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Engagement Across Generations

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THE ROLE OF VALUE ALIGNMENT IN SHAPING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ACROSS GENERATIONS

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ABSTRACT:

This study examined the relationship between employees' personal work values, their alignment with organizational values, and their effects on employee engagement and turnover intention, with a focus on generational differences. Drawing on the Person-Environment Fit framework, the Job Demands-Resources model, and Self-Determination Theory, the study explored whether value alignment predicts engagement and turnover intention, and whether it mediates the relationship between the two. Data was collected via an online survey from 202 participants across various organizational contexts. Measures included the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), the Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6), and an adapted version of the Work Values Survey (WVS). Multiple linear regression and MANOVA were used for hypothesis testing. Results showed that engagement significantly predicted reduced turnover intention, confirming prior research. However, value alignment did not significantly predict engagement or turnover intention, nor did it mediate the relationship between them. Among work values, altruism, prestige, and pay were significantly associated with engagement. No significant generational differences in work values were found, likely due to sample imbalances. The findings suggest that specific work values may influence engagement more than general alignment and highlight the need for refined measurement approaches. Implications for retention strategies, as well as directions for future research on multilevel value alignment and generational diversity, are discussed.

KEYWORDS:

employee engagement, work values, value alignment, generational work values, turnover intention, retention strategies

JEL classification: M12, J28, J63

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Introduction

Employee engagement, defined as a “positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli, 2006, p. 702), plays a critical role in influencing both individual and organizational outcomes (Bailey et al., 2017, p. 40). Yet, despite its importance, a significant portion of the workforce remains disengaged. According to Gallup, a leading analytics and advisory firm specializing in workplace trends, employee engagement in the United States fell to its lowest level in a decade in 2024, with only 31% of employees classified as engaged (Harter, 2025). This disengagement carries considerable economic implications: Gallup (2024, p. 3) estimates that low employee engagement costs the global economy approximately 8.9 trillion U.S. dollars annually, equivalent to 9% of global gross domestic product. However, the consequences of low engagement extend beyond financial loss. Higher levels of engagement have been linked to improved organizational and team performance, increased organizational citizenship behaviors and innovative work behaviors, and a lower likelihood of deviant workplace behaviors (Andrew & Sofian, 2012, p. 505; Bailey et al., 2017, p. 40). Additionally, engaged employees report greater job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions (Andrew & Sofian, 2012, p. 505; Bailey et al., 2017, p. 42; Bakotić & Alvir, 2024, p. 300; Jo & Shin, 2025, p. 16; Saks, 2006, p. 611).

Despite these benefits, employee engagement has steadily declined, particularly among younger employees. Gallup’s most recent report identifies Generation Z as the generation most affected by low engagement, suggesting that this may relate to generational differences in work values and a lack of alignment between individual and organizational priorities (Harter, 2025). Work values are defined in this study as “*evaluative standards relating to work or the work environment by which individuals discern what is ‘right’ or assess the importance of preferences*” (Dose, 1997, pp. 227-228). Additionally, value alignment refers to the degree to which an employee perceives congruence between their personal work values and those promoted by their organization. Some research has suggested that perceived value alignment is positively associated with engagement (Halim et al., 2021, pp. 87-88), yet few studies have examined this relationship directly. Where such studies exist, they are often limited to single organizations (Khairunnisa & Lubis, 2024, p. 7217) or specific industries (Basinska & Dãderman, 2019, pp. 5-6; Coelho et al., 2023, p. 5), limiting the generalizability of their findings. Furthermore, current research tends to measure general, personal values rather than work-specific ones and often neglects to assess perceived alignment at all (Bakotić & Alvir, 2024, pp. 298-299; Busacca et al., 2010, pp. 6-7; Coelho et al., 2023, p. 5; Duong & Phan, 2024, p. 6).

Additionally, while many studies attempt to identify generational differences in work values, their conclusions are often ambiguous. Some research indicates that younger generations increasingly prioritize leisure, work-life balance, and vacation time compared to older generations (Twenge et al., 2010, pp. 1131-1133), yet the specific direction and extent of these differences remain unclear. This lack of clarity makes it difficult for organizations to design retention and engagement strategies that effectively account for generational diversity.

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining how employees’ personal work values, and their perceived alignment with organizational values, relate to employee engagement and turnover intention. Turnover intention in this context refers to the self-reported likelihood of voluntarily leaving one’s organization. The research also explores whether value alignment moderates or mediates the

relationship between engagement and turnover intention. Furthermore, it considers whether generational differences in work values exist, particularly concerning preferences for flexible working conditions. In simpler terms, this study investigates whether employees are more engaged and less likely to consider leaving their organization when their values align with those of the organization, and whether this dynamic varies across generations.

To accomplish these goals, this study aims to

1. identify key work-related values across different generations and examine their perceived relevance in the workplace;
2. assess the extent to which value alignment between employees and organizations influences engagement across generational cohorts;
3. explore whether value alignment can serve as a predictor of turnover intention; and
4. test whether value alignment mediates or moderates the relationship between engagement and turnover intention.

These questions are explored through the lens of the Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit) Theory, which proposes that congruence between an individual and their work environment enhances outcomes such as satisfaction, engagement, and retention. The specific research questions guiding this study are:

- How do personal and organizational work values and their alignment relate to employee engagement?
- Are there significant generational differences in work values, particularly regarding flexible working conditions?
- To what extent do engagement and work value alignment predict employees' turnover intention?
- Does value alignment mediate the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention?

By investigating these issues, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how value alignment, work values, and generational perspectives relate to employee engagement and turnover intention. In doing so, it offers insights for improving organizational strategies aimed at boosting engagement and retention across a diverse workforce.

To address the research questions guiding this study, the paper begins with a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. First, employee engagement is defined, and attention is given to its determinants, outcomes, and potential strategies for improvement. The next section focuses on work values, highlighting their relevance for individuals and organizations. Next, the discussion presents Person-Environment (P-E) Fit Theories as a framework for understanding value alignment and its implications for organizations, followed by an examination of generational differences in work-related values. The fourth section addresses employee turnover and the distinction between actual turnover and turnover intention, a review of their determinants, and a summary of effective retention strategies. After outlining the study's hypotheses, the methodology chapter describes the instruments used to assess engagement, value alignment, and turnover intention, as well as the procedures for data collection. This is followed by a description of the data analysis process, along with an overview of the research sample and its characteristics. The results chapter presents descriptive and inferential statistics for each hypothesis and offers a visual summary of key outcomes. The discussion chapter

interprets the results in light of existing research and addresses both theoretical and practical implications, while also discussing study limitations and recommendations for future research. Finally, the paper concludes by summarizing the study's key contributions.

Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the study's research questions and hypotheses, providing the theoretical and empirical foundation for the analysis. It begins with employee engagement, examining its determinants, outcomes, and strategies for enhancement, followed by a discussion of work values and value alignment through the lens of P-E Fit Theories and generational differences in work-related values. Finally, the chapter considers employee turnover, distinguishing between actual turnover and turnover intention, and summarizes the key factors and evidence-based strategies relevant to retention.

UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: ANTECEDENTS, OUTCOMES, AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Employee engagement has emerged as a critical concept in organizational psychology, capturing the attention of both researchers and practitioners due to its strong links to employee performance, well-being, and retention (Bailey et al., 2017, pp. 40-43). While there are various definitions of employee engagement, this study adopts the Utrecht Group's definition of engagement as a "*positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption*" (Schaufeli, 2006, p. 702). In this framework, engagement extends beyond a moment of excitement or focus on a specific task or situation. Rather, it represents a sustained psychological state characterized by consistent mental and emotional involvement in one's activities, regardless of the context. According to this approach, a key characteristic of work engagement is *vigor*, which is defined by high levels of energy and mental resilience during work performance, accompanied by a strong willingness to invest effort and persist despite challenges (Schaufeli, 2006, p. 702). Another characteristic is **dedication** which reflects deep engagement with one's work, marked by feelings of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and a sense of challenge. The third aspect of work engagement is **absorption**, which refers to a state of complete concentration and immersion in tasks, while time passes rapidly and detaching from work becomes difficult. Schaufeli (2006, p. 702) assumes that vigor and dedication are considered the direct opposites of exhaustion and cynicism, which are both indicators of disengagement. Bailey et al. (2017, p. 34) identified the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli et al., 2002, pp. 72-92) and their validated translations and variations as the most used scale to assess employee engagement.

There is extensive research on determinants of employee engagement, which Bailey et al. (2017, pp. 37-39) categorize into five groups: individual psychological states, job design factors, leadership and management, organizational and team perceptions, and organizational interventions. Individual-level factors such as self-efficacy, resilience, personal strengths, positive emotions, empowerment, and job satisfaction have been positively linked to engagement, whereas burnout lowers it (Bailey et al., 2017, p. 38; Bakotić & Alvir, 2024, pp. 299-301; Basinska & Dąderman, 2019, pp. 8-9; Jo & Shin, 2025, p. 16; Ugwu et al., 2014, pp. 387-388). Personal values and their alignment with organizational values also

play a role, although the specific values that drive engagement remain ambiguous. However, there are indicators that intrinsic values such as creativity, variety, altruism, challenge, and achievement have a stronger impact (Bakotić & Alvir, 2024, pp. 300-301; Basinska & Dåderman, 2019, pp. 8-9; Duong & Phan, 2024, p. 9; Schreurs et al., 2014, p. 9). Beyond individual factors, job resources, autonomy, and meaningful job characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, and task significance promote engagement, while role conflict undermines it (Bailey et al., 2017, pp. 38–39; Saks, 2006, pp. 609–611). Leadership approaches are equally important, with transformational and supportive leadership enhancing engagement, while dysfunctional leadership behaviors reduce it (Bailey et al., 2017, p. 39; Popli & Rizvi, 2016, pp. 972–974; Rose et al., 2015, p. 84). Finally, organizational and team factors, including support, fairness, positive employee–organization relationships, and interventions such as training or mindfulness, also influence engagement, though their effectiveness depends on organizational context and implementation (Andrew & Sofian, 2012, p. 504; Bailey et al., 2017, p. 39; Kang & Sung, 2019, p. 14; Liu et al., 2020, pp. 3–5).

Employee engagement is strongly associated with positive outcomes at both the individual and organizational levels. Research shows that engaged employees and teams perform better, enhance customer loyalty, and improve service quality (Bailey et al., 2017, pp. 40–41). At the individual level, engagement is positively related to in-role performance, extra-role behaviors, organizational citizenship behaviors, innovative work behavior, and knowledge sharing, while negatively related to counterproductive work behaviors (Andrew & Sofian, 2012, p. 505; Bailey et al., 2017, p. 40). Engagement also supports adaptive behaviors that help employees respond effectively to workplace demands (Bailey et al., 2017, p. 40). In addition to performance outcomes, engagement benefits employee morale: engaged employees report higher well-being, life satisfaction, and psychological health, as well as lower levels of stress and burnout (Bailey et al., 2017, p. 40). Engagement is further linked to work-related attitudes, including stronger organizational commitment, higher job satisfaction, and lower turnover intentions, suggesting its central role in workforce retention (Andrew & Sofian, 2012, p. 505; Bailey et al., 2017, pp. 40–42; Bakotić & Alvir, 2024, p. 300; Jo & Shin, 2025, p. 16; Saks, 2006, p. 611). Overall, evidence indicates that engagement fosters both superior performance and improved employee well-being, while disengagement poses risks to organizational outcomes, including financial losses (Gallup, 2024, pp. 2, 34). For organizations, this highlights the importance of prioritizing employee engagement strategies, as doing so not only enhances productivity and retention but also builds resilience and long-term organizational success (Andrew & Sofian, 2012, p. 505; Bailey et al., 2017, p. 43; Saks, 2006, p. 611). Having outlined employee engagement, its antecedents, outcomes, and organizational implications, the next chapter focuses on work values and their potential role in shaping engagement.

WORK VALUES AND VALUE ALIGNMENT

Before examining specific work-related values, it is important to first establish a general understanding of the broader concept of values. Values play a fundamental role in shaping human behavior, guiding decision-making, and influencing attitudes across life domains, including the workplace. Values possess several key characteristics that distinguish them as a significant aspect of human cognition and behavior (Schwartz, 2012, pp. 3-4). First, values are inherently beliefs that are deeply connected to affect. For instance, individuals who prioritize values such as tradition and conservation may

experience emotional arousal, such as distress when these values are threatened, and a sense of happiness or fulfillment when these values are upheld. Second, values are oriented toward desirable goals, serving as motivational drivers that inspire individuals to take action and influence their behavior (Schwartz, 2012, pp. 3-4). For example, individuals who place high importance on power and achievement may be motivated to pursue activities or roles that help them attain these objectives. Third, values extend beyond specific actions or situations (Schwartz, 2012, pp. 3-4). For example, values like benevolence are applicable across various contexts, including personal, educational, and professional settings. This universality distinguishes values from context-specific constructs, such as attitudes or social norms, which are typically tied to particular situations or objects. Additionally, values function as standards or criteria that guide decision-making and evaluation (Schwartz, 2012, pp. 3-4). They influence how people assess actions, policies, individuals, and events by determining what aligns with their principles without individuals being conscious of that influence. While the influence of values on decision-making may not always be conscious, individuals become aware of these values when decisions involve conflicting implications for different important values. Another critical feature of values is their hierarchical organization (Schwartz, 2012, pp. 3-4). Individuals prioritize values relative to one another, forming a unique system of ranked importance that characterizes their identity. This hierarchical structure also differentiates values from norms and attitudes.

Finally, the relative importance of multiple values shapes attitudes and behaviors. Since most actions have implications for more than one value, individuals often make trade-offs between competing values (Schwartz, 2012, pp. 3-4). For example, participating in volunteer work may reflect and support values such as altruism and social responsibility, while potentially conflicting with values like hedonism or stimulation. These compromises highlight how values influence behavior, particularly when they are contextually relevant and personally significant (Schwartz, 1992, pp. 3-4). Therefore, values act as both motivators and standards, shaping actions in alignment with what individuals consider meaningful.

Work values are “*evaluative standards relating to work or the work environment by which individuals discern what is ‘right’ or assess the importance of preferences*” (Dose, 1997, pp. 227-228). Dose (1997, pp. 227-228) proposes that work values differ along two key dimensions:

1. whether they incorporate a moral component, and
2. the level of social consensus regarding their importance or desirability.

The moral element reflects societal norms about what is considered right or wrong. According to Dose (1997, p. 22), values would only represent personal preferences without this element. Additionally, due to varying degrees of social consensus, some values are more individually held, while others are shaped by broader societal agreement. Work values play a fundamental role in shaping employees’ motivation, behaviors, and overall well-being. They are commonly separated into intrinsic and extrinsic work values. This classification stems from the theoretical framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which emphasizes the different psychological outcomes associated with the pursuit of internal versus external goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000, as cited in Schreurs et al., 2014, p. 1).

Intrinsic work values are associated with internal satisfaction and psychological fulfillment derived directly from the work itself (Basinska & Dåderman, 2019, p. 2). These values involve experiences such as personal development, recognition, meaningful interactions, and the opportunity to contribute to a greater good. According to Basinska and Dåderman (2019, p. 2), intrinsic values are tied to intangible

rewards such as professional growth, mastery, and thriving in one's role. Similarly, Vansteenkiste et al. (2007, p. 253) describe an intrinsic work value orientation as one that reflects the individual's inherent drive to realize their potential, establish authentic and satisfying connections with others, and engage in prosocial behavior through work. For instance, an employee with strong intrinsic values may be drawn to roles that offer autonomy, encourage creativity, or involve helping others.

Conversely, extrinsic work values are centered on tangible rewards and the economic utility of employment (Basinska & Dåderman, 2019, p. 2). These include outcomes like financial compensation, social recognition, job stability, and professional status. Vansteenkiste et al. (2007, p. 253) further emphasize that individuals driven by extrinsic values often seek to distinguish themselves through prestige and external validation. Their work-related efforts are motivated less by the task itself and more by the external rewards it brings, such as climbing the career ladder or acquiring material wealth. For example, someone focused on extrinsic values might prioritize job offers that offer high salaries or prestige, even at the expense of personal interest or fulfillment.

Although these categories are conceptually distinct, they are not mutually exclusive. Many employees hold both intrinsic and extrinsic values simultaneously, and the two orientations may influence one another depending on the context. In some cases, work values exhibit characteristics of both intrinsic and extrinsic orientations. For instance, autonomy is often considered both an intrinsic and extrinsic motivator, as it fulfills a psychological need and can also signal professional status (Basinska & Dåderman, 2019, p. 3). Similarly, achievement is typically more aligned with intrinsic motivation, yet it can involve extrinsic recognition as well.

SDT posits that prioritizing intrinsic values over extrinsic ones generally leads to more adaptive psychological outcomes. This means that when individuals are guided by values such as personal growth, meaningful relationships, and community contribution, rather than by external rewards like wealth, fame, or image, they are more likely to experience greater well-being, motivation, and engagement. Schreurs et al. (2014, pp. 2-3) argue that while pursuing extrinsic goals is not inherently harmful, it may undermine well-being if it overshadows intrinsic aspirations. Empirical findings support this view: individuals who place high importance on intrinsic goals while de-emphasizing extrinsic ones report higher levels of positive affect, self-esteem, and life satisfaction (Leke et al., 2012, p. 254). In the workplace, the dominance of extrinsic values over intrinsic ones has been linked to lower job and life satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and burnout (Basinska & Dåderman, 2019, pp. 9-10; Roche & Haar, 2013, p. 523, Vansteenkiste et al., 2007, pp. 260-267). Additionally, employees with a strong extrinsic orientation have been found to experience more work-family conflict and to be more inclined to leave their organizations (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007, p. 267). Understanding the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic values offers valuable insights into employee motivation and well-being. While both types of values coexist and can influence behavior, an overemphasis on extrinsic rewards at the cost of intrinsic fulfillment appears to be associated with adverse outcomes. Organizations aiming to foster sustainable engagement and satisfaction among employees should therefore consider ways to support intrinsic motivations, such as autonomy, growth, and meaning, alongside the more traditional extrinsic incentives.

Cable and Edwards (2004, pp. 825-826) extended Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values to the organizational context by aligning it with their own work values framework. While Schwartz's

circumplex model captures broad, universal values across cultures, some of its dimensions, such as a spiritual life or honoring parents and elders are not directly applicable in workplace settings. Recognizing this, Edwards and Cable maintained the theoretical structure of Schwartz's model, particularly its two central axes of openness to change versus conservation and self-enhancement versus self-transcendence but adapted it for relevance in organizational research. They used Schwartz's empirically derived value clusters as a foundation and applied domain sampling procedures to develop eight core work values: altruism, relationships, pay, security, authority, prestige, variety, and autonomy (see Table 1).

To support later analyses, the work values proposed by Cable and Edwards (2004, p. 834) were grouped as either intrinsic or extrinsic based on Schwartz's Theory of Basic Values. According to Sagiv and Schwartz (2000, p. 182), intrinsic values (e.g., universalism, benevolence, stimulation, self-direction) reflect growth-oriented motivations and psychological needs. In contrast, extrinsic values (e.g., achievement, power) are associated with self-enhancement and external rewards. This categorization enables clearer interpretation of value alignment patterns in the context of employee motivation and retention.

Tab. 1: Aligning Schwartz's (1992) Theory of Basic Values with Cable & Edwards' (2004) Work Values Framework

Schwartz's conceptual dimension	Schwartz's universal values	Cable and Edward's Work value dimensions	Type
Self-transcendence	Universalism	Altruism	INT
	Benevolence	Relationships with others	INT
Self-enhancement	Achievement/hedonism	Pay	EXT
	Power	Prestige	EXT
Conservation	Security	Security	
	Conformity/tradition	Authority	
Openness to change	Stimulation	Variety	INT
	Self-direction	Autonomy	INT

Source: Adapted from: Cable and Edwards, 2004, p. 834. *Note.* Work values were categorized as intrinsic (INT) or extrinsic (EXT) based on Sagiv and Schwartz (2000). Intrinsic values reflect growth-oriented motivations and psychological needs; extrinsic values reflect externally regulated or status-driven goals.

Understanding work values provides a foundation for examining how individual priorities interact with organizational characteristics. This interaction becomes particularly relevant when considering the degree of alignment between what employees value and what their work environment offers. P-E Fit theories offer a foundational framework for understanding how the alignment between individuals and their work environment impacts psychological and organizational outcomes. These models suggest that discrepancies between a person's characteristics and environmental attributes may generate stress and reduce well-being, while alignment, or fit, can promote satisfaction and performance (Edwards et al., 1998, pp. 28-67). Across various theoretical approaches, P-E Fit emphasizes the importance of compatibility, while the definition of fit differs depending on the focus of analysis. The model developed by Edwards et al. (1998, pp. 28-67) differentiates between two essential types of fit. The first concerns the alignment between an individual's skills and abilities and the demands of the job. Mismatches in this area can result in overqualification or underqualification, potentially leading to frustration, disengagement, or underperformance. The second type addresses the congruence between what the job offers, such as growth opportunities or intrinsic rewards, and the needs and

aspirations of the individual. When these needs remain unmet, individuals may feel unfulfilled or disengaged. Additionally, Edwards et al. (1998, pp. 28-67) highlight the distinction between objective fit, which refers to measurable congruence between personal and job characteristics, and subjective fit, which captures the individual's perception of how well they align with their environment. This subjective interpretation is particularly relevant for understanding the psychological experience of value congruence.

Kristof's (1996, pp. 1-49) framework of P-E Fit introduces four dimensions of fit: Person-Organization, Person-Job, Person-Group, and Person-Person fit. Among these, Person-Organization fit is most directly related to value congruence, as it captures the alignment between an individual's values and those promoted by the organization (Kristof, 1996, pp. 4-5). A strong Person-Organization fit exists when individuals and organizations share similar values or when one satisfies the essential needs of the other. In such cases, employees are more likely to identify with the organization, experience a sense of belonging, and demonstrate greater commitment. This supports the notion that value congruence is not simply a desirable characteristic, but a significant factor influencing organizational and individual outcomes. The other dimensions of fit, such as Person-Group and Person-Person, are also relevant, particularly in team-based or collaborative settings, where compatibility among members can influence team dynamics and the quality of interpersonal relationships (Kristof, 1996, pp. 7-9).

Combined, these models underscore the critical role of value congruence within P-E Fit frameworks and potential consequences of misalignment. This raises the question of how value congruence manifests within organizational settings and what practical implications it holds for recruitment, employee engagement, and overall organizational performance. Research indicates that when employees perceive congruence between their personal values and those of their team, supervisor, or organization, they report higher levels of satisfaction, commitment, and engagement (Schreurs et al., 2014, pp. 8-11). Misalignment, by contrast, increases turnover intentions (Chapman et al., 2005, p. 950; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, pp. 310-315). Value congruence also influences collective outcomes, as shared intrinsic values within teams foster supportive environments that reinforce motivation and engagement, while organizational culture and leadership further shape these dynamics (Schreurs et al., 2014, pp. 8-11). Empirical findings confirm that alignment is positively related to commitment and engagement across contexts, emphasizing the importance of fostering an organizational culture that supports employees' core values (Halim et al., 2021, pp. 87-88).

Cross-cultural studies illustrate the significance of different value dimensions. For example, research on Brazilian teachers highlighted belonging, support, and normative values such as obedience and tradition as strong predictors of engagement (Coelho et al., 2023, pp. 7-11). In high-stress professions such as policing, intrinsic values, including creativity, variety, altruism, achievement, and challenge, show stronger correlations with engagement compared to extrinsic values like job security or supervision, which display weaker or non-significant associations (Basinska & Dåderman, 2019, p. 8). These findings suggest that intrinsic values are particularly influential in sustaining meaningful employee involvement.

Beyond engagement, value congruence extends to change readiness. Employees who perceive alignment with their organization, supervisor, or workgroup experience a stronger sense of belonging, which enhances adaptability to organizational change (Deng et al., 2023, pp. 5-7). The quality of change

communication further strengthens this relationship, although supervisor alignment remains influential regardless of communication effectiveness (Deng et al., 2023, pp. 5-7). Similarly, value congruence with the broader organization predicts stronger behavioral support for change initiatives, whereas alignment with smaller units is less consistently related to change support (Lamm et al., 2010, pp. 58-59).

In summary, value congruence is a key determinant of employee engagement, commitment, and change readiness. Intrinsic values play a particularly critical role in promoting well-being and sustained engagement, while alignment between personal and organizational values fosters loyalty and adaptability. These findings underscore the importance of cultivating an organizational culture that reflects employees' core values in order to support both individual motivation and long-term organizational success.

Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Employees whose personal work values align closely with their organization's values will exhibit higher levels of engagement compared to employees experiencing misalignment.

H2: Intrinsic work values (altruism, relationships with others, variety, and autonomy) will have a stronger positive relationship with employee engagement than extrinsic work values (pay, prestige).

As values are often influenced by broader social and cultural contexts, the next chapter explores potential generational differences in work values to better understand how shared experiences may contribute to varying expectations in the workplace.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN WORK-RELATED VALUES

Research on generational differences in work values reveals patterns across Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y (Millennials), and Generation Z. These patterns include preferences for leisure, extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, altruism, social interactions, and workplace flexibility, with some findings indicating stability for these preferences and others suggesting shifting priorities over time. Studies suggest that younger generations, particularly Millennials, increasingly prioritize leisure in their work lives. Compared to Baby Boomers and Generation X, Millennials emphasize vacation time, minimizing overtime, and maintaining work-life balance to a greater extent (Twenge et al., 2010, pp. 1131-1133). Similarly, Generation Z considers work-life balance a crucial factor, alongside flexibility, teamwork, and innovation, in shaping their workplace preferences (Žuromskait-Nagaj, pp. 673-677). Their rejection of the hustle culture embraced by previous generations and their emphasis on mental health further highlights this shift (Revuru & Bandaru, 2024, pp. 461-463).

Extrinsic rewards, such as salary and job security, also show generational differences in work values. Generation X places the highest importance on financial compensation and prestige, while Millennials rank extrinsic rewards slightly lower than Generation X (Schullery, 2013, pp. 260-261; Twenge et al., 2010, pp. 1131-1133). Meanwhile, Generation Z considers fair pay essential but also seeks authenticity, transparency, and ethical leadership in organizations, aligning compensation expectations with broader workplace values (Revuru & Bandaru, 2024, pp. 461-463).

Regarding intrinsic rewards, Baby Boomers tend to prioritize meaningful and challenging work more than younger generations (Schullery, 2013, pp. 260-261). In contrast, Millennials place less emphasis on

finding personal fulfillment in their jobs (Twenge et al., 2010, pp. 1131-1133). However, other studies suggest that Generation Z emphasizes purpose-driven work and professional development opportunities (Revuru & Bandaru, 2024, pp. 461-463).

Altruistic values, particularly the opportunity to help others through work, show stability across generations. No significant generational differences have been observed in how status and altruism are valued, though Generation X places a slightly higher emphasis on both compared to previous generations (Kinger & Kumar, 2023, pp. 217-218). Other studies find that Generation Z demonstrates an interest in social responsibility and ethical organizational practices, particularly among male employees, who link job satisfaction to these aspects (Žuromskait-Nagaj, pp. 673-677).

Social rewards, such as workplace interactions and relationships, show a declining trend in importance across generations. Millennials value these rewards less than Baby Boomers (Schullery, 2013, pp. 260-261), and Generation Z further place less emphasis on them, instead prioritizing team efficiency and pragmatic collaboration over emotional support (Žuromskait-Nagaj, pp. 673-677). However, gender differences within Generation Z suggest that women value structured work environments, strong mentorship, and emotional support, whereas men focus more on professional flexibility and efficiency (Žuromskait-Nagaj, pp. 673-677). These findings indicate that while generational trends exist, individual differences based on demographic factors also play a crucial role in shaping work values.

Workplace flexibility emerges as a central theme for younger generations, particularly Millennials and Generation Z. Millennials prefer workplaces that provide autonomy, opportunities for creativity, and clear managerial support (Frye et al., 2020, pp. 5-8). Internal marketing strategies, such as participative decision-making and empowering employees, significantly enhance job satisfaction and commitment among Millennials in industries like hospitality (Frye et al., 2020, pp. 5-8). Similarly, Generation Z expects organizations to offer flexible work arrangements, emphasizing the need for employers to adapt working conditions to retain young talent (Žuromskait-Nagaj, pp. 673-677). Generation Z places significant importance on hybrid and remote work arrangements, viewing them as essential for achieving a healthy work-life balance, optimizing productivity, and fostering professional growth (Oserio & Madero, 2025, p. 83-86). This preference for flexibility reflects a broader shift toward valuing autonomy and digital connectivity in the workplace.

Overall, generational differences in work values illustrate a shift from traditional models emphasizing commitment and intrinsic fulfillment to contemporary expectations prioritizing work-life balance, flexibility, and ethical leadership. While Baby Boomers maintain a strong focus on intrinsic rewards, Generation X favors extrinsic rewards, Millennials emphasize leisure, and Generation Z seeks a balance between purpose-driven work and workplace flexibility. Organizations aiming to attract and retain talent must consider these evolving values, implementing tailored strategies that address both generational preferences and individual variations within each cohort.

Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Work values differ significantly across generations.

Although numerous studies identify generational patterns in preferences for intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, leisure, altruism, social interaction, and flexibility, the direction and magnitude of these differences vary across contexts and studies. Due to this mixed evidence, this hypothesis does not

predict specific directions but instead assumes that meaningful differences exist in work values across generational cohorts.

H4: Younger generations value flexible working conditions more highly than older generations.

This hypothesis is grounded in consistent findings that Millennials and Generation Z prioritize autonomy, remote work, and hybrid models more than older cohorts. For these younger generations, flexibility is closely linked to job satisfaction, well-being, and long-term retention.

One important implication for organizations that emerged in previous chapters, but has not yet been explored in depth, is employee turnover as a potential consequence of employee engagement and value alignment. Low employee engagement and a misalignment between individual and organizational values are often associated with increased turnover, while high engagement and strong value alignment tend to contribute to employee retention. In practice, high turnover is commonly evaluated as a negative outcome, suggesting organizational issues such as poor fit, dissatisfaction, or lack of support. Conversely, low turnover is generally seen as a positive indicator of a stable and committed workforce. Given the significant financial and operational costs associated with high turnover rates, understanding this dynamic is essential for effective workforce management. The following chapter therefore examines the concept of turnover in greater detail, identifying key determinants of employee turnover, and outlining strategies organizations can implement to improve retention.

TURNOVER AND TURNOVER INTENTION

To understand employee turnover, it is important to first distinguish its different forms. There are two primary types of employee turnover: voluntary and involuntary turnover. Voluntary turnover occurs when employees decide to leave an organization for personal reasons or for dissatisfaction with their current role. Key drivers of voluntary turnover include job dissatisfaction, low employee engagement, availability of more attractive opportunities elsewhere, and personal circumstances (Aziz et al., 2019, pp. 1326-1329; Lubis et al., 2024, pp. 1035-1042). This type of turnover can have substantial implications for organizations, including increased recruitment and training costs, disruption of workflows, service delivery, and overall organizational performance. On the other hand, involuntary turnover occurs when an organization terminates an employee's contract due to factors such as downsizing, layoffs, or performance-related issues. Similar to voluntary turnover, involuntary turnover has organizational consequences. It can negatively impact employee morale, create uncertainty among the remaining staff, and lead to the loss of institutional knowledge. For this study, the focus is on voluntary turnover, which will henceforth be referred to simply as turnover.

Turnover intention, defined as the extent to which an employee considers leaving their job, is widely used as a predictor of actual turnover due to its theoretical and practical advantages (Bolt et al., 2022, pp. 566-568; Cohen et al., 2016, p. 3; Harrison et al., 2006, pp. 314-316). Empirical findings show that its predictive power varies across contexts, with some studies reporting strong correlations in stable environments (Cho & Lewis, 2012, p. 11; Aziz et al., 2019, pp. 1328-329) and others indicating a weaker relationship influenced by external opportunities and organizational factors (Sun & Wang, 2017, pp. 12-14; Cohen et al., 2016, pp. 15-17). Despite this variability, turnover intention provides a practical and cost-effective measure for assessing employees' likelihood of leaving when tracking actual turnover is

difficult (Cohen et al., 2016, p. 3). Consequently, while useful, turnover intention should be interpreted cautiously, as it does not capture the full complexity of employee retention and departure decisions (Bolt et al., 2022, pp. 566-568).

Employee turnover is influenced by organizational, psychological, and individual factors, with employee engagement emerging as a critical predictor of retention (Kang & Sung, 2019, p. 17; McCarthy et al., 2020, pp. 1–11; Rafiq et al., 2019, pp. 621–623; Xiaolong et al., 2023, pp. 1001-1013). Organizational factors such as leadership style, workplace culture, compensation, and internal communication shape turnover intentions, with transformational leadership and perceived fairness reducing the likelihood of employees leaving (Chapman et al., 2005, p. 950; Kang & Sung, 2019, pp. 16-17; Lubis et al., 2024, p. 431; Rombaut & Guerry, 2021, p. 93; Sun & Wang, 2017, p. 215). Psychological factors, including work engagement, trust, and work-life balance, further influence retention by enhancing commitment, job satisfaction, and readiness to remain with the organization (Lubis et al., 2024, p. 431; Rafiq et al., 2019, pp. 621–623; Sari et al., 2017, p. 78). Individual characteristics such as age, tenure, family status, and cultural background also affect turnover intentions, highlighting the need for organizations to adopt comprehensive engagement strategies that address both organizational practices and employee needs (Cho & Lewis, 2012, p. 145; Hur, 2024, pp. 102, 108; Rombaut & Guerry, 2021, p. 95; Sari et al., 2017, p. 78).

Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Higher levels of employee engagement will predict lower turnover intention.

H6: Greater alignment between employees' personal work values and organizational values will predict lower turnover intention.

While employee engagement has consistently emerged as a strong predictor of turnover intention, emerging evidence suggests that this relationship may be influenced by additional factors. One such factor may be the alignment between individual and organizational values. Although the concept of organizational values and value congruence has received increasing attention, many existing studies rely on value assessments that are not tailored to the workplace context. Furthermore, the degree to which personal and organizational values align is often overlooked in empirical research. This study therefore aims to examine the influence of value alignment on turnover intention and explore whether value alignment mediates the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H7: Work value alignment mediates the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention. Specifically:

H7a: The negative effect of employee engagement on turnover intention will be partially explained by higher levels of work value alignment.

H7b: When work value alignment is low, the predictive effect of employee engagement on turnover intention will be weaker.

In addition, the study investigates potential generational differences in work values to better understand how values may vary across age groups. The following chapter presents the methodology used to examine these hypotheses.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to investigate the study's hypotheses by presenting the measures used to assess employee engagement, work value alignment, and turnover intention. Following this, the data collection procedures are described, including the participant recruitment strategy and ethical considerations. The chapter then details the data analysis approach and provides an overview of the research sample and its characteristics to give perspective on the results presented in the next chapter

MEASURES

Employee engagement was measured through the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale-9 (UWES-9), a shortened version of the original UWES, designed to measure employee engagement across three key dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2006, pp. 707-708). The UWES-9 utilizes a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always/every day). The three dimensions together provide a comprehensive measure of work engagement, capturing the energetic, emotional, and cognitive aspects of an employee's experience in the workplace. The UWES-9 has demonstrated strong reliability ($\alpha = .93$) with high internal consistency and good test-retest reliability (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 21). Additionally, the scale has been validated across various populations, showing strong construct validity, making it a widely accepted and reliable tool for measuring work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 708).

As discussed previously, studies investigating the relationship between work values and employee engagement often measure general personal values rather than workplace-specific values and their perceived alignment with organizational values (Busacca et al., 2010, pp. 6-7; Coelho et al., 2023, p. 5; Duong & Phan, 2024, p. 6). This approach is problematic since some general values do not apply to the workplace and neglecting to assess the perceived organizational work values limits the ability to assess value congruence and its impact on employee attitudes and behavior. To address this gap, this study utilizes a work-specific survey that assesses both individual values and respondents' perceptions of their organization's values, enabling a direct evaluation of perceived alignment.

The Work Values Survey (WVS), developed by Edwards and Cable (2002, as cited in Cable & Edwards, 2004, p. 825) is based on the circumplex model of human values proposed by Schwartz (1992, pp. 3-12). This model differentiates values along two main dimensions: openness to change vs. conservation and self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence. To adapt Schwartz's framework to the workplace context, Edwards and Cable (2002, as cited in Cable & Edwards, 2004, p. 825) identified eight core work values: altruism, relationships, pay, security, authority, prestige, variety, and autonomy. Each value is measured using a three-item scale, which has been validated in previous research. The WVS uses a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (extremely important). The scale demonstrates strong reliability ($\alpha = .82$), indicating consistent internal measurement (Cable & Edwards, 2004, p. 825). Additionally, the model fit indices confirm its robustness with the comparative fit index of .93, suggesting a good model fit, and a root mean square error of approximation of .07, which falls within an acceptable range for model fit. These results imply that the scale effectively captures the intended value constructs with both internal consistency and a well-fitting measurement model.

The WVS is used to measure value congruence by comparing individual values (the importance of a value to the person) with perceived organizational values (the importance of the same value within the organization) (O'Reilly et al, 1989, p. 494). In the original WVS framework, respondents also evaluate personal psychological needs and organizational supplies, reflecting the desired and actual presence of these values at work (Cable & Edwards, 2004, pp. 825-826). For the purpose of this study, the assessment of psychological needs and organizational supplies was not included to reduce survey completion time and maintain the focus on value congruence. Therefore, only individual values and organizational values were measured. Since the WVS is not publicly available, one of its original developers was contacted. Professor Cable granted permission to use the instrument for this study and also provided guidance on the appropriate procedures for scoring the items.

Turnover intention was measured using the Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6), a shortened version of the original 15-item scale (Bothma & Roodt, 2013, pp. 1-12). The TIS-6 is a six-item instrument designed to assess an employee's desire and likelihood to leave their current organization. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with higher total scores indicating stronger intentions to leave. The scale has demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$) and construct validity in previous studies and is widely used in organizational research (Bothma & Roodt, 2013, p. 6). Since the Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6) is not openly accessible, permission to use the instrument was obtained from Professor Roodt. Now that the instruments used to measure employee engagement, work value alignment, and turnover intention have been outlined, the next chapter outlines the data collection process and the structure of the online survey.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES AND OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

The survey was administered online using LimeSurvey, allowing anyone with access to the link to participate. To ensure required data was collected, all questions were mandatory, meaning participants could only submit the survey after providing responses to every item. This study adhered to ethical research standards in accordance with the guidelines set by IU International University of Applied Sciences. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. To guarantee anonymity, no information that could link responses to individual participants was collected.

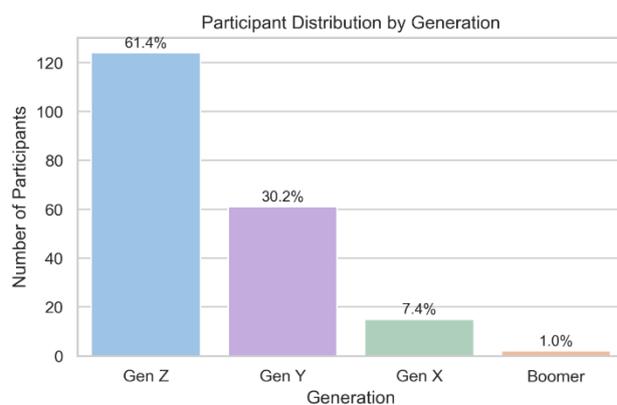
Participants were recruited through a combination of convenience and voluntary sampling methods, including sharing the survey link on social media platforms such as Instagram, direct outreach to friends and family, and posting the study on survey exchange platforms like SurveySwap and SurveyCircle, where users complete each other's surveys to earn participation credits which they can later use to recruit participants for their own research. To ensure data quality, an attention check item was included near the end of the survey, embedded among the TIS-6 items. This item instructed participants to select Often to demonstrate attentiveness, helping to identify and exclude inattentive respondents from the final sample.

The survey followed a structured format. First, participants completed the UWES-9 to measure their level of work engagement. Next, the WVS was administered in two sections: participants first rated the importance of various work values to themselves, followed by an assessment of the values they

perceived in their organization. Following this, the TIS-6 was used to evaluate participants' commitment to remaining with their employer. The final section of the survey collected demographic and general information. Demographic and general information was collected in the last step of the survey.

Participants represented a range of generational backgrounds, with 61.4% identifying as Generation Z, followed by 30.2% from Generation Y, 7.4% from Generation X, and 1% from the Baby Boomer generation. This distribution is illustrated in Figure 1, which displays the number of participants per generation alongside the corresponding percentages.

Fig. 1: Participant Distribution by Generation



Source: Own results.

The gender distribution was 55% female, 39% male, 5% non-binary, and 1% other. Regarding education, nearly half of the participants held a Bachelor's degree (45%), followed by Master's degrees (27%), high school diplomas (15%), associate degrees (6%), and doctorates (3%). One participant reported an other form of education.

Participants were employed across diverse industries. The largest segments worked in Other (18%), Finance (16%), Education (14%), Technology (14%), and Healthcare (13%). Smaller groups were employed in Retail (11%), Government (6%), Construction (3%), Nonprofit (3%), and Manufacturing (2%).

Most participants were employed full-time (68%), while others worked part-time (23%), were self-employed (5%), or worked on a contract/temporary basis (4%). Work environments varied, with 54% working onsite, and equal proportions (23%) working remotely or in a hybrid setting. Job levels were diverse, with 31% identifying as mid-level employees, 25% as entry-level or junior employees, 12% as interns or trainees, and 11% as senior employees. Others held positions as team leads or supervisors (7%), managers (5%), senior managers or directors (4%), or executives (3%). Four participants selected other.

The sample included participants from organizations of varying sizes: 30% were employed in small organizations with fewer than 50 employees, 27% in medium-sized organizations with 50 to 199 employees, 14% in large organizations with 200 to 999 employees, and 29% in very large organizations with 1,000 or more employees.

A PRIORI POWER AND DATA ANALYSIS

Ensuring an adequate sample size is essential for achieving sufficient statistical power to detect hypothesized effects and minimize the risk of Type II errors, which occur when real effects go undetected. Therefore, a series of a priori power analyses were conducted using G*Power version 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2007) to estimate the minimum number of participants required for testing each hypothesis. These calculations were conducted for each hypothesis and were based on effect sizes reported in previous empirical studies that examined constructs closely related to the present research questions. The a priori power analyses confirmed that the sample size ($N = 202$) was adequate for testing the study's hypotheses, based on effect sizes reported in prior research. However, since the hypotheses regarding the potential mediating effect of work value alignment on the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention is exploratory and prior studies have not tested this mediation, the required sample size for testing the mediation hypotheses could not be determined. Therefore, results should be interpreted with caution due to the increased risk of a Type II error.

The data analysis was conducted in Python (version 3.11.7) using Jupyter Notebooks. When the survey data was exported from LimeSurvey, only completed responses were included and data cleaning confirmed that there are no missing values or duplicates in the data set. Participants were required to meet the following inclusion criteria: residency in the United States, current employment, and selecting the correct answer for the item confirming attentiveness.

A total of 86 participants were excluded for not meeting these criteria, which resulted in a final sample size of $N = 202$. For employee engagement, an overall score was calculated by averaging all nine items from the UWES-9. In addition, the means for the three dimensions of engagement, absorption, vigor, and dedication, were calculated as well.

Work value alignment was operationalized as the Pearson correlation between each participant's personal work value ratings and their ratings of their organization's values. This approach was recommended by one of the developers of the WVS who took inspiration for this method from O'Reilly et al (1991, p. 494). Higher correlation values reflect greater alignment in value patterns. For participants whose ratings showed no variance, either in personal or organizational values, correlation scores could not be calculated. These rows were excluded from analyses involving value alignment, resulting in an effective sample size of $N = 195$ for relevant tests.

For turnover intention, the total score from six items on a five-point Likert scale (range: 6-30) was summed. A score below the midpoint (18) reflects an intention to stay, whereas a score above 18 indicates an intention to leave. No reverse scoring was required for items from the UWES-9, Work WVS, or TIS-6. The following chapter presents the results of descriptive statistics and hypothesis testing.

Results

This chapter provides an overview of the descriptive statistics for all key study variables. Measures of central tendency and variability are presented to summarize participants' responses and offer a preliminary understanding of the dataset. These descriptive insights serve as a foundation for the hypothesis testing reported in the following sections.

Descriptive statistics for the main study variables are shown in Table 2. Participants reported moderate to high levels of work engagement, with the overall engagement score averaging $M = 3.51$ ($SD = 1.12$) on a scale from 0 to 6. Among the dimensions of engagement, absorption ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.16$) and dedication ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.32$) showed slightly higher means than vigor ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.23$). Distributions were approximately normal, with skewness and kurtosis values close to zero for all subscales. Internal consistency reliability, as measured by *Cronbach's alpha*, ranged from .69 (absorption) to .91 (overall engagement), indicating acceptable to excellent reliability for the engagement constructs.

The turnover intention score, calculated as the sum of six items (range: 0–30), had a mean of $M = 17.91$ ($SD = 4.36$), with responses spanning from 7 to 28. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .79$) and showed a slight negative skew.

Value alignment was operationalized as the Pearson correlation between each participant's individual and perceived organizational work value profiles based on 24 matched items. The average value alignment score was relatively low ($M = .08$, $SD = 0.20$), with individual correlations ranging from -0.40 to 0.55, suggesting that participants varied widely in their perceived alignment with their organization's values. As expected, Cronbach's alpha was not applicable to this variable, since it represents a single correlation-based composite score rather than a set of multiple items measuring a latent construct.

Tab. 2: Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency for Engagement, Turnover Intention, and Value Alignment

Variable	M	SD	Min	Max	Skew	Kurtosis	α
Engagement vigor	3.15	1.23	0	6	-.14	-.53	.81
Engagement dedication	3.73	1.32	0	6	-.35	-.39	.85
Engagement absorption	3.75	1.16	0	6	-.35	-.03	.69
Engagement overall	3.51	1.12	1	6	-.15	-.59	.91
Turnover intention	17.91	4.36	7	28	.05	-.53	.79
Value alignment	.08	.2	-.04	.55	-.07	-.44	NA

Source: Own results. Note. Cronbach's α is not applicable for value alignment, as it is based on a single correlation coefficient rather than a multi-item scale.

This section presents the inferential statistical analyses conducted to evaluate the study's hypotheses and answer its research questions. Prior to reporting results, the necessary assumptions and conditions for each analysis were assessed to ensure the validity of the findings. Table 3 summarizes the hypotheses, the corresponding statistical tests, and whether each hypothesis was supported.

The results of the linear regression testing **H1** indicate that value alignment does not significantly predict overall engagement ($F(1, 193) = 0.26$, $p = .61$). The standardized regression coefficient for value alignment is positive but not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.20$, $p = .61$), suggesting that perceived alignment between personal and organizational values is not meaningfully associated with employee engagement in this sample. The model explains only a very small portion of variance in engagement ($R^2 = .001$), indicating that only 0.1% of the variability in engagement can be attributed to value alignment. This suggests that other factors not included in this analysis likely play a more substantial role in predicting engagement. Given these findings, the hypothesis that higher value alignment is associated with higher employee engagement cannot be supported.

A multiple linear regression was conducted to examine the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic work values and employee engagement (**H2**). The overall model was significant ($F(6, 188) = 9.15$, $p <$

.001, explaining 23% of the variance in engagement ($R^2 = .23$). Among the intrinsic values, altruism was a significant positive predictor of engagement ($\beta = .27, p < .001$). Relationships with others showed a positive trend that approached significance ($\beta = .13, p = .068$). Variety and autonomy did not significantly predict engagement.

A one-way MANOVA was conducted to examine whether mean individual work value scores differed significantly across generations (**H3**). The distribution of participants across generational groups was uneven, with only $N = 2$ participants falling into the Boomer category and $N = 14$ being considered Generation X. These small sample sizes limit the reliability of statistical comparisons involving these groups. Therefore, only Generation Y ($N = 58$) and Generation X ($N = 121$) were included in the MANOVA to ensure adequate statistical power. The dependent variables included altruism, relation, pay, prestige, security, authority, variety, and autonomy. The multivariate test using Pillai's Trace was not statistically significant (*Pillai's Trace* = .069, $F(8, 170) = 1.578, p = .135$). This indicates no significant overall difference in the combination of work value scores between the two generational groups.

To further examine group differences, a series of univariate analyses of variances (ANOVA) were conducted for each work value. None of the individual ANOVAs yielded statistically significant differences between generations (all p -values $> .13$), supporting the multivariate findings. These results suggest that there were no meaningful generational differences in any specific work value dimension in this sample.

To test **H4**, which states that younger generations value flexible working conditions more highly than older generations, differences in perceived autonomy at work were examined. Autonomy was used as a proxy for valuing flexible working conditions, consistent with research linking flexibility to employees' sense of control over their work schedules and environment. A one-way ANOVA was previously conducted with Generation Y vs. Z as the independent variable and mean autonomy score as the dependent variable. Since only two generational groups were compared, this part of the ANOVA is mathematically equivalent to an independent samples t-test and thus directly relevant for testing this hypothesis. The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in autonomy scores between the two generations ($F(1, 177) = 2.28, p = .13$). These results suggest that, in this sample, younger and older generations do not differ significantly in the extent to which they value flexible working conditions.

To examine whether employee engagement and alignment between personal and organizational values predict turnover intention, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted (**H5 & H6**). The model included two predictors: overall engagement and value alignment, with turnover intention as the dependent variable. The regression model was statistically significant ($F(2, 192) = 36.74, p < .001$) and explained approximately 27.7% of the variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = .277, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .269$), indicating a moderate effect size. As hypothesized (**H5**), employee engagement significantly and negatively predicted turnover intention ($\beta = -.526, SE = .061, t = -8.57, p < .001$). This suggests that for every one-unit increase in overall engagement, turnover intention decreased by approximately 2.08 units, holding value alignment constant.

Contrary to expectations (**H6**), value alignment was not a significant predictor of turnover intention ($\beta = .024, SE = .061, t = 0.394, p = .694$). The direction of the effect was also not in line with the hypothesis, indicating that greater perceived alignment between personal and organizational values did not correspond with a lower intention to leave the organization in this sample.

A bootstrapped mediation analysis was conducted to test whether value alignment mediated the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention, using 5,000 bootstrap samples (H_7). The total effect of employee engagement on turnover intention was significant ($\beta = -.526$, $SE = .061$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher engagement was associated with lower turnover intention. This is consistent with the results of the previously conducted regression analysis. The direct effect remained significant when value alignment was included in the model, ($\beta = -.526$, $SE = .061$, $p < .001$), suggesting no evidence of mediation. The indirect effect of employee engagement on turnover intention through value alignment was not statistically significant, ($\beta = .001$, $SE = .005$, 95% $CI [-.005, .018]$, $p = .959$). Since the confidence interval includes zero, the mediation hypothesis was not supported. These findings do not support the hypothesis that the negative effect of employee engagement on turnover intention is partially explained by higher levels of work value alignment (**H7 & H7a**). In other words, value alignment does not serve as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between engagement and turnover intention in this sample.

To test whether value alignment moderates the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention (**H7b**), a multiple regression analysis was conducted to test. The overall model was not significant ($F(3, 191) = 25.35$, $p = .953$). However, employee engagement was a significant negative predictor of turnover intention ($\beta = -.538$, $SE = .062$, $p < .001$) as expected. Neither value alignment ($\beta = .039$, $p = .528$) nor the interaction term ($\beta = -1.90$, $p = .145$) was statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis that value alignment moderates the relationship between engagement and turnover intention was not supported.

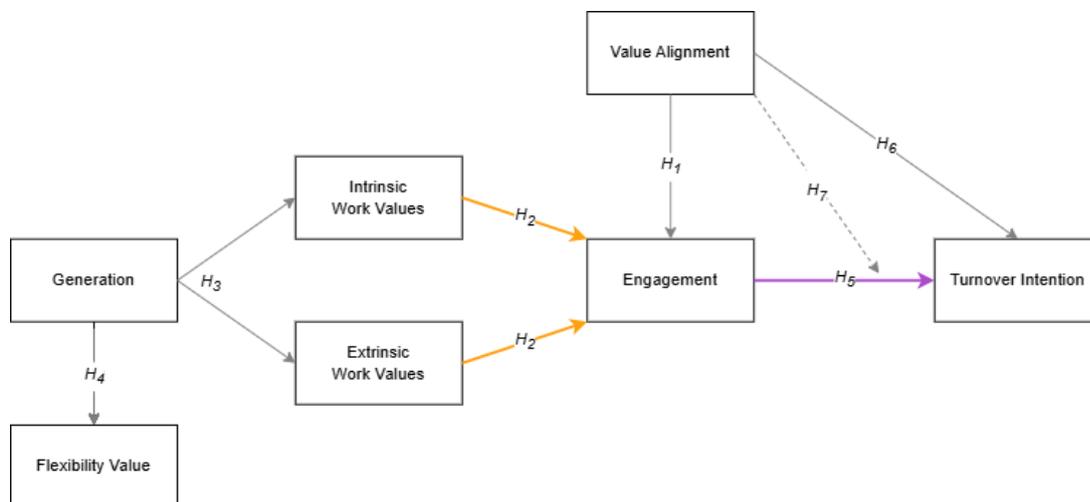
Tab. 3: Overview of Hypotheses, Corresponding Statistical Test, and Results

	Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Supported
H1	Employees whose personal work values align closely with their organization's values will exhibit higher levels of engagement compared to employees experiencing misalignment.	Simple Linear Regression	No
H2	Intrinsic work values (altruism, relationships with others, variety, and autonomy) will have a stronger positive relationship with employee engagement than extrinsic work values (pay, prestige).	Multiple Linear Regression	Partially
H3	Work values differ significantly across generations.	MANOVA	No
H4	Younger generations value flexible working conditions more highly than older generations.	Independent-samples t-test	No
H5	Higher levels of employee engagement will predict lower turnover intention.	Multiple linear regression (H ₅ and H ₆)	Yes
H6	Greater alignment between employees' personal work values and organizational values will predict lower turnover intention.		No
H7	Work value alignment mediates the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention.	Bootstrapping (H ₇ and H _{7a})	No
H7a	The negative effect of employee engagement on turnover intention will be partially explained by higher levels of work value alignment.		No
H7b	When work value alignment is low, the predictive effect of employee engagement on turnover intention will be weaker.	Moderated regression analysis	No

Source: Own representation

To provide a clear overview of the tested relationships, a structural equation model (SEM) was created to visually summarize the study's hypotheses and corresponding results (see Figure 2). Although SEM was not used as the primary analytical method, the diagram serves as a conceptual visualization to illustrate the proposed pathways and the empirical findings. Purple lines indicate hypotheses that were supported by the results, orange lines indicate hypotheses that were partially supported, while gray lines represent unsupported hypotheses. Arrows depict the direction of hypothesized relationships between constructs. This visualization aids in interpreting the pattern of findings across multiple tests and highlights which aspects of the proposed model received empirical support.

Fig. 2: Structural Equation Model (SEM) Illustrating Hypothesized Relationships and Empirical Support



Source: Own representation. Note. Dashed lines indicate hypothesized mediation paths. Purple lines represent supported hypotheses; Orange lines represent partially supported hypotheses; grey lines represent unsupported hypotheses. Path estimates not shown for clarity.

The findings raise important questions about the dynamics between work values, engagement, and retention. The following chapter interprets these findings in the context of existing research, examines their theoretical and practical implications, and outlines key limitations and suggestions for future research.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the relationships between personal and organizational work values, their alignment, and how these factors influence employee engagement and turnover intention. Particular attention was given to potential generational differences in work values, as well as the possible mediating role of value alignment in the relationship between engagement and turnover intention. The study sought to address notable gaps in the existing literature, including the limited use of work-specific value measures, a lack of large and diverse samples, and the absence of research explicitly examining value alignment as a potential mediator (Basinska & Dãderman, 2019, pp. 8-9; Coelho et al., 2023, pp. 7-11; Duong & Phan, 2023, p. 9).

Previous research has consistently shown that employee engagement negatively predicts turnover intention and that personal values influence engagement. However, the role of work value alignment

in these relationships remains underexplored. Moreover, while generational differences in work values have been documented, the direction and nature of these differences are not yet clearly established.

The results of this study contribute new insights. No evidence was found that value alignment predicts engagement. However, when distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic work values, altruism (intrinsic), prestige (extrinsic), and pay (extrinsic) showed significant associations with engagement, suggesting that specific work values may influence engagement more than the general alignment of values. Contrary to expectations, no significant generational differences in work values were identified. Consistent with previous findings, higher engagement significantly predicted lower turnover intention, while value alignment did not. Furthermore, there was no support for the hypothesis that value alignment mediates the relationship between engagement and turnover intention. The following sections interpret these findings in the context of existing research, explore their theoretical and practical implications, and outline the limitations of the study along with suggestions for future research.

INTERPRETING THE FINDINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF PRIOR RESEARCH

This chapter discusses the findings of the current study in relation to existing research on employee engagement, turnover intention, generational differences in work values, and work value alignment. It explores where the results align with or differ from past studies and highlights what new insights this research adds. In doing so, the chapter helps place the study's findings in a broader research context.

The observed relationship between higher levels of employee engagement and lower turnover intention aligns with a substantial body of existing research (Kang & Sung, 2019, p. 17; McCarthy et al., 2020, pp. 1-11; Rafiq et al., 2019, pp. 621-623; Xiaolong et al., 2023, pp. 1001-1013). This reinforces the widely acknowledged role of engagement as a critical factor in retention strategies.

The study further contributes to the growing interest in understanding the underlying mechanisms of turnover intention by exploring work values and value alignment as potential predictors. Theoretical frameworks such as P-E Fit (Kristof, 1996, p. 1-49) provide a useful lens for interpreting these findings. Kristof (1996, pp. 1-2) distinguishes between person-organization fit and person-group fit, a differentiation that may be particularly relevant when considering the impact of value alignment. The absence of significant effects for value alignment with the organization suggests that alignment with closer contexts, like a workgroup or supervisor, might have a stronger impact. This could mean that value congruence at these more immediate levels helps explain how engagement relates to turnover intention and should be explored further

In this study, no significant generational differences in work values were observed, including the importance placed on flexible working conditions. While the literature remains inconclusive regarding which generations prioritize which values, there is some agreement that younger generations tend to value flexibility more highly (Frye et al., 2020, pp. 5-8). The absence of such effects in the present study was unexpected. However, due to several limitations, such as an overrepresentation of Generation Z and unequal group sizes, it is plausible that existing differences were not detected. Another possible explanation for the absence of significant generational differences in valuing flexibility is that the comparison was limited to Generation Z and Millennials, both of which represent the youngest cohorts in today's workforce.

At the same time, the current literature provides limited guidance for interpreting the non-significant findings related to work value alignment, largely due to a lack of prior studies assessing its effects on engagement or turnover intention. Furthermore, existing research often relies on general value measures rather than work-specific values, making direct comparisons difficult (Bakotić & Alvir, 2024, pp. 298-299; Coelho et al., 2023, p. 5; Duong & Phan, 2024, p. 6).

Nonetheless, this study adds to the literature by examining individual work values in more detail. Altruism, an intrinsic work value, was positively associated with engagement. Unexpectedly, prestige, an extrinsic value, also showed a positive relationship, while pay was negatively associated with engagement. These findings challenge the assumption that intrinsic values are more closely tied to engagement and suggest that individual work values may differ in their influence. This aligns with prior work highlighting mixed findings on the role of intrinsic versus extrinsic values (Bakotić & Alvir, 2024, pp. 300-301; Basinska & Dåderman, 2019, pp. 8-9, p. 9; Duong & Phan, 2024; Schreurs et al., 2014, p. 9). Taken together, the results suggest that future research should move beyond the intrinsic-extrinsic dichotomy and focus on how specific work values relate to employee outcomes.

Having examined the results of this study in light of existing research, the following chapter discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the findings. It explores how the insights gained contribute to ongoing academic discussions and how they may inform organizational strategies aimed at improving employee engagement and retention.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This chapter outlines the theoretical and practical implications of the study's results and considers how the insights gained contribute to existing theories. In addition, the chapter explores how organizations may apply these insights to improve employee engagement and retention, and highlights areas where current practices may be improved.

This study reinforces the critical role of employee engagement in predicting turnover intention, supporting the understanding of engagement as a key factor in retention strategies (Kang & Sung, 2019, p.17; McCarthy et al., 2020, pp. 1-11; Rafiq et al., 2019, pp. 621-623; Xiaolong et al., 2023, pp. 1001-1013). In this study, engagement explained approximately 28% of the variance in turnover intention, which is consistent with previous findings, however, it also highlights that a significant portion of the variance remains unexplained. This underscores the need to further investigate additional predictors that influence both engagement and turnover intention, particularly considering that current approaches to employee retention remain suboptimal and leave room for improvement (Sun & Wang, 2017, pp. 1-2).

Although value alignment did not significantly predict engagement or turnover intention in this study, prior research suggests it may still play an important role. For example, employees who perceive alignment with their organization, supervisor, and workgroup are more likely to feel a stronger sense of belonging and demonstrate greater adaptability during organizational change (Deng et al., 2023, pp. 5-7). Similarly, value congruence has been found to influence employees' behavioral support for change initiatives, with stronger alignment associated with greater willingness to support organizational transformation (Lamm et al., 2010, pp. 58-59). Given these findings, value alignment may influence engagement and turnover under specific circumstances or within particular organizational

contexts not captured in this study. Additionally, it is possible that the present study lacked sufficient statistical power to detect small or medium-sized effects of value alignment, especially considering the sample size and distribution. Therefore, future research should continue to explore the role of value alignment not only in relation to engagement and turnover intention but also in predicting other important outcomes such as openness to change or organizational commitment.

From a practical perspective, organizations should continue to prioritize employee engagement as a key aspect of retention strategies, while remaining open to the potential benefit of fostering alignment between individual and organizational values. Even if value alignment was not a significant predictor in this sample, the theoretical relevance and prior empirical support suggest it remains a promising area for targeted interventions aimed at improving employee well-being, adaptability, and retention. While these findings offer practical and theoretical insights, they also highlight unresolved questions. The next chapter discusses the limitations of this study and outlines directions for future research.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationships among work values, value alignment, employee engagement, and turnover intention, several limitations must be acknowledged that affect the interpretation and generalizability of the findings.

First, although the results support previous literature suggesting that higher engagement levels are associated with lower turnover intention, it is important to note that turnover intention does not always translate into actual turnover behavior (Cohen et al., 2016, pp. 15-17; Sun & Wang, 2017, p. 13). Therefore, the predictive power of engagement for actual turnover remains uncertain and should be investigated further in longitudinal studies incorporating actual turnover data.

Second, the study's sample composition limits generalizability. Over 61% of participants belonged to Generation Z, resulting in an unbalanced generational distribution. This was likely influenced by the data collection approach, which included recruitment through social media and survey exchange platforms, methods that tend to attract younger participants, particularly students. As a result, findings cannot be reliably applied to older generations, such as Generation X or Baby Boomers. Future research should consider more targeted recruitment strategies, such as partnerships with organizations, to ensure more generationally diverse samples.

Third, the unequal group sizes may have impacted analyses of generational differences in work values. The study only compared Generation Z and Generation Y, with Generation Z represented by nearly twice as many participants. This imbalance, along with the limited age range, may explain why no significant generational differences were found regarding the importance placed on flexible working conditions. Moreover, using autonomy as a proxy for flexible working conditions may not have adequately captured the intended construct. Future research should consider more nuanced, direct measures of flexible working preferences and include older generations in the sample to draw more conclusive insights.

Additionally, this study assessed only the perceived alignment between personal and organizational work values. However, prior research has suggested that value congruence with one's immediate work group or supervisor may have an even greater impact on employee outcomes due to more frequent interpersonal interaction (Rahn et al., 2023, p. 998). Future studies should consider assessing alignment

across multiple organizational levels to gain a more comprehensive understanding of value congruence.

It is also important to note that no a priori power analysis was conducted for the analysis involving potential mediating effects of value alignment on the relationship between engagement and turnover intention. This was due to the lack of prior research reporting effect sizes for value alignment, which made it difficult to estimate a meaningful effect size in advance. As a result, it is possible that the sample size used in this study was insufficient to detect smaller effects, increasing the risk of Type II errors. To ensure that true effects are not overlooked, future research should use larger and more demographically diverse samples when replicating these analyses.

A further methodological limitation concerns the measurement of value alignment. In this study, alignment was operationalized as the correlation between personal and perceived organizational work values. However, the weak associations between value alignment and key demographic or outcome variables suggest potential limitations in the measure's sensitivity. Alternative methods of capturing alignment may offer improved construct validity and should be explored in future research.

Despite these limitations, the study offers directions for future research. It emphasizes the need to move beyond assessing general values and instead investigate the influence of work-specific values on engagement. The finding that altruism, prestige, and pay each were associated with engagement highlights the importance of identifying which values matter most to employees. Future studies could build on this research by exploring whether specific values, such as altruism, are particularly important to employees and whether alignment on these values with the organization, work group, or supervisor contributes to higher engagement or lower turnover intention. Researchers might also examine whether such alignment mediates the relationship between engagement and turnover intention. Taken together, these findings suggest that a more differentiated approach to studying work values, including their alignment at various organizational levels, may offer deeper insights into the dynamics of engagement and turnover.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore how personal and organizational work values, and the alignment between them, relate to employee engagement and turnover intention. In addition, it examined whether work values differ across generations and whether value alignment plays a mediating role in the relationship between engagement and turnover intention. Using data collected in an online survey from a predominantly Generation Z and Y sample, the study tested a series of hypotheses through multiple linear regression, MANOVA, and mediation analysis.

The findings reaffirm the important role of employee engagement in predicting turnover intention, consistent with existing research (Kang & Sung, 2019, p. 17; McCarthy et al., 2020, pp. 1-11; Rafiq et al., 2019, pp. 621-623; Xiaolong et al., 2023, pp. 1001-1013). However, the study did not find evidence that general value alignment between employees and their organizations significantly predicts engagement or turnover intention. This raises questions about how alignment is typically conceptualized and measured, suggesting that more context-specific or relational forms of value congruence (e.g., alignment with a team or supervisor) may be more relevant to employees' experiences.

Furthermore, while previous literature suggests younger generations value flexibility more than older generations, this study found no significant generational differences in work values. Given the overrepresentation of Generation Z and the imbalance between generational groups, this result likely reflects sample limitations rather than a true absence of generational patterns.

From a practical standpoint, these findings highlight the continued importance of fostering employee engagement as part of retention strategies. Organizations may benefit from focusing on specific work values that influence engagement, such as altruism and recognition, rather than assuming that alignment with broad organizational values is sufficient. HR professionals and organizational leaders may also want to reconsider how they assess values and value alignment and explore whether more targeted interventions, such as strengthening value alignment with immediate teams or supervisors, can improve outcomes.

Future research should build on these findings by investigating specific work values in more depth, using more diverse samples, work-specific value measures, and exploring multiple levels of value alignment. Additionally, longitudinal designs could help clarify whether value alignment exerts a delayed influence on engagement or turnover intentions over time. Further studies could also examine whether particular values, when shared with a team or supervisor, strengthen engagement or support for organizational change. Overall, this study contributes to the growing literature on engagement and retention by challenging some common assumptions and highlighting the need for a more nuanced approach to understanding work values in today's workforce.

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