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# Designing a Supportive Work Environment That Meets Expectations of Generationally Diverse Workforce

**Abstract:**

This article examines the changing dynamics of a workforce that spans multiple generations, highlighting the essential role of a supportive work environment in boosting employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention. As globalisation and technological progress change workplace expectations, organisations must navigate the challenge of aligning their operational strategies with the unique preferences of different age cohorts, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z. The article begins with reviewing the historical development of the work environment concept, shifting from an emphasis on physical workspace attributes to a comprehensive understanding that includes psychological and social aspects. It identifies significant variations in work environment expectations among generations, such as preferences for leadership styles, work-life balance, and opportunities for career advancement. It suggests customised strategies for creating supportive workplace designs that address the specific

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needs of each age group. By recognising generational differences and promoting an inclusive culture, organisations can utilise the strengths of a diverse workforce, ultimately achieving long-term success in a competitive job market. The findings highlight the importance of adapting Human Resource Management practices to align with the evolving expectations of employees, thereby increasing organisational resilience and fostering innovation in a rapidly changing business environment. The article concludes with a proposed research framework aimed at addressing the identified knowledge gaps and guiding future investigations in the field.

**Keywords:** generation BB, generation X, generation Y, generation Z, generational diversity, supportive work environment

**JEL:** M54

## 1. Introduction

The work environment has significantly evolved due to societal changes, technological advancements, and shifting organisational paradigms. Early research emphasised physical workspace characteristics, focusing on safety and ergonomics to enhance productivity and worker health, as seen during the Industrial Revolution with scholars such as Mayo (1945) and Taylor (2011). Over time, the focus expanded to include organisational culture and employee behaviours, highlighting the importance of a supportive environment for employee well-being and organisational success. Today, the work environment is viewed holistically, encompassing physical, psychological, and social dimensions, as defined by Briner (2000).

Globalisation and technological innovation have transformed the workplace, facilitating remote work and altering employee expectations. While digital communication tools offer autonomy, they also introduce challenges such as job insecurity and technology overload. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated trends toward remote and hybrid work models, prompting organisations to reevaluate their operational frameworks and employee engagement strategies to prioritise health and well-being.

As different generations work alongside each other, organisations have become aware of the profound differences in how age cohorts envision their ideal work environments. Understanding these generational features and needs allows for the optimisation of employee strengths, boosting engagement and satisfaction, leading to higher tenure and better cooperation (Jurkiewicz, 2000; Hansen, Leuty, 2012).

The recruitment and retention of valuable employees have become challenging due to shifting demographic and generational trends. The ageing population contributes to an older workforce while creating a potential shortage of highly skilled younger workers. Additionally, rapid advancements in digital technologies necessitate new skill sets, complicating the hiring process as generational values reshape career trajectories.

Organisations must establish a supportive work environment to secure a high-calibre workforce. By addressing the unique expectations of various generations, organisations can improve employee engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty, contributing to long-term success in a competitive labour market.

This article outlines the concept of a positive work environment and investigates generational differences in expectations related to work environment, motivational factors, leadership style, work-life balance, and career advancement opportunities, proposing supportive workplace designs for each age cohort.

Key research questions include:

## 2. How can a supportive work environment be defined, and what is its role in aligning employee and organisational expectations?

1. What are the distinctions in work environment expectations among different generations?
2. What approaches can organisations adopt to create a supportive work environment catering to diverse employee needs?

The article is structured as follows: it first discusses the concept of work environment, then presents an overview of generational expectations in the labour market, followed by proposals for supportive work environment designs for each age cohort.

### 2.1. Methods

In this research endeavour, the author chose to employ a narrative literature review method instead of a systematic one. A systematic literature review has traditionally been considered superior because of a clearly defined research question, a more rigorous methodological approach resulting in high replicability, and the fact that it is less prone to bias compared to narrative reviews (Greenhalgh, Thorne, Malterud, 2018). Nevertheless, the latter methodology might be a justified choice in selected cases and can prove particularly beneficial in examining emerging fields – such as work environment expectations of the youngest generation entering the workforce. The narrative review methodology enables a broader contextual exploration (Baumeister, Leary, 1997) despite relatively low availability of publications and their very diverse nature. It allows for flexibility in addressing multiple research questions rather than being confined to a single, narrow inquiry, fosters a deeper understanding, encourages analytical critical reflection, and facilitates drawing of original conclusions rather than merely reproducing existing data (Greenhalgh, Thorne, Malterud, 2018). This method is particularly suitable if the scientific objective is to move beyond strict inclusion criteria for data in order to provide a holistic view, summarise and integrate

the current literature in a descriptive manner, and enrich the overall discourse on the subject. Finally, it can establish a foundation for suggesting new research frameworks for future investigations, thereby facilitating further exploration and advancement in nascent areas of study.

### 3. Theoretical Background

#### 3.1. Evolution of the Work Environment Concept

##### Early definitions and contemporary understanding of work environment

The perception of the work environment has undergone significant changes over the years, reflecting alterations in societal values, technological advancements, and organisational structures. Initially, research focused primarily on the physical aspects of the work environment, highlighting factors such as safety, ergonomics, and workspace design. For example, during the Industrial Revolution, researchers stressed the significance of physical conditions in factories, which had a direct impact on worker productivity and health. Taylor (1911) advocated for the establishment of work performance standards and processes based on research and observation rather than relying on traditional 'rules of thumb.' In the 1930s and 1940s, Mayo (1945) explored the social dimensions of the work environment, revealing the gap between technological progress and communication challenges in the workplace. In subsequent decades, scholars began to examine the concept of organisational culture (Jacques, 1951; Hofstede, 1991; Schein, 1992; Lazear, 1995; Ravasi, Schultz, 2006; Flamholtz, Randle, 2011; Gorton, Zentefis, 2019), along with shared values and beliefs (Donaldson, Lorsch, 1983; Kotter, Heskett, 1992; Cremer, 1993; Van den Steen, 2004; 2005), as well as attitudes and behaviours (Hackman, Oldham, 1976; Kahn, 1990; O'Reilly, Chatman, 1996; Hatch, Schultz, 2002; Saks, 2006). This research has shaped the understanding of a supportive environment and its effects on employee well-being, as well as the long-term success and sustainability of organisations.

The modern view of the work environment adopts a more comprehensive and holistic approach, incorporating various dimensions beyond mere physical conditions. It can be defined as the setting where individuals carry out their tasks, encompassing the physical space, job characteristics (such as task complexity and workload), the broader organisational context (including culture and history), and certain external factors (such as the local labour market conditions) (Briner, 2000). Ramadhan and Defrizal (2024) classify the work environment into two categories: physical and non-physical work environments. The physical work environment includes all tangible conditions surrounding the workplace that can affect employees, either directly or indirectly. This aspect is crucial for employee productivity, satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being. In contrast, the non-physical work

environment pertains to various elements of work relationships and communication, including interactions with supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates, which contribute to a collaborative and positive workplace culture.

### Changes in the work environment caused by technological advancement

Sociological and technological developments, along with major global events, have greatly influenced the evolution of the work environment concept. Factors such as information and communication technology (ICT), globalisation, increased awareness of mental and physical health, and the COVID-19 pandemic have had the most profound impact on workplace settings in recent decades.

Digitalisation, automation, and artificial intelligence have altered labour market dynamics and the relationship between employers and employees, facilitating remote work and equipping workers with efficient tools for information gathering and processing, greater independence, and more time to concentrate on strategic tasks. Nonetheless, this transition has brought about challenges, including job loss due to automation and the ongoing need for skill enhancement.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a major driver of change, hastening the adoption of remote and hybrid work models and transforming workplace interactions. It highlighted the dual aspects of remote work, providing advantages such as employees' flexibility and cost reductions for organisations while also raising issues related to productivity, feelings of isolation, communication difficulties, and adaptation challenges faced by new employees. As organisations work towards a return to in-person operations, many are implementing hybrid models that blend remote and office work, reflecting a shift in employee expectations and organisational approaches.

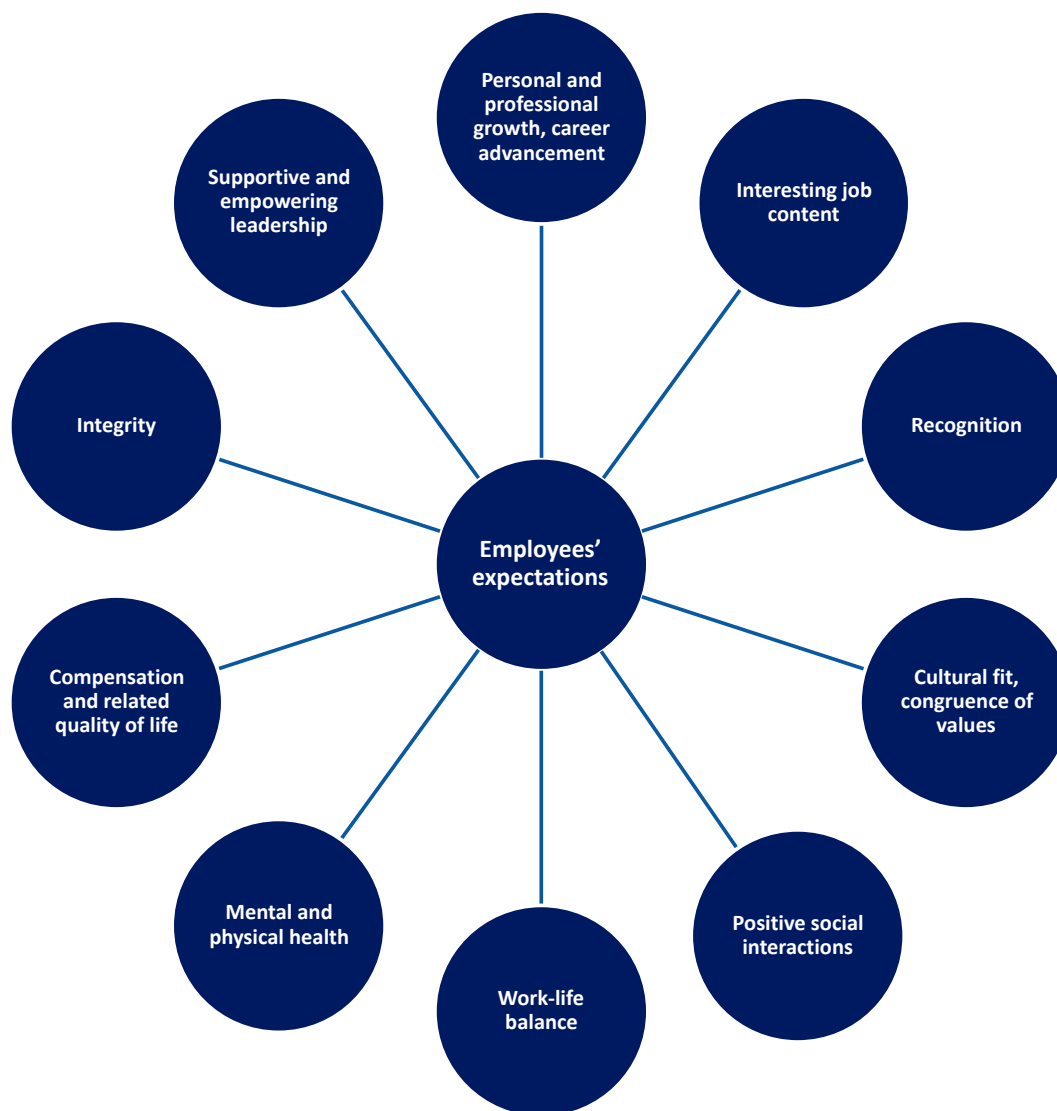
Current trends emphasise the link between physical and mental health in work settings. Studies show that factors such as ergonomics, air quality, and workplace design play a crucial role in employee well-being. Organisations are increasingly expected to prioritise health and wellness in their workplace strategies, with younger generations seeking employers that align with their values around health and well-being.

This transformation highlights the necessity for organisations to acknowledge societal and industrial changes, as well as the resulting shifts in employee expectations, and to formulate and execute suitable adaptation strategies. Additionally, they must continuously foster a culture of engagement, innovation, productivity, well-being, and resilience.

### Work environment components

The work environment plays a crucial role in human fulfilment, as it relates to the surrounding reality and the experiences that foster personal development (Jakimiuk, 2017) and the satisfaction of various needs. It has the potential to address the diverse demands of employees while aligning them with the corresponding expectations of the organisation.

Figure 1 illustrates the most commonly mentioned expectations of employees.



**Figure 1.** Different dimensions of employees' expectations

**Source:** own elaboration based on the literature review (multiple authors).

The personal and professional development of employees is a crucial requirement for many, serving as a catalyst for motivation, engagement, and a hopeful outlook for the future within an organisation (Jia-Jun, Hua-Ming, 2022). This growth is facilitated by a nurturing workplace, which includes the planning and execution of development initiatives such as formal education, hands-on experiences, professional networking, and assessments of personality, skills, and competencies that aid in advancing employees' careers (Noe, Clarke, Klein, 2014). Jakimiuk (2017) suggests that employees thrive in environments that foster accountability for their actions and encourage the innovative use of their skills. A robust sense of self-worth and positive interpersonal relationships promote personal engagement and the pursuit of set goals, leading to meaningful participation in the workplace.

Another role of the development measures is to foster a flexible and adaptable workforce that can effectively respond to and manage change, while also being prepared to embrace technological advancements (Salas et al., 2012). In an environment where companies, both within

and outside a particular industry, are competing for talent, development programmes are crucial for helping organisations not only to cultivate and nurture their employees but also to retain them (Jha, Bhattacharyya, 2016).

Organisational culture embodies the values and beliefs of a company and refers to the behavioural norms and expectations that define a work environment, influencing how individuals within organisations approach their jobs, establish priorities, and perform tasks (Glisson, 2015). When this culture aligns well with employees' values, it can facilitate a harmonious adjustment between the needs of both parties. Tomei and Russo (2016) contend that cultural alignment is an unseen yet cohesive force that unites the organisation. Pérez-Temprano, Leal-Rodríguez, and Sanchís-Pedregosa (2024) emphasise that value congruence is a fundamental component of Person-Organisation Fit and elaborate on how a well-aligned organisational culture positively influences the achievement of desired business outcomes, which is a primary need and goal for every organisation.

For many employees, the need for integrity in the workplace is satisfied by being genuine, truthful, and adhering to their own ethical principles. A work environment that supports integrity is characterised by an ethical climate, which Borrelli et al. (2023) define as the collective understanding of what constitutes appropriate ethical behaviour and how to address unethical conduct. This environment promotes ethical reasoning, trust, and mutual respect within the organisation, encouraging questioning of norms and sharing of diverse viewpoints. Heine, Engelbrecht, and Mahembe (2013) highlight the significant role of leadership in fostering an ethical and trustworthy climate, which enhances employee engagement and encourages innovative thinking. Shahid and Azhar (2013) assert that a culture of integrity can only be cultivated over time through consistent demonstrations of various organisational behaviours and practices.

Historically, one of the most basic needs fulfilled by employment has been the provision of income (Darmawan, 2021). Employees expect their jobs to provide financial resources for daily living and emergency situations, offering a sense of economic security and predictability, while also allowing for investment and wealth accumulation, which contributes to achieving desired social status. Contributions to social insurance are part of the compensation package (often shared between the employer and the employee) and offer protection in case of accidents or disabilities, while pension plans ensure income continuation beyond retirement age. Furthermore, earnings can satisfy a wide range of individual needs (Yao et al., 2017; Wibisono, Prasetya, Anindyajati, 2024), from enabling a preferred lifestyle and achieving independence, to engaging in social and cultural activities, supporting family members, and accessing healthcare and education, all of which increase the quality of life for employees and their dependents.

The purchasing power of income is just one significant aspect of how salary meets employees' needs. In the workplace, individuals expect fair and adequate compensation – this is a primary motivator and reflects recognition of their efforts and unique skills used to achieve expected outcomes. Salary is also linked to job satisfaction (Mabaso, Dlamini, 2017), which is defined as a sense of positivity, happiness, and achievement derived from an employee's interpretation of their work experiences and career history (Locke, 1976).

Discretionary employee benefits, which can include nearly any form of compensation that is not categorised as cash, can be tailored to align with an organisation's business strategies and significantly influence employee attraction and retention rates (Barringer, Milkovich, 1998; Werner, Balkin, 2021). Among various types of benefits, the most common classifications differentiate between traditional, non-monetary such as private health insurance, paid vacations, or retirement plans; non-traditional benefits, such as scholarships and financial assistance; and intangible perks, which encompass flexible work arrangements and work environment (Werner, Balkin, 2021). Support solutions for physical and mental well-being are becoming more common in workplaces, including gym membership co-payments, workplace sports classes, discounted lunches, free food, stress management courses, and counselling services. Companies may also offer public transport tickets, company cars, or parking spaces. In areas with high education costs, some employers assist with student loan repayments or reimburse course fees (Fulmer, Li, 2022). Benefits for employees with young children may include extended parental leave, on-site daycare, and childcare subsidies.

Additionally, occasional leave for family events, sabbaticals, and options to purchase extra days off are gaining popularity. Investment opportunities in company stocks increase motivation and loyalty, while state-of-the-art equipment or company cars may be provided for personal use. To attract talent from abroad, companies might offer relocation assistance, including accommodation and private school tuition. Younger generations increasingly expect an enjoyable and fun work environment, such as games and company-sponsored events, to improve workplace dynamics and relationships. In a supportive work environment, the compensation package is thoughtfully designed, taking these factors into account, leading to a better alignment between the company's and workforce's requirements.

Another important aspect of a supportive work environment that addresses employee-organisation needs is work-life balance. Striking a balance between professional responsibilities and personal life is one of the most fundamental needs expressed by employees, encompassing family obligations, social activities, and pursuits for personal growth (Marecki, 2024). Susanto et al. (2022) demonstrate that a strong work-life balance reduces psychological stress and enhances job performance. The authors argue that flexible working hours, along with autonomy and organisational policies that promote a balance between work and personal life, contribute to a positive work environment and, consequently, increased job satisfaction.

Social exchange theory posits that the employment relationship is based on reciprocity, where employees' attitudes and actions are influenced by expected rewards or the fulfilment of their needs (Malenga, 2022). This theory is often discussed in relation to tangible and task-related benefits, such as salary or promotions, anticipated by employees in exchange for their contributions – utilising their skills and knowledge, meeting deadlines, and striving for optimal results. However, this theory also applies to the interplay between employees' personal and professional lives. Those who can effectively allocate time to both

work and personal activities, establish healthy boundaries, and feel empowered to manage personal matters without neglecting their job responsibilities are more likely to exceed standard expectations and perform beyond the required efforts.

It is important to note that work-life balance initiatives have a direct impact on employees' mental and physical well-being (Zheng et al., 2015) by alleviating conflicts of interest and ensuring adequate time to recharge, rest, engage in physical activities, and nurture relationships. This addresses their need for a healthy, balanced life while also satisfying the employer's demand for a focused, well-rested workforce with low absenteeism rates.

Another way to meet employee expectations in terms of health, well-being, and safety is through the physical environment. Ergonomics plays a crucial role in designing workspaces and practices that align with employees' capabilities, reducing the risk of work-related injuries and enhancing effectiveness. Additionally, proper lighting, room temperature, and acceptable noise levels are vital for improving health, safety, and productivity, as excessive noise can lead to various health issues. Maintaining good air quality by eliminating pollutants and ensuring proper ventilation is essential for preventing serious health conditions. Lastly, organisations that prioritise safety through regular training and equipment maintenance can minimise the risk of accidents and injuries in the workplace.

A key component of a supportive work environment is fostering positive social interactions among employees. Relationships with colleagues rank high among the priorities of most workers, fulfilling their needs for belonging (Baumeister, Leary, 1995), recognition, relevance, and companionship (Kahn, 1990), while providing essential emotional support. Shared goals can be pursued with enthusiasm (Roffey, 2016) based on equitable work distribution that aligns with individual strengths and preferences. High-quality interactions make individuals feel valued and are a source of vitality and energy. Stephens, Heaphy, and Dutton (2012) suggest that organisations achieve their objectives through social processes, making connections vital for success. Employees flourish when interactions are positive and founded on trust, and when collaboration is encouraged over competition. These conditions enhance workers' well-being by reducing mental strain and replacing stressful competition with enjoyable, supportive teamwork, leveraging complementary skills, and facilitating mutual learning and skill development. Openness in relationships with colleagues also fosters honest and constructive feedback (Zhang, Qian, Yu, 2022), which is crucial for career advancement.

The relationship with one's supervisor constitutes another significant aspect of the work environment that can greatly influence the alignment of employees' and organisational needs. While preferences for leadership styles vary among workers, common expectations include appreciation, respect, and accessibility. Individual needs and characteristics shape preferences for formal or informal relationships with supervisors, the expected scope and types of support, the desired level of supervisor involvement in daily tasks, autonomy, independence, and the co-creation of work content and methods, as well as the need for guidance, mentorship, and inspiration.

Interesting job content is a major expectation and a driving force for employees' engagement and commitment. Hackman and Oldham (1976) posit that the work design, including certain job characteristics, such as skill variety, task significance, and autonomy, significantly enhance employee motivation and satisfaction. By fostering psychological states of meaningfulness, responsibility, and performance awareness, organisations can improve overall performance and reduce turnover rates. Many employees enjoy being able to utilise their knowledge, skills and abilities at work, and strive to be assigned roles of high significance and impact on the organisational outcomes. Challenging and diverse tasks, as well as those requiring creativity and innovative thinking satisfy employees' needs of accomplishment, achievement and personal worth, and motivate them to perform efficiently and deliver desired results on time.

Various aspects of a positive work environment mentioned earlier represent just a few key elements within the workplace that greatly influence employees' experiences, satisfaction, performance, and productivity. By recognising and proactively enhancing these dimensions, organisations can cultivate a vibrant workplace that benefits employees and contributes to the overall success of the company.

### The concept of a supportive work environment

With the changes affecting workplace arrangements becoming an inevitable reality, organisations need to embrace and respond to these changes effectively, which is only possible if they pursue the supportive work environment concept. Researchers have proposed a number of different approaches and definitions of a positive work environment.

Łukasiński (2016) characterises the work environment as a framework that facilitates the generation of functional quality within organisations. He notes that a company and its workforce, capable of effectively converting inputs into outputs through established processes, rely on the presence of various systems, including:

- Spatial: office design and infrastructure that optimise process efficiency.
- Human: enhancing employee skills, providing favourable working conditions, and fostering a company culture that promotes trust and engagement.
- Functional: reducing production cycle times, ensuring workplace safety, and maintaining high-quality supplies and tools.
- Organisational: promoting job humanisation, maintaining workplace hygiene, and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the work environment.
- Economic: achieving financial objectives and minimising associated costs.
- Ecological: investing in responsible waste management and implementing strategies for sustainable growth.

He emphasises that an ideal work environment should support effective work methods, facilitate task coordination, and eliminate unnecessary tasks and prolonged information flows.

Krot and Lewicka (2015) define a high-quality work environment as one that increases employee satisfaction and focuses on fostering trust in horizontal, vertical, and institutional relationships. They highlight characteristics of positive workplace arrangements, such as high levels of trust, organisational and supervisory support, and perceptions of fairness within the organisation.

Gangwar and Yadav (2018) argue that a positive workplace environment is characterised by supportive coworkers and managers, constructive competition, and the acknowledgment of setbacks while learning from successes. It is also marked by an empowering organisational culture that prioritises employee recognition and fosters an atmosphere where individuals can grow, develop, and reach their full potential. A supportive work environment empowers the workforce to leverage their strengths and abilities, even in challenging situations.

Taylor (2008) asserts that a primary function of a supportive work environment is to create and enhance opportunities for social connections. He outlines several positive outcomes associated with this relationship-oriented approach, including:

- Improved attendance and reduced absenteeism, leading to less revenue loss and fewer workflow disruptions.
- Increased dedication among employees.
- Higher job satisfaction.
- Enhanced productivity.
- Effective strategies for mitigating psychological distress through meaningful social connections during challenging times.
- Better employee health, quicker recovery from acute illnesses, and improved coping mechanisms for chronic diseases.

A supportive work environment is linked to increased productivity, creativity, and overall organisational output (Begum, Mohd, 2021). As demonstrated by Zhenjing et al. (2022), a positive work environment can enhance employee performance, significantly boosting their commitment and drive for achievement.

It is essential to note that a positive work environment is not a one-size-fits-all concept; it is shaped by a complex interaction of organisational culture, physical layout, leadership styles, and individual employee preferences. The framing and development of the supportive work environment and powerful company culture allowing to match the expectations of the employees and organisation is not an easy task, especially in the presence of increasingly heterogenous workforce. Accomplishing this essential goal is conditioned by a number of factors, one of which is understanding and unlocking the potential of age diversity and distinct work environment expectations presented by different generations within a workforce.

## 3.2. An Overview of Generations in the Labour Market

### Key characteristics of generations

The most numerous generations dominating today's workforce are (Dimock, 2019; Lettink, 2019):

- Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, representing approximately 25% of the workforce;
- Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980 – 33%;
- Generation Y, born between 1981 and 1996 – 35%;
- Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012 – 5%.

**Baby Boomers**, born during the post-war baby boom from the 1940s to the 1960s, grew up amidst significant historical events such as the Cold War, the moon landing, the assassination of JFK, and the Watergate scandal. This generation experienced a time of prosperity and rapid urbanisation, which influenced lifestyle changes and socioeconomic dynamics, making them more receptive to change. Baby Boomers are known for their hard-working, dedicated nature and commitment. However, they are often perceived as demanding and entitled, with tendencies toward materialism, and have faced criticism for overlooking the needs of future generations and environmental issues.

The members of **Generation X** were born between 1965 and 1980 and were raised under the influence of the end of the Cold War, the Gulf War, and the nuclear crisis. Often referred to as 'latch-key' kids, they grew up in dual-income families and faced disruptions in traditional family models, which fostered their self-sufficiency and adaptability. This generation is also known as the 'sandwich generation,' as they navigate responsibilities between Baby Boomers and Generation Y. Generation X is recognised for being independent and resourceful, as well as creative problem solvers. On the other hand, they are often regarded as cynical and detached, with a reputation for lacking commitment and struggling with authority.

**Generation Y**, born between 1981 and 1996, grew up in the era of modern technology and the Internet. This generation witnessed September 11 attacks, economic crises, and various social movements. Despite facing disillusionment, they present with optimism and resilience, with a strong emphasis on education and personal development, shaped by supportive parenting styles. Generation Y is ambitious and driven, eager to make a positive impact, and loyal to organisations that align with their values. At the same time, they are being criticised for feeling entitled and lacking patience.

The youngest age group with increasing presence in the workforce is **Generation Z**, born between 1997 and 2012. Influenced by economic downturns and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, this generation has been experiencing the impacts of globalisation and rapid technological advancements. Modern technology and IT solutions have been integral to Generation Z's daily lives since early childhood, leading to a strong reliance on the Internet for various activities, including basic tasks and work-related communication. Researchers generally agree that a defining trait of this generation is their digitalisation and the ubiquitous presence of communication devices in their everyday experiences. In addition to being the 'digital natives,' Generation Z places a high value on tertiary education and alternative career paths. They are known

for their adaptability and quick response to change, resilience and self-confidence. Additionally, they possess strong technological skills and demonstrate innovative, entrepreneurial multitasking abilities. Generation Z (Gen Z) is characterised by a realistic yet optimistic outlook on their future (Schawbel, 2014b; Özkan, Yilmaz, 2015). They are highly individualistic (Bulut, Maraba, 2021), self-confident (Barhate, Dirani, 2022), and independent (Fodor, Jackel, Szilagyi, 2017). However, they may also be perceived as having difficulties with interpersonal communication and being susceptible to anxiety and stress.

### Generational expectations towards the work environment

In the last 20 years, sociological theories of generations have taken a new trajectory by being utilised in the workplace context. Researchers, Management and Human Resource practitioners as well as journalists are exploring the connection between generation cohorts and their work-related values, attitudes, and behaviours (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020).

When examining the workplace characteristics of **Baby Boomers**, it is crucial to understand that they entered the job market during times of financial stability and abundant job opportunities, which set the stage for their success (Pettid, 2003). This era fostered competitiveness, diligence, and a 'live to work' mentality, while also encouraging teamwork and collaboration. Baby Boomers are driven, optimistic (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak, 2000) and known for their honesty (Yang, Yu, Wu, 2018), and ability to reach consensus (Wong et al., 2008). They are eager to share their knowledge and mentor younger colleagues (Glass, 2007).

Baby Boomers view their career progression as a climb up the organisational ladder, gaining power and authority. Their relationships with employers are built on loyalty, commitment, and a strong work ethic (Weeks, Weeks, Long, 2017; Rani, Samuel, 2019). They value their careers highly, seeking alignment between personal and organisational goals, and desire recognition and respect from management. Their motivation is often tied to formal acknowledgment of their contributions, preferring structured feedback through annual reviews over informal comments. Financial rewards, promotions, and symbols of success, such as prestigious job titles, are significant to them (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Bejtkovsky, 2016). They take pride in their accomplishments and want to 'put their stamp on things' (Dwyer, 2008).

For many Baby Boomers, job satisfaction stems from their work. They report high levels of happiness and pride in their contributions, especially compared to younger colleagues (Westerman, Yamura, 2007; Chia, 2023). Their long tenure and senior positions contribute to this sense of fulfilment (Kee, Ching, Ng, 2019). Many feel emotionally connected to their organisations and identify strongly with their roles. With extensive institutional knowledge, Baby Boomers are valuable assets in the workforce (Seifert et al., 2023).

This generation prefers a structured leadership style with clear reporting lines (Yu, Miller, 2005). They expect managers to be disciplined, provide clear directions, and demonstrate authority based on experience without being authoritarian (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak, 2000). Continuous self-development is important to them, with many pursuing further education. In the workplace, they seek job security and stability, often adhering to a traditional

8 AM to 5 PM schedule (Seifert et al., 2023) but are willing to work overtime to meet their goals. They generally prefer on-site work, believing it enhances productivity compared to remote arrangements.

In terms of communication, Baby Boomers favour face-to-face interactions (Glass, 2007) and appreciate written communication and phone calls. While they may not be digital natives, they recognise the importance of basic IT skills for both personal and professional use. Work-life balance is a challenging concept for this generation; they prioritise their careers and often work long hours, which can strain family relationships. This workaholism, despite their commitment to providing for loved ones, has contributed to an increase in divorces among Baby Boomers (Twenge et al., 2010; Berkup, 2014).

**Generation X** employees are dedicated to advancing their careers but do not share their parents' belief in staying with one company until retirement. Instead, they often seek lateral moves for professional development and are willing to change jobs if they find a position that better aligns with their expectations (O'Bannon, 2001). Exposure to globalisation has introduced Xers to diversity, fostering a desire for varied perspectives and global thinking (Reeves, Oh, 2008). Their proactive approach to career management makes them more open to global job opportunities. They view their career development as a series of diverse assignments and experiences, actively marketing themselves in the job market.

Although they are labelled as lazy and uncommitted (Dickson, 2015), these stereotypes do not reflect their driven and ambitious nature. Baby Boomer supervisors often criticize Xers for a perceived lack of loyalty and discipline (O'Bannon, 2001). Xers desire a comfortable and enjoyable workplace, expecting flexibility and freedom. They are entrepreneurial, innovative, and solution-oriented, seeking autonomy and creative freedom in their daily tasks (Costanza et al., 2012). While they appreciate clear guidance, they prefer to work with minimal oversight, thriving in informal team structures. They enjoy tackling diverse assignments that allow them to showcase their unique skills (Jurkiewicz, Brown, 1998) and prefer freelance or entrepreneurial roles over rigid corporate rules (Buhane, Kovary, 2003).

Like their predecessors, Xers are individualistic yet effective team players (Karp, Fuller, Sirias, 2002). They are pragmatic (Zemke, Raines, Filipczak, 2000), valuing quality over the quantity of hours worked, and believe in 'working smart, not hard' (Lancaster, Stillman, 2002). They focus on results while also valuing their right to breaks and leisure time. As the first generation to prioritise work-life balance, Xers reject workaholism and materialism (Pettid, 2003), seeking harmony between their professional and personal lives without favouring one over the other. They view their jobs not as the ultimate life goal but as a means to achieve a satisfying existence (Berkup, 2014).

While financial compensation is important for encouragement and reassurance, it is not their primary motivation. They faced challenges such as lower earning potential compared to their parents, high student loan debt, and a tough job market during the 1980s (Tulgan, 2000; Erickson, 2009). Although they value job security, scepticism about its reality has grown (Pettid, 2003). Fair compensation and transparent benefits are crucial for fostering positive relationships with employers. Many Xers appreciate regular constructive feedback

and a casual work atmosphere, with some open to workplace fun (Lamm, Meeks, 2009). They value consistent communication and involvement in decision-making processes (Tulgan, 2000).

Xers prefer a participative leadership style that recognises individual skills, contrasting with the rigid hierarchical structures of Baby Boomers. They are willing to challenge bureaucracy and question authority when it threatens their autonomy (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Characterised by openness to new experiences, risk tolerance (Antwi, Cephas, 2022), and adaptability, Xers can adjust quickly to organisational changes (Pettid, 2003).

Access to learning opportunities is vital for Generation X (Dwyer, 2008; Dickson, 2015). They seek to enhance their skills through interactive training that allows for questions and feedback (O'Bannon, 2001). Xers prefer action learning that addresses real-life issues rather than formal, one-way training (Bova, Kroth, 2001). They recognise how a strong learning record can enhance their marketability (Pettid, 2003), with mentoring and coaching serving as effective motivational tools.

In the workplace, **Generation Y** is perceived as confident, driven, ambitious, and demanding (Wong et al., 2008; Berk, 2013). They are often seen as affluent (Buhane, Kovary, 2003) and highly adaptable to change (Berkup, 2014), eager to make a positive impact and willing to take risks (Smolbik-Jęczmień, 2018). While they recognise their comfort zones, they are enthusiastic about stepping outside of them for meaningful pursuits (Henry, 2011). This generation is characterised as passionate and loyal (Walker, 2007) but selective, committing only to the 'employer of choice' (Sheahan, 2005) that meets their high expectations. Some researchers suggest that Millennials are more loyal to an organisation's vision than to the organisation itself (Henry, 2011).

Generation Y shows greater commitment to their employers than Generation X but views job changes as a natural part of their career trajectory. They identify as global citizens (Buhane, Kovary, 2003) and are highly mobile (Marzec, 2023), ready to manage multiple careers (Berkup, 2014). They are outspoken and express their opinions openly. Despite concerns about job security (Wong et al., 2008), Millennials firmly demand compensation, benefits, and flexibility that exceed those of Generation X. They value adjustable work schedules and work-life balance (Gozukara, 2022), often seeking integration between the two. While aspiring for success and generous pay like Baby Boomers, Generation Y is unwilling to sacrifice personal lives for these rewards (Sheahan, 2005; Henry, 2011). Consequently, they may be perceived unfavourably by other generations (Anantatmula, Shrivastav, 2012), and can come across as overly assertive, with their skills sometimes viewed as overrated (Marzec, 2023).

Having grown up with technology, Generation Y excels at multitasking and can work quickly, which may lead to frustration when colleagues take longer to complete tasks (Berk, 2013; Berkup, 2014). Nevertheless, Millennials are committed team players who collaborate effectively and engage in challenging projects that showcase their creativity and problem-solving abilities. They were early adopters of job-sharing (Berkup, 2014) and cultivate both real-world and virtual relationships (Buhane, Kovary, 2003; Goldgehn, 2004), desiring acceptance in personal and professional spheres (Rai, 2012). This generation

is diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and social background (Goldgehn, 2004; Anantatmula, Shrivastav, 2012) and advocates for diversity, inclusion, equity (Berkup, 2014), and tolerance (Bejtkovsky, 2016).

Leaders of Generation Y should be highly collaborative, encouraging teamwork and active participation in planning and executing tasks. This management style aligns well with the team-oriented spirit of Generation Y (Kutlák, 2019). Millennials appreciate guidance and support from their managers, who empower them to achieve their goals (Bejtkovsky, 2016). They expect adaptive leadership that considers their varying needs and values. While they value strong, expertise-driven leadership, they also expect respect for their candid nature and need for authenticity (Sheahan, 2005). The energetic and outcome-focused attitude of Generation Y corresponds to a fast-paced, pragmatic management style (Saha, 2023). Leaders should be open to constructive criticism, as Millennials are known for challenging the status quo (Anantatmula, Shrivastav, 2012).

Their motivation is boosted by meaningful work, responsibilities, and opportunities to contribute to significant decisions. Immediate feedback reassures Generation Y members (Berk, 2013), helping them identify strengths and areas for improvement (Henry, 2011). Coaching and mentoring can fulfil their need for attention and support (Gozukara, 2022). Millennials thrive in environments where they feel respected and inspired, as well as in trustful (Goldgehn, 2004), flexible workplaces that allow exploration and networking, leading to worthwhile outcomes (Rai, 2012). They wish to be involved in workplace design (Berkup, 2014) and prefer hybrid models that combine office and remote work.

Providing ongoing opportunities for self-improvement is crucial to keeping them motivated (Wong et al., 2008). In their learning processes, Generation Y prioritises self-advancement over competition with peers (Hill, 2002), stemming from limited competition as children. Millennials are open to learning on the job, pursuing internships, part-time roles (Berkup, 2014), and short-term assignments to gain new experiences.

**Generation Z** is redefining the employer-employee relationship, prioritising values such as flexibility and immediate career progression over traditional job stability and long hours (Graczyk-Kucharska, Erickson, 2020; Oliver Wyman Forum, 2023). They seek quicker paths to advancement, often bypassing conventional career steps, and express less concern for job permanence compared to earlier generations (Schawbel, 2014a; Dolot, 2018; Wuttaphan, 2018). While they are often labelled as money-conscious (Bulut, Maraba, 2021) and materialistic (Hysa, 2016), insufficient pay is a key factor in their high turnover rates, as highlighted in a 2022 Deloitte report. Gen Z desires fulfilment in their work and is attracted to global opportunities due to their mobility and language skills (Hysa, 2016). They view freelancing and startups as viable alternatives to traditional employment (Wilson, Veigas, George, 2017) and prefer diverse roles across departments instead of a linear career trajectory (Bohdziewicz, 2016; Barhate, Dirani, 2020). Embracing failure as part of the learning process (*Deep Focus'...*, 2015), Gen Z aims to shape their futures while remaining true to their ethical beliefs (Kovary, Pearson, 2017).

The ideal workplace for Gen Z promotes flexibility, growth, and diverse tasks (Lazányi, Bilan, 2017; Hutanu, Berteau, Iftode, 2018; Lalic et al., 2020). However, more research is needed to determine what 'meaningful work' means to them (Kirchmayer, Fratričová, 2018). They

expect organisations to adapt while maintaining their mission and serving the community (Graczyk-Kucharska, Erickson, 2020). An informal work environment that encourages innovation and collaboration is preferred (Bulut, Maraba, 2021), with workplace enjoyment being a significant factor in their excitement about a company (The Center for Generational Kinetics, 2017).

As digital natives, Gen Z expects advanced technology integration in their work (Sidorcuka, Chesnovicka, 2017), and values employers who embrace change, including AI (Bieleń, Kubiczek, 2020). They are drawn to brands that align with their values (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022) and prioritise teamwork, seeking mutual respect and belonging (Jayatissa, 2023). They prefer dialogue over confrontation (Francis, Hoefel, 2018), and appreciate honest feedback (Dolot, 2018). Their extensive digital social networks facilitate professional connections (McCrinkle, 2014), although some studies suggest they may struggle with direct interpersonal skills (Bejtkovsky, 2016).

Resilient and responsible, Gen Z understands the importance of work-life balance (Fodor, Jaeckel, Szilagyi, 2018; Kirchmayer, Fratričová, 2018). They expect flexible work arrangements that allow time for family and self-development, often preferring hybrid or remote work for its benefits, including cost savings and increased productivity (Chillakuri, Mahanandia, 2018). However, they are aware of the downsides of remote work, such as limited mentorship and feelings of isolation. Mental health is a significant concern for Gen Z, with many experiencing stress and anxiety (Deloitte, 2022). Factors contributing to these challenges include over-protective parenting and social media pressures (Kovary, Pearson, 2017; Hu, 2024). Organisations must prioritise mental health support in their HR policies to retain Gen Z employees.

Gen Z is open to rapid changes and job hopping, favouring 'boundless careers' over long-term commitments to a single employer (Hutanu, Berteau, Iftode, 2018; Jayatissa, 2023). They seek happiness in their professional lives and are willing to leave unfulfilling jobs (Özkan, Yilmaz, 2015; Lazányi, Bilan, 2017). They are inspired by managers who lead by example (Racolța-Paina, Irini, 2021) and expect respect and transparency from their supervisors (Schawbel, 2014b; Agarwal, Vaghela, 2018). While they value autonomy, they also seek validation of their skills from management.

Their communication preferences lean towards virtual, real-time interactions, favouring visual communication over lengthy text (Jayatissa, 2023). Despite their digital orientation, they appreciate face-to-face communication in informal settings (Schawbel, 2014b; Kovary, Pearson, 2017). Self-development is a key priority for Generation Z, driven by intrinsic motivation and the belief that formal education alone does not prepare them for lifelong learning. They seek ongoing learning and mentoring opportunities in the workplace, preferring to co-create their educational plans. Additionally, Gen Z values practical knowledge and collaborative learning experiences, highlighting the need for educational institutions to adapt to their unique expectations.

Generation Z is characterised by strong environmental consciousness, viewing green initiatives as essential to their employer choices. They prioritise honesty in eco-friendly practices and expect organisations to integrate environmental sensitivity and Corporate Social

Responsibility (CSR) into their core values. Furthermore, they advocate for diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace, believing that a heterogeneous workforce fosters innovation and demanding equity, transparency, and open-mindedness in organisational practices.

### The impact of fit between work environment expectations and workplace design on organisations

Oludeyi (2015) describes the work environment as the entirety of relationships between employees and employers, along with the context in which employees operate, including technical, human, and organisational dimensions. When these conditions align with employee expectations, high job satisfaction and engagement are likely to follow. Bala (2013) discusses employee-employer expectations as part of the psychological contract, which encompasses shared beliefs, perspectives, and informal commitments between the organisation and the individual, shaping the dynamics between them and clarifying the specifics of the work to be done.

Naz et al. (2020) emphasise the beneficial relationship between optimal workplace arrangements and Person-Organisation Fit, where a supportive atmosphere encourages employees to engage in activities aligned with organisational values. Employees exhibiting a strong Person-Organisation Fit are more likely to receive recognition and incentives, fostering trust and intrinsic motivation, which further meets organisational demands. This mutual enhancement between supportive environments and Person-Organisation Fit is crucial.

As an example, the alignment of employee's desire for personal and professional growth with employer's demands for a skilled, motivated workforce is essential for achieving organisational goals and maintaining competitive advantage (Dachner et al., 2019). The Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) underscores that employees are a strategic asset, and effective development programmes tailored to individual needs can enhance workforce performance. This results in improved skills, adaptability, creativity, motivation, and overall job satisfaction, reinforcing employee commitment and loyalty through a strong Person-Organisation Fit.

Organisations are trying to achieve harmony between the practicalities of business world, and the requirements of the workforce. The effectiveness and sustainability of such balance is conditioned by its understanding and acceptance by the employees. Further difficulties arise from the fact that the nature of employee and employer demands is quickly changing and varies not only between individual companies and workers but also within the same person or entity, due to both intrinsic and external factors.

Considering the crucial role of aligning the work environment expectations of the employees and workplace design offered by organisations, the establishment of a supportive work environment is one of the most effective and sustainable strategies for improving both company's and individual outcomes, achieving high employee retention and aiming for enhanced overall organisational effectiveness.

## 4. A Proposition of Supportive Work Environment Design for Each Cohort

Taking into account the specific traits and expectations of different generation, the author proposes an optimal workplace design tailored to meet the distinct needs of each age cohort.

### 4.1. Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers benefit from structured hierarchy, ensuring clear reporting lines and a defined chain of command, aligning with their preference for authority and discipline. Additionally, establishing formal recognition programmes will acknowledge their contributions through awards, promotions, and symbols of success, such as prestigious titles or dedicated office spaces. Encouraging mentorship opportunities is also vital, as it allows Baby Boomers to share their knowledge with younger employees, fostering collaboration across generations. Furthermore, providing long-term employment opportunities and clear career progression paths will resonate with their desire for loyalty and commitment. Promoting regular in-person meetings and interactions, supplemented by written communication for clarity, will enhance face-to-face communication, which they value.

### 4.2. Generation X

To optimise workplace design for Generation X, organisations should offer flexible work arrangements, including adaptable schedules and remote work options, aligning with their desire for autonomy and work-life balance. Additionally, providing access to continuous learning opportunities and interactive training that addresses real-life issues will enhance their skills and marketability. Creating a casual work atmosphere is also essential, as it encourages creativity and informal team structures while still offering clear guidance. Maintaining transparent communication is crucial, allowing for open lines of feedback and participation in decision-making processes. Furthermore, recognising individual contributions through programmes that celebrate achievements and talents will help acknowledge the unique skills of Generation X employees. Finally, fostering an environment that encourages innovation is important; creating spaces for brainstorming and collaboration enables Generation X to showcase their distinct abilities and tackle diverse assignments.

### 4.3. Generation Y

A supportive work environment for Generation Y can be implemented by offering flexible work models, such as hybrid arrangements that allow for both remote and on-site work, catering to their desire for flexibility and work-life integration. Additionally, fostering a collaborative leadership style that emphasises teamwork and active participation in decision-making can be helpful. Providing meaningful work and responsibilities is also important; offering opportunities for Millennials to engage in projects that correspond to their values, increasing their sense of purpose and contribution. Establishing regular feedback mechanisms will help them identify their strengths and areas for improvement, ensuring they feel supported and valued. Moreover, offering a variety of career development paths, including internships and short-term assignments, will broaden their experiences and enhance their skills. Actively promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in the workplace aligns with their values and expectations.

### 4.4. Generation Z

To create an optimal workplace design for Generation Z, it is vital to establish flexible and adaptive workspaces that promote creativity, collaboration, and innovation. Additionally, designing career paths that allow for rapid advancement and diverse roles across departments caters to their preference for non-linear career trajectories. Implementing mental health support resources and systems is crucial to address the psychological challenges faced by Gen Z employees. Furthermore, integrating advanced technology and digital tools into the workplace ensures that they have the necessary resources to thrive in a tech-savvy environment. Establishing environmentally conscious practices, including green initiatives and Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, aligns with their values and encourages active participation. Finally, fostering a culture of open communication and feedback will create an atmosphere of transparency and honesty, allowing for real-time dialogue between employees and management.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

### 5.1. Discussion

The work environment expectations of different generations reflect their distinct historical contexts, formative events, values, and experiences. While there are clear differences in their preferences, notable similarities also exist that shape modern workplace dynamics.

Similarities among generations:

- All generations desire meaningful work and value finding purpose in their jobs. Baby Boomers gain satisfaction from their contributions and achievements, while Millennials and Generation Z seek roles that provide personal fulfilment and align with their principles. This common focus on meaningful work indicates a collective desire for positions that contribute positively to society and individual well-being.
- Flexibility in the workplace has become increasingly important across generations. While Baby Boomers traditionally valued job security and stability, Generation X began to emphasise work-life balance, and Millennials and Gen Z have taken this further by demanding flexible work arrangements and hybrid work models. This evolution reflects a growing acknowledgment of the necessity to balance professional and personal lives, regardless of age.
- Recognition and constructive feedback are significant for all generations, though they prefer different forms. Baby Boomers tend to expect formal acknowledgment through annual reviews and promotions, while Generation X and Millennials appreciate ongoing feedback and recognition of individual contributions. Generation Z also seeks validation from management, indicating that acknowledgment of efforts is a shared expectation.

Differences in work environment expectations:

- Baby Boomers view career advancement as a linear progression within the organisational hierarchy, valuing loyalty and long tenure with a single employer. In contrast, Generation X is more open to lateral moves and career changes, while Millennials and Gen Z prioritise rapid advancement and are more willing to switch jobs to find better alignment with their values and goals. This shift illustrates a generational transition from loyalty to adaptability and exploration.
- Baby Boomers often prefer traditional hierarchical structures and formal communication, whereas Generation X leans towards a more participative leadership style and informal team dynamics. Millennials and Gen Z, being digital natives, prefer collaborative environments that embrace technology and real-time communication, valuing transparency and open dialogue. This evolution highlights a move away from rigid structures toward more fluid, empowered and inclusive workplace cultures.
- Although Baby Boomers have adapted to technological advancements, they may not rely on technology as heavily as younger generations. Generation X is comfortable with technology but often prefers verbal communication. However, Millennials and Gen Z are deeply integrated with technology, using it for multitasking and collaboration, and they expect employers to fully embrace digital solutions. This generational gap highlights the varying levels of comfort and reliance on technology in the workplace.
- Generation Z is particularly known for its strong environmental awareness and demand for CSR. While Baby Boomers have faced criticism for neglecting environmental concerns, younger generations prioritise sustainability and ethical practices when choosing employers. This shift reflects an increasing awareness and responsibility toward global challenges, underscoring the changing values of the workforce.

The examination and understanding of commonalities and divergencies in work environment expectations of different age groups is an essential task for contemporary organisations. On one hand, acknowledgment of shared values can help bridge the gaps between younger and older colleagues. For example, initiation of company-sponsored community engagement initiatives might resonate well across all age cohorts, willing to engage into meaningful work. From another perspective, addressing generational differences not only honours the unique attributes of each age group but also maximises the effectiveness of HRM practices. For instance, hybrid leadership blends traditional and modern management techniques, and can flexibly switch from one approach to another, depending on the needs of individual employees – with some expecting more guidance and supervision, and other awaiting mentoring or coaching (Nazir et al., 2014).

By acknowledging the significance of age diversity in the workplace, organisations can seek similarities with other well-established dimensions of diversity, such as gender, ethnicity, and cultural background, which are already incorporated into HRM policies. Analogously to how the companies have crafted strategies to advance gender equality and inclusivity for marginalised groups, a comparable framework can be utilised to meet the distinct needs of various generations.

## 5.2. Limitations and future research framework proposal

While there is an extensive body of knowledge on the work environment expectations of Baby Boomers, Generations X and Y; empirical research on Generation Z in the workplace setting is insufficient. Several attempts have been made to investigate the perception of work among the youngest generation (Mustafa, Betul, 2015) and selected elements of the envisaged organisational offer such as effective onboarding (Chillakuri, 2020), motivational factors (Kirchmayer, Fratričová, 2018) or Generation Z expectations viewed through a gendered lens (Grow, Yang, 2018). In all cases, however, data were collected from the students pursuing final years in business fields, prior to having their hopes and beliefs confronted with the realities of professional life upon joining the workforce. Consequently, the scientific value of comparative analyses including Generation Z is limited by lacking comparison between their expectations prior and after starting their career, and the resulting changes in their perceptions and attitudes towards the organisational offer.

The author is therefore proposing a research model aiming to investigate the work environment expectations of different generations, including members of Generation Z who have already transferred into the professional world, thereby filling a critical gap in the existing literature. The suggested study could examine these expectations in conjunction with the organisational offerings the employees encounter and provide useful insights into how these factors influence key outcomes such as motivation, job satisfaction, and employee loyalty. In addition, it would allow to evaluate the level of Person-Organisation Fit among different age cohorts existing in the same work context. Understanding this relationship is vital, as it not only informs organisational practices but also contributes to the retention and engagement of employees from all four generations.

The following questions could be addressed:

Q1. Which elements of work environment and HR practices are the most important for each age cohort and how do they differ between these groups?

Q2. To what degree do organisations offer the essential components of the workplace to members of different generations?

Q3. How do employees from different generations perceive the impact of their current work environment on their personal outcomes?

The suggested approach to answering these questions encompasses three stages:

- conducting a review of the subject literature to gain a deep understanding of the existing research on the work environment expectations of different generations, evaluating the results of previously conducted studies in the field to determine the context for planned research, support the design of the subsequent research tools, and link them with the obtained findings;
- conducting an online survey (quantitative research) to obtain statistically significant answers to proposed research questions and concisely present the findings derived from applied research methods;
- conducting a focus group interview (qualitative research) to complement and corroborate the results from the online survey and provide a deeper understanding should any confounding outcomes arise from previous research stages. Finally, the focus group interview enables the calibration of the findings from the online survey to aid effective design and implementation of generation-oriented HR systems.

The proposed three-step process will result in the creation of statistically supported portraits of expected work environment design for each age cohort, and is anticipated to provide scholars with a comprehensive, validated data set, thereby enabling the development of detailed recommendations for practitioners working with an age-diverse workforce, and offering new and revised insights pertinent to the effective management of Generation Z.

### 5.3. Conclusions

Generation-specific characteristics, primary motivators, values, communication styles, learning preferences, expectations regarding organisational offerings, and their perceptions of a supportive work environment have a major impact on employees' engagement and productivity. While there are shared values between age cohorts, related to meaningful work, flexibility, and recognition across generations, significant differences exist in career progression, workplace structure, technological reliance, and social consciousness. Understanding these similarities and differences is essential for organisations aiming to leverage the advantages of a diverse workforce. By customising Human Resource Management practices to align with specific needs and aspirations of each generation, businesses can cultivate a more inclusive and cohesive work environment, ultimately boosting employee satisfaction, fostering innovation and resilience in a rapidly changing business environment, and encouraging efficient collaboration, contributing to the overall organisational success. This endeavour is a challenging

one, as the development of policies and practices that can accommodate a wide range of employee needs, can be complex and resource intensive. At the same time, in many sectors (such as STEM), organisations are competing for talents, and providing a tailored organisational offer is one of the most effective tools to attract and retain the most suitable and promising candidates with a required skillset and expertise. Adapting to the needs of a multi-generational workforce and offering a supportive work environment that values the contributions of all age groups is crucial for organisations aiming to thrive in a multifaceted, continuously evolving and competitive landscape and should be perceived as a core strategy to position the organisation for long-term success.

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## Tworzenie wspierającego środowiska pracy spełniającego oczekiwania zróżnicowanych pokoleniowo pracowników

### Streszczenie:

W artykule autorka analizuje zmieniającą się dynamikę siły roboczej obejmującej wiele pokoleń, podkreślając kluczową rolę wspierającego środowiska pracy w zwiększaniu zaangażowania, satysfakcji i retencji pracowników. W miarę jak globalizacja i postęp technologiczny zmieniają oczekiwania wobec miejsca pracy, organizacje muszą stawić czoła wyzwaniu dostosowania swoich strategii operacyjnych do unikalnych preferencji różnych grup wiekowych, w tym pokolenia wyżu demograficznego oraz pokoleń X, Y i Z. W artykule przedstawiono przegląd historyczny rozwoju koncepcji środowiska pracy, począwszy od nacisku na fizyczne atrybuty przestrzeni roboczej do jego kompleksowego rozumienia uwzględniającego aspekty psychologiczne i społeczne. Wskazuje on istotne różnice w oczekiwaniach różnych pokoleń związanych ze środowiskiem pracy, takie jak preferencje dotyczące stylów przywództwa, równowagi między życiem zawodowym a prywatnym oraz możliwości awansu zawodowego. Proponuje też zindywidualizowane strategie tworzenia wspierających miejsc pracy, które odpowiadają specyficznym potrzebom każdej grupy wiekowej. Rozpoznając różnice pokoleniowe i promując kulturę inkluzywną, organizacje mogą wykorzystać mocne strony zróżnicowanej siły roboczej, osiągając w ten sposób długoterminowy sukces na konkurencyjnym rynku pracy. Konkluzje podkreślają wagę dostosowywania praktyk zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi do zmieniających się oczekiwań pracowników, co prowadzi do zwiększenia odporności organizacji i wspiera innowacyjność w dynamicznie zmieniającym się otoczeniu biznesowym. Artykuł kończy

się propozycją ram badawczych mających na celu uzupełnienie zidentyfikowanych luk w wiedzy i ukierunkowanie przyszłych badań w tej dziedzinie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** pokolenie BB, pokolenie X, pokolenie Y, pokolenie Z, różnorodność pokoleniowa, wspierające środowisko pracy