



Generation Z vs. Generation X

Analysing Resignation Trends Post-Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

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Quiet and loud quitting were introduced through TikTok during the post-pandemic era. These trends were embraced especially by Generation Z employees, who have a different perspective on defining success and value pursuing activities outside of work. Generation X employees share a similar mindset, appreciating work-life balance and letting go of the hustle culture during the pandemic. This thesis aimed to determine to what extent Generation Z employees follow these resignation trends and whether Generation X employees behave like this. Examining these two generations' resignation habits aims to contribute to the existing knowledge of generational differences and increase leaders' awareness of their prejudices toward the younger generation.

The theory section reviews existing literature. It examines previous knowledge of Generation Z and Generation X to understand their behaviour during resignations. The section also explains resignation trends, background, and links to the two generations. The research section outlines the qualitative study's aspects and selected methodologies. The research problem was investigated by conducting thematic interviews with employees from both generations and two HR specialists from a manager's perspective. Conclusions were drawn from recurring answers during interviews. To protect the anonymity of the interviewees, no single participant can be recognised from the study.

Based on the results of this study, Generation X is quiet quitting more often than Generation Z. Loud quitting does not occur frequently, and only one case was found among Generation Z. The findings do not align entirely with previous studies of their occurrence, but this can be explained by not having a theoretical background for the phenomena and different parties having different interpretations of them. Generational differences could be found in expectations of working life and communication during the resignation process.

Further studies with a bigger sample size of these two generations and the addition of millennials are recommended for a more comprehensive view of generational differences. The topic could be reviewed in a few years to see if the resignation trends have become part of daily life.

Key words: generation z, generation x, quiet quitting, loud quitting,

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Studies show that 74% of managers consider Generation Z employees the most challenging generation to work with as they lack effort, motivation, and productivity. 30% of these managers would hire Generation X employees instead because they are more productive and honest (Resume Builder, 2023). The problem is that Generation X employees will retire in a few years, and leaders have no choice but to hire younger employees. It would be more beneficial for leaders to learn to know this new generation now rather than fighting against this inevitable change.

All generations face different stereotypes, and as Generation Z employees entered working life, they were featured in clickbait headlines about being disloyal, unproductive, and too sensitive. Instead of believing these stereotypes, leaders should take their time to embrace the importance of the differences between generations. The surrounding events have influenced all generations differently, shaping their values and beliefs. Understanding and adapting to these differences is not just a choice; it's a necessity for the success of any organization (Waldman 2021).

Leaders can have employees from 4 different generations in the same team who must be led systematically and consistently. However, leaders need to be aware of the differences between these generations to support all employees regardless of age. Values and expectations can differ significantly from generation to generation, but seeing that as an issue is the real problem. Leaders must adapt quickly to the events in the world and their effects on employees because denying them is not sustainable. More importantly, leaders must ensure that all employees, regardless of their generation or age, feel valued, understood, and supported in the workplace (Waldman 2021).

The global pandemic was one of the most significant events in recent years that has impacted work culture. COVID-19 gave employees a perfect opportunity to review their careers and satisfaction in life. During the pandemic, the pace of life

slowed down, and work became more adjustable. All employees embraced this flexible way of working, and when they were called back into the office, many decided to resign. During the pandemic, TikTok trends were created daily, and soon enough, the trend-setters hit the working life. The first resignation trend was created when employees realised they could have a more relaxed everyday life if they did not participate in the hustle culture. This trend was called quiet quitting, as employees started to do the bare minimum at work, not taking on additional responsibilities but not quitting literally (Krueger, 2022). Loud quitting followed quiet quitting, but this time, employees quit their jobs loudly, publicly stating the company's problems (Lamberg, 2024).

Generation Z created these TikTok trends of different quitting behaviours and is therefore blamed for those phenomena. However, generation X employees' mindset does not differ much from the younger generations since they are also considered entrepreneurial and independent and have a strong feeling for work-life balance and flexibility (Herrity, 2023). This research aims to clarify whether only Generation Z employees follow the trends or if Generation X employees also behave like this by examining generational differences in resignation habits.

1.2 Research Questions

The research question is, to what extent do Generation Z employees follow the post-pandemic resignation trends, and do Generation X employees quit like this?

Secondary research questions consider generational differences in other aspects that help understand the trends' background.

- What are the reasons behind resignations?
- What is expected from the employer by the employees?
- What does communication around resignations look like?

1.3 Aim of the Research

The two inspected generations share similar mindsets and values. They are both independent and appreciate a healthy work-life balance. During the post-pandemic setting, Generation Z employees created TikTok trends of different quitting behaviours and are therefore blamed for those phenomena. This research aims to clarify the reasons behind participating in these trends and if they are bound to generational borders.

By studying their resignation habits, the research aims to add knowledge and understanding to the differences between Generation Z and Generation X employees. It aims to help organisational leaders and HR specialists embrace the ongoing transformation of working life in a post-pandemic environment and help unravel stereotypes regarding Generation Z employees entering the working life.

The personal approach to this topic strives to encourage everyone to review their predetermined thoughts on generational differences. The aim is to lead organisational leaders to embrace generational differences and understand resignation habits to improve employee commitment.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is split into two sections: a literature review and conducted research. The aim was to gather relevant information about the topic before conducting qualitative research. This method was chosen because this thesis aimed not to create a new theory or model but to contribute to the existing literature.

Chapter 2 introduces the relevant theory regarding this research. It also explains quiet and loud quitting and presents the background of the phenomena. The phenomena are viewed from different generations' points of view; therefore, Generation Z and Generation X are chosen to be viewed more closely. Factors contributing to quitting behaviour, in general, are explained to clarify what could be the causes behind said phenomena.

Chapters 3 and 4 explain the methodology used to study the subject and the research outcomes. These chapters aim to bring trust and transparency into the research by explaining why particular methods were chosen and how the results were found.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the research results and their significance compared to previous research. The study's limitations are acknowledged, and the success of this study is reviewed. Based on these findings, future research is suggested.

2 KEY CONCEPTS

2.1 Hustle Culture

Hustle culture is about pursuing something more—a promotion, a new record, or more money. This mindset promotes working overtime and dedicating everything to one's career. Hustle culture started in the early 2000s, but with the rise of social media, it has become even more desirable. People recorded themselves devoting their lives to work and showing off their wealthy lifestyle. More and more people have fallen into this mindset where all you must do is work around the clock to become happy (Carnegie, 2023). Hustling can be seen as an honourable thing and a way to express one's passion and ambitions toward a successful career, which is why so many employees strive to achieve this (Smith, 2024).

This mentality of always being on call is not sustainable. It often leads to prolonged stress and burnout, leaving employees exhausted and drained. A company culture that promotes hustling usually results in an unhappy workforce and a higher turnover percentage (Smith, 2024).

During COVID-19, people realised that dedicating one's life to work is unsustainable. Many started to pull back from work to figure out what was meaningful in life, setting boundaries between their personal and work lives. When employees were forced to work remotely, they realised they also wanted to spend time with their families and pursue things outside their careers (Carnegie, 2023). This change in mindset resulted in viral quitting trends: first, the great resignation, then quiet quitting, and lastly, loud quitting.

2.2 Quiet Quitting

Quiet quitting became a social media trend in 2022 after TikTok user Zaiad Khan made a video of it that went viral. He emphasised that quiet quitting does not mean that employees are literally quitting their jobs but making a silent statement instead. There are many interpretations of quitting quietly since, for some, it means losing interest and disconnecting emotionally from the job. Others see it

as not accepting additional work without additional pay. However, quiet quitting can be summarised as not quitting your job but quitting the idea of going above and beyond. (Krueger, 2022).

The concept of quiet quitting as we know it today went viral because of COVID-19. Research shows that employees who were asked to return to the office and their regular working hours after being in lockdown tended to fall into quiet quitting if they returned to their jobs (Aratani, 2023). Those who did not return to their jobs took part in the first post-pandemic trend now known as the Great Resignation. This trend was especially visible in the U.S., where over 47 million Americans did not return to their offices but quit instead (Fuller, Kerr, 2022).

Before COVID-19 the hustle culture was at its strongest, and employees were expected to go above and beyond what they were paid for the job. When the pandemic started, many companies were forced to send their employees home to work remotely, which gave them a break from hustling (Aratani, 2023). Employees who were working from home during the pandemic suddenly had a lot more flexibility and freedom to do their work. The time working remotely showed that they could also do their job without sacrificing all their life for it and that changed their view on work in the future (Yıldız, 2023). Many employees realised that their previous way of working was not sustainable or worth it since their exceeding efforts were hardly rewarded. Quiet quitting starts when employees do not feel valued or appreciated, lack commitment, and avoid taking responsibility (Atalay, Dağıstan, 2023).

Many leaders have been worried that these social media trends are destroying the sense of work ethics and commitment. However, human resource specialist Nikki Miles who was interviewed by the New York Times thinks that the concept of quiet quitting is ridiculous. According to her, the pay you get should always match the work you do and there should be no requirement to do additional work for yourself. She thinks this should not be a trending phenomenon, but the way everyone should do their job and what companies should encourage (Krueger, 2022).

The reality however is that nowadays employees do many tasks outside of their job description and do not necessarily wait for any recognition for it. Even if the employees are still engaged in their core tasks, having them quiet quit suddenly, will put companies in a poor competitive position and put more workload on other employees (Atalay, Dağistan, 2023). Many leaders have argued that having employees quiet quit is worse than having unengaged employees not quit. Companies still expect their workforce to meet expectations as needed, even if they are outside their job description (Klotz, Bolino, 2022).

2.3 Loud Quitting

While some decided to quit their jobs quietly, others wanted to do it loudly in a public way. What once again started as a TikTok trend called “Quit-Tok” quickly became visible among all employees (Lamberg, 2024). This public way of quitting became a viral trend, especially among young people who did not feel valued at their companies. Employees quit their jobs via online calls while filming themselves and posting their resignations on social media platforms such as TikTok. Some users did this only to follow a trend and gain followers, but the general goal was to fight for company transparency (Gabert-Doyon, Thomas, 2024). This loud quitting trend might sound excessive, however, according to research conducted by Gallup almost 1 in 5 or 18% of the workforce globally are actively disengaged or in other words loud quitting (Gallup, 2023). The most likely reason for posting their dissatisfaction on social media instead of talking with the manager or human resources is that no one has listened to them before while they were still employed (Persaud, 2023).

Loud quitting is a countereffect of the same phenomenon as quiet quitting, but not as passive. Employees who are unhappy with the company not only quit but do it dramatically (Kelly, 2023). Loud quitting is not about yelling the phrase “I quit” and storming out of the office but rather about expressing the reasons behind their resignation openly and visibly (Nucleus_AI, 2024). Employees would walk into their superior’s office to tell them that they are not only quitting, but they are done being overworked and underpaid. Loud quitters would announce their

departure in a triumphant tone or even talk negatively of their employer on different digital platforms and make sure that colleagues knew exactly why they were leaving (Yikilmaz, Tarakci, 2023). By loud quitting, employees aim to make a long-lasting impact on their workplace and refer to better job conditions at large (Robinson, 2023).

Brittany Pietsch made one of the viral, loud quitting TikTok videos. She had heard from her co-workers that she would be fired and decided to film the predicted call with the human resources executive and her supervisor. In the video, she argued over her performance and defended herself to no purpose. This video did go viral later and has now over 2 million views, which forced the chief executive of the company to respond to the video on social media platform X, admitting that they had made a mistake in the way they handled the situation. This video did make a long-lasting impact on their workplace, as loud quitting is aiming to. However, having the video get as much attention as this one did might have hurt the company's brand image on a larger scale and hurt Pietsch's future job opportunities (Gabert-Doyon, Thomas, 2024). Loud quitting is not advised if the employee relies on good recommendations for a new job. Depending on the social position the previous manager has, the employee might not find a new job in the whole industry (Madell, 2023).

The actions of loud quitters impact the company negatively. Loud quitters usually leave without notice, create a public scene, and post negative insights about the company on social media. Not only is loud quitting impacting the company brand, but it also causes damage to company morale and culture (Kelly, 2023). The team dynamics are also affected, and additional stress and uncertainty do increase among the remaining team members. Loud quitting may also contribute to a negative domino effect as other employees might start reconsidering their position, especially if the reasons for departure originate from the company (Ganesh, 2024).

| | Pros | Cons |
|----------------|---|---|
| Quiet quitting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More satisfying work-life balance. -Less stress and tendencies for burnout. -Employer awareness on the job-dissatisfaction. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Co-workers must take on additional work. -Not promoting an open communication culture. -Might miss out on a possible promotion. |
| Loud quitting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Getting one's voice heard. -Long-lasting impact on their workplace might help other employees. -Taking a stand on job conditions at large. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hurting own future job opportunities. -It is hurting the company's brand image. -Damage to team morale and culture. -Additional stress for the team after a sudden resignation. |

TABLE 1 Pros and cons of quiet and loud quitting

2.4 Quiet and Loud Quitting Across Generations

Quiet quitting is said to be Generation Z's gift to the business world because the TikTok trend was mostly supported by Generation Z and young Millennials. Generation Z employees started their careers during the pandemic and were introduced to a more relaxed working life. What others saw as a break from hustling Generation Z learned to see as a norm. When everyone was asked to return to the offices, Generation Z expressed their concerns about job dissatisfaction more vocally. Quiet quitting came after realising those concerns would not be heard (Atalay, Dağıstan, 2023).

Generation Z employees were also most likely the first ones who were dismissed during COVID-19 when companies had to let go of some of their employees. As the “generation quit”, Generation Z is said to change workplaces more hastily and not be as loyal to their employers as other generations. These young employees, however, do not feel any less loyal than the companies they work for. Companies are still struggling after COVID-19 with several things, such as component shortage and global inflation, which have led to big layoffs in many industries. That is why many younger employees were laid off, even if they would have been committed to their company (Kaplan, 2023).

Even if quiet quitting started as a TikTok trend, doing the bare minimum at work is a well-known phenomenon. One of the critical concepts in quiet quitting is disengagement, which up to 86% of employees worldwide feel at work, according to Professor Stephan Meier, Columbia Business School, interviewed by Fortune in 2022. In 2013, Gallup conducted a poll of engagement at work in the U.S., and 53% of Generation X reported not being engaged. This shows that disengagement is not a new phenomenon, and therefore, quiet quitting is not only for Generation Z, even if they did blow up the trend on social media (Hoffower, 2022; Sorenson, Garman, 2013).

There are several reasons why quiet quitting became so popular amongst the younger generation during COVID-19. The worldwide pandemic affected everyone socially, economically, and psychologically, as a traditional way of life was impossible. Suddenly, there was room to question the old when new everyday life was built. Creating new trends on social media is particularly popular amongst Generation Z users, and the lack of theoretical knowledge allows old phenomena to be recreated as social media trends (Atalay, Dağıstan, 2023). In research conducted in the UK, quiet quitting was compared to a decline in hours worked per year. According to that study, Generation Z working hours decreased the most in post-pandemic years, but a decline was also visible in Generation X hours. With these theories in mind, Generation Z employees tend to quit quietly more often, but Generation X employees are no less guilty of this behaviour (Hamilton, Jolles, Lordan, 2023).

Since loud quitting also started as a TikTok trend, it is only natural that Generation Z employees are the ones who have embraced it the most. Generation Z employees express their thoughts about company culture and well-being more loudly than any other generation (Pickup, 2023). However, according to research, 18% of the workforce globally is loudly quitting, which means that the trend is not bound to generational ranges (Gallup, 2023).

2.5 Generation Z

Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2012, is starting to make an impact on workplaces, consumption trends, technology, politics, and culture. This generation is said to have a new way of defining success in life and approaching their career. This might be because this generation was the first one to always have had internet access and is used to having machines doing the most manual and repetitive tasks; the assumptions for more advanced jobs might be there before even starting their career (Gomez, Mawhinney, Betts, n.d.).

Generations Z employees' expectations of their workplace are different in many ways. Generation Z employees value money the least of all generations, even if it remains the most important factor when looking for a job. If they had to choose between taking a well-paying but boring job or an interesting job that didn't pay well, the answers would be split evenly. Meanwhile, any other generation would have had more people taking well-paying jobs. Generation Z employees prioritize social activism more than previous generations and value employers demonstrating their commitment to societal challenges. They do not evaluate companies only by the products but also by company ethics, practices, and social impact (Gomez, Mawhinney, Betts, n.d.). At Columbia Law School, students built a website to grade each law firm in the U.S. based on their contributions to climate change. This project has helped students choose their future workplaces more thoughtfully and increased transparency in American law firms (Onesto, 2022).

Stereotypes of Generation Z are making it harder for them to be taken seriously in the job market. This generation is seen as depending on technology, always seeking new experiences with no commitment, and they are said to prefer digital

communication over face-to-face conversations (Gomez, Mawhinney, Betts, n.d.). A survey conducted by ResumeBuilder.com found that 74% of managers and company leaders believe that Generation Z is the most difficult generation to work with. Generation Z is not only seen as tech-dependant but also “not as hard-working, driven or resilient as other generations”. However, even if this generation is seen as tech-dependent, the most common reason why managers found them to be difficult to work with was a lack of technological skills, followed by a lack of effort and motivation (Resume Builder, 2023).

34% of those managers who say Generation Z is the most difficult to work with would rather hire Millennials and 30% would prefer Generation X. Millennials are seen as most productive and having the best technological skills. Generation X employees are also seen as more productive and honest. It is suggested that Generation Z should improve their way of communicating in person, be more open to feedback, and be more adaptable to change to improve how they are viewed at their workplace (Resume Builder, 2023).

Some managers do see Generation Z employees as innovative and adaptable since they question the existing operations and come up with new and improved ideas. However, some managers do not see this behaviour as innovative, but as a way of challenging the manager and not respecting them (Resume Builder, 2023). That might correlate with the fact that according to a survey conducted by Adobe in the US, 74% of Generation Z employees are comfortable giving feedback to their supervisors regardless of their position in the company (Adobe Communications Team, 2023).

Generation Z has a lot in common with Generation X since they were in most cases raised by them. Generation X is also known for having a strong feel for work-life balance because their parents have worked hard with no expected recognition. This different view of a more balanced life has been passed on by Generation X to Generation Z. Research claims that Generation Z might be even more hard-working than Millennials. However, they are not going to do the job at the expense of their mental health. The traditional work ethic that still lies behind many employees' decisions has created a fear of taking time off work since it's seen as laziness. Research shows that 55% of American employees did not use

their paid vacation days off work. The stigma of laziness is now easily laid upon all Generation Z employees who seek to have a healthy work-life balance. In addition, this generation has never been “offline” since they have always had internet access and a mobile phone. Considering that most jobs have become technical as they are done online on a phone or a computer, and it is easy to take work home, it is only healthy for this generation to draw a line between work and private life to aim for a good work-life balance (Onesto, 2022).

Some experts say loud quitting reflects Generation Z's work culture because they tend to take criticism personally and emotionally. Reacting to the manager's feedback, the employees quit loudly to feel more in charge of the situation. Whereas older generations have been more loyal to their workplace, Generation Z focuses on being on top of the situation and not worrying about commitment. Overall, younger employees tend to be more open about what they think of their employer. This could be an advantage for the employer if they care to listen to the employee, but otherwise, it might turn out to be bad press if the employee goes viral with their story (Gabert-Doyon, Thomas, 2024).

What Generation Z wants from their employer is obvious. They are seeking a job that helps them to make a difference, either their work should be purposeful, or the company should be doing something socially important. Generation Z also highly values support from their employer. This includes support on their work tasks as well as mental health support. They value flexibility in their work environment and good work-life balance (Tivian UK, n.d.). Generation Z employees also want to know their development opportunities in the company since, according to a study conducted by Adobe in the US, 50% of these young employees ranked not having a clear career path inside the company as one of the top reasons for turnover intentions (Adobe Communications Team, 2023).

2.6 Generation X

Generation X employees born between 1965 and 1980 are known as entrepreneurial, independent, and flexible, valuing work-life balance (Herrity, 2023). This kind of behaviour does originate from the influence of their parents and their

youth. The parents of Generation X had high divorce rates, which led to them being self-reliant by looking after themselves and their siblings (Tivian UK, n.d.). The X in the name of this generation, created by Douglas Coupland for his novel, originally stood for not being defined yet (Kagan, 2024). This generation was pessimistic and disobedient, and not ready to be put in a box (Rodriguez, 2016). Generation X as the smallest generation is often overlooked in research that considers different age groups. Between the Baby Boomer generation and Millennials, who often get the attention of researchers, Generation X is like the freewheeling middle child, who must make it on their own (Gorman, 2019).

Generation X employees started their careers during uncertain times and have been affected by several economic declines since then (Onesto, 2022). In general, Generation X is less wealthy and cannot consume stuff like the previous generation (Kagan, 2024). This uncertainty in work life has led to employees doing their jobs well but also arranging time for activities outside of their careers (Onesto, 2022). 25% of this generation has been working at their current company for more than 12 years. However, they will still value their work-life balance and leave, if necessary, unlike the previous generation of Baby Boomers who would have committed to their employer either way (Tivian UK, n.d.).

Regardless of the previous and more traditional generation of Baby Boomers, Generation X strived for a different kind of adulthood. This generation did not care as much for the traditional milestones of getting married or buying a house, but more for happiness and pursuing essential things. The rebellion they had younger turned into an entrepreneurial mindset and independence (Rodriguez, 2016). Their hardworking parents had no other choice than to dedicate their lives to work in a post-war setting. Generation X had to grow up looking at this lifestyle and this is the reason why they have decided to have a more balanced life valuing home and social life as well (Tivian UK, n.d.). This generation values work-life balance significantly in the post-pandemic setting. According to a survey conducted by EY in 2022, Generation X employees who were planning to resign from their jobs during the next year would consider staying at their company if doing their job at least partially remotely was an option (EY US, 2022).

According to research conducted by Workfront in the UK, over 50% thought Generation X was the hardest-working generation, and almost 60% thought they also had the highest work ethic (Leeming, 2016). Even if this generation is seen as the most hard-working, as the oldest people of Generation X start turning 60 next year some employers see the age as a disadvantage. Even employees with perfect backgrounds and impressive job experience might want to reconsider before leaving their current jobs since the stereotypes of older employees are starting to catch this generation. A person of a certain age is not considered open to learning new things, is not up to date on new technologies, and is not coming up with new ideas. Once again Generation X finds itself in the middle between Millennials with perfect technological skills and Baby Boomers who refuse to retire and let go of their leadership roles. HR managers suggest everyone leave graduation dates from resumes to prevent ageism. According to a survey conducted by AARP, around 80% of employees between the ages of 40 and 65 have either seen or faced ageism at work. Companies fear that older candidates are set in their ways and younger employees are considered more accepting and adaptable for their new roles. This leaves Generation X employees considered overqualified for job openings (Knight, 2024).

Generation X employees are clear about what they expect from their companies. As entrepreneurial and individualistic employees, Generation X is looking for freedom to do their job and not be micro-managed. They value a company that is open and supportive and not too formal or hierarchical. They appreciate it when development opportunities are available and know how to reach better positions if desired (Tivian UK, n.d.).

Generation X employees do not switch jobs for fun if their expectations are met. They are loyal to their employers until a certain point. During the Great Resignation, the trend of not returning to the offices after the pandemic lockdown but quitting instead, Generation X was at the top of the charts as 37% more 45–50-year-olds left their jobs compared to the year before. The reasons behind the Great Resignation lay behind not being able to continue working from home, having no work-life balance after returning to the office, and having, in general, a toxic work environment, which are all remarkable turnover factors for Generation X (Tivian UK, n.d.).

2.7 Factors Influencing Quitting Behaviour

2.7.1 Job Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

Job satisfaction is simply the level of happiness the employee feels and how much they enjoy their job. This covers the work itself, co-workers, managers, and policies at work. Companies benefit from focusing on employee job satisfaction as it reflects directly on job performance and, therefore, plays a vital role in company success. The perception of job satisfaction varies in different generations, and understanding the various points of view is essential to keeping the employees at the company (Fahed-Sreih 2020, p.1).

Job satisfaction can be measured by conducting interviews or questionnaires for the employees. Interviews are time-consuming and expensive but more personal. The employees can provide more detailed information about their experiences and elaborate on their responses through interviews. Questionnaires are effective in gathering responses from a larger company. The answers are more straightforward and more accessible for standardisation and analysis. However, suppose a questionnaire is the only tool for hearing the employee's thoughts on job satisfaction; individual answers get lost in the mass, and their dissatisfaction might not be observed in time (Spector, 1997).

Job satisfaction affects the level of commitment. Employees who are committed to their company identify with the organisation's goal and tend to keep working there (Fahed-Sreih 2020, p.35). Job dissatisfaction affects the whole company, and the most severe outcome is increased employee turnover. There are several reasons for job dissatisfaction, such as getting no recognition, little to no support from the managers, or being micro-managed. These factors cause employees to become disengaged and dissatisfied with their work, which increases quitting intentions. However, the most significant turnover factors are caused by the organisation not keeping its promises and not meeting expectations (Azeem, Bajwa, Shahzad, Aslam, 2020).

2.7.2 Work-life Balance

Work-life balance refers to the relationship between life outside of work and work. An excellent work-life balance usually means not working as much and dedicating time to other activities. However, experiencing a good work-life balance is highly subjective and depends on personal goals. The work-life balance mindset started after the two world wars when it became more common for women to work. The intention was to have a career and to be able to take care of the family (Kelliher, Richardson, Boiarintseva, 2019). Nowadays, all employees desire work-life balance to have more stability in all areas of life. A healthy work-life balance promises less stress and more satisfaction in all responsibilities (Parkes, Langford, 2008).

The concept of work-life balance has affected companies, forcing them to make their policies more flexible to prevent turnover. Some employees appreciate zero-hours contracts and freelancing or only having a part-time job to pursue their interests. According to research, those who work only up to 20 hours a week have a better work-life balance than those who work for up to 34 hours a week. This, however, depends on whether the reduced hours are voluntary or if the employee cannot get a full-time job they want or need (Kelliher, Richardson, Boiarintseva, 2019).

The company benefits from focusing on its employees' work-life balance because it increases motivation, productivity, and commitment towards the company. A significant connection exists between work-life balance and employee engagement, and companies benefit from it, as having employees motivated and engaged equals increased productivity (Siregar, Nasution, Absah, 2022). Some organisations have taken a stand against work-life balance by rewarding employees for working overtime and showing commitment towards the company. However, this strategy is not sustainable as research indicates a correlation between work-life balance and decreasing turnover intention (Jaharuddin, Zainol, 2019).

2.7.3 Organisational Culture and Management Style

Organisational culture consists of norms and values established over time, and like national cultures, they are hard to change once set. Company culture usually reflects the founders' values and formation history. Leaders of multinational companies should be aware of possible differences between national and organizational cultures, as they might clash. Culture is part of everyone's identity, and having two completely different operating models at home and work might be exhausting for the employee (Wright, 2021).

Research shows a correlation between employee turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and organisational culture. Keeping a positive organisational culture is essential to increasing productivity and employee engagement. Employees who do not share the same values as the company are more likely to burnout or quit their jobs. Employee's ethical, economic, or emotional values that do not align with the company values are usually those that cannot be overlooked (Wright, 2021).

Multiple studies show that there is a direct correlation between management and employee job satisfaction as well as turnover intentions. The manager creates and maintains the organisational culture that supports generating a satisfying work environment. A company's leaders should always stay objective since one of the most significant employee turnover factors is the manager's unequal treatment of employees. This behaviour causes friction between the manager, employee, and co-workers. Having a manager who is supportive, cooperative, and democratic is shown to create better job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Wright, 2021).

2.7.4 Economic and Social Factors

Salary is a significant factor that influences turnover intention. The company's compensation substantially correlates to job satisfaction and, therefore, to turnover intention. Usually, employees who are happy with their salaries do not want

to find another job and negotiate their salaries to the same level as in their previous job (Siregar, Maryati, 2021). The compensation should align with the work done as it influences the employees' performance and motivation. If the compensation is not excellent and the employee is not satisfied with their work, there is a high risk of resignation (Agustin, Samekto, 2023).

Another significant factor for turnover intention, especially for younger employees, is not having a clear career path. Both companies and employees benefit from the staff developing their skills and knowledge. It is always better for the company to promote someone familiar with its procedures instead of hiring a new person, and letting an existing employee enhance their skill set will keep them motivated and committed. Research shows that employees aware of possible development opportunities will likely keep their current jobs (Kasdorf, Kayaalp, 2022).

A reason to stay at a company other than getting reasonable compensation or knowing the development opportunities is having a meaningful job. Meaningfulness can be reached by sharing values with the company and contributing to the greater good or by having a job that is personally significant and feels worthwhile. Reaching meaningfulness is highly subjective because the leadership, organisational culture, policies, and social context should align with the employee's perceptions. Not having a meaningful job might lead to declining employee engagement and turnover intentions (Lysova, Allan, Dik, Duffy, Steger, 2019).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Method and Data Collection

Qualitative research aims to understand people's experiences and interpretations that are important to them. The goal is to observe respondents' messages and possible links between the given answers. Qualitative research collects information from subjective words and knowledge instead of objective numbers and figures. The interviewees are not seen as respondents but as informants for data collection. The researcher cannot be seen as completely independent of the respondents as they must build rapport and be sensitive to access the data (Saunders et al. 2019, p.179; Silverman, 2016).

Qualitative research is conducted using different observation and interview techniques. The chosen method should be consistent with the research question and desired results. A semi-structured interview allows the predetermined theme to be more flexible and adaptable to the interviewee's experience since the questions are not set in stone. Even more complicated questions are feasible since there is room for explanation and conversation. Participants may hesitate to answer a questionnaire because they cannot explain their actions; therefore, conducting interviews might be more beneficial with a sensitive research subject. People also tend to agree to be interviewed rather than answer a questionnaire, especially if the topic interests them, because they feel flattered by getting asked for an interview on an important topic. However, collecting reliable data through interviews can also be complicated since it relies on the rapport built between the interviewer and interviewee (Saunders et al. 2019, p.434, p.437, p.438, p.445).

The first few minutes of the interview are crucial for the success of data collection. The nature of the conversation does affect the outcome of the interview, as the interviewer's credibility and the interviewee's confidence are in line. In the beginning, the purpose and methods of the research should be explained, and any uncertainties clarified. Explaining data protection and anonymity also reduces the interviewee's anxieties. (Saunders et al. 2019, p.456).

A semi-structured interview aims to understand the interviewee's perspective, meaning the interviewer should concentrate on listening. One efficient way of ensuring no misunderstandings is repeating the given answers. Semi-structured interviews do not have specific questions that need to be answered but rather themes that need to be discussed. Questions related to those themes should still be formulated if the conversation does not cover the wanted themes. The focus should be on open questions because that allows the participant to describe the events thoroughly from their point of view. Probing questions are used to get more specific information and answers that need more explanation. Specific or closed questions in semi-structured interviews are usually only used as introductory for a new theme or to gather background information (Saunders et al. 2019, p.458-460).

Recording the interviews, as well as making notes, has several benefits. The notes are suitable for backup if the recording fails and for saving anything notable outside spoken words. In qualitative research, it is vital to note facial expressions, tone of voice, and any hesitation to understand the interviewee's experience fully. Audio recording allows the interviewer to concentrate on the interview and makes data analysis easier. When the interview has been recorded successfully, it can be re-listened as many times as needed, providing direct quotes from the interviews (Saunders et al. 2019, p.461).

3.2 Data Analysis

Analysing qualitative data is an interactive and reflective process. The collected data might be verbal, textual, or visual and should be analysed with specific implications. Due to its complexity, the data provides an opportunity for in-depth analysis of the reviewed phenomena. Qualitative data analysis is interactive since the process is done during and after the data collection. During the interview, the interviewer must listen carefully to any links between meanings and the collected data to ask further clarifying questions. This is why it is important to analyse every interview when it is done before continuing further with the data collection (Saunders et al. 2019, p.638, p.641).

In quantitative data analysis, the numbers need to be analysed. In qualitative data analysis, spoken words and experiences must be examined. Therefore, it is recommended that qualitative data be categorised and coded. Large amounts of non-standardised data can be complex if not coded into more summarised categories. Some qualitative analytical techniques focus on analysing occurring themes or spoken topics, while others focus on behaviour and the use of language (Saunders et al. 2019, p.643).

The usual procedure when coding qualitative data is to transcribe the recording first. The transcription should contain what is said precisely and by whom, the tone, choice of words, and other non-verbal communication. The transcripts can be summarised into briefer statements to help find the recurring themes that can be turned into codes. The codes might change as more interviews are analysed (Saunders et al. 2019, p.644, p.645, p.649).

The general technique in qualitative data analysis is thematic analysis. The data is coded into themes or patterns relevant to the research question. Coding provides a logical and structural yet flexible system for analysing complex qualitative data. By coding the data, it is given a label that allows recurring themes to be found and answers within the theme compared with each other. Thematic analysis is the most general form of qualitative data analysis because of its unique qualities. It suits most qualitative research strategies and is not as prescriptive as other techniques (Saunders et al. 2019, p.651, p.660).

3.3 Interview Research

In this thesis, the research topic was approached with qualitative research techniques by interviewing employees from two generations and two HR specialists. By conducting semi-structured theme interviews, it was possible to investigate the interviewees' thoughts and experiences on quitting their jobs, the extent of quitting trends, and what is expected from employers. HR specialists were interviewed to understand the manager's point of view better and get affirmation for the results. The research was conducted as deductive independent research, and themes for the interviews were drawn from existing literature.

Sixteen people were interviewed for this research. Eight interviewees represented Generation Z employees, six were from Generation X, and two HR specialists represented the employer's point of view. Fourteen of the interviews were internet-mediated, and two were conducted in person. Because of the sensitive nature of the research topic and for building rapport during the interviews, the participants cannot be recognised from the results.

The selection of employee participants was utterly random, and the HR specialists were selected for their expertise, one from Generation Z and one from Generation X. This research aimed to get a realistic view of the differences between the two generations. That is why the participants all have different backgrounds from different fields. The only two criteria for participating in this research were belonging to one of the examined generations and having experienced quitting a job.

The main research question examined generational differences between quiet and loud quitting. The aim was to understand generational differences in quitting their jobs, determine to what extent quitting trends are followed at workplaces, and explore what kinds of expectations or requirements employees have regarding their workplaces.

The interviews with the employee participants were semi-structured, meaning the questions were only partially predetermined. The first two questions determined which generation the participants belonged to and ensured they had working experience and quit their jobs. After the background questions, the participants were asked to talk freely about their last jobs and how they quit. By allowing the participants to explain their experiences freely, they could focus on the parts that were significant for them, and the research got a broader view of the quitting phenomenon. Specific themes were predetermined and separately asked if not brought up by the participants in their descriptions. The themes included communication with co-workers, social media, and work-life expectations. These questions were determined to understand the background for their resignation and to see if the participants were following the trends of quiet and loud quitting (Appendix 1).

The interviews with the two HR specialists were more structured. The questions were designed based on the employee participants' answers to get a manager's perspective of the events. HR specialists generally work closely with employee engagement, occupational well-being, and the quitting processes. The interview questions allowed the HR specialists to bring up any noticeable differences between the two generations by talking freely about employees' expectations and behaviour (Appendix 2).

All participants were briefed beforehand about the goal and the purpose of the thesis. The participants were informed of the interview themes before set meetings and told that they would be asked a few background questions and then to freely share their experiences. It was a considered decision not to ask directly about quiet and loud quitting since the topics are sensitive and not easy to admit during an interview. By not asking about these phenomena, it was possible to notice the trends from the participants' experiences and get more information on the underlying reasons. The HR specialists got a predetermined list of questions so they could prepare for the interviews. Quiet and loud quitting and the generations' ages were explained in the document in case they were unaware of them.

Each interview was scheduled in advance, either as an internet-mediated or in-person session and all were recorded for later transcription. Before each interview, the interviewee was informed about recording, transcribing, and disposing of the saved material after the research. The transcriptions included only valuable information regarding the detected themes, leaving out all confidential material, such as names or companies.

The transcribed interviews were coded into categories and analysed, reflecting the theory. Three themes regarding generational differences were detected from the given answers: reasons behind the resignations, appreciated qualities in a job, and communication. These themes were analysed separately to get an overview of the gathered data and then applied to the prior theory.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Prevalence of Quiet and Loud Quitting

This thesis's main aim was to determine if there were any generational differences in quiet and loud quitting between Generation Z and Generation X employees, to what extent Generation Z employees are following these trends, and whether Generation X employees also quit like this. The results indicate that quiet quitting is more common than loud quitting. 3 out of 14 (21,4%) participants' behaviour shared some characteristics with quiet quitting and 1 (7,1%) participant's way of quitting was a borderline case of loud quitting. Still, no clear instances of either quitting behaviour were found that would have been part of the post-pandemic trends. These four events had more to do with individual experiences and the workplace than the generation or trend participation. Some differences between the two generations' quitting behaviour were found regarding communication, reasons for resignation, and social media usage.

The two HR specialists interviewed from the managers' point of view agree with the findings of this research. They point out that Generation Z employees are not hard to work with but have different career approaches and expectations. Generation Z employees tend to seek meaningfulness in their jobs, and one of the critical tasks of a manager is to remind them why they are doing this job and what significance it has. Once Generation Z employees realise the meaning of their work and find a job they are passionate about, they tend to commit to their jobs just as well as employees from other generations.

Company leaders might have employees from four generations to lead simultaneously. The HR specialists point out that employees' expectations are naturally different if they are two years into working life or retiring in two years. The leaders are responsible for leading the employees consistently and systematically while being aware of the differences between everyone's career paths.

Quiet and loud quitting have not been that visible in the companies, but according to the HR specialists, there has been an apparent change in the way of working. Employees of all generations seem more peaceful in general, and they have a

healthier view of work-life balance. Two participants whose behaviour shared characteristics with quiet quitting were Generation X employees, which is 33,3% of Generation X participants. One was a Generation Z employee, 12,5% of all Generation Z participants. Both Generation X participants loved their jobs, but poor management and lack of respect from their employers made them lose interest and emotionally disconnected from the job. The one Generation Z participant whose behaviour shared characteristics with quiet quitting had decided not to take any extra responsibility without additional pay. According to them, they used to take on all kinds of work that did not fit into their job description and extra responsibility because they were young and scared to lose their job if they did not go that extra mile for the company. Nowadays, they have decided not to take on any additional work without getting proper compensation.

HR specialists agree that older people tend to quit quietly more easily than younger employees. At some point, older people might start lacking motivation to learn new skills or take on extra responsibilities, especially when the company hires younger employees. This is most likely not a protest towards the employer but more of a change of attitude towards the job when retirement is in sight. The ones who do not feel this way usually stay in the companies longer than their retirement age.

The one loud quitting incident was with a Generation Z participant. Their workplace had several issues that led to this event, such as no training when they started the job, a shortage of employees, and a manager who was rarely available and had no management or people skills. The team seemed very dissatisfied with the work environment, which affected the general work atmosphere. On their last day of probation, the participant emailed their manager that they would no longer return to work. This can be referred to as loud quitting because they left rapidly in a provoking way. However, they did not post anything on social media about the case; instead, they talked openly about the company and the manager with friends and family. 85% of all participants mentioned that they did not want to go public with their resignation because they did not want to burn any bridges. They stated that even if they were displeased with the employer, they still wanted to complete the resignation professionally.

4.2 Secondary Research Problems

The secondary research problems considered generational differences in expectations in work life, communication, and social media usage. Some generational differences could be drawn from these topics. Generation Z participants' most valued qualities they seek in a new job are flexibility, a meaningful job description, and a good manager and team: Generation X valued company transparency, the feeling of security, and an employer who cares for its employees. For Generation Z participants the job needed to have flexible working hours, an open communication culture, a job description that was in line with current studies, and a manager who listened. Generation X participants wanted an employer investing in well-being, a stable company with a secure future, and shared values.

The reasons for leaving previous workplaces somewhat correlate with the participants' expectations. Generation Z participants had more external reasons for resignation, and Generation X participants had personal reasons. They both, however, shared reasons that had to do with the management and work environment. Generation Z participants left their jobs because they were moving to another city, got another job offer, or began their studies. They also mentioned unprofessional or no immediate managers, a toxic work environment, and a lack of a team as reasons for resignation. Generation X participants quit their jobs because the company's future was unstable, its reputation was terrible, or they lacked motivation. Other reasons for resignation were managers who were not open to feedback, having values different from the company's, and getting no respect.

The participants were asked about the importance of remote work and compensation. Most of both generations did not see the opportunity to work remotely as important. When the participants were asked if they would choose a job they disliked with a good salary over a job they liked but did not pay well, the generations had different opinions. Compensation was important for nearly every Generation X participant, compared to Generation Z participants, of whom only three out of eight saw compensation as important.

| Remote work | Important | Not important |
|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| Generation Z | 3 | 5 |
| Generation X | 2 | 4 |

TABLE 2 Importance of remote work

| Compensation | Important | Not important |
|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| Generation Z | 3 | 5 |
| Generation X | 5 | 1 |

TABLE 3 Importance of compensation

Communication habits when quitting a job also differed between the two generations. Generation Z participants were either open about everything or did not talk about their resignation at all. Generation X participants were more open about searching for another job but did not want to talk about the resignation itself. The HR specialists agree partly with these results. According to their experience, older employees come to speak with the manager about looking for another job or being head-hunted, which gives the employer a chance to convince them to stay. Younger employees are also open about their resignations with co-workers but do not tend to discuss them with the manager before deciding to leave. When employees come to resign, it is usually too late to negotiate a pay raise or new responsibilities.

| Generation Z | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| Did you announce your resignation, not your manager? | 5 | 3 |
| Did you tell your coworkers about searching for another job? | 5 | 3 |
| Did you tell the reasons behind your resignation? | 5 | 3 |

TABLE 4 Generation Z communication during resignation

| Generation X | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| Did you announce your resignation, not your manager? | 2 | 4 |
| Did you tell your coworkers about searching for another job? | 5 | 1 |
| Did you tell the reasons behind your resignation? | 2 | 4 |

TABLE 5 Generation X communication during resignation

The official resignation methods for the two generations were similar. Most participants had a face-to-face conversation or video call with their supervisor, during which they said they would resign. The only difference between the two generations' resignation methods was that two Generation Z participants resigned by sending a text message to their supervisor. This method was in line with common communication styles in their companies.

| Official resignation | Generation Z | Generation X |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Conversation | 4 | 4 |
| Text message | 2 | |
| Email | 2 | 1 |
| Official form | 1 | 1 |

TABLE 6 Official resignation method

Only two of the participants usually post about their work on social media and posted about their last resignations. These posts, however, did not judge the workplace but told of the end of an era in their lives. Many participants had LinkedIn profiles but were inactive or only announced getting a new job, not resigning from one.

| Generation Z | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| Did you post about your resignation on social media? | 2 | 6 |
| Do you usually post about your work on social media? | 2 | 6 |

TABLE 7 Generation Z social media habits

| Generation X | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| Did you post about your resignation on social media? | | 6 |
| Do you usually post about your work on social media? | | 6 |

TABLE 8 Generation X social media habits

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Generational Differences in Quitting Trends

The purpose of this research was to determine if there were any generational differences between Generation Z and Generation X in quiet and loud quitting. These two phenomena started as TikTok trends, and Generation Z got most of the blame for them (Atalay, Dağistan, 2023; Pickup, 2023). Generation Z and Generation X employees value work-life balance and an open communication culture. Having trouble with these two aspects in a company is the core reason employees quit quietly or loudly (Fung, 2022). Because of these shared values, the research aimed to clarify if Generation X employees also follow the trends and to what extent Generation Z follow them.

The research results indicate that 3 out of 14 or 21% of the participants acted in a way that could be interpreted as quiet quitting. 1 of 14 or 7% of the participants had a resignation experience that was borderline loud quitting. These results do not align entirely with Gallup's study about employee engagement. According to the survey, 59% of employees globally are quiet quitting, and 18% are loud quitting. The remaining 23% of the employees are the ones thriving at work. Gallup describes them as employees who "...find their work meaningful and feel connected to the team and their organization. They feel proud of their work and take ownership of their performance, going the extra mile for teammates and customers." (Gallup, 2023).

The differences in results can be explained by not drawing harsh lines between thriving at work, quiet quitting, and loud quitting and having different interpretations of the phenomena. In this thesis, many interviewees described their previous workplace as satisfactory but not their dream job. They were motivated to do their job as well as possible until their resignation but did not find their work meaningful or feel highly connected to their organisation. If connection or commitment indicated thriving at work, everyone participating in the research would have been considered quiet quitters, as they all decided to resign.

Quiet quitting is not unambiguous, as it has many different interpretations. The most common description of this phenomenon is not exceeding expectations when not getting rewarded for the made sacrifices. Quiet quitters proceed to do their jobs but avoid taking any additional responsibility if they do not feel valued. According to Atalay and Dağıstan (2023), these characteristics, however, are not new concepts to the existing body of literature in management as there are a lot of theories of employee engagement and motivation out there that were recognised long before COVID-19. The global pandemic created a perfect opportunity for employees to reflect on their working habits and life expectations, which explains why such trends were created.

Atalay and Dağıstan (2023) also argue that researchers were not the ones to introduce quiet quitting and should, therefore, be considered a grassroots phenomenon. The concepts of quiet and loud quitting were introduced in TikTok as something entirely new, even if similar behaviour is already recognised under different names in the academic world. Studies show that employees who lack motivation or connection to their organisation now describe themselves as quiet quitters with no further knowledge of the phenomenon.

Loud quitting is also interpreted in various ways by different parties. Forbes describes loud quitting in the most well-known way. The employee leaves their job dramatically without further notice; they make sure that co-workers know precisely why they quit, and they might even post about it on social media (Kelly, 2023). Gallup, on the other hand, sees loud quitting as being actively disengaged. They describe loud quitters as employees who "...take actions that directly harm the organization, undercutting its goals and opposing its leaders." (Gallup, 2023). This description differs from the more commonly known one as it does not mention employees resigning from their jobs.

This is what makes comparing generational differences in quitting behaviour difficult. Younger people tend to be more up-to-date on social media events and describe their behaviour according to the latest trends. Older people might not have heard of the newest trends and, therefore, do not identify with them. In addition, when employees say they are quiet or loud quitting, they might mean dif-

ferent things, as there is no official academic theory or description of the phenomena. Everyone might have different views on them. This is why, in this research, participants were not asked directly about quiet or loud quitting but to describe their resignation experience instead.

The outcome of this research differs from the common idea that Generation Z employees are the ones quiet quitting their jobs. The results show that two Generation X employees quit quietly, which is 33,3% of this generation's participants. For Generation Z, the percentage of quiet quitting participants was 12,5%. If the behaviour is inspected, not the trends, it can be stated that Generation X employees practice quiet quitting more often than Generation Z.

Loud quitting behaviour is seemingly not bound to any generation but to individuals practising it. Generation Z employees are more vocal about issues in their companies but do not want to go as far as loud quitting any more than Generation X employees do. Many interviewees from both generations said that even if they were displeased with their employer, they still wanted to handle the resignation cleanly and not burn bridges. They thought about their futures and were afraid that resigning in a public way would affect their future employment. In addition, loud quitting is most likely not as common as it is believed to be. Gallup (2023) stated that 18% of employees globally are loud quitting, but they see it as active disengagement. If only employees who quit dramatically were considered loud quitters, then the results globally would most likely be closer to the results of this research, where only 7% of all participants quit loudly.

5.2 Factors Contributing to Quitting Trends

Job satisfaction is essential for employee performance and commitment and is significant in company success (Fahed-Sreih, 2020, p.1). Those four participants in this research who had either quit quietly or loudly in their previous workplace were all dissatisfied with their employer and had tried to express their feelings for nothing. They all said they had discussed what was bothering them with their supervisor, but nothing had changed. Two of the four participants reported that they had worked at the same company for years but had not had performance

reviews or in-depth feedback sessions with their supervisor in a long time. The happiness and commitment of employees should be measured regularly by conducting surveys or interviews to ensure employee satisfaction (Spector, 1997).

For three of the four participants, the main reason for their chosen behaviour was the company culture and management style they were exposed to. Even if they were all part of a team, they felt they had no support or respect as employees. Either their supervisors were constantly changing, or their supervisors had no management skills. All 14 participants mentioned something about management in their interviews, either as reasons for resignation or as expectations in a new workplace. A supportive, cooperative manager who treats everyone equally is critical to organisational commitment (Wright, 2021).

For the one remaining Generation Z employee, work-life balance was the main reason for quiet quitting. They enjoyed their job and were satisfied with their management, salary, and job description. Yet, they decided not to take on additional tasks or responsibilities if they did not get proper compensation. The question remains: If they are happy and engaged in their work but do not go that extra mile for the company, are they quiet quitting? According to human resource specialist Nikki Miles, interviewed by the New York Times, the compensation should always match the done work, and there should not be any unspoken requirements of going above and beyond for the company with no additional pay (Krueger, 2022). However, the general description of a quiet quitter is someone who will not put in any extra effort or work overtime for no shown appreciation (Newport, 2022). It remains to be seen if this kind of quiet quitting behaviour will become the new norm where employees' extra efforts are required to be compensated or if the hustle culture will return after some time.

5.3 Limitations of Study

The most significant limitation of this research is the small sample size. Even if the results resemble existing data to some extent, a bigger sample size would make the research more trustworthy and generalisable.

There is also a lack of prior research and academic articles on quiet and loud quitting. As Atalay and Dağıstan (2023) stated, these trends do not have a theoretical background but are introduced by practitioners, complicating the literature review of the research problem.

The topic of resignation is sensitive, which might be why there is not much research on it. Resignation experiences are also highly individual, which makes their generalisation problematic. In this research, a questionnaire about the participants' previous workplaces could have been sent to them, and interviews could have been conducted based on them. Even if rapport was built in many ways with the interviewees, some participants might have understated the events because of the topic's sensitivity.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should study the same topic with a bigger sample size. The subject could be discussed with more in-depth interviews or a widely distributed detailed questionnaire to support generalisation.

Future research should also include Millennials to widen the bigger picture of generational differences. This research concentrates on Generation Z and Generation X because they share similar values that affect quitting behaviour. Including Millennials in the study would affirm similarities between the two generations.

Quiet and loud quitting both started as post-pandemic TikTok trends. This thesis was written a year after the World Health Organization ended the Public Health Emergency of International Concern declaration on COVID-19 (World Health Organization, 2023). It is suggested that these quitting trends should be reviewed after some years to confirm if they remained short trends or if they left a mark in the companies' everyday lives.

6 CONCLUSION

This thesis aims to clarify the differences between Generation Z and Generation X employees by inspecting their resignation habits. After COVID-19, the view on work in the future changed as many employees decided to stop taking part in the hustle culture and focus on work-life balance instead. As a result, TikTok trends of quiet and loud quitting were created to promote pursuing other things outside of work and to refer to better job conditions at large.

Generation Z employees embraced these TikTok trends faster than any other generation. This young generation is seen stereotypically as unproductive and uncommitted, and blaming them for these resignation trends seems natural. However, Generation X employees also have a strong feeling for work-life balance, and especially after COVID-19, they have reconsidered what success means in their lives. This thesis aimed to determine if these resignation trends were only for Generation Z employees or if Generation X employees were also behaving like this.

The research problem was approached by conducting semi-structured interviews with employees from Generation Z and Generation X. Two HR specialists were also interviewed to understand the bigger picture from a manager's point of view. The interviews were then transcribed, and frequently occurring themes were noted. These themes were inspected more closely, and possible links between answers were studied.

The interviewees were not asked directly about quiet or loud quitting but to describe their behaviour during the latest resignation. The results showed that 12,5% of Generation Z employees' behaviour could be considered quiet quitting, whereas for Generation X, the percentage is 33,3%. These results differ from the common idea that Generation Z employees quit quietly more often than other generations. The interviewed HR specialists agree with these findings. They stated that Generation Z employees are very committed and motivated when their expectations are met. On the other hand, Generation X employees have been working for a long time and, therefore, could avoid taking on new responsibilities or working overtime.

According to this research, loud quitting did not occur as often as quiet quitting. Only one resignation by a Generation Z employee could be considered loud quitting, and none by Generation X. Nearly all participants stated that even if they were displeased with their employer, they did not want to burn bridges. Many participants chose to resign professionally in case they had to contact their former employer in the future.

Quiet and loud quitting were both introduced by practitioners, and there is no academic theory behind these phenomena. This explains the many interpretations of these trends and why different parties have different views of their occurrence. However, it is true that Generation Z and Generation X employees have different views on success and life expectations. Generation Z employees seek more flexible jobs that allow them to pursue their other passions. Generation X employees appreciate security and stability in a company so they can relax and have balance in their lives. However, taking part in these resignation trends cannot be said to be bound to a certain generation but to the individual and the company.

Leaders should not underestimate Generation Z employees solely based on predetermined stereotypes. They should take the time to get to know this young generation and adapt their management style to the changes in the world. Once they find meaning in their jobs and know their development opportunities in the company, these Generation Z employees are not that different from the older generations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview Questions for Employees

These questions were used to support the semi-structured interviews. Every interview did not retain the same structure, but these topics were discussed with everyone.

Background

1. Age
2. Years in working life (approximately)

Theory

1. What made you switch jobs the last time?
2. Could you tell me more about the last time you quit? Why? How?
 - a. Were you motivated until the end?
3. Did you talk to your coworkers about searching for another job?
4. Did you tell your coworkers the reasons behind your resignation?
5. Did you tell your coworkers you have quit, or did you wait for your manager to announce it?
6. Did you post on social media that you have quit?
7. Do you usually post about your work life on social media?
8. Why did you choose to resign like this?
9. What features are you looking for and appreciate when applying for a new job?
 - a. Is the possibility of remote work important for you?
 - b. How much does the compensation mean to you?

Appendix 2. Interview Questions for HR specialists

1(2)

1. Study shows that 74% of managers consider Gen Z employees as the most difficult generation to work with as they lack effort, motivation, and productivity. Have you noticed a radical difference between Gen Z compared to Gen X?
2. Gen Z is known to have a new way of approaching their career and defining success in life. Is this noticeable?
3. Does Gen Z employees have different requirements regarding their job?
4. Are Gen Z and Gen X employees different from each other? How?
5. Is there a difference in how Gen Z and Gen X employees quit?
6. Has quiet and loud quitting trends been visible?

Gen X – born in 1965-1980

Millennials – born in 1981-1996

Gen Z – born in 1997-2010

Quiet quitting

Quiet quitting became a TikTok trend in 2022 after TikTok user Zaiad Khan made a video of it that went viral. He emphasized that quiet quitting does not mean that employees are literally quitting their jobs but making a silent statement instead. There are many different interpretations of quiet quitting since for some it means checking mentally out from work and others see it as not accepting additional work without additional pay. The employee continues to do the work described in their contract but does not take on any additional tasks or responsibility. However, quiet quitting can be summarized as not quitting your job but quitting the idea of going above and beyond. Quiet quitting is often a result of poor employee satisfaction and culture of conversation. For example, the employee might not get the recognition deserved from their work, the opportunities for advancement are not clear or the work environment is not motivating.

Loud quitting

Loud quitting is a countereffect to the same phenomenon as quiet quitting, but not as passive. Employees who are unhappy with the company not only quit but do it dramatically. Loud quitting is not about yelling the phrase “I quit” and storming out of the office but rather about expressing the reasons behind their resignation openly. Employees would walk into their superior’s office to tell them that they are not only quitting, but they are done being overworked and underpaid. Loud quitters would announce their departure in a triumphant tone or even talk negatively of their employer on different digital platforms and make sure that colleagues knew exactly why they are leaving. By loud quitting employees aim to make a long-lasting impact on their workplace and refer to better job conditions at large.