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**ENTRANCE OF GENERATION Z TO THE LABOUR MARKET AS A
NEW CHALLENGE FOR COMPANIES**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

angl. – English

DEI – (sl. diverziteta, enakost, vključenost)); Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Gen Z – Generation Z

IB – International Business

sl. – Slovene

INTRODUCTION

A generation is defined as a group of people who share the same birth years, and characteristics and went through the same major life events at critical stages of their development. In the literature, the definitions of the birth years of each generation vary, especially for the younger generations (Dolot, 2018). In this thesis, I am going to focus on Generation Z (hereinafter Gen Z), which refers to the cohort of individuals born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. This generation follows the Millennial generation (born between 1980 and the mid-1990s) and is currently the youngest generation in the workforce and society. The exact dates that define Gen Z vary somewhat depending on the source, but for the purpose of this thesis, I am going to use the most frequently used birth age range to define this generation, which is 1995 – 2010.

Gen Z has been shaped by a unique set of experiences, including growing up with the internet and social media, witnessing the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, and coming of age during the Great Recession after the global financial crisis in 2008. As a result, they have distinct values, attitudes, and expectations that differentiate them from previous generations (Broadbent, Gougoulis, Lui, Pota & Simons, 2017).

The literature focuses mostly on Gen Z-ers' career aspirations, preferences in communication, job expectations, preferred work styles, their organisational commitment, job search behaviours, the technological component of this generation, their wish for deeper relationships in the workplace, their social media skills, employment practices and cross-cultural skills of gen Z. However, there's still relatively little written about the impact of the values of Gen Z that make this generation so distinctive from other generations, and as we can see from the literature, one of the key values of Generation Z is commitment and demand for diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of their life (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). In order to contribute to filling this gap, the thesis discusses the possible implications of the arrival of a value-driven generation to companies and how they can address and respond to them in terms of what methods of attraction and retention they can use for Gen Z employees to stay competitive in the job market.

Gen Z-ers pay especially a lot of attention to these three values compared to the generations before (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). This difference might many times be the cause of arguments and disagreements. In the lived experience of Gen Z-ers (such as the author of this thesis), this is frequently observable and is a subject of many discussions. Such observations and discussions with peers have inspired this thesis.

Furthermore, as most of the literature (Bakhtiari, 2022: Adamy, 2018: Gayle, 2019), focuses on Gen Z in the USA, this thesis explores how Generation Z's values in Slovenia, specifically their commitment to DEI, will affect the Slovenian labour market. Companies in Slovenia face the challenge of creating more inclusive workplaces to attract and retain Generation Z

talent. By examining the values and expectations of Generation Z, the main goal of this thesis is to analyse how will this value-driven generation affect the labour market and the workplace in Slovenia and recommend strategies for companies for attracting, recruiting and benefiting from the prospects of having Gen Z employees.

Thus, my research questions are:

1. How will the centrality of values of equality, diversity, and overcoming stereotypes of Gen Z play out in the labour market?
2. What do Gen Z-ers expect from future employers in terms of considering their values?
3. How are employers positioned towards Gen Z equality-diversity-overcoming stereotypes value system?
4. Taking into account the findings of the thesis, what can companies do to increase their inter-generational sensitivity?

The following chapters provide the reader with some general information about Gen Z-ers their characteristics and value systems. Given that the most recent global event - the Covid-19 pandemic - has had a major effect on Gen Z, hitting them right when they were at the stage of their lives to either start their education or a career, the topic is put in this context as well. The first chapter ends with a presentation on the topic of DEI and Gen Z.

Chapter four aims to give the reader an insight into the design of the research part of this thesis, methodology, data collection and analysis methods used, the research sample and the survey questions.

Chapter five introduces the reader to the results of the thesis, followed by Chapter six with the discussion of these results.

1 GEN Z GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Gen Z is a generation that is in many ways different from its predecessors, the Millennials - and even more different from older generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X). It might be the first generation in developed countries that will be worse off than their parents due to the increasingly unstable economic conditions. Geopolitics has been just as turbulent - ever since Gen Z-ers were born, the world has gone through the War on Terror, the global financial crisis, the Arab Spring, the rise of populism and extremism, the Covid pandemic, the war in Afghanistan and most recently the war in Ukraine – all of this happening against the backdrop of a changing climate (Broadbent, Gougoulis, Lui, Pota & Simons, 2017). This reinforces their commitment to socio-political values, and searching for truth, it makes them more activist-oriented, and politically progressive and in turn, shapes their shared generational identity.

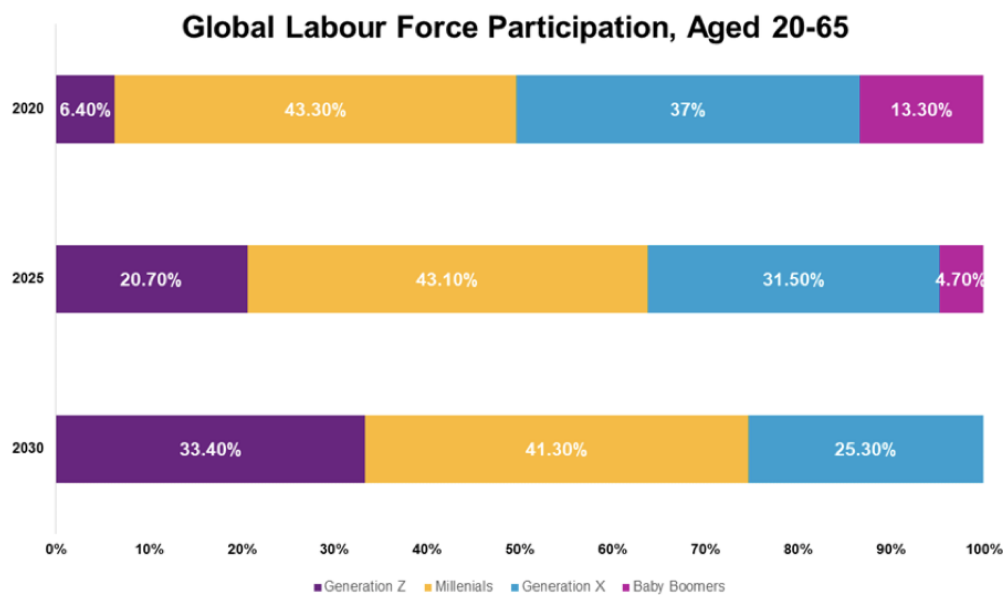
Table 1: Generations and their characteristics

	Baby Boomers 1940-59	Gen X 1960-79	Gen Y 1980-94	Gen Z 1995-210
Key historical events	Vietnam War World War II Neil Armstrong	Berlin Wall Stock market crash	New Millennium 9/11	The Arab Spring War in Afghanistan 2008 Financial Crisis Covid-19 crisis War in Ukraine
Context	Postwar Dictatorship and repression in Brazil	Political transition Capitalism	Globalisation Economic stability Emergence of internet	Mobility and multiple realities Social networks Digital natives
Behaviour	Idealism Revolutionary Collectivist	Materialistic Competitive Individualistic	Globalist Questioning Self-oriented	Unidentified ID “Dialoguer” Realistic “Communaholic”

Source: Francis & Hoefel (2018).

According to the United Nations World Population Prospects 2019, Gen Z is going to represent more than 33% of the global workforce by 2030. Therefore, more and more articles describing changes and challenges that the entrance of Gen Z in the workforce will bring are popping up. Employers already have to face the fact that in order to attract and retain the newer generation, they will have to explore and understand Gen Z-ers’ career aspirations, preferences, perceptions and expectations they have of their workplace (Barhate & Dirani, 2021).

Figure 1: Estimated composition of the workforce in 2020 and beyond



Source: Mathur (2021).

Gen Z is the first generation born in a fully digitalised world, and they have never known a world without the World Wide Web or a home without a PC (Bencsik, Juhász, & Horváth-Csikós, 2016). From their earliest youth, they have been exposed to social networks and mobile devices, which have greatly contributed to their distinct approach to processing information and their fluency in digital language. Therefore, they are many times referred to as “the first true digital natives” and “the first real global generation”, whereas the preceding generations of X and Y are referred to as "digital migrants" (Lev, 2021). Members of Gen Z (also called ‘Gen Z-ers’) are used to being connected at all times and have instant access to everything everywhere (Cseh-Papp, Varga, Szabo, Szira & Hajos, 2017; Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017). In today's digitally globalised world, Gen Z-ers across different countries share many similarities in their lifestyles. With the widespread use of the internet, social media, and popular culture, young people from various parts of the world are exposed to similar trends and influences (Lifintsev & Wellbrock, 2019).

They come by many other different names, such as “net generation” due to the highly developed digital era they were born into, Gen Tech, Facebook Generation, Post Millennials, iGeneration and Online Generation (Dolot, 2018). They are seen as learners who are quick to respond, seek ongoing and immediate interactions, possess a high level of technological proficiency, have high expectations of technology, prefer self-directed learning, and feel comfortable in digital and visual environments. This generation is adept at multitasking and, like Generation Y (the Millennials), places less dependence on teachers for intellectual guidance. In contrast, Generation X is characterised by a need for concentration and difficulty in multitasking. They rely heavily on teachers and traditional sources of learning, such as books (Lev, 2021).

Individual expression is highly valued by the members of Gen Z, who also tend to steer clear of categorisations or labels. They are actively involved in a multitude of causes, and they have a deep-seated belief in the power of communication to address conflicts and effect positive change in the world. Additionally, they approach decision-making and interactions with institutions in a highly pragmatic and analytical manner, which is why they are often referred to as the "True Gen". On the other hand, the preceding generation, the Millennials are known as the "me generation". They grew up during a period of economic growth and are concentrated primarily on the self. They tend to be more idealistic, and confrontational, and are less likely to accept diversity and different perspectives (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Gen Z is also a generation with a strong commitment to a set of socio-political values, in particular the values of equity, diversity and inclusion (Francis & Hoefel, 2018), which will be in-depth explored in the next chapter. The duality of being digital experts, who are globally connected and a desire for a better world where everybody is treated equally, there are no stereotypes, and all organisations are inclusive is what shapes their profile. At the same time, it is a generation that is shaped by a particular historical context. Gen Z-ers are the people who will shape the next few decades and face the predicament of finding solutions

for issues that previous generations failed to resolve, such as global warming issues and economic issues.

2 GEN Z IN THE LABOUR MARKET

2.1 Centrality of values

Gen Z-ers share many values different from those of other generations, while at the same time standing out due to the relatively higher standards they attach to these values. Diversity, promoted by previous generations, has become a norm for Gen Z. Gen Z-ers do not focus on or at least care less about someone's religion, colour or sexual orientation and identity (Scheuerlein, Lucia & Plachecki, 2019). Nowadays, it is expected for all organisations to have a diversity and inclusion strategy in place. The murder of George Floyd in the United States has brought corporate commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion to the forefront of public attention. Numerous companies have released bold statements regarding their intentions to prioritise diversity and inclusion in response to consumer demand. Now, these companies are expected to follow through with their commitments (Bakhtiari, 2022).

Gen Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in history. Turning ethnicity or race into checkboxes on survey forms is refused by them (Deloitte, 2019). Furthermore, working in a diverse and multicultural business environment can even give them additional motivation for work (Lifintsev, Fleşeriu & Wellbrock, 2019). And Gen Z is the first generation to expect and embrace diversity in their workplace (gender, cultural, ethical or generational) (Racolta-Paina & Irini, 2021). According to Deloitte's survey, 60% of Gen Z and 56% of Millennials believe that systemic racism is moderately to extremely prevalent throughout society. Many Gen Z minorities also feel that their race is not well represented in marketing, and companies that can better reflect the spectrum of differences in their branding and marketing are more likely to diversify their talent pool (Deloitte, 2019).

However, a year following the death of George Floyd, which led to the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, more than 50% of Millennials and Gen Z-ers express the view that society may be on the verge of genuine transformation concerning systemic racism (Rutgers, 2021).

They see gender and identity very untraditionally and much more fluidly than their predecessors. The self is a place to test and experiment for them and it is very important that causes related to identity are defended. They are sometimes even called "identity nomads". Therefore, they are more interested in human rights than the previous generations (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Gen Z also has the most individuals who identify as non-binary/third gender (Deloitte, 2019). Human rights, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues, race and ethnicity issues - all these issues interest them more than the generations before. 91% of Gen Z-ers believe that everyone is equal and should be treated that way. Stereotypes of any

kind are considered outdated and can be a source of conflict (Schroth, 2019). According to the Global Citizenship Survey which drew Gen Z characteristics across 20 countries, 9 out of 10 Gen Z-ers believe men and women should be treated equally. More than 60% of Gen Z-ers believe that same-sex marriage should be legal and more than 70% of them believe that transgender people should have the same rights as non-transgender (Broadbent, Gougoulis, Lui, Pota & Simons, 2017). Gen Z-ers hold progressive attitudes towards sexual orientation, supporting gay marriage and transgender rights as part of everyday life. It is uncommon for a member of this generation to not have a friend from the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, according to a 2016 survey conducted by J. Walter Thompson Company, a marketing firm based in New York, only 48% of those aged 13 to 20 described themselves as "completely heterosexual," compared to 65% of those aged 21 to 34 (Moring, 2017).

Gen Z-ers value frank and respectful conversations about gender identity, as they prioritise diversity and inclusion in all areas of life. In fact, a vast majority of Gen Z workers, around 88%, believe that recruiters or potential employers should ask for their gender pronouns, with 65% feeling strongly that such inquiries should be included in the recruitment process. However, only 18% have actually been asked about their gender pronouns by a recruiter, indicating that the job market and the working world have yet to align with Gen Z-ers' values and expectations in many ways (Stahl, 2021).

Gen Z-ers see their relationships with others and the outside world. Not only do Gen Z-ers care about the problems of their family members and friends, but they also care about the problems of identity groups and communities around the world, as it will be elaborated in depth in Chapter 3 that deals with DEI. They are one of the most connected generations, and they require much less physical interaction to develop links and attachments to others (Scheuerlein, Lucia & Plachecki, 2019). Conversely, the extensive use of smartphones, video games, and social media among Gen Z has resulted in technology addiction, sleep deprivation, attention deficit problems, and depression. Therefore, fewer face-to-face interactions and higher usage of social media results in higher levels of loneliness. Compared to preceding generations, Gen Z's widespread access to technology has made them more individualistic in their approach to learning, interpersonal communication, and interactions. Due to the self-sufficient nature of technology, Gen Z-ers tend to learn through videos, social media, and online search engines independently. As a result, they tend to spend more time alone overall (Pichler, Kohli & Granitz, 2021).

Gen Z-ers are incredibly inclusive - they don't make a distinction between friends they make online versus those they meet in person. They effortlessly move between communities that align with their values, utilising the impressive mobilisation enabled by technology. Gen Z-ers place a high value on online communities as they provide an avenue for individuals from diverse economic backgrounds to connect and rally around shared interests and causes. (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

According to a 2018 survey conducted by Deloitte, 77% of Gen Z participants considered it vital to work for organisations that shared their values. This demographic places great importance on social values, with climate change being of particular concern. In the United States, Gen Z-ers, exhibit much greater concern for climate change compared to older generations (Ro, 2022). Likewise, BUPA, a health insurance company in the UK, discovered in 2021 that 64% of individuals aged 18 to 22, who participated in their survey, viewed it as crucial for employers to address environmental concerns, and 59% indicated that they would stay longer with responsible organisations (Bupa, 2022). In Australia, younger employees have quit companies that they perceive as not taking sufficient action to fight climate change. This sudden increase in interest in careers that align with personal values has also had a significant impact on the educational landscape. In the United States, there has been a growing trend of university students pursuing careers related to the environment and an increasing number of MBA programs have been developed to focus on social impact and environmental issues.

According to a recent study of business students in the US, 51% of respondents would be willing to accept a lower salary if the company they work for was environmentally responsible - this marks a 7% increase from a similar study conducted five years prior. To some degree, this nuanced perspective on compensation is shared among members of Gen Z, regardless of their income level (Ro, 2022). Deloitte's (2022) survey showed that Gen Z-ers are even ready to take action if the companies they work for don't respond to environmental concerns. A considerable percentage of Gen Z-ers (48%) and Millennials (43%) have indicated that they have urged their employers to take action. An interesting fact is also that those who are more outspoken about this matter and perceive that their employers are attentive and integrating their inputs tend to be more loyal. This implies that it is beneficial for employers to pay heed and respond to their employees' concerns in the long run. Moreover, the pandemic has made Gen Z-ers even more interested in the whole finding a sustainable job matter because many believe that their generation cannot afford not to be sustainable anymore (Ro, 2022).

2.2 New perspectives

Having grown up during the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the economic aftermath of the 2008 recession (and now the Covid-19 pandemic), Gen Z-ers have a unique perspective. They tend to prioritise job stability, security, and growth in potential employers. They also recognise the importance of continuous learning and believe that their jobs will change over time, with 59% expecting their roles to be different 20 years from now. Employers can respond to this by capitalising on the benefits their companies can offer, such as various bonuses and good health insurance, and also showing the potential long-term career paths available within the organisation (Carlevatti, 2021).

Another watchword for Gen Z-ers is personalisation. It is expected they will be able to demand more control and personalisation in their career paths. To attract and retain the top talent of this generation, employers must shift their mindset and recognise the unique behaviour and expectations of Gen Z. This generation seeks personalised treatment from their employers and is no longer content with filling standard job roles. This shift towards personalisation can benefit workers of all generations and create a more attractive workplace for retaining talent across age groups (Deloitte, 2019).

One of the major challenges organisational leaders are facing is also the challenge of managing now four different generations with differences in learning styles, communication styles, preferences and beliefs within the same workplace. Two contributing factors to this are definitely a drastic increase in life expectancy and consequently a postponed retirement age. Failing to understand all of the differences between the generations can create conflicts and nowadays it is harder than ever for HR managers to create a productive, successful, and cohesive working environment. To manage a workforce consisting of four different generations, organisational leaders must understand the differences between them, including their use of technology, work values, and leadership styles. Failure to comprehend these differences may result in generational conflicts, and organisational leaders must find ways to effectively engage and manage these four generations (Perilus, 2020).

However, heterogeneity in the workplace can also be turned into a competitive advantage, if human resource management takes into account the identity of each group and proactively manages them (Meret, Fioravanti, Iannotta & Gatti, 2017).

Gen Z will bring a new set of challenges for HR managers, leaders, educators, and supervisors will be confronted with a great challenge (Scheuerlein, Lucia & Plachecki, 2019), which will be amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic might make this shift even bigger (Pichler, Kohli & Granitz, 2021). Much of these challenges stem from the general considerations about Gen Z-ers, who are supposed to be more highly educated and more diverse in all ways than others (Schroth, 2019). According to research from Deloitte (2019), the common belief that Gen Z is reconsidering the worth of a college education is not accurate. In reality, Gen Z places even greater importance on obtaining a four-year college education than previous generations. Gen Z is becoming the most educated generation with the highest amount of student debt. Therefore, companies that prioritise investing in learning and skill development are more appealing to this education-focused group. They are very ambitious, and creative, with the need for constant development and evaluation. It was found that 80% of working Gen Z-ers consider learning from failures as an essential value for personal growth and innovation, rather than a potential pitfall (Lev, 2021). Issues like transparency in terms of communication and activities, opportunities for promotion and involvement in challenging projects are very important (Racolta-Paina & Irini, 2021).

However, the key insights into the characteristics of Gen Z-ers are based on their digital world nativity. They are generally not looking for permanent or life-long employment but

rather change jobs and work in different organisations. When it comes to their workplace, they expect that it offers the same opportunities as the online world - flexibility, gamification, home office and task orientation (Fodor & Jaeckel, 2018). Flexible working hours are highly appreciated, and Gen Z is moving away from the classic nine-to-five schedule in the office (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017).

According to recent research from LinkedIn in 2022, Gen Z-ers are more likely to quit their jobs and search for a better one if their expectations are not met. Compared to 2019, Gen Z-ers are changing jobs at a much higher rate of 134%, whereas Millennials are switching jobs at only a 24% higher rate. Baby Boomers, on the other hand, are in fact switching jobs at a slower rate compared to 2019, which does not come as a surprise. Older employees may not prioritise their employers' values, but it could be due to their stage of life rather than being cynical. As Baby Boomers and Generation X members have been working for decades, they may have already found an industry or position that aligns with their values. As a result, they may automatically make job changes that feel safe and familiar. However, younger generations like Gen Z and Millennials are still exploring the job market. If they have mainly worked in low-paying entry-level jobs in fields such as retail or customer service, they may have encountered workplace cultures that don't align with their values (Anders, 2022).

The job-hopping trend is unlikely to change and slow down though, as around 25% of Gen Z-ers aim or expect to resign from their current positions within the next six months. Furthermore, 75% of Gen Z-ers are open to completely switching their careers and seeking employment opportunities in different industries (Anders, 2022). While, according to Waldron (2022), these numbers may be influenced by Gen Z's early career stage and the overall trend of employees being more willing to leave their jobs, they do offer insights into how Gen Z navigates the workplace and potential implications for the future.

Work-life balance (WLB) will be more and more important for future employees because Millennials and Gen Z-ers appreciate relationships and personal life more than previous generations (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017). WLB has recently emerged in the context of freedom in the workplace as an important aspect of a healthy work environment and also as a strategic HR policy (Sánchez-Hernández, González-López, Buenadicha-Mateos & Tato-Jiménez, 2019). In today's work environment, promoting work-life balance has become increasingly essential also because new generations of workers prioritise a fluid and flexible work environment. According to Sánchez-Hernández, González-López, Buenadicha-Mateos and Tato-Jiménez (2019) meeting the needs of these employees not only results in a happier workforce, but also has positive effects on consumers, clients, and the organisation as a whole. To achieve this, organisations can provide various tools and services, such as childcare services, extended and flexible parental leave, and support for single parents, which can help employees balance work and domestic life. Companies are also realising that workers with bad WLB eventually start to lose productivity, become more absent or go on sick leave more often and this end up costing them a lot of money and impacting the revenue (Sánchez-Hernández, González-López, Buenadicha-Mateos & Tato-Jiménez, 2019).

Compared to Millennials, among which 47% worry about WLB, a lower percentage of Gen Z workers (38%) consider work-life balance as the most important factor in their jobs. However, this does not mean they are old-school. Instead, they bring a forward-thinking perspective in terms of digital skills and mindset, which can be of great value to any employer. It's also worth noting that WLB is no longer limited to being a women's issue and has become a concern for society and the generation as a whole. However, among job candidates, schedule flexibility is still slightly more important for women (Sánchez-Hernández, González-López, Buenadicha-Mateos & Tato-Jiménez, 2019).

2.3 Expectations from the workplace

Gen Z might be the most socially conscious generation, but Gen Z-ers may also be among the most pragmatic as well. Recent research indicates that young Americans prioritise earning potential over other considerations when seeking employment. This emphasis on financial stability, however, could be attributed in part to their perception that employers have not made significant strides in improving society. Approximately 70% of Millennials and 69% of Gen Z-ers believe that corporations prioritise their own objectives over the welfare of society. Furthermore, the majority of both generations (62% and 59%, respectively) believe that businesses have no aspirations beyond financial gain. Young people's scepticism about their employers' dedication to social progress may stem from their own work experiences. Several corporations have been criticised for making sweeping statements about diversity, equity, and inclusion in the last year, yet still have room for improvement in their policies and practices. According to the Deloitte survey, almost a quarter of both Millennials and Gen Z workers believe they have been victims of discrimination in their workplace. Racism and ethnicity were the most frequent reasons cited for discrimination, with 39% of Gen Z-ers and 36% of Millennials who identify as ethnic minorities claiming they are "all the time" or frequently discriminated against at work. Sexual orientation is also a significant factor, with around 30% of LGBTQ individuals having experienced discrimination (Deichler, 2021).

Gen Z-ers are, as already mentioned, undisturbed by technological advancements and their possible glitches. They believe that they can swiftly retrieve information by seeking help from Google, YouTube, TikTok, colleagues, or random people on the internet. This generation embraces the "work smart" mindset, using technology to streamline their work processes and increase their productivity. They are always eager to learn new skills, allowing them to complete tasks more efficiently (Aubrey, 2022).

Despite being a tech-savvy generation, the majority (90%) of Generation Z individuals prefer interpersonal and visual communication in their workplaces, as opposed to telephone conversations (Lev, 2021). Gen Z workers prefer to use technology to expand their skill sets and prepare for their future careers. Therefore, companies should consider incorporating technology into their employee development and performance management systems. For

example, digital tools that provide instant feedback and can be accessed through mobile devices may be particularly helpful for Gen Z workers who tend to communicate with emojis, pictures, symbols, videos, and reactions (Pichler et al., 2021). Furthermore, according to Huppert (2017), recruiters need to refrain from using long job descriptions and content when trying to reach out to Gen Z. Instead, they should use videos, animations, and even emojis to effectively convey their message. Although these preferences may seem unnecessary or frivolous to older generations, it is crucial to recognise their significance to Gen Z workers and how ignoring them can create a disconnect (Pichler et al., 2021). According to Carlevatti (2021), the technology provided by an employer is a significant factor in the job selection process for 91% of Gen Z-ers.

Gen Z-ers tend to be less patient with traditional annual feedback meetings and prefer to receive feedback on their performance at least weekly, with digital communication like email or WhatsApp messages being acceptable to them (Lev, 2021).

Deeper relationships are also valued in the workplace. Social environment and happiness are important for Gen Z-ers. If their workplace does not provide them with, they are quickly ready to quit the job. They also don't like authority (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015). But at the same time, it is expected that superiors mentor them (Iorgulescu, 2016). When selecting a workplace, important drivers are flexible HR, team spirit and a successful career path (Fodor & Jäckel, 2017). Studies indicate that Gen Z employees highly value support from their colleagues and supervisors within the organisation. This finding aligns with the fact that Gen Z-ers experience higher levels of anxiety and depression (Pichler et al., 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic has had people starting to realise the value of mental and physical health. And Gen Z-ers are far more likely than any other generation to report their mental health as poor. They have the highest chance of suffering from anxiety and depression. Therefore, managers might focus more on this issue and use more resources to promote health and wellness programs within companies (Schroth, 2019). According to the Deloitte Global survey, 41% of Millennials and 46% of Gen Z-ers reported feeling stressed or anxious most or all the time, which is a worrying statistic. What is concerning is also the fact that more than half of Millennials and Gen Z-ers believe it is common to witness discrimination based on someone's mental health status (Deloitte, 2021b).

According to a survey conducted by Forrester Consulting, 79% of non-managers and 81% of managers would prefer to work for a company that provides them with high-quality resources to take care of their mental health. This desire is even stronger among Gen Z-ers and Millennials aged 18 to 29. The survey also found that poor mental health support from employers during the pandemic is causing some employees to consider leaving their current jobs, with a higher percentage of managers than non-managers feeling this way (Comstock, 2021).

Despite the increased attention on mental health by employers during the Covid-19 pandemic, many young employees are still hesitant to disclose their mental health challenges to their employers. This reluctance is evident from the fact that almost 50% of those who took time off from work due to mental health reasons, such as stress and anxiety, did not reveal the real reason to their employer. Additionally, those who have not taken such time off also reported that they would not disclose the reason if they needed to take an absence for mental health reasons. Consequently, despite the increased awareness of mental health in the workplace, this has not necessarily led to a reduction in workplace stigma (Deloitte, 2021b).

Gen Z tends to be more entrepreneurial than their predecessors, the Millennials. They also expect their workplace to encourage their entrepreneurial skills (Lifintsev & Wellbrock, 2019). However, research conducted by Fast Company indicates that although Gen Z-ers appreciate the idea of being self-employed, most of them are practical, risk-averse, and pragmatic in their approach. Their perceived inclination towards entrepreneurship is more of a survival mechanism rather than an aspirational pursuit for wealth or prestige (Finch, 2015). Another research by Adamy (2018) indicates similar results with Gen Z being more pragmatic than entrepreneurial. The reason for this may be fear of failure, which comes as a risk with entrepreneurship.

2.4 Challenges fro employers

Schroth (2019) argues that Gen Z-ers appear inclined towards individualism, particularly in their learning, communication, and interpersonal interactions, which can make group work challenging for them. Therefore, organisations should implement socialisation programs that aid Gen Z workers in adapting to cultures and work arrangements that prioritise teamwork and collaboration. Experts recommend that organisations provide socialisation opportunities for Gen Z workers to get to know their colleagues and offer Q&A sessions with organisational leaders and human resource professionals. Undoubtedly, socialisation programs like these can improve person-organisation fit, not only for Gen Z-ers but for the overall workforce of a company. By enhancing person-organisation fit, these programs can also contribute to improved performance (Pichler et al., 2021).

However, support and opportunities should be provided also for individuals who tend to work independently, while also helping them adapt to team-based work by establishing healthy group norms that encourage cooperation. Organisations should also consider adopting self-directed work teams, which provide a significant level of customisation of work and decision-making autonomy while recognising individual contributions to team goals. With the increasing trend towards remote work and virtual communication, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic, Gen Z workers can set an example for coordinated work with geographically dispersed team members who communicate electronically. This presents a

valuable opportunity for organisations to utilise the distinctive strengths of Gen Z-ers (Pichler et al., 2021).

Among some of the negative traits of Gen Z-ers literature lists hard-to-motivate, easy-to-give-up, very easily distracted by their mobile devices (Perilus, 2020), self-centred, lack of concentration, lack of experiences and very low average attention span (8 seconds) (Jain, 2020). This generation is also often seen as lazy employees who only want to have fun at work (Dziadkiewicz, Nieżurawska & Karaszewska, 2016). But despite the perception of older generations that Gen Z is unmotivated and impractical, many of them are willing to work hard for financial stability. According to a study conducted by Monster, 58% of Gen-Z employees would work on weekends or at night to earn a higher salary. To compare, for Millennials this percentage drops to 45%, and for Generation X members even lower to 40% (Stahl, 2021). Furthermore, the survey conducted by Deloitte (2022) revealed that Millennials and Gen Z-ers are deeply concerned about the state of the world and are struggling to balance their desire for change with the demands and restrictions of daily life. They are experiencing financial stress while attempting to make environmentally sustainable choices. Despite feeling burnt out, 43% of Gen Z-ers and 33% of Millennials are taking on additional jobs and seeking work that is purposeful and flexible.

According to Iorgulescu (2016), Gen Z's writing skills may be adversely affected by their social media activity, indicating a need for comprehensive training in formal communication skills. Another pitfall may come from the impact of technology on this generation. A study conducted by Deloitte showed that 37% of Gen Z-ers worry about technology weakening their capacity to build strong personal relationships and acquire interpersonal skills. The development of cognitive skills of Gen Z, including intellectual curiosity, has been impacted by technology. This poses a risk of skill gaps when they enter the labour market in large numbers, particularly in highly cognitive social skills such as critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving. Furthermore, communication skill gaps can affect the passing on of tacit knowledge (specific organisational knowledge about processes or customers), which can hardly be transferred digitally, and this poses another risk for companies. Gen Z-ers, however, value and recognise the importance of in-person communication and admit their own shortcomings in this area. In addition, organisations are likely to feel the effects of any skill shortfall in a work environment where social and emotional skills are considered increasingly important by 92% of HR leaders (O'Boyle et al., 2017).

Concerning their infamously very short attention span there are recent studies that suggest quite the opposite. According to them, Gen Z possesses what they refer to as "highly developed eight-second filters". In an era where Gen Z is surrounded by a deluge of content, it's not just a matter of paying attention, but rather, what manages to cut through all the noise. And Gen Z is very good at cutting through the noise. Having grown up in a world where they have limitless options but limited time, Gen Z has adapted to quickly sort through and evaluate vast amounts of information. On the internet, they heavily rely on trending pages

within apps to locate the most relevant information and content. This helps them narrow down their options to a more manageable size. Once something has captured their attention, they become intensely focused and committed. The internet has allowed them to delve deep into any topic they choose and learn from like-minded fans. Gen Z is highly attuned to being marketed to and has a limited amount of time and energy to spend on assessing whether something is worth their attention. To capture their attention, providing them with engaging and immediately beneficial experiences is essential. Simply relying on one-way messaging alone is likely to get drowned out in the noise (Finch, 2015).

2.5 Gen Z and the Covid-19 context

Without a doubt the Covid-19 crisis has had a major effect on Gen Z. It hit right when they were at the stage of their lives to either start their education or a career.

According to Euromonitor International research, Gen Z has been the most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, experiencing higher rates of anxiety, decreased work hours, unemployment, and the need for financial assistance. Nowadays' younger generations (Millennials and Gen Z-ers) have, as already stated in previous chapters, faced many global challenges, such as global warming, political instability, unaffordable housing, and financial crises. The Covid-19 pandemic has now become yet another crisis that is going to define them. For Millennials, this has already been the second recession that they have experienced after the 2008 financial crisis. While older Millennials might already have established careers, younger ones have just entered the workforce, some have become parents, bought a house or are aspiring to own one and are therefore particularly vulnerable. On the other hand, for Gen Z-ers, the Covid-19 pandemic has been the defining crisis of their generation, as they are completing their education and entering the world of work and are therefore at the most critical stage of their career life. The good side of all this is that the pandemic has made many businesses worldwide adapt to the changing needs and expectations of these two generations during the pandemic. Popular platforms and apps among young people have been focusing on mental health, and some fashion and beauty retailers have been reallocating profits and changing production to help stop the virus's spread (Euromonitor International, 2020).

Also, the pandemic has had a subtle yet significant impact on society - fostering a sense of solidarity. Over 60% of Millennials and Gen Z-ers expressed a feeling of shared responsibility towards one another, displaying increased empathy towards their communities and taking steps to help those in need. Moreover, more than one-third of Millennials and Gen Z-ers anticipate a shift towards a more altruistic world, characterised by greater international cooperation, compassion, and efforts to combat climate change. This demographic also expects companies to display greater social responsibility, with less than 14% of respondents anticipating a regression in these areas once the pandemic is completely over (Deloitte, 2021a).

Although Gen Z-ers are less likely to suffer from the physical effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, they experience unique challenges due to their developmental stage in life, including high levels of job loss and unemployment, emotional stress and grief, and educational difficulties caused by remote or disrupted studying. Recent college graduates, in particular, have been hit hard by the pandemic, with many experiencing difficulties finding jobs or having job offers rescinded due to the lockdowns in March 2020. In April of the same year, 27% of workers aged 18 to 24 were unemployed, with 13% giving up their job search. Although employment rates have largely rebounded, this group has left the workforce at twice the rate of other age groups since the pandemic began. The pandemic's disproportionate impact on racial minorities also extends to Gen Z's employment, with black, Asian American, and Hispanic/Latino workers aged 18 to 24 facing up to almost two times the unemployment rate of their white peers (Coe et al., 2022).

According to the research that examined how Gen Z and Generation X (i.e. older generations) differentiate in terms of coping with the Covid-19 crisis, Gen Z exhibited lower levels of resilience compared to Gen X. Multiple studies have also shown a rise in anxiety and depression among Gen Z-ers, and the research on Generation Z during the Covid-19 pandemic suggests that they are more susceptible than older generations. Some experts suggest that this could be due to limited direct in-person interactions with others and that this is the reason for the elevated rates of depression, reported as the highest of any generation before (Harari et al., 2022).

Moreover, according to McKinsey surveys, Gen Z-ers are more inclined to report having received a diagnosis of a behavioural-health condition, such as a mental or substance use disorder, compared to Generation X and Baby Boomers. Additionally, during the 12-month period from late 2019 to late 2020, Gen Z-ers were two to three times more likely to report planning, attempting or thinking about suicide than other generations. Compared to other generations, Gen Z-ers reported a higher number of unmet social needs, which accounted for education, income, housing, employment, food, transportation, safety and social support. 58% of Gen Z-ers reported at least two unmet social needs, while only 16% of people from older generations reported the same. These unmet needs are linked to higher rates of self-reported behavioural-health conditions. (Coe et al., 2022).

Related to self-reported behavioural-health conditions and a rise in anxiety and depression among Gen Z-ers, they are nearly two times more likely to not seek treatment for their behavioural-health condition compared to Millennials. The lack of seeking help may be attributed to various factors such as the developmental stage of Gen Z-ers, disengagement from healthcare, perceived unaffordability of treatment, and the stigma surrounding mental or substance use disorders prevalent in their families and communities. However, Gen Z-ers value racial and ethnic diversity in the behavioural-health workforce more than previous generations (Coe et al., 2022).

Another research examining Gen Z-ers across Europe has shown extremely concerning numbers - the percentage of young Europeans who are at risk of depression has risen to 64%, up from 15% before the pandemic (Butler & Bannock, 2021).

The research on Generation Z during the Covid-19 pandemic also examined the values of participants. It showed that compared to Generation X, Gen Z-ers displayed higher levels of openness to change and self-improvement and lower levels of conservation. These results align with previous studies, indicating that younger generations remain open to change despite facing difficult times. Traditionally, values linked with conservatism and stability are thought to prevail during times of crisis, while values of self-expression are predominant during prosperous and stable times. Openness to change reflects growth motivations, whereas conservation values indicate anxiety motivators. This research is intriguing because it goes against these predictions. Although younger people showed lower levels of resilience, they still demonstrated higher levels of openness to experience and self-enhancement in terms of their values. Younger generations valued self-enhancement, openness to change, and novelty (self-direction, stimulation, and hedonism) over preserving the status quo and resisting change. Even during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic crisis, younger generations still desire self-expression in the future. Gen Z also showed a more favourable attitude towards flexible learning, while both generations shared similar views on online consumption and flexible work. Despite the significant impact of the crisis, the core values of each generation remained mostly unchanged. Both generations showed a positive inclination towards hybrid work and consumption (Harari et al., 2022).

3 DEI AS THE CENTRAL VALUE SYSTEM FOR GEN Z

3.1 DEI in International Business (IB): Origins and state of the art

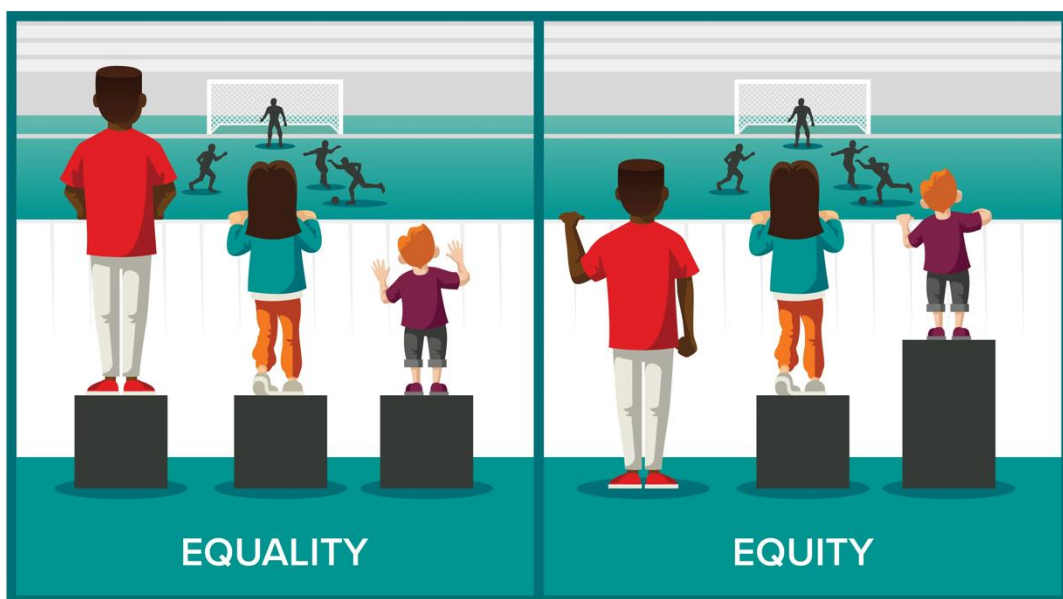
DEI stands for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. It is a concept that has gained significant traction in recent years and refers to creating an environment that embraces and values differences among people, promotes fairness, and actively works to eliminate discrimination and bias (Heinz & Urwin, 2023).

In a particular environment, diversity denotes the existence of distinctions among individuals. In the workplace, this may encompass variations in factors such as race, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status and socioeconomic status. It can also involve differences in physical abilities, whether or not one is a veteran, or whether one has children - all of which are aspects of diversity. Diversity in the workplace is important for many reasons. First, people with different backgrounds bring different points of view, which can lead to better solutions and ideas and different approaches to problems (Heinz & Urwin, 2023). Another significant advantage of having a diverse workforce is that such organisations have a greater ability to attract the required talent, particularly when it comes to drawing in individuals from the Gen Z demographic.

According to a study conducted by McKinsey in 2014, companies that have the most ethnic and racial diversity in their executive teams are 35% more likely to outperform their competitors, while companies with the most gender diversity are 15% more likely (Hunt et al., 2015). The 2017 report, also by McKinsey, rose this number to 21% (Hunt et al., 2018). Similarly, some older studies indicate that companies with a more diverse workforce tend to surpass their rivals because of enhanced organisational appeal and better retention of employees. It is even believed that failing to accommodate this new and diverse group of workers, who have a preference for diversity, could lead to conflicts and undermine organisational performance, even if it does not directly improve it. (Pichler et al., 2021).

Equity or “fairness” refers to ensuring equal treatment of everybody while at the same time giving everybody the same opportunities, access and resources. Equity aims to recognise and eliminate obstacles that prevent certain groups from fully engaging in society or particular professions and industries (Barney, 2023). Recognising barriers is what makes “equity” different from “equality”. Understanding how to build an equitable workplace is what makes building diversity in a company possible. Establishing equitable work environments not only encourages a diverse workforce but also motivates employees to put in more effort and enthusiasm towards their roles.

Figure 2: Definition of equity



Source: McGraw-Hill (2018).

Giving people a sense of belonging in their company and supporting them to be who they truly are, without feeling discriminated against is what’s called inclusion. It is the driving force of diversity and Gen Z-ers expect companies to provide an inclusive environment (Heinz & Urwin, 2023). The relationship between workforce diversity and firm performance is well established, but increasing diversity alone may not yield the desired outcomes if the

company lacks an inclusive work culture. Considering Gen Z-ers' attention to perceptions of organisational support, firms should adopt explicit policies and practices that promote inclusivity, such as nondiscrimination policies, employee resource groups and diversity training. With the arrival of this new generation in the labour market, promoting diversity and inclusion has become of vital importance for attracting, supporting, and retaining Gen Z workers, and for gaining and maintaining a competitive advantage. Additionally, it is crucial to note that inclusivity programs require support and endorsement from top management, highlighting the need for their involvement (Pichler et al., 2021).

3.2 Gen Z and DEI

According to a survey conducted by Monster, 83% of Gen Z-ers expressed the importance of a company's dedication to diversity and inclusion while considering an employer (Monster, n.d.). Another survey by Handshake organisation showed that more than half of Gen Z-ers would not apply for a job if the company lacked diversity (Handshake, 2021).

Furthermore, in a survey conducted by Handshake organisation around 50% of Gen Z respondents claimed they would quit their job if it didn't comply with their equity and social justice expectations. Moreover, 62% of them said they would more likely work in a company that had a commitment to equal pay and that gender equity is very important (Handshake, 2021).

To sum up, having strong DEI strategies has become very important for all companies as the youngest generation has entered the labour market. Generation Z members are emphasising the immediate need for more substantial implementation of DEI strategies in the workplace. In a survey from 2021 conducted by Tallo, more than 1400 Gen Z-ers were asked about the importance of DEI in their workplace and 99% of them said that it is important or very important, which is a number that speaks for itself. Furthermore, 86% of respondents expressed their intention to take part in a diversity, equity and inclusion Employee Resource Groups or committee, or contribute to the organisation's strategy. So it is on companies now to listen to Gen Z future employees and implement strong and meaningful DEI strategies in order to attract fresh and new talents (Tallo, 2021).

4 RESEARCH

To conduct a thorough investigation of the impact of the values of diversity, equity and inclusion of Generation Z on the labour market and companies, I collected both primary and secondary data. In the first part of the research, I reviewed existing literature on the subject. However, recognising the limitations of secondary data, ie. the lack of literature about Gen Z in the Slovenian market in particular, I also decided to collect primary data to gain a better understanding of the values of Gen Z in Slovenia, their importance to Gen Z-ers and how they differ from those of other generations. In selecting a research framework and

methodology, I considered both qualitative and quantitative methods. Ultimately, I determined that a quantitative approach was more suitable for the research topic since it focuses on recognising the key values of Gen Z that make this generation so distinguishable from others and how this poses a challenge for companies and their methods of attracting and retaining Gen Z workers. To collect the necessary data, I conducted two online survey questionnaires, one that targeted Gen Z potential employees and another that targeted companies. There were different questions for each group to see the perceptions of both. Both questionnaires were structured in a way to provide valuable data that complemented the theory and insights gathered from the literature review and answers to my research questions.

4.1 Research design and objectives

This thesis explores how Generation Z's values in Slovenia, specifically their commitment to DEI, will affect the labour market. The focus is on how companies can create more inclusive workplaces to attract and retain Generation Z talent. By examining the values and expectations of Generation Z, this thesis aims to provide insights into how the Slovenian labour market can adapt to meet the needs of this new generation of workers.

With this in mind, the main goals of my master's thesis are:

1. To provide a basic overview of the values that make Gen Z stand out and understand how this shapes the preferences and expectations of prospective Gen Z employees.
2. To analyse how will a value-driven generation affect the labour market and the workplace in Slovenia.
3. To examine implications for human resource management (HRM).
4. To examine whether there is a difference in perceptions of these values between Slovenian companies and international companies.
5. To recommend strategies for companies for attracting, recruiting and benefitting from the prospects of having Gen Z employees.

Thus, my research questions are:

1. How will the centrality of values of equality, diversity, and overcoming stereotypes of Gen Z play out in the labour market?
 - 1.1. How central are these values to Gen Z compared to other values?
 - 1.2. How central are these values to Gen Z compared to their importance or lack thereof for other generations?

- 1.3. How do these values shape attitudes towards work, job seeking, and labour issues in general?
2. What do Gen Z-ers expect from future employers in terms of considering their values?
 - 2.1. How important is it for Gen Z-ers that their company shares the same values as them?
 - 2.2. Would Gen Z-ers be willing to work in a firm that does not meet their expectations, shares the same values and in general operates in ways perceived as conservative or undesirable by Gen Z-ers?
 - 2.3. Do Gen Z-ers think that companies are taking action in the direction of changing some practices to accommodate their profiles?
3. How are employers positioned towards Gen Z equality-diversity-overcoming stereotypes value system?
 - 3.1. Are companies aware of these values of Gen Z? How seriously do they treat this phenomenon?
 - 3.2. How do they evaluate Gen Z? Do they see their value system as an opportunity or a threat?
 - 3.3. Are they proactive in terms of adapting to Gen Z?
 - 3.4. Are international companies more flexible than Slovenian companies in considering Gen Z values?
4. Taking into account the findings of the thesis, what can companies do to increase their inter-generational sensitivity?
 - 4.1. What are the possible strategies for attracting and hiring Gen Z-ers?
 - 4.2. How to manage Gen Z employees in the workplace?
 - 4.3. What could encourage/discourage companies to adjust or change some of their strategies?

4.2 Research Methodology

As I already mentioned, my research relied on two types of data - primary and secondary data. The latter was obtained by a thorough review of relevant literature from official online databases of academic journals, scientific and research papers, different articles and websites of relevant institutions to obtain the foundation for the research. It gave me an insight into

the characteristics of Gen Z-ers, their values and value systems and the relationship between them and the labour market. I also gathered information about other generations' characteristics and the differences between them and Gen Z. Primary data was obtained through two online survey questionnaires, one that targeted Gen Z potential employees, and another that targeted human resource managers in different companies. For the second target group, I tried to reach out to as diverse a group of companies as possible in order to see the perception of all types of companies (Slovenian and international, small and big). Since I wanted to find out whether Gen Z-ers in Slovenia care about DEI in their lives and work and what Slovenian employers think of this phenomenon, there were different questions for each group. Both questionnaires were structured in a way to help me answer my research questions.

4.3 Primary data collection methods

According to Sukamolson (2007), quantitative research is defined as the process of collecting numerical data and then analysing it by using mathematically based methods. It is commonly used in natural and social sciences, including biology, physics, sociology, economics, psychology etc. with the purpose of explaining particular phenomena, recognising patterns, testing hypotheses, making predictions and generalising results to wider populations (Bhandari, 2022). There are several approaches to quantitative research: exploratory research, correlational research, descriptive research, experimental research, trend analysis and survey research (Sukamolson, 2007). I chose survey research for the purpose of this thesis, as it seemed the most appropriate.

Survey research helps us systematically gather information from our respondents in order to understand and/or predict some behavioural aspects of the population. It consists of sampling, questionnaire design, questionnaire administration and data analysis (Sukamolson, 2007). When I conducted this type of research, I was aware of both advantages and disadvantages of it. Among the many advantages of quantitative research is of course time efficiency and the ability to reach a higher sample size as I was able to collect a relatively large amount of data in a short period of time. Furthermore, this type of research is repeatable because of standardised data collection protocols and other procedures. The results are also directly statistically comparable to other similar studies with different groups of participants. Unfortunately, quantitative research does not go without some weaknesses, e.g.: over-generalisation (the view of our group of respondents does not necessarily represent the view of the whole population) and limited outcomes of the research (questionnaires and questions in them are usually structured in a way to provide the desired outcome) (Bhandari, 2022). These limitations should always be considered in interpretations of the results of such research.

4.3.1 Personal values survey

The questionnaire for Gen Z-ers was prepared with an internet survey tool 1KA and then sent to representatives of Gen Z to see their perception of the topic and get an insight into their value systems and expectations related to these values in their workplace. The questions included in the questionnaire were structured in a way to obtain this information. For the distribution of the Gen Z questionnaire, I used social media (mainly Instagram and Facebook), because Gen Z-ers are, as already stated in the first part of this thesis, “digital natives” and they use social media on a daily basis and are very computable with it. My target population were representatives of Gen Z who were of age (born between 1995 and 2005) and born in Slovenia. The exception was one respondent who was 17 at the time of answering the questionnaire, but as it turned out they were already working as a student, and I therefore included their answer in the analysis of the results of the questionnaire.

4.3.2 Survey of companies

For the second target group – human resource managers in different companies – I also prepared questions using 1KA. These questions reflected their perception of Gen Z-ers in general, what they think about them and their values, whether they are aware of the importance of these values to Gen Z-ers, whether they are willing to listen to Gen Z and reframe some of the attracting, hiring or business practices they currently use in order to remain competitive on the job market, what is their view of the current turbulent situation and how will that in their opinion affect their previously mention practices. I reached out to potential employers and managers using personal contacts. Companies were further divided into two groups – Slovenian companies and international companies operating in the Slovenian market. By comparing the responses from these two groups I intended to answer my research question of whether there is a difference in the perceptions of the topic between them.

The questionnaires for both Gen Z and companies consisted of multiple-choice, ranking and open questions. The data from the surveys were analysed by employing descriptive statistical analytical techniques using Microsoft Excel. Open-ended textual questions were critically interpreted.

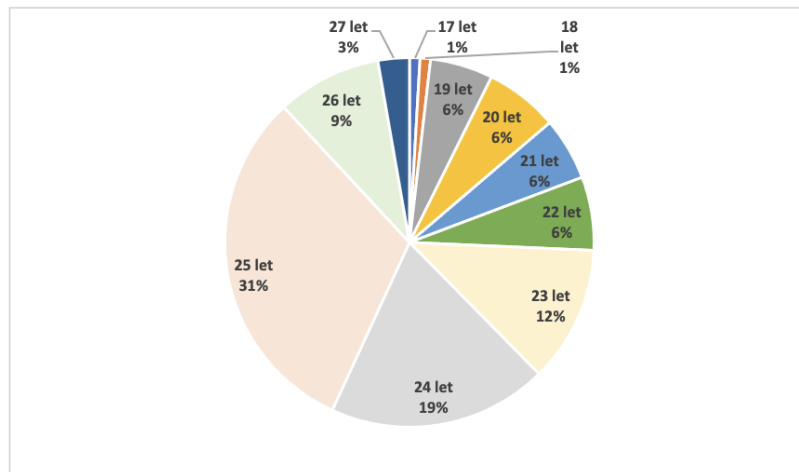
4.4 Sampling

4.4.1 Personal values survey sampling

For the respondents from the personal values survey, I targeted members of Gen Z who were of age (born between 1995 and 2005) and born in Slovenia. The sample consisted of 111 respondents. Two respondents, one the age of 28 and one of 29, were members of Generation Y and therefore not included in the analysis of the results. As already mentioned earlier, one

respondent was 17 years old, but already active in the labour market and therefore included in the analysis of the results. Most respondents were in the age range of 23 to 26 years old (78). The distribution by age of the respondents is presented in Figure 3.

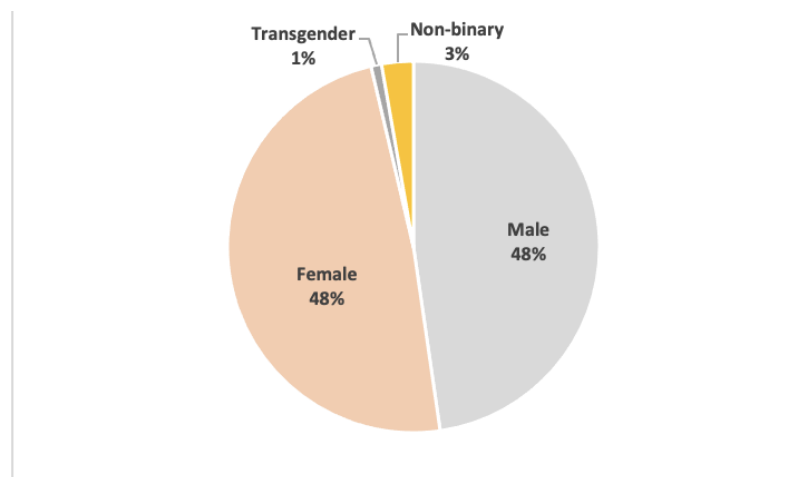
Figure 3: Distribution of survey respondents by age



Source: Own work.

Looking deeper into the demographics of my respondents, 49% of them were male and 47% female. 2% of the respondents identified as transgender and 3% as non-binary. The distribution by level of education is presented in Figure 4.

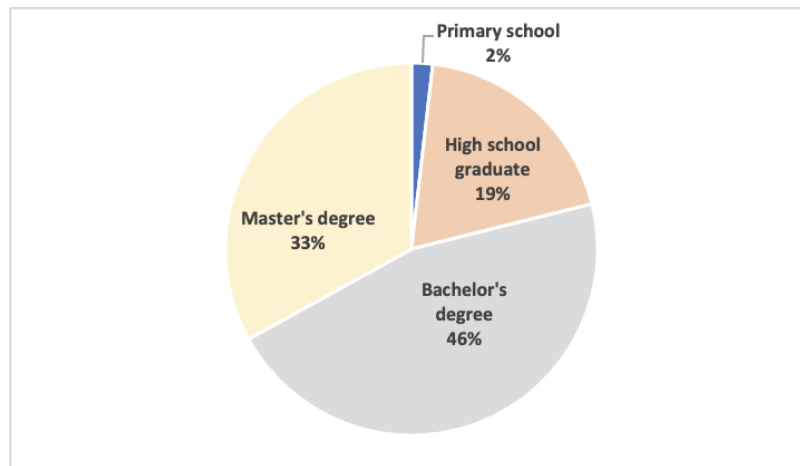
Figure 4: Distribution of survey respondents by gender



Source: Own work.

As for the level of education of the respondents, it varied from primary school to a Master's degree. 50 respondents had a Bachelor's degree, which was the most common answer, followed by a Master's degree (36 respondents). 23 respondents had a lower level of education (primary or high school). The distribution by level of education is presented in Figure 5.

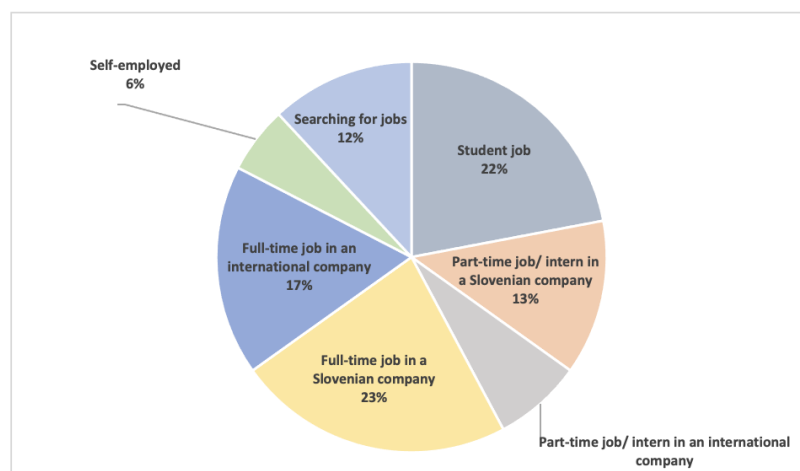
Figure 5: Distribution of survey respondents by level of education



Source: Own work.

Considering work-related demographics, 22% of the respondents were engaged in student jobs. 20% of the respondents worked part-time or as interns - they were further divided into those who worked in a Slovenian company (13%) and those who worked in an international company (7%). 40% of the respondents were employed full-time - 23% of them worked in a Slovenian company and 17% in an international one. 6% were freelancers or self-employed and 12% were in the process of changing or searching for a job. The distribution by current employment situation is presented in Figure 6.

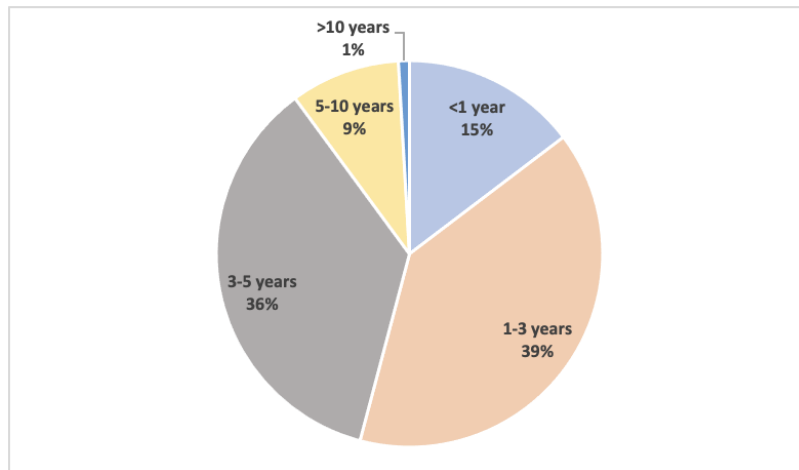
Figure 6: Distribution of survey respondents by current employment situation



Source: Own work.

Furthermore, most of the respondents (75%) had 1-5 years of work experience, 15% of them were employed for less than a year and 10% for more than 5 years. 1 respondent had more than 10 years of work experience. The distribution by current employment situation is presented in Figure 7.

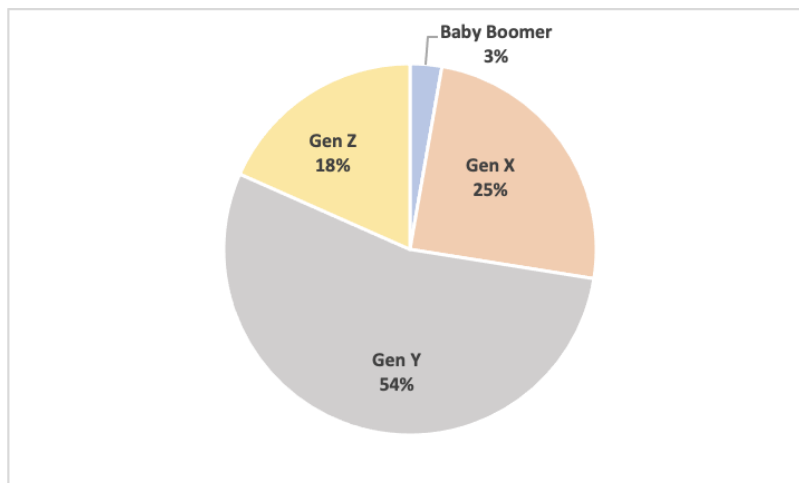
Figure 7: Distribution of survey respondents by years of work experience



Source: Own work.

In addition, regarding the generation of the respondents' superiors, most of the bosses were Millennials or Gen Y members (54%). Every fourth respondent had a superior from Generation X. 18% of the respondents said their superior is from the same generation as them and 3% had a Baby Boomer as their boss. The distribution by the generation of the respondents' superiors is presented in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Distribution of survey respondents by the generation of their superiors



Source: Own work.

Regarding the sampling method, there are two main types we can use: probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling methods are used to produce results representative of the whole population, each member of the population has the same chance of being selected. There are four types of these sampling methods: simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling. On the contrary, non-probability sampling involves selecting individuals based on non-random criteria, and not

each member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. These methods include convenience sampling, purposeful sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling. With non-probability sampling methods data is more easily collected, but the risk of sampling bias is higher (McCombes, 2023).

For the first target group, I decided to use the snowball sampling method. With this method, I recruited respondents via other respondents (my sample of respondents “snowballed” as I got in contact with more respondents), which means hidden populations for me, and I also collected data in a very cost- and time-effective manner. These are, according to Dudovskiy (2019) all advantages of the snowball sampling method.

4.4.2 Survey of Companies Sampling

The second target group included 8 companies operating in the Slovenian market. I divided them according to two parameters - country of origin and size. Five companies were Slovenian and three were international. All three international companies were large-sized (>250 employees). Regarding Slovenian companies, one was micro-sized, one small-sized, two middle-sized and one large-sized. According to the definition of the Companies Act [Zakon o gospodarskih družbah (ZGD-1), Uradni list RS, no. 65/09], a micro-sized company is a company with up to 10 employees, a small-sized company with 11-50, a middle-sized company with 51-250 and as already mentioned a large-sized company with more than 250 employees.

The sampling method for this target group was a combination of the purposeful and the snowball sampling method. The purposeful sampling method, also known as the judgement sampling method, is a technique used to collect the most useful sample for the purpose of the research. It is very useful when the target population is specific and very small (McCombes, 2023). The target number of companies in my case was 5-10.

4.5 Survey questions

4.5.1 Personal values survey questions

The questionnaire for the Gen Z respondents consisted of two groups of questions. The first group provided some general information about the demographics of the respondents and included five questions - about age, gender, level of education, employment situation and work experiences. This information is presented in the Sampling section. There was one extra question regarding the respondents’ superiors and what generation they belong to. In the second group of questions, the respondents were asked about their personal values, values at the workplace in general and values at their current job. The values in question were diversity, equity and inclusion. These questions were structured in the form of a 5-point Likert scale, which is a widely used scale for assessing attitudes and views. This type of

scale was chosen because of its many advantages, including easier understanding compared to other scales and easier sampling of the answers in case of a larger audience. It has five response options, ranging from one extremely negative pole to one extremely positive pole with a neutral option in the middle and two intermediate options (Voxco, 2022). In my case these options were: “Strongly disagree” – “Disagree” – “Neither disagree nor agree” – “Agree” – “Strongly agree”.

4.5.2 Survey of companies' questions

The questionnaire for companies consisted of four questions. The first two questions gave me information about the size of companies and whether they were Slovenian or international. The third question had seven sub-questions about companies' perceptions and responses to Gen Z-ers, and their values in the workplace. They were all structured in the form of a 5-point Likert scale. The fourth question was an open-ended question asking companies whether they see Gen Z as a challenge or not.

4.6 Data analysis method

According to Calzon (2023), data analysis refers to a process of extracting useful and meaningful information by collecting, modelling and analysing data using various logical and statistical techniques and methods. In the case of analysing number-based data or data that can be converted into numerical data, we talk about quantitative data analysis (Eteng, 2022).

After conducting survey research (which is a quantitative research method) I naturally decided to proceed with quantitative data analysis. Firstly, I needed to convert the raw data I collected into a readable and meaningful format. I achieved this by following three steps, which are according to Bhatia (2018) essential to carrying out the analysis properly:

1. Data validation (making sure the data was collected correctly and in an unbiased manner)
2. Data editing (conducting basic data checks, finding outliers etc.)
3. Data coding (grouping and assigning numerical values to data)

After data preparation, I needed to choose the data analysis method. Quantitative data analysis usually starts with a descriptive analysis and continues with further analysis to make predictions, show relationships between variables, test hypotheses etc. Hence, there are two most commonly used quantitative data analysis methods - descriptive statistics, used to describe certain datasets and inferential statistics, used to make predictions (Eteng, 2022). I opted to put an emphasis on the methods using descriptive statistics and enrich my analysis with some of the methods used within inferential statistics.

Examples of descriptive statistics methods include mean (numerical average of a set of values), median (midpoint of a set of numerical values), mode (most common value), range (highest and lowest value), frequency (number of times a value is represented), percentage (relation of a value to a larger group), standard deviation (dispersion of a range of numbers) etc. (Eteng, 2022). These methods provide absolute numbers and do not explain the motives behind those numbers (Bhatia, 2018).

Therefore, there is sometimes a need for further analysis using various inferential statistics methods. According to Eteng (2022), some of them are:

- Factor analysis (a technique used to reduce a large number of variables into a smaller number of factors, the most commonly used factor analysis is Principal component analysis)
- Regression analysis (a technique used for the estimation of correlations between dependent and independent variables)
- Cross-tabulations (also crosstabs is a technique used to show the relationship between two variables in a basic tabular form)
- Analysis of variance (ANOVA) (a technique used to test the difference between two or more groups)
- Cluster analysis (a technique used to recognise patterns within datasets and group objects according to the similarity among them)
- Monte Carlo Simulation (a mathematical technique used to generate models of possible outcomes and show their probability distributions)

In this thesis I analysed the data using cross-tabulations due to the simplicity, usefulness and in my case practicality of this method. After collecting the answers to each question from my respondents I further analysed their responses by adding another independent variable – gender. This way I got a more comprehensive overview of the data and was able to identify different patterns.

5 RESULTS

The following chapter provides the reader with the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the surveys using descriptive statistics.

One of the main goals of my master's thesis was to provide a basic overview of the values that make Gen Z stand out and understand how this shapes the preferences and expectations of prospective Gen Z employees. The questions in the questionnaire for Gen Z were, as already mentioned before, about their personal values, values at the workplace in general

and values at their current job (3 groups of questions). The values in question were diversity, equity and inclusion. These questions were structured in the form of a 5-point Likert scale.

For further analysis, I made a comparison between the answers of male, female and non-binary/transgender respondents.

5.1 Personal values

With these questions, I wanted to get some insight into the importance of the values of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in my respondents' everyday lives and their workplaces. The first question/statement was: *Living/working in an **equitable** environment where all people are treated fairly and get access to the same opportunities and resources is very important to me.*

As shown in Figure 9, the results revealed that the majority of the respondents (58%) strongly agreed with the statement that equity (gender, racial etc.) is very important to them. Moreover, 38% of the respondents agreed with the statement, meaning that altogether 96% of the respondents supported equity in their everyday life. 5 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement and none of them disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The next question/statement was that *Living/working in a **diverse** environment involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations etc., is very important to me.* As shown in Figure 9, the results revealed quite a different response from the respondents as in the first question. The majority of them still agreed (52%) or even strongly agreed (15%) with the statement that diversity in terms of co-living/ co-working with people of different social and ethnic backgrounds and different genders, sexual orientations etc. is very important to them. However, every fourth respondent neither disagreed nor agreed with the statement and the percentage of those who disagreed with it was at 8%.

The last question/statement in this group was: *Living/working in an **inclusive** environment where everyone feels valued and respected as an individual and there is no discrimination or intolerance is very important to me.* As shown in Figure 9, the results were similar to those in the question about equity. The majority of the respondents either strongly agreed (44%) or agreed (49%) with the statement that inclusivity is very important to them. 6% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed and 1 of them disagreed with the statement.

Figure 9: Distribution of the answers for the first group of questions



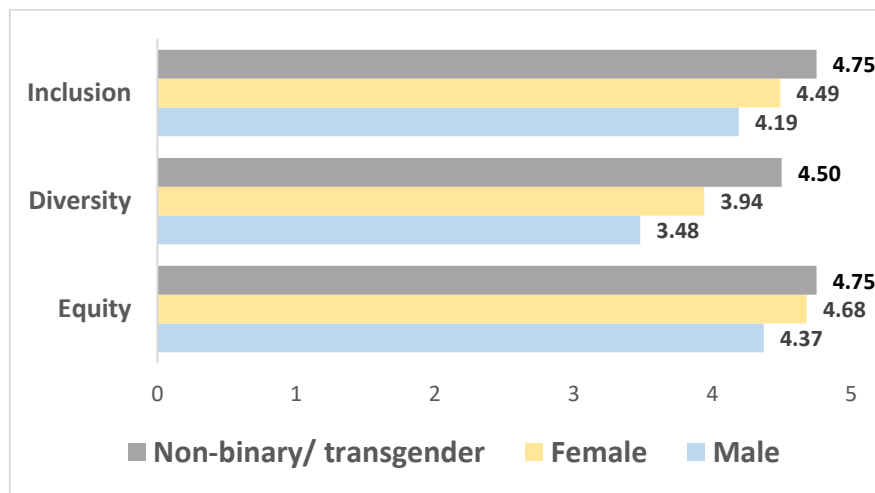
Source: Own work.

Looking further into the distribution of the answers between different genders, I noticed a difference between male, female and non-binary/transgender respondents in all three questions. For the purpose of this analysis, I calculated the means for each question for male, female and non-binary/transgender respondents and compared them with each other. Since the questions were structured in the form of a 5-point Likert scale, the value for each answer could be 1, if the respondent answered with “Strongly disagree”, 2 if “Disagree”, 3 if “Neither disagree nor agree”, 4 if “Agree” and 5 if they answered with “Strongly agree”. The closer the value was to 5, the more respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the question/statement.

Starting with the first question about equity, female and non-binary/transgender respondents were much more inclined towards supporting equity since they all agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. On the other hand, 10% of the male respondents were indifferent about the importance of equity in their everyday lives. The mean for female respondents was 4.68, 4.75 for non-binary/transgender and 4.37 for males. Next, diversity in their everyday lives also seemed to play a much more important role for female and non-binary/transgender

respondents. 17% of females strongly agreed and 63% of them agreed with the statement. 16% of female respondents neither disagreed nor agreed with the statement and 4% disagreed. Among non-binary/transgender respondents half of them strongly agreed and the other half agreed with the statement. On the contrary, more than a third (36%) of the male respondents were indifferent to the importance of diversity in their everyday lives and 13% thought that it was not important at all. Half of them agreed (42%) or strongly agreed (9%) with the statement. The mean for female respondents was 3.94, for non-binary/transgender 4.50 and 3.48 for males. Female and non-binary/transgender respondents also showed a strong inclination towards supporting inclusivity in everyday life, given the percentage of those who answered the question with “agree” or “strongly agree” was 98% for females and 100% for non-binary/transgender and only 2% of females were indifferent to it. On the other hand, the answers “agree” or “strongly agree” were chosen by 87% of the male respondents, while 11% of them neither disagreed nor agreed with the statement and 2% disagreed. The mean for female respondents was 4.49, 4.75 for non-binary/transgender and 4.19 for males. Based on the mean comparison of the answers on how important the given statements regarding DEI were to respondents, I can conclude that equity is the most important value in everyday life for female and male Gen Z-ers, while for non-binary/transgender respondents, equity and inclusion seem to be equally important. Scores of all three questions are presented in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Importance of DEI in everyday life to respondents



Source: Own work.

5.2 Values in the future (potential) workplace

The next group of questions focused on the importance of DEI values to my respondents when searching for a new job. The first question asked my respondents about the importance of equity in the workplace when they are looking for a new job. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed (47%) or agreed (48%) with the statement, while 4% of them

neither disagreed nor agreed. 1 respondent disagreed with the statement. The second question was about diversity in the workplace. The results revealed quite a different response from the respondents from those in the first question (just like in the first group of questions). More than a third of the respondents were indifferent about the importance of diversity in their workplace. Furthermore, 7% of them disagreed and 1 respondent strongly disagreed with the statement. 56% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they expect their workplace to be diverse. When asked about the importance of inclusivity in their workplace, half of the respondents agreed and 40% of them strongly agreed with the statement. 1 respondent disagreed and 8% of them were indifferent to the inclusivity in their workplace.

The distribution of the answers to all three questions is shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Distribution of the answers for the second group of questions



Source: Own work.

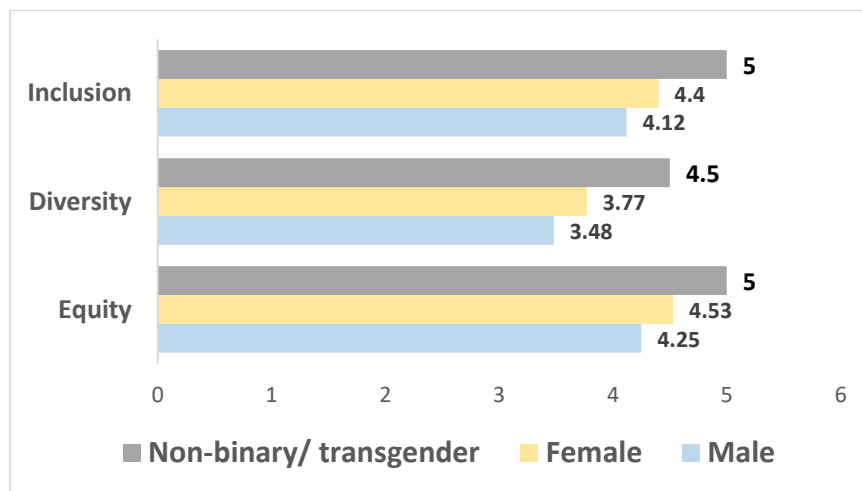
In terms of the distribution of the answers between different genders, I again calculated the means for each question for male, female and non-binary/transgender respondents and compared them with each other. The results revealed that the majority of male respondents

(61%) agreed that the workplace should be equitable, while the majority of female respondents strongly agreed (56%) with that. All non-binary/transgender respondents strongly agreed with the statement. The percentage of those who neither disagreed nor agreed with the statement was the same in male and female respondents (4%). 2% of male respondents thought that inclusivity is not important for them in the workplace, while no female or non-binary/transgender respondent had such an opinion. The mean for female respondents was 4.53, for non-binary/transgender 5.00 and 4.25 for males.

Regarding diversity in the workplace, 62% of female and 100% of non-binary/transgender respondents expected their workplace to be diverse, while less than half of male respondents (47%) did the same. Moreover, one-tenth of male respondents disagreed and 2% even strongly disagreed with the statement. On the other hand, only 6% of female respondents disagreed with the statement. The percentage of the respondents who neither disagreed nor agreed was 42% in male and 32% in female respondents.

The mean for female respondents was 3.77, for non-binary/transgender 4.50 and 3.48 for males.

Figure 12: Importance of DEI in the workplace to respondents



Source: Own work.

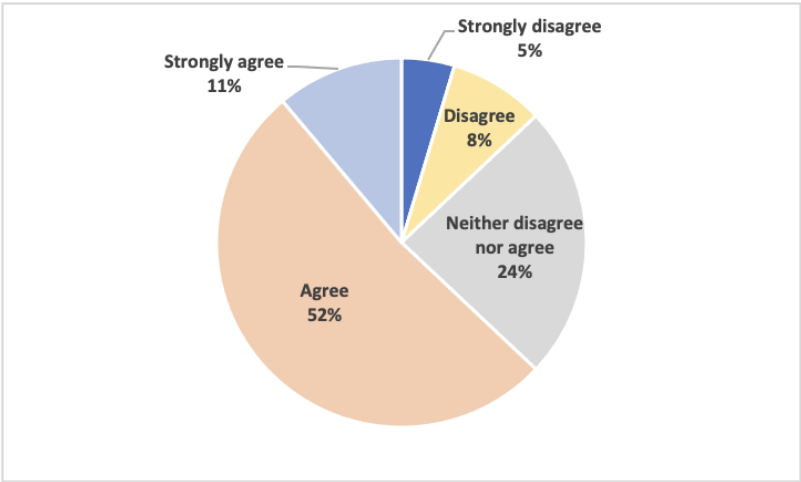
As it turned out, more female and non-binary/transgender respondents again felt that inclusivity in the workplace is important when looking for a new job – for females, 48% of them agreed and 46% strongly agreed. The rest of them neither disagreed nor agreed. Among non-binary/transgender respondents all of them strongly agreed with the statement. On the other hand, male respondents were a bit more reserved when it comes to looking for inclusivity in their workplace - the majority of them still either agreed (56%) or strongly agreed (31%) with the statement, however, 9% neither disagree nor agreed and 4% either disagreed (2%) or strongly disagreed (2%).

The mean for female respondents was 4.40, for non-binary/transgender 5.00 and 4.12 for males. Based on the mean comparison of the answers on how important the given statements regarding DEI were to respondents, I can conclude that equity is also the most important value in the workplace for female and male Gen Z-ers, while for non-binary/transgender respondents equity and inclusion again seem to be equally important. Scores of all three questions are presented in Figure 12.

With the last question in this group, I wanted to find out whether a good salary, flexible working hours and an option to work remotely were more important factors to my respondents (when they are applying for a new job) than diversity, equity and inclusion. The results revealed that the majority of the respondents (63%) would be willing to exchange job benefits such as a good salary and remote work for their workplace to be diverse, equitable or inclusive. Every fourth respondent was not sure about that, 8% of them disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed with the statement.

The distribution of the answers is shown in Figure 13.

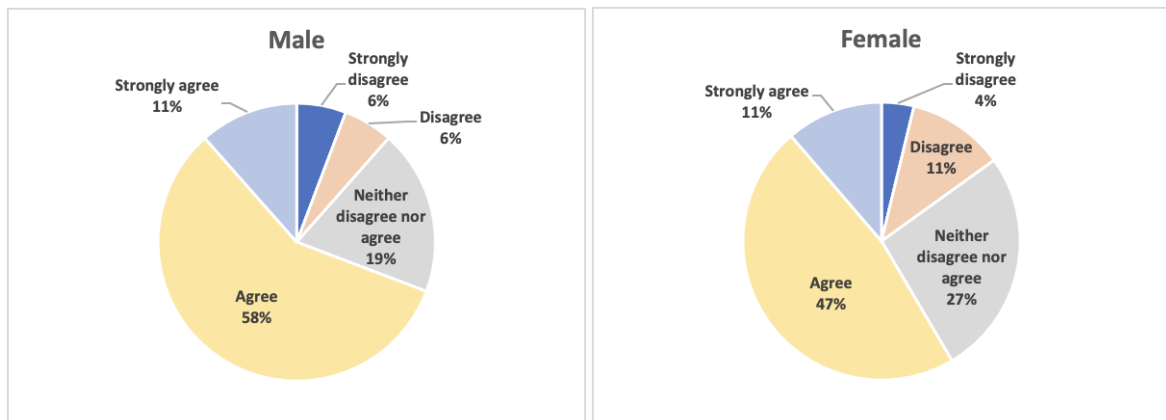
Figure 13: When applying for a new job, a good salary, flexible working hours and an option to work remotely are more important factors to me than whether the overall company culture is diverse, equitable and inclusive.



Source: Own work.

Regarding the distribution of the answers by gender, we can see that male respondents favour job benefits (salary, remote work, flexible working hours) over good overall workplace culture more than female respondents. 11% of them strongly agreed and 58% agreed with the statement. 19% of them were indifferent and 12% either disagreed (6%) or strongly disagreed (6%). The majority of female respondents on the other hand also agreed (47%) or strongly agreed (11%) with the statement, but the percentage of those who were indifferent (27%) or disagreed (15%) was higher. The distribution by the gender of the respondents is presented in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Gender distribution of the answers



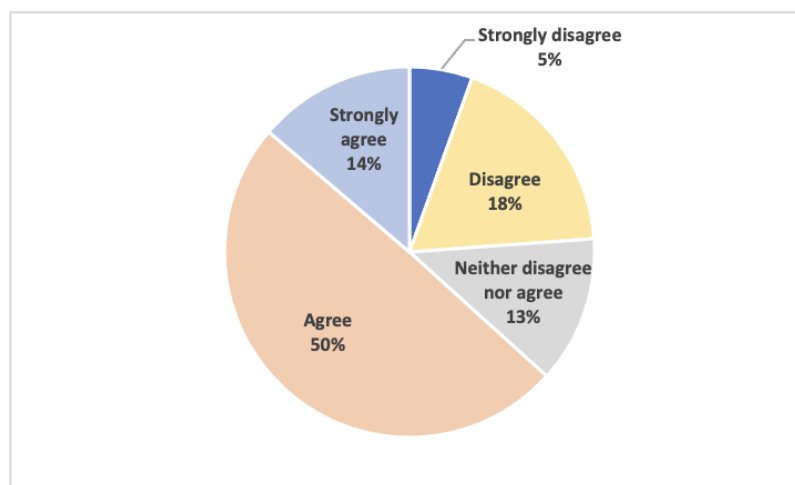
Source: Own work.

Regarding the distribution of the answers among non-binary/transgender respondents only one person (25% of the respondents) agreed with the statement. 50% of them neither agreed nor disagreed and 25% disagreed with the statement.

5.3 Values in the current workplace

The third group of questions was about my respondents' experiences in their current or former workplace regarding DEI. In the first question, I wanted to find out how many of my respondents have come across any kind of discrimination in their workplace. As shown in Figure 15, the results revealed that most of the respondents (64%) have witnessed discrimination in their workplace. 13% were indifferent with the statement, while 23% claimed they had not witnessed any discrimination in their current or former workplace.

Figure 15: I have witnessed some sort of discrimination (sexism, racism, homophobia, xenophobia etc.) in my workplace (current or former).



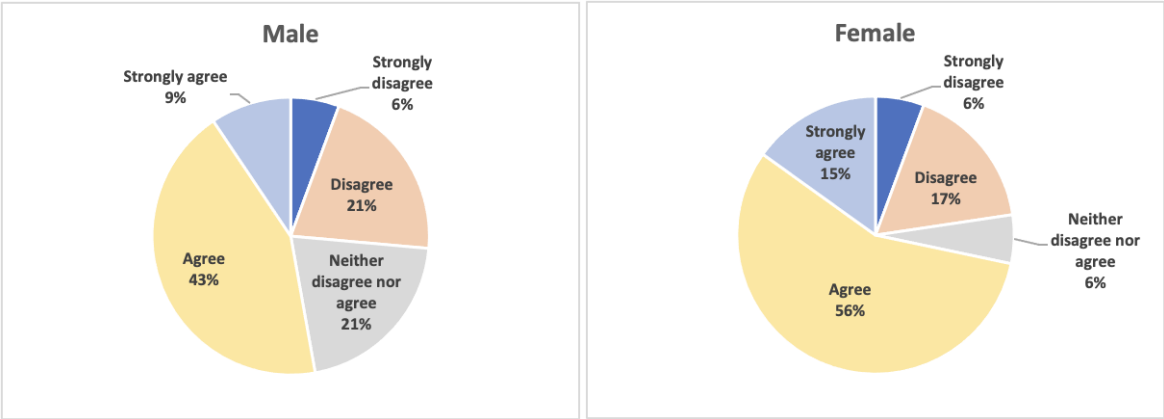
Source: Own work.

Looking further into gender distribution for this question, unsurprisingly a higher percentage of female respondents said they have witnessed some sort of discrimination in their workplace. The percentage of those who strongly agreed with the statement was 15% and those who agreed was 56%.

On the contrary, 9% and 43% of the male respondents gave the same answer. 6% of the female respondents neither disagreed nor agreed with that, 17% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed. Meanwhile, 21% of the male respondents neither disagreed nor agreed, the same percentage disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed.

The distribution by the gender of the respondents is presented in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Gender distribution of the answers

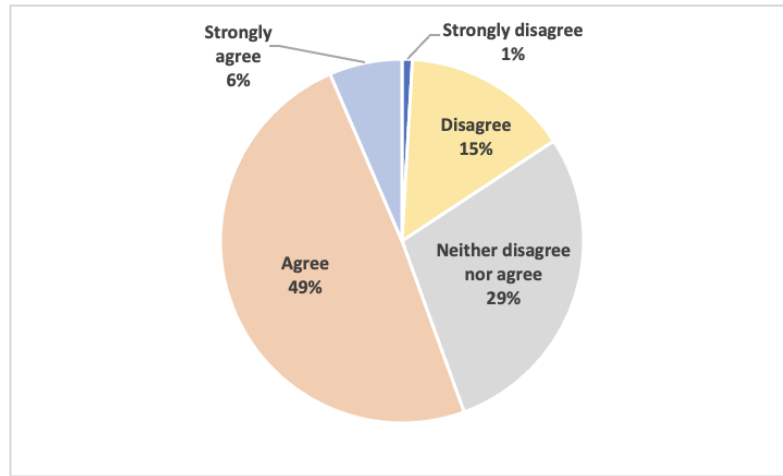


Source: Own work.

Regarding the distribution of the answers among non-binary/transgender respondents we can conclude that all of them have witnessed discrimination in their workplace, since all of them either agreed (25%) or strongly agreed (75%) with the statement.

The second and third questions were about the DEI programs at my respondents’ workplaces and whether they would like to see their employers put more emphasis on this. Figure 17 shows that the majority of the respondents (55%) thought their employer was acting towards promoting equity and diversity (e.g., DEI programming for employees, workshops/ seminars etc.). 29% of them could not decide whether this was the case at their workplace or not, 15% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed with the statement.

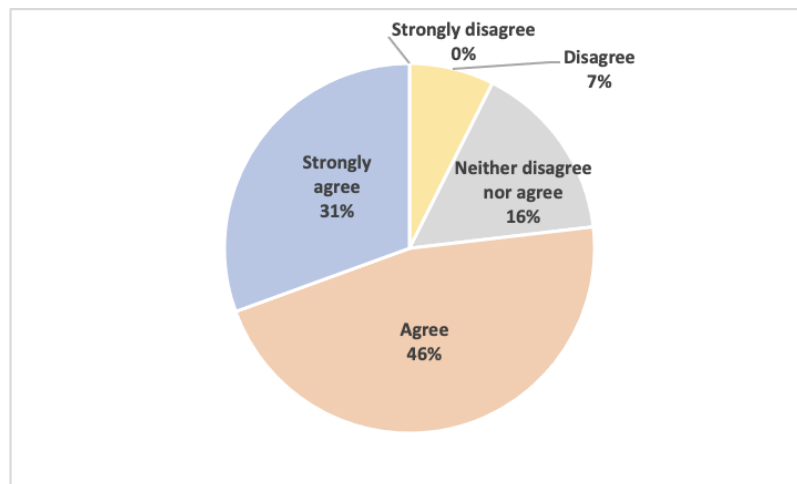
Figure 17: My current (or last) employer is (was) acting towards promoting equity and diversity (e.g., DEI programming for employees, workshops/ seminars etc.).



Source: Own work.

However, as shown in Figure 18, more than three-quarters of the respondents (77%) would like to see their employers do more in terms of promoting DEI in their workplaces. 16% of the respondents neither disagreed nor agreed with the statement and 7% disagreed.

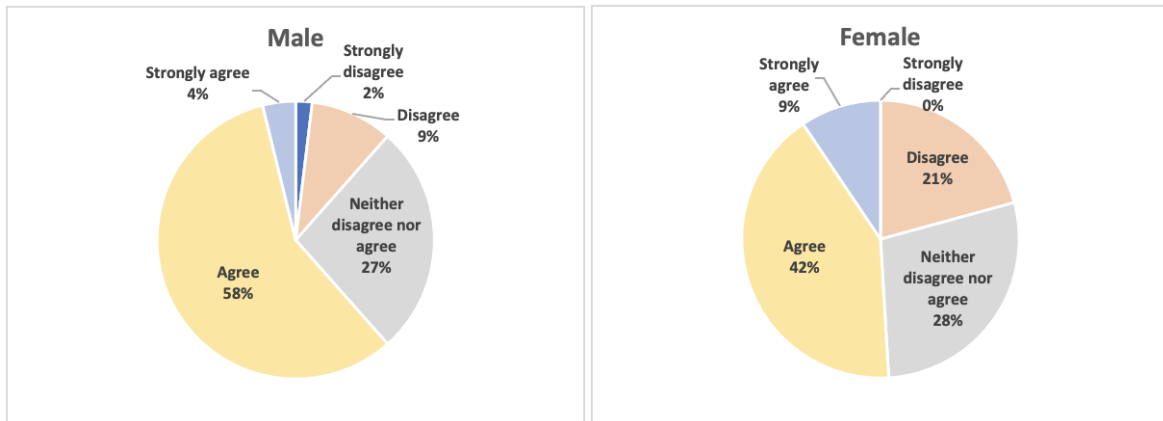
Figure 18: I would like to see my employer put more emphasis on DEI.



Source: Own work.

Regarding the gender distribution of the answers, Figure 19 shows that the majority of male (62%) and female (51%) respondents thought their employer was acting towards promoting DEI and a similar percentage of male and female respondents were indifferent to this statement. Every fifth of female respondents thought their employer could do more about it, while such male respondents were 11%.

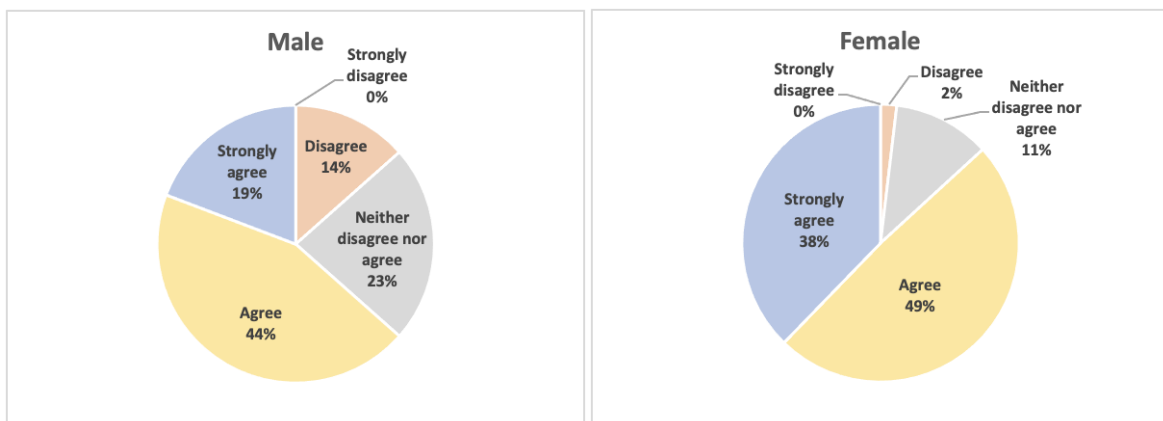
Figure 19: Gender distribution of the answers



Source: Own work.

Figure 20 shows quite a big difference between male and female respondents in whether they would like to see their employer do more in terms of promoting DEI in their workplaces. The percentage of male respondents who were not satisfied with promoting DEI in their workplace was 63%, while the percentage of female respondents was 87%. 23% of male and 11% of female respondents neither disagreed nor agreed with the statement. A noticeable difference was also in those who would not like to see their employers put more emphasis on DEI - 14% of male and only 2% of female respondents were of such an opinion.

Figure 20: Gender distribution of the answers



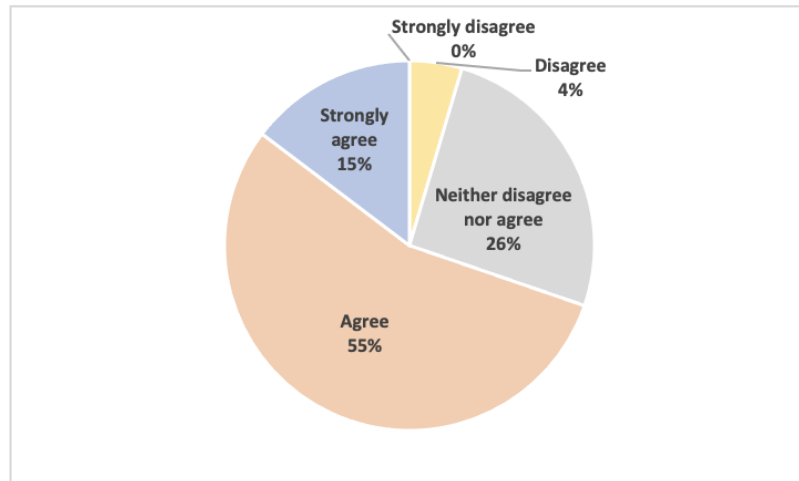
Source: Own work.

Regarding the distribution of the answers among non-binary/transgender respondents we can see that 25% of them thought their employer was not acting towards promoting equity and diversity, 50% of them were indifferent about this and 25% agreed with the statement. Furthermore, all of them either agreed (25%) or strongly agreed (75%) that they would like to see their employer put more emphasis on DEI.

5.4 Violation of the values in the workplace

The last group of questions focused on my respondents' readiness to act against the violation of DEI values in their workplace. As shown in Figure 21, 7 out of 10 respondents would act against any type of discrimination in their workplace.

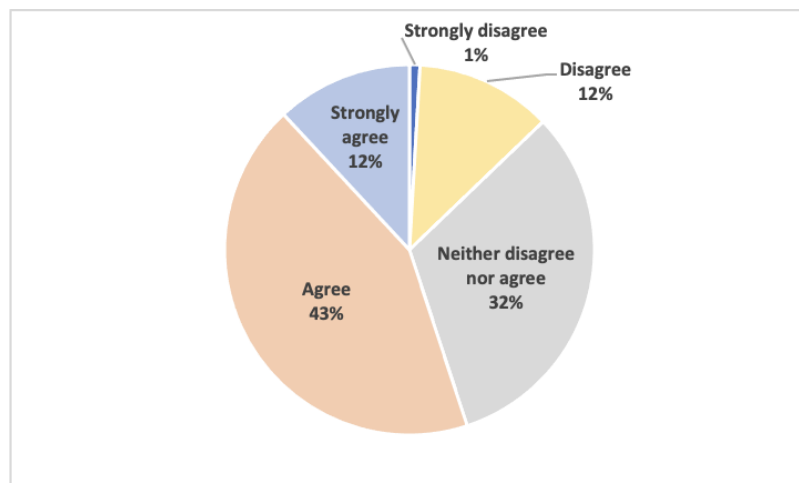
Figure 21: If I witness any type of discrimination, I am ready to act against it, even if it comes at a cost for me.



Source: Own work.

Furthermore, when I asked my respondents if they'd consider quitting their jobs in case of discrimination in their workplace, the percentage who would do so was still high at 55%. One-third of them were indifferent to this statement and 13% said they would not go that far. The distribution of the answers is presented in Figure 22.

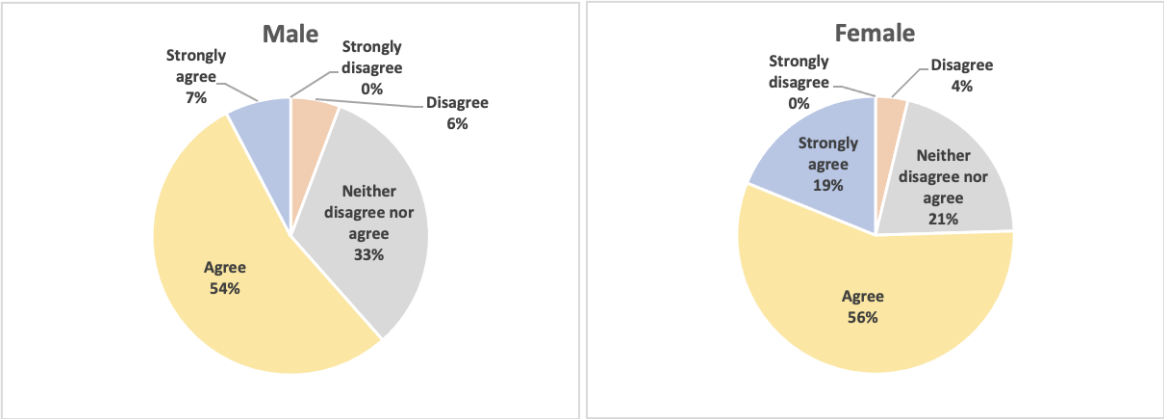
Figure 22: If the employer discriminated against people based on their sex/race/sexual orientation/gender identity/religion etc., I would consider quitting my job.



Source: Own work.

Looking further into gender distribution for the first question, female respondents showed a higher inclination (75%) towards acting against discrimination in their workplace than male respondents (61%). Less female respondents (21%) were also indifferent to this statement compared to male respondents (33%). Moreover, 4% of female respondents would not act against discrimination, while the percentage of such male respondents was 6%. The distribution by the gender of the respondents is presented in Figure 23.

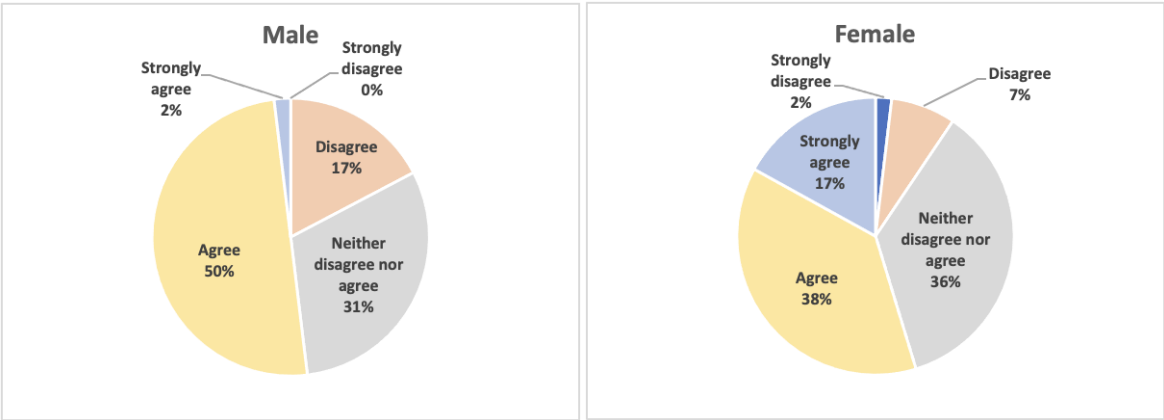
Figure 23: Gender distribution of the answers



Source: Own work.

However, as shown in Figure 24, this difference between male and female respondents became smaller when quitting the job was in question. The percentage of male respondents who would quit their job in case of discrimination was 52%, while the percentage of female respondents was 55%. 31% of male and 36% of female respondents neither disagreed nor agreed with the statement. Furthermore, 17% of male and 7% of female respondents would not quit their jobs in case of discrimination.

Figure 24: Gender distribution of the answers



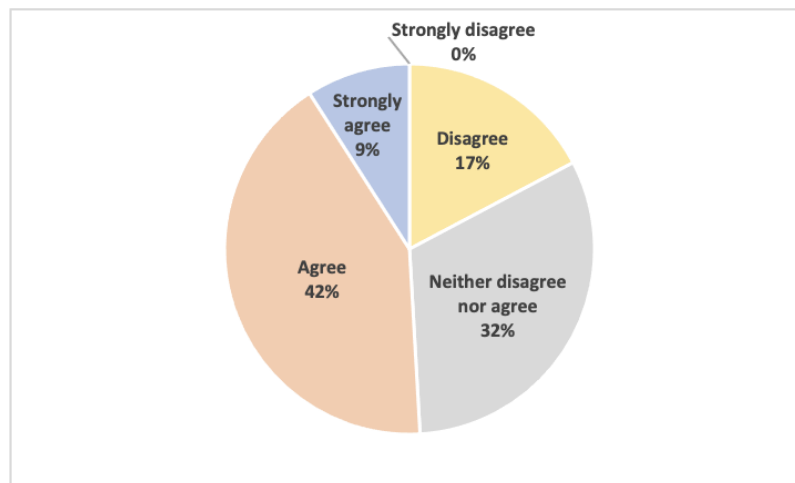
Source: Own work.

However, regarding the distribution of the answers among non-binary/transgender respondents we can see they were all quite unified in both questions – all of them would act against discrimination even if it comes at a cost for them. All of them would even consider quitting their job if their employer discriminated against people based on their sex/race/sexual orientation/gender identity/religion etc.

In addition, I asked my respondents if they think employers are aware of this problem and if their age contributes to putting more emphasis on values of diversity, equity, and diversity. More than half (51%) of the respondents thought that most of the time employers ignored or did not address the problem of discrimination appropriately. One-third neither disagreed nor agreed with this statement, while 17% disagreed. None of the respondents strongly disagreed.

The distribution of the answers is presented in Figure 25.

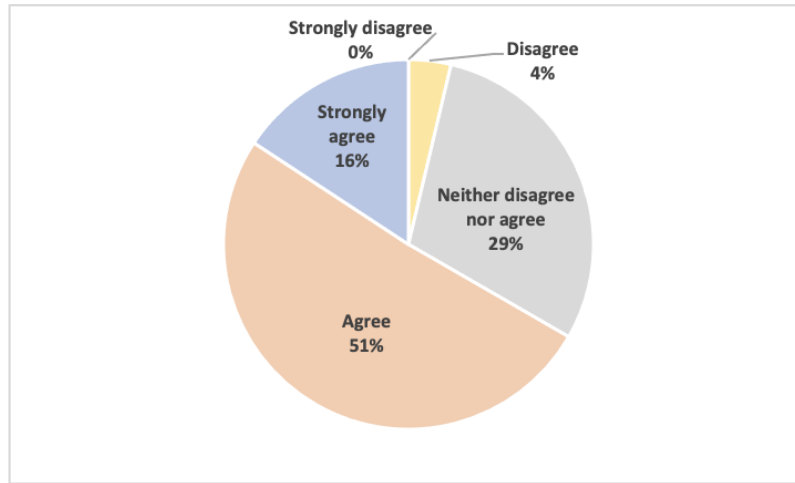
Figure 25: I think that most of the time employers ignore or do not address such behaviour appropriately.



Source: Own work.

However, the majority (67%) of the respondents thought that employers are in general becoming more aware of the importance of values of diversity, equity, and diversity in the workplace, since they agreed (51%) or even strongly agreed with the statement and only 4% of them disagreed with it. None of the respondents strongly disagreed. 29% neither disagreed nor agreed with this statement. The distribution of the answers is presented in Figure 26.

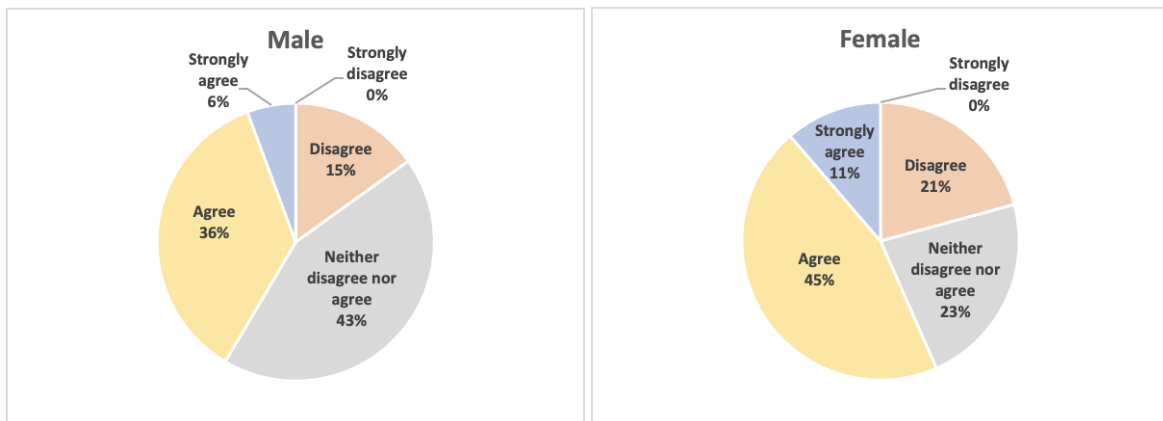
Figure 26: I think that employers in general are becoming more aware of the importance of DEI in the workplace.



Source: Own work.

In terms of gender distribution, a higher percentage of female (56%) than male (42%) respondents thought employers did not address discrimination appropriately. However, the percentage of those who disagreed with this statement was higher in females (21%) than in males (15%). There were 23% of female respondents and even 43% of male respondents who neither disagreed nor agreed. The distribution by the gender of the respondents is presented in Figure 27.

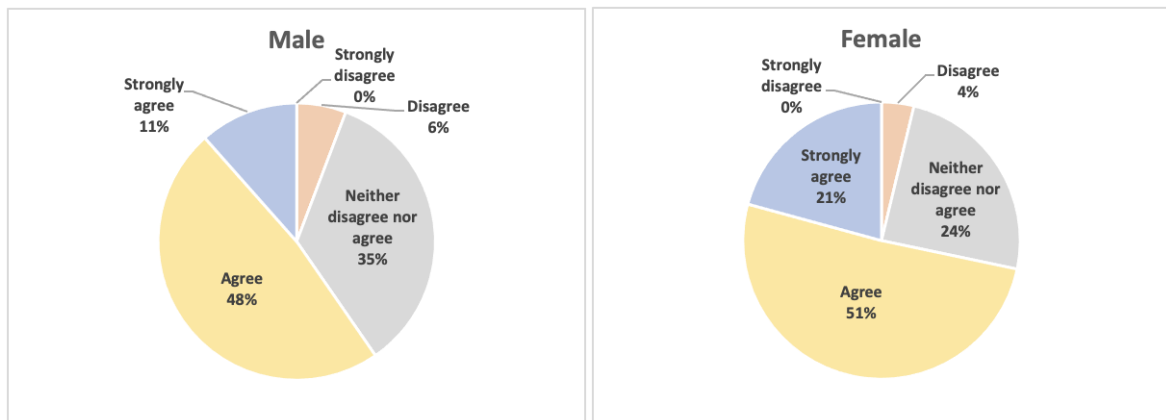
Figure 27: Gender distribution of the answers



Source: Own work.

Similarly, more female respondents (72%) agreed or strongly agreed that employers are becoming more aware of the importance of DEI in the workplace than male ones (59%). 24% of female and 35% of male respondents were indifferent to this statement and a similar percentage of both female (4%) and male (6%) respondents disagreed. The distribution by the gender of the respondents is presented in Figure 28.

Figure 28: Gender distribution of the answers

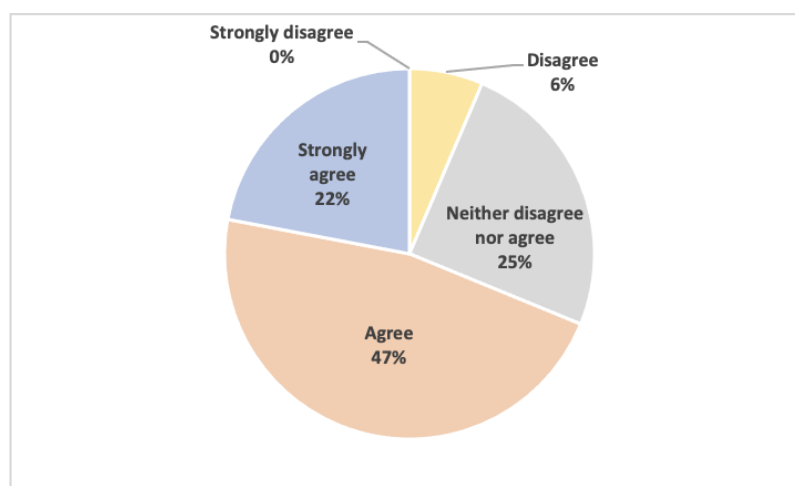


Source: Own work.

Regarding the distribution of the answers among non-binary/transgender respondents we can see that they were again all quite unified in the first question – all of them either agreed (75%) or strongly agreed (25%) with the statement that most of the time employers ignore or do not address discrimination appropriately. For the second question, 75% of them agreed and 25% of them neither disagreed nor agreed with the statement that employers in general are becoming more aware of the importance of DEI in the workplace.

Lastly, as shown in Figure 29, the majority of respondents (69%) thought that superiors from younger generations put more emphasis on DEI. One in four respondents neither disagreed nor agreed with this statement and 6% of them disagreed.

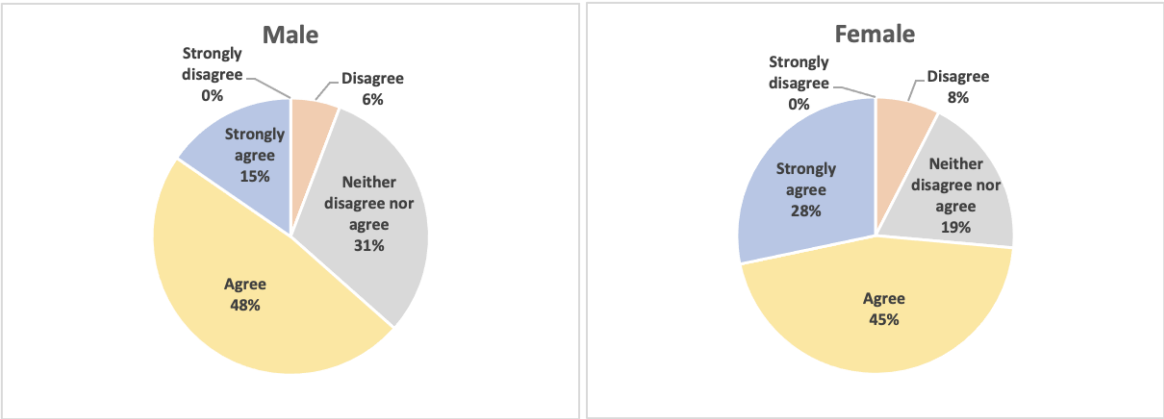
Figure 29: From my past experiences, I would say that a younger superior/management/work team means putting more emphasis on DEI.



Source: Own work.

Female respondents were again more inclined towards this statement - 73% of them either agreed or strongly agreed, 19% were indifferent and 8% disagreed. On the contrary, 63% of male respondents thought that a younger boss means more attention to DEI, 31% neither disagreed nor agreed and 6% disagreed with the statement. The distribution by the gender of the respondents is presented in Figure 30.

Figure 30: Gender distribution of the answers



Source: Own work.

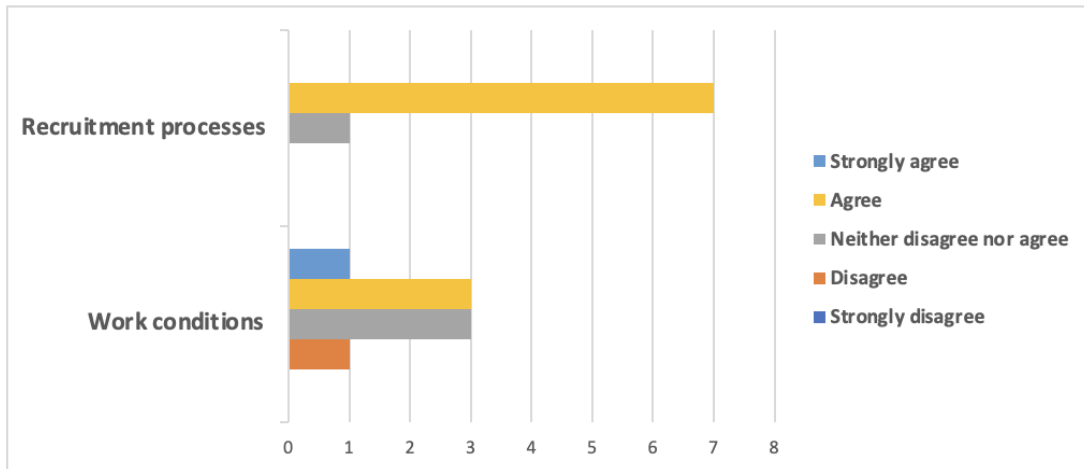
Regarding the distribution of the answers among non-binary/transgender respondents we can see similarity with that of female respondents. 50% of them agreed, 25% strongly agreed and 25% of them neither disagreed nor agreed with the statement that a younger superior/management/work team means putting more emphasis on DEI.

5.5 Companies’ perception

The second questionnaire was as already mentioned prepared for the companies and consisted of questions about companies’ perceptions and responses to Gen Z-ers, and their values in the workplace. They were structured in the form of a 5-point Likert scale as well.

With the first two questions, I wanted to find out if the companies thought the recruitment processes and work conditions in terms of flexible working hours, the possibility to work remotely etc. had changed because of Gen Z-ers, i.e., young people entering the job market. The results shown in Figure 31 revealed that 7 out of 8 companies agreed that Gen Z-ers affected their recruitment processes (1 company neither disagreed nor agreed), while only half of the companies agreed or strongly agreed that work conditions had changed because of them. Moreover, 3 companies neither disagreed nor agreed and 1 disagreed with the statement about work conditions.

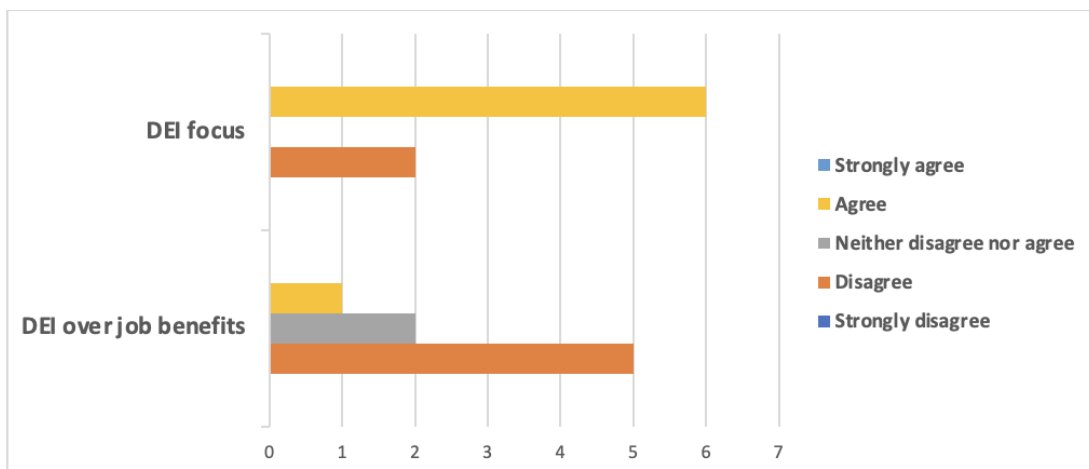
Figure 31: Have recruitment processes and work conditions changed in companies due to the arrival of Gen Z workers?



Source: Own work.

The third and fourth questions were about companies' opinions on whether Gen Z-ers focus more on DEI values in the workplace than representatives of older generations and if they prioritise these values being respected over work benefits such as good salary and flexible working hours. As you can see in Figure 32, 6 out of 8 companies agreed that the values of diversity, equity and inclusion are in fact more important to Gen Z-ers than the members of older generations. Nevertheless, 2 companies disagreed with that statement. However, figure 32 also shows that only one company agreed that Gen Z-ers put DEI values in their workspace before the option to work remotely, flexible working hours or a good salary. Furthermore, 2 companies could not say whether this is true or not and 5 of them disagreed.

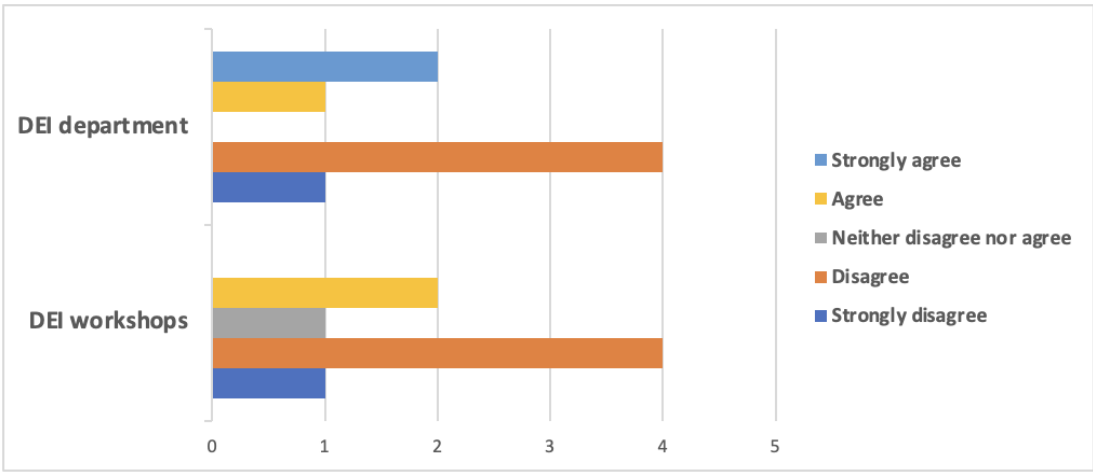
Figure 32: Do Gen Z-ers focus more on DEI values in the workplace than the members of older generations and prioritise these values over work benefits?



Source: Own work.

In the next two questions, I asked companies whether they had a special department dedicated to strengthening diversity in the workplace, promoting equality among employees and protecting minority groups (i.e. DEI department) and whether they were organising any workshops and seminars on the topic of diversity, equality and inclusion in the workplace. The results showed that 5 out of 8 companies do not have any special department for promoting diversity, equity and inclusion. The other 3 companies do have it. The results were even a bit more concerning in the second question where only 2 companies agreed they were organising any workshops on this topic, one company neither disagreed nor agreed and 5 companies claimed there weren't any DEI workshops. The results with the answers to both questions are presented in Figure 33.

Figure 33: In our company, we have a DEI department and organise DEI workshops.

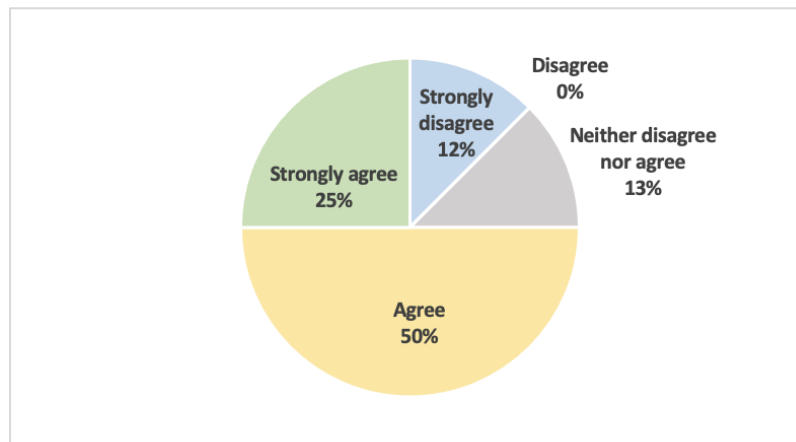


Source: Own work.

In addition to these two questions, I asked the companies that did not have a DEI department and were not organising DEI workshops yet whether they were planning on opening one (DEI department) or organising the workshops. Out of 5 companies that did not have a DEI department, 4 said they were not planning on opening one, and 1 neither disagreed nor agreed. Furthermore, 4 out of 6 companies that were not organising DEI workshops disagreed with the statement that they were planning on doing it, and one company again neither disagreed nor agreed. Only one company had DEI workshops in their plan for the future.

Finally, the last question was about companies' opinions on whether their employees feel accepted, equal and included, and whether any kind of discrimination is strictly dealt with. As shown in Figure 34, 6 out of 8 (75%) companies agreed with that statement, while one company neither disagreed nor agreed and one strongly disagreed.

Figure 34: From my past experiences, I would say that a younger superior/management/work team means putting more emphasis on DEI.



Source: Own work.

6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of the following chapter is to provide the reader with an explanation and help them get an understanding of the results analysed in the previous chapter. I will begin with a discussion of the results in order to obtain a broader picture of the topic as a whole. Then I will continue by examining some practical implications for employers. In the end, I will discuss the limitations I came across and give some recommendations for future research.

6.1 Discussion of the results

The main goal of this thesis was to provide a basic overview of the values that make Gen Z-ers stand out and understand how this shapes the preferences and expectations of prospective Gen Z employees in the Slovenian job market, and on the other hand, see how employers are positioned towards their (potentially) different value system. This is reflected in the first three of my research questions.

6.1.1 Personal values survey results

The results of both survey questionnaires are more or less in line with what is written in the literature – Gen Z-ers hold DEI values in high regard and companies are becoming more aware of this phenomenon. The results of the questionnaire for Gen Z show how similar are Gen Z-ers in Slovenia to those in other Western countries. Their values and the importance they ascribe to them are very similar to those of their peers in the USA or the United Kingdom for example. The reason for this may lie behind the rise of social media and globalisation. However, the results of the questionnaire I sent to companies somehow differ

from my expectations and the information found in the existing literature. It is clear that companies in Slovenia are not (yet) either aware of or considering the values of DEI and their importance to Gen Z. There is, nevertheless, a slight difference between Slovenian companies and international companies.

Slovenia and Slovenian youth are, just like in many other countries, mostly influenced by the West and its value systems. This phenomenon of one powerful culture (in this case the Western culture) influencing and dominating other cultures and reshaping the values, norms, and identities of the individuals in these cultures is called cultural imperialism (Latif & Naseer, 2021). Social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, where people, especially young people, share bits of their lives and express opinions about countless topics and issues that trouble today's world are major contributing factors to the development of values systems of Gen Z-ers around the world. And since most young people in Western countries are exposed to the same content on these platforms, their views on certain topics can be many times quite similar (of course sometimes social media can be polarising too, but this is a topic for another discussion). This is also one of the main characteristics of social media - it can very convincingly influence people's position towards topics that they are uncertain about or even those they are certain about to some extent. In this case, it provides them with all the affirmation they need to support that belief (Iuncta, 2023). Many celebrities expressing their opinions about numerous things also play an important role in all that. It is no surprise then that Gen Z-ers in Slovenia, just like Gen Z-ers in the USA or the United Kingdom, put great emphasis on the values of diversity, equity and inclusion. And they also expect their employers to do so.

However, the value of diversity seems to be the least important out of DEI for them - from the literature, it is clear that in the USA diversity is a much hotter topic than in Slovenia. From the questionnaire I prepared for Gen Z-ers, we can see that 67% of them agreed with the statement that it is important for them to live in a diverse environment, while diversity in their workplace is even less important - 56% agreed with the statement. The percentage of American Gen Z-ers who think that diversity in their lives and workplace matters is according to the literature 83%. One of the main reasons for that probably lies behind the fact that America is a way much more diverse country than Slovenia in terms of race, religion, ethnicity and also sexual orientations after all or better, maybe Slovenians are less aware of diversity because there are no stark differences (such as the marginalization of African and Latin Americans) as well. Moreover, due to mass immigration from all around the globe, the U.S. is now considered one of the most religiously, ethnically, and racially diverse countries in the world (USINDO DC, n.d.). Therefore, diversity there is somehow embedded in people's lives from an early age. Another reason why Americans value diversity more might be in the views of diversity there and in Europe for instance. According to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center in which the U.S. and 10 European countries were included, 58% of Americans think that growing diversity in the country makes it a better place to live, while the percentage of people from the European countries who think

the same is between 36% in Sweden and 10% in Greece (Drake & Poushter, 2016). And Slovenia is likely to be similar to other European countries.

The other two aspects of DEI seem to be more important for Gen Z-ers in Slovenia and similarly important as they are to Gen Z-ers in the USA. 96% of the respondents in my questionnaire believed that equity is important or very important in their everyday lives and 93% of them believed that inclusion is too. Most of them also expect their workplace to be equitable (95%) and inclusive (91%).

I also asked my respondents about their experiences of discrimination in their workplace. 64% of them have witnessed some sort of discrimination (sexism, racism, homophobia, xenophobia etc.) in their workplace. This number is quite high compared to some research studies done previously. According to Šešerko (2019), 47% of the respondents to her survey felt discriminated against at their workplace. However, these respondents were also from other, older generations and not just Gen Z, which was the case in my survey and this might be the reason for a lower percentage of those who either felt discriminated against or were compelled to report discrimination. Or simply, discrimination increased.

Furthermore, 51% of the respondents to my survey think that most of the time their employers ignore or do not address such behaviour appropriately, which are quite concerning numbers. The good side of this issue is that quite many respondents (70%) said they would act against such behaviour, even if it comes at a cost for them, 55% of them would even consider quitting the job. The percentage of such Gen Z-ers in America is according to the literature also around 50%. These numbers show a substantial increase from the results of the survey conducted by Šešerko (2019), where only 28% of the respondents claimed they had acted against discrimination in their workplace. This should probably be a signal to employers that Gen Z's readiness to act against discrimination is apparently increasing and they should be focusing even more on this problem.

When I asked them about DEI in their workplace, 55% think their employers are acting towards promoting equity and diversity (e.g., DEI programming for employees, workshops/seminars etc.), 67% of the respondents think that employers, in general, are becoming more aware of the importance of DEI in the workplace, but 77% of them would like to see their employer put even more emphasis on DEI. Improvements are therefore visible, but still not enough is being done in this area.

6.1.1.1 Comparison of the results by gender

At this point, I also want to mention the difference I noticed between the answers of female and male respondents in my survey (the answers of non-binary/transgender respondents are discussed later on). As expected, female respondents turned out to be more critical of current employers and the culture in the workplace and also more supportive of diversity, equity and inclusion. More of them also unsurprisingly noticed any sort of discrimination around them.

Despite the rise of awareness of women’s rights and getting closer to the point of sexual equality in society, the fact is we are still living in a patriarchal society. Women continue to experience discrimination more often than men and it is no surprise then that they support DEI values more.

Table 2: Gender comparison of the answers of the respondents.

Statement	% of male respondents supporting the statement	% of female respondents supporting the statement	% of non-binary/transgender respondents supporting the statement
Equity in everyday life is (very) important to me.	90	100	100
Diversity in everyday life is (very) important to me.	51	80	100
Inclusivity in everyday life is (very) important to me.	87	98	100
Equity in my workplace is (very) important to me.	94	96	100
Diversity in my workplace is (very) important to me.	48	62	100
Inclusivity in my workplace is (very) important to me.	87	94	100
I have witnessed some sort of discrimination in my workplace.	43	56	100
I think that most of the time employers ignore or do not address discrimination appropriately.	42	56	100
I would like to see my employer put more emphasis on DEI.	63	87	100
If I witness any type of discrimination I am ready to act against it.	61	75	100

Source: Own work.

4 of the respondents to my survey identified as neither male nor female. Their answers were very much in the same direction as those of female respondents - they all supported diversity, equity and inclusion more than male respondents, they were all more critical of the current culture in the workplace and they also noticed discrimination more often than male respondents. The probably obvious reason for that is the fact these people are still far more likely to experience any sort of discrimination anywhere they go compared to male members of society. Transphobia is a serious problem in today’s society. According to research on transgender people in the USA, the percentage of unemployed individuals among

transgender people is twice the size of the general population. 97% of the respondents also reported having been discriminated against in their workplace, and 47% lost their jobs or were unable to get one because of their gender identity. In 2016 research on the same topic was done in Slovenia and it showed that 69% of transgender people there had been discriminated against based on their gender identity (Hafner, 2016).

6.1.2 Survey of companies' results

From the responses from the companies, we can see that 88% of them agree and are aware of the fact that attracting and recruiting practices have changed in recent years because of the younger generations of employees. Moreover, 75% of them believe that Gen Z-ers put more emphasis on DEI in their workplace than older generations. However, only 38% of the companies said they already had a DEI department and none of those who didn't have one had a plan to open it in the future.

6.2 DEI and Gen Z-ers in the labour market

If it is to compare other generations in Slovenia to those in the USA or some Western European countries as well, we can easily say that Generation Z is the most diverse, equitable and inclusive generation in Slovenia so far. There has never been so much discussion on these values and topics related to these values in the media and society in general as there is today. Women's rights, gay rights, trans rights, rights of people of colour and rights of many other minorities have been at the centre of public attention in recent years. Many movements related to the violation of these rights have risen around the world in the past years and many of them have had an influence in Slovenia too. 20th of November has become the International Trans Day of Remembrance to warn about violence against trans people. The movement Black Lives Matter started in 2013 and spread around the world, especially in 2020 after the murder of George Floyd (Campbell, 2021). Pride parade is another event, to support LGBT rights, that has been gaining popularity in recent years, also in Slovenia. Globalisation and the rise of social media have made the world (especially the Western world) a more connected place than ever. Anything that happens in one country will eventually impact the others. And everything is happening at an extremely fast pace.

The labour market is no exception. Career aspirations, preferences, perceptions, expectations and needs of people entering it are changing. And according to the results of my survey and many others in the literature (e.g. Deloitte surveys), the importance of certain values in the workplace is also changing. Gen Z-ers think about diversity, equity and inclusion a lot when seeking a new job or reassessing their current one. This brings us to the answer to my first research question - the centrality of values of diversity, equity and inclusion to Gen Z-ers will most likely play a very important role in the labour market in the future - more than it has in the past. It will force the market to adapt to these new demands of the new generation, just like it has always had to the demands of any other generation in the past. New employees

coming into the labour market will seek companies that will also align with their values and beliefs. Companies that will ignore the fact of how important DEI values are to Gen Z-ers and which will not adapt their current policies or business culture to them may fall behind and jeopardise the company's revenue.

6.3 Gen Z expectations regarding DEI

According to the literature and the results of my survey, it is very important to Gen Z-ers that the company they work for or are contemplating the option to work for shares the same values as them. Otherwise, the majority of them are willing to take action, even if comes at a cost for them. Many of them are even willing to quit such a job. Fortunately, according to the results of my survey, the majority (more than 75%) of the respondents think their workplace is inclusive. This means that many Gen Z-ers do have a sense of belonging in their company. They feel that their company is supporting them to be who they truly are, and they are not feeling discriminated against. As a reminder, inclusion is believed to be the driving force of diversity, which is further connected to equity and therefore Gen Z-ers really expect companies to provide an inclusive environment. Performance of companies that lack an inclusive work culture may suffer and this is a well-established connection.

With the arrival of this new generation in the labour market, promoting diversity, equity and inclusion has become of vital importance for attracting, supporting, and retaining Gen Z workers, and for gaining and maintaining a competitive advantage. However, many Gen Z-ers in my survey also think that their employers are not taking enough action towards promoting diversity yet. The same goes for equity. Only half of the respondents claim there is DEI programming for employees or some DEI workshops/seminars in their company and they would like to see their employers put more emphasis on DEI. The bright side of all this, nonetheless, is that many Gen Z-ers think that employers in general are becoming more aware of the importance of DEI in the workplace.

6.4 Employers' perception of Gen Z and DEI

There are Gen Z-ers and their expectations and demands regarding their future job on one side and there are companies, i.e. employers on the other. The first two research questions tried to answer what the characteristics of Generation Z regarding their values (DEI) are and how will they play out in the labour market in the future. The third research question is about the employers and their perception of Gen Z-ers and their (different) value systems. The results of the survey somehow indicate a lack of DEI awareness or better, willingness to change things regarding DEI among companies in the Slovenian market. It seems that most of them are aware of the increased importance of DEI values to Gen Z-ers. 6 out of 8 companies agreed that Gen Z-ers focus more on DEI values in the workplace than the members of older generations.

However, it also seems that they do not treat this phenomenon seriously or have just not given that much attention to it yet - 3 out of 8 companies had a special DEI department dedicated to strengthening diversity in the workplace, promoting equality among employees and protecting minority groups and only 2 of them were organising any workshops on this topic. One of the reasons for that might be in the results of one of the questions I asked companies, which is if they think Gen Z-ers prioritise DEI values over some work benefits such as flexible working hours, remote work and good salary and more than half of them disagreed with that. This indicates companies' opinion that they know diversity, equity and inclusion matter to Gen Z-ers, but not that much that they would have to prioritise DEI programs in their business plans.

Nevertheless, I noticed a difference between Slovenian and international companies. Out of the three international companies I sent my questionnaire to, all three confirmed they already had a DEI department, while none of the Slovenian companies did the same. It was similar to the question about DEI workshops - two of the international companies already had some workshops on this topic, and the third one said they were planning on doing some in the future, while none of the Slovenian companies had DEI workshops or was planning on organising any. To sum up, the results of the questionnaire for the company indicate companies' awareness of the difference between the value systems of Gen Z-ers and that of older generations, but it seems that no real changes have been made in this area or at least very few of the companies have. They are, however, proactive in terms of adapting their recruiting strategies and work conditions (flexible working hours etc.). International companies are unsurprisingly ahead of Slovenian ones in terms of giving more importance to diversity, equity and inclusivity in the workplace.

Table 3: Comparison of companies' answers

Statement	% of Slovenian companies supporting the statement	% of international companies supporting the statement
In our company, we have a DEI department.	0	100
In our company, we organise DEI workshops.	0	66
In our company, we are planning on having a DEI department.	0	/
In our company, we are planning on organising DEI workshops.	0	100

Source: Own work.

6.5 Recommendations for companies

The last research question is about the possible ways for companies to increase their inter-generational sensitivity in terms of the values of diversity, equity and inclusion. From the results of my research, it is clear that Gen Z-ers in Slovenia are fond of these values. If it is to compare the influence of the importance of DEI values to Gen Z-ers on their job-seeking habits abroad to those in Slovenia, we can also assume the possible solutions or strategies for companies in the Slovenian job market of how to attract Gen Z-ers based on the ways companies are trying to do the same in other countries.

To begin with, according to the literature, numerous companies in the US have released bold statements regarding their intentions to prioritise diversity and inclusion in their business plans. Companies in Slovenia should in my opinion do the same. This would definitely be a signal to young job seekers that the company actually cares about DEI. Considering Gen Z-ers' attention to DEI values and the fact that a lot of Gen Z-ers in my survey still believe they have been victims of or have witnessed discrimination in their workplace, firms should also adopt some explicit policies that promote inclusivity, such as non-discrimination policies, employee resource groups and diversity training. They should also establish equitable work environments not only to encourage a diverse workforce but also to motivate employees to put in more effort and enthusiasm toward their roles. Opening a DEI department would also be of help. Employers should definitely not ignore any type of discrimination too, which, as we can see from the results of my survey, many times still happens.

As I already mentioned before, inclusivity is the driving force of diversity, so Gen Z-ers expect companies to provide an inclusive environment. Promoting diversity and inclusion has become of vital importance for attracting, supporting, and retaining Gen Z workers, and for gaining and maintaining a competitive advantage. Another way to attract Gen Z employees could also be to adjust the marketing strategies of the company. According to the literature, many Gen Z-ers in the US feel that their race is not well represented in marketing. It might be the same in Slovenia, so companies should include more people of different races, religions and sexual orientations in their marketing campaigns and this way diversify their talent pool. Furthermore, the change in some formalities in job interviews, such as adding a question about potential employees' gender could also help companies look more appealing to Gen Z-ers.

What could then encourage companies to adjust or change some of their strategies to the requirements of Gen Z-ers (which is in this case working in a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment) are definitely the advantages of having a diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment in the first place. Some studies indicate that companies with a more diverse workforce have a tendency to surpass their rivals because of enhanced organisational appeal and better retention of employees. It is also believed that failing to accommodate this new and diverse group of workers, who have a preference for diversity, could lead to conflicts

and undermine organisational performance, even if it does not directly improve it. Furthermore, establishing equitable work environments not only encourages a diverse workforce but also motivates employees to put in more effort and enthusiasm towards their roles. So, the overall company performance could improve. In a survey conducted by Handshake organisation around 50% of Gen Z respondents claimed they would quit their job if it didn't comply with their equity and social justice expectations. Moreover, 62% of them said they would more likely work in a company that had a commitment to equal pay and that gender equity is very important (Handshake, 2021). The results of my questionnaire are quite similar, so this should definitely be another motivational factor for companies to listen to Gen Z-ers. However, as already mentioned before, it is on companies now to listen to Gen Z future employees and implement strong and meaningful DEI strategies in order to attract fresh and new talents.

Table 4: Adressed problems and recommendations for companies

Problem	As addressed in the thesis	Recommendation
Lack of DEI programming for employees, workshops/ seminars etc.	Respondents would like to see their employers put more emphasis on DEI (more DEI workshops etc.).	To address this problem, companies should pay more attention to this type of employee training.
Discrimination in the workplace.	Respondents expressed their view of discrimination in the workplace as still being presented too often and considered even quitting their job in case they witnessed any type of discrimination.	Employers should not ignore any type of discrimination and have strict anti-discrimination policies.
Lack of diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.	Respondents predominantly expected their workplace to be diverse, equitable and inclusive. Many would also “sacrifice” a good salary, flexible working hours and an option to work remotely for their workplace to be more diverse, equitable and inclusive.	Companies should consider opening a DEI department, diversifying their employee pool, ensuring equal pay to all, regardless of their gender etc.
Lack of diversity and inclusion in companies’ business and marketing plans.	Respondents predominantly expected their workplace to be diverse, equitable and inclusive when looking for one (companies' business and marketing plans may be one of the factors indicating how diverse, equitable and inclusive companies are).	To address this problem, companies should prioritise diversity and inclusion in their business plans and include more diverse pool of people in their marketing campaigns.

Source: Own work.

CONCLUSION

This thesis does not really come up with any new findings about Generation Z in general. Many studies and research papers have been done on the topic of DEI and its importance to Gen Z-ers. What distinguishes this thesis is a new context. All the studies from the literature were done on Gen Z-ers from the USA, UK, China, Brazil and some other bigger countries. The research in this thesis has been done on Slovenian Gen Z-ers and companies operating in the Slovenian market and therefore gives the reader an insight into the conditions in the Slovenian job market.

The findings from both questionnaires are more or less consistent with the previous studies from the literature. Gen Z-ers in Slovenia are to some extent a bit different to Gen Z-ers in the US or the UK regarding the importance of diversity in particular. Given the fact that America and the UK are much more diverse countries than Slovenia in terms of race, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientations after all, the reason why diversity is so much more important to Gen Z-ers there could lie here. In terms of the importance of equity and inclusion, on the other hand, it seems that there is fundamentally no difference between Slovenian and Gen Z-ers in other countries. As already mentioned, the main reason for this might be social media (Instagram, TikTok) and the exposure of most young people in Western countries to the same content on these platforms, resulting in their views on certain topics developing similarly. Nevertheless, companies and their views on the topic of DEI values in the workplace in the Slovenian market seem to be a bit more different to those of the companies in the US or the UK for instance. The results from my questionnaire show that the Slovenian job market is in a way not as liberal or mindful when it comes to topics such as diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace. And this was in fact the main reason why I chose this topic for my thesis. I expected this gap between Gen Z-ers and HR management in the Slovenian job market and their views on the values of diversity, equity and inclusion. Therefore, my findings can hopefully be of relevance both for general readers to get an insight into the general condition of the Slovenian job market regarding DEI values and their relevance to employers and Gen Z-ers and also for HR managers to try to realise the increasing importance of these values to the potential new employees and help them turn this realisation into a competitive advantage in the job seeking market.

When conducting my research, I came across a few difficulties and possible limitations. Firstly, the size of my target groups, both Gen Z-ers and companies, was relatively small. Therefore, the results of both surveys might be somehow biased and do not necessarily apply to the general population of Gen Z-ers in Slovenia or all companies in the Slovenian job market. Secondly, the Gen Z group was quite targeted in terms of which representatives of this generation was my survey sent to. Given that I first sent my survey to my friends and classmates and then they sent it to their friends and so on, we could assume the group of Gen Z respondents was in some ways very like-minded with similar views on this particular topic. Furthermore, from all the answered questionnaires, a few were insufficient with some

answers being unanswered. Therefore, I had to omit the answers from those respondents and the size of the respondent group got even smaller.

I want to conclude with the answer of one of the companies to the question of whether this new generation poses a challenge to them and whether they seem to be more demanding and with higher expectations than any of the previous generations, that in my opinion perfectly describes how everyone, from HR managers in companies to just everyone in everyday life should treat any younger generation that comes after them - this generation, the Gen Z generation, does not and should not pose a challenge to anyone, but rather the opposite. It is in some ways no different to any of the previous generations. Just like all young people, they want to be heard and included. The bigger problem might be in the older generations that somehow exclude younger ones. My addition to this would be in my opinion a great thought of Mark Twain who once said: "History may never repeat itself, but it does often rhyme." The events during which Gen Z-ers grew up and which shaped their outlook, i.e., the invention and rise of the internet and social media, the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the 2008 recession, wars, and the pandemic, are not much different to those experienced by their parents, grandparents or even great-grandparents. A century ago, in the 1920s, the most powerful expression of personal freedom was buying a first car. For Gen Z-ers today, it is most likely getting their first smartphone. The way young people express themselves may have changed, but their desire and need to do so has not (KPMG, 2021). If companies want to attract Gen Z-ers, they need to make them feel seen and heard and not like they are just a revenue stream to them.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Povzetek (Summary in Slovene language)

Generacija Z se tako kot vsaka druga generacija v marsičem razlikuje od prejšnjih. Ena izmed osrednjih značilnosti, v kateri se njeni predstavniki zelo očitno razlikujejo od predstavnikov starejših generacij, je pomen, ki ga dajejo vrednotam raznolikosti, enakosti (pravičnosti) in vključujočnosti (angl. diversity, equity, inclusion). To je tudi tema te magistrske naloge, v kateri sem želel raziskati vpliv in odraz vrednot oz. njihovega pomena generaciji Z na trg dela v Sloveniji.

Veliko literature je že napisane na to temo – nekateri avtorji pišejo o vrednotah raznolikosti, enakosti (pravičnosti) in vključujočnosti med mladimi na splošno, spet drugi to temo postavljajo v kontekst trga dela in delovnih mest ter kako se podjetja odzivajo na prihod delavcev generacije Z, ki jo še bolj kot druge generacije pred njo skrbi spoštovanje enakosti, raznolikosti in vključujočnosti, z odpiranjem t.i. DEI oddelkov, organiziranjem DEI delavnic ipd. Kar to magistrsko nalogo razlikuje od ostalega napisanega v literaturi na to temo je nov kontekst – slovenski trg. Večina literature se namreč osredotoča na ameriški, angleški ali kateri drugi zahodni trg in tamkajšnje predstavnike generacije Z.

Raziskave sem se lotil najprej s podrobnim pregledom trenutne literature, ki je na voljo, nato pa sem z izdelavo dveh anketnih vprašalnikov, ki sem jih razdelil, enega med slovenske predstavnike generacije Z, drugega med podjetja na slovenskem trgu, pridobil potrebne podatke o generaciji Z v Sloveniji in podjetjih, ki poslujejo na slovenskem tgru. Te podatke sem nato podrobno analiziral in kasneje tudi kritično prediskutiral pridobljene rezultate.

Preko analize podatkov in diskusije rezultatov sem prišel do zaključka, da je generacija Z v marsičem zelo podobna svojim vrstnikom drugod po svetu. Pomen, ki ga mladi pri nas dajejo vrednotam raznolikosti, enakosti (pravičnosti) in vključujočnosti je izredno velik. Več kot 90% vprašanih v anketi je na vprašanje kako pomembna jim je enakost in vključujočnost na delovnem mestu odgovorilo z »strinjam se« oz. »zelo se strinjam«, pri vprašanju o diverziteti pa je bilo takih več kot polovica. Hkrati se je izkazalo, da jih je veliko bilo priča diskriminaciji na delovnem mestu ter mnenja, da delodajalci še vedno velikokrat ne ukrepajo zoper nje. Prav tako bi skoraj 8 od 10 vprašanih rado videlo, da bi njihovi delodajalci dajali več poudarka na vrednote raznolikosti, enakosti (pravičnosti) in vključujočnosti. Na drugi strani so bila podjetja, od katerih sem izvedel, da se očitno večina od njih zaveda pomembnosti omenjenih vrednot generaciji Z, vendar je na tem področju še vedno narejenega relativno malo v primerjavi s tujino.