

J. of Business and Management

ISSN online: 3049-9062 - ISSN print: 1535-668X

<https://www.inderscience.com/jbm>

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DOI: [10.1504/JBM.2025.10071627](https://doi.org/10.1504/JBM.2025.10071627)

Article History:

Received:	04 October 2024
Last revised:	28 January 2025
Accepted:	07 April 2025
Published online:	27 June 2025

The intersection of gender and generation: new insights into drivers of job satisfaction

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Abstract: This study's intersectional approach offers new insights into the combined influence of gender and generation on job satisfaction. A web-based survey captured variables such as job meaningfulness, autonomy, pay, job security, and work-life balance. Findings indicate that male employees report higher overall satisfaction than females across all cohorts, with a narrower gender gap among younger generations. Intrinsic rewards enhance satisfaction for female millennials, while extrinsic rewards like pay impact males more. Older generations value organisational commitment, while younger groups prioritise engagement and balance. By promoting tailored strategies to improve job satisfaction, organisations can foster a more inclusive and equitable workplace.

Keywords: job satisfaction; gender; generational cohort; intrinsic and extrinsic rewards; work-life balance; work relations.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Schill-Owens, A., Andrade, M.S., Westover, J.H. and Clark, S. (2025) 'The intersection of gender and generation: new insights into drivers of job satisfaction', *J. Business and Management*, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp.69–98.

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Silvia Clark is an Assistant Professor of Management at Utah Valley University, where she specialises in human resource management and organisational behaviour. With a background in both academia and industry, she brings a global perspective to her teaching and research, particularly in the areas of HR analytics, international HRM, and workforce diversity. She is actively involved in research exploring how gender, generation, and other demographic factors shape employee experiences and job satisfaction. Prior to academia, she worked as a Management Accountant in Germany, blending practical insight with scholarly rigor.

1 Introduction

In today's dynamic workplace, job satisfaction is a critical determinant of both individual well-being and organisational success. Despite the evolution of work environments and societal norms, significant differences in job satisfaction persist across genders and generations. Why do some employees find more satisfaction in their jobs than others, even when faced with similar challenges? This question is at the heart of understanding how diverse demographic factors influence workplace experiences and outcomes.

Research indicates that gender significantly impacts job satisfaction, with women often reporting higher satisfaction levels despite facing more significant challenges such as pay disparities and limited promotional opportunities (Safiullah and Sumi, 2014). However, recent studies have challenged this notion, indicating that the gap in job satisfaction between men and women might be narrowing, especially in contexts characterised by greater gender equality (Watkins, 2023). Generational differences also play a crucial role in shaping job satisfaction. Different generations (i.e., baby boomers, generation X, millennials, and generation Z) bring unique values, expectations, and attitudes to the workplace, influenced by the socio-economic conditions and cultural trends they experienced growing up. For instance, millennials are often characterised by their desire for meaningful work and work-life balance (Bauers and Mahler, 2020), while baby boomers might prioritise job security and loyalty to their employer (Becton et al., 2014). Understanding these generational traits is essential for organisations aiming to develop effective management strategies and foster a work environment that accommodates the diverse needs of their employees.

This study utilises a comprehensive survey conducted across the USA, which examines various determinants of job satisfaction, including intrinsic rewards (e.g., job meaningfulness, autonomy), extrinsic rewards (e.g., pay, job security), work-life balance, and worker relations. By analysing these factors across different gender and generational cohorts, this research aims to uncover the underlying reasons for job satisfaction differences and provide insights that can help organisations better cater to their diverse employee base. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the broader understanding of workplace dynamics in a rapidly evolving labour market, offering practical recommendations for enhancing job satisfaction and employee engagement across different demographic groups.

2 Literature review

This review focuses on gender and generational differences in job satisfaction, examining extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, work-life balance, and worker relations.

2.1 Gender job satisfaction

The contented female worker paradox suggests women are often more satisfied with their jobs than men, despite lower pay, more discrimination, and fewer promotion opportunities (Clark, 1997; Donohue and Heywood, 2004; Kristensen and Johansson, 2008; Loscocco and Bose, 1998; Metle, 2001; Mulinge and Mueller, 1998; Sloane and Williams, 2000), a trend seen across occupations (Bashaw, 1999; Dhawan, 2000; Grissom et al., 2012; Hull, 1999; McDuff, 2001; Yasin et al., 2020; Zou, 2015). Explanations include women's socialisation to expect less (Buchanan, 2005; Clark, 1997; Gutek, 1993; Konrad et al., 2000) or their choice of more satisfying jobs, especially when they are not the primary wage earner (Carleton and Clain, 2012).

Women value intrinsic rewards like meaningful work and autonomy (Bender et al., 2005; Clark, 1997), while men prioritise pay, promotion, and job security (Konrad et al., 2000; Donohue and Heywood, 2004). Security contributes to men's satisfaction, though income does not (Hall et al., 2023). Men's satisfaction may be negatively affected by supporting dependents (Dyke and Murphy, 2006; Magee, 2014), potentially leading to 'quiet quitting' (Flood, 2022; Harter, 2022). Women are more satisfied working with other women (Clerkin, 2017; Sloane and Williams, 2000). Gender-balanced workplaces enhance satisfaction and commitment for all, though men are less satisfied in male-dominated jobs (Olafsdottir and Einarsdottir, 2024). In European contexts with gender equality, women have similar career expectations as men due to equal work opportunities and accessible childcare (Kaiser, 2005; Grönlund and Öun, 2018; Hauret and Williams, 2017; Perugini and Vladislavljević, 2019). A global study of 37 countries found worker relations and work-life balance were greater predictors of job satisfaction for men than women (Andrade et al., 2019). In female-dominated fields like hospitality, women had lower job satisfaction than men (Andrade et al., 2021a). Intrinsic factors (interesting work, job usefulness) and extrinsic factors (security, pay, work-family interference, management relations) affected job satisfaction similarly for both genders.

Flexible work during the pandemic benefited men in pay and promotion (Boston College Center for Work & Family, 2020), while remote work hindered women's career

progress (Partridge, 2021). Intrinsic rewards like helping others became less predictive of satisfaction during COVID-19, while interesting work, work-life balance, and autonomy remained important for women. Stress impacted men more (Andrade et al., 2021b; Hall et al., 2023).

US studies challenge the contented female worker paradox. Women scored lower than men on every job satisfaction metric, including sick days, family leave, and flex-work policies (Conference Board, 2023). Globally, fewer than 25% of women reported increased job flexibility (Deloitte, 2023), cited as a key reason women leave the workforce. Women with flexible schedules are three times more likely to remain in their jobs. Although US job satisfaction has risen to 64%, women lag at 60.1% (Conference Board, 2023).

Findings from recent research are calling into question the contented female worker paradox as men's and women's roles are changing as is the workplace itself. Certainly, the disparate findings outlined in this review support the need for additional research identifying drivers of gender job satisfaction.

2.2 Generation job satisfaction

Individuals growing up in a specific time period typically share similar values, attitudes, and beliefs due to experiencing the same trends, economic and cultural conditions, and social and political events (Mannheim, 1952). These shared events and resulting beliefs shape behaviour with each generation demonstrating distinct patterns (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Ryder, 1965). Despite this, research has found minimal differences in job outcomes across generational cohorts (Abate et al., 2018; Costanza et al., 2012; Kowske et al., 2010). Turnover intentions for service workers in the US banking industry are similar across generations (Abate et al., 2018); satisfaction with pay, benefits, job duties, and turnover are comparable across boomers, gen Xers, and millennials although millennials are more satisfied overall and with their companies, job security, recognition, and career development (Kowske et al., 2010). A meta-analysis found no meaningful differences in job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and turnover intent across generations (Costanza et al., 2012). Thus, tailoring interventions for specific generations may not be cost-effective (Kowske et al., 2010).

Today's workplace includes boomers II (1955–1964), generation X (1965–1980), generation Y/millennials (1981–1996) and generation Z (1997–2012) (Beresford Research, 2024). Boomers are likely to be in upper management or leadership positions, gen Xers constitute the biggest share of employees, and millennials are beginning their careers and aspiring to middle management (Muskat and Reitsamer, 2020). Although research has not established major differences in work outcomes across generations, differences do exist in how these generations approach the workplace and react to workplace conditions. However, caution is urged as generational cohort work preferences are not homogeneous and other factors may be more salient (Egerová et al., 2021; Guillot-Soulez and Soulez, 2014).

Millennials are characterised as lacking long-term commitment (Twenge, 2010; Pena, 2013; US Department of Labor Statistics, 2013). They may quit stressful jobs despite few choices due to inexperience (Matin et al., 2012). Boomers and gen Xers may stay in jobs even when dissatisfied, particularly if they lack skills to be competitive (Abate et al., 2018). Millennials have strong self-esteem (Holt et al., 2012), do not see the relationship between effort and performance (Alexander and Sysko, 2011; Ng et al., 2010), and do not

respond well to negative performance feedback or limited rewards (Laird et al., 2015). They value independence and autonomy as well as work-life balance (Eisner, 2005; Cennamo and Gardner, 2008; Hite and McDonald, 2012) and career growth (Kong et al., 2015). Employee engagement provides millennial IT employees in India with autonomy and control in their work to enhance job satisfaction and address high attrition (Jena and Nayak, 2023). Job-seeking millennials in France, recently graduated from university, valued job security and a relaxed work environment but generally did not have homogenous preferences (Guillot-Soulez and Soulez, 2014), complicating both recruitment and retention practices and suggesting the need for employers to provide employees of all generations with engaging work, development and advancement opportunities, competent management, and effective leadership (Deal et al., 2010). Although a comprehensive review of generational cohort differences in terms of workplace expectations and behaviours is beyond the scope of this study, these examples illustrate some general disparities.

Understanding the impact of generational values on work outcomes requires considering gender. Gender differences within or across generations are not well-studied, but some exist. Female UK millennials in their final year of university rated the following organisational attributes higher than men: employers who care about employees as individuals, variety in daily work, a friendly culture, working with people who share commonalities, use of degree skills, a stress-free environment, an international mix of colleagues, and working standard hours whereas males rated a high starting salary as important (Terjesen et al., 2007). These findings generally fall along the lines of intrinsic work characteristics being valued by women and extrinsic for men. Interesting work with varied tasks as well as regular work hours were more important to millennial females in France than for males (Guillot-Soulez and Soulez, 2014). A comparative study of generation Y and Z found similarities between the two cohorts, but that other characteristics, including gender, shaped work expectations more than generational association (Egerová et al., 2021). Women had different job expectations than men in terms of job content, organisational policies, social atmosphere, and rewards; no statistical difference was found between women and men for career development expectations.

Gender and organisational type have been found to influence work quality for gen Z hospitality employees (Muskat and Reitsamer, 2020). Job security was not a factor in job satisfaction for female employees and negatively influenced job satisfaction for males. Appreciation at work increased satisfaction for both females and males but women remained satisfied without it. Input into decision making contributed to job satisfaction for all gen Y workers in this study. Employee involvement for workers across sectors in Colombia has been correlated with job satisfaction for millennials, characterised by participative decision making related to teamwork and tasks; intrinsic work aspects also improved satisfaction (García et al., 2019). Less educated workers were more satisfied, and more satisfied workers were more likely to participate in decision making; no gender differences were found.

Overall, the relationship of generational cohort characteristics to work values, motivation, and job satisfaction is inconsistent and not well understood (Abubakar et al., 2018; Abubakar, 2020; Krahn and Galambos, 2014; Parry and Urwin, 2011; Ng et al., 2012). In particular, research specific to gender differences and work outcomes within and across generations is limited although the studies cited suggest some distinct

differences. Understanding gender and generational differences is critical to establish workplace well-being and productivity (Arsenault, 2004; Leiter et al., 2010).

3 Research model and design

To frame our investigation into the determinants of job satisfaction across genders and generations, we developed a comprehensive research model based on existing literature and previous studies. Utilising a stratified random sampling method, we gathered data through a web-based survey administered to 566 respondents across the USA. This survey captured a range of variables, including intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, work-life balance, work relations, and worker engagement. By operationalising these variables and conducting thorough statistical analyses, we aim to interpret the intricate dynamics influencing job satisfaction. Building on this framework, we propose the following hypotheses, which seek to explore the nuanced differences in job satisfaction across gender and generational lines.

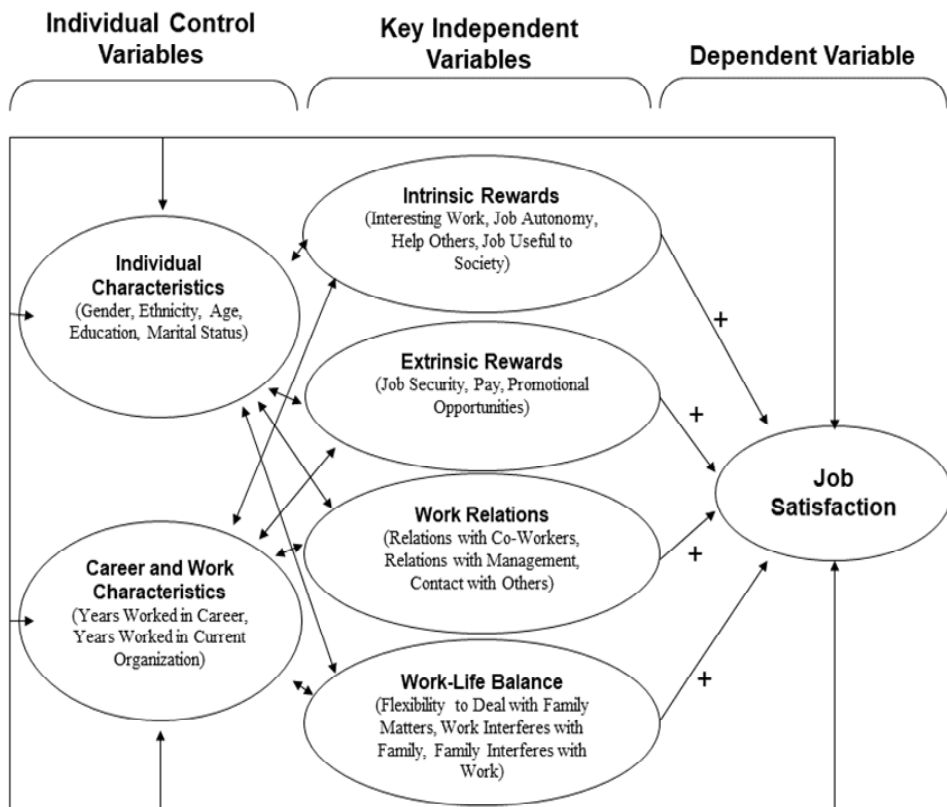
- Hypothesis 1a Female employees will report higher overall job satisfaction than male employees despite lower pay and fewer opportunities for promotion.
- Hypothesis 1b The gender gap in job satisfaction will be narrower in younger generations (millennials and generation Z) due to increasing gender equality in the workplace.
- Hypothesis 2a Intrinsic rewards (e.g., interesting work, job autonomy) will have a stronger positive impact on job satisfaction for female employees than for male employees across all generational cohorts.
- Hypothesis 2b Male employees will report higher job satisfaction related to extrinsic rewards (e.g., pay, promotion opportunities) than female employees across all generational cohorts.
- Hypothesis 3 Positive relations with management and coworkers will significantly predict job satisfaction across all genders and generations, but the strength of this relationship will be higher for men and younger employees.
- Hypothesis 4 Female millennials will place higher importance on intrinsic work characteristics (e.g., interesting work, variety) compared to male employees from the same generation.

Given the gap in the literature with limited research on gender differences across generations in job satisfaction variables we propose the following hypotheses based on our revised model incorporating worker activation variables (model 2):

- Hypothesis 5a Organisational commitment will have a significant positive impact on job satisfaction for both female and male baby boomers.
- Hypothesis 5b The sense of meaningfulness in one's job will have a stronger impact on job satisfaction for male baby boomers compared to female baby boomers.

- Hypothesis 6a Supervisor encouragement will have a significant positive impact on job satisfaction for female gen X employees.
- Hypothesis 6b For male gen X employees, the opportunity to do what they do best every day and working with a satisfying purpose will have significant positive impacts on job satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 7a Employee engagement will have a significant positive impact on job satisfaction for female and male millennials.
- Hypothesis 7b Organisational commitment will have a significant positive impact on job satisfaction for both female and male millennials.
- Hypothesis 8 Employee engagement and working with a satisfying purpose will have significant positive impacts on job satisfaction for female gen Z employees.

Figure 1 Research model



Modelled, in part, after the International Social Survey Work Orientations Module and the work of Andrade et al. (2023), we developed a web-based survey to explore the shifting nature of the workplace. The survey included a range of questions related to intrinsic, extrinsic, workplace relations, work-life balance, and employee activation

variables. The survey was administered during the winter of 2024 using a stratified random sampling method across the USA, resulting in 566 completed surveys.

3.1 Operationalisation of variables

We operationalised the study variables following the approach of Andrade et al. (2023) and the International Social Survey Work Orientations Module IV (Jutz et al., 2018; for justification of use of single-item measures, see Matthews et al., 2022). Additionally, building on the survey conducted by Andrade et al. (2023), new survey questions were added to the follow-up survey, which allowed us to utilise new variables in the analysis. See Table 1.

Table 1 Study variables and measurements

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Item</i>
Dependent variable	
Job satisfaction	How satisfied are you in your main job? (0) extremely dissatisfied to (10) extremely satisfied
Intrinsic rewards	
Interesting job	My job is interesting. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Job autonomy	I can work independently. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Help others	In my job I can help other people. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Job useful to society	My job is useful to society. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Extrinsic rewards	
Pay	My income is high. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Job security	My job is secure. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Promotional opportunities	My opportunities for advancement are high. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Work stress	How often do you find your work stressful? (1) never to (5) always
Work relations	
Relations with management	In general, how would you describe relations at your workplace between management and employees? (1) very bad to (5) very good
Relations with coworkers	In general, how would you describe relations at your workplace between workmates/colleagues? (1) very bad to (5) very good
Contact with others	In my job, I have personal contact with others. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Work-life balance	
Flexibility to deal with family matters	How difficult would it be for you to take an hour or two off during work hours, to take care of personal or family matters? (1) not difficult at all to (5) very difficult

Table 1 Study variables and measurements (continued)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Item</i>
Work-life balance	
Work interference with family	How often do you feel that the demands of your job interfere with your family? (1) never to (3) always
Family interference with work	How often do you feel that the demands of your family interfere with your job? (1) never to (3) always
Worker engagement	
Job engagement	Overall, how engaged are you in your (main) job? (1) not at all engaged to (10) extremely engaged
Do what you do best	I Have the opportunity to do what I do best every day. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Understanding of meaning and purpose	
Meaningful work	I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Purposeful work	I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Sense of encouragement and belonging	
Supervisor encouragement	My supervisor shows me encouragement for my work efforts. (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree
Where I am meant to be	I believe that my work group is where I am meant to be. (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree
Leadership efficacy	I see myself as a leader. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Career meaning and commitment	
Meaningful career	I have found a meaningful career. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Organisational commitment	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation. (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Controls	Dummy variables for race, ethnicity, education level, marital status, and state of residence; continuous variables for birth year, full-time years worked in career, and years worked in current organisation.

3.2 Statistical methodology

Following the approach of Andrade et al. (2023), we used a multi-step approach to analyse respondents' work experience and characteristics data as well as their job satisfaction responses. First, we conducted bivariate and descriptive analyses of work characteristics and attitudes by generation as well as for the full sample. Next, we tested for statistically significant differences in job satisfaction between generations using t-test analyses. We then examined generation-specific OLS and ordered probit regression models to evaluate the relative contribution of work characteristics and experiences to job

satisfaction for each generation. Finally, we tested for statistically significant differences between generations in the impact of work-life and worker activation determinants on job satisfaction using moderation analyses.

4 Results

4.1 Participant demographics

More than 550 respondents ($n = 566$) participated in the modal stratified random sample in Utah and other areas of the USA. The respondents were full- or part-time workers who worked prior to the COVID pandemic and were employed at the time of the study. As seen in Table 2, 129 respondents fell within the baby boomer generation (born 1946–1964), 191 fell into the gen X generation (born 1965–1980), 185 fell into the millennial generation (1981–1996), and 55 fell into the gen Z generation (1997–2012). Males comprised 46.11% ($n = 261$) of the sample and females 53.89% ($n = 305$). Respondents provided details on their racial and ethnic background; 67.67% of the sample was White or Caucasian, 19.96% of the sample was Black or African American, 9.72% of the sample was Asian, just over 1% was Native American or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and less than 2% of the sample reported they are race as ‘other’. They also reported their ethnicity, and 88.34% of respondents were not Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin, and 11.66% of respondents were. 44% ($n = 249$) of the sample have only some college or less, and a little under 56% ($n = 314$) have a college degree or higher. 62.7% of respondents are married or cohabitating and 36.59% of the sample are single (with just four respondents preferring not to say). 1977 is the average birth year of respondents, 20.57 is the average full-time years worked in the respondent’s career, and 13.94 is the average years worked in the respondent’s current organisation.

Table 3 shows the means of job satisfaction and other main study variables, by generation and gender, as well as significant differences where present. As shown in Figure 2, there is a statistically significant difference in reported job satisfaction between older and younger females and males, with a steady decline in perceived job satisfaction levels as we move from the older to younger generations. Male respondents also had significantly higher job satisfaction mean scores than their female counterparts within each generational cohort, thus not supporting Hypothesis 1a. As illustrated in Table 3, the gap between genders in mean levels of job satisfaction is narrower in younger generations (millennials and generation Z) than in older generations (baby boomers and gen X) supporting Hypothesis 1b.

4.2 Descriptive results

Additionally, as seen in Figure 3, there is a statistically significant difference in reported employee engagement between older and younger females and males, with a steady decline in perceived employee engagement levels as we move from the older to younger generations. While there are several other significant differences in mean scores by generation and gender, of additional note as seen in Figure 4 is the difference in the ‘leadership efficacy’ variable across generations, with baby boomer and gen Z males

reporting significantly higher mean scores than their female counterparts, while there was no significant difference for male and female gen X and millennial respondents.

Table 2 Demographics of respondents

	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Race of respondent		
White	383	67.67
Black or African-American	113	19.96
Asian	55	9.72
Native American or Alaska Native	2	0.35
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	4	0.71
Other	9	1.59
Total	566	100
Education level of respondent		
Less than high school	6	1.07
High school diploma	96	17.05
Some college, but no degree	147	26.11
Bachelor's degree	192	34.1
Master's degree	97	17.23
Doctoral degree	25	4.44
Total	563	100
Ethnicity of respondent		
Hispanic or Latino or Spanish origin	66	11.66
Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish origin	500	88.34
Total	566	100
Marital status of respondent		
Married or cohabitating	353	62.7
Single	206	36.59
Prefer not to say	4	0.71
Total	563	100
Gender of respondent		
Female	305	53.89
Male	261	46.11
Total	566	100
Generation of respondent	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Baby boomer	129	23.0%
Gen X	191	34.1%
Millennial	185	33.0%
Gen Z	55	9.8%
Total	560	100
Other demographic variables		
Birth year	1,977.34	13.99
Full-time years worked in career	20.57	13.92
Years worked in current organisation	13.94	86.29

Table 3 Variable means and test of difference, by generation

	Baby Boomer		Gen X		Millennial		Gen Z		All		T statistic and p-value for sig. diff.		
	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	Mean	Std. dev.	t	p-value	df
Dependent variable													
Job satisfaction	5.46	1.49	5.25	1.61	5.15	1.65	4.84	1.637	5.21	1.62	1.94**	0.027	560
Intrinsic rewards													
Interesting job	3.98	0.87	3.86	1.02	3.74	1.06	3.73	1.062	3.83	1.02	2.04*	0.020	560
Job autonomy	4.25	0.87	4.08	1.05	4.01	0.91	3.76	1.105	4.06	0.99	2.36*	0.009	560
Help others	4.24	0.76	4.14	0.88	4.12	0.83	4.16	0.938	4.15	0.86	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Job useful to society	3.99	0.96	4.03	0.99	4.01	0.96	4.05	0.951	4.01	0.98	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Extrinsic rewards													
Pay	2.83	1.16	3.03	1.10	3.16	1.22	2.89	1.301	3.01	1.18	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Job security	3.88	1.05	4.01	0.92	4.06	0.91	4.05	0.931	3.99	0.96	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Promotional opportunities	2.96	1.16	3.10	1.17	3.42	1.16	3.44	1.135	3.20	1.18	-3.84***	0.000	560
Work relations													
Relations with management	3.83	0.89	3.65	1.06	3.81	0.96	3.71	0.956	3.75	0.99	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Relations with coworkers	4.16	0.79	3.94	0.93	4.06	0.86	4.18	0.641	4.05	0.85	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Contact with others	4.25	0.81	4.20	0.89	4.09	0.91	4.25	0.775	4.17	0.89	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Work-life balance													
Flexibility to deal with family matters	1.93	0.90	2.09	1.02	2.17	0.96	2.35	0.907	2.10	0.97	-2.30*	0.011	560
Work interference with family	1.59	0.59	1.73	0.67	1.85	0.69	2.04	0.693	1.76	0.67	-3.92***	0.000	560
Family interference with work	1.35	0.51	1.60	0.63	1.72	0.71	1.89	0.712	1.61	0.66	-4.69***	0.000	560
Worker activation													
Job engagement	8.47	1.51	8.10	2.02	7.59	2.16	7.47	1.894	7.93	2.02	4.14***	0.000	560
I see myself as a leader	3.67	1.58	4.02	1.55	4.09	1.51	4.00	1.515	3.96	1.54	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
I have found a meaningful career	4.10	0.99	3.95	1.13	3.90	1.17	3.82	1.219	3.95	1.14	2.38**	0.010	560
Work that has a satisfying purpose	4.06	0.92	3.89	1.12	3.88	1.07	3.69	1.169	3.95	1.11	2.31*	0.011	560
Supervisor encouragement	5.25	1.55	5.08	1.74	5.26	1.52	4.98	1.750	5.16	1.64	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Where I am meant to be	5.31	1.51	5.09	1.79	5.14	1.68	4.64	1.710	5.10	1.70	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
My work contributes to my life's meaning	4.06	0.92	3.89	1.12	3.88	1.07	3.69	1.170	3.90	1.08	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Organisational commitment	5.49	1.61	5.10	1.84	5.02	1.87	4.60	1.852	5.10	1.82	2.18*	0.015	560

Note: t-statistics has a significance level of *p < 0.05.

Figure 2 Mean job satisfaction, by generational cohort and gender (see online version for colours)

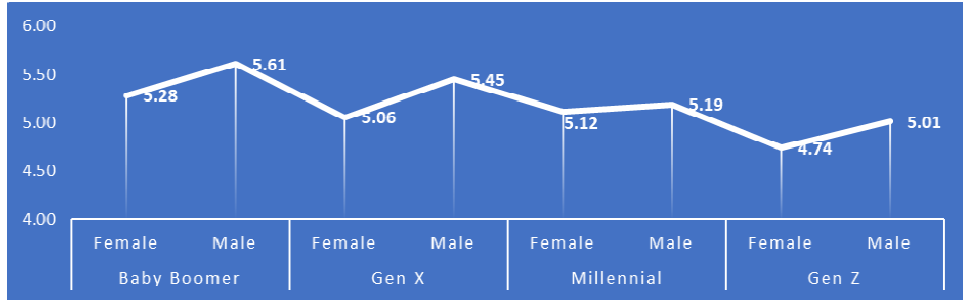


Figure 3 Mean employee engagement, by generational cohort (see online version for colours)

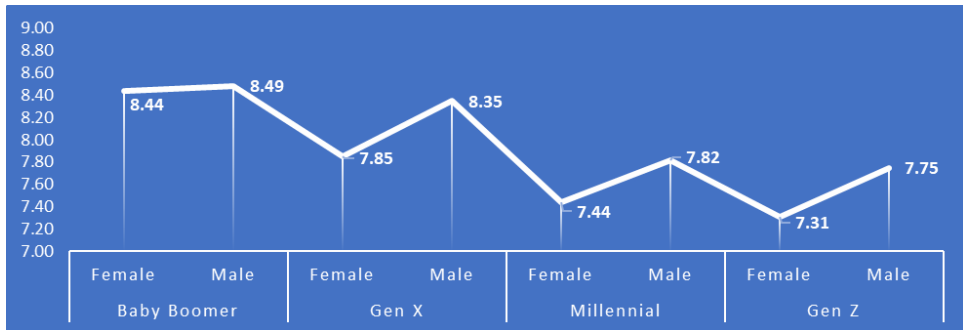
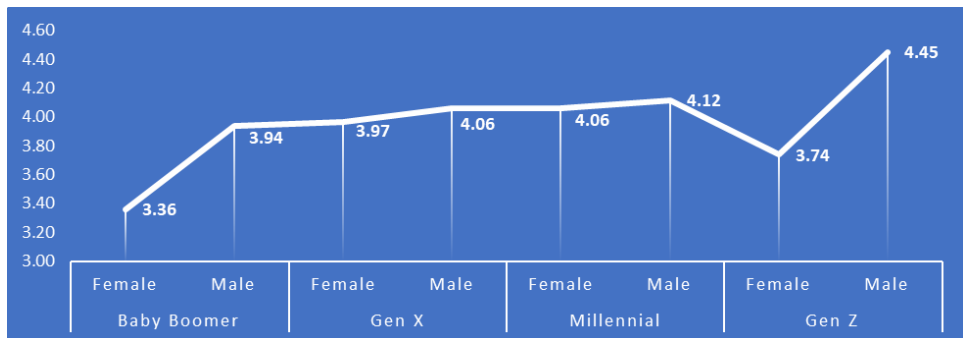


Figure 4 Mean leadership efficacy, by generational cohort and gender (see online version for colours)



4.3 Regression results

Following the approach of Westover and Andrade (2024), we examined the association between job satisfaction and the independent variables across multiple regression analyses. The first model (Table 4) examined the influence of intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, work relations, work-life balance variables, and control variables on job

satisfaction, by generation and gender. In the second model (Table 5) we focused on the ‘worker activation’ variables and represent what we consider to be ‘the best’ model.

Table 4 Model 1 – OLS traditional job satisfaction regression results, by generational cohort and gender

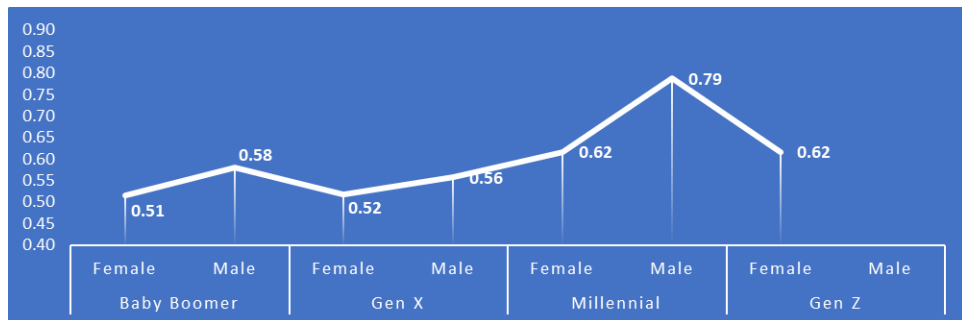
	<i>Baby boomer</i>	<i>Gen X</i>	<i>Millennial</i>	<i>Gen Z</i>	<i>All</i>
Intrinsic rewards					
Interesting job	0.293**	0.315***	0.216**	0.584***	0.316***
Job autonomy	0.062	0.029	0.156**	0.138	0.063
Help others	−0.126	0.184**	0.084	−0.037	0.079*
Job useful to society	−0.037	−0.076	0.060	−0.123	−0.035
Extrinsic rewards					
Pay	0.173*	0.232***	0.169**	−0.052	0.180***
Job security	0.086	−0.034	0.007	0.072	0.020
Promotional opportunities	0.176*	0.052	0.063	−0.028	0.120**
Work relations					
Relations with management	0.177*	0.316***	0.247***	0.182	0.233***
Relations with coworkers	0.088	0.027	0.016	−0.023	0.028
Contact with others	0.091	−0.128*	0.117*	−0.068	−0.012
Work-life balance					
Flexibility to deal with family matters	−0.005	−0.011	−0.031	−0.136	−0.026
Work interference with family	−0.068	−0.119	−0.082	−0.214	−0.086*
Family interference with work	0.015	0.011	0.063	0.196	0.057
Controls					
Race	0.058	−0.066	−0.006	−0.281	−0.003
Gender	0.043	−0.007	−0.019	0.041	0.000
Ethnicity	−0.035	0.023	0.048	−0.161	0.013
State of residence	−0.078	0.087	−0.033	0.500**	0.020
Education level	−0.059	−0.021	−0.025	−0.059	−0.009
Marital status	0.011	−0.061	0.001	−0.054	−0.042
Years worked in career	0.057	0.005	−0.107*	0.041	0.012
Years worked in current organisation	0.028	−0.030	0.153**	0.134	−0.012
N	129	191	185	55	561
Adjusted R-squared	0.562	0.549	0.673	0.595	0.596
F	8.82***	11.99***	19.04***	4.78***	38.49***

Notes: Beta values. significance levels: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

In Table 4, there is variation in standardised beta coefficient strength and statistical significance for each variable. For female baby boomers, 'pay', 'relations with management' and 'relations with coworkers' were the significant and most impactful variables, while for male baby boomers, 'interesting work', 'job security' and 'promotional opportunities' were the significant and most impactful variables. For female gen X, 'interesting work', 'helping others', 'pay', and 'relations with management' were the significant and most impactful variables, while for male baby boomers, 'contact with others', 'work interference with family' were also significant variables. For female millennials, 'interesting work', 'job autonomy', 'pay', 'relations with management', and 'contact with others' were the significant and most impactful variables, while for male millennials, 'helping others', 'pay', 'relations with management', 'family interference with work' were the significant and most impactful variable. Interestingly, 'years worked in current organisation' was also statistically significant control variable for both female and male millennials. For female gen Z, 'interesting work', 'flexibility to deal with family matters', and 'family interference with work' were the significant and most impactful variables influencing working job satisfaction (note: with N of only 20 in the male gen Z group, OLS regression results could not be computed).

Additionally, as seen in Figure 5, there were variations in *adjusted r-squared* values across the OLS generational and gender models: baby boomers (adjusted r-squared for females = 0.51; adjusted r-squared for males = 0.58), gen X (adjusted r-squared for females = 0.52; adjusted r-squared for males = 0.56), millennials (adjusted r-squared for females = 0.62; adjusted r-squared for males = 0.79), and gen Z (adjusted r-squared for females = 0.62). This means the model accounted for 51% and 58% of the variation in job satisfaction for female and male baby boomers, 52% and 56% of the variation in job satisfaction for female and male gen X, over 62% and 79% of the variation in job satisfaction for female and male millennials, and 62% of the variation in job satisfaction for female gen Z (note: with N of only 20 in the male gen Z group, OLS regression results could not be computed).

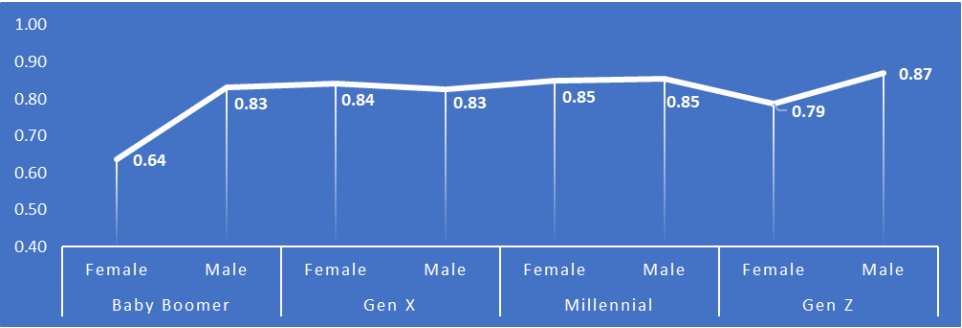
Figure 5 Original model fit (adjusted R-squared), by generational cohort and gender (see online version for colours)



Finally, for Table 5, there is variation in standardised beta coefficient strength and statistical significance for each variable. For female baby boomers, 'I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful' and 'organisational commitment' were the significant

and most impactful variables, while for male baby boomers, ‘supervisor encouragement’, ‘meaningful career’, and ‘organisational commitment’ were the significant and most impactful variables, thus supporting Hypothesis 5a and 5b. For female gen X, ‘supervisor encouragement’, ‘where I am meant to be’, and ‘organisational commitment’ were the significant and most impactful variables supporting Hypothesis 6a, while for male gen X, ‘the opportunity to do what I do best everyday’, ‘work with satisfying purpose’, and ‘organisational commitment’ were significant (with ‘state of residence’ as a significant control variable) supporting Hypothesis 6b. For female millennials, ‘employee engagement’, ‘supervisor encouragement’, ‘where I am meant to be’, ‘I see myself as a leader’, and ‘meaningful career’, and ‘organisational commitment’ were the significant and most impactful variables, while for male millennials, ‘supervisor encouragement’, ‘where I am meant to be’, and ‘organisational commitment’ were the significant and most impactful variable partially supporting Hypotheses 7a and 7b. For female gen Z, ‘employee engagement’, ‘work with satisfying purpose’, and ‘where I am meant to be’ were the significant and most impactful variables influencing working job satisfaction (with ‘state of residence’ as a significant control variable), thus supporting Hypothesis 8 while for male gen Z, none of the variables were significant, though with an N of only 20 in the male gen Z group, this is not surprising.

Figure 6 Revised model fit (adjusted R-squared), by generational cohort and gender (see online version for colours)



Additionally, as seen in Figure 6, there were variations in *adjusted r-squared* values across the OLS generational and gender models: baby boomers (adjusted r-squared for females = 0.64; adjusted r-squared for males = 0.83), gen X (adjusted r-squared for females = 0.84; adjusted r-squared for males = 0.83), millennials (adjusted r-squared for females = 0.85; adjusted r-squared for males = 0.85), and gen Z (adjusted r-squared for females = 0.79; adjusted r-squared for males = 0.87). This means the model accounted for 64% and 83% of the variation in job satisfaction for female and male baby boomers, under 84% and 83% of the variation in job satisfaction for female and male gen X, 85% of the variation in job satisfaction for both female and male millennials, and 79% and 87% of the variation in job satisfaction for female and male gen Z. While there is virtually no difference in model predictability for female and male respondents in the gen X and millennial age cohorts, of note is the large difference in model fit and predictability between female and male respondents in the baby boomer and gen Z generational cohorts.

Table 5 Model 2 – new OLS job satisfaction regression results, by generation

	<i>Baby boomer</i>	<i>Gen X</i>	<i>Millennial</i>	<i>Gen Z</i>	<i>All</i>
Worker engagement					
Overall, how engaged are you in your (main) job	0.000	0.063	0.162***	0.185*	0.108***
I Have the opportunity to do what I do best every day	0.080	0.113*	0.038	−0.020	0.076***
Understanding of meaning and purpose					
I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful	0.173**	0.083	−0.044	0.201*	0.083**
I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose	0.066	0.106*	0.104*	−0.239*	0.073*
Sense of encouragement and belonging					
My supervisor shows me encouragement for my work efforts	0.204**	0.118**	0.206***	0.204***	0.166***
I believe that my work group is where I am meant to be	0.127	0.152***	0.319***	0.501*	0.204**
Leadership efficacy					
I see myself as a leader	−0.027	−0.039	−0.071*	−0.130	−0.058**
Career meaning and commitment					
I have found a meaningful career	0.207*	0.054	0.125*	0.085	0.108***
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation	0.264***	0.439***	0.219***	0.196*	0.324***
Controls					
Race	0.059	0.032	0.004	−0.050	0.030
Gender	0.031	0.005	−0.026	−0.025	0.002
Ethnicity	0.003	0.025	−0.020	−0.074	−0.012
State of residence	−0.071	0.030	−0.033	0.142	−0.019
Education level	−0.068	0.024	0.003	−0.043	−0.014
Marital status	0.044	0.005	−0.001	−0.037	0.010
Years worked in career	−0.077	−0.024	0.008	−0.071	−0.066**
N	129	191.000	185.000	55	561
Adjusted R-squared	0.758	0.837	0.852	0.808	0.821
F	26.02***	61.91***	67.30***	15.20***	151.60***

Notes: Beta values. Significance levels: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

4.4 *Revisiting hypotheses*

Hypothesis 1a which proposed that female employees would report higher overall job satisfaction than male employees despite lower pay and fewer promotion opportunities. Instead, the data showed that male respondents consistently reported higher mean job satisfaction scores compared to their female counterparts across all generational cohorts. This suggests a potential shift in job satisfaction dynamics, where men may be experiencing greater job satisfaction than women, despite the persistent challenges faced by women in the workplace.

The data supports Hypothesis 1b, which suggested that the gender gap in job satisfaction would be narrower in younger generations (millennials and generation Z) due to increasing gender equality in the workplace. The findings show that the gap in mean job satisfaction between males and females was indeed narrower in younger generations compared to older ones:

- baby boomers: males 5.61, females 5.28 (notable gap)
- gen X: males 5.45, females 5.06 (gap slightly narrower than boomers)
- gen Z: males 5.01, females 4.74 (gap further narrowed)
- millennials: males 5.19, females 5.12 (smallest gap).

This suggests that the increased gender equality in the workplace has contributed to a narrowing of the job satisfaction gap between men and women in the younger generations.

The results provide partial support for Hypothesis 2a, which proposed that intrinsic rewards would have a stronger impact on job satisfaction for female employees compared to male employees across all generational cohorts. For millennials, job autonomy had a significant positive impact on job satisfaction for females, but not for males. However, the hypothesis was not uniformly supported across all intrinsic rewards and generational cohorts. Having an interesting job positively influenced job satisfaction more for males among baby boomers and gen X; the impact of an interesting job was significant for females only among millennials and gen Z; helping others significantly impacted job satisfaction for gen X females, but not for females in other cohorts. While intrinsic rewards do positively impact job satisfaction for females in certain contexts, the strength and significance of this impact varied across different rewards and generational cohorts. The hypothesis was supported in specific scenarios but not universally applicable across all the examined groups.

The results partially support Hypothesis 2b, which suggested that male employees would report higher job satisfaction from extrinsic rewards (e.g., pay, promotion opportunities) than female employees across generational cohorts. Male employees generally reported higher job satisfaction related to certain extrinsic rewards, but this trend was not consistent across all reward types and cohorts. Only female baby boomers reported a significant impact of pay on job satisfaction. For gen X and millennials, both genders reported a significant positive impact of pay, with males showing a slightly higher impact. Job security and promotional opportunities were only significant for male baby boomers. These findings suggest that while extrinsic rewards like pay and job security are generally more significant for males, their influence varies across cohorts. Notably, females in the baby boomer cohort reported higher satisfaction related to pay,

contrasting with the general trend observed in other cohorts. This indicates that generational differences affect how extrinsic rewards influence job satisfaction across genders.

The results provided partial support for Hypothesis 3, which suggested that positive relations with management and coworkers would significantly predict job satisfaction across all genders and generations, with the strength of this relationship being higher for men and younger employees. Relations with management were significant predictors of job satisfaction for all groups except generation Z. However, the strength of these relationships varied: for males in gen X and millennials, relations with management were more impactful predictors of job satisfaction compared to females in the same cohorts; relations with coworkers were a significant predictor of job satisfaction only for female baby boomers. Contrary to the hypothesis, the impact of these relational factors was not uniformly stronger for men or younger employees. Instead, the influence of positive work relations appeared to be more distributed across different cohorts and genders. This indicates that while these relational factors are important, their impact may be influenced by additional variables such as job roles and organisational culture, rather than being solely dependent on gender or generational differences.

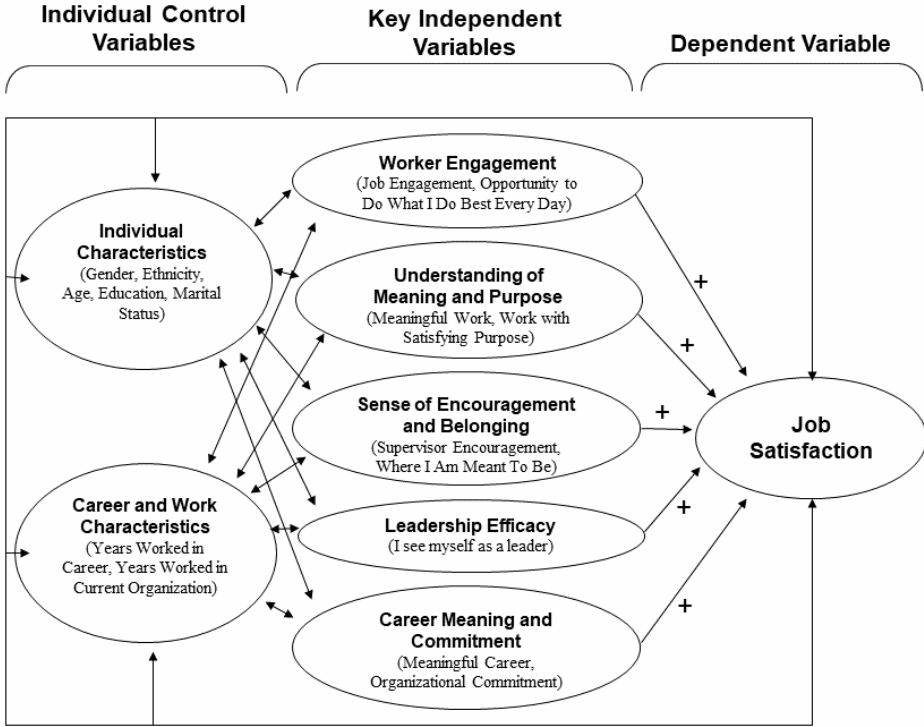
The results did not support Hypothesis 4, which proposed that female millennials would place higher importance on intrinsic work characteristics compared to their male counterparts. Both female and male millennials showed no significant impact on job satisfaction from flexibility to deal with family matters and work interference with family. Interestingly, male millennials reported a significant positive impact on job satisfaction from family interference with work, but female millennials did not. These findings suggest that within the millennial cohort, intrinsic work characteristics related to work-life balance do not significantly differ in their impact on job satisfaction between females and males, contrary to the hypothesis.

For baby boomers we proposed that organisational commitment would have a significant positive impact on job satisfaction for both female and male baby boomers (Hypothesis 5a) and that the sense of meaningfulness in one's job will have a stronger impact on job satisfaction for male baby boomers compared to female baby boomers (Hypothesis 5b). The analysis supports this 5a. Organisational commitment was a significant positive predictor of job satisfaction for both female ($\beta = 0.225$, $p < 0.05$) and male ($\beta = 0.332$, $p < 0.001$) baby boomers. This generation values stability, long-term relationships, and loyalty, which enhance their commitment and job satisfaction. The analysis also supports 5b. For male baby boomers, having a meaningful career was a substantial driver of job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.284$, $p < 0.01$). This aligns with the notion that men in this cohort value the significance and impact of their work, which is closely tied to their professional identity and sense of achievement. In contrast, the sense of job meaningfulness did not significantly impact job satisfaction for female baby boomers.

For generation X, we proposed that supervisor encouragement would significantly impact job satisfaction for female gen X employees (Hypothesis 6a) and that for male gen X employees, the opportunity to do what they do best daily and working with a satisfying purpose would have significant positive impacts on job satisfaction (Hypothesis 6b). The analysis supports 6a, showing that supervisor encouragement, involving support, recognition, and guidance, is crucial for female gen X employees' job satisfaction, helping them balance professional and personal commitments while providing career advancement and recognition ($\beta = 0.181$, $p < 0.05$). The analysis also supports 6b,

showing that the opportunity to do what they do best daily ($\beta = 0.243, p < 0.001$) and working with a satisfying purpose ($\beta = 0.184, p < 0.05$) significantly impact male gen X employees' job satisfaction. These findings suggest that male gen X employees value opportunities to fully utilise their skills and expertise, leading to higher job satisfaction by fostering a sense of competence and effectiveness in their roles.

Figure 7 Revised research model



For millennials we proposed that employee engagement would have a significant positive impact on job satisfaction for female and male millennials (Hypothesis 7a) and that organisational commitment would have a significant positive impact on job satisfaction for both female and male millennials (Hypothesis 7b). The analysis partially supports 7a, indicating that employee engagement significantly impacts job satisfaction for female millennials ($\beta = 0.157, p < 0.05$), but not for male millennials. This indicates that fostering a highly engaging work environment that provides meaningful work experiences and opportunities for growth is particularly important for enhancing job satisfaction among female millennials. Additionally, the analysis supports 7b, indicating that organisational commitment significantly impacts job satisfaction for both female ($\beta = 0.200, p < 0.01$) and male millennials ($\beta = 0.265, p < 0.05$). The findings suggest that organisational commitment, involving emotional attachment and involvement with the organisation, is a significant predictor of job satisfaction for both female and male millennials. This indicates that fostering strong organisational commitment through practices that promote loyalty, alignment with organisational goals, and a supportive work environment can enhance job satisfaction among millennials.

Hypothesis 8 proposed that employee engagement and working with a satisfying purpose would significantly impact job satisfaction for female gen Z employees. The analysis yielded mixed support: employee engagement was a significant positive predictor of job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.407, p < 0.05$). However, the relationship between working with a satisfying purpose and job satisfaction was unexpectedly negative ($\beta = -0.439, p < 0.05$). This result may stem from high expectations for immediate purpose and meaning in work, leading to disappointment when unmet. A mismatch between roles and personal values or aspirations may also contribute. While employee engagement positively predicted job satisfaction, the expected impact of satisfying purpose was not supported. This suggests female gen Z employees face challenges aligning work with their sense of purpose, impacting job satisfaction.

5 Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several insights into the determinants of job satisfaction across different genders and generations. This discussion will interpret these results in the context of existing literature, explore the implications for organisational practice, and identify areas for future research.

5.1 Gender differences in job satisfaction

Our analysis did not support the traditional notion of the ‘contented female worker’ phenomenon. Contrary to Hypothesis 1a, male employees consistently reported higher job satisfaction than their female counterparts across all generational cohorts. These findings challenge previous research that suggests women derive more satisfaction from intrinsic rewards despite facing greater workplace challenges. This suggests that even amongst older generations, gender equality has likely shifted expectations, leading to conditions once more commonly attributed to European standards (Kaiser, 2005; Grönlund and Öun, 2018; Hauret and Williams, 2017; Perugini and Vladislavljević, 2019), younger generations, and other contexts in which women and men share comparable expectations. This outcome aligns with more recent findings (Conference Board, 2023) that job satisfaction for US women, overall, is lower than it is for men. While gender equality appears to be impactful in all generations, a gender gap in job satisfaction, according to this analysis, is narrower among younger generations (millennials and gen Z), supporting Hypothesis 1b, and reflecting the impact of increased gender equality and progressive workplace policies.

In considering nuances of job satisfaction, this study’s partial support for Hypothesis 2a indicates that intrinsic rewards positively impact job satisfaction for females, particularly millennials, where job autonomy is significant. However, this is not uniformly true across all intrinsic rewards and generational cohorts. These mixed findings support past research attributing intrinsic rewards as more valuable for women (Bender et al., 2005; Clark, 1997) while also aligning with recent studies suggesting intrinsic rewards vary in importance across genders and attributes (Andrade et al., 2019; Baeza et al., 2018; Grönlund and Öun, 2018). Additionally, the influence of intrinsic rewards appears to depend on specific job characteristics and generational expectations.

Extrinsic rewards, as hypothesised in Hypothesis 2b, generally have a more substantial impact on job satisfaction for males, particularly regarding pay and job security. While recent research challenges the generalisation that men value extrinsic rewards more than women value intrinsic rewards (Andrade et al., 2019; Baeza et al., 2018; Grönlund and Öun, 2018), vestiges of earlier tendencies persist. This may reflect preferences specific to US participants. Interestingly, female boomers report significant satisfaction related to pay, showing generational context can influence how extrinsic rewards are valued. These findings highlight the complexity of gender dynamics in job satisfaction and suggest intrinsic and extrinsic rewards must be considered within a generational context.

5.2 *Generational differences in job satisfaction*

Generational differences are evident in how job satisfaction determinants vary across cohorts, opposing studies suggesting minimal generational impact (Costanza et al., 2012). Findings reveal boomers highly value organisational commitment and meaningful careers, supported by Hypotheses 5a and 5b. These values align with research indicating boomers often hold upper management and leadership roles (Muskat and Reitsamer, 2020). This generation's higher adjusted R-squared values suggest stronger predictability of job satisfaction based on studied variables, indicating older generations have more defined satisfaction determinants.

While acknowledging that factors like gender can significantly influence job satisfaction preferences (Egerová et al., 2021; Guillot-Soulez and Soulez, 2014), outcomes validate significant generational preferences. For example, gen Xers find supervisor encouragement and the opportunity to do what they do best critical for satisfaction, supporting Hypotheses 6a and 6b. They value support and recognition from supervisors and *utilise* their skills effectively. Millennials show partial support for Hypotheses 7a and 7b, with employee engagement and organisational commitment being substantial predictors of female satisfaction but less so for males. This aligns with research suggesting millennial females have a stronger preference for intrinsic rewards. Overall, this study highlights millennials' desire for meaningful work and strong organisational ties, aligning with literature pointing to intrinsic motivators as impactful for this generation (García et al., 2019).

For gen Z, employee engagement is a significant predictor of job satisfaction for females, but working with a satisfying purpose has an unexpectedly negative relationship. This suggests younger employees might have high expectations for immediate job purpose, leading to dissatisfaction when unmet, supporting Hypothesis 8 with caveats. These results also extend insights into previous findings on gen Z that assert gender differences in preferences regarding job expectations (Egerová et al., 2021). Such findings highlight the importance of considering preferences through dual lenses of gender and generations, as notable variances emerge with an intersectional approach.

In understanding employee satisfaction from generational and gender perspectives, these results validate aspects of prior research while indicating changes are occurring. These findings emphasise the importance of ongoing investigations into job satisfaction when developing policies and interventions.

6 Recommendations for organisations and workers

The outcomes of this study indicate the need for continued and reinforced measures towards gender equality in workplace policies and offerings to reduce gaps in either direction, particularly amongst those in the older generations where the gender gap is more significant in comparison to younger generations. Any actions taken to decrease the gender gap within an organisation could potentially result in less manoeuvring when it comes to answering the needs, preferences, and expectations of all employees. One approach for organisations to minimise gender disparities is through the provision of thoughtfully crafted affirmative action initiatives aimed at equality and accessibility for women (Mujtaba, 2023). Additionally, this study points to a strong preference for extrinsic rewards in both genders, therefore increasing access to extrinsic rewards for women and men could also aid in reducing the gender gap. As gender equality in the US appears to be mirroring European trends, as evidenced in the results of the younger generations, it is likely that extrinsic rewards will continue to be a motivating influence for female workers as well as their male counterparts. Perhaps this progressive shift in workplace culture and policy can make an impact on raising female job satisfaction indicators. While some findings in this study suggest similar preferences for women and men in some respects, justifying more streamlined approaches towards job satisfaction interventions, other results also signal that differences in gender-related preferences still exist. Understanding and respecting the nuances of gender specific expectations should be a significant focus in terms of providing options that speak to worker preferences as they relate to all of the variables examined in this study, including intrinsic, extrinsic, workplace relations, work-life balance and employee activation factors. Maintaining an awareness of these differences in preferences and answering them while promoting gender equity is a complicated but necessary path towards bridging gaps and building equality. Alongside this awareness of worker preferences based on gender is the necessity to tailor and customise policies, rewards and other interventions with additional variances in mind.

Interventions that prioritise intrinsic rewards should still be part of the workplace provision equation. Findings insinuate that intrinsic factors are quite powerful motivators for both women and millennials. The crossover between gender and generations can yield significant information towards formulating organisational interventions that can reach multiple groups with specific job satisfaction preferences. Intrinsic motivators as well as workplace relations and other activation factors that are shown in this study to be valuable to the older generations (boomers and gen X), highlight the need for a varied approach to these interventions. The inclusion of employee activation factors in this study also highlights the need to consider more than traditional components of job satisfaction to meet such varied employee preferences towards job satisfaction. This is emphasised via generational striations of well-being, engagement, purpose and belonging preferences that surfaced in the findings. While some research suggests that curated approaches based on generational preferences are not likely to produce a financially satisfactory outcome (Kowske et al., 2010), the results of this study are salient enough for managers to consider approaches that consider the generational perspective. Offering provisions that mentor, support, and cultivate employees' needs related to purpose and engagement can make an impact on worker satisfaction within an organisation. Organisations that

prioritise job satisfaction provisions through a generational lens and cater to nuanced generational preferences will likely see significant organisational impacts.

Workers can also benefit from gaining an awareness of factors that comprise their own job satisfaction preferences as well as what interventions increase their job satisfaction. This information informs workers as to careers, positions and environments that align with those preferences. Workers can then take advantage of organisational opportunities and policies that align with their values. Workers with this insight can also request workplace provisions that foster development, leadership, flexibility and other employee activation options to increase their job satisfaction. Workers can also self-advocate by being willing to share their personal insights with management regarding needed support to maintain alignment with their personal goals and the goals of the organisation. Such information propels individual as well as organisational progress while also increasing feelings of autonomy, wellbeing, cooperation, and belonging.

7 Opportunities for future research

This work indicates a rich opportunity for future research on job satisfaction at the crossroads of gender and generations. Each individual component of either gender or generations has the potential to yield worthwhile insight. Investigations are needed that seek to better understand the shifting gap between women and men in the workplace regarding expectations, preferences and values, as are explorations towards generational differences in the same arena. However, taking inventory of these job satisfaction preferences from an intersectional approach addresses even more nuances within the dissection of generational inclinations and gender.

This study was conducted within a US framework, automatically applying generational differences with specific influences that may manifest differently within different country or global studies. Multiple country comparisons and global studies would contribute more discoveries regarding the evolution of preferences from gender and generational lenses. Future research from a gender or generational lens that includes historical and cultural components within specific countries or even specific demographics within the same country may yield additional findings regarding worker preferences and job satisfaction. Analysis conducted on these or additional demographic factors could unearth insights leading to more specific organisational recommendations and interventions towards employee job satisfaction.

Qualitative research aimed at investigating organisations where gender and generationally informed preferences have guided policy and customised interventions towards employee job satisfaction would provide powerful narratives from which to draw practical applications centered on lived experiences. Further examination into generational cohorts, particularly younger generations, such as gen Z, would yield much needed information as they continue to enter the workplace and interact with older generations. Investigating other factors such as COVID-19, changes in the economy, historical or political movements and other overarching influences in relation to how these outside influences shape preferences within each perspective would further this segment of research. Finally, research pointed both at the organisational level as well as the individual level offers promising insights in an area of research that has substantial potential for development.

8 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to better comprehend the differences in employee satisfaction related to worker preferences at the intersections of gender and generations. Research conducted via a survey of 500 US workers provided valuable findings indicating significant impacts on employee job satisfaction related to both gender and generational cohorts. Findings indicate that more traditionally researched elements of job satisfaction such as extrinsic and intrinsic rewards were somewhat upheld, while signposting some changes to the previously accepted dynamic. For instance, findings show that males experience higher job satisfaction than their female counterparts and that this gap is less pronounced amongst millennials and gen Z. In addition to traditional aspects of job satisfaction, employee activation factors were revealed as significant components of employee satisfaction, with both genders and generations narrowing in on specific elements of engagement and purpose in the workplace that enhanced their well-being and job satisfaction.

This research supports the need for interventions in the workplace that take gender and generational impacts into consideration when seeking to answer employee job satisfaction. This should be an integral part of a larger undertaking to promote individual worker well-being as well as the overall health and efficiency of the organisation. More research is also required to explore more nuances surrounding employee satisfaction as influenced by internal and external factors. Considerations within new areas of research include additional demographic components like multiple country comparisons, individual narratives as well as historical and other cultural investigations as they relate to the continuing evolution of employee satisfaction contributors. Application of these findings in an organisational setting entail a willingness to understand the nuances surrounding employee job satisfaction preferences and to offer curated solutions tailored to support male and female workers in varying generational cohorts. This willingness to be flexible, adaptive and responsive to the needs of their employees, enables organisations to evolve, align and thrive within a dynamic workplace environment where workers are more satisfied.

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