Employees in Global Technology Companies during COVID-19 Pandemic: Factors Influenced their Sense of Belonging and Attrition

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Abstract

This research study investigates the factors influencing employees' sense of belonging and attrition in global technology companies. Due to the pandemic of COVID-19 and its effect on these choices, the research study will explore what global technology companies need to examine and consider changing to retain employees and maintain productivity. Heraclitus said, "The only constant thing in life is change," Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is changing, and companies need to get their strategies to adapt to this change. The research study is conducted using the mixed-research method, which is gathering responses to a set of questions in a questionnaire that was distributed to one hundred and fifty-three (153) participants from various locations in regions of the AMER: Americas, EMEA: Europe, Middle East, Africa, and APAC: Asia-Pacific and analyze the data received on this question. Followed by conducting one-on-one sessions with fifteen (15) participants to study the research questions from a qualitative perspective. The analysis results will be shared, along with a conclusion and recommendations. The research study resulted in accepting the hypothesis that says Employment working situation options, programs, and benefits available from employers do Impact employees' sense of belonging feeling and attrition. Employees feel they belong to their employer if their employer has Great benefits programs, Diversity, Inclusion, and belonging programs, and they are paid well, they're likely to stay with their employers for the next 5 years if they're paid well, have career development opportunities, and the company is performing well Financially, on top of that they have Job Security. This research study discusses these factors and what companies can focus on to retain employees and enhance their Sense of belonging but also increase their level of happiness as it was found one of the results that there is a correlation between the sense of belonging and happiness in the workplace.

Keywords: belonging, diversity, inclusion, culture, employee attrition, global technology companies

Declaration

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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Research Students Declaration Form
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

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Acknowledgements

This dissertation marks the end of two years learning journey, which I started after the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2019. I started this journey to continue my higher education degree, a dream I started to chase back in 2014 before I moved to Ireland from my homeland Jordan, I left this behind when the opportunity to move to Ireland presented itself. With this step, my main goal was to add another certificate under my belt to strengthen my knowledge of International Business and how global companies are being managed and led since I am working in one, but also to challenge myself and my fears of not being able to do so due to the differences between education systems back home and here in Ireland, not only that but also my fears that my language skills won't suffice along the way, to find that I have learned that with hard work, commitment and dedication everything can be achieved and that I can do this.

Education has changed my life; since I was a little girl standing on this balcony in the picture, dreaming of a better future, I used to stand here and look over this refugee camp where - unfortunately-dreams are buried because of life's hard circumstances, but dreams are valid, does not matter where we are, or we come from, we're eligible to dream, and we're eligible; to achieve them.

Once again, education saved me and my mental health during a global crisis the whole world went through. I found it very useful to focus on school and feel productive during such hard times; I chose the sense of belonging as a topic because of the challenges COVID brought with it to the world; I, myself, felt at times that I don't belong and thought to leave several times, but something keeps me staying, and I wanted to learn more about it.

This work would not have been done without the support of some great people in life; my family and my friends, who inspire me every day to be and do better, and my amazing supervisor Anne Cooper who did a phenomenal job encouraging and guiding me through the process to produce the best work I can. Also, participants who took the time to participate in the online questionnaire and the one-on-one interview. I am forever grateful for all that and feel very lucky to have such amazing human beings in my life.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Stands for
AMER	Americas
APAC	Asia-Pacific
EMEA	Europe, Middle East, Africa
ERGs	Employee Resource Groups
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures

1. Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Research Study

COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way of work we know it. While there are physical offices for employees to work from, several organizations have adapted the hybrid working model for their employees in response to the pandemic. The world of work is changing. COVID-19 global pandemic showed that what was impossible before the pandemic is very much doable today, especially in the business world. The choices for how the task can be done have expanded along with the pandemic.

COVID-19 impacted all businesses around the globe. In December 2019, a report of an outbreak of pneumonia in Wuhan, China; a few months later, this has spread all over the world due to its fast-spreading nature (Ciotti, M. et al., 2020). Besides how to run a business and overcome the challenges that the pandemic had brought, one prominent challenge organization leaders had to face was the humanitarian challenge. What can these organizations do for the sake of their employees (Boland B. et al., 2020), in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that the organizations were forced to close their offices and limit physical contact due to the virus's massive spread and impact on employee health? This new way of working opened the doors to the idea that work would be done when not in the office. In some economic sectors, the situation COVID-19 pandemic brought proved to employers that employees can be productive while not physically in offices and that work can be done. As a result, several working models were presented to employees to choose from based on what best suited their life circumstances: working from home, also known as "Remote" working from the office where employees go on-site, and a hybrid working model where employees can do both, whether going into the office for some days or choosing to work from home based on their life circumstances. A drawback is that employees began to leave employers in search of better employment opportunities with employers with more options available. As a result, 19 million American workers left their jobs due to employers failing to do this and considering their workers' changing life circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Rosalsky, G. 2022). With these new options that COVID-19 revealed, most organizations adapted to this change and adopted the remote work environment as

an indefinite possibility in some cases. A survey conducted in 2021 as part of studying the new working norms on 1,561 employees in 56 countries showed that employees, as well as employers, are adapting to remote work (Technology, 2022). However, the landscape that is still upending between them is the traditional work agreements. Adjusting to remote work is not easy. Organizations had to figure out the best working environments for employees. With this change, a considerable focus was always on organizational cultures and how the working environment got cultures to change and adapt to the new norm. With the shift in working remotely versus working from the office, the talk about inclusion, diversity, and a sense of belonging did take a massive change in organizations, especially those with the nature of a global technology organization.

Technology companies use what is available to them from technology available to sell products or provide services using this technology. They predict user needs through teamwork and a diversified workforce (Zakrzewsk-Bielawska, 2010). They also specify a budget for large-scale research and development on user behavior and contribute to innovative and new scientific-technical solutions for the market/s in which they operate. Global companies have different business units in other countries, perform business operations, and follow regulations and laws per country (Kogut, 1999).

A combination of these operations within a company makes the company a Global Technology Company.

An exchange of the wordings organization and company is used in this dissertation to refer to the same institute of a Global Technology Company.

1.2 Research Study Purpose and Objective

The primary goal of this research is to investigate the factors influencing employees' sense of belonging and attrition due to the COVID-19 pandemic and how these factors changed or were influenced by the pandemic. And the pandemic's role in changing how people feel about their current circumstances, what makes an employee feel like they belong to the organization, and what makes them decide to leave.

- Identify what the sense of belonging is.
- Identify what employee attrition is.

- Study the factors that influence employees' sense of belonging and attrition.

Companies need to rethink their current working environments, embracing the hybrid working model, where employees are given more choices choose where to work from; their home or office. Companies must also reimagine the shape of physical spaces, with fewer employees going to the office, how the space of the office will look like, and how it can be used to the best of the environment, and what this study research will investigate further, is the factors that influence employees' decisions in choosing where to work from and if they would like to stay with their employers or not, due to the flexibility that is available to them by their employers.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research question/s will guide the research study

1. What factors influence the sense of belonging and employee attrition?
2. What is the impact on the employers as a result?

This research study will explore the factors that impact employees' sense of belonging during and after COVID-19, and the impact it as a result on employees' life decisions of going back to the office or staying at home, changing their employer, or staying with them.

1.4 Significance of this Research Study

This research study will demonstrate the importance of working situation options, programs, and benefits employers offer to their employees and how this impacts employees' decision-making in staying with their employer or not based on factors that affect their life situations if the research is done correctly. The research study will also reveal what employees believe is best for their life situation; working from home or returning to the office, or doing both and what factors play a role in this. Is productivity and sense of belonging impacted?

The findings of this study will aid organization leaders in understanding what factors influence employees' decisions about their employment situation based on life situations and circumstances; it will aid in the development of programs that will assist global technology companies in retaining employees and improving their sense of belonging.

1.5 Hypothesis Testing

This research study will test the following:

Employment working situation options, programs, and benefits available from employers impact employees' sense of belonging feeling and attrition.

Null Hypothesis: Employment working situation options, programs, and benefits available from employers do not impact employees' sense of belonging feeling and attrition.

Testing this hypothesis will help answer the research questions posed in this research and will help form the factors that inform employees in global technology companies' life decisions; it will inform companies about what could they better to retain employees.

1.6 Plan of Development and Structure of the Research Study

Chapter One: Introduction of the research study and the background of the research outline the main purpose of the research study and the plan of development.

Chapter Two: Literature review, which includes what has been discussed in literature about the topic and how COVID-19 influenced how the world changed because of these new life circumstances. The chapter outlines the definition of a sense of belonging and employee attrition along with the COVID-19 pandemic, how this change has affected companies' culture, and why diversity, inclusion, and belonging work is crucial in companies in such times. The chapter also highlights the factors that affect employees' life decisions and influence their feelings of belonging and attrition.

Chapter Three: Research study questions and method in gathering and analyzing the data; this study will use a mixed research method using qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Chapter Four: The analysis of the data gathered, the findings from each question, and a summary detailing the findings from responses to the survey.

Chapter Five: The findings from the data gathering will be discussed in this chapter and their relevance to the research study.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and recommendations from the analysis and findings

2. Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The outline of this chapter will discuss and critically review the literature review around several areas related to this research study:

First, life before the COVID-19 pandemic and what it is and how it affected the world changed many concepts in managing and leading organizations.

Second, working models presented to workplaces in global technology companies; remote working, work from the office, and hybrid working model and highlight what other sectors do.

Third, culture definition and how organizations' culture changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Diversity, inclusion, and belonging define this work's importance in an organization.

Fourth, the factors influencing employees' sense of belonging and attrition and what organizations can do to keep them within.

Fifth, a conclusion to what was been presented in this chapter

2.2 Life Before COVID-19 Pandemic

Before the COVID-19 virus hit the world in 2020, the typical working situation was for employees to go to their workplaces in an office. Few global technology company employees had the option to work in remote locations. It was not the norm; previous studies showed that economic-oriented priorities are accompanied by positive performance (Pileggi, S.F., 2021). The US Global Leadership Coalition (Jones, C. et al. 2022) showed numbers of how the world was before COVID-19, and now, the graph below shows the comparison numbers for each category (Jones, C. & Ramcharitar, S., 2022). Global unemployment in 2019 was at the rate of 5.4%, while it's at 6.21% in 2021 and is expected to remain above the normal levels pre the pandemic. No data was included on the sense of belonging and employee attrition.

Graph 1: Then and Now: A Graphic Representation of Life Before COVID-19 and Today, 2022)

	THEN — The world before COVID	NOW — 2 years into a global pandemic
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE	168 million people in need of humanitarian assistance globally, 1 in every 45 people worldwide.	274 million people in need of humanitarian assistance globally, 1 in every 28 people worldwide.
POVERTY	Projected global poverty rate of 7.9% in 2020, 613.7 million people worldwide.	The ongoing damage of the pandemic is significant, as projections reflect that nearly 700 million people are still in poverty.
HUNGER	135 million people facing acute hunger in 2019.	155 million people are still facing acute hunger.
DISPLACEMENT	70 million people displaced from their homes in 2018.	More than 84 million people displaced from their homes by mid-2021.
VIOLENT EXTREMISM	Approximately 10,460 reported fatalities linked to African militant Islamist groups in 2019.	An estimated 12,700 deaths across Africa reportedly linked to militant Islamist groups.
DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING	64 countries saw democratic declines and 37 had improvements in 2019.	Democratic backsliding accelerated during COVID-19, with the latest report indicating 73 countries saw democratic declines and only 28 had improvements.
GLOBAL UNEMPLOYMENT	Global unemployment rate of 5.4% in 2019.	Global unemployment rate 6.2% in 2021, and is expected to remain above pre-pandemic levels until at least 2023.
GLOBAL GDP	Global GDP in 2019 was $88 trillion.	Global GDP grew by 5.5% in 2021 to $89 trillion, largely driven by advanced economies while emerging markets and developing economies remain 4% below pre-pandemic trends.
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS	1.1 million int'l students studied in the U.S. in 2019, contributing $38.7 billion to the U.S. economy.	Int'l student enrollment at U.S. institutions remains over 12% below pre-pandemic levels.
SDGs	World on track to meet Sustainable Development Goals by 2073.	World target to meet SDGs pushed back by 19 years to 2092.

2.3 COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19, also known as the seventh human coronavirus, was discovered in Wuhan, China, during the pneumonia epidemic in January 2020. Since then, the virus has spread worldwide, and as of June 2022, it has infected 532,201,219 people and caused 6,305,358 deaths worldwide, according to the World Health Organization (WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, 2022). Scientists debated the virus's origin, but the world stopped when it broke. Even the most advanced health care systems could not contain the massive influx of critically ill patients in their departments. To prevent this, governments implemented recommendations from the World Health Organization to limit physical contact as much as possible, curfews, lockdown, and other daily life restrictions in most countries. On their official website, www.defense.govn , the Department of Defense in the United States of America provides a timeline of the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They established the Coronavirus Incident Management

System in January 2020, and in the same month, they issued a travel warning for China to stop the virus from spreading there through travel. They also declared a public health emergency, followed by several restrictions.

Along with it, several global companies closed their offices. In China, where the virus initially started, the government took many steps on small and large scales to prevent the spread of the virus. To stop the virus from spreading again, new prevention and control measures have been developed based on the characteristics of the epidemic and the social habits of the Chinese people. The strategies applied had a combination of Chinese and Western medicine. These measures helped supply a reference point for the global public health system facing the pandemic; acting and using social measures to manage the risk of infectious diseases were some essential recommendations based on the Chinese government procedures (Yu et al., 2021). Many countries like the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Australia followed similar restrictions to prevent the virus's spread.

The article on the future of work after COVID-19, which was published by McKinsey, a renowned and dependable advisor and counselor to many of the most important businesses and institutions in the world, discussed how the coronavirus disrupted the labor market globally, with millions of people losing their jobs as a result. Others adjusted rapidly to the new norm by working from home as offices were closed (Lund et al., 2021). The article also shares that:

"*net job losses were concentrated in middle-wage occupations in manufacturing and some office work, reflecting automation, and low- and high-wage jobs continued to grow. All low-wage workers who lost jobs could move into other low-wage occupations—for instance, a data entry worker could move into retail or home healthcare. Because of the pandemic's impact on low-wage jobs, we now estimate that all growth in labour demand will occur in high-wage jobs. In the future, more than half of displaced low-wage workers may need to shift to occupations in higher wage brackets and require different skills to remain employed.*"

What does this tell us? It ensures that the impact of the pandemic was massive, especially on those with lower pay bands. Still, it also shows the work that employers need to do to upskill their employees to prepare employees for circumstances like the one that the COVID-19 pandemic presented. It also emphasizes the importance and the need for employers to rethink what they are currently doing and offer employees that will help retain them.

COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges; some affected everyone, regardless of status, and others disproportionately. In addition to the health issues and challenges that affected everyone, the pandemic affected the working environment; new working models were discussed to be adopted by employers to support the business and keep it running. A year into the pandemic, employees had the most challenging time; this also affected exceptionally diverse groups; women, people of colour, distinct groups within the gay culture, and employees who are parents (Ellingrud et al., 2020). The pandemic created several inequalities for diverse groups. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that employers released due to restrictions, lockdowns, and curfews (CDC Org, 2021) confirmed the need for creating a different working environment. The previously mentioned impact of the introduced SOPs on employees' internal and external factors in people's personal lives, as well as being undervalued by some companies, resulting in employees making critical decisions about their employment and led to the "Great resignation," in which approximately 19 million American employees left their jobs (Rosalsky, G. 2022). The great resignation was another indicator that employers need to do better and activate their programs towards enhancing culture, diversity, inclusion, and belonging to retain employees. Some time has passed since the great resignation happened, but was it the right thing to do? In this research study, the factors that influenced this are studied.

2.4 Working Models presented due to COVID-19 pandemic

Before the COVID-19 pandemic working from the office was the conventional wisdom to keep productivity and organizational cultures. Maral Babapour Chafi, Annemarie Hultberg, and Nina Bozic Yams (2021) addressed the challenges and opportunities that arose after the pandemic era of 2019 and affected everyone in the world. The authors focused on these challenges and opportunities related to the sustainability of the working environment, which was deeply affected by COVID-19. As COVID-19 spread because of physical contact and airborne transmission, new working options were introduced and called a hybrid working environment (Babapour et al., 2021).

62% of US employees worked from home due to the pandemic and restrictions (Brenan, 2020). With this change, more challenges arose to the surface, and a hybrid working model was presented as a result. With what employees faced in the last two years of anxiety, employees did not know what they wanted, and organization leaders expected them to return to offices at least three days a week (De Smet et al., 2021). With this, the hybrid model existed to balance what

employers and employees want. Another model existed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote working, which is working remotely from home and does not visit the office only occasionally. How these impacted organizational cultures, diversity, inclusion, belonging, and, more importantly, employee attrition. Many employees leave employers due to the lack of flexibility in working situations.

2.5 Organization Culture, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging and Employee's Attention

A business model is a collection of interconnected pieces that describe how an organization develops, delivers and collects value, including activities that extend outside the bounds of the primary organization. Organizational culture is the set of values, expectations, and practices that guide and inform employees' actions in an organization. Organizational culture includes the organization's values, sociology, psychology, philosophy, beliefs, expectations, and experiences are some examples of corporate culture (Eisenberg et al. 2001). The COVID-19 outbreak has had a vast and rapid impact on workplace culture. The global lockdown, travel prohibitions, and staying at home have challenged long-held beliefs about the nature of business interactions. Organizations and employees found that work can be done from home, working remotely and not physically in the office. They do not have to drive to work. The transition to work from home for several businesses had an insignificant impact on the business and employees' performance. Organizational leaders must decide which culture changes they want to keep and which they must prevent as they adjust to working during a pandemic and prepare for recovery (Thomas, 2021).

Every business follows a different business model, and proper functioning of the business model guarantees business success. The COVID-19 pandemic affected all businesses, and their profitability and normal functionality were compromised due to slower supply chains and a lack of human capital to support the businesses, it also posed problems for businesses in various industries. Many organizations have been pushed to implement new internal working procedures and have felt intense pressure to offer items via digital channels. Organizations have undergone significant transformations and deployed solutions based on digital technology in record time. Concurrently, management and cooperation structures were redesigned to ensure that no one within enterprises feels left behind or excluded from the digitalization process. The merging of

modern technologies and the integration of physical and digital systems characterize digital transformation (Fernando Almeida, 2020).

Innovative business strategies, new manufacturing techniques, and the development of knowledge-based products and services are the norm. Although digitization is not new, the accompanying problems and opportunities are continually changing. Before the introduction of COVID-19, digital transformation problems were mainly centered on the fourth industrial revolution, as represented by the ideas of Industry 4.0, Internet of Things (IoT), and Web 4.0. Both the disruption of concepts and technology and the rapidity of this digital change posed issues. The issues were found during the COVID-19 era, and involving the entire company and stakeholders in this process is critical. Furthermore, the rate at which this transformation occurred was incredible. This had to be done independently of an organization's past position or experience with digital transformation processes (Fernando Almeida, 2020).

When creating a more diverse workforce, it is critical to distinguish between having a varied team and being inclusive. If a company has a diverse staff, but employees do not feel included, some may interpret this as a poor diversity and inclusion approach. Inclusion is a critical part of any diversity plan since it is difficult to gain the benefits of diversity, such as new goods and services, increased talent, and enhanced organizational performance, without inclusion.Diversity and Inclusion efforts in a company is what leads to a true sense of belonging. It is an endeavor ingrained in a company's culture to ensure that everyone is culturally and socially welcomed regardless of their backgrounds or other distinctions (Diversity in tech, 2021). Inclusion means treating everyone equally and creating an environment where every employee feels this organization is his, regardless of their differences. To understand what inclusion in tech means for employers and employees, consider the differences within a team. Differences can be based on age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or socioeconomic status. However, they can also result from a person's education, industry experience, and personality (Diversity in tech, 2021).

To develop a culture in which employees feel free to be themselves and are supported equally by leaders, who are crucial in encouraging inclusion inside organizations, diversity, inclusion, and belonging must coexist. Biases and preconceived notions must be addressed at work (Brown, 2019). A sense of belonging is essential for life satisfaction, pleasure, mental and physical health, and even lifespan. It supplies a sense of meaning and purpose. The loss of a sense of belonging has been linked to stress, disease, lower well-being, and despair; according to research, it's also

linked to what employers offer employees and what programs they must keep employees. In the workplace, inclusiveness, diversity, and belonging have become vital components of a pervasive, ever-present philosophy. Because of their value, diversity and inclusion are swiftly rising to the top of organizational priority lists. They not only lead to a happier, more discretionary, and productive workforce, but they also boost the financial success of enterprises, according to several studies (Brown, 2019). A positive, all-inclusive atmosphere values variety, participation, and belonging. Inclusion in the workplace is becoming a more prevalent attitude in many organizations. Achieving global diversity and inclusion is an enormous, complex challenge that corporations cannot complete overnight. Making this idea a reality demands tremendous dedication and consistent, organizational-wide work, but the result is well worth the effort. The advantages are mutual: happier, more productive employees and a wealthier organization (Brown, 2019). This research study focuses on the factors that contribute to the sense of belonging including efforts put in diversity and Inclusion in an organization and what employees consider the essential factors that influence their feelings.

2.6 Factors That Influence Employees' Sense of Belonging and Attrition and what Companies Can do!

The turnover intention and the attrition factor differ significantly. According to the studies, turnover intention influences attrition elements such as quality of work-life, career progression, working hours, personal/family reasons, relationship with internal co-workers, welfare, working conditions, and salary and financial situation. A positive relationship exists between high participation work practices and employee retention and organization production. Employees value job quality and employer treatment more than pay (De Smet, 2022).

Employee attrition is affected by the organization's pay and length of service (De Smet, 2022). When attrition is high, research reflects a profound sense of knowledge and analysis to be carried out among organizations. Every organization must also be constantly vigilant and grasp the status of their organization's hygiene and incentive aspects by conducting regular satisfaction surveys. Supervisors must understand internal and external issues via the lens of the hygiene-motivation factor hypothesis.

Primary elements that cause attrition in the rapidly developing technology industry are a. monetary benefits, b. lack of motivation, c. lack of personal benefits, and d. poor working conditions. To reduce attrition, companies can supply possibilities for employee advancement

within the organization by using innovative technologies, effective training programs and better working culture.

Attrition is affected not only by employee-related issues but also by organizational-related factors. Researchers also note that there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution; thus, every organization must conduct a complete diagnosis to uncover the employee turnover issue and appropriately create a retention strategy. However, most studies conclude that most employees are unsatisfied with their career growth plans, job type, and working circumstances. Furthermore, some employees were disappointed with the organization's training and development program and the working atmosphere. When controlling attrition, intrinsic variables are just as essential, if not more so, than extrinsic factors (De Smet, 2022).

When global technology companies build an open environment, it leads to higher job satisfaction, employee inclusion, belonging,hapiness and mutual respect, decreasing attrition within the organization and resulting in a more productive and enjoyable work environment. Emphasis on communication enables employees to feel happy, valued, and driven, boosting morale and productivity. Employees get disengaged, frustrated, and stressed due to a lack of communication (Brown, 2019).

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, some companies have adopted the culture of online meetings using Zoom or Microsoft Teams and other platforms. Technology acceptance resulted in greater employee inclusion, engagement, belonging and happiness and lower attrition (Fernando Almeida, 2020).

These companies can show a diverse workplace culture by encouraging employees to speak up. Employee empowerment is critical to making this happen. Ideally, employees should have no reservations about sharing their thoughts in a diverse workplace, because employees feel they are in a safe environment where they may share ideas without fear of being judged. True company diversity entails more than just hiring employees from underrepresented groups. A corporation achieves peak company diversity when it can show its employees that they are valued, regardless of their differences, personality, race, age, gender, or identity (De Smet, 2022).

Offering a training program to educate staff about distinctions like neurodiversity and how to remove bias in the workplace helps raise awareness of the value of inclusivity. Employers and employees should receive training suited to their individual needs; leaders should communicate the purpose of the training transparently to employees so that they understand the goals and are encouraged to participate. Leaders must look inward, listening to their prejudices and evaluating

their preconceptions and behaviours (Riley, 2001). They can turn to their staff, making room for difficult dialogues and listening with care and compassion. To set up a supportive environment, everyone involved in internal work must be capable of doing so.

Outdated software, such as conferencing or email facilities, might alienate disabled staff. Avoid this issue by reviewing the organization's technology stack and selecting software that supports assistive devices such as refreshable braille displays and screen readers (De Smet, 2022). As technology trends are changing, it is inevitable for organizations to adopt updated technologies. Different global technology companies have upgraded their business models with new software and online portals to get their clients in touch with the companies (De Smet, 2022)

Look for accessibility features like live captioning, keyboard accessibility, and resizable text. Finally, consider implementing a policy for supplying accessible internal material. ReachDeck, for example, can help global technology companies ensure that the company's content is equally accessible to all employees. Managers must invest time getting to know their team members – to truly connect with them to help employees feel confident, appreciated, and supported. Employees with solid and trustworthy relationships are more secure. Employees who can express their insecurities with their leader will feel accepted, and employees who have a leader willing to work with them on complex and sensitive themes will feel supported. Connect with employees to get them to open, and then stick with it (even if it is difficult!) When employees have worries or challenges, help them discover solutions that leave them feeling appreciated, supported, and listened to.

2.7 Conclusion

What literature have uncovered is that because of COVID-19 pandemic companies started to listen to their employees more and employee started to be more vocal about what they want and need from their employers, the Great resignation is a great example to this. In the next chapters an analysis is put in place to learn more about what factors COVID-19 pandemic have unrevealed for employees to feel they belong to their workplace but also what employers need to do to retain their employees and increase their level of happiness.

3. Chapter Three: Research Questions, Hypothesis, and Methodology

3.1 Research Questions and Hypothesis

Several factors that influence an employee's decision to stay with their employer or not and influence their sense of belonging were determined and discussed in many journal articles, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Different opinions went as far as studying how the COVID-19 pandemic changed the organization's culture and employer's focus on diversity, inclusion, and belonging.

From the information gathered through the literature review, two research questions were developed:

1. What factors influence the sense of belonging and employee attrition?
2. What is the impact on the employers as a result?

And several factors were considered in the research study hypothesis, which are:

Employment working situation options, programs, and benefits available from employers do not impact employees' sense of belonging feeling and attrition.

The research questions were developed from previous research, and the same studies chose the factors. Global technology companies can retain their employees if they provide flexible working situation options. This could be through different benefit programs companies can implement but also through channels like inclusion, Diversity and belonging, and Employee resources groups, and depend on these to make sure employees are listened to in what they need to feel that they belong to their employer. The literature review discussed above mentioned many factors impacting a company's culture. One of the main areas is that performance is not impacted, as studies have shown due to changes in the working situation that the COVID-19 pandemic presented. This is what the following two chapters will include.

3.2 Research Methodology

3.2.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the methodology used for this research. The mixed method is used to analyze the results of this research study, and qualitative and quantitative analysis to study the research question. This chapter includes the research philosophy as well as the application of the mixed method. It Identifies the research sample and the process used to collect and analyze the data. Finally, it includes the ethics behind collecting and storing the targeted sample. The researcher will include challenges faced along the way.

3.2.2 Design and Philosophical Approach

American sociologist Earl Robert Babbie identified research as: "research is a systematic inquiry to describe, explain, predict, and control the observed phenomenon. It involves inductive and deductive methods." According to Babbie, the inductive method is associated with qualitative research as it analyzes the event or the topic being studied. At the same time, the deductive confirms the results of the investigated methods and is often associated with the quantitative research method.

Inductive and deductive methods are used in this research study as the method used is mixed, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The deductive method is associated with the quantitative research method and aims at testing an existing theory, which includes; formalizing the hypothesis, collecting the data, testing it, and accepting or rejecting it. While the inductive is more used with qualitative research methods, and its main aim is to develop a theory and test it, it's often used to analyze the observed phenomenon, which includes a.specify the observation, b. recognize the pattern, and c. generalize results (Babbie, 2010). Both are used in this research study; first, the questionnaire will study the factors that impact the sense of belonging for employees in global technology companies and attrition, and then will study individual experiences in depth.

The paradigm applied in this study is pragmatism. Pragmatism is the belief that:" There are many ways to interpret the world and that there is no one that gives the complete picture, but it reflects many realities" (Saunders et al., 2009).

Pragmatism believes that human behaviors or activities are part of their own experience, and it's how to employ experience in future actions. In summary, it's a philosophy of action. Using pragmatism as a research approach focuses on the research question and Objectives while producing a practical solution to the research question (Denscombe, 2014). Using the Quantitative and Qualitative approaches, known as Mixed Methodology Research (MMR) (Bergman,2008). Since pragmatic research focuses on practical solutions, the mixed method gathers information and analyzes based on quantitative and qualitative data. Running the quantitative approach will help study the numerical data in terms of what impacts employees' decision-making process and what factors play a role in the belonging feeling to their organization. In contrast, the qualitative approach will help better understand these factors in-depth and develop recommendations for practical solutions for global tech companies into what factors they need to consider to increase their employee happiness score, satisfaction, purpose, and stress level. It will also identify the COVID-19 pandemic's role in employees' decision-making and sense of belonging.

3.2.3 Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods

Research is conducted using one of two approaches or a combination of both quantitative and qualitative; Quantitative research method depends on systematic data gathering and a mathematical approach to analyze data patterns that lead to a conclusion based on the data gathered and analyzed (Creswell, 2014). Results from quantitative research usually are unbiased and logical since it uses systematic and mathematical ways to collect data to explore it. Using structured data gathering tools such as surveys, polls, and closed-ended questions, and results of the analysis of the data gathered can be generalized. The qualitative research method is more of an experimental approach to understand the participant's stories better and find more information from the data collected from the targeted audience. The data gathered using various data collection tools such as one-on-one interviews or focus groups are usually non-numerical, so the results and conclusions are more descriptive of the event or topic being studied in the research. This research study adopts quantitative and qualitative approaches, known in research as

mixed-method. Mixed-method research help draw the strengths from both quantitative and qualitative to help gain a better understanding of the topic studied in this research. The quantitative approach will employ an online questionnaire to collect numerical data and generalize it across general groups (Babbie, 2010). The online questionnaire consists of a set of questions that helps the researcher to collect more numerical data and generalize it to the sample group. The qualitative approach helps the research by studying probability based on statistics, leading to better decision-making. A Descriptive quantitative model is followed in this research as it sheds some light on the relationship between factors and results (Brandimarte,2012).

The qualitative approach employs a one-to-one interview with participants who complete the online survey and agree to participate in the qualitative analysis. The Qualitative research helped in studying the feelings and opinions of employees in global tech companies about the Social Needs: Belonging and how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their decision-making in their employment situation (Collis, J. & Hussey, R., 2014).

During the One-on-One meetings, participants can help discuss questionnaire results and add suggestion solutions into recommendations for global technology companies to retain employees and maintain a sense of belonging within the company.

3.2.4 Data Collection and Design

Data can be collected in many ways. Different types of data are usually contained in research; primary and secondary data. Primary data is typically the data that is collected for the analysis. Its new and fresh data from participants, while secondary data already exists in previous studies in the forms of articles, journals, and research. For this research study, secondary data is being discussed in the literature review chapter, while primary data is collected for this study (Creswell, 2014)

To collect primary data for this study, an online questionnaire and one-on-one interviews were used, as well as quantitative and qualitative methods. A one-on-one interview is a form of data collection for the qualitative side of the research, which aims to explore results and generalize results when analyzed and was used as the second phase of collecting the data for the qualitative side of the research. Secondly, a questionnaire, also known as a survey, is a type of data collection for research that provides a quantitative or numeric description of a population's

trends, attitudes, or opinions by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2014), which will then be analyzed later to form conclusions and results. Different options are available to distribute the online questionnaire, such as Google Forms, Forms from Microsoft, SurveyMonkey, and many other platforms. Google Forms was chosen to collect data for this research study amongst different social media platforms, such as LinkedIn and WhatsApp, to collect data from participants. With the help of participants from the targeted sample who found the research study interesting. The researcher focused on LinkedIn as a platform to distribute the questionnaire as it's the world's largest professional network on the internet (LinkedIn, 2022), and the target audience - explained in a later section - mainly exists on this platform with chances to gather more data.

As this study used mixed-method research, the online questionnaire was the first step for participants to fill in. It included a cover letter that explained to the participants the purpose of the research study and that their data would be collected anonymously unless they chose to participate in the second phase of the analysis, which is qualitative. They will be able to provide their name and email address. The data collected will not be used except for contacting the participants for phase two of the research and will not be shared. The cover letter also confirmed that the data collected is stored on a secure computer that is password protected. The questionnaire collected structured data and will help the researcher form a structure for findings and how diverse groups perceive the topic discussed in this research study.

The one-on-one interviews are held on online platforms such as Zooms, Teams, and qualitative questions that lead participants to answer these questions to understand better their stories and how the factors impact their life circumstances.

3.2.5 Targeted Sample Description

John Creswell and Babbie confirm that one of the most critical areas in conducting research is identifying the population the research is studying. The targeted population is the people with the information that the researcher needs to conduct the investigation, which will help accept or reject the hypothesis that the research is built to study. This research study targets employees in global technology companies; technology companies are companies that use what's available to them from technology to sell products or provide services using this technology. They also specify a budget for research and development on user behavior on a large scale, contribute to

innovative and new scientific-technical solutions to the market/s they operate in, and predict the users' needs through teamwork and a diversified workforce (Zakrzewsk-Bielawska, 2010). Global companies mean that these companies have different business units in other countries, perform business operations in these countries, and follow regulations and laws per country (Kogut, 1999). A combination of these operations within a company makes a company a global technology company. Employees in global technology companies are the targeted population for this research study as they are the ones who have the information that the researcher needs to confirm or deny the factors that influence employees' sense of belonging and attrition and what role the COVID-19 pandemic played in changing or confirming these factors.

3.2.6 Research Study Population

As suggested by researchers gathering the maximum number of participants, number of participants in the online questionnaire: N=153 from employees in global technology companies, age groups 18 - 65, and all gender types, various levels in a global organization (See chapter: analysis and findings for a breakdown). The researcher intentionally used Inclusive language in the questionnaire and one-on-one interviews to allow more flexibility for participants to express themselves in the best way possible. 15 participants were identified to participate in the one-one discussions.

3.2.7 Quantitative Analysis: Online Questionnaire Design

The online questionnaire is designed using a structured tool to gather the data and includes several sections:

A cover letter is an instrument that explains what the questionnaire is all about and what it includes (Creswell, 2014). It also explains to the participant the purpose of this research study, how their data is being used, and where it is stored. It also includes the researcher's contact details in case any participants had questions about the research study.

Biography Data is essential in defining the participants and helps generalize the results to a group of people with the same characteristics. This section in the online questionnaire includes Age, Gender type, Parental status, ethnicity, job level, Job category, and country location.

Working Situation as this research study will study the factors that influence the sense of belonging and attrition for employees in global technology companies and how COVID-19 influenced their decision-making in staying with their employer or considering other options, so this section includes the options that the employees choose to work from, whether it's from home, from the office or following a hybrid model based on what the literature review revealed as well. This section included questions that helped the researcher gather information about choices employees considered that worked for their life circumstances.

The last section, Belonging and employee attrition, includes questions about the factors influencing the feeling of belonging and employee attrition. It had a Likert scale with the variables of the scale where Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA) but also included some open-ended questions to allow participants to elaborate on the answers. With these answers, the questions in the interviews are formed. The responses in these sections will be analyzed using the qualitative analysis method.

3.2.8 Qualitative Analysis: One-on-One Interviews

As identified by Creswell, one-on-one interviews are a way of collecting exploratory data to gather precise data from participants based on their own experiences. The researcher chooses this method to complement the findings from the quantitative research, share more experiences, and thoroughly examine the factors identified from the literature review. Fifteen (15) participants did the one-one interviews. NViVo the descriptive analytical tool, was used to analyze the results from the one-on-one interviews.

3.2.9 Research Challenges

The researcher's main challenge in this study was the lack of literature on this topic. The topic is new, and there is little to no literature available in published books nor published dissertations. The main body of this research study was based on articles and journals written by reliable sources. One of them is Mckinsey, a reputable organization that conducted extensive research into the new challenges the COVID-19 pandemic presented to the world, as well as similar organizations like universities and some other writers.

3.2.10 Ethics and Permissions

For ethical considerations, all ethical guidelines stipulated by the national college of Ireland were respected and strictly followed in this research study. The main concern for this research is confidentiality, but the questionnaire distributed gathers anonymous data. Only participants who participated in the qualitative phase of the analysis were asked in the questionnaire to provide their names and email address and consent for the research lead to contact them to conduct the one-on-one interview. There was no need to distribute the questionnaire in an organization as participation was allowed anonymously from all locations; hence no approvals to conduct the research were needed since there is mention of any company in the research. The researcher confirms the data gathered from participants in the one-on-one interviews will be used in this research anonymously, and no contact details will be shared in the results. Data collection, treatment, and storage have been made known to participants; if they would like to access it later, the researcher can make it available. Before beginning the questionnaire, each participant had the option to decline participation. The cover letter that is included with the questionnaire included all this information. Additionally, participants are permitted to decline to participate in the one-on-one interview.

Chapter Four: Finding and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter present mixed methods data gathered during the research study. First, the findings from the online questionnaire will be outlined and discussed across the main themes. Second, results will be discussed and aligned to the research objectives and answer the research questions. Third, the data gathered from the one-on-one interviews will be shared and reviewed, along with the online questionnaire in an attempt to answer the study question:

1. What factors influence the sense of belonging and employee attrition?
2. What is the impact on the employers as a result?

And the interview questions focused on understanding some of the results collected in the online questionnaire. All results will be integrated, and the implications of the findings will be discussed.

4.2 Online Questionnaire

The online questionnaire was the first step in collecting the data to understand what people feel around a sense of belonging and attrition, as well as what employers can do. To test the hypothesis: Employment working situation options, programs, and benefits available from employers affect employees' sense of belonging feeling and attrition. To apply good research practices, the significance level of $p < 0.05$ was adopted to accept or reject the hypothesis. Therefore, the chi-square test was selected as it can be employed for nominal and ordinal data and thus was used to test for connections between the collected variables and employee belonging and attrition.

One hundred and fifty-three (153) employees from global technology companies participated in the online questionnaire in all three main geographical regions; AMER: America, EMEA: Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and APAC: Asia-Pacific. sections of the online questionnaire are displayed and discussed.

First section: Collecting participant's demographic data: Age, Gender, Parent/Caregiver, Job level, Job type, Ethnicity, and Location.

Second Section: Collecting working situation: Working from Home, from the office, or doing both. Participants are directed to different questions based on their choice of this question.

Third Section: This section dives into a sense of belonging feeling, employee attrition, and happiness, and the factors that impact them.

4.2.1 First Section: Demographic Data

44.4% out of 153 participants were males, 54.2% were females, while two participants were transgender-male and transgender-female, representing 1.4% of the participants. 13.1% of the respondents were from the 20-29 age group, 54.2% were from the 30-39 age group, 28.1% were from the 40-49 age group, and only 4.6% were from the 50-59 age group. Most of them were from the parent\caregiver category with a percentage of 66.7%; only one participant preferred not to share if they were a parent or not. 57.5% of participants were White, 9.2% were of Hispanic, Latin or Spanish origin, 17% were Black or African Americans, 14.4% were Middle Eastern or North African, 0.7% were American Indians or Alaska Native, and 1.3% were from another ethnic category. In terms of Job level, 19% were Individual contributors (No direct reports), 20.3% were Senior - Individual contributors (this includes titles of Senior, Lead, no direct reports), 22.2% were managers (Manager of Individual Contributors), 11.1% were Senior Manager (Manager of Managers), 17% were Director (Manager of Senior Managers), 5.9% were Senior Director (Manager of Directors), 2.6% were Vice President. In comparison, only 2% were Senior Vice President. 66% of participants worked from the office, 17.6% were working from home, while 16.3% were doing both. The table below shows the categories in detail.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Online Questionnaire

Variable		*f*	%
Age Category	20-29	20	13.1%
	30-39	83	54.2%
	40-49	43	28.1%
	50-59	7	4.6%
Gender	Male	68	44.4%
	Female	83	54.2%
	Transgender - Male	1	0.7%
	Transgender -Female	1	0.7%
Parent/Caregiver	Yes	102	66.7%
	No	50	32.7%
	Prefer not to say	1	0.7%
Ethnicity	White	88	57.5%
	Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish origin	14	9.2%
	Black or African Americans	26	17.0%
	American Indians or Alaska Native	1	0.7%
	Middle Eastern or North African	22	14.4%
	Others	2	1.3%
Job Level	Individual Contributor (No direct reports)	29	19.0%
	Senior - Individual Contributor (this includes titles of Senior, Lead, No direct reports)	31	20.3%
	Manager (Manager of Individual Contributors)	34	22.2%
	Senior Manager (Manager of Managers)	17	11.1%
	Director (Manager of Senior Managers)	26	17.0%
	Senior Director (Manager of Directors)	9	5.9%
	VP, Vice President	4	2.6%
	SVP, Senior Vice President	3	2.0%

The online questionnaire was distributed globally; participants from global technology companies were asked to fill out the questionnaire from where they work; the reason for this is that global companies share the same characteristics in their operating locations; they provide the same experience to their employees regardless of the location hence the global participation from any country, 22 courtiers were in the participant's answers, Table 2 shows the distribution of them, the United States led the table with 28.8% followed by Ireland 16.3% and the United Kingdom with 15.7% while Colombia had the lowest participation rate.

Table 2: Participants per Country

		F	%
Country	Australia	1	0.7%
	Colombia	2	1.3%
	Ethiopia	1	0.7%
	France	6	3.9%
	Germany	4	2.6%
	Ireland	25	16.3%
	Italy	1	0.7%
	Jamaica	4	2.6%
	Jordan	8	5.2%
	Mexico	7	4.6%
	Morocco	1	0.7%
	N/A	1	0.7%
	Netherlands	2	1.3%
	Nigeria	11	7.2%
	Norway	1	0.7%
	Portugal	1	0.7%
	Saudi Arabia	1	0.7%
	Somalia	3	2.0%
	Spain	2	1.3%
	United Arab of Emirates	3	2.0%
	United Kingdom	24	15.7%
	United States	44	28.8%

Despite the United States leading the countries list, the EMEA region led the regions chart with a participation rate of 61.44%

To understand the working situation of participants, the second section of the questionnaire explored the working situation of employees in global technology companies in an attempt to understand the factors that play a role in them choosing to work from home or the office or both better. The next section will discuss the results.

4.2.2 Second Section: Working Situation

The second section of the online questionnaire explored the options of the working situation and where employees are working to understand better the factors that play a role in people's choices.

27 participants (17.65%) said they are working from home, 101 (66.01%) said they're working from the office, and 25 (16.34%) said they do both.

82.4% of the male gender are working from the office, while 53% only of the female gender do; the higher rate is within the male gender. The COVID-19 pandemic proved that women request more flexible options due to caring responsibilities, especially those with children; this may harm females' equality and career growth opportunities (The Guardian, 2022) in a world where females and allies are working towards a more equitable workplace. Table 4: shows the breakdown of a working situation based on Gender,. 0.0% of those who identify as males and a parent have chosen to work from home.

Table 3: Working Situation by Gender

			Working Situation			
			Working from home	Work from the office	I do both, some days I work from home and others from the office	Total
What Gender describes you the best?	Male	f	5	56	7	68
		%	7.4%	82.4%	10.3%	100.0%
	Female	f	21	44	18	83
		%	25.3%	53.0%	21.7%	100.0%
	Transgender - Male	f	1	0	0	1
		%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Transgender -Female	f	0	1	0	1
		%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		f	27	101	25	153
		%	17.6%	66.0%	16.3%	100.0%

4.2.2.1 Working from Home

27 participants chose the option "work from home" (17.65%) of the total population, 77.8% are females, 18.5 are males, and 3.7% are Transgender Male. The graph below shows the list of reasons these participants; participants were given the option to choose all that apply, 20 participants said that they don't want to commute, 14 said working from home saves them money, and 11 said they would be more productive and it's better for their mental health.

Graph 1: The factors in choosing to work from home*
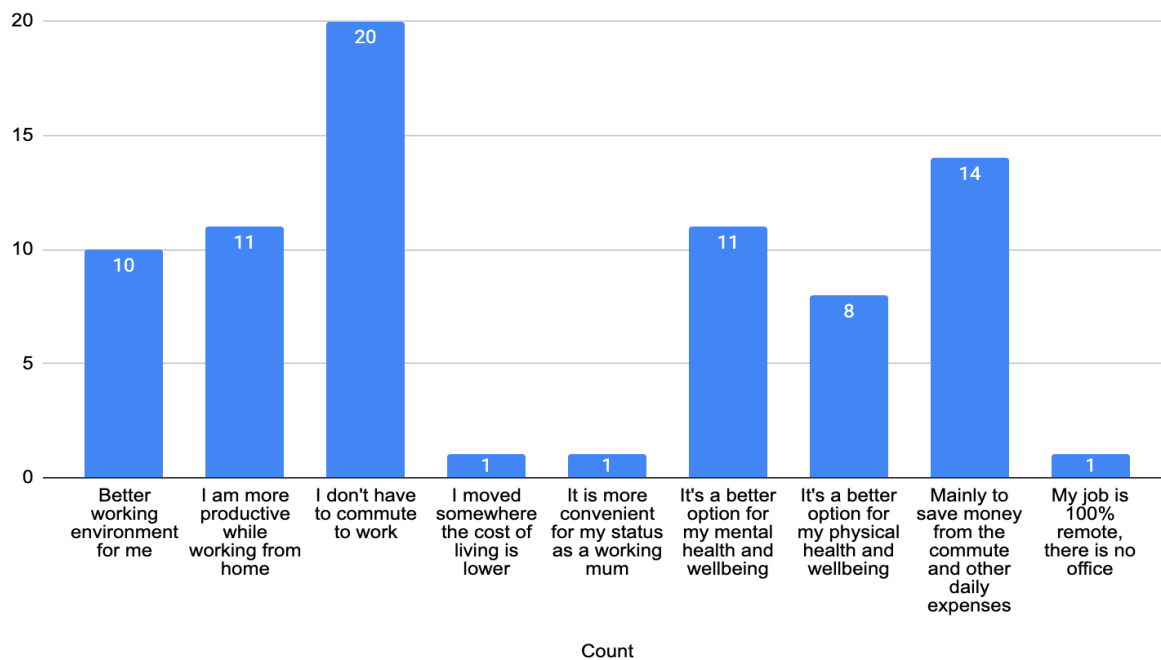
An extension to this was a question to see if people who are working from home would like to go back to the office, out of the 27 participants, 22.2% said they would go back to the office, while 44.4% said. No, they won't, 29.6% said Maybe in the future, and 3.7% said they don't know.

Participants who said they would like to return to the office said they would be back 1-2 days a week (83.3%) and 2-3 days a week (16.7%). This proves that the hybrid working situation presented by the pandemic will be the future of work, which is already being adopted by many companies. Participants then were asked to choose some of the factors that will play a role in getting them to go back to the office; some of the factors were: 11 participants said they're a people person and being in the office will enhance their productivity; 7 participants said employers find ways to help save money for employees by providing meals during the day, followed by considering being in the office to be better for their productivity.

Graph 2: Factors that play a role in getting employees back to the office*

I am a people person and I like being in the office	11
My employer provides meals during the day and this helps me saving money	7
It's better for my productivity as i have to leave my home every day and go to work - having a routine helps me be more productive	6
It's a better option for my physical health and wellbeing	4
It's a better option for my mental health and wellbeing	3
Working from the office help reduce my bills expenses (Electricity, Internet)	3
The necessity of my work function. If my role requires it to most successfully accomplish business objectives	2
I live a long distance from my current office, I likely will not go back more than 1 day per week	1
Networking,Relationship building could potentially influence visibility and henbce career progression options	1
None, i see no benefits to work in an office whatsoever	1

Participants could choose all that apply to their situation.

While 27 employees in global technology companies said they choose to work from home and they will go back to the office only when circumstances benefit their well-being, on the other hand, 126 employees chose to work from the office or do hybrid work, the next section shows findings and analysis.

4.2.2.2 Working from the Office and working from both (Hybrid)

58.7% of participants who said they're currently working from the office confirmed it's a mandatory requirement from their employer to go to the office five days a week, while 24.6% said they prefer to go to the office five days a week and 9.5% said only for some days. Graph 8: shows the distribution of employees who go to the office.

Graph 3: Working from the Office and Hybrid Model

Participants who want to go back to the office by choice and not because it's a mandatory requirement by their employer said they would be back to the office 1-2 days (42.9%) followed by 3-4 days (23.8%) followed by 2-3 days a week (9.5%) other participants said they might go back 1-2 days a month (4.8%). The below graph shows the breakdown of working from the office choice if employees were allowed to choose. This reflects how employees prefer the flexible option to be provided for them by their employer.

Graph 4: Work from office by choice breakdown

How many days on average will you be back in the office?
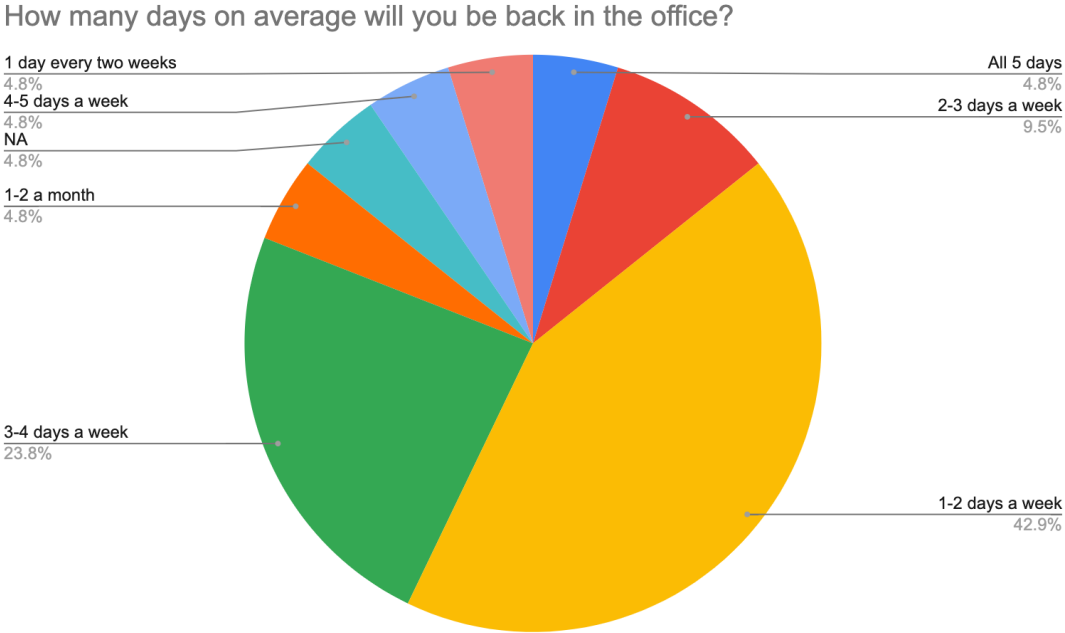
Several employees said that for them to come back to the office is better for their productivity and as they are people persons, and it saves them money, which shows similarity with results in the previous section for the 27 employees who are working from home but if they want to go back to the office their personal needs need to be by their employer.

Graph 5: Factors that impact work from office choice*

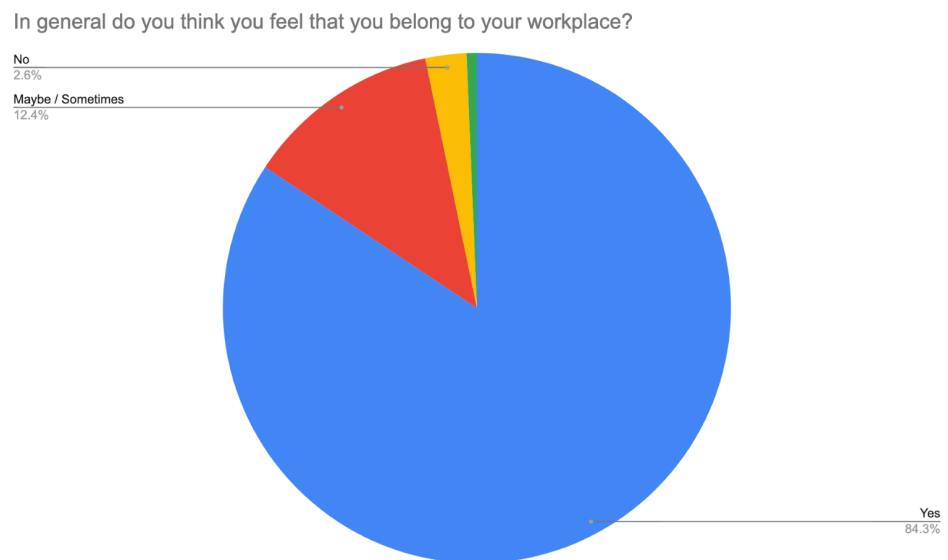|	
It's better for my productivity as i have to leave my home every day and go to work - having a routine helps me be more productive	83
I am a people person and I like being in the office	62
Working from the office help reduce my bills expenses (Electricity, Internet)	27
It's a better option for my mental health and wellbeing	16
It's a better option for my physical health and wellbeing	14
My employer provides meals during the day and this helps me saving money	7
In-person meetings and socialising	4
N/A	1

Participants could choose all that apply to their situation.

This concludes the second section of the online questionnaire, and the data showed that for employees to go back to the office, they need to feel good about their personal needs and circumstances; in the next section, the feeling of belonging and attrition as well as feeling happy with the employer will be discussed and analyzed.

4.2.3 Third Section: Sense of Belonging and Attrition

All 153 employees were asked if they belonged to the workplace where they work, a very basic definition of belonging was provided to participants to help them better understand Belonging:" feeling valued through positive connections with others and able to bring the authentic self to work." 84.3% said they feel they belong where they work, 2.6% said they don't, and 12.4% said maybe/sometimes.

In general do you think you feel that you belong to your workplace?

No
2.6%

Maybe / Sometimes
12.4%

Yes
84.3%

Graph 6: Sense of Belonging

Most participants who said they feel they belong to their employer ranked in the age range 30-39, followed by the age range 40-49, while those who said they don't feel that they belong ranked in the age range of 50-59. The reason this is highlighted is that older generations have been facing ageism in the workplace and discrimination and a lack of hiring opportunities due to their age could also be that the new way of working is different from what the older generations are used to.

Graph 7: Sense of Belonging by Age
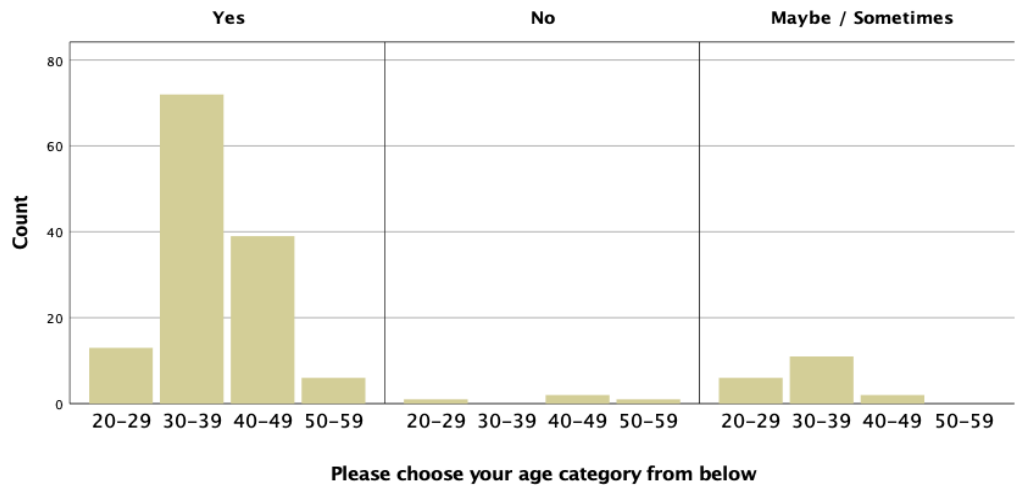
There is no Significant difference between Males and Females in feeling they belong to their employer; only 4 participants said they don't belong to their employers.

Graph 8: Sense of Belonging by Gender
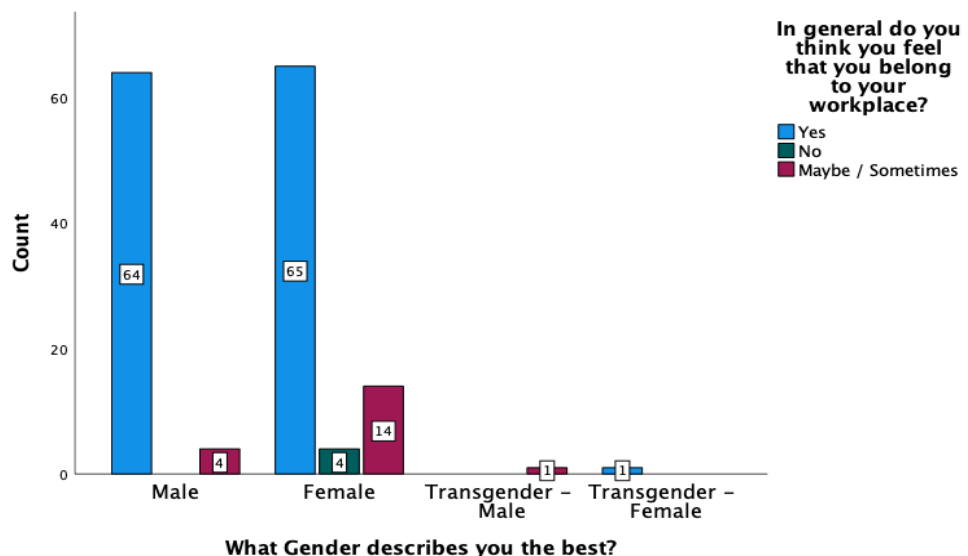
64.05% of parents said they feel they belong to their workplace, while 1.96% said they don't feel they belong.

Graph 9: Sense of Belonging by Parent/Caregiver
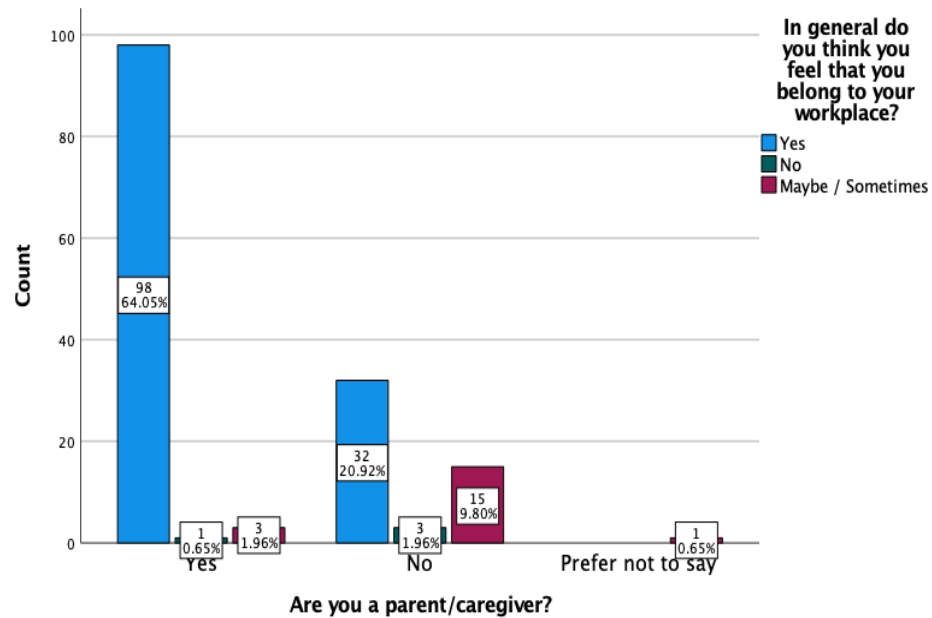
50.98% of the participants who identify as White said they feel that they belong to their workplace, followed by participants who identify as Black or African American (15.03%) and those who identify as Middle Eastern or North African with 9.8%. Those who identify as Minorities: a culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group have a very low percentage of feeling that they belong to the workplace, which means a lot of work in the shoulders of employers to be done still in the Inclusion, Diversity and Belonging Area.

Graph 10: Sense of Belonging by Ethnicity
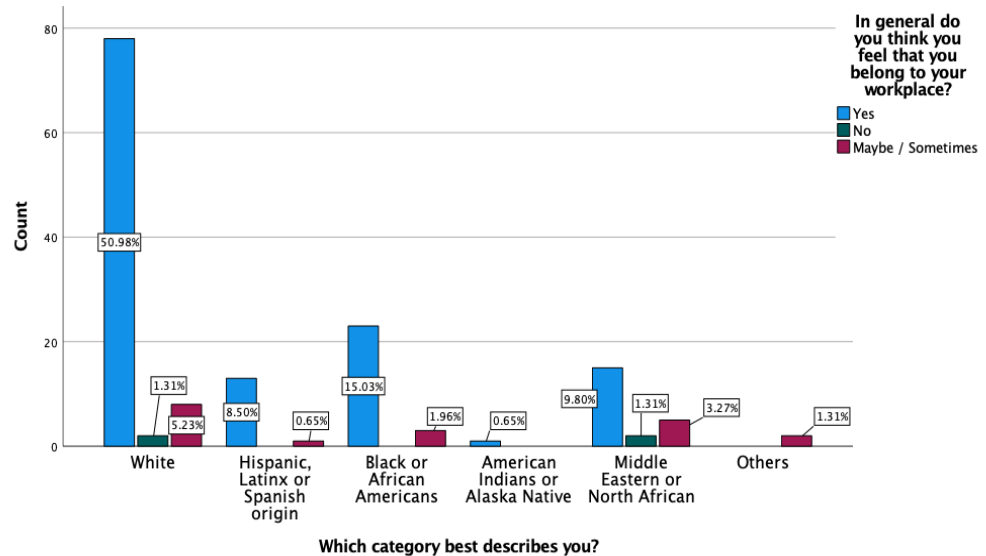
To understand the factors that impact the feeling of belonging and what helps employees to feel that they belong, the Likert scale was used with where: 5= Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly disagree

Regression analysis was performed to accept or reject the hypothesis of the research study, the main Hypothesis of the research:

Employment working situation options, programs, and benefits available from employers do affect employees' sense of belonging, feeling, and attrition

For this section, testing hypothesis H: Employment working situation options, programs, and benefits available from employers affect employees' sense of belonging. Using the regression analysis, some values have been determined.

R = .619. The higher the R-value, the more the model is more predictable for the dependent variable, the Sense of belonging

R Square = .383 for all independent variables, which are the predictors that can explain .383 of the Sense of belonging

Table 4: Model Summary

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.619[a]	.383	.310	.557

a. Predictors: (Constant), I feel my job is secure and I don't worry about losing it, I am passionate about my work, Benefits my employer offers are great, I am paid well, My employer has reduced work schedule for less pay (Less hours for less pay) , I feel heard and seen where I work, My direct leadership is supportive, My employer has great Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging programs, My employer has different working situation options that I can choose what works for me best, My employer offers career development plans and I have an opportunity to grow professionally within the company, Employee Inclusion Resource Groups have great programs at my company, My employer offers training and coaching programs, Transparency and communication are great, My employer has voluntary unpaid leave , My employer is just great and ticks all boxes for me, My work has a purpose and I can feel it

b. Dependent Variable: In general do you think you feel that you belong to your workplace?

The whole model of the predictors is $p < 0.001$ which means its highly significant as $P < 0.05$ we would accept the hypothesis that these factors: job security, being passionate about the work I am

doing, and the benefits that the employer provides amongst other factors impact the Sense of belonging to employees in global technology companies, overall.

Table 5: ANOVA Analysis – Sense of Belonging

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	26.206	16	1.638	5.270	<.001[b]
	Residual	42.265	136	.311		
	Total	68.471	152			

a. Dependent Variable: In general do you think you feel that you belong to your workplace?

b. Predictors: (Constant), I feel my job is secure and I don't worry about losing it, I am passionate about my work, Benefits my employer offers are great, I am paid well, My employer has reduced work schedule for less pay (Less hours for less pay) , I feel heard and seen where I work, My direct leadership is supportive, My employer has great Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging programs, My employer has different working situation options that I can choose what works for me best, My employer offers career development plans and I have an opportunity to grow professionally within the company, Employee Inclusion Resource Groups have great programs at my company, My employer offers training and coaching programs, Transparency and communication are great, My employer has voluntary unpaid leave , My employer is just great and ticks all boxes for me, My work has a purpose and I can feel it

While factors are significant and have an impact on the Sense of belonging in the organization, several factors have a more positive impact while others don't if employers don't pay enough attention to them. Factors that have a more positive impact on the sense of belonging are ordered from the highest positive impact to the lowest:

1. The benefits my employer offers are great
2. My employer has great Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging programs the lack of these programs leads to a negative impact on the sense of belonging feeling.
3. I am paid well
4. My direct leadership is supportive
5. I feel heard and seen where I work
6. My employer has different working situation options so that I can choose what works for me best

Around 9% of participants added more factors they believed are key to the feeling they belong; several themes across these factors were laid out, and the highest percentage was contributed to Social Engagement (4 participants), this includes employers who use their power to make

positive change on the society but also offer employees more volunteer days to participate in this change and give back to the society, this is followed by Diversity or the lack of it, where employees may feel there is no one who looks like them or share an experience they're going through, as well as the team environment where participants (2 participants) pointed out that they may feel that they don't feel they belong if their team does not make them feel they're part of it and part of the team as a whole. Some other factors were being part of the change which contributes to the factor mentioned above (being listened to and heard). The graph below shows the regression standardized model with frequency followed by the Coefficients table to confirm the above information.

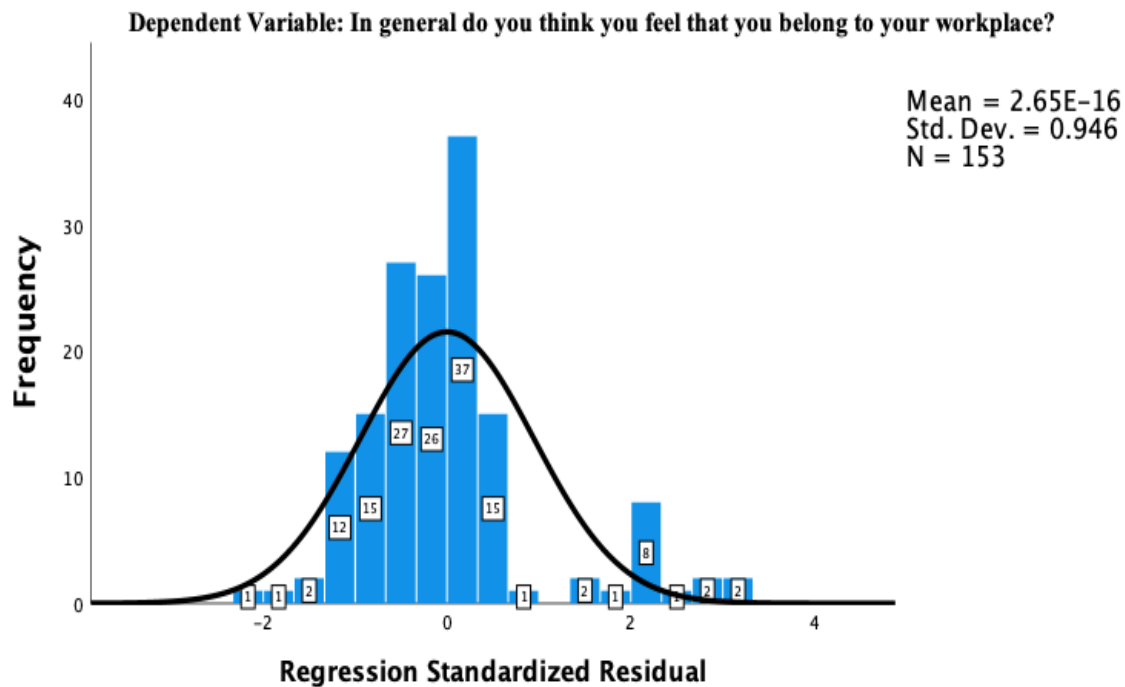Graph 11 How do you feel that you belong to the workplace

Dependent Variable: In general do you think you feel that you belong to your workplace?

Mean = 2.65E−16
Std. Dev. = 0.946
N = 153

Table 6: Coefficients - Factors that impact the Sense of Belonging

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.046	.318		9.577	<.001
	My employer is just great and ticks all boxes for me	-.200	.090	-.255	-2.236	.027
	My employer has different working situation options that I can choose what works for me best	.008	.076	.010	.102	.919
	Benefits my employer offers are great	.170	.076	.230	2.243	.027
	Transparency and communication are great	-.085	.087	-.104	-.970	.334
	I feel heard and seen where I work	.008	.078	.011	.106	.916
	My employer offers training and coaching programs	-.155	.078	-.211	-1.993	.048
	I am paid well	.069	.075	.089	.918	.360
	My employer offers career development plans and I have an opportunity to grow professionally within the company	-.132	.073	-.185	-1.805	.073
	My employer has great Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging programs	.161	.077	.209	2.090	.039
	Employee Inclusion Resource Groups have great programs at my company	-.023	.082	-.031	-.279	.781
	My work has a purpose and I can feel it	-.126	.087	-.182	-1.456	.148
	I am passionate about my work	-.117	.068	-.163	-1.710	.090
	My direct leadership is supportive	.037	.072	.052	.516	.607
	My employer has reduced work schedule for less pay (Less hours for less pay)	-.015	.057	-.027	-.259	.796
	My employer has voluntary unpaid leave	-.009	.068	-.014	-.131	.896
	I feel my job is secure and I don't worry about losing it	-.016	.070	-.024	-.226	.821

a. Dependent Variable: In general do you think you feel that you belong to your workplace?

In addition to the factors above, participants were asked to add any other factors that may have not been mentioned in the table above, the below graph shows what participants added.

Graph 12: More factors play a role in Sense of Belonging.

More factors play a Role in Sense of Belonging
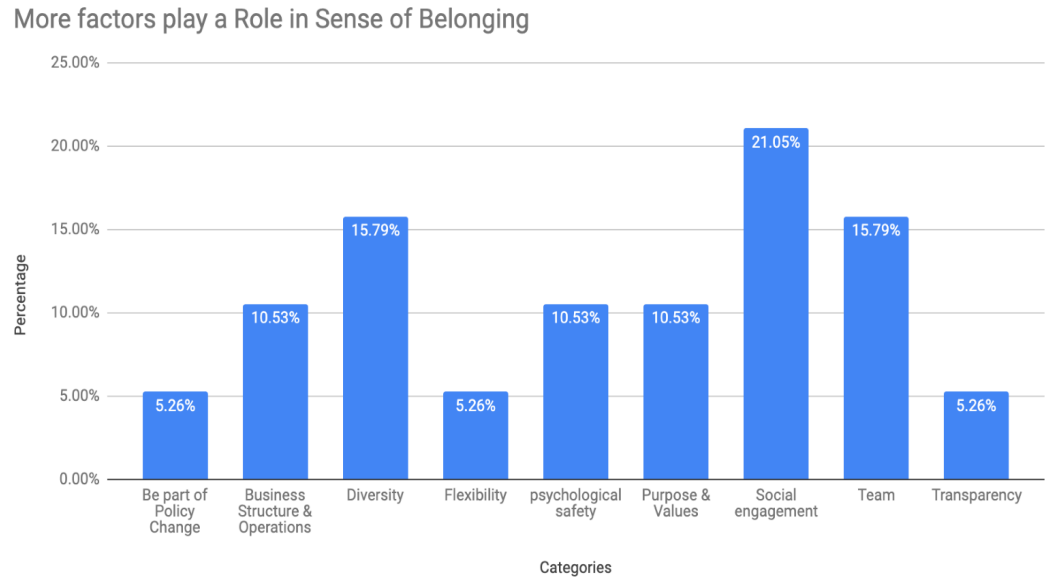
More participants related their values and purpose to how their work contributes to the company's mission and how they feel it daily. This is explored more in the qualitative analysis.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, more than half of the test population appreciated the flexible option. To measure the impact of having this flexibility, the question of having flexibility in choosing where to work from was asked. 60.13% said Yes, it increases Sense of belonging, while 28.76% said they feel the same level of belonging, followed by 4.58% who said they never thought of it like this; it shows the work the companies have to do around this topic. The below graph shows the breakdown of the participants' answers.

Graph 13: Feeling of belonging/flexibility in working situation
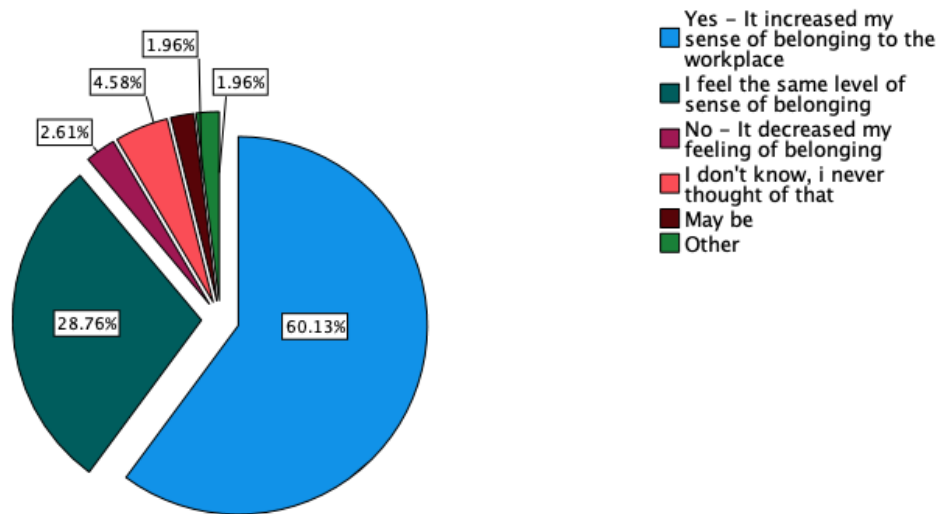
To better understand the factors that play a role in this feeling of belonging, regression analysis has been performed on the factors to better understand if these have significance in increasing the feeling of belonging in the workplace

R = .465

R Square = .216

Table 7: Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.465[a]	.216	.155	1.002

a. Predictors: (Constant), Introduces new career development programs, More transparent communications, Built new physical health programs, Increased Paid time Off period, Enhanced employee engagement by having better Technology (like Zoom or any other platforms, Increased pay for everyone in the company, Enhanced inclusive language all over the company , Introduced more interactive tools to enhance employees engagement, More voluntary working programs, Started to listen more to employees requests, Built new mental health programs

ANOVA tests shows that the model is significant, having different options to work from the office, or from home or do both impacts the feeling of belonging significantly and the hypothesis will be accepted.

Table 8: ANOVA Analysis - Working situation and its impact on Sense of Belonging

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	39.081	11	3.553	3.539	<.001[b]
	Residual	141.560	141	1.004		
	Total	180.641	152			

a. Dependent Variable: With different work situation options: Working from home, In the office, Hybrid (from home and office), or Remote, your employer has during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic, did this impact your feeling of belonging?

b. Predictors: (Constant), Introduces new career development programs, More transparent communications, Built new physical health programs, Increased Paid time Off period, Enhanced employee engagement by having better Technology (like Zoom or any other platforms, Increased pay for everyone in the company, Enhanced inclusive language all over the company , Introduced more interactive tools to enhance employees engagement, More voluntary working programs, Started to listen more to employees requests, Built new mental health programs

The highest factors that have a positive impact on the sense of belonging along with the flexibility in choosing the working situation:

1. Enhanced employee engagement by having better Technology (like Zoom or any other platforms.
2. Built new mental health programs
3. Built new physical health programs
4. Introduced more interactive tools to enhance employee engagement
5. Enhanced inclusive language all over the company

Are there any factors that influence your feeling of belonging during or after the COVID-19 pandemic that was not mentioned above? please list them below

8% of participants added more factors that may play a role in the sense of belonging feeling during/after the COVID-19 pandemic, having flexible schedules, transparent communications, and safe/brave spaces, especially during the pandemic and the social injustice incidents that happened during this time, a lot of minority groups faced racism and discrimination. This psychological support that employers provided is an important factor that plays a role in

increasing the sense of belonging to the company. Handling Change positively or negatively was also a factor that played a role in sense of belonging during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 9: Coefficients - Factors impact Sense of Belonging based on the working situation

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.675	.453		8.112	<.001
	More transparent communications	-.425	.140	-.370	-3.038	.003
	More voluntary working programs	-.083	.159	-.067	-.525	.600
	Built new mental health programs	.082	.152	.076	.537	.592
	Built new physical health programs	.031	.133	.029	.231	.818
	Enhanced inclusive language all over the company	.009	.133	.008	.072	.943
	Increased Paid time Off period	-.032	.116	-.032	-.273	.785
	Started to listen more to employees requests	-.227	.127	-.224	-1.782	.077
	Increased pay for everyone in the company	-.006	.103	-.007	-.060	.952
	Enhanced employee engagement by having better Technology (like Zoom or any other platforms	.228	.136	.198	1.671	.097
	Introduced more interactive tools to enhance employees engagement	.021	.134	.020	.161	.872
	Introduces new career development programs	-.060	.119	-.058	-.504	.615

a. Dependent Variable: With different work situation options: Working from home, In the office, Hybrid (from home and office), or Remote, your employer has during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic, did this impact your feeling of belonging?

The graph below shows more factors participants added to show what else may impact their Sense of belonging to their employer; flexibility, Transparency, managing Change and Team building activities are on the top of the list.

Graph 14: More factors to Sense of Belonging during and after Covid 19
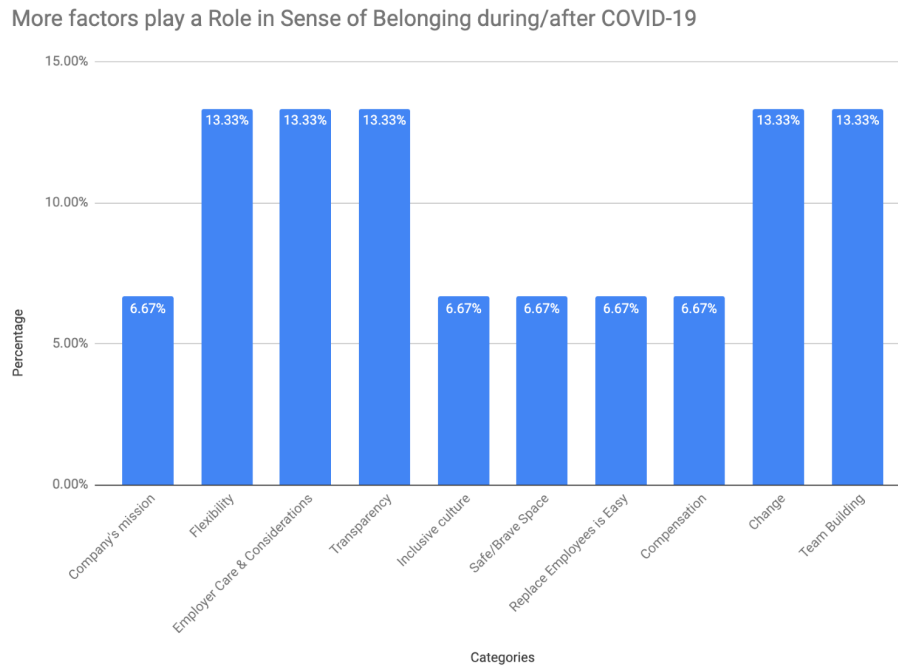
To complement the Sense of belonging and to test the hypothesis Employment working situation options, programs, and benefits available from employers do affect employees' attrition, the question of: Are you staying with your employer for the next five years was asked to the participants and 59.48% said Yes, they would stay with the same employer, while 19.61% said Maybe and 13.73% said no.
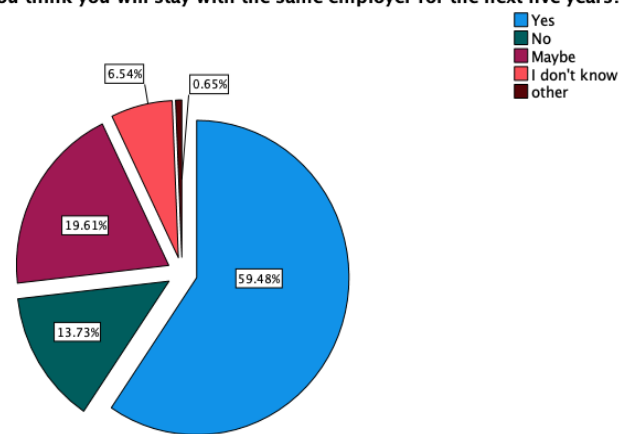
Graph 15: Staying with an employer in the next five years?

To better understand why employees feel this way and what factors play a role in an employee staying with a company or leaving, the following factors played a role in this.

Table 10: More factors - Employee Attrition*

Reason	COUNTA of Reason
Pay/Salary	117
Career Development / Growth opportunities	77
Company Financial Performance	66
Job Security	63
The passion I have for the work I do	63
Paid Leave period	51
The offered work situation options (Working from home, In the office, Hybrid (from home and office), or Remote)	48
My family circumstances/situation	45
The mission of the company I work for	40
The available options to take care of my mental health	31
The available options to take care of my physical health	31
Diversity, Inclusion and belonging programs the company has	30
I want to work for a far smaller company. I'm sick of all the corporate nonsense. Small companies are more focused on work and there is less focus on non-productive "anti-work."	1
My direct manager	1

Participants could choose all that apply to their situation.

Pay/Salary, Career Development /Growth opportunities, Company Financial Performance, and Job Security are top factors that keep an employee within the company for the longer term.

Other factors that appeared in the analysis are direct managers/ Leadership and how these play a role in the decision to stay with the employer or leave. Negative experiences lead employees to leave the company. This is along with poor benefits for parents as well.

There is a statistically significant association between a sense of belongingness and happiness in working with the current employer; X2=111.24, P<.001. 130\153 who have a sense of belonging, 121(93.1%) of them prefer that they are happy working with their current employer. While neither of them preferred that they were not happy and stayed with the same employer. The below table shows the breakdown of this relationship.

Table 11:Sense of belonging and Happiness at work

Sense of Belonging / Happy at Work

			Overall, would you say you are happy to work for your current employer?				
			Yes	No	Maybe/somet imes/I'm not sure	I prefer not to answer	Total
In general do you think you feel that you belong to your workplace?	Yes	Count	121	0	9	0	130
		% within Overall, would you say you are happy to work for your current employer?	93.1%	0.0%	42.9%	0.0%	85.0%
	No	Count	0	1	2	1	4
		% within Overall, would you say you are happy to work for your current employer?	0.0%	100.0%	9.5%	100.0%	2.6%
	Maybe / Sometimes	Count	9	0	10	0	19
		% within Overall, would you say you are happy to work for your current employer?	6.9%	0.0%	47.6%	0.0%	12.4%
Total		Count	130	1	21	1	153
		% within Overall, would you say you are happy to work for your current employer?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

From the online questionnaire, several important clarification questions were needed to be performed to better understand employees' stories; the next section will show the finding from the on-one interviews.

4.3 One-on-One Interviews

4.3.1 Introduction

The findings of the one-on-one interviews will be presented, analyzed, and discussed across the themes that emerged, and aligned to the research objectives; NVivo Software was used for this purpose. The identified themes include narratives around the Sense of belonging and employees' level of happiness, how the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted productivity, and how the future of work will look from the participant's point of view. Fifteen (15) employees were interviewed in a one-on-one session to answer several questions about the Sense of Belonging, its difference from Inclusion, and its attributes to happiness at work. 73% were female, and 27% were male. 53% of participants were between the age of 30-39, 20%: were 21-29, 13%: were 40-49, and 13% were 50 or more.

Participants are from all three main regions: AMER, EMEA, and APAC. They also are from all job levels. Participants come from different backgrounds, educational, professional, religious, or years of experience, but they all are employees in global technology companies.

4.3.2 Narratives around Sense of Belonging and Inclusion

One of the main objectives of this research study is to identify the sense of belonging to better understand how it contributes to future life decisions, mainly staying with the company or leaving; 100% of participants defined belonging; most participants said it's different from Inclusion and that both need different focus from the company's leadership to be successful.

A collective agreement that is belonging is feeling comfortable and excited to go to work and be part of a great, supportive, caring, and respectful community, where you can take a space that is not given or granted but rather being your authentic self, it where you can feel comfortable contributing to the community (Internally or externally) and know that your contribution is valued and impactful, its where your values align with your employers' values, and you know you operate in a safe physical and emotional space.

14/15 participants agreed that Inclusion is different from a Sense of belonging, although they go hand in hand; "Belonging is inclusive of inclusion," one participant said. It's a result of the Diversity and Inclusion efforts companies perform to create a sense of belonging, although it's harder to measure. Inclusion is having equal rights, and knowing that cultures and individual differences are all considered when planning for the company's future. Having a respectful relationship with co-workers and the company that's built on respect rather than differences.

With these results, companies need to work more closely with employees who identify as part of any of the minority groups so efforts can be directed and intentional to improve the level of the Sense of Belonging.

4.3.3 Narratives around Productivity During/After the COVID-19 Pandemic

Productivity in global technology companies was one of the main concerns for employers when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, c-suit executive's report shows that an increase in individual productivity was apparent and accompanied by an increase in productivity (Alexander, A. et al. 2022), though not all organizations have seen the same results in productivity. To better

understand employees' experiences, a question was asked to the 15 participants to elaborate on their experience; 4/15 said their productivity increased due to the nature of their job and demand, 6/15 changed employers, and with that, their productivity was in between due to the change to their employment status but also due to other circumstances of managing this change, some others also were in between due to personal circumstances; home setup, having kids, health issues in the family which impacted their level of productivity, 1/15 said their productivity was impacted due to exploring the pandemic where it affected their mental health. It was challenging to navigate the pandemic while working from home and not the office. 2/15 said it did not impact their productivity, and it stayed the same.

A correlation is found between personal circumstances and productivity.

4.3.4 Narratives around ERGs (Employee Resource Groups) and Company's Culture

Organizational culture identified earlier includes the organization's values, sociology, psychology, philosophy, beliefs, expectations, and experiences as examples of organizational culture (Eisenberg, et al. 2001). Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are "*within-organization groups, staffed by employee volunteers, which have evolved since their inception in the 1960s. Originally called affinity groups, they began when racial tensions escalated in the United States and businesses utilized them to help achieve diversity and inclusion goals. Recently, their purpose has transformed to include organizational challenges such as leadership development, innovation, and change management, which should translate to significant research from the academic community.*"(Welbourne et al. 2015). ERGs are extension work to the Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging efforts companies put in place. In asking about ERGs definition in this research study, 6/15 participants said they were unfamiliar with ERGs, and the researcher explained their definition to them; the rest were familiar with them but didn't participate as much. To understand the ERGs' impact on a company's culture, a question was asked around this, and 15/15 participants said ERGs work to impact the culture positively; where companies can incorporate inclusion in business strategies that help promote diversity in business practices and drives profit from more inclusive decision-making that could have been overlooked, ERGs also may be one of the most important tools to put company's values into actions and for people to feel it. One participant highlighted that ERGs might negatively impact the company's culture

as some people may feel they are not connected to this culture because it is too woken or politically correct, and that's why we may see people who are aware of the EGRs' work, but they don't actively participate as it may feel exclusionary to them.

4.3.5 Narratives around the Future of Work and Challenges

14/15 participants said the future of work is flexibility where employees can work from wherever they want and with what works best for them with the option to go to the office whenever they feel like it, which means the hybrid working model is what participants in this analysis agreed will happen; also employees to be given the trust that they're responsible for their productivity, with this comes a need for putting a structure into how flexibility provided by the company works to maintain accountability, productivity, and the company's culture. Some challenges to implementing this type of flexibility are that it will come with its issues, as in, are career development chances going to be equal for employees working remotely versus employees who choose to go to the office?

4.3.6 Narratives around Happiness at Work and Sense of Belonging

14/15 defined happiness at work as working in a workplace where someone's ethical values match their employers, knowing that what they do makes a positive impact, whether on society or the environment or and knowing that their work has a long-lasting impact, yet it's challenging and bringing the best out of them.

A correlation was found between being happy at work and feeling belonging to the workplace 15/15 participants said they would feel they belong to their workplace if they felt happy about their work circumstances.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

The demographic results presented in table 4.1 shows that the age range of 30-39 years represented the largest labor force in the USA, while 40-49 years represented the second largest population of the labor force in the USA, which negates the survey of (OECD 2022) where the age range of the highest labor force in the USA IS 15-54. Females also constituted the highest population of the labor force in the USA, particularly in the global technology companies, as opposed to the research (Key Women in tech statistics 2022) stating women fill only 24% of all company roles.

The demographic results state that 66.7% of the labor force were working parent/caregiver; this also matches the research of OECD 2019, which presented that 59.8% of the labor force in the USA are parent/caregiver.

5.1.1 Working Situation and Future of Work

This section provides insight into the COVID-19 pandemic on the working situation of the employee in global technology companies. Insight drawn from the submission made by about 66% of the participant in the survey indicates that the lockdown measure imposed by the government led to the unavailability of people at work as only 66% of the participant worked in the office while 17.6% were working from home, while 16.3% were doing both, which negate the findings of suggesting that in May 2020, approximately half of the workforce in the US were working from home. On the other hand, it shows that in July 2022, nearly half of all employees in the EU countries worked from home.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a severe disruptor, forcing governments into mandating curfews and lockdowns. While essential services were exempted from the lockdowns, businesses suffered as economic activities reached an abrupt stand-still. In light of this survey, only 66% of the participant worked in the office while 17.6% were working from home, while 16.3% were doing both, 82.4% of the male gender were working from the office, while 53% only of the female gender do, the higher rate is within the male gender, the COVID-19 pandemic proved that Females request more flexible options due to the caring responsibilities especially those with

children which may harm equality and career growth opportunities for females which corroborate with the findings of (The Guardian, 2022). Several factors played a role in this choice for the 27 participants working from home. The high impact factor is that participants save money from daily expenses and are more productive while working from home. From the qualitative responses, this increase in productivity appears to be because of increased work hours, with respondents re-utilizing the time saved from commuting. In addition, several reported a better working environment due to lesser meetings, more flexible working hours, and a better work-life balance as reasons for their improved performance. This corresponds with a UK study (Bailyn, L., 1988) of IT and non-IT employees indicating that working from home made employees independent and increased their motivation. However, this has been criticized later by different studies where they found that while remote workers showed a reduction in productivity, their peers who worked in the offices showed an increase in productivity.

To confirm the impact of remote working during the pandemic, out of the 27 participants, who participated in the online questionnaire, 22.2% said they would go back to the office, while 44.4% said No they won't, and 29.6% said Maybe in the future, and 3.7% said they don't know. Those who said Yes, they would like to go back to the office said they would be back 1-2 days a week (83.3%) and 2-3 days a week (16.7%); this proves that the hybrid working situation presented by the pandemic is going to be the future of work. Some of the factors that may play a role in getting employees to go back to work from the offices are them being a people person and being in the office will enhance their productivity; employers find a way to help save money for employees by providing meals during the day, followed by considering being in the office to be better for their productivity.

While 27 employees in global technology companies said they choose to work from home and go back to the office only when circumstances benefit their well-being, on the other hand, 126 employees chose to work from the office or do hybrid work. While 27 employees chose to work from a home model, 126 participants said they are working from the office or do both options, 58.7% said it's mandatory for their employer to go to the office five days a week, while 24.6% said they prefer to go to the office five days a week and 9.5% said only for some days.

Several employees said that for them to return to the office is better for their productivity and as they are people persons. and it saves them money. Scholars have also reported numerous

potential disadvantages associated with working from home.   This concludes the second section of the online questionnaire, and the data showed that employees need to feel good about their personal needs and circumstances for employees to return to the office.

5.1.2 Factors influencing Sense of belonging and Attrition

The result of the analysis survey question on the factors influencing the employee sense of belonging and attrition in the USA shows that most participants who said they feel they belong to their employer ranked in the age range 30-39, followed by the age range 40-49 while those who said they don't feel that they belong ranked in the age range of 50-59. Older generations have faced ageism in the workplace, discrimination, and a lack of hiring opportunities due to their age. (David Neumark 2019) There is no Significant difference between Males and Females in feeling they belong to their employer. 64.05% of parents said they feel they belong to their workplace, while 1.96% of parents said they don't feel they belong.

50.98% of the participants who identify as White said they feel that they belong to their workplace, followed by participants who identify as Black or African American (15.03%) and those who identify as Middle Eastern or North African with 9.8%.

While factors are significant and impact the Sense of belonging in the organization, several factors positively impact the Sense of belonging. Factors that positively impact the sense of belonging from the highest to the list in respect to the survey of this work include

1. Employer benefits.
2. Diversity, inclusion, and belonging program are great, and the lack of these programs negatively impacts the sense of belonging.
3. Adequate remuneration
4. Supportive leadership
5. The feelings of being head and seen at the workplace.
6. Conducive working situation option where employers can choose what works for them best.

Participants added that social engagement also contributes majorly to the sense of feeling belonging, that is, employers who use their power to make positive change in society but also

offer employees more volunteer days to participate in this change and give back to society, this is followed by Diversity or the lack of it, where employees may feel no one looks like them or share an experience they're going through, as well as the team environment where participants pointed out that they may feel that they don't feel they belong if their team does not make them feel they're part of it and part of the team as a whole. Some other factors were being part of the change which contributes to the factor mentioned above (being listened to and heard), more participants contributing to the company's values and purpose and how their work contributes to the company's mission, and how they feel it in their day to day, this provides them with an accurate sense of belonging.

The highest factors that positively impact the sense of belonging and the flexibility in choosing the working situation: 1. Enhanced employee engagement by having better Technology (like Zoom or other platforms).

1. Built new mental health programs
2. Built new physical health programs
3. Introduced more interactive tools to enhance employee engagement
4. Enhanced inclusive language all over the company

8% of participants added more factors that may play a role in the sense of belonging feeling during/after the COVID-19 pandemic, having flexible schedules, transparent communications, and safe/brave spaces, especially during the pandemic and the social injustice incidents that happened during this time, a lot of minority groups faced racism and discrimination. This psychological support that employers provide is an important factor that plays a role in increasing the sense of belonging to the company. Handling Change positively or negatively was also a factor that played a role in the sense of belonging during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

To complement the Sense of belonging and to test the hypothesis Employment working situation options, programs, and benefits available from employers do affect employees' attrition, the question: Are you staying with your employer for the next five years was asked to the participants and 59.48% said Yes, they would stay with the same employer, while 19.61% said Maybe and 13.73% said no.

To better understand why employees feel this way and what are the factors that play a role for an employee to stay with a company or leave, the following factors played a role in this:

Pay/Salary, Career Development /Growth opportunities, Company Financial Performance and Job Security are top factors that keep an employee within the company for the longer term.

Other factors that appeared in the analysis are direct managers/ Leadership and how these play a role in the decision to stay with the employer or leave. Negative experiences lead employees to leave the company. This is along with poor benefits for parents as well.

5.1.3 Results in the Qualitative Analysis

For employers to retain employees, employers need to pay attention and invest more in what keeps employees happy but also feel that they belong; from the one-one-interviews findings, people will feel they belong when they feel they're included but also are heard and listen to when they feel that their employer's values match their values and what they work on and products and services they produce do serve societies and communities. Employees want flexibility in having the freedom to choose the working situation that works best for them, whether it's by working from home, doing a hybrid model, or going t the office. ERGs are also very important to enhance teh companies culture although not everyone knows what they are and how they work, all participants agreed that they're very impactful on the company's culture positively; some participants pointed out that inclusion workers may feel excluding to some people especially if the work that ERGs or inclusion teams are doing doesn't impact these employees directly. A general understanding is that feeling happy at work correlates to belonging at work.

5.2 Conclusion

In the previous chapters, this study considered the employee in global technology companies during the covid-19 pandemic: Factors that influenced their sense of belonging and attrition sets to investigate what specific challenges employees of global technology companies faced and how they responded to the challenges. Research findings were analyzed with previous literature, objectives, and questions. A summary of the results, limitations, and recommendations are provided below. The Analysis of this research accepts the hypothesis that Employment working

situation options, programs, and benefits available from employers do Impact employees' sense of belonging feeling and attrition.And adding to this their level of happiness.

5.2.1 Summary of Findings

The research mainly has two research questions:

- What factors influenced their sense of belonging and attrition?
- What is the impact on the employers as a result?

What are the factors that influenced their sense of belonging and attrition?
The findings of the research showed that the COVID -19 pandemic had both positive and negative impacts on the employee's sense of belonging, particularly older generations who have been facing ageism in the workplace as well as discrimination and lack of hiring opportunities due to their age, and a little percentage of parents who are part of the workforce do not feel a sense of belonging in their place of work.

In the same vein, the study found that most participants feel a sense of belonging to their company, and the factors that influence this are: the benefit the employer offers are great, the employer's diversity, inclusion, and belonging program are great, and the lack of this program leads to the negative impact on the sense of belongings feelings, adequate remuneration, supportive leadership, the feelings of being head and seen at the workplace, conducive working situation option where employers can choose what works for them best. Their ability to be heard and seen at their place of work, proper recognition, and appreciation of their ideas and contributions.

In the same vein, the working condition of the employee was also considered as many choose to work from home, which enhances their productivity, while a more significant percentage decided to work from the office since they are more effective and productive when they are around people, while some consider the two as a better option for them. The highest factors that have a positive impact on the sense of belonging along with the flexibility in choosing the working situation are: Enhanced employee engagement by having better Technology (like Zoom or any other platforms, building new mental health programs, building new physical health programs,

introduced more interactive tools to enhance employee engagement, and enhanced inclusive language all over the company

What is the impact on the employers as a result?

Most organizations actively strive for diverse representation in their workplace, but many also try to ensure that all employees feel included. Belonging is a crucial component of inclusion when employees are truly welcomed and perceive that the organization cares for them as individuals because all workers want to feel a sense of belonging to their workplace.

Participants' responses indicate that fostering a feeling of community at work leads to higher levels of employee performance and productivity and more on-the-job effort. Building a sense of belonging eliminates outsiderness, brings everyone on board, and demonstrates care through benefits and initiatives.

Nevertheless, this study finds some of the best practices that may be adopted to increase the employee's sense of belonging and attrition. These include the following:

1. Social Engagement
2. Introduces new career development programs.
3. More transparent communications.
4. Built new physical health programs.
5. Increased Paid time Off period.
6. Enhanced employee engagement by having better Technology (like Zoom or any other platforms.
7. Increased pay for everyone in the company.
8. Enhanced inclusive language all over the company.
9. Introduced more interactive tools to improve employee engagement.
10. More voluntary working programs.
11. Start to listen more to employees' requests.
12. Built new mental health programs.

5.2.2 Limitations of Research Findings ad Future Research

The researcher acknowledges that the research findings from the one hundred and fifty-three (153) employees from global technology companies who participated in the online questionnaire in all central three geographical regions; AMER: Americas, EMEA: Europe, Middle East, Africa, and APAC: Asia-Pacific. are not fully representative of the reality for global technology companies. Furthermore, as this research was conducted in a few months, and during the COVID-19 pandemic and a little after it when life started to get back together again, future research after the world fully recovers from it can be done around what after belonging? Equity in the workplace as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, also understanding the new life norms and working situations and how they impact employees' life decisions and productivity after living the new norms for a while.

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Chapter Seven: List of Appendices

1. Online Questionnaire

1.1 Cover Letter

Dear Participant

I am inviting you to take part in this research thats investigating the factors that influence employees who work in global technology companies's sense of belonging and attrition. The research will explore what are these factors and how they influence your life decision by choosing to work from home, or from the office or both, or even decide to to work for another employer because of choices available to you. This questionnaire is part of the requirement for the completion of my Master of Science in International Business at the National College of Ireland.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are an employee in a global technology company, a global technology company is a company that operates and has offices in different locations whether in the Americas, EMEA or APAC regions and uses technology to offer products and services using the technology they develop and use.

The information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. The questionnaire is the first phase of the analysis for this research, a second part will be a 1:1 meeting or a focus group if you consent to participate in phase two. Therefore the questionnaire does NOT require any personal, identifiable information (i.e., your name) nor your email address unless you decide to participate in the second phase of the analysis. If you do there will be a couple of fields that will ask you to provide your names personal email address at the end of the questionnaire.

The data gathered for this research will be held on a password-protected computer, to which only the lead researcher will have access. A report of the research study will be produced to meet course requirements and may be submitted for publication, but the data will be analyzed on an aggregate level, and no individual participants will be identifiable. Your data may be shared with other researchers if requested after publication. However, there is no identifying information in the data and your responses will be completely anonymous.

Participation in this research is voluntary, you can discontinue the study simply by closing your internet browser window. However, you will be unable to withdraw after completing the study, as the data analysis process may have begun and as all responses are anonymous, we will not be able to identify your data.

The survey will take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. At the conclusion of this study, you will receive further information to inform you about the nature of this research if you wish to. Should you have any concerns or need clarification at any point, you may reach out to the lead researcher through the following email: x20101066@student.ncirl.ie

By completing this survey, you are consenting to participate in this study. If you do not wish to participate you can close this internet browser window.

Thank you.
Lead Researcher
Suzan

1.2 Biography Data

Please choose your age category from below

Choose

20 or younger

21-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60 or older

...u the best? *

What Gender describes you the best? *

○ Female

○ Male

○ Non-Binary

○ Transgender - Male

○ Transgender - Female

○ Prefer not to say

○ Other:

Are you a parent/caregiver? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Prefer not to say

Which category best describes you? *

The categories listed below are meant to be as inclusive as possible, the researcher means no harm in not listing a category you belong to if you belong to a category that is not listed below please add it to the other field.

- ◯ White (Eg: German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, French, etc)

- ◯ Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish origin (Eg: Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, etc)

- ◯ Black or African American (Eg: African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc)

- ◯ Asian (Eg: Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, etc)

- ◯ American Indian or Alaska Native(Eg: Navajo nation, Blackfeet tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village or Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc)

- ◯ Middle Eastern or North African (Eg: Lebanese, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan, Algerian, etc)

- ◯ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Eg: Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, Fijian, etc)

- ◯ Other: _____

Which job category best describe your job? *

- ◯ Accountancy
- ◯ Advertising
- ◯ Customer Care/Services
- ◯ ESG: Environmental, Social and Governance
- ◯ General Management
- ◯ Human Resources
- ◯ Investment and Financial Services
- ◯ Legal
- ◯ Project/Program management
- ◯ Public Relationships
- ◯ Recruitment
- ◯ Training and Development
- ◯ Sales
- ◯ Other: _____

What is your job level? *

Choose
Individual Contributor (No direct reports)
Senior - Individual Contributor (this includes titles of Senior, Lead, No direct reports)
Manager (Manager of Individual Contributors)
Senior Manager (Manager of Managers)
Director (Manager of Senior Managers)
Senior Director (Manager of Directors)
VP, Vice President
SVP, Senior Vice President
CEO, Chief Executive Officer

Where are you working from? Please add your country name *

Example: Ireland

Your answer

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1.3 Working Situation

Work Situation Choice

In this section, the researcher asks you what your choice is for your work situation, depending on your answer you'll be directed to the relevant questions.

Are you currently working from home or went back to working from office? *

- ○ Working from home
- ○ Work from the office
- ○ I do both, some days I work from home and others from the office

1.3.1 Working from Home Options

How long have you been working from home? *

- ○ 1-2 months
- ○ 3-5 Months
- ○ 6-11 months
- ○ 1 year or more
- ○ Other: _____

With soft opening for offices, what are the factors that influenced your decision to *
choose to stay working from home?

- ☐ Better working environment for me
- ☐ I am more productive while working from home
- ☐ I don't have to commute to work
- ☐ Mainly to save money from the commute and other daily expenses

Do you think you will go back to working from the office? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Maybe in the future

◯ I don't know

If you said "Yes" to the previous question, will you go back to the office 5 days a week or only some days?

◯ 1-2 days a week

◯ 2-3 days a week

◯ 3-4 days a week

◯ 4-5 days a week

◯ N/A

What are the factors that will help you decide to go back to working from the Office? *

☐ I am a people person and I like being in the office

☐ It's better for my productivity as i have to leave my home every day and go to work - having a routine helps me be more productive

☐ It's a better option for my physical health and wellbeing

☐ It's a better option for my mental health and wellbeing

☐ My employer provides meals during the day and this helps me saving money

☐ Working from the office help reduce my bills expenses (Electricity, Internet)

☐ Other:

Will you work from the office 5 days a week? *

○ Yes - i personally prefer to

○ Yes - its a mandatory requirement for my job, from my employer to work from the office

○ No

○ Maybe

○ Only some days

If you chose "Only some days" in the previous question, how many days on average you're back in the office?

○ 1-2 days a week

○ 2-3 days a week

○ 3-4 days a week

○ 4-5 days a week

○ All 5 days

○ Other:

What are the factors that influenced your decision to work from the Office/ for some days or a full week? *

☐ I am a people person and I like being in the office

☐ It's better for my productivity as i have to leave my home every day and go to work - having a routine helps me be more productive

☐ It's a better option for my physical health and wellbeing

☐ It's a better option for my mental health and wellbeing

☐ My employer provides meals during the day and this helps me saving money

☐ Working from the office help reduce my bills expenses (Electricity, Internet)

☐ Other:

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1.4 Sense of Belonging and Attrition

"Sense of Belonging" is defined as: "feeling valued through positive connections with others and able to bring the authentic self to work." In general do you think you feel that you belong to your workplace? *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Maybe / Sometimes
- ○ N/A
- ○ Other: _____

1.4.1 Sense of Belonging

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My employer is just great and ticks all boxes for me	○	○	○	○	○
My employer has different working situation options that I can choose what works for me best	○	○	○	○	○
Benefits my employer offers are great	○	○	○	○	○
Transparency and communication are great	○	○	○	○	○
I feel heard and seen where I work	○	○	○	○	○
My employer offers training	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My employer has great Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging programs	○	○	○	○	○
Employee Inclusion Resource Groups have great programs at my company	○	○	○	○	○
My work has a purpose and I can feel it	○	○	○	○	○
I am passionate about my work	○	○	○	○	○
My direct leadership is supportive	○	○	○	○	○
My employer has reduced work schedule for less pay	○	○	○	○	○

Are there any factors that influence your feeling of belonging that were not   *
mentioned above? please list them below
If none please add N/A

Your answer

With different work situation options: Working from home, In the office, Hybrid   *
(from home and office), or Remote, your employer has during and after the
COVID-19 Pandemic, did this impact your feeling of belonging?

○ Yes - It increased my sense of belonging to the workplace

○ I feel the same level of sense of belonging

○ No - It decreased my feeling of belonging and I am considering looking for
  alternatives because the options available don't meet my life goals personally and
  professionally

○ I don't know, i never thought of that

○ Maybe

○ Other:

What did your employer do so you feel this way?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
More transparent communications	○	○	○	○	○
More voluntary working programs	○	○	○	○	○
Built new mental health programs	○	○	○	○	○
Built new physical health programs	○	○	○	○	○
Enhanced inclusive language all over the company	○	○	○	○	○
Increased Paid time Off period	○	○	○	○	○
Started to listen more to employees requests	○	○	○	○	○
Increased pay for everyone in the company	○	○	○	○	○
Enhanced employee engagement by having better Technology (like Zoom or any other platforms)	○	○	○	○	○
Introduced more interactive tools to enhance employees engagement	○	○	○	○	○
Introduces new career development programs	○	○	○	○	○

Are there any factors that influence your feeling of belonging during or after COVID-19 pandemic that were not mentioned above? please list them below *
If none please add N/A

Your answer

Do you think you will stay with the same employer for the next five years? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

○ I don't know

○ Other:

What are the factors that will influence your decision? *

☐ Pay/Salary

☐ Company Financial Performance

☐ Paid Leave period

☐ Career Development / Growth opportunities

☐ Job Security

☐ The passion I have for the work I do

☐ The mission of the company I work for

☐ The available options to take care of my mental health

☐ The available options to take care of my physical health

☐ Diversity, Inclusion and belonging programs the company has

☐ My family circumstances/situation

☐ The offered work situation options (Working from home, In the office, Hybrid (from home and office), or Remote)

☐ Other:

1.4.3 Happiness at Work

Overall, would you say you are happy to work for your current employer? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe/sometimes/I'm not sure

○ I prefer not to answer

○ Other: _____

1.5 Thank you Page and Consent

THANK YOU

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this questionnaire, as mentioned at the beginning, your answers are used confidentially and are secured on a password-protected computer to which only the researcher lead has access. Will only be used for the purpose of this research.

This questionnaire is phase one of the analysis for this research study, if you like to participate in phase two of the analysis which will be a 1:1 session with the research lead or within a focus group, and will focus on some areas that were mentioned in this questionnaire but in-depth to have a better understanding of the factors that informed your decisions.

You will be asked to provide your name and personal email address if you choose to participate, if you choose "NO" the questionnaire will end and you need to submit your answers.

Do you consent to participate in phase two of the analysis? *

○ Yes

○ No

Your Information!

Thank you for saying Yes to participating in phase two of this analysis, the researcher lead is looking forward to working with you on the next steps!

What's your name? *

Your answer

What's your email address? *

Your answer

Can the research lead get in touch with you when they're ready to organize the next steps with you? *

○ Yes

○ No

2. One-one-Interviews Questions

2.1 Introduction to the session

Introduction to the research study and goals to be achieved in today's session:

This session will last 30 minutes, I am Suzan the research lead on this topic, and I am working on this interview as part of my qualitative research for my dissertation to gain my degree in International business.

Before we start do you have any questions for me?

2.2 Questions asked During the Interviews

1. To kick us off, can you tell me a little bit about your background?

2. What is Belonging in your opinion? And do you think there is a difference between inclusion and belonging? If yes, what is it?

3. Describe your working experience during COVID-19 Pandemic, how did it impact your productivity? Take into consideration your professional and personal circumstances!

4. If you have the magic wand, how do you imagine the future of work in a global tech company? And what are the challenges that global tech companies are facing to make this happen?

5. From your experience, Describe the Employee resource groups (ERGs)? and explain how you see the impact these groups have on a company's culture!

6. Describe "being happy at work"? Would you relate feeling happy at work to feeling that you belong to your workplace? Please explain

7. Anything else that you wanted to add at this time that we haven't had a chance to chat about yet?