3,69) = 3.399 p =.023). Post hoc analysis observed that Generation Y showed a statistically significant difference between Baby Boomers and Generation Y, with Baby Boomers scoring higher (M 3.64, SD=.90) on organisational commitment compared Generation Y (M=2.84, SD=.49 , however there was no statistically significant difference between the other generational groups.

6.3.3.3 Bar Graph for organisational commitment across generations
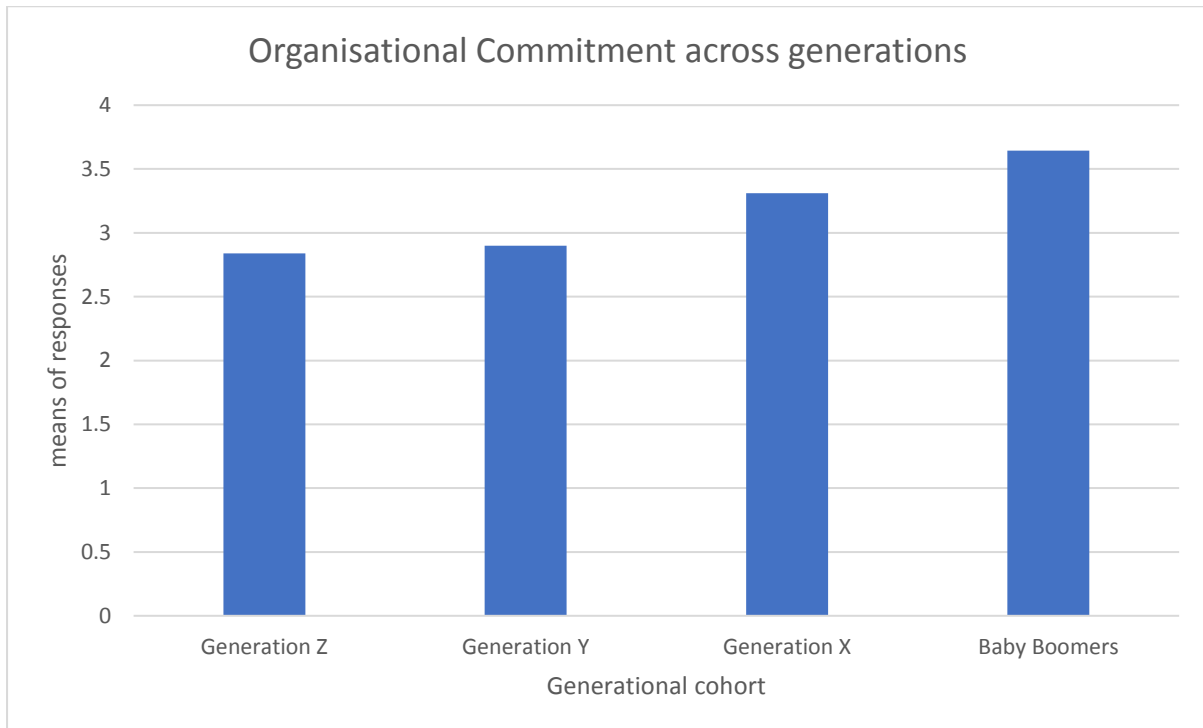
Figure 4: Bar Graph of means for organisational commitment across generations.

6.3.4: H4: Different generations are interested in different types of work and have a desire to work in different industries or professions.

Hypotheses: There is a statistical difference between generation's desired occupations.

Null hypotheses: There is no statistical difference between generation's desired occupations.

6.3.4.1 Chi square test for difference in desired occupation across generations.
A Chi Square test was carried out to investigate the weather different generations had a desire towards different industries. A significant event was observed (X^2 = 29.424, p = .773) indicating that there in a significant difference between generations and their desired occupational profession.

6.3.4.2: Bar graph showing desired occupations across generations.
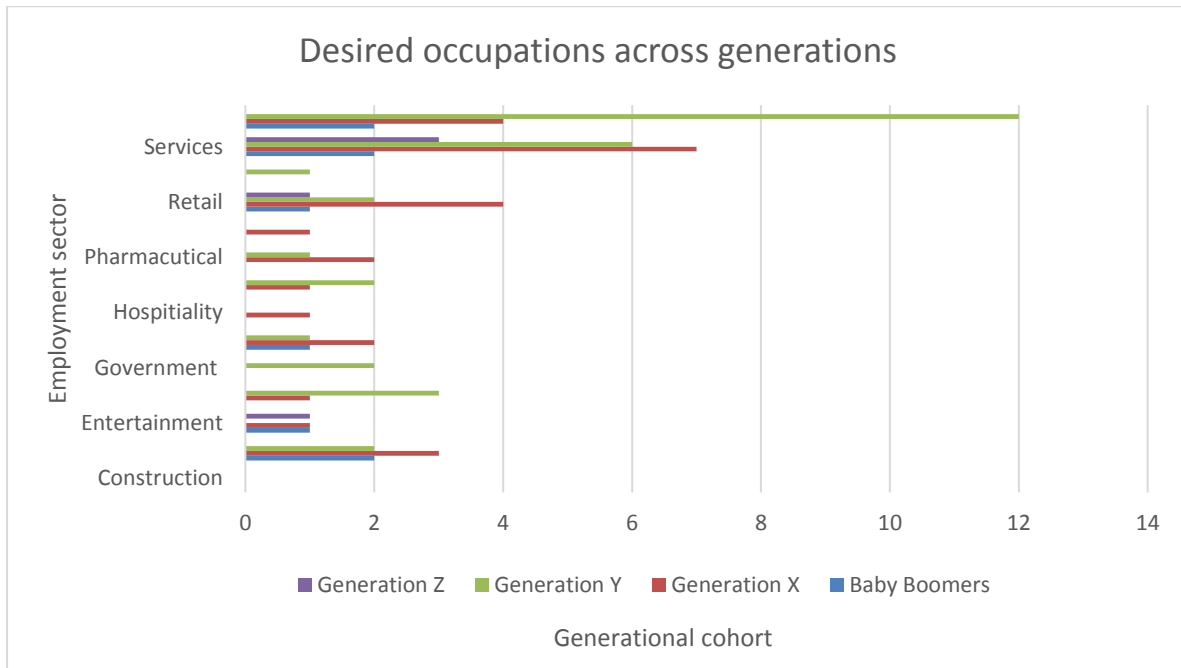
Figure 5: Bar graph of desired occupations across generations.

6.3.5: H5: Different generations have different motivations to work in varying degrees.
Hypotheses: There is a statistical difference between generational levels of Job Motivation.

Alternative hypotheses: There is no statistical difference between generational levels of Job Motivation.

6.3.5.1: Descriptive statistics for motivation across generations.

	N	Mean	Mode	Median	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Range
Total	73	22.5046	19.91666667	22.33333333	4.28998	.50210	19.17
Generation Z	5	22.9833	19.41666667	19.41666667	5.32793	2.38272	11.92
Generation Y	32	22.8307	19.75	23.45833333	4.26184	.75339	16.67
Generation X	27	22.1759	-	21.75	3.94922	.76003	15.5
Baby Boomers	9	22.0648	-	21.16666667	5.40556	1.80185	18.58

Table 8: Group statistics for motivation across generations.

6.3.5.3: **One way between groups Anova for motivation across generations.**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	9.207	3	3.069	.161	.922
Within Groups	1315.875	69	19.071		
Total	1325.082	72			

Table 9: One way between groups Anova for motivation across generations.

6.3.5.4: Interpretation of one way between groups Anova.

A one way between groups Anova was carried out to investigate the effect of the different generation types to job motivation. No significant main effect was observed ($F_{(3,69)}$ = .161 p =.922).
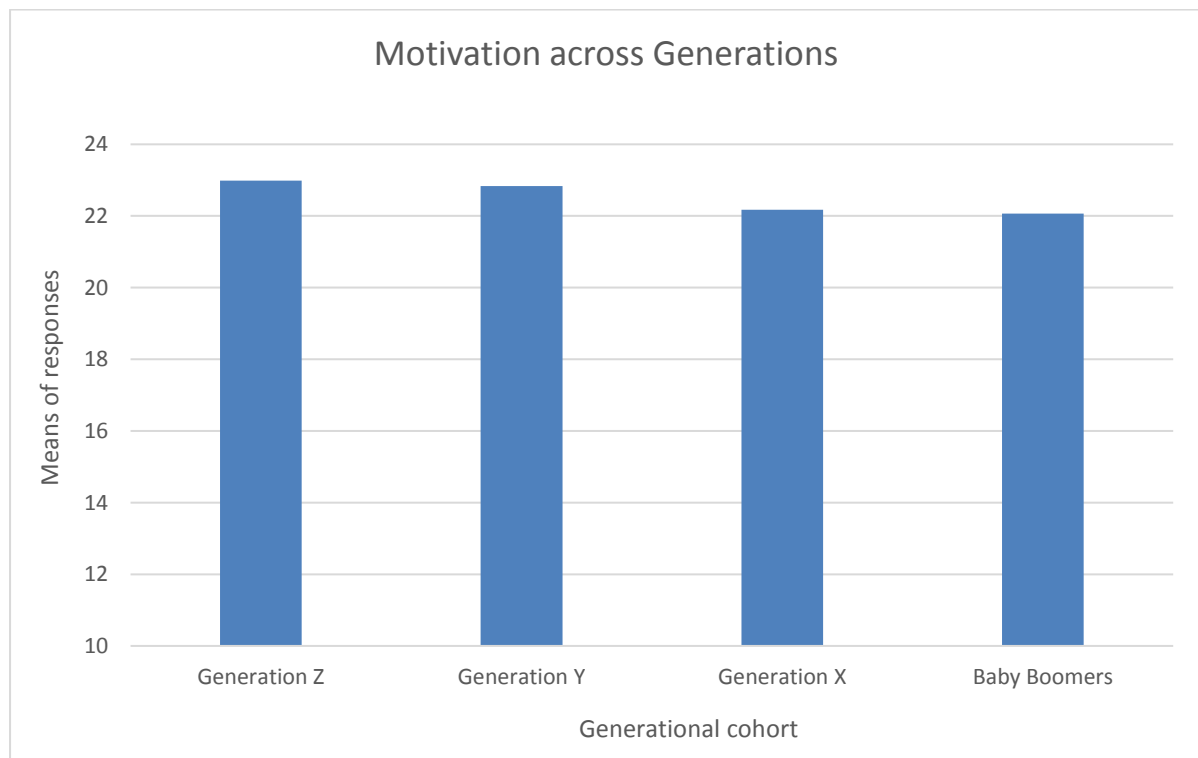
Figure 6: Bar chart for motivation across generations.

6.3.6: H6: Different generations have varying degrees of job satisfaction.

Hypotheses: There is a statistical difference between generational levels of job satisfaction

Alternative hypotheses: There is no statistical difference between generational levels of job satisfaction.

6.3.6.1: Descriptive statistics for degrees of job satisfaction between generations.

	N	Mean	Mode	Median	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Range
Total	73	13.5342	12	13	4.72312	.55280	22.00
Generation Z	5	14.6000	10	14	4.87852	2.18174	11.00
Generation Y	32	14.8438	12	13.5	5.05524	.89365	20.00
Generation X	27	11.7037	15	11	4.26808	.82139	15.00
Baby Boomers	9	13.7778	13	13	3.41971	1.13990	12.00

Table 10: Descriptive statistics for degrees of job satisfaction between generations.

6.3.6.2: One way between Anova for degrees of job satisfaction between generations.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	151.560	3	50.520	2.396	.076
Within Groups	1454.604	69	21.081		
Total	1606.164	72			

Table 11: One way between Anova for degrees of job satisfaction between generations.

6.3.6.3: Interpretation of one way between groups Anova.

A one way between groups Anova was carried out to investigate the effect of the different generation types to job satisfaction. No significant main effect was observed (F(3,69) = 2.396 p =.076).
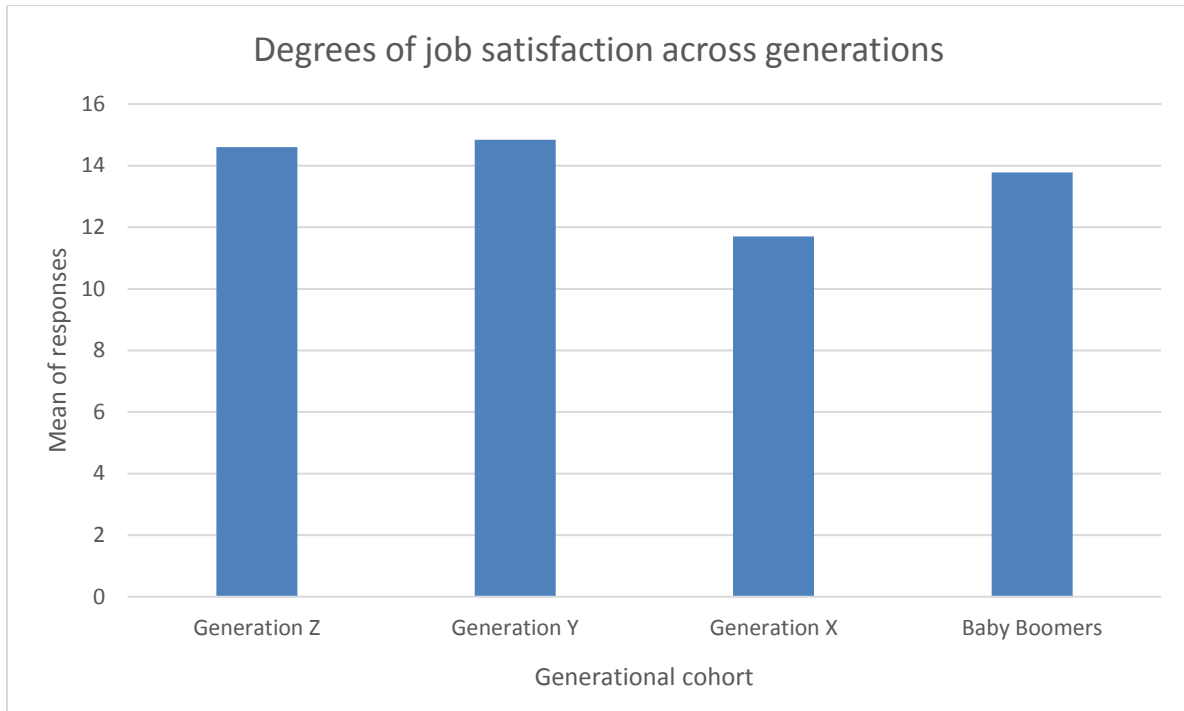
Figure 7: Bar chart for job satisfaction across generations.

6.3.7: H7: Different generations have different motivations for leaving jobs.

Hypotheses: There is a statistical difference between generations for motivations for leaving a job.

Alternative hypotheses: There is no statistical difference between generations for motivations for leaving a job.

6.3.7.1: Chi Square for motivations for changing jobs across generations.

A Chi Square test was carried out to investigate whether different generations have different motivations for leaving a job. A significant event was observed (X^2 = 13.349, p = .147) indicating that there was a statistically significant difference in motivations for leaving a job across generations.

6.3.7.2: Bar graph showing motivations for leaving a job across generations.
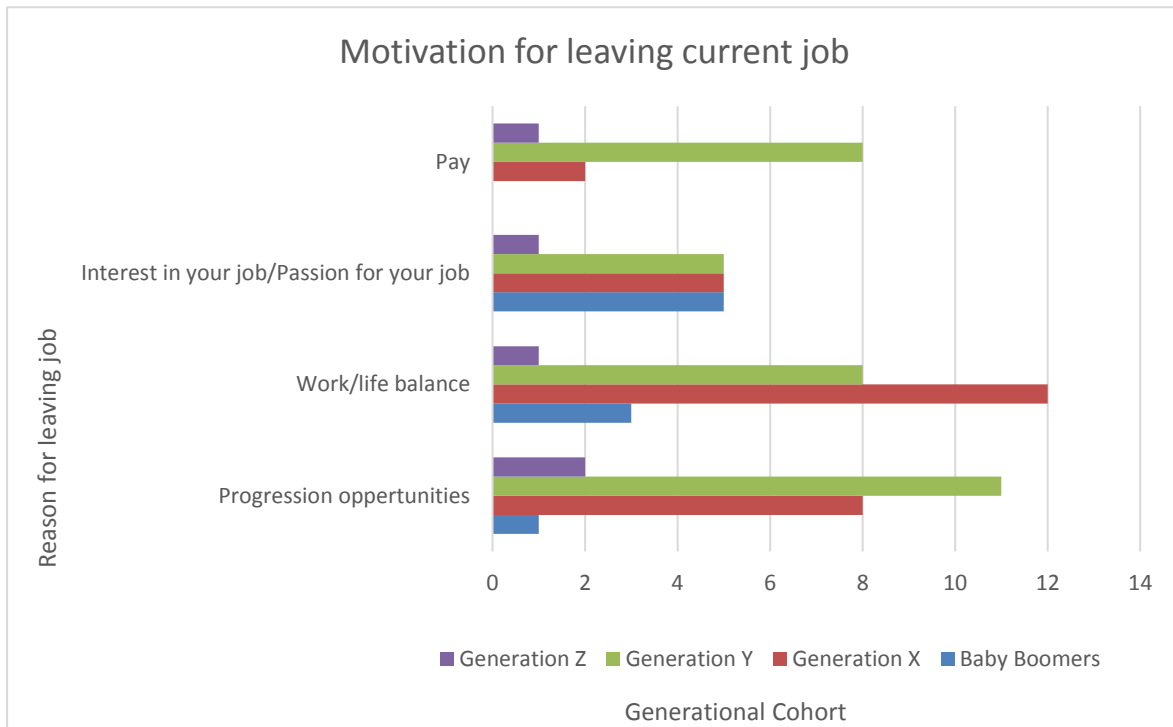
Figure 8: Bar chart for motivations for leaving a job across generations.

6.3.7.3: Frequency chart showing motivations for leaving a job across generations.

Reason	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Progression opportunities	11.1%	229.6%	34%	40%
Work/life balance	33.3%	44.4%	25%	20%
Interest in your job/ Passion for your job	55.6%	18.5%	16%	20%
Pay	0%	7.5%	25%	20%

Figure 9: Frequency chart of motivations for leaving a job across generations.

Chapter 7

Discussion and recommendations

7.1 Discussion

The research study focuses on the four generational cohorts that are present in the Irish labour market in the first six months of 2020. The research objective was to examine what differences if any were present across the labour market with respect to members of different generational cohorts. The research instrument presented questions to the participants which was framed to measure if there were any generation differences with respect to areas such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction and job motivation. The research also sought to examine if generational cohorts gravitated towards certain occupations and if there was a difference between generation's desires to work in certain sectors over others. The research study also specifically investigated if there were any differences between Baby Boomers and Generation Y in respect to their approach and attitude to work.

While generational differences has been a popular subject and has been subjected to strong convictions surrounding it. Researchers have applied theoretical frameworks around the existence of generational differences have had difficulty identifying actual differences such as behaviours and attitudes across generations (Costanza, et al., 2012; Finegold, et al., 2002; Conger, 2000; Wong, et al., 2008; Saba, 2009). Some differences between generations have been observed within their expectations the workplace and younger workers tend to show higher expectations regarding career advancement and work life balance than older workers (Saba, 2009). It is also suggested that a person's age and occupation have a greater bearing on areas such as job satisfaction (Ng & Fieldman, 2010).

According to Wils (2011) values, needs and attitudes of workers are often entangled and based on opinions and speculation which has also been a concern of other researchers (Trzesniewski and Donnellan, 2010; Macky, et al., 2008; Rhodes, 1983) and has been identified as an ongoing concern into generational research.

7.1.1: H1 approach and attitude to work between Baby boomers and Generation Y

Millennials started to enter the adulthood at the turn of the century and became the subject of many studies as the newest generation. As before generational differences have been the subject of many articles, books and conferences (Oh & Reeves, 2011; Stein & Sanburn, 2013), and have received extensive coverage across the media (Stein & Sanburn, 2013). Much discussion has ensued generation Y's effect upon the workplace and their differences to previous generations (Saba, 2009; Ng & Fieldman, 2010).

This research examined and compared responses from both Baby Boomers and Generation Y to ascertain if there was a difference between approaches and attitudes to work between the generations. There was no statistically significant difference between the Baby Boomer generation and Generation Y in this study.

The data tested from the responses in the research questionnaire showed that there was no statistically significant different in the means of responses between Baby Boomers (M=9.1979) and Generation Y (M=7.9481). This is in line with studies using the appropriate theoretical frameworks which has also not shown any fundamental differences between generations, and the few differences that have been found are of a low magnitude (Saba, 2009).

While other studies showed that interest in social problems and thrust in government has decreased among generations not much else has changed (Twenge, et al., 2012), however McCrae (1999) found that older individuals tend to have higher levels of conscientiousness than younger workers, while younger workers from generation Y tend to place more value on extrinsic values such as money and fame (Twenge, et al., 2012). It has been put forward that work attitudes, values and satisfaction change as workers get older (Walsh, et al., 1996) move through their careers (Rhodes, 1983).

There may be a perception that there is a difference between Generation Y and other generations but the evidence actually suggests that the values of generation Y are actually in tune with that of their colleagues from different generations (Pfau, 2017) with only minor differences across generations with respect to attitudes at work (Liesman, 2015).

7.1.2: H2 Different generations are associated with different industries or professions.

There is much discussion about generations being different and having different qualities, characteristics and skills (Mannheim, 1952; Rokeach, 1968; Noble & Schewe, 2003; Twenge, et al., 2010), but does this have a bearing of which industry they work in? In this study a statistically significant differences was present across generations for employment across sectors. Technology and services were the two largest sectors where participants are employed in this research study,

According to the Central Statistics Office (2017) the 2016 census recorded that the retail category including sales assistants, cashers and checkout operators were the top occupational group in the Irish economy with 90,746 workers. The next highest occupations were Farmer (69,375), Information Technology occupations (59,376) and nurses and midwifes (53,910).

There is a perception that younger employees perform better mainly in the field of Information Technology and jobs that require creativity and innovation (Bencsik, et al., 2016), and why generations may be attracted to different industries.

Prior to the 1950s Ireland was a largely agricultural nation with a policy of protectionism. In the late 1950s the Irish Government began to encourage a greater a greater degree of Foreign Direct Investment into the economy. Along with Foreign Direct Investment, membership of the European Economic Community and being an English speaking country, Ireland became a strong lure for American companies, and this was a main economic driver (Murphy, 1997). This attraction was a result of key elements of Ireland's economic policy part of which was its low corporation tax rate and its access to capital grants (Breathnach, 1998). With this attraction came multiple technology firms including providers of social media content, and changed to makeup of Ireland's labour market to one with highly skilled positions in multinational companies which has been the cornerstone of Ireland's economic success (Collins & Grimes, 2008).

Ireland flourished and attracted multiple technology based roles which of course did not exist prior to the arrival of the internet in 1991. This may not be a generational issue but one of economic development, a shift in available industries and access to education.

In this research study there was a statistically significant difference between generations as to where they work. Within this study the three largest sectors where respondents are employed make up 57.53% of 14 sectors. Technology accounted for 19.18%, Services 21.91% and Retail 16.44%. Within the technology sector Generation Y are in the majority with 50% of respondents in this research. One consideration that has to be noted is that not only are these technology jobs new, but new jobs in new sectors and did not exist at the start of the careers of Baby Boomers and Generation X.

7.1.3: H3: Different Generations have different levels of organisational commitment.

In this study a statistically significant difference in organisational commitment was found between Generation Y and Baby Boomers, and no difference was found between other groups. In a study by Pfau (2017) which contained 1,700 respondents, found that the percentage of respondents who want to make a positive impact within their respective organisations was the same across all generations. In a similar study by Liesman (2015) only minor differences across generations were found.

While some generational differences do exist in between two of the Generations studied with respect to organisational commitment, in research by McCrae, et al, (1999) the suggestion is that there are some differences that exist across generations. Twenge et al, (2012) further examines this and concludes that there are higher levels of conscientiousness in older generations than in younger generations. Likewise Wils *et al.* (2011) showed that workers of all generations have similar work values and that it was without foundation that human resource departments should follow any speculative conclusion that there is a difference between generations.

7.1.4: H4: Different generations are interested in different types of work and have a desire to work in different industries or professions.

This research has shown that there is a statistically significant difference between where different generations desire to work.

While the persona of individuals may be shaped during their growth years so too will their values and expectations of work, therefore it would be common for work expectations to differ between generations (Glass, 2007). Within these expectations are what Hertzberg

(1964) termed as motivation-Hygiene factors which can make certain jobs meet differing expectations across generations. While many tech companies offer so much more to their employees than regular or traditional jobs they appear more attractive to certain workers. Younger generations also tend to seek jobs which allows them to be both creative and innovative (Bencsik, et al., 2016).

7.1.5: H5: Different generations have different motivations to work in varying degrees.

There has been no statistically significant difference observed in this research study with respect to motivation across generations. Other research has also reached the conclusion that generational differences do not exist for certain workplace constructs such as motivation. According to Sirota, et al, (2005) large scale research demonstrates a lack of generation differences in the workplace. Other studies (Deal, 2007; Deal, et al., 2013) empirical evidence was provided for lack of generational differences, while other studies (Anderson, 2012; Bartram and Inceoglu, 2012; Meyer, 2012; Wadlington & Elizondo, 2012) report only minor generational differences for motivation in the workplace.

7.1.6: H6: Different generations have varying degrees of job satisfaction.

In the generations studied in this research there was no statistically significant generational difference with respect to job satisfaction in Ireland's labour market. Workplace attitudes and satisfaction are workers feelings, evaluations and beliefs that manifest about their workplace and their job (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012).Job satisfaction has been found to be connected with status, tenure and age (Bedeian, et al., 1992; Hulin and Smith, 1965; Kacmar and Ferris G.R, 1989; White and Spector, 1987).

Research has also shown the existence of a 'Honeymoon effect' or 'Honeymoon period' where a positive feeling about a new job begins to wane over time (Bolswell and Boudreau, 2005). While this may be the case it has also been found that agreeableness increases as workers get older (Donnellan & Lucas, 2008; Roberts, et al., 2006).

Work attitudes values and satisfaction change throughout the careers of workers (Rhodes, 1983; Walsh, et al., 1996), however Singer and Abramson (1973) found that there was no change across generation for work satisfaction and values even through substantial changes

in salaries. Thus, it appears that age only has a small influence on job satisfaction (Cucina, et al., 2018) and is also unconnected to performance (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004).

7.1.7: H7: Reasons for leaving a job

There is evidence in this research study that there is a significant statistical difference across generations with regard to what would motivate them to change jobs. Participants were asked what would their main motivation for leaving a job would be and as per *figure 9*, there were differences across generations with respect to what was valued in a job and what factors would influence a career move.

Baby boomers top motivation for leaving a job was in the following order due to their interest or passion for their job (55.6%), Work/life balance (33.3%), progression opportunities (11.1%) with no motivation for pay (0%) in the responses. Generation X respondent's top motivation for leaving a job was Work/life balance (44.4%), with progression opportunities (29.6%), Interest or passion for their job (18.5%) and Pay (7.5%) respectively. Generation Y showed that most important to them was progression opportunities (34%), both work/life balance and pay were their joint second most important (25%) and interest or passion in their jobs being least important (16%). Generation Z responded that Progression opportunities are most important to them (40%), with work/life balance, interest and passion for the job and pay all responding at the same level (20%).

Progression opportunities decline significantly from younger workers to older workers decreasing from 40% for Generation Z to 11.1% for Baby Boomers. Likewise pay as an important factor also decreases from younger to older workers decreasing from 20% and 25% in Generation z and Y to 7.5% in Generation X and not presenting as a factor whatsoever for Baby Boomers (0%). The decline trend is almost reversed for interest or passion for job across the generations with this factor becoming more important as the workers get older, this value increased from 16% in Generation Y, 18.5% in Generation X, 55.6% in Baby Boomers, and it presented as 20% of Generation Z. Likewise there appears to be a trend of work/life balance getting more important as workers get older, with Generation X showing a slightly higher importance (44.4%) and slightly bucking the trend of increasing importance. The other

generational cohorts increase this value with age from Generation Z (20%), Generation Y (25%) and Baby Boomers (33.3%).

It is possible that this is not a generational difference but a career stage difference where respondents are at different stages not only in their lives but also in their careers, and that generational differences may hinge on values or traits such as valuing leisure and work/life balance (Twenge, et al., 2010). There also may be a connected factor of generational differences with organisational and job mobility, especially with younger generations (Loyns, et al., 2015) whereas younger workers may not have the same responsibilities as their older counterparts, and that as up to as much as 60% of Generation Y are open to a different opportunity at any given time (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016), and that younger generations place more significance on extrinsic values such as money (Twenge, et al., 2012). Younger workers appear to have less loyalty and up to 60% of Generation Y are open to a different work opportunity at any given time (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016), and that 87% consider that professional development and career opportunities are important to them (McGrady, 2016).

7.2 Recommendations

Most employees no matter what age they are tend to resist change due to fear of losing out more than others (McCaffree, 2007). It is most likely that most workplace conflicts are caused by personal agendas, selflessness and the personal goals of individuals and that this is not the result of generational differences (McCaffree, 2007). While the justification for intergenerational conflict is weak, it is suggested by Deal (2007) that workers form all generations have much more in similarities than in dissimilarities. Workers share

Leading and managing a multigenerational workplace requires managers and organisations to account for differences in the workforce, and managing differences can necessitate different management styles. This approach must be a calculated one which that does not treat employees differently to the effect that a group or groups may feel discriminated against, which could have legal ramifications (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). Stereotyping and meta-stereotyping workers can cause behavioural change and can lead to organisational

strife and dissatisfaction which can impede the achievement of organisational goals (Salahuddin, 2010).

Employees should be viewed by what they have in common rather than their differences, as they share so much in common. Employees share much in common that shape their expectations such as love, happiness, honesty, a sense of worth and conscientiousness, and all employees share the wants and needs of wanting to belong, wanting to be valued and wanting to work in a safe and harmonious place to work (Angeline, 2011). Human resource management has for some years now has focused on individualising the employment relationship and has underscored the importance of understanding individual differences (Saba, 2009).

It is suggested by Wilson (2009) that rather that viewed it as a generational issue, it should be viewed as a diversity issue and that the managing should lie in the managing of different perspectives while finding common ground. Generational conflict is more likely to arise out of errors of perception and attribution rather than any real differences therefore effective communication is important when dealing with conflict (Zemke, et al., 1999) and will avoid any cognitive bias which may not exist otherwise (Kunda, 1999; Lester, et al., 2012).

Workers appear to have a different view on which they appreciate supervision and require feedback, whit younger workers disliking micromanagement but do want strong leadership and clear instructions Performance reviews are a way in which employers and managers assess workers performance and discuss it with the employee. Traditionally this has been an annual process but (CIPD, 2020) state that this should not be the case, and this should be a continuous process involving 360- degree feedback.

Organisational policies and procedures should be reviewed to include any factors that may have an effect on employee performance. Al-Asfour & Lettau (2014) suggest that this should include input from all generations of workers as managers tend to be from the older generations and may not understand the perspective of younger workers.

Other methods to gauge and measure attitudes of workers are 'Your say' style surveys to give employees a voice and give unfiltered feedback as to their attitudes and feelings on their workplace.

Chapter 8

Research Limitations

8.1 Research Limitations

One key strength of this research is that it is a quantitative study as opposed to a qualitative study which enabled a greater accuracy and enabled a larger amount of participants to be involved in the research. This type of study involved the use of validated scales and also allowed responses to be compared across participants.

The researcher acknowledges that there are limitations to this research. The limitations applicable to this research are noted.

The effects of the Worldwide COVID-19 Pandemic has most likely had a profound effect on the subject's job security and may have an effect on the responses of the participants in this study. It is most likely that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its influence on the labour market will be the subject of a range of studies for the foreseeable future, although this is far beyond the scope of this particular study.

Future study might also address limitations of this research study and focus more on Generation Z who will be a growing cohort in future years, and were the smallest number of respondents in this study (6.8%).

Conclusion

The subject of generational differences has received extensive attention (Stein & Sanburn, 2013), although not all are in agreement. Some argue that generational differences in the workplace are a cause of conflict and are under rooted by different generations misunderstandings of each other, while others dismiss this assumption as a myth (Deal, 2007) (McCaffree, 2007). Much research on generational issues is diverse and is far from agreement not alone on generational differences but on the actual generational cohorts (Oh & Reeves, 2011). Current research has failed to find consistent evidence of actual generational difference (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015)

In the past number of years when Generation Y were becoming more prevalent in the workplace, much studies were focused on them and the perceived differences that they brought to the workplace. There was a perception that this new generation was different to the rest of the workforce and that if this was not properly managed it would influence productivity, create conflict and result in unnecessary employee turnover (Smith, 2013). While this may have been the perception the evidence actually suggests that this cohort's attitudes and values are actually in tune with the attitudes of their colleagues of different generations (Pfau, 2017) with only minor differences across generations being noted (Liesman, 2015). Likewise Trzesinewski and Donnellan (2010) noted that after a thirty year study there was very little differences between generations studied.

Ireland has a diverse workforce (Central Statistics Office, 2016), and whatever generational differences manifest in the workplace should be treated as diversity issue and that the managing should lie in the managing of different perspectives while finding common ground (Wilson, 2009). Stereotyping or attributing issues as generational issued can have unintended consequences and can cause behavioural changes (Salahuddin, 2010; Zemke, et al., 1999) and can awaken cognitive biases in employees which may otherwise not exist (Kunda, 1999).

CIPD personal statement and reflective journal

This Master's degree in Human Resource Management consists of one of my most significant academic achievements and has further developed my skillset. This educational endeavour has offered me a new learning experience in relation to data analysis and the transferring of raw survey data into usable and interpretive information with the aid of suitable software. Presenting this data in a format that could be easily understood by other parties was a learning process in itself and one I embraced and was a major learning initiative.

As with any academic endeavour time management, discipline, grit and determination are major factors to any success, and are skills for life, along with organisational skills and the ability to set and achieve self-set deadlines.

One of the major challenges faced was that of endless avenues that could have been explored and knowing when to complete sections and stay relevant to the research topic. COVID-19 also presented significant challenges to the completion of this research study such as national lockdowns and severe restrictions on movement.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

I Gordon Kiely am currently working towards a Master's Degree in Human Resources at the National College of Ireland. As part of the requirements for this course of study, I am preparing a dissertation on the different attitudes towards work by different generations.

The method of gathering information for this study is by way of a questionnaire which will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

All data collected during this research will be held in a secure electronic format and accessed only by the researcher and the research supervisor. No identifiable information will be collected or stored from participants in this study. The aggregated results of this study will be used solely for the stated purpose of this research dissertation and no other purpose. No identifiable information will be collected during the course of this study.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and participants can choose to opt out at any time prior to submission (5th May 2021). Opting out or choosing not to participate will not incur any penalisation for the participant. Should the need arise I can be contacted at x15039561@student.ncirl.ie and my supervisor Michael Cleary-Gaffney can be contacted at michael.cleary-gaffney@ncirl.ie.

- I agree to participate.

- I do not agree to participate.

Section 1

General Information:

Participant's age range

- Baby Boomers (1946-1964),

- Generation X (1965-1979),

- Generation Y or Millennials (1981-1994)

- Generation Z (1995-2015).

Participants Gender

- Male,

- Female,

- Transgender,

- Non-binary,

- Prefer not to say

Education Level

- Primary,

- Secondary,

- Third Level (Level 7, Ordinary Degree)

- Third Level (Level 8, Honours Degree / Higher Diploma)

- Third Level (Level 9, Master's Degree)

- Third Level (Level 7, Doctorate)

What Sector do you work in?

- Technology,

- Services,

- Retail,

- Manufacturing,

- Healthcare,

- Pharmaceutical,

- Other (Specify),

What sector would you like to work in?

- Technology,

- Services,

- Retail,

- Manufacturing,

- Healthcare,

- Pharmaceutical,

Is your role?

- Graduate,

- Non-skilled,

- Skilled,

- Apprenticed

Section 2

Organisational commitment

The 5-item measure utilized a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "never" 1 to 5 ''always''.

- I would like to work for this firm for the rest of my life.

- I discuss about the firm I work for with others.

- I feel the problems of the firm as my own problems.

- The firm I work for is important to me personally.

- Generally I am satisfied with the decisions of my firm

Section 3

Job Motivation

Why do you or would you put efforts into your current job?

The 19 items are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from not at all" 1 to "completely" 7.

Amotivation

- I don't, because I really feel that I'm wasting my time at work.

- I do little because I don't think this work is worth putting efforts into.

- I don't know why I'm doing this job, it's pointless work.

Extrinsic regulation—social

- To get others' approval (e.g., supervisor, colleagues, family, clients...).

- Because others will respect me more (e.g., supervisor, colleagues, family, clients...).

- To avoid being criticized by others (e.g., supervisor, colleagues, family, clients...).

Extrinsic regulation—material

- Because others will reward me financially only if I put enough effort in my job (e.g. employer, supervisor...).

- Because others offer me greater job security if I put enough effort in my job (e.g. employer, supervisor...).

- Because I risk losing my job if I don't put enough effort in it.

Introjected regulation

- Because I have to prove to myself that I can.

- Because it makes me feel proud of myself.

- Because otherwise I will feel ashamed of myself.

- Because otherwise I will feel bad about myself.

Identified regulation

- Because I personally consider it important to put efforts in this job.

- Because putting efforts in this job aligns with my personal values.

- Because putting efforts in this job has personal significance to me.

Intrinsic motivation

- Because I have fun doing my job

- Because what I do in my work is exciting

- Because the work I do is interesting.

Section 4

Work Attitudes Measure

Job satisfaction is measured on a 5-point scale (1 = very satisfied, 5 = very dissatisfied).

Organizational commitment is measured using a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). This scale is later reversed.

Job motivation is measured on a 5-point scale (1 = always, 5 = never).

Job Satisfaction

- Job content

- Degree of responsibility

- Degree of variation in the job

- Opportunities to use professional qualifications

- Extent of freedom at work

- Recognition for good performance

Organizational Commitment

- I am happy to tell others about my good job and good working conditions

- I talk positively about my job to people I see off-hours

- My own values and priorities are identical to the values and priorities at my workplace

- I like the personnel policy where I am working now

- I really care about changes at my own workplace

Job Motivation

- Do you feel stimulated by your work tasks?

- Do you feel motivated by your job?

- Do you experience your job as challenging?

- Do you look forward to go back to work after summer vacations?

- Would you like if your children chose the same job as you?

- Would you like to spend more time at work?

Section 5

Your future

What do you see your next position as?

What sector do you see yourself in in 5 years?

- Technology,

- Services,

- Retail,

- Manufacturing,

- Healthcare,

- Pharmaceutical,

- Other (Specify),

What factors would influence your decision to change job/sector.

- Pay

- Work/Life balance

- Progression opportunities

- Interest in your job/passion for your job

How long do you expect to say in your current role?

- Less than 1 year

- More than one year

How long do you wish to stay in your current role?

- Less than 1 year

- More than one year