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Antonios Papadopoulos, Alexandros Ozbag, Lida Kyrgidou

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Human Resources' Strategic Initiatives in the Public Sector: An Explanatory Study

Antonios Papadopoulos^{*}, Alexandros Ozbag[†], Lida Kyrgidou[‡]

Abstract

Human Resource Management is crucial in contemporary business. This study explores attracting and retaining Generation Z within public sector entities, addressing several challenges such as demographic transition, digitalization, innovation, business performance, organizational culture, and sustainable competitive advantage, with particular emphasis placed on the co-existence of four generations in the workplace. Stuckey (2016) states that many leaders and managers lack the necessary insight to effectively manage the work needs and expectations of Generation Z compared to previous generations (Kupperschmidt, 2000). This study aims at identifying effective strategies to attract, recruit and most importantly, retain Generation Z, considering job retention factors of Generation Z individuals in the Federal State of Nordrhein-Westfalen in Germany, focusing on the town of Düsseldorf. A questionnaire served as the main survey instrument, with items adapted by previous related studies (e.g. Acheampong, 2019; Bos, 2021; Fodor & Jaeckel, 2022; Schnetzer, 2023; Wright, 2022). The questionnaire was distributed to a broad sample of individuals employed in or expressing interest in the public sector within the Federal State of Nordrhein-Westfalen. Based on the findings, the study suggests respective strategies to attract, recruit and retain Generation Z and provides implications to HR specialists, public sector managers and policy makers alike.

JEL Classifications: M12, M51

Keywords: Retention strategies, Generation Z, Personnel Attraction, HRM Public Sector

^{*} Corresponding author. Hellenic Open University. Email: std144040@ac.eap.gr

[†] Hellenic Open University. Email: alexisozzy1984@gmail.com

[‡] Hellenic Open University. Email: l.kyrgidou@gmail.com

1 Introduction

The Generation Z cohort, encompassing individuals born between 1995 and 2010, represents the most recent and young generation to embark upon its professional career. Given the demographic transition, the growing older population over the youngest one and the pension wave of Baby Boomers, both the private and public sector increasingly “struggle” in order to gain personnel. While in the past, companies strived to win only the best candidates, nowadays they are struggling to find candidates for vacant position. Therefore, it becomes even more crucial for an organization to effectively attract, recruit and retain Generation Z cohort members, since they constitute the majority in the workplace. As such, it is vital to understand, foster and integrate the characteristics, experiences and needs of Generation Z members in organizational strategies, policies, rewards and generally in the international workplace (Morris, 2022; Acheampong, 2019; Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018; Wiley, 1992; Randstad, 2022).

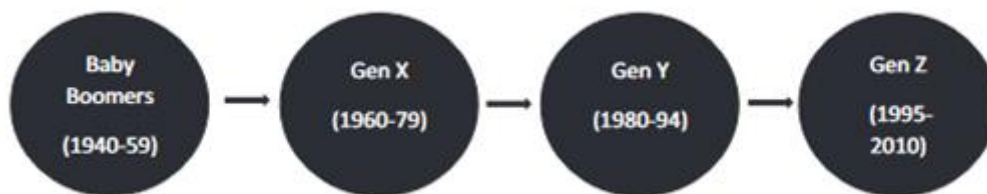
The current study aims to examine the core and workplace values, the job selection and job retention factors that Generation Z considers critical, focusing on the town of Düsseldorf, Germany. Based on the findings, it intends to highlight the most important job retention factors and suggest respective HRM strategies. Retention factors like trust, cooperative colleagues and recognition and praise, play a critical role in shaping the long-term success of any organization, particularly within the public sector, since these factors appear vital for maintaining a motivated and engaged workforce. Thus, the study focuses on job retention factors of Gen Z in particular.

According to the literature, a generation is defined by Kupperschmidt (2000) as: “a group of people or cohorts who share birth year and experiences as they move through time together, influencing and being influenced by a variety of critical factors (Gimbergsson & Lundberg, 2016). According to the Cambridge English Dictionary, a generation refers to the collective experience and events shared by individuals of individuals who are roughly of the same age within a specific society or family structure (Bos, 2021). According to the generational theory of Strauss and Howe, the personality of each member of a generation is shaped by general experiences such as social, cultural, historical, and unique personal experiences in their life (Acheampong, 2019). Furthermore, Macky et al. (2008) state that individuals’ formation of personality, values, beliefs, and expectations are immensely determined by their life experiences in crucial maturing stages (Bos, 2021).

In the literature, Generation Z has been given several names such as iGeneration, App Generation, Homelanders, Founders, Plurals but the term “Generation” Z seems to prevail (Gimbergsson & Lundberg, 2016; Kupperschmidt, 2000).

The generational cohort known as Gen Z encompasses individuals born between 1995 and 2010. As such, the eldest members of this group are approximately 28 years of age and are now transitioning into the workforce. According to Bloomberg, it is projected that Generation Z will surpass all other living generations in terms of population size, accounting for approximately 32% of the total population. While Gen Z may not exhibit a complete departure from the behaviors of prior generations, it does demonstrate a distinct approach to the professional territory (Pandita, 2021).

Figure 1: Generation Classification (Pandita, 2021)



Attracting the new generation is important, yet understanding the influential factors that shape Gen Z, their core values, workplace values, job selection, but most importantly their job retention factors is even more critical. The latter is highly likely to build long-term engagement with organizations that will highly likely set the basis for competitive advantage creation. As a result, employers can design strategies and policies to gain and maintain Generation Z and thus achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Bos (2021) claims that globalization, terrorist attacks, technology and the Great Recession are the factors and life events that hugely affected the development of Generation Z. Acheampong (2019) also argues that terrorism and global pandemics in conjunction with the Great Recession have been factors that influenced their personalities, turned them keener on change, adaptable and highly driven, socially responsible and environmentally concerned (Acheampong, 2019; 2020). She explains that this fact stems from the societal shifts that Gen Z experienced in their upbringing and this is reflected in their daily decisions and daily standpoint to be part of something bigger (Acheampong, 2019; 2020; Bos 2021).

As far as workplace values are concerned, the workplace values of Generation Z are going to impact organizations since they are different from other generations. Their most important workplace values seem to be technology, work with modern technological equipment, flexibility, remote work possibilities, and teamwork, as Generation Z not only wants to collaborate with their team and colleagues, but it also wants to work in a friendly work environment. Equally key workplace values appear the independent work, work-life balance and mental health, job security, as well as diversity and inclusion. Further workplace values are stability, meaningful tasks, personal development, and

social responsibility (Acheampong, 2019; Bos, 2021; Fodor & Jaeckel, 2022; Schnetzer, 2023; Randstad, 2022; Wright, 2022).

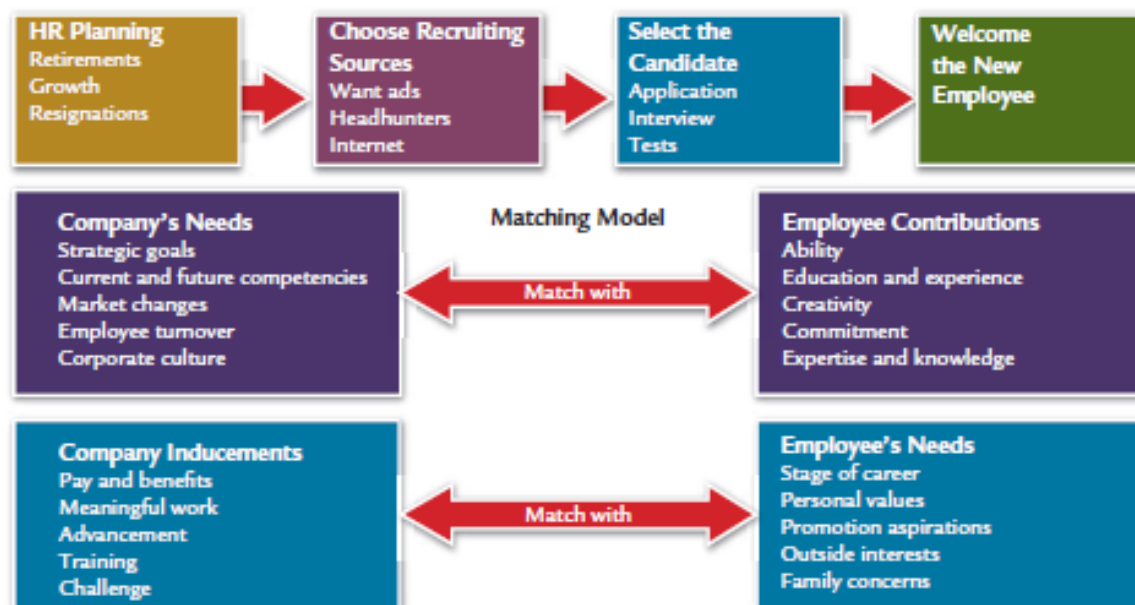
Considering the above, the study aims at identifying effective strategies in order to attract, recruit and most importantly to retain Generation Z cohort members in Germany.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Human resource planning and recruitment

Daft (2019) refers to staffing as finding the right people. He states that the three overarching objectives of Human Resource Management (HRM) are the acquisition, enhancement, and retention of a proficient workforce. Human resource planning is the initial stage in identifying suitable personnel, wherein HRM professionals or managers forecast the requirement for fresh recruits by considering the types of job openings available, as demonstrated in Figure 2. The subsequent phase involves the utilization of recruitment methods to establish communication with prospective candidates. The third phase involves the identification and subsequent selection of individuals from the pool of applicants who are deemed to possess the greatest potential for making valuable contributions to the organization. Ultimately, the novel staff members are cordially received into the company (Daft, 2019).

Figure 2: Attracting workforce (Daft, 2019)



2.2 Recruiting and retention

Richardson (2022) identifies that recruitment decisions affect organizational performance and goal achievement. For the public sector, she cites two main reasons: laws and managerial inertia. The subsequent discourse involved an examination of tactics aimed at identifying optimal job candidates, encompassing an analysis of their merits, drawbacks, and recommendations for their implementation. These strategies include the dissemination of job openings through various means (such as internal and external recruitment), as well as the utilization of online applications and internet-based recruitment methods, alongside college recruitment initiatives. The conclusion is that at all levels of the Public Sector; new recruitment strategies are being implemented. In several geographic areas, the approaches employed are currently manual; however, with the increasing prevalence of automated techniques, the mechanisms that enable their utilization will experience a rise in popularity (Richardson, 2022).

Vesin (2022) identified a research gap in the public sector regarding the potential strategic management strategies to combat challenges. The author's study primarily focuses on the examination of factors that influence employee recruitment, selection, and retention within the public sector, such as the aging workforce (focusing on attributes of generations and work flexibility), employee recruitment and selection (focusing on civil service examinations proposing to reduce some hurdles in it so as to accelerate the process and gain the potential talents in the competitive workforce gaining environment (private sector and other government agencies), employee retention (focusing on factors that retain employees and factors let them leave as well as the consequences), employee turnover (focusing on the two types of employee turnover and the associated reasons), public service motivation (focusing on the motivation of potential employees to select their career in the public sector), employee retention strategies (focusing on strategies that promote well-being and work life balance such as training and development, empowerment, employee compensation/benefits, work/life balance, rewards and recognition, work environment and social support), the effect of employee turnover on public sector (focusing on dysfunctional or functional effects) (Vesin, 2022).

Goldman et al. (2021) use evidence-based research to identify the most important factors affecting the recruiting of diverse talents in the public sector. They focused on strategies that have the potential to effectively attract a broader range of individuals, particularly those who are underrepresented, to pursue careers in the public sector. The primary imperative for leadership within the public sector is to demonstrate unwavering dedication to the continual enhancement of the recruitment efforts targeting individuals possessing exceptional abilities and those belonging to

underrepresented groups (clear commitment from organizational leaders as well as expression and demonstration). Secondly, the benefits of the public sector careers should be properly communicated (place emphasis on job stability, employee benefits and purpose-driven mission). Thirdly, the public sector should make better aware of the job offers and the internships. Fourthly, the career entry and retention should be well prepared and promoted (proposed actions). Finally, the public sector should pursue official connections with higher education institutions (Goldman, et al., 2021).

Moraes, Correa, Daneris, & Queiroz (2021) argue that efficient recruitment can be achieved within a brief period. Notwithstanding its potential benefits, the utilization of Instagram as a tool for involving participants in survey research presents difficulties and constraints that necessitate additional scrutiny. The study expounds upon the development of Instagram advertisements and the attainment of a snowball sampling technique through user reposts from diverse geographical locations within the social network platform. The cost-effectiveness of social media campaigns, particularly the utilization of Instagram, has garnered significant attention. It has been observed that Instagram recruitment can yield at least five times the number of participants compared to email recruitment. However, this research indicates that a combination of email and Instagram recruitment strategies can result in a more diverse participant pool and enhance response rates. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the initial 2-day period of recruitment plays a critical role in determining the effectiveness of recruitment strategies (Moraes et al., 2021).

2.3 Recruiting and retention of Generation Z

Acheampong (2019) examined the strategies that could recruit and retain Generation Z in the public sector in USA, which faces a massive retirement wave of Baby Boomers. She thus focused on their work values, rewards, work preferences and characteristics. Her findings emphasized the importance of employer branding strategy (organizational culture, social media presence, and recruitment process), reverse mentoring, work environment, feedback, employee recognition, corporate social responsibility culture, autonomy, training, skills development, extrinsic rewards, and succession planning. According to Coccia and Benati (2018), the primary objectives of reward strategy in public organizations are to understand the motivation of individuals and to foster job satisfaction and organizational commitment among employees. Moreover, the findings suggest that public sector organizations can take advantage of the extrinsic and intrinsic values to attract and retain Generation Z. Although the impact of their extrinsic and intrinsic work values on choosing the employer and workplace motivation is varying, the attraction and retention can be effective

provided that the reward strategies are tailored to profile, values, and needs of Generation Z (Acheampong, 2019).

In addition, the study reveals how public sector leaders and managers may use a customized reward allocation method to attract, acquire, and retain Generation Z cohort representatives. The study provides a clearer understanding of the linkages between Generation Z's experiences and their effect on their reward preferences and appraisal of their career choices via the theoretical lens of Strauss and Howe's generational cohort theory (1991). According to the findings, Gen Z's extrinsic and intrinsic incentive preferences demonstrate that public sector enterprises may constitute the preferred workplace for the youngest generation (Acheampong, 2019).

2.4 Values and characteristics of Generation Z

The Randstad worldwide research identifies five main findings: attitude (aligning values), values (aligning values), empowerment (strengthening attraction strategies), flexibility (job flexibility), and self-improvement (accelerating professional growth). The findings reveal that the desire for happiness is more essential to Gen Z and Millennials, which is logical given that younger generations have historically been more committed to their ideas. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) states that having a purpose is critical to implement the notion of New Work and increasing staff engagement. According to the report, firms should continue to be cautious about addressing the demands of returning personnel and build a plan to address new issues. Employees need positive experiences from their jobs and a feeling of purpose and recognition. Managers should make regular connections with employees in order to contribute to the overarching corporate mission and try to adjust policies to make the workforce as inclusive as feasible. For instance, flexible scheduling and job-sharing options should be provided to working parents, while teleworking agreements should be explored for younger workers, who wish to live the digital nomad lifestyle and work from anywhere in the globe (Randstad, 2022).

A further finding is job flexibility, and the analysis indicates that it is doubtful that the workplace will completely revert to its pre-2020 state. Most participants cite flexibility as being vital. Organizations will need to maintain some employment flexibility for their employees. It is evident that a significant number of individuals who possess the opportunity to engage in remote work do not perceive the desirability of enduring lengthy commuting periods or adhering to fixed work schedules. With a view to improve flexible working policies, companies ought to assess the influence of flexible work schedules and remote work on creativity and productivity using data from their workforce. To better inform policy decisions, they should establish control groups and evaluate metrics that demonstrate how unconventional work arrangements affect organizational culture. Further, they should verify

that flexible scheduling and hybrid workdays support team objectives. To foster teamwork and cooperation, in-office gatherings should be scheduled. Finally, it should be clarified how workplace policies contribute to firms' overall needs and regulatory obligations and use with regard to flexible strategy to personnel management (Wright, 2022).

Figure 3: Values of German Generation Z (Wright, 2022)



Gen Zers seek a feeling of purpose as well as something more than a transactional connection. Firstly, it is essential for Gen Z to maintain their personal values. The two major issues that Gen Zers are most enthusiastic about are climate change and racial inequity. Secondly, the attainment of financial stability holds significant importance for Generation Z. The global financial crisis and subsequent decade of subpar economic growth may have exerted a significant influence on the formative years of individuals who currently transition into the labor market. Given the obvious necessity for competitive remuneration to draw and maintain talent, Gen Z may not be able to stay on board with only an appealing income. Thirdly, a balanced life is equally important to Gen Z. All generations will continue to place a high value on the additional flexibility that resulted from the pandemic, but younger employees are particularly concerned about it. 46% of Gen Zers expressed their preference for retaining flexibility with regard to their work hours, while 40% mentioned they would not accept a job if it did not provide flexibility. According to Workmonitor, just over 41% of Gen Z stated they left a job because it did not mesh with their personal lives. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of brand mission and salary transparency as additional key retention considerations (Randstad, 2022).

Betterteam.com also identifies Generation Z's workplace characteristics, such as traditional communication, inclination to labor independently, mobile-first conduct, flexible work hours, industry-related training, and growth opportunities. Companies should provide the most recent hardware and software and demonstrate organizational concern for the community and its employees. When selecting an employer, Generation Z seeks a collaborative environment, trust, innovative technologies and digital tools, flexible hours, a business that positively impacts the community, and firms that value genuineness. Moreover, the presence of competitive compensation, allocated time for leave, comprehensive health and wellness benefits, cafeteria plans, flexible work arrangements, and financial management support serve as key factors that incentivize Generation Z individuals to apply for a vacancy (Betterteam.com, 2022).

2.5 Branding for Generation Z

Employer branding is defined as the package of psychological, economic, and functional benefits that potential workers connect with employment with a certain organization (Wilden et al., 2010). It covers the organization's market perception as well as the employee value proposition to workers in return for their talent, expertise and abilities. Pandita (2021) explores innovative employer branding strategies that might help a business attract and retain Gen Z to further examine and comprehend generation Z's distinctive desires and how they differ from those of earlier generations. The study also attempts to explore and explain the latest trends in employer branding and the resources that fall under this category for recruiting and retaining Generation Z. Pandita (2021) discovered that Gen Z has strong work goals, work methods, traits, educational choices, need for recognition and independence. Most notably, financial criteria are not its primary objective when it comes to job advancement. Gen Z also needs to be associated with a workplace that supports the community and is motivated by an inventive attitude creative tactics to attain its organizational objectives.

Fodor and Jaeckel argued that the factors that impact Generation Z's intentions to remain with their employer are associated with Herzberg's Hygiene and Motivational theory. In the context of employment decisions, Generation Z exhibits a high degree of selectivity. It only joins a firm after considering drivers of employer branding, a positive work atmosphere and effective leadership styles. This study highlights the way in which Gen Z views the workplace, underlines the importance of employee engagement, trust, a friendly and fostering work environment, and the need to build firm policies that promote innovation, diversity, and collaboration as part of firms' employee value proposition (Fodor & Jaeckel, 2022).

Retention factors such as trust, recognition and praise, and cooperative colleagues play a critical role in shaping the long-term success of any organization, particularly within the public sector. These

factors are vital for maintaining a motivated and engaged workforce (Vesin, 2022). Trust between employees and management fosters a secure and open work environment, which enhances job satisfaction and reduces turnover. According to Gallup (2020), organizations with a high level of employee trust report 50% lower turnover rates compared to those with a distrustful work environment. Trust can reinforce productivity and employee satisfaction, by providing employees with flexibility and autonomy, assigning them with more responsibilities, engagement and space for decision making. The latter are highly likely to increase employees' job retention decisions. When management sets clear objectives, enhances top-bottom communication and reinforces employees' initiative, employee contribution and loyalty to the organization are increased.

A second job retention factor highlighted by the literature pertains to collaborative colleagues. When teamwork emerges, more talents and skills are combined, that may likely lead to problem solving and increased effectiveness, since teamwork rather than individualism is fostered and therefore more knowledge is accumulated. Furthermore, collaboration fosters more idea generation and combined experience that might aid managers and employees to foresee potential obstacles, create more communication channels and predict future organizational activities with greater accuracy. In addition, through collaboration, employees improve communication among them, share knowledge and may make better decisions, that can be exploited by top management for increased organizational outcomes. Last but not least, cooperative colleagues contribute to a positive team dynamic, where collaboration and mutual support enhance productivity and job satisfaction.

Recognition and praise are fundamental to employee morale, as they reinforce a sense of value and accomplishment, encouraging continued high performance. They are associated with innate satisfaction, reinforcing employee motivation that might increase organizational success (Abdullah et al., 2016). Mussie et al. (2013) argued that praise to employees is associated with achieving strategic goals and increased employee turnover (Nurul et al., 2014). Increased recognition and appreciation to employees increases their motivation and improves their performance.

As organizations face increasing challenges in retaining top talent, these three factors have become central to creating work environments that not only attract but also retain skilled employees. Their importance has been reflected across multiple studies and frameworks, making them essential components in the hypothesis tested in relation to their impact on employee retention (Vesin, 2022; Acheampong, 2019; Randstad, 2022; Randstad, 2022).

Based on the above, it is assumed that job retention factors are positively associated with job retention intentions. Thus, the following three Hypotheses are developed:

H1: Trust is positively associated with job retention intentions

H2: Cooperative colleagues are positively associated with job retention intentions

H3: Recognition and praise are positively associated with job retention intentions

3 Methodology and Data Analysis

Data was collected through a questionnaire that adapted items from past related studies and was pilot tested with academic and practitioners before distribution. The questionnaire was distributed during a 4-month period, from February to June 2023. The survey instrument was structured into five distinct sections, namely demographic data, core values, workplace values, job selection factors and factors that influence employee retention. The demographic section is responsible for collecting fundamental demographic data. The segment pertaining to core values comprises a query in the form of a multiple-choice raster and assesses the congruence of the core values of the interviewees with those of the prospective employer. The third section of the study explores the significance of workplace values. The assessment comprises of a single raster question with multiple-choice options and three additional multiple-choice questions. The fourth section of the study focuses on the factors that drive individuals to seek employment. This section comprises a multiple-choice raster question and three additional multiple-choice questions. The final segment of the assessment pertains to the retention factors and comprises a single multiple-choice grid query, two sets of three multiple-choice queries, and two open-ended queries.

The questionnaire was distributed to the Generation Z cohort residing in the district area of Dusseldorf, since one of the authors' professional endeavors are primarily concentrated in local municipalities within the federal state of Nordrhein-Westfalen in Germany. Consequently, the survey was disseminated within the aforementioned locality to a heterogeneous cohort of Generation Z members, comprising of both civil servants and aspirants of public sector employment. The survey instrument intended to elucidate the core principles and beliefs held by the Generation Z cohort residing in the immediate vicinity. A sample size of 121 respondents was gathered.

A demographic analysis was conducted to summarize the background characteristics of the respondents. To further analyze the collected data, a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical methods was applied. Descriptive Statistics were employed in order to measure and summarize the responses and provide an overview of the data distribution. Hypothesis Testing Analysis using Chi-Square Test of Independence was employed in order to determine whether there

exists a statistically significant association between categorical variables and in order to examine the relationships between job retention factors and job retention intentions. Last but not least, Logistic Regression Analysis was employed in order to further examine the influence of job retention factors and in particular, trust, collaborative colleagues and recognition and praise with job retention intentions.

Respondents' birth years span from 1995 to 2008. Individuals born in the years 2009 and 2010 were not found among the cohort of respondents. The individuals in question represent the most junior members of the Generation Z cohort. Out of the 16 Federal States, only six are included in this survey. As intended, the preponderance of respondents, comprising 88.04%, emanates from the Federal State of Nordrhein-Westfalen. The Federal States with the next highest percentages are Hamburg with 4.35%, followed by Baden-Württemberg with 3.26%, Bayern with 2.17%, and Rheinland-Pfalz and Sachsen with 1.09%. Regarding their core values, respondents claimed that fairness and justice are the most prominent core values. While friendly working environment, employee health, family friendliness, social action, realism and independence are identified as the next in turn. It is important to note that environmental core values did not appear as significant for Generation Z as expected according to the literature review.

With respect to workplace values, long-term job security, positive work atmosphere and mental health, were ranked as the most significant. The top workplace values pertain to a healthy work-life balance and effective collaboration within teams and colleagues, followed by good supervisory skills and flexibility.

The significance of workplace factors such as independence, diversity and inclusion, and utilization of modern technology do not align with the emphasis these factors hold in the existing literature. With regard to job selection factors, payment appears the most significant factor when individuals seek an employer, accounting for a considerable proportion of their decision-making process (67%). The subsequent factors that hold a relatively lower degree of significance among individuals belonging to Generation Z (37%), pertain to the existence of advancement opportunities and flexible working hours. The top five crucial factors with regard to job selection include opportunities for further education, and the potential for meaningful work that benefits both oneself and the broader community. As was the case with the findings of the core values section, environmental factors in this section also hold a relatively lower ranking, as they were ranked ninth in importance.

As per the strong response scale, there exist six principal factors that hold utmost significance in the retention process. The top five factors that are highly valued by employees are appreciation (65%), trust (58%), work-life balance (54%), cooperative colleagues (50%), and payment and benefits (40%) along with friendly contact with colleagues (40%), which hold equal importance.

Findings also indicate that factors affecting job selection decisions are quite similar in terms of significance compared to factors affecting job retention decisions. The top-ranking factor is the amalgamation of job selection and retention factors (30%). Retention factors occupy the second position with a percentage of 26.67%. Job selection factors and workplace values are more prominently featured in the third, fourth and fifth position. Thus, it can be inferred that there is also a significant correlation between the retention of Generation Z employees and job selections factors. Furthermore, it can be inferred that members of Generation Z determine their choice to change their present employer by considering job selection and retention factors.

With regard to test results, trust had the most influential impact on predicting job retention intentions, with a value of 0.761, suggesting that trust might strongly motivate an employee to consider staying with their employer. Employers must focus on building trust within the organization to reduce the risk of employee leaving. Cooperative colleagues (with a value of 0,681) strongly discourage employees from leaving; suggesting having good relationships with colleagues significantly reduces the intention to leave. Team harmony and collaboration are key retention factors. Recognition and praise are also positively associated with job retention intentions (with a value of 0.561).

4 Discussion

Despite the increasing prevalence of the emerging workforce, organizational leaders often struggle with effectively recruiting and retaining these individuals due to a lack of comprehension regarding their core values, traits, work ethics, and preferences (Acheampong, 2019). The introduction of Generation Z personnel into the public sector workforce has the potential to bring about workplace changes due to generational disparities, given the multi-generational composition of public sector organizations. According to Stuckey (2016), a significant proportion of leaders lack the necessary preparation to effectively manage the work needs and expectations of Generation Z in comparison to those of previous generations, including Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Gaidhani, Arora, & Sharma, 2019; Acheampong, 2019).

Retention factors take precedence over core values, workplace values, and job selection criteria as they directly address the challenge of maintaining long-term organizational stability and workforce continuity. These factors encapsulate critical elements like job satisfaction, professional growth, and work-life balance, which are more actionable for enhancing employee loyalty. Literature emphasizes the importance of addressing these practical and strategic aspects to retain Generation Z talent effectively.

While core values and job selection criteria shape initial attraction, retention factors are pivotal for sustaining employee engagement and loyalty over time. Retention factors, such as flexible work arrangements, personalized reward systems, and alignment with organizational values, have been identified as key drivers for retaining Generation Z talent. This focus reflects the need for a strategic approach to workforce stability and reduced turnover.

Retention factors are uniquely significant as they provide actionable insights into fostering long-term commitment, making them more impactful than core values or initial job selection criteria. Research underscores their role in addressing Generation Z's distinct expectations, such as flexibility, recognition, and professional growth opportunities, which directly influence their decision to remain with an employer.

Compared to core values and workplace preferences, retention factors offer a focused lens on the specific strategies that ensure the long-term engagement of Generation Z employees. They highlight actionable areas, such as fostering work-life balance, providing professional growth opportunities, and ensuring value alignment, that are critical to addressing this generation's unique retention challenges.

The decision to focus on retention factors for the analysis of local Generation Z is underpinned by their critical role in ensuring organizational sustainability and competitiveness, particularly in the public sector. Unlike core values, workplace values, or job selection factors, retention factors encompass both intrinsic and extrinsic elements that directly influence an employee's decision to stay within an organization. Literature highlights the need for tailored strategies addressing these factors, such as professional development opportunities, work-life balance, and value alignment, to effectively retain talent in a rapidly evolving and value-conscious workforce (Vesin, 2022; Acheampong, 2019, 2020; Wright, 2022; Randstad, 2022; Villa, Dorsey, & Boucher, 2022; Deloitte, 2022).

Trust and appreciation appear quite important, providing implications with regard to Gen Z's job satisfaction determinants, reinforcing previous literature findings. In addition, Gen Z places considerable value on genuine interpersonal connections within the professional environment as previous studies have also argued (Villa, Dorsey, & Boucher, 2022; Vesin, 2022; Schnetzer, 2023). Furthermore, Gen Z values ethics, which significantly determines their decision-making processes—a finding not previously highlighted in previous studies. The retention of Generation Z appears to be significantly influenced by workplace values, such as a positive working environment, job security over a long time, and cooperative colleagues, as well as job selection factors such as payment and advancement opportunities.

5 Conclusions

HR planning processes of public organizations could amend the aforementioned processes in order to match the Generation Z core values, workplace values, job selection factors and retention factors. Effective attraction and retention can be achieved by tailoring recruiting strategies to the profile, values, and needs of Generation Z. As a next step, public organizations should conduct a comprehensive and meticulous job analysis for the purpose of revising current job descriptions and to leverage job postings as a promotional instrument to entice a greater number of Generation Z candidates (Mihiotis, 2004; Ulferts et al., 2009). To effectively promote job opportunities, it is imperative that the advertised positions align with core values such as justice, friendly working environment, employee health, with workplace values like mental health, long-term job security, work-life balance and good working atmosphere. It is equally important to include job selection factors, such as payment, flexible working hours, and advancement opportunities, opportunities for further education, meaningful activity and society. Public organizations do provide flexible working hours, educational advancement opportunities, and meaningful activities for both individuals and society. On the contrary, payment is frequently deemed inadequate, thereby necessitating an improvement in the matter of compensation. Although this undertaking may prove to be challenging due to the legal restrictions and public financial considerations that impede its progression, it is of paramount importance to ameliorate payment in the public sector, since payment appeared as the most significant job selection and retention factor for Generation Z. The public sector offers opportunities for career progression, albeit with greater complexity and formality in comparison to the private sector. Notwithstanding, it is imperative for public organizations to endeavor towards facilitating career progression by revising regulations and policies.

Another crucial factor that public organizations should consider regards the enhancement of training and development. Since opportunities for further education and advancement appear extremely important for generation Z, organizations should develop such development programs in advance and communicate and promote them in their job postings. These programs should be aligned with the mission, goals, and objectives of the organization (Fodor & Jaeckel, 2022; Pandita, 2021; Randstad, 2022; Bos, 2021; Wright, 2022). Likewise, performance evaluation should be considered, since appreciation and trust appeared as the most important retention factors for Generation Z. Designing and implementing a fair and transparent performance appraisal system will emphasize appreciation of employees' performance and demonstrate trust to Generation Z cohort members, increasing their retention (Villa, Dorsey, & Boucher, 2022; Sujan, 2023).

Furthermore, prioritizing the alignment of corporate values with those of employees is a crucial step for public sector organizations. The initial step should involve a thorough examination of

organizations' mission, values, and culture to ascertain their alignment with their constituents' perspectives (Wright, 2022; Asseburg, Homberg, & Vogel, 2018; Goldman, et al., 2021; Wright, 2022). This requires reconsidering conventional approaches to personnel acquisition, job assignments, employee development, and molding business culture as a whole (Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018; Bos, 2021). It is also recommended that public organizations prioritize the promotion of enhanced mental health in the workplace (Deloitte, 2022). Since according to some authors workplace values are the most important values for attracting and retaining Generation Z, these values should be communicated to applicants in a manner that is connected to the organization's mission through job advertisements (Asseburg et al., 2018; Acheampong, 2020; Bos, 2021; Fodor & Jaeckel, 2022).

Regarding job selection and retention factors, organizations should offer a variety of incentives, including salary increases, opportunities for further education and advancement opportunities, to attract and retain employees (Wright, 2022; Villa, Dorsey, & Boucher, 2022). Since employees' desire positive and fulfilling work experience, it is recommended that hiring managers establish communication messages in HR planning to elucidate the impact of each individual on the organization and society and their respective contributions towards the attainment of the overarching corporate mission. Given that flexible working hours and work-life balance are significant for job selection and retention, it is imperative to advertise them in job postings and evaluate the impact of flexible work schedules and remote work on creativity and productivity, utilizing workforce data (Asseburg et al., 2018; Randstad, 2022; Villa et al., 2022). Furthermore, the study acknowledges ethics as a novel retention factor that significantly influences the retention of Generation Z. Therefore, it is imperative for public organizations to prioritize the ethical dimension of their conduct and leadership within the workplace. In addition, it appears that expressing appreciation and fostering a sense of trust towards employees belonging to the Generation Z cohort members can effectively promote their retention within an organization. Another way to take advantage of these factors could be employer branding to attract the proper sort of personnel.

Based on the above, the study contributes to existing theoretical knowledge in the field of Human Resource Management, highlighting the set of values and factors for designing and implementing successful recruitment strategies for Generation Z, with an emphasis on the public sector. While it has reinforced previous studies' findings regarding factors contributing to effective recruitment, it has also brought to light some new ones. The significance of these findings lies on the fact that German public organizations are presently struggling to recruit new qualified staff in the face of the enormous Baby Boomer retirement deluge.

At the managerial level, the study provides valuable insights for both aspiring and experienced Human Resource professionals regarding optimal strategies for developing new recruitment initiatives, essential values and factors to be taken into account. The significance of this matter lies in the limited availability of qualified personnel that public organizations are currently facing due to "The Great Retirement" phenomenon. This refers to an unparalleled surge of retirees who leave their jobs earlier than anticipated. It is anticipated that the economy will undergo various modifications subsequent to the retirement of a greater number of individuals belonging to the Baby Boomer generation. The retirement of Baby Boomers is expected to create employment opportunities for younger individuals. Given that the attraction and retention of members belonging to Generation Z could potentially alleviate the dearth of qualified candidates that public organizations are currently facing on a global scale, the study's research findings hold significant implications for redirecting human resource strategies towards more effective approaches.

This study has certain limitations. The study focused on Generation Z and its association with the public sector. Hence, the findings of this study are exclusively relevant to public institutions that aim to attract members of the Generation Z cohort and future research in other settings and sectors is required in order to generalize its results.

In addition, the study refers to the selection of values and factors that were chosen for examination in this study. A more comprehensive review of the literature shall uncover further values and factors requiring examination with regard to effective recruitment processes. Expanding the sample size would enhance the reliability and validity of the findings.

Lastly, a significant proportion of the participants originate from the Federal State of Nordrhein-Westfalen. Future studies should expand the transferability and generalizability of the findings to different geographical locations and countries. The study centered on identifying the primary values and factors that hold significance for Generation Z and subsequently proposing the most suitable strategic initiatives to attract and retain them. The study employed primary data. Subsequent research may consider incorporating secondary data obtained from public institutions to enhance the questionnaire's design. Furthermore, the inclusion of a quantitative analysis could potentially augment the questionnaire's validity.

An additional possibility for future research could involve conducting interviews with HR recruiters employed in the public sector. This would facilitate the determination of the alignment between the viewpoints of human resource professionals and the anticipations of individuals belonging to Generation Z. The objective is to narrow the distance between the parties involved and facilitate the recruitment procedure. It would also be intriguing to conduct interviews with individuals belonging to Generation Z in order to obtain further insight into their values and influential factors. These

insights could then be compared with the results of the questionnaire to augment the conclusions of the study.

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