An investigation into the factors affecting turnover of Generation Z employees in the Human Resources function in Ireland

By

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Abstract

This study attempts to address the factors affecting the turnover of Generation Z employees in the HR function in Ireland. HR skills are readily transferable between organisations and industry sectors and the HR profession has the highest turnover of any job function. The challenge facing employers is to accommodate Generation Z to the workplace and to understand the factors affecting the turnover of such employees. Research to date has identified the traits of Generation Z, their expectations regarding the workplace and the difficulties of engaging with this generation. The importance of job satisfaction, engagement, wellbeing, work life balance (WLB) and learning and development (L&D) to Generation Z have been identified in the literature. The review of the literature has however revealed several gaps in the literature regarding Generation Z concerning the psychological contract, leadership style, the development of a comprehensive strategy to retain Generation Z and the Irish experience regarding the retention of Generation Z employees.

The rationale of this study is to assist organisations, managers, and employees in uncovering the reasons why Generation Z leave organisations in the early years of their employment. The researcher has adopted a qualitative approach to the investigation, which has enabled the views of Generation Z interviewees to be ascertained through semi-structured interviews so as to attempt to understand what motivates this generation.

The findings were developed using thematic analysis where four themes, together with related sub-themes, emerged in the interview process: L&D, career progression, WLB and management style. The findings suggest that job satisfaction and engagement increase the sense of attachment that the interviewees feel towards an organisation, and this serves to reduce Generation Z turnover. Overall, this investigation has confirmed the importance that Generation Z place upon L&D, career progression, WLB and wellbeing, and the pivotal role played by management in accommodating Generation Z within the organisation. Surprisingly, onboarding did not appear to be an issue of concern to the interviewees, which may be due to the prevalence of small medium enterprises (SMEs) in Ireland.

Policies should be tailored to Generation Z needs and expectations in order to increase employee engagement and job satisfaction as a powerful retention tool. It is important that all organisations meet the challenge of integrating Generation Z employees successfully into their workforce and

the researcher makes five recommendations regarding L&D, onboarding, total rewards package, variation in tasks and manager support training as potential useful retention tools.

Keywords: Generation Z, traits, job satisfaction, engagement, learning and development, onboarding, career progression, wellbeing, work life balance, management support/style, retention tools.

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List of Abbreviations

- Employer (ER).
- Employee Engagement (EE).
- Chapter 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 (Ch1), (Ch2), (Ch3), (Ch 4), (Ch5), (Ch6), (Ch7).
- Generation Z (Gen Z).
- Learning and Development (L&D).
- Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).
- Thematic Analysis (TA).
- Work life Balance (WLB).
- Inclusion and Diversity (I+D).
- Small Medium Enterprises (SME).

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1   Introduction

This study attempts to address the factors affecting the turnover of Generation Z employees in the HR function in Ireland. Excessive employee turnover is expensive – there is a cost of losing human capital in management time, financial terms and a loss of organisational focus. HR skills are readily transferable between organisations and industry sectors (Deichler, 2021; Personnel Today, 2011). Lewis and Soroñgon, (2022) point out that the HR profession has the highest turnover of any job function.

1.2   Background

Generation Z are the most recent entrants into the labour market. They are children of the digital age, and they are more motivated by intrinsic rewards than extrinsic rewards than previous generations (Berge and Berge, 2019). Gurchiek (2016) identifies the importance to this generation of career development, learning and development (L&D), coaching and mentoring programmes and constructive feedback. They value wellbeing and work life balance (WLB), and they are more likely to leave an organisation than previous generations if their expectations are not met (Francis, 2022).

1.3   Gaps in the Literature

The literature review has recognised the importance of L&D, job satisfaction and engagement, total rewards, wellbeing and WLB in attracting, motivating and retaining Generation Z. The review of the literature has however revealed a number of gaps in the literature regarding Generation Z.

First, Generation Z belong to digital age and exhibit different traits to previous generations (Rodriguez *et al*., 2019; Lanier, 2017). Whilst the importance of the psychological contract between employers and employees has been recognised and the difference in traits between Generation Z and previous generations have been documented (CIPD, 2022b; Schroth, 2019), the literature is relatively silent on the necessity to change the nature of the contract, which is dynamic in nature, in light of the different expectations of Generation Z in the workplace.

Second, the literature recognises the crucial importance of management support, and that effective leadership needs to bear in mind Generation Z traits (Pennington, 2022; CIPD, 2021; McCrindle and Fell, 2019; Harris, 2016). McCrindle and Fell (2019) in their appraisal of Generation Z suggest that effective leadership needs to be adaptable to new business necessities, leading with transparency, behaving ethically, developing a learning, flexible and collaborative culture, and coaching and mentoring employees, so as to retain this generation.

There are various leadership styles model such as autocratic and democratic leadership models, the Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid, and inspirational leadership (for example: Richard Branson, Elon Musk). However, the literature is somewhat silent on the best leadership style to motivate and retain Generation Z.

Third, the literature recognises the importance of L&D, job satisfaction and engagement, total rewards, wellbeing and WLB in attracting, motivating, and retaining Generation Z (Yadav *et al.*, 2022; Torrington *et al.*, 2020; Schroth, 2019). However, the literature is relatively silent on the development of a comprehensive strategy on how to retain Generation Z employees.

Finally, the literature recognises that the skills acquired by HR professionals are multi-faceted involving an appreciation of organisations and the role of management and employees within such structures (Armstrong and Taylor, 2017) and that these people-orientated skills are skills that are readily transferable between organisations and industry sectors (Deichler, 2021; Personnel Today, 2011). Lewis and Soroñgon (2022) point out that the HR profession has the highest turnover of any job function. However, the literature is silent regarding the experience of employers in retaining Generation Z in the HR function in Ireland.

The gaps in the literature therefore reveal areas which may benefit from further research. In the circumstances, this investigation has sought to consider the factors affecting the turnover of Generation Z employees in the HR function in Ireland. In seeking to address this question, this study has sought to examine the expectations of Generation Z in the workplace and the components of the psychological contract between employers and this generation, leadership style and issues such as L&D, wellbeing, WLB and the impact of the introduction of a total rewards package.

1.4   Research aim

The aim of this investigation to determine the factors affecting the turnover of Generation Z in the HR function in Ireland raises a host of interrelated issues pertaining to HRM and this generation.   The challenge is to accommodate these new entrants to the workplace and to understand the factors affecting the turnover of such employees. This investigation seeks to establish how to attract, engage, and in particular, retain Generation Z employees and what specific HR policies are best suited to this generation. The researcher contends that it is necessary to identify the appropriate organisational policies and procedures for Generation Z and to develop new processes and policies to engage, inspire and motivate them. The recognition of the dynamic nature of psychological contract between employers and this generation, the role of manager support and the importance of L&D, career progression, wellbeing, and WLB, and the development of a total rewards package are key components of a Generation Z retention strategy.

1.5   Research Question, Hypothesis and Objectives

The researcher in endeavouring the answer the research question, *"An investigation into the factors affecting turnover of Generation Z employees in the Human Resources function in Ireland"*, has developed a hypothesis which this investigation will attempt to prove or disprove, namely:

H0 – Job satisfaction and engagement affect the turnover of Generation Z.

H1 – Job satisfaction and engagement do not affect the turnover of Generation Z.

The researcher has also developed four objectives to support the investigation of the research question and the hypothesis proposed in this study, namely:

- to determine Generation Z expectation levels of employers at the outset of employment.

- to explore Generation Z engagement levels in the early years of employment.

- to explore Generation Z job satisfaction levels in the early years of employment; and

- to explore the factors affecting turnover of Generation Z employees in the HR function.

1.6   Rationale

The rationale for this study is to assist organisations, managers, and employees in uncovering the reasons why Generation Z leave organisations in the early years of their employment. Turnover costs organisations money and time because it requires them to restart the process of resourcing and developing talent. The researcher observes that organisations invest resources in developing Generation Z employees, and once they have the skills, knowledge and experience, there appears to be a tendency for such employees to leave the organisation, regardless of whether they have been treated fairly or not (Love and Singh, 2011). The researcher chose this topic after observing how her peer group on entering the labour market seemed to change employers frequently, staying a maximum stay of about two years. The researcher thought this behaviour on the part of Generation Z merited further investigation.

1.7   Research Approach

On the basis that the issues pertaining to Generation Z are still developing and research in this area is in its infancy, particularly in Ireland, this investigation has adopted a qualitative approach using semi-structured interview to ascertain the views of interviewees so as to gain a deeper understanding of the expectations and motivation of this generation. A qualitative approach to the investigation rather than a quantitative approach is preferred as the former allows for an interpretivist approach, which the researcher believes is more appropriate to this investigation (Saunders *et al.*, 2019; Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). The semi-structured interview process has provided the researcher with an insight and understanding of the interviewees' perspective on their early experiences of employment. The questions forming part of the interview process have been derived from the objectives determined at the outset of this investigation and these objectives have facilitated the discovery of themes which emerged from the interviews conducted with the various interviewees as part of the investigation, namely:

- learning and development.
- career progression.
- work life balance, and
- management style.

This investigation has developed a thematic analysis approach in order to address the research question.

1.8   Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1 introduces the topic and has provided a background to the study, the gaps in the literature and the research aim for the investigation. The chapter has outlined the research question and the research hypothesis and objectives. It has also outlined the rationale for the study and the research approach adopted.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the research that has been conducted to date regarding the factors affecting a turnover in Generation Z employees. It identified the characteristics of Generation Z and their expectations regarding the workplace and the difficulties of engaging with this generation were noted. It noted the importance of job satisfaction and engagement and the importance of L&D, work life balance and wellbeing to Generation Z and the role played by reward strategies and leadership as retention tools. It has also identified the gaps in the literature.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology adopted in the investigation. An interpretative perspective was adopted using an inductive and qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect primary data and to identify the dominant themes arising from the interview process. The issues of research reliability and validity, ethical considerations and research limitations have been documented and considered.

Chapter 4 outlines the findings arising from the primary research, where four themes emerged around L&D, career progression, WLB and management style during the interviews with the interviewees and provide an analysis of the findings and the related observations in the literature review.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the primary research and compares these to observations arising from the literature review and provides tentative answers to the factors affecting the turnover of Generation Z employees in the HR function in Ireland and makes a series of recommendations for HR professionals and organisations to assist in retention. The chapter also notes the limitations of the investigation undertaken in this study.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the research undertaken, the literature review, the results of the investigation, and a series of recommendations for future research. It also contains a brief personal learning statement.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive review of the research that has been conducted to date regarding the factors affecting a turnover in Generation Z employees. Generation Z is becoming increasingly important in employment terms. The challenge, therefore, is to accommodate these new entrants to the workplace and to understand the factors affecting the turnover of such employees (Maxwell, 2021).

This study identifies the research undertaken into the characteristics of Generation Z and identifies the factors affecting Generation Z turnover. The study notes the importance of job satisfaction and the elements giving rise to it, and the relevance of employee engagement, reward strategies and leadership style in developing policies to encourage the retention of Generation Z employees.

2.2   Introduction to Generation Z

Generation Z are those born in the years 1995 to 2013. Individuals in this cohort, now in their early to mid-twenties, have grown up in a diverse environment and may have third-level education (Center for Generational Kinetics and Dorsey, 2016). As with any generation, they are unique, having just finished college with little experience, and they have different values and ways of understanding information than other generations (Chun *et al.*, 2017). They are very focused on technology as they have grown up in a society where social media and smartphones are fundamental to their existence (Schroth, 2019; Center for Generational Kinetics and Dorsey, 2016). Generation Z will be working with four generations in organisations, and it will be necessary for the management and the HR function to implement best practices to accommodate all employees so as to foster a healthy work environment where work life balance and job satisfaction are keys to employee retention (Yadav *et al.*, 2022; Leslie *et al.*, 2021). Whilst our knowledge of Generation Z is in its infancy, research conducted to date indicates that their expectations are high, and they are very keen to move from one job to another (Dwivedula, Singh and Azaran, 2019) and experience to date suggests that there is a high turnover of Generation Z employees.

2.2.1   How do Generation Z differ from Generation Y

Generation Y are characterised as good achievers (Pew Research Center, 2014) and they look for security and feedback in their jobs and recognise the value of wellbeing (Kowske, Rasch and Wiley, 2010; Twenge, 2010). In contrast, Generation Z are more focused on technology, innovation, and creativity (Priporas *et al.*, cited in Moore and Krause, 2021), and they like simplicity, safety and they have 'high expectations' (Tunsakul, 2020, cited in Moore and Krause, 2021), which can give rise to difficulties in meeting such expectations and therefore, lead to employee turnover. Both generations belong to the digital era and the internet, and both are 'tech savvy', impatient and seeking new opportunities and therefore display less loyalty to the organisation than previous generations (Rodriguez *et al.*, 2019; Lanier, 2017). Both generations are similar in terms of values and culture. However, Generation Z are more likely to emphasise the importance of well-being, are better educated with high accomplishment, and are more diverse in terms of race and culture and more entrepreneurial than Generation Y (Barna Group, 2018; Stuckey, 2016). Both generations have a huge involvement in social media and depend upon technology continuously (Karasek and Hysa, 2020) and we can observe them communicating with colleagues and friends via social media rather than face-to-face.

2.2.2   What are the Traits of Generation Z

Generation Z are focused on achievement with a hard-working approach, and like difficult work (Barna Group, 2018); they have confidence in themselves and love self-learning (Schroth, 2019; Bjerke, 2014). They also appreciate transparency in communications and are very detail orientated (Chillakuri, 2020). However, being high achievers with high expectations, they can suffer from anxiety or burnout (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). In addition, if the role is boring or without meaning, they tend to be disengaged (Schroth, 2019). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) suggest that there is therefore an onus on management and the HR function to design meaningful jobs with task variety and job rotation to avoid boredom and to nurture engagement.

Generation Z are also innovative and willing to share knowledge, and employers must develop employee voice and facilitate involvement in decision-making to encourage high performance

(Singh and Shaurya, 2021). If Generation Z see career opportunities and competitive wages, they are willing to improve performance. Due to their ability in handling technology, they are prepared to be involved in the rapid changes facing organisations in a volatile and global environment.

2.3   Generation Z Expectations in the Workplace

The psychological contract between employers and employees requires employers to reward employees fairly according to their performance and to provide them with training, feedback, career development and to support them as much as possible, as these factors are critical for employee retention (CIPD, 2022b; Schroth, 2019). Therefore, the psychological contract should be addressed by both parties where both have expectations and commitments to each other. If employees feel that there is a breach, it can lead to mistrust of the organisation they are working for (CIPD, 2022b; Harris, 2016).   The psychological contract is particularly important to Generation Z who are recent entrants to the workplace with little experience in the dynamic relationship between employers and employees. Furthermore, the different traits of Generation Z vis-à-vis previous generations mean that the nature of the psychological contract between Generation Z and employers will be somewhat different to that between previous generations and employers.

2.3.1   Generation Z Expectations of Employers

From an employee's perspective, the psychological contract plays an important part – employees want flexibility, job security and support at work (Schroth, 2019). When these expectations are not met, there is a breach of the psychological contract which can lead to dissatisfied employees, decreasing levels of performance, increased absence from work, and employee turnover.

Employees typically expect a programme of onboarding to facilitate them to settle down at the beginning (Schroth, 2019). Indeed, Bjerke (2014) found out that employees can leave after three months if they do not experience a proper onboarding process. Therefore, onboarding should be used as a strategy for retention. Employers spend time and money on recruiting the best talent to achieve organisational success (Becker and Bish, 2021). Schroth (2019) points to the importance

of a proper onboarding process, which serves amongst other things as a retention tool. As soon as employees feel integrated, they are less inclined to leave.

Furthermore, Generation Z expect a continuous programme of training to assist in job performance and development (McCrindle and Fell, 2019). Generation Z also expect good wages, fast promotion, career advancement, a healthy culture, good team interaction and a congenial atmosphere helps to attract and retain this cohort (Arar and Öneren, 2018). In terms of work life balance this cohort value flexible working arrangements and the possibility of working remotely (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2019).

2.3.2 Employer Expectations of Generation Z

Employers must ensure that the job description is well designed to attract 'the right people with the right skills' to the organisation and in the recruitment process, both parties must have clear goals and realistic expectations (Armstrong and Taylor, 2017). This ensures an appropriate fit and may avoid dismissals in the earlier years

Most employers face challenges in retaining Generation Z who are inevitably looking for better organisations to accommodate their demanding expectations (Karasek and Hysa, 2020). This generation prefers to work for organisations with strong brand names, such as Apple, Microsoft, and Google (The Irish Times, 2022), and employers need to invest resources in developing social media to foster their brand name as a retention tool. Indeed, multinationals use their strong brand name as a tactic in staff recruitment and retention. Organisations need to adapt to this generation, being the most advanced generation in terms of digitalisation and information gathering, by offering flexibility, e-learning strategies and facilitating remote learning by developing virtual platforms (Wiedmer, 2016). Generation Z bring many demands to an organisation that they expect to be satisfied, otherwise they may leave.

2.4 Generation Z and the HR Function

The skills acquired by HR professionals are multi-faceted involving an appreciation of organisations and the role of management and employees within such structures (Armstrong and Taylor, 2017). The influx of Generation Z employees into the HR function in organisations

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provides these individuals with the opportunity of practical experience in HR areas such as recruitment and performance appraisals. These people-orientated skills are skills that are readily transferable between organisations and industry sectors (Deichler, 2021; Personnel Today, 2011). Therefore, it is not surprising that the HR profession has the highest turnover of any job function (Lewis and Soroñgon, 2022).

2.5   Generation Z and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is concerned with how this generation feels about their job, and the job needs to be aligned with their values and expectations (Saranya, 2014). As Generation Z have entrepreneurial minds and value flexibility at work, employers should therefore endeavour to incorporate these needs into the job to increase performance and productivity (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018; Siengthai and Pila-Ngarm, 2016). Having satisfied their needs and having a healthy, harmonious environment with good-working conditions, overall organisational performance increases (Shobe, 2018). This is a win-win for both parties. A satisfied Generation Z will be more committed to the job and less prone to leave, as they are involved and motivated (Tarigan et al., 2022). Moreover, motivated Generation Z employees
perform competently and attain the organisation's objectives (Peluso et al., 2017).

2.5.1   Benefits and Rewards

Total rewards can be divided into financial rewards (pay, financial benefits) and non-financial elements (training, career development, work environment including work life balance and recognition on the job (Armstrong, 2015). This recognises the value that Generation Z, as new entrants to the workforce, place upon such non-financial elements as training and career development. It has been found that Generation Z can be motivated by achieving 'recognition on the job', for example, 'employee of the month' nominations. However, such practice has drawbacks in that, it can demotivate others who had not been so recognised (Norbury, 2019; Peluso et al., 2017). HRM should develop reward strategies to attract, engage and retain Generation Z (WorldatWork, 2015) due to this cohort not only valuing a flexible rewards system, but also having the need to feel trusted and valued by their employer in order to remain within the organisation, and all practices must be updated regularly (Norbury, 2019).

2.5.2 Wellbeing

Well-being is a mixture of health, job satisfaction, happiness; how Generation Z feel in their work environment, satisfaction with the reward system, their relationship with colleagues, managers, stakeholders, and lastly the leadership style (Peccei et *al.*, 2013). Most organisations are aware of the importance of well-being and have some policies in place to support this generation with wellbeing initiatives. These policies should be tailored according to Generation Z traits. The workload can lead to stress and burnout, and therefore organisations should promote a culture of mental health by performing a risk assessment monthly to check how employees feel about their well-being (CIPD, 2022a). Torrington *et al.* (2020) emphasise the importance of well-being and recognise the central role played by job quality and job design. Good job design involves the development of meaningful employee tasks with clear duties and responsibilities, providing appropriate autonomy and feedback, and thus contributes to employees performing tasks efficiently. Torrington *et al.* (2020) conclude that where an organisation promotes wellbeing, employee performance increases, employees are more engaged and committed, and this serves as a retention tool.

2.5.3 Work Life Balance

Yadav *et al.* (2022) stress the importance of work life balance (WLB) on employee engagement and organisational effectiveness. A healthy environment requires eliminating stress, aiming to satisfy Generation Z personal, social and psychological needs. Generation Z value WLB more than previous generations (Sánchez-Hernández *et al.*, 2019). Morahan (2019) observes that Generation Z also prioritise WLB over career advancement. CIPD (2022a) recommends the implementation of a wide range of policies to promote health and wellbeing in the workplace. WLB is achieved where the job is flexible in terms of location, working hours, and part-time/full-time. WLB is effective in boosting employee performance and also reducing absenteeism (LinkedIn, 2022). Henley Business School (2019) points out that job rotation, job sharing and reducing the working time from 5 to 4 days can increase flexibility, therefore improving WLB. However, Collewet and Sauermann (2017) argue that reducing one day can reduce productivity, thereby necessitating the development of managerial practice incorporating new policies and procedures to overcome potential productivity losses.

From an employer's perspective, WLB may be used as a tactic of branding to retain talent (Love *et al.*, 2011). This strategy not only works as an attraction or retention tool, but also serves to promote the company's brand for competitive advantage purposes (McCall, 2020; Green *et al.*, 2018). WLB also facilitates employers in implementing flexible time, job-sharing, and remote working (Sanchez *et al.*, 2019). Such flexible arrangements can benefit young couples with children and therefore improve employment prospects to the benefit of the Irish economy (Watters, 2022).

2.5.4   Learning and Development

In terms of learning and development (L&D), Generation Z expect continuous training to assist them in working efficiently now and in the future as their careers progress (McCrindle and Fell, 2019). Iorgulescu (2016) states that career development is considered a priority by Generation Z. They prefer to work for organisations where a mentorship programme is offered, delivered with the latest technology, and for organisations that offer career opportunities (Barhate and Dirani, 2021). This contributes to the development of a congenial culture that can attract and retain Generation Z (Arar and Öneren, 2018).

L&D is pivotal for employees to grow and achieve the organisation's needs. Therefore, it is important to create a learning culture. All members of the organisation should receive training to comply with HR best practices, and for higher positions, coaching and mentoring. L&D not only benefits employees, it also increases overall organisational efficiency and performance (Armstrong and Taylor, 2017). Organisations need to adapt to Generation Z by offering e-learning strategies, facilitating remote learning, and developing virtual platforms – this generation has been the most advanced in terms of digitalisation and information gathering (Wiedmer, 2015).

Generation Z values training, coaching, and mentoring. This generation is particularly motivated toward career development. Iorgulescu (2016) observed that the most important goal for Generation Z is when the organisation offers career opportunities – learning new skills and learning from their leaders/peers are pivotal for Generation Z, and therefore L&D can be used as a retention tool. In contrast, when training is not provided, employees can become demotivated and may be inclined to leave.

2.6   Generation Z and Engagement

According to Gifford and Young (2021), employee engagement (EE) happens when the employee is devoted to the organisation – going that extra mile over and above their contractual obligations. Employees who are so engaged have a high level of motivation, have an understanding of wellbeing and are focused on achieving the organisation's goals, which usually leads to good performers. Likewise, when employees feel a sense of empowerment, an employee voice, which is facilitated by the organisation's culture and supported by line management, this also leads to good performance. It is recommended that the HR function should design a job that fits Generation Z traits to improve employee performance, which may be measured through KPI tools every three months (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009, cited in Gifford and Young, 2021). EE facilitates the development of a congenial environment where Generation Z feel supported by co-workers and line managers. Consequently, they collaborate with members of the teams by sharing knowledge. When this support works in tandem with manager support, it contributes to increases in levels of engagement (Zhou and George, 2001). Managers have observed that it can be difficult to engage Generation Z since they are technology savvy, and they need to understand firstly this cohort's behaviour and what motivates and drives them (Leslie *et al*., 2021).

Mani and Mishra (2019) suggest that as EE contributes to organisational performance and success, HRM must act strategically by developing tailored policies to engage and retain employees; for example, tailoring and aligning the financial rewards and benefits to individual requirements, fostering employee wellbeing to lessen absenteeism, re-inventing job descriptions to include variety in the tasks, and aligning and personalising training to individual requirements. However, where an organisation has a scarcity of resources and job demands are higher, EE can generate employee burnout (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Therefore, Generation Z may be prone to leave for another organisation with more flexibility, fewer job demands and better wellbeing. It is necessary to maintain appropriate levels of engagement, by creating a 'nice place to work', so as to harness this generation to the organisation by building relationships with stakeholders and hence fostering its brand name (Mani and Mishra, 2019). Google is a good example of such an environment – the company has a flat hierarchy, employees are given autonomy and variety in their tasks, wellbeing is one of its priorities and employees are highly rewarded.

2.7   Generation Z and Turnover

It is important to develop coherent HR strategies as a retention tool for Generation Z employees. This involves understanding Generation Z and their needs, and requirements, and developing and tweaking HR policies so as better serve as a retention tool for this generation (Maxwell, 2021). Employee retention has become more difficult due to increasing globalisation, competition, employee diversity and the interaction of generations within the workforce.

Recognising the specific needs and requirements of Generation Z, it is necessary to develop specific recruitment and selection procedures, employee performance measurements with feedback, training, and motivation of employees with rewards and career development (Prund, 2021; McCall, 2020). The successful implementation of such policies goes some way towards fulfilling the expectations of Generation Z and the job satisfaction and engagement criteria sought by this generation. Key retention tools involve the development of a total rewards strategy and a leadership style capable of supporting and motivating Generation Z.

2.7.1   Reward Strategies

Total rewards can be divided into financial rewards and non-financial elements. Armstrong (2015) points to the necessity of developing a fair rewards system based on qualifications, experience, performance and matching wages with individuals in similar roles in other organisations. However, the most important element is being strategic in the rewards system. The rewards system must be capable of motivating Generation Z and have a clear purpose in supporting organisational goals where all HR policies and processes have been developed in accordance with an employee and organisational performance, and the rewards system must be aligned with such performance indicators (for example KPIs).

Generation Z differ from previous generations in terms of the rewards system, as this generation is more inclined to prioritise a congenial environment and L&D, rather than monetary rewards (Tarigan *et al*., 2022). This is confirmed by Berge and Berge (2019) who argue that this generation is motivated by intrinsic rewards, namely career advancement, job security and

flexibility at work. However, Stuckey (2016) points out that extrinsic rewards, such as good wages, are a significant factor in motivating and retaining this cohort. Gurchiek (2016) has observed that Generation Z value feedback, coaching and mentoring programs which help them grow in their careers. If this generation does not see career development, they may leave as soon they have the opportunity, whether to another organisation or perhaps embark on a career change. Hence, a total rewards system – a combination of both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards – can be utilised as a retention tool.

The SHRM survey (2016) found that HRM modulated employee benefits, such as flexibility in working-time and location, retirement contributions, career advancement and fostering wellbeing, can increase staff retention within five years. This provides further evidence that HRM should develop new policies and processes with new benefits tailored to the values of Generation Z due to the challenges of attracting and retaining talent.

2.7.2   Leadership Style

It is important that employers develop an environment of trust, fairness and friendly relationships with Generation Z, where they can feel supported by management and properly rewarded. Accordingly, management support is pivotal for an organisation to succeed – the more support employees have, the more their level of engagement increases (Pandita and Kumar, 2022). When there is an abuse of power and Generation Z feel that they cannot be heard or are treated unfavourably, this can affect their performance (Tepper et *al.*, 2011). Employees need to feel that they are being fairly treated (Wayne *et al*., 2002).

Leadership needs to be receptive to an ever-changing work environment and to be prepared to adapt to this environment on an ongoing basis to survive and thrive in the competitive environment facing all enterprises and to gain a competitive advantage (Pennington, 2022, CIPD, 2021; Harris, 2016). Effective leadership needs to bear in mind Generation Z traits – they are individuals open to digital transformation, working in an inclusive and diverse environment, where sustainability plays an important role. McCrindle and Fell (2019) in their appraisal of Generation Z suggest that effective leadership needs to be adaptable to new business necessities,

leading with transparency, behaving ethically, developing a learning, flexible and collaborative culture, and coaching and mentoring employees, so as to retain this generation.

2.8   Gaps in the Literature

The review of the literature has revealed several gaps in the literature regarding Generation Z. First, whilst the importance of the psychological contract between employers and employees has been recognised and the difference in traits between Generation Z and previous generations have been documented, the literature is relatively silent on the necessity to change the nature of the contract in light of the different expectations of Generation Z in the workplace. Second, though the literature recognises the crucial importance of management support, and that effective leadership needs to bear in mind Generation Z traits, the literature is somewhat silent on the best leadership style to retain this generation. Third, whilst the literature is replete with references to the importance of L&D, job satisfaction and engagement, total rewards, wellbeing and WLB in attracting, motivating and retaining Generation Z, the literature is relatively silent on the development of a comprehensive strategy on how to retain Generation Z employees. Finally, the literature is silent regarding the experience of employers in retaining Generation Z in the HR function in Ireland.

The gaps in the literature reveal areas which may benefit from further research. In the circumstances, this study has focused on the factors affecting the turnover of Generation Z employees in the HR function in Ireland. On the basis that the issues pertaining to Generation Z are still developing and research in this area is in its infancy, particularly in Ireland, this investigation has adopted a qualitative approach using semi-structured interview to ascertain the views of interviewees so as to gain a deeper understanding of the expectations and motivation of this cohort.

2.9   Summary

Research to date has identified the characteristics of Generation Z and their expectations regarding the workplace and the difficulties of engaging with this generation have been noted. The importance of the psychological contract and the dynamic nature of the relationship between employers and Generation Z that it implies has been recognised. The importance of job

satisfaction and engagement and the elements giving rise to it, namely a total rewards package encompassing financial and non-financial rewards, the importance of wellbeing and work life balance to Generation Z, have been confirmed in the literature review. The crucial role played by L&D in engaging and retaining Generation Z has been identified in the literature review and the high turnover of Generation Z experienced by employers has featured in commentary in the literature. The high turnover of employees in the HR function has also been noted. Furthermore, the key role played by effective reward strategies and leadership style in motivating and retaining employees has been highlighted in this review.

Bearing in mind their traits, expectations, and the digital era they belong to, research points to the need for consideration to be given to ensuring Generation Z experience sufficient job satisfaction, rewards, L&D and engagement in their initial roles in organisations so as to improve retention levels. The gaps identified in the literature suggest that further research is required to determine the nature of the psychological contract in light of the different expectations of Generation Z vis-à-vis previous generations in the workplace and the best leadership style to retain Generation Z. Furthermore, the literature review is relatively silent on the development of a comprehensive strategy on how to retain Generation Z employees and this suggests that further research may be necessary on developing such a comprehensive strategy for Generation Z retention. Finally, the literature is comparatively silent regarding the experience of employers in retaining Generation Z in the HR function in Ireland and this suggests that further research in this area is appropriate.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1   Introduction

The research methodology must be capable of supporting the research undertaken. This chapter focuses on the methodology grounding the investigation. The foundation blocks of the research are established, explained, and reviewed through consideration of the philosophical underpinnings of the research and the approach adopted. The research methods are considered and the preference for a qualitative approach is explained.

3.2   Research Paradigm

The philosophical underpinnings to this research reflect an interpretative perspective referred to as "interpretivism". Interpretivism has developed through a critique of "positivism", the philosophical stance adopted by research through the ages (Saunders *et al*., 2019; Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). Positivism emphasises the importance of what is observable and seeks to undertake research in a value-free context where the research is detached from research material (Saunders et al., 2019; Quinlan *et al*., 2019).

In contrast, interpretivism acknowledges that the human context in any research and findings reflects the dynamics and complications associated with human behaviour, absent from the observations and measurement of physical material. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) observe that Interpretivism considers differences such as cultures and circumstances and aims to include richness in the insights gathered. Interpretivism involves the consideration of people and organisations as a living and complex phenomenon which requires the researcher to focus on the multiple interpretation and meanings arising from the conduct of such research. This inevitably requires the researcher to take a subjective approach to their research and adopt an empathetic approach to their subject matter. Saunders *et al.*, (2019) summarise the interpretivist's task as one of entering the social world of the research participants and understanding it from their perspective.

This research involves a consideration of the interaction of individuals (in this instance, Generation Z) and organisations, and an interpretivist approach has been adopted so as to allow

for the capturing and interpretation of Generation Z expectations in their early years of employment and the factors that organisations can use to encourage their retention.

3.3   Research Approach

Saunders *et al.*, (2019) point out that there are two approaches commonly used for research purposes – the deductive and inductive approaches. The research approach to be taken depends largely upon the philosophical underpinning to the research. The deductive approach involves the development of a theory which is rigorously tested, and this approach is mainly used in the natural sciences. This approach involves putting forward a hypothesis having regard to the existing literature, and testing the hypothesis (Saunders *et al*., 2019; Quinlan *et al*.,2019).

In contrast, the inductive approach involves sampling a specific cohort – in this instance, Generation Z in their early years of employment, so as to develop an understanding of factors influencing employee turnover. The inductive approach is useful in the context of attempting to understand the motivation of individual behaviour. This invariably requires the researcher to bring a certain element of subjectivity and empathy to the research and involves the development of certain hypotheses in the light of the responses of the views of the sample chosen for research purposes (Saunders *et al*., 2019).

The inductive approach complements the interpretative perspective and therefore has been utilised in this investigation. In using this approach, the critical importance and role played by the research data which may be used to frame a hypothesis or proposition arising from the investigation is recognised.

3.4   Research Methods

There are three prevailing methods that may be adopted in research design, namely quantitative or qualitative or mixed methods (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Quantitative research involves the testing of a hypothesis or specific questions using standardised questionnaires and surveys seeking defined and structured responses and large sample sizes to enable the production of statistically meaningful results. Saunders *et al.* (2019) point out that the

underlying philosophy of quantitative research is positivism, utilising a deductive approach, where results are objectively obtained. The advantage of this method is that it focuses on narrow issues involving the sampled population and results can be analysed statistically and summarised for the reader. This method is particularly appropriate where the research area is somewhat mature, which is not the case regarding Generation Z in the workplace. The main disadvantage of a quantitative approach is that the researcher cannot control the responses to the data gathering mechanism which might not address the research question (Saunders *et al*., 2019; Quinlan *et al.,* 2019).

In contrast, Quinlan *et al.* (2019) point out that a qualitative approach is particularly apposite where the research topic area is relatively unsettled, and the research aim involves the development of an understanding and interpretation of underlying attitudes and behaviour. The use of the interpretivist perspective and inductive approach informs the research strategy to be used in the research. The recent arrival and retention of Generation Z in the workplace is an area which is in its infancy as is apparent from the literature review and therefore the adoption of a qualitative approach is most appropriate and preferred to a quantitative approach.

The qualitative approach uses 'interviews' or 'focus groups' to address the research question. Qualitative research is exploratory by nature and enables themes to emerge in the research arising from the feedback provided by the participants in the study so as to facilitate a full investigation of the research question (Saunders *et al.* (2019; Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). Qualitative methods are invariably more time-consuming than quantitative methods and responses obtained from participants are more open to subjectivity than those obtained through quantitative analysis (Saunders *et al.* (2019; Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, the recording of interviewees' responses may involve IT issues in order to properly capture the meaning on transcripts which can lead to misinterpretation and misunderstanding, and interviewees may not express their full and frank opinion in a recorded interview setting (Saunders *et al*.,2019; Quinlan *et al*.,2019).

The integrity and credibility of the researcher are pivotal to the successful adoption of the qualitative method. The qualitative approach in this instance involves the development of a series of semi-structured interviews with a sample of Generation Z employees in the HR function whose views have been sought the results of the interviews have been subject to thematic analysis. This investigation has combined the findings emerging from the interview process with the literature review to make certain tentative conclusions to the research question.

The third approach, mixed methods – a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods has not been considered by the researcher, as this method may dilute the importance of a qualitative approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Data gathering is the fieldwork required to provide evidence in the investigation. The data collection methods are determined subsequent to establishing the research method to be adopted, in this instance a qualitative approach. Quinlan *et al.* (2019) point out that the data collection methods used must be capable of providing the required data. Data collection consists of primary and secondary methods. The primary data collection methods consist of observation, interviews and focus groups, surveys, and questionnaires.

The qualitative approach adopted in this investigation has been to use a semi-structured interview process based upon the research objectives. The interviewees are provided with the opportunity to respond to the open-ended questions and to proffer their opinions regarding their positions as recent entrants to the workforce and how they perceive their career development. This approach has the capability of providing relevant and thoughtful insight into the behavioural attitudes of Generation Z employees in the HR function.

3.5.1 Primary Data Collection

The interview is the main primary data collection method adopted for the purpose of this research. A range of clear and concise questions developed from the four objectives of the study referred to in Appendix C have been prepared. The interview process has enabled the researcher to develop a purposeful conversation and rapport with each of the participants. The answers to the questions and discussion which ensued between the parties allowed the researcher to explore the research objectives and thereby assist in addressing the research question. By their nature, interviews represent the views of interviewees, which inevitably introduces an element of bias. The researcher must ensure that any bias arising from the interview is considered in the research findings and conclusions.

3.5.2 Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data is data that was originally collected for other purposes. This use of this data involves a substantial saving in resources. The researcher utilised secondary data from recent journals, books, and websites by availing of NCI, Google Scholar and CIPD databases. Secondary data can provide comparative and contextual data which can be usefully compared to the primary data collected through the primary research conducted (Saunders *et al*., 2019; O'Leary, 2021).

Saunders *et al.,* (2019) caution that the use of secondary data comes with certain health warnings. The secondary data may have been collected for purposes that do not match the requirements of the research question and insufficiently focused on the objectives of this particular study. Further, the secondary data may be outdated. Notwithstanding, the use of secondary data has the potential to assist in the investigation of the research question.

3.5.3 Interviews

Interviews may be delivered by group or individually, face-to-face, or online (Saunders *et al*., 2019; Quinlan *et al*., 2019). For the purpose of this study and due to the Covid-19 regulations, the interviews were conducted online by Microsoft Teams. Interviews were the primary means of qualitative research utilised to obtain information and the interview questions based on the four objectives, which reflected the issues raised in the literature review, are located in Appendix C.

Before the interviews were conducted, the consent forms were sent via email to each of the interviewees seeking permission to record the meetings, so as to comply with data protection regulations ("GDPR") and the principle of confidentiality – a copy of the consent form has been included in Appendix B. The data format of the participants was narrative, and the result was exploratory, seeking reasons why Generation Z may leave their organisation turnover. Finally, the data was collected in transcript format, and it is analysed in section 3.7 below – Data Analysis Method.

3.5.4 Semi-structured Interviews

In considering the level of standardisation of the interview appropriate, the semi-structured interview was deemed to be the most suitable. The semi-structured interview enabled the researcher to seek responses to the pre-determined twelve questions and to generate a rapport with each interviewee by discussing with them their responses and in subsequent discussions regarding the issues covered. The semi-structured interview enabled the interviewees to express their views freely and frankly with the possibility of a second interview to clarify issues, if necessary. The semi-structured interview complemented the interventionist perspective and inductive approach, that has been adopted in this study, as the researcher was able to ascertain the views and opinions of the interviewees, and to obtain relevant responses from them regarding the research objectives, such as their expectations, engagement levels, job satisfaction and factors affecting their willingness to remain or leave their current employer (Saunders *et al.*, 2019); Quinlan *et al*., 2019).

3.5.5 Interview Procedures Adopted

The interview questions were carried out by Microsoft Teams to save time and to comply with Covid-19 regulations. The questions were split into 12 questions (see Appendix C) and the total process took in 40 minutes. The interviews were carried out over a one-week period from 20 May to 27 May 2022. The interviewees' answers were retained in transcripts under encrypted coding to protect their confidentiality. In accordance with the procedures outlined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the interviews were transcribed and analysed by themes.

The process allowed the interviewees a degree of flexibility as they were able to choose a convenient timeframe. However, the transcription process had challenges because the Microsoft Teams software sometimes did not capture all the interviewees' words accurately, thereby causing the researcher to review the video recording to clarify participant responses in some instances. Notwithstanding such difficulties, the researcher believes that interviews provide a clear understanding of the prospective HR challenges to motivate this cohort.

3.6   Sampling Strategy

Sampling is a tool utilised by researchers to collect data in the absence of collecting data from the entire population (Saunders *et al*., 2019). Many researchers regard sampling as contributing to a more accurate analysis of small data numbers than a full census of the population would entail. Saunders *et al*. (2019) stress that the sample chosen should relate to the research question and objectives. The researcher has fulfilled this requirement by selecting a sample of Generation Z engaged in the HR function in Ireland.

The purpose of this research is exploratory; thus, the researcher found answers by asking 'what' and 'how' during the semi-structured interviews to understand this phenomenon and its relationships among answers. This phenomenon is in line with the interpretivist philosophy whereby participants express their views, and it is critical that the researcher establishes rapport with interviewees willing to share their experiences (Saunders *et al.*, 2019, Quinlan *et al*., 2019).

In the circumstances, the sampling strategy to choose interviewees was 'purposive sampling' for two reasons. Firstly, it is most appropriate for a small size of population and secondly the researcher needed to use judgment in the selection process so as to adequately address the research question and the four objectives (Saunders *et al*., 2019; Quinlan *et al.*, 2019). The sample was made of eight participants of Generation Z employees in the HR function. Finally, the researcher took advantage of the snowball approach to include three members of the consultancy company sector as the participants were colleagues.

3.6.1   Sample Size

The sample size for this research is eight. All interviewees (participants) have been coded as P1, P2 and so on. All interviewees have one to three years of Human Resources experience and have been selected from different sectors, as outlined in the table below:

	PARTICIPANT CODE	JOB TITLE	SECTOR	TIME FRAME
Participant 1	P1	Early Talent Lead	Consultancy	1 year
Participant 2	P2	Early Talent	Consultancy	1 year
Participant 3	P3	Recruitment Coordinator	Retail	1 year
Participant 4	P4	HR Advisor	Electrical Wholesaler	1 year
Participant 5	P5	Administration Intern - HRM	Pharmaceutical	1 year
Participant 6	P6	Staffing and Recruitment	IT	3 years
Participant 7	P7	Recruitment Analyst	Consultancy	2 years
Participant 8	P8	Entry-level Recruiter	Restaurant	2 years

TABLE 1: Overview of Primary Research Participants

3.7   Data Analysis Method

Qualitative data results are typically diverse in nature, having been drawn from written answers to the interview discussions which have been recorded and/or reduced to written transcripts, and interactions/observations of the researcher involving visual, aural and textual imagery.

The essence of analysing qualitative data is to recognise the interactive nature of qualitative analysis which is in line with the interpretivist perspective being used in this study as the researcher focuses on the interviewees' view of their position as individuals in their early years of employment. The semi-structured interview process, which encourages a free-flowing discussion, provides a suitable mechanism to obtain the participants' views and perceptions.

The researcher uses the thematic analysis approach devised by Braun and Clarke (2021; 2006) which includes five clear steps summarised as follows:

- **Step 1** - familiarization with the data by listening to the recordings of each interview and reading the transcripts.

- **Step 2** - highlighting the information relevant to the research question.

- **Step 3** - creating sections and labelling them, so as to develop themes - the themes were not coded due to the small sample (8 participants).

- **Step 4** - skimming themes using the strategy of funneling regarding the four research objectives.

- **Step 5** - paraphrasing the themes and writing a statement.

3.8   Reliability and Validity

It is important that a reader of this study can draw comfort in the reliability and validity of the research. Reliability in qualitative research is based on how consistent the research project it is. Validity relates to the level and quality of engagement by the researcher with the relevant literature and the information obtained through the interviewees' responses (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). For example, the researcher encouraged interviewees to express their personal experiences, and this places an important onus on the researcher to obtain informative and reliable information from each of the interviewees.

Saunders *et al.* (2019) recognise the interactive nature of an interpretivist approach and the adoption of the qualitative method of analysis and the key role that the researcher plays in all aspects of the investigation. The thematic analysis adopted in this investigation provides a systematic approach to the research which is both accessible and flexible and fulfils the criteria of reliability and validity. Thematic analysis accommodates the inductive approach used in this investigation and the search for themes is sufficiently rigorous to allow the researcher to draw tentative conclusions and develop propositions as appropriate.

3.9   Ethical Considerations

The researcher recognises the importance of maintaining the highest possible ethical standards in the conduct of her investigation. This involves engaging in the exercise in an organised and

systematic way and being sensitive to all those involved in the investigation, including the National College of Ireland (NCI) and the participants in the sample. As Quinlan *et al*. (2019) observe: "the quality of every research project is dependent on the integrity of the researcher".

The researcher has complied with the ethical procedure of the policy of NCI. The consent form and the sheet information were sent by email three days before the interview process to provide the participants with an appreciation of the interview process and full transparency regarding their participation. Participants were informed of the freedom to reject any questions or withdraw at any time and were informed that data would be deleted after two years and the transcript after the study is assessed by NCI. Every transcript has been protected with a password encrypted to achieve anonymity. Participants were coded by numbers and the name of the organisation not mentioned, just the sector, so as to comply with NCI policy.

3. 10 Limitations

Whilst the research has been conducted in a diligent and rigorous fashion, there are nevertheless certain limitations to this research as follows:

- The number of participants is small – however, the interviews undertaken were sufficiently detailed to allow the research to ascertain a wide range of views to allow tentative conclusions to be drawn.

- There was a gender imbalance in the sample – only one male participant in a sample of eight.

- The literature review in this specific area regarding Generation Z is only developing, and therefore is not as wide-ranging as the researcher would have wished. Indeed, the researcher has identified certain gaps in the literature which may merit further research (see Chapter 2).

However, notwithstanding the limitations noted, the researcher believes that the investigation conducted may provide some valuable insight to the research question posed.

3.11   Summary

Consideration of the methodology has enabled the researcher to adopt a soundly based approach to this investigation. An interpretative perspective has been adopted using an inductive approach to ground tentative conclusions to the research. The qualitative approach has been utilised consisting of questions based upon the research objectives and semi-structured interviews combined with thematic analysis so as to address the research question, and the findings emerging from the interview process together with the literature review have enabled this study to make certain tentative conclusions to the investigation. The issues of research reliability and validity, ethical considerations and research limitations have been documented and considered.

Chapter Four – Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse the findings identified through the primary research conducted through semi-structured interviews conducted with eight interviewees, P1 to P8. The interview questions were designed to address the four objectives of the investigation identified in Chapter 1.

A thematic analysis approach was adopted as outlined in Chapter 3. Four main themes were identified, and a series of sub-themes based upon the four objectives are depicted in the following figure.

Figure 1.

- On line learning

Theme 1
LEARNING AND
DEVELOPMENT

Theme 2
CAREER
PROGRESSION

- Promotion
- Job security

Theme 4
MANAGER
STYLE

Theme 3
WORK LIFE
BALANCE

- Manager Suppot
- Team Work

- Flexibility
- Pay
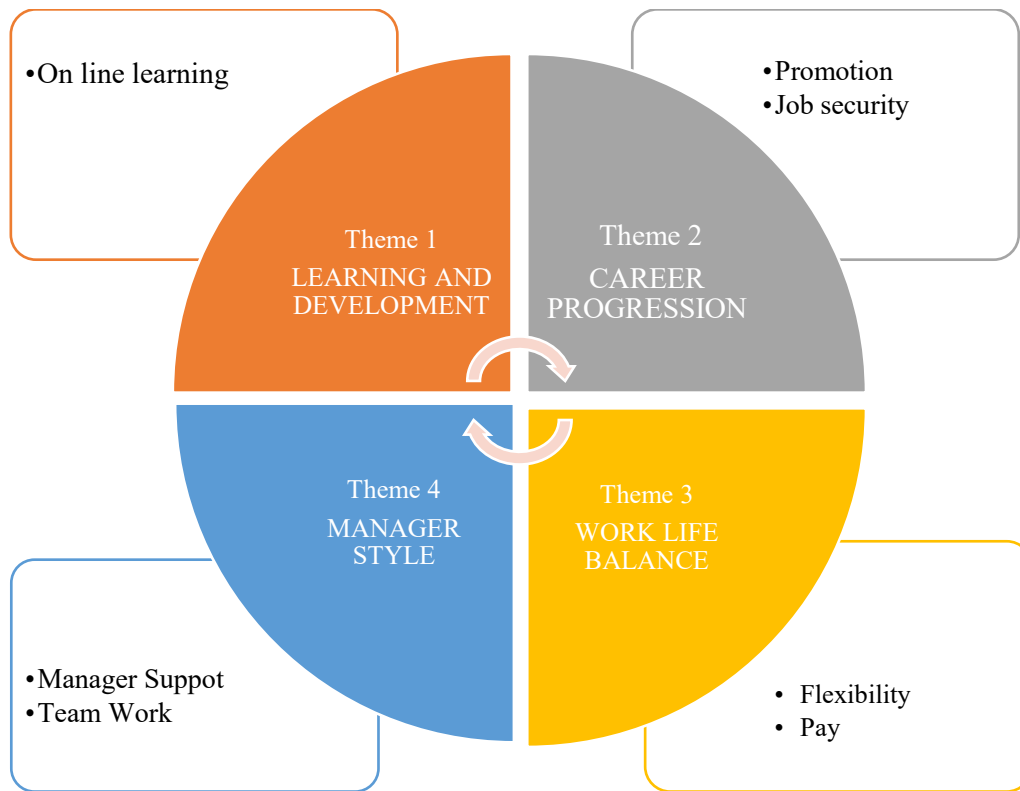
4. 2 Theme One: Learning and Development

Learning and Development (L&D) featured as a constant theme throughout the interview process where interviewees commented on the importance of training and expected to receive ongoing training in their careers. This confirmed the observations of McCrindle and Fell (2019), who stated that Generation Z expect continuous training throughout their careers, and training can be used as a strategy for talent retention, and the observations of Iorgulescu (2016), who noted that career development is considered a priority by this cohort.

From the primary research conducted P2 and P3 were unhappy with the training, and they expected more from their employers. P2 was particularly explicit in seeking *"more training"* and stated that training provided to them was: *"more about the business … it was focused on core values, ethics and compliance, it wasn't tailored to my role"*. Similarly, P3 highlighted that a new

system had been introduced and their manager had not provided training in this new system which has led to a chaotic environment. P3 observes that *"the recruitment system was very manual at the beginning and now we've got a brand-new system ... Oracle and we're just still getting to grips with it"*. In contrast, P1, P4 and P5 were happy with the training. For example, P1 stated: *" I'm really impressed with everything that they have done for me so far"*.

Three interviewees were responsible for delivering elements of training, P4, P5, and P8. P4, a high achiever with significant experience, commented that mandatory training has been delivered to a high standard: *"the company ... has a training platform and some people have issues, so I have to deal with them and then to ensure that the mandatory training modules are completed"*. Similarly, P5, who has two years' experience with the company and a further year elsewhere, was responsible for the induction programme in a pharmaceutical company. *"I organize all their training. I'd reach out to the managers. I'd organise time slots, training with the managers and the trainers"*.

The findings confirm the importance placed upon L&D by Generation Z, and the sense of attachment and loyalty that it generates, which concurs with the literature review. However, whilst the literature review observed the importance of onboarding to Generation Z and employees in general (Schroth, 2019; Bjerke, 2014), the issue of onboarding was barely mentioned by the interviewees. This may be due to insufficient emphasis placed upon onboarding by employers and may merit further investigation in future research.

4.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Online Learning

Generation Z are digital learners and are receptive to online learning (Chillakury & Mahanandia, 2018). More online learning was implemented as a result of Covid-19 restrictions and training is now being delivered online through platforms such as Zoom and Teams. The findings confirmed the broad themes expressed in the literature review regarding the benefits and popularity of online learning with Generation Z. P1, P4 and P7 are very pleased as online learning allows them to save time in commuting, time which can be invested in learning.

However, through discussions with the interviewees, it emerged that online learning also has drawbacks, such as the adverse impact on levels of employee commitment, engagement, and

satisfaction. For example, P2 states that collaboration increases when they meet in the office and benefits the company in terms of production levels. P2 observed: *"When we come into the office, we have collaborative sessions or engagement sessions, training, and things like that. So we can work together"*.

In general, the interviewees confirmed the popularity of and preference for online learning observed in the literature review, though the findings did qualify the positive impact of such learning to some extent.

4. 3 Theme Two: Career Progression

The importance of career progression was expressed by all interviewees in one form or another. P7 summed up the general attitude of the interviewees in the following terms: *"You might not have true job satisfaction if you don't really see progression, or you don't really see how this can get you to your career goals."*

Interviewees with one-year of experience (P1-P5) noted the importance of having career expectations within the company. P2 bemoaned the lack of career progression: *"I feel there hasn't really been much career progression or emphasis on career progression. I want more career progression if I was to stay within the company."* In contrast, P3, P4, and P5 found career opportunities within their company. P4 and P5 were quite satisfied. P4 stated: *"I get to participate in various projects. I get to attend various conferences, meetings, pieces of training and all the rest"*. Similarly, P5 stated: *"I was given a lot of responsibility."*

This confirms the observations in the literature review whereby Generation Z expect continuous training to assist in job performance and development (McCrindle and Fell, 2019) and fast promotion and career advancement (Arar and Öneren, 2018).

4.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Promotion

The issue of promotion was raised by some interviewees and the findings suggest that promotion can increase engagement. P3 stated: *"They have given me opportunities to do a bit more work and to get myself ready for a promotion. Although the promotion is taking a bit long."*

Findings pointed to this cohort embracing responsibility and this links to promotion to engagement. P2 stated: *"I could be more engaged if there was more emphasis on career progression .... there's no real pathway."* Similarly, interviewees with two years of experience, P6 and P8, also complain about the lack of promotion opportunities. For example, P6 stated: *"I want more responsibility, for example, one step or two steps more on the career ladder."*

In contrast, P7 who is two years within the company feels there is a career path available as they state, *''I suppose my role has developed and after six months I got extra responsibility and it's continued."*. Regarding P7's decision to stay in the company for a further period, they commented: *"I'm still here, I've had lots of opportunity of developing my role and then I've got a promotion as well. I think that's had a huge impact on my loyalty to the company and my team and so I see myself staying for another while…"*

Research conducted found there were challenges to career paths due to sectoral issues. P3 and P8 could foresee career path obstacles owing to the sector in which they are currently employed - P3, retail and P8 – hospitality/restaurant. These sectors have a few layers on the organisational ladder leading to promotion difficulties. P8 summed up their dilemma: *"I would be more engaged if there were more career opportunities if I had an opening to go into management or to advance up the ladder."*

The importance that some interviewees place upon promotion is in line with Generation Z's expectations of career progression observed in the literature review.

4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Job Security

As with other generations, job security is an underlying concern with Generation Z. However, the issue of job security was only raised directly by three of the eight interviewees. P2 and P3 referred to it briefly in conversation, and P1 points out: *"… they always promise us that you'll be permanent in a few months – it's always kind of rolling in that sense."*

These findings concur with the literature review which was relatively silent regarding job security. The literature review suggested that centennials were more focused in obtaining experience,

flexibility and work life balance than job security (Kirchmayer and Fratričová, 2018, cited in Leslie *et al*., 2021).

4.4 Theme Three: Work Life Balance

The issue of job satisfaction and work-life balance (WLB) was a dominant theme amongst all the interviewees, who appreciated the importance of achieving a good work-life balance. P1 indicated: *"I think job satisfaction to me is happiness in the workplace comfort like being comfortable in my role, being confident in my role and safety."*

P3 recognised the importance of good work-life balance however bemoaned their current situation stating: *"We're overworked right now and we're extremely busy and it's very difficult to meet targets. I don't go to work really happy, and I don't come home happy, and I come home thinking of the workload that I have for the next day."*

P1 regarded *"job satisfaction to me is happiness in the workplace comfort like being comfortable in my role, being confident in my role and safety."*

P5 commented: *"I just want to be happy. I want to be in a job that I'm happy getting up to and going into each day .... You know, staying on and doing an extra hour or two in the evening or going the extra mile and maybe happens to get up earlier and start early to do because I have to do a certain project or so. I guess that's why it's being happy in my job, and you know ... I guess the benefits, like the flexibility of being able to kind of balance your life and work, that's a very big thing right now, especially with me."*

P8 summed up job satisfaction in the following terms: *"Means that you leave work and you do not dread going into work the next day. It means that you leave work feeling like you've accomplished something, feeling proud and happy that you work for a particular organization within a particular role."*

P2 noted the importance of job satisfaction to productivity: *"I feel like the more job satisfaction you have, the more productive you are, the happier are inside and outside of work."*

Research conducted found that most participants had achieved a satisfactory work-life balance except for P3 and P5. Indeed, in the case of P5, she indicated that poor work-life balance has resulted in her leaving her current position.

The importance of achieving job satisfaction and WLB was noted throughout the literature review. Tarigan *et al.,* (2022) observed that a satisfied Generation Z will be involved, motivated, more committed to the job and less prone to leave. Wellbeing and WLB were components of job satisfaction for Generation Z who place a high value of WLB (CIPD, 2022a; Yadav *et al.*, 2022; Sánchez-Hernández *et al.,* 2019). The findings confirm this as the dominant viewpoint amongst the interviewees.

4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Flexibility

The literature review noted that flexibility was highly regarded (Schroth, 2019; Chillakuri and Mahanandia (2018) and was part of the psychological between employers and employees. This was confirmed by the findings where all interviewees regarded flexibility as a priority in terms of hybrid work, flexible benefits, and flexible hours.

P2 extolled the virtues of the flexible approach adopted by her employer: *"They let us work from home. They let us work from the office and if I decided they wanted to move away and they're kind of encourage us to move away and they'd help us try and get a job in [the company] wherever we wanted to go."*

Flexibility has been achieved by all participants where remote working was possible, and this was welcomed by such participants.
P1, P2, P4 and P5 regarded flexibility in terms of "workload". For example, P4 stated: *"I wanted the employer to be flexible when it comes to workload"* and P5 stated: *"... I had a hybrid. ... I worked on site and the home which was really great."*

P1, P2, P5 and P7 also regarded flexibility in terms of "work-life balance", where for example, P5 stated: *"Benefits such as the flexibility of being able to balance your life and work is a very big thing right now and in general."* P7 indicated the decision to stay in the company was due to flexibility.

P3 and P8 were unable to avail of remote working as they worked in the retail and hospitality sectors respectively, whilst P6 was endeavouring to balance work and study at the same time.

4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Pay

The literature review did not regard pay as a major motivator for this cohort – they prefer wellbeing, flexibility, feedback and mentoring (Berge & Berge, 2019; Gurchiek, 2016). However, the issue of pay did feature in the interviews where five interviewees expressed a certain degree of dissatisfaction with pay levels. P1, P2, and P8 focussed on the lack of recognition of a master's qualification in terms of pay. In contrast, three interviewees were satisfied with pay levels. Most interviewees focused on issues such as well-being and job autonomy and general job satisfaction. Broadly speaking, the findings concur with the literature review. However, the issue of dissatisfaction regarding relative pay levels expressed by some of the interviewees should not be underestimated.

4.5 Theme Four: Management Style

Management style was a theme which featured in the interview process and affected how interviewees regarded their position within the organisation. This also involved the presence of good manager support and the adoption of teamwork and a collaborative approach in the workplace.

4.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Manager Support

All participants agreed on the importance of manager support and in the words of P1 "honest communication".

P1 articulated manager support in the following terms: *"I think I'm probably very lucky with my manager and she's quite young as well, so she understands us and she really does make an effort to get to know us on a personal level as well as a manager and to guide us. She's asked about our goals long term."*

P3 emphasised the importance of job satisfaction in *"… having a good team, having a good boss, having a good flow of workload …"*

P4, was particularly animated about the importance of the manager's role and appreciated the level of freedom, autonomy, and support provided.

P5 also appreciated the involvement of management: *"my manager would do weekly check-ins with me. They were so good and accommodating."*

The literature review regarded leader support as pivotal for an organisation to succeed and as McCrindle and Fell (2019) observed in their appraisal of Generation Z, the importance of adapting to their needs. The appreciation displayed by interviewees benefiting from such positive manager support confirmed the importance of such support expressed throughout the literature review.

4.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Teamwork

Teamwork and a collaborative approach have been developed by management and were themes that were mentioned and favourably commented upon by most interviewees. They appreciated the interaction with their manager and the team and said that it contributes to the development of a congenial work environment. They spoke of the virtues of collaboration and teamwork in the office particularly in an era of hybrid working.
The literature review in emphasising employee engagement and employee voice noted the importance of a collaborative and congenial work environment (Linnan *et al.*, 2013, cited in Pandita and Kumar, 2021) and how such a collaborative approach is the hallmark of tech companies. The findings confirmed the observations in the literature regarding the importance of teamwork and developing a collaborative environment.

4.6 Summary

The interview process provided the primary data which enabled investigation into the mindset of Generation Z in their early experiences of employment to be progressed. Four themes emerged around L&D, career progression, work-life balance and management style, together with certain sub-themes, which affected how the interviewees regarded their position in the organisation and the likelihood of their remaining within the organisation.

The importance that Generation Z place upon L&D was a constant theme raised by the interviewees and confirmed by the observations in the literature review. It was however surprising that onboarding did not appear to be an issue of concern to the interviewees. Further research may be required in this area to understand the impact of onboarding in the Irish market.

The findings confirm the importance of career progression to Generation Z and this accords with the literature review. The findings noted the popularity and benefit of WLB and the importance of wellbeing to the interviewees which is also consistent with the body of literature regarding such matters. The findings also confirm the pivotal role played by management in accommodating Generation Z within the organisation.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

5.1   Introduction

The aim of the study has been to determine the factors affecting the turnover of Generation Z in the HR function in Ireland. This study has recognised the challenges involved in the recent influx of Generation Z into the workplace. Generation Z have different characteristics to previous generations (Bencsik *et al.,* 2017; Lanier, 2017; Chun *et al*., 2016; Iorgulescu, 2016) The challenge is therefore to accommodate these new entrants to the workplace and to understand the factors affecting turnover this generation.

5.2   Key Findings and Commentary

This study developed a hypothesis at the outset – whether or not job satisfaction and engagement affect the turnover of Generation Z. The findings suggest that job satisfaction and engagement increase the sense of attachment the interviewees interviewed as part of the primary research conducted for this investigation felt towards an organisation, and this serves to reduce Generation Z turnover. The findings were developed using thematic analysis where four themes, together with related sub-themes, emerged in the interview process.

5.2.1   Learning and Development

The importance Generation Z place upon learning and development (L&D) was a constant theme raised by the interviewees and confirmed the observations in the literature review that L&D encourages employee engagement and serves as a retention tool. The findings confirmed the importance placed upon continuous L&D by Generation Z and how such L&D encourages engagement and a sense of attachment and loyalty towards the organisation. These findings were in line with the literature review which viewed L&D as a vital component of Generation Z interaction with the organisation (McCrindle and Fell, 2019; Mani and Mishra, 2019).

5.2.2 Career Progression

The findings point to the fundamental imperative of career progression in Generation Z which was of concern to all interviewees. This accords with the observations in the literature review where the psychological contract between employers and employees created an unwritten set of expectations in the relationship (CIPD, 2022b; Schroth, 2019) including the promise of L&D and career progression (Barhate and Dirani, 2021; Maloni *et al*., 2019). Breaches of the psychological contract by employers can lead to a lack of employee engagement, poor performance and high turnover. The first sub-theme, promotion, was also raised by many of the interviewees and may be considered to be an integral part of the psychological contract. The findings point to the minority of interviewees placing value on the second sub-theme, job security. However, it plays an important part in their engagement levels, as those interviewees who did raise the topic perceived non-permanent contracts as somewhat demotivating, thereby discouraging engagement levels. The issue of job security is an element of the psychological contract between employers and employees and the expectations of Generation Z in the workplace and any breach of this contract by the employer will be a demoralising and demotivating factor for the employee, impact adversely on performance and lead to turnover (CIPD, 2022b; Schroth, 2019).

5.2.3 Work Life Balance

The findings noted the popularity and benefit of work-life balance (WLB) and the importance of wellbeing to the interviewees which is also consistent with the body of literature regarding such matters. Generation Z regard WLB, well-being and flexibility as extremely important (Yadav *et al.* 2022; Sánchez-Hernández *et al*., 2019; Peccei *et al.*, 2013). The findings point to interviewees regarding good WLB as a motivating factor leading to increased job commitment, satisfaction, and engagement. The issue of pay, though referred to by many of the interviewees, was clearly a subsidiary factor in comparison to such issues as WLB, career progression and general job satisfaction. Overall, this study confirmed the literature review which found that Generation Z prefer intrinsic rewards, L&D, career progression and a congenial environment, over financial rewards.

5.2.4 Management Style

The findings also confirm the pivotal role played by management in accommodating Generation Z within the organisation. The findings noted that good manager support which displays an empathetic, constructive, and humane approach will foster engagement and increase job satisfaction amongst Generation Z. These findings concurred with the literature review where commentators such as McCrindle and Fell (2019) and Schroth (2019) have recognised the need for management to accept that Generation Z are different to previous generations, though the literature is somewhat silent on the best leadership style to retain this generation. They are tech savvy, culturally more diverse and prioritise WLB, and in order to accommodate them in their early years, it is necessary to develop manager support, L&D, employee voice, the creation of teams and a congenial work environment.

5.2.5 Onboarding

It is accepted that onboarding prepares new employees such as Generation Z for their role in the organisation and it serves to manage their expectations and help them make sense of their new work environment (Becker and Bish, 2021; Chillakuri, 2020; Bjerke, 2014). Onboarding introduces employees to the culture of an organisation and invariably leads to better commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and employee retention (Becker and Bish, 2021; Schroth, 2019). It was therefore surprising that onboarding did not appear to be an issue of concern to the interviewees. This may be due to the importance of onboarding as an L&D technique for new entrants being insufficiently formalised by many organisations within Ireland. Whilst large organisations may emphasise the importance of onboarding, small medium enterprises (SMEs) which are prevalent in the Irish labour market do not necessarily have the resources for formalised onboarding, and instead, propel new employees into the work environment with little or no onboarding. The absence of formalised onboarding may be a factor in explaining the high turnover of recent entrants experienced in the Irish labour market. However, this study involved a relatively small sample size which precludes extrapolating this finding to the entirety of the domestic market. Further research may be required in this area to understand the nature and impact of onboarding in the Irish market.

5.3   Implications

The HR profession is facing further globalisation and demographic changes. Generation Z is the newest generation which has different values and features to previous generations (Maloni *et al*., 2019; Iorgulescu, 2016). Employees are a vital component of any business. As the labour market is dynamic with many changes and opportunities, organisations need to evolve rapidly to meet such challenges as the influx of Generation Z into the workforce.

As new entrants to the labour market, Generation Z are particularly focused on L&D and career progression at the beginning of their career path and therefore, the ability of employers to significantly reduce Generation Z turnover must be tempered by the aspirations of Generation Z to progress. Indeed, Generation Z professionals within the HR function have a variety of people-orientated skills which are readily transferable to other organisations and industry sectors, which makes it difficult to retain these individuals (Deichler, 2021; Personnel Today, 2011). However, it may still be possible for organisations to accommodate and retain talented Generation Z individuals through internal progression within the organisation utilising a talent retention strategy, involving L&D and a system of mentoring and feedback.

This study has identified the importance that Generation Z places upon L&D, career progression, WLB and wellbeing. HRM should develop new policies and processes, with new benefits tailored to the expectations and values of Generation Z (Armstrong, 2006) in order to meet the challenges of attracting and retaining talent (Chillakuri, and Mahanandia, 2018; Arar and Öneren, 2018). Bearing these concerns in mind, HRM must develop a well-designed strategy of recruitment and selection, such as employer branding (McCall, 2020), employee performance measurement, offering feedback; motivating employees with rewards/career development; and offering structured and continuous training, including onboarding (Prund, 2021; Williams, 2021). As a result, policies should be tailored to Generation Z needs and expectations in order to increase employee engagement and job satisfaction as a powerful retention tool and this study makes the following recommendations.

5.3.1   Recommendation One – Learning and Development

Given that L&D is pivotal for both Generation Z development and organisational success, this study recommends that L&D should be specifically tailored to meet the needs and requirements of these new entrants to the workforce. Training should be role-specific, and resources should be invested to ensure that online platforms are used to allow for the delivery of training, in addition to face-to-face sessions. Training materials and seminars should be regularly updated and readily accessible online to all employees on an ongoing basis and Generation Z should be encouraged to access such online facilities. It may also be appropriate to appoint mentors to certain Generation Z employees at some stage as a talent retention strategy. It will be necessary to develop well thought out and comprehensive L&D programme in order to ensure that this programme aligns with organisational objectives, and it may be necessary to enlist external consultancy assistance. This investigation envisages that the development of such a programme may be introduced over an 18-month period.

5.3.2   Recommendation Two – Onboarding

It is recommended that organisations should develop a formalised programme of onboarding as an entry tool for new Generation Z employees. This programme should encapsulate a series of measures to familiarise newcomers with the organisation and to help them to cope with any anxieties that they might have. It is likely that such onboarding will involve formal training and other practices such as continual manager and HR support. The importance of proper onboarding cannot be overestimated and therefore, it is suggested that all organisations should ensure that they have a formalised programme of onboarding within a period of 3 to 6 months.
As with the general L&D, it will be necessary to ensure the onboarding programme aligns with organisational objectives and it may also be necessary to enlist external consultancy assistance.

5.3.3   Recommendation Three – Total Rewards Package

Organisations should be encouraged to develop total rewards packages for Generation Z to meet their preferences and expectations. The package should include intrinsic rewards based on flexibility, including wellbeing and WLB initiatives, such as remote working, time-off for

study/children/elderly relatives and gym membership. This policy should be introduced over a period of 12 months to coincide with annual performance assessment, bonus awards and salary assessments. There are elements of the total rewards package which may be introduced earlier bearing in mind operational practicalities – for example, remote working.

5.3.4   Recommendation Four – Variation in Tasks

Organisations should consider varying the tasks allotted to new Generation Z employees so as to avoid boredom and demotivation. For example, new Generation Z employees may be assigned to routine roles within the HR function of recruitment which they may regard as comprising monotonous tasks. In recognising this, organisations should implement policies whereby such employees are rotated to other departments such as marketing, where they could experience other aspects of the organisation and to develop sales/customer service skills. This facilitates the engagement and attachment of such employees to the organisation. This is a strategy which organisations should consider introducing with immediate effect with due regard to organisation size and operational practicalities.

5.3.5   Recommendation Five – Manager Support Training

It can be difficult for management to engage with Generation Z and also to provide leadership to manage with the four generations working within the same organisation. The findings noted that good manager support which displays an empathetic, constructive, and humane approach will foster engagement and increase job satisfaction amongst Generation Z. These findings concurred with the literature review which also recognised the need for management to accept that Generation Z are different to previous generations. In these circumstances, it is recommended that organisations should arrange comprehensive training for managers on how to engage, support and motivate Generation Z, and how to ensure that all generations work harmoniously and productively together. Consideration should be given to adopting a democratic style of management and to the promotion of the principle of employee voice. It will be necessary to develop well thought out and comprehensive programmes regarding manager support training in order to ensure that such programmes align with organisational objectives, and it may be necessary to enlist external consultancy assistance. This investigation envisages that the development of such a programme may be introduced over a 12-month period.

5.3.6   Recommendations – Financial and Operational Implications

The implementation of these recommendations will inevitably entail financial costs to the organisation, and it may be appropriate to perform a cost-benefit analysis to determine their appropriateness or otherwise. It is accepted that it may not be possible or practicable to implement in full such recommendations in small organisations. However, the importance of employees to any organisation, whatever its size, should never be underestimated.

5.4   Limitations

The issues pertaining to Generation Z as employees in the workplace are relatively new and emerging. The literature is recognising the importance of L&D, job satisfaction and engagement, total rewards, wellbeing and WLB in attracting, motivating and retaining Generation Z, yet is relatively silent on the development of a comprehensive strategy on how to retain Generation Z employees. Furthermore, the research undertaken in the context of Generation Z and the Irish labour market is not yet as wide-ranging as the researcher would have wished. However, there is no reason to suggest that the literature review undertaken in respect of Generation Z internationally may not be relevant to the Irish labour market.

Whilst his study has been conducted in a diligent and rigorous manner adopting a qualitative approach, there are however certain limitations to the study revolving around the limited number of participants involved in the interview process, eight, and the gender imbalance within the sample (only one male participant). Nonetheless, the interviews undertaken of Generation Z in their early years of employment were sufficiently detailed to enable a wide range of views to be obtained so as to allow tentative conclusions to be drawn. The research undertaken would have benefited from access to HR managers in order to obtain their views regarding the factors giving rise to the high turnover of Generation Z in their early years of employment. However, notwithstanding the limitations noted, the researcher believes that this investigation can provide some valuable insights to the research question.

5.5   Conclusion

This study has provided tentative answers to the factors affecting the turnover of Generation Z employees in the HR function in Ireland. The study recognises the importance of L&D, WLB and wellbeing to Generation Z and suggests that job satisfaction and engagement reduce the level of Generation Z turnover.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions, Recommendations, and Personal Learning Statement

6.1   Introduction

This investigation has endeavoured to address the factors affecting the turnover of Generation Z employees in the HR function in Ireland. HR skills are readily transferable between organisations and industry sectors (Deichler, 2021; Personnel Today, 2011) and Lewis and Soroñgon, (2022) point out that the HR profession has the highest turnover of any job function. The challenge facing employers is to accommodate these new entrants to the workplace and to understand the factors affecting the turnover of such employees.

6.2   Literature Review

The literature review recognised the importance of L&D, job satisfaction and engagement, total rewards, wellbeing and WLB in attracting, motivating and retaining Generation Z. However, this study revealed a number of gaps in the literature regarding this generation – the literature is somewhat silent on the necessity to change the nature of the psychological contract in light of the different expectations of Generation Z in the workplace and on the best leadership style to retain this generation. Furthermore, the literature is relatively silent on the development of a comprehensive strategy on how to retain Generation Z employees. The literature is also silent on the specific research question regarding the experience of employers in retaining Generation Z in the HR function in Ireland.

6.3   Research Approach

The researcher has adopted a qualitative approach to the investigation. A qualitative approach enabled interviewees' views and beliefs to be ascertained through semi-structured interviews, which provided the researcher with a better understanding of what motivates this cohort. This study used the primary data so obtained together with a literature review so as to address the investigation question regarding the retention of Generation Z employees.

6.4 Results of the Investigation

The researcher in endeavouring to answer the research question, *"An investigation into the factors affecting turnover of Generation Z employees in the Human Resources function in Ireland"*, developed a hypothesis at the outset – whether or not job satisfaction and engagement affect the turnover of Generation Z. The findings suggest that job satisfaction and engagement increase the sense of attachment that the interviewees felt towards an organisation, and this serves to reduce Generation Z turnover. The findings were developed using thematic analysis where four themes, together with related sub-themes, emerged in the interview process: learning and development (L&D), career progression, work life balance (WLB) and management style.

6.4.1 Learning and Development

The importance that Generation Z place upon L&D was a constant theme raised by the interviewees and confirmed the observations in the literature review that L&D encourages employee engagement and serves as a retention tool. Surprisingly, onboarding did not appear to be an issue of concern to the interviewees. This may be due to the importance of onboarding as an L&D technique for new entrants being insufficiently formalised by many organisations in Ireland, where small medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the main employers, and this may be a factor in explaining the high turnover of recent entrants experienced in the Irish labour market.

6.4.2 Career Progression

The findings point to the fundamental imperative of career progression to Generation Z which was of concern to all interviewees. This accorded with the observations in the literature review where the psychological contract between employers and employees created an unwritten set of expectations in the relationship (CIPD, 2022b; Schroth, 2019).

6.4.3 Work Life Balance

The findings noted the popularity and benefit of work life balance (WLB) and the importance of wellbeing to the interviewees which is also consistent with the body of literature regarding such matters. Overall, this study confirmed the literature review which found that Generation Z prefer intrinsic rewards, L&D, career progression and a congenial environment, over financial rewards (Sánchez-Hernández *et al*., 2019; Gurchiek, 2016;)

6.4.4 Management Style

The findings also confirmed the pivotal role played by management in accommodating Generation Z within the organisation. These findings concurred with the literature review where commentators such as McCrindle and Fell (2019) and Schroth (2019) have recognised the need for management to accept that Generation Z are different to previous generations.

6.4.5 Implications

Overall, this study has identified the importance that Generation Z places upon L&D, career progression, WLB and wellbeing. HRM should develop new policies and processes with new benefits tailored to the expectations and values of Generation Z in order to meet the challenges of attracting and retaining talent (Prund, 2021; Lanier 2017). Policies should be tailored to Generation Z's needs and expectations in order to increase employee engagement and job satisfaction as a powerful retention tool. This study has made five recommendations to meet the challenge of integrating Generation Z employees successfully into the workforce in the areas of L&D, onboarding, introduction of a total rewards package, variation in tasks, and manager support training.

6.5   Limitations

This study has been conducted in a diligent and rigorous fashion. There are however certain limitations to the study revolving around the limited number of participants involved in the interview process, though the interviews undertaken were sufficiently detailed to enable a wide range of views to be obtained so as to allow tentative conclusions to be drawn, and there is no reason to suggest that the literature review undertaken in respect of Generation Z internationally may not be relevant to the Irish labour market. The research undertaken would have benefited

from access to HR managers in order to obtain their views regarding the factors giving rise to the high turnover of Generation Z in their early years of employment. However, notwithstanding the limitations noted, the researcher believes that this study can provide some valuable insights to the research question.

6.6   Recommendations for Future Research

It should also be noted that the issues pertaining to Generation Z and in particular, the factors affecting their retention within the organisation, are only developing, and the research undertaken in the context of the Irish labour market is in its early stages. This area may benefit from further research utilising a mixed methods approach involving (1) a large sample size to ascertain a wide range of views (quantitative method) and (2) semi-structured interviews of a smaller sample to gain a deeper understanding of the concerns of Generation Z as they continue their journey in the workforce (qualitative method). In particular, the area of onboarding as an L&D technique for new Generation Z employees may merit further research so as understand the nature and impact of onboarding in the Irish market. It would also be useful to obtain the views of a sample of HR managers regarding these matters.

The review of the literature has revealed a number of gaps in the literature regarding Generation Z concerning the psychological contract, leadership style, and the development of a comprehensive strategy to retain Generation Z and these areas may merit future research internationally and in the Irish context.

6.7   Personal Learning Statement

I selected this investigation question as I observed that many Generation Z HR students who enter the labour market seem prone to changing jobs frequently. I realised that the high turnover rates in this generation are costly to organisations who have already invested time and financial resources in recruiting and training these employees. This sparked my interest in the factors that affect the retention of such persons.

This dissertation has been the most challenging exercise that I have experienced from an academic perspective. I have learnt how to structure a project and to manage my time, I have developed my writing skills and my ability to link ideas and my attention to detail.

Due to the issues involving the retention of Generation Z are relatively new and developing, I decided to adopt a qualitative approach in my investigation. I found that I had to craft a plan of action prior to embarking on the investigation and this helped me to focus on the important issues at the outset such as identifying the exact research question and the various interview questions. I had to seek out members of Generation Z in the HR function who were willing to participate in the study. I found myself interviewing people, whom I did not know, using Microsoft Teams and subsequently putting everything together in a coherent and understandable manner. I found the exercise of organising and developing this study very challenging, yet so worthwhile. Interviewing the participants was daunting at first, and I had to grow in personality in order to obtain their views and to progress the investigation in a meaningful way.

I have learnt to be more reflective and critical in terms of the research that I have undertaken and in terms of drafting this dissertation. The assignment has enabled me to deepen my HR knowledge and honed my HR skills. The completion of this dissertation has made me more confident in myself and increased my determination, motivation and resilience to develop a rewarding career in HR.

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List of Appendices

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Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the study is being conducted and what it would mean to you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything is unclear to you or if you want more information. Take time to decide if you want to participate in the study.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT?

My name is Maria Luz Barrio, I studied HRM at the National College of Ireland and I am currently doing a Masters in HRM. The thesis is the last step of the Master's degree. I am conducting this research because my colleagues from previous years do not stay long in the HR function in their first employment, typically two years or less, and are also looking for new opportunities in other organisations. Therefore, Generation Z experience high turnover.

This study is to find out the factors and reasons why centennials (Generation Z) leave their first employment after two years or less. It may be due to the completion of a graduate programme, or due to other reasons, such as better job opportunities in another organisation.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

Participation in this study involves a 40-to-60-minute interview that asks respondents' opinions and perceptions about various factors regarding their employment experience.
All interviews will take place in English and will be recorded in audio or video form via MS teams or a mobile recording application.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

You have been selected through a snowball sampling as a recent entrant into the HR function in an organisation in Ireland or as someone who has experience with administration or recruitment in the HR function.

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DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse to participate, decline any question, and withdraw at any time without consequence.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

The results of this study can help employers develop new strategies to retain this valuable cohort. A participant should not suffer any physical or psychological harm as a result of participating in the study, as no sensitive or potentially triggering topics will be discussed. Technical details about company products and services will not be discussed and, if they come up in conversation, will be deleted from the transcripts.

WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Confidentiality and anonymity of the participant and the people they are talking about is ensured by anonymising personal and organisation/company names, e.g., by talking about Interviewee 1, 2, 3, etc., and only mentioning the organisation's sector/industry, not its name. The only information about individual participants that are directly mentioned in the dissertation is their job title, the field of activity, and gender.

The only situations in which confidentiality may be breached are if I strongly believe that there is a serious risk to the participant or another person (e.g., physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, child protection concerns, rape, self-harm, suicidal intent, or criminal activity) or if a serious crime has been committed.

It is important to note that non-anonymised data in the form of signed consent forms and audio recordings are collected and retained as part of the research process. Data will be protected with passwords and anonymised when the dissertation is graded.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

The signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be kept on a password-protected hard drive that only I will have access to until my degree is conferred. A transcript of the interviews, from which all identifying information has been removed, will be retained for an additional 5 years. Under Freedom of Information laws, you have the right to access the information you have

provided at any time.

This study is not funded, and to the best of my knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If I decide to include direct quotes from the interviews in my dissertation, I will contact the participants to confirm them before they are included.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

My final research will be used for my dissertation submission and may be used for conferences, publications, or teaching purposes in the future.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

Please contact me if you have any further questions

Researcher:	Maria Luz Barrio
Degree:	MA in HRM, National College of Ireland
Researcher's email:	luzbarrio3@gmail.com
Student email:	x17138701@student.ncirl.ie
Researcher's phone number:	+353 87 76 22 181

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THANK YOU!

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Appendix B: Interview Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

This template is designed primarily for those doing qualitative interviews with adults from non-vulnerable populations and dealing with non–sensitive topics.

The form would be different in the case of focus groups or quantitative research. If conducting research with vulnerable populations and / or sensitive topics please see Research Ethics Committee website for further details.

The points listed on the template below are for illustration only. You may alter the wording to suit your project as you see fit.

A consent form is not simply about a person giving you permission to involve them in research, it is an agreement between the researcher and the research participant outlining the roles and responsibilities they are taking towards one another throughout the whole of the research process.

The researcher should retain one copy of the consent form signed by both themselves and the participant. The participant should also be given a copy of the consent form as a record of what they have signed up to.

Even if a person has signed a consent form consent should still be re-established at the point of doing the interview.

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Consent to take part in research

- I ------------ voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I understand that participation involves engaging in an interview of the duration of 40 to 60 minutes that will touch on the opinions and perceptions of the interviewee around the factors affecting turnover of Generation Z in HR

- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a dissertation, conference presentations, published papers or journal articles

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- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a password protected HD until December 2022 where my degree is conferred.

- I understand that a transcript of the interviews, from which all identifying information has been removed, will be retained for an additional 5 years. Under Freedom of Information laws, you have the right to access the information you have provided at any time.

- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Names, degrees, affiliations, and contact details of researchers (and academic supervisors when relevant).

8

Signature of research participant

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Signature of participant   Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

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                                                                        18-05-2022

Signature of researcher   Date

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Appendix C: Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Questions:

1. Tell me about your current role.

2. How long have you been employed by your current employer?

3. What were your expectations of your employer when you started this role?

4. How has your employer met these expectations?

5. How has your employer not met these expectations?

6. Thinking about work, what does engagement mean to you in a work context?

7. Thinking about your current role:
    (a) How engaged do you feel in your job on a scale of 1 to 10?

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

    (b) Tell me about why you gave this rating?

    (c) Based on your rating of x , how could this rating be increased?

8. Thinking about your current role:
    (a) How engaged do you feel in your job on a scale of 1 to 10?

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$$1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 5 \quad 6 \quad 7 \quad 8 \quad 9 \quad 10$$

(b) Tell me why you gave this rating?

(c) Based on your rating of x , how could this rating be increased?

9. What does job satisfaction mean to you?

10. Thinking about your current role:

(a) How would you rate your level of job satisfaction. On a scale of 1 to 10, which are you?

$$1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 5 \quad 6 \quad 7 \quad 8 \quad 9 \quad 10$$

(b) Tell me the reasons why you gave this rating?

(c) What can be changed/improved to increase this number x?

11. How long do you intend to stay with your employer?

12. What are the factors affecting your decision to stay with your current employer? (if they say they intend to stay)?

What are the factors affecting your decision to leave your current employer (if they say they intend to leave)?

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