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Master's thesis:
Diversity management and its impact on employee satisfaction
in different life stages

Supervisor: Prof. Svetla Trifonova Marinova

Ann-Kathrin Köhler: 20221468

Beatriz Caninas: 20220961

Laura Wermuth Hem: 20194071

Abstract

This thesis investigates the relationship between diversity management and employee satisfaction across different life stages within organizations. With the global interconnectedness of most organizations, a broad range of personal, cultural, and demographic distinctions can be made that makes an effective approach to managing this diversity critical for an organization's success. Therefore, diversity management is relevant for a majority of organizations, but especially for those operating on an international level. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the project employs a comprehensive survey targeting employees at various life stages to assess how diversity management initiatives impact their satisfaction levels. This intends to establish trends with generalizable proprieties on the topic. A framework is conceptualized that finds an effective design of diversity management to include the formulation of concrete objectives and tracking their efficacy, decreasing biases between groups, structural interventions, broader framing, and the minimization and preparation for backlash. Employee satisfaction consists of the factors perceived organizational support, training and development, rewards and recognition, workplace happiness, and psychological involvement. Key findings reveal statistical significance specifically for broader framing and structural interventions positively influence overall satisfaction, while specific needs vary across life stages. Life stage 1 employees benefit from standardized recruitment processes, flexibility, and career development opportunities, whereas life stage 4 employees require tailored training and performance measures to address ageism. For life stage 2 employees, often balancing professional growth with family responsibilities, no significant factors can be confirmed. However, it is indicated that supportive policies such as parental leave and flexible working hours are beneficial. Career development and networking and mentoring are found influential for employees in life stage 3. The research underscores the necessity for life stage specific diversity initiatives to enhance overall employee satisfaction and highlights the importance of adaptations to the organizational circumstances. These insights provide actionable guidelines for organizations to refine their diversity strategies, ensuring inclusivity and satisfaction across their workforce. Future research could further explore the nuanced impacts of diversity initiatives on specific minority groups within each life stage to optimize the inclusivity and effectiveness of organizational policies.

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1 Introduction

In the 21st century, as the world grows more interconnected, the idea of diversity in the workplace has expanded to include a broad range of personal, cultural, and demographic distinctions. The employees of an organization reflect the intricate mosaic of the cultures it operates in as it grows increasingly global. Strong strategies are needed to handle the variety of human factors that contribute to its success (White, 2023).

Diversity in the workplace has developed into a vital force behind both internal creativity and external market relevance. It is no longer only about adhering to legal and ethical requirements. When it comes to creativity, problem solving, and decision making, organizations that can successfully leverage the different perspectives of their workforce can outperform their competition (Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes, 2002). The advantages of diversity, however, depend on how well these diverse human resources (HR) are managed. Implementing diversity management strategies that are both inclusive and flexible enough to meet the varying needs of their workforce is a challenge for modern firms. To create an atmosphere where every employee feels appreciated and involved, diversity management needs to be flexible and aware of these nuances (Mousa, Massoud & Ayoubi, 2020). It is in this multifaceted situation that the significance of employee satisfaction becomes evident as one primary concern. Employee satisfaction is a key determinant of organizational performance and affects factors like productivity, employee retention, and overall organizational success. It is influenced by several factors, such as how much support and appreciation individuals receive from their managers (Harter et al., 2002). Understanding and improving employee satisfaction necessitates attending to the unique requirements and aspirations of employees at various phases of their lives and careers. Every period of life, from the beginning of a career to the end of a career, has its own set of expectations and obstacles that need to be addressed to keep satisfaction levels high.

The aim of this study is to investigate the complex relationship between employee satisfaction and diversity management, with a focus on how well diversity management strategies support employees at various phases of their lives. As most organization in this age face diversity on an international or national level, diversity management has become a critical consideration for almost every organization. But it is especially relevant for organizations engaging in international activities, as they encounter a multifaceted variety of diversity-related challenges. By focusing on this area, the research aims to advance knowledge of how firms may maximize

their diversity measures to improve employee satisfaction and thereby promote organizational success. The project offers guidelines for organizations looking to improve their diversity initiatives in a complex market. It also highlights the impact of diversity management on employee satisfaction through a thorough investigation.

1.1 Problem formulation

Due to the high relevance of diversity management and its impact on employee satisfaction, this thesis will dive deeper into the topic adding life stages as a factor. This chapter offers information about the purpose of the study, the research question, and the structure of the project.

1.1.1 Motivation

The intention behind this project is to contribute to existing research by further investigating the relationship of employee satisfaction and diversity management. It is a sincere effort to develop practical implications to a present consideration in organizations. The authors are intrigued by the relevant topic that many organizations are facing as diversity management becomes a bigger part of the agenda. In larger organizations, diversity initiatives can be broad and implemented on a surface level, which miss to consider different challenges throughout the employees' work life. This can potentially decrease the employees' satisfaction levels in their employment. Diving into the different life stages of the workforce, how these differ, and what implications follow is especially interesting, is yet to be explored. Up until now, scholars have focused on the relationship of employee satisfaction and diversity management. The authors believe life stages and their unique requirements could play an important role in this relationship. Therefore, the authors are motivated to investigate the opportunities and challenges to life stage specific considerations and thereby find a potentially more sustainable approach for organizations to increase the satisfaction among all employees.

1.1.2 Research question

The following research question is developed to examine how diversity management across different life stages affect employee satisfaction. The research question acts as a compass for both the authors and the reader, as it is designed to keep the research process clear, focused and purposeful.

“How is employee satisfaction impacted by diversity management supporting different life stages?”

The objective of this project is to investigate the impact of diversity management across different life stages on employee satisfaction. This is explored in a general applicability to all organizations but must be considered especially for an international context. With an increasing variety of influences with the level of internationalization, it becomes more critical in its implications for the organization. Existing literature within the area of this research is thoroughly reviewed and serves as the basis for the conceptualization that is developed. The research aims to examine the nuanced relationships between organizational diversity practices and the varying needs of employees at various stages of their life and career. By differentiating the effects of diversity management across these life stages, the project aims to offer a comprehensive analysis of how such initiatives influence employee satisfaction. The findings in literature are tested with a primary data analysis based on a survey developed for employees in a corporate employment. Lastly, a discussion of the research's theoretical and practical implications for organizations to improve their diversity management is brought forward as well as limitations and suggestions for additional research.

1.2 Scope

This project has defined boundaries regarding its scope to provide a thorough and detailed analysis. Focusing solely on the impact of diversity management on employee satisfaction across different life stages, the scope of this research is limited to this aspect of organizational dynamics in the corporate world. Therefore, it does not include other potential organizational practices that can affect employee satisfaction. The project is written from a mainly European perspective, both from the literature and the survey, which might result in a slightly narrow cultural viewpoint of the organizational structures, performances and values. Additionally, the project primarily looks at the perspectives of employees, with no specific focus on managerial or executive viewpoints. While leadership roles involve orchestrating and implementing diversity initiatives, which are critical to their success, this narrower focus is chosen to facilitate a more concentrated analysis of the direct effects on employees' satisfaction levels across various life stages. This approach helps to ensure depth and precision in exploring how diversity management practices influence employee perceptions and satisfaction.

2 Literature review

In the following chapter, the available literature is examined to answer the formulated research question: *“How is employee satisfaction impacted by diversity management supporting different life stages?”*.

To gain a deeper understanding of the concepts of employee satisfaction and diversity management, as well as their relationship, a literature review is conducted. First, the design of the literature review is explored. Then, current literature is synthesized on the concepts of employee satisfaction and diversity management, providing a nuanced understanding of the complex dimensions influencing these concepts. To differentiate the effect of diversity management according to varying circumstances, four life stages of employees are identified and explored: Early career, early parenthood, career maturity, and pre-retirement. Lastly, the findings are contextualized in the conceptualization.

2.1 Literature review design

This thesis applies a literature review to present a comprehensive compilation and synthesis of available research related to the research question. Out of the three commonly utilized methods for conducting literature reviews (systematic, semi-systematic, integrative approach), this review is based on the semi-systematic review approach. The semi-systematic review, less rigorous than the systematic review, is described by Snyder (2019) as a good strategy for studying a topic that has been studied and conceptualized in different ways. Therefore, this approach was deemed the most suitable as it combines elements of both systematic and integrative approaches, allowing to investigate the research question in a broad context.

A strategic approach to the conduction of the literature review allows to ensure accuracy and preciseness (Snyder, 2019). Before conducting the review, it is essential to formulate a search strategy. For this project, the following search strategy was defined. The review focuses on academic peer-reviewed journal articles, as it is recognized as the main form of communication among scholars (Weintraub, 2000). The literature is not limited based on the publication dates, encompassing literature published up to April 2024. The scope is limited to literature published in the English, German, or Danish language.

When conducting the review, all authors of this project conducted a thorough search for relevant literature in the chosen databases. Google Scholar, Scopus, Aalborg University Online

Library, Science Direct, and Web of Science are searched using following keywords in the title, subject, and abstract fields:

- “employee satisfaction” AND “diversity”
- “diversity” OR “inclusion” AND “organizations”
- “diversity” OR “inclusion” AND “life phases”
- “diversity management” AND “gender” OR “life stages”
- “diversity” AND “impact” AND “employee satisfaction”
- “diversity management” AND “initiatives”
- “diversity management” AND “Gen Z”
- “employee satisfaction” AND “generations” OR “generation”
- “effectiveness” AND “diversity measures”
- “diversity management” AND “satisfaction”
- “diversity” AND “inclusion” AND “organizational support”
- “diversity” AND “inclusion” AND “management”
- “organizational” AND “diversity” AND “initiatives”
- “Europe” OR “Asia” OR “US” AND “quotas” AND “diversity”

In total, 735 papers potentially match. After reviewing and filtering for relevant literature, the literature pool consists of 132 publications. An overview of the relevant literature can be found in Appendix A. The search process is depicted in Figure 1.

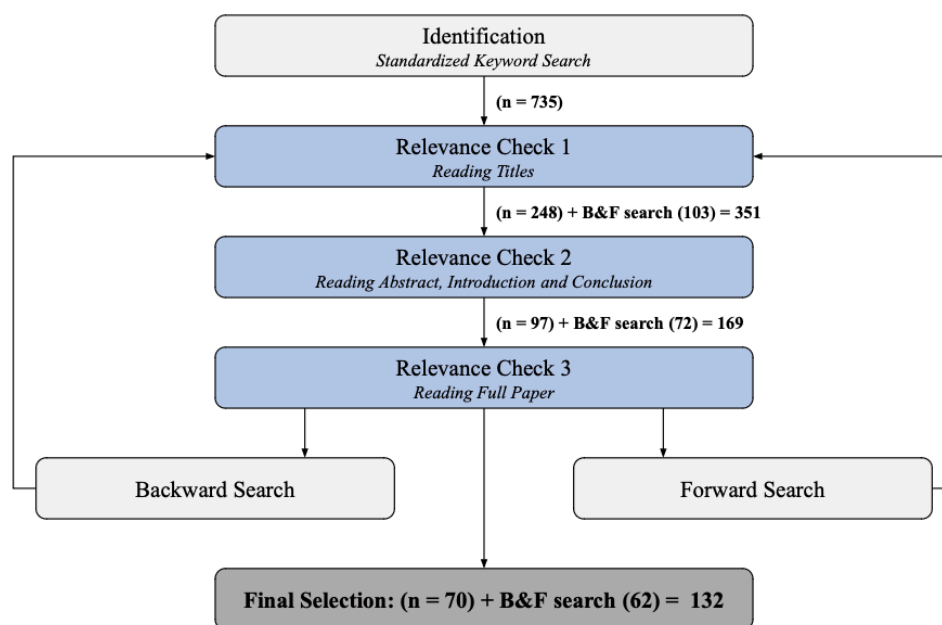


Figure 1 Search strategy literature review

After the literature pool is selected, a standardized method of analysis is employed to synthesize appropriate information. This analysis is structured thematically, to identify prevalent patterns and themes, leading to meaningful conclusions. Divided thematically, the literature is separately examined on the concepts of employee satisfaction, diversity management, and life stages. The findings are then summarized in the writing process of the project and conceptualized as a conclusion.

2.2 Employee satisfaction

Employee satisfaction has been a focus of various scholars since the mid-20th century when organizations realized the value of employee satisfaction as they found that satisfied employees perform better and thereby the company becomes more competitive (e.g., Locke, 1976; Mousa, Massoud, & Ayoubi, 2020; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Therefore, organizations now invest in creating positive work environments and offer opportunities to enhance employee satisfaction.

The following chapter synthesizes various definitions and the significance of employee satisfaction, exploring its impact on companies' performance. Utilizing current literature, it offers a comprehensive understanding of employee satisfaction and its role for corporations to provide context for the subsequent analysis of the relationship with diversity management.

2.2.1 Definition and importance of employee satisfaction

The concept of employee satisfaction has evolved through various theoretical lenses, such as the resource-based view (RBV), institutional theory, transaction cost theory (TCT), etc., each offering a unique perspective on what influences an individual's level of satisfaction in the workplace. The RBV in this context suggests that employees' knowledge and skills are valuable, and organizations can contribute to their satisfaction by investing in training and development, advancement opportunities, and a supportive work environment along with focusing on maximizing human resources by aligning organizational goals and human resources practices (Singh, 2023). From the perspective of the institutional theory, HR practices should not only be adopted to maximize effectiveness but also align with institutional expectations which ultimately can affect perceptions of the organization and thereby satisfaction (Najeeb, 2014). In the context of the TCT, there are various costs connected to managing employees - performance monitoring, communication, conflicts, etc. If these transaction costs are high, a decrease in employee satisfaction most likely will occur, therefore

initiatives to avoid these can contribute to higher satisfaction levels (Husted & Folger, 2004). Recognizing the contribution of each theoretical perspective, employee satisfaction and its definition is regarded in the interaction of employees, organizations, and the impact of specific actions and measures.

Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) make a distinction between motivators that contribute to employee satisfaction and hygiene factors that, if inadequate, lead to dissatisfaction. They highlight the dual nature of work environment influences, implying that different variables influence satisfaction and dissatisfaction rather than being on the same continuum. Building on this, Locke (1976) emphasizes the significance of individual expectations and perceptions by introducing the concept of employee satisfaction as an emotional state that arises from an individual's judgment of their employment. He states that an employee's psychological involvement with their work is what determines their level of satisfaction, where satisfaction is seen as a function of what employees expect versus what they perceive. Spector (1997) simplifies the concept to the extent of an individual's liking or disliking their job, bringing attention to the affective dimension of employee satisfaction. This definition places a strong emphasis on an employee's emotional response to their work, implying that job satisfaction essentially comes down to how much a person enjoys their employment. Lastly, Mousa et al. (2020) define employee satisfaction as a dynamic and comprehensive state that reflects a worker's emotional, mental, and behavioral reactions to their job and work environment. They emphasize that individual perceptions of organizational practices, such as diversity management, responsibility, achievement, recognition, and company policies, as well as interpersonal relationships, salary, and personal expectations, all have an impact on employee satisfaction.

A substantial body of research suggests a clear link between higher productivity and employee satisfaction. According to Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002), satisfied employees are more motivated, engaged, and show a stronger commitment to their work, all of which contribute to increased productivity. This beneficial link emphasizes how crucial it is to design workplaces that satisfy employees' needs and expectations to have a more effective workforce. A key factor in retention is employee satisfaction. High satisfaction lowers employees' withdrawal intention, which lowers actual turnover rates (Tett & Meyer, 1993). For multinational corporations (MNC) operating in various cultural and regulatory contexts, this stability is especially crucial

since it guarantees the preservation of critical organizational expertise and lowers the expenses related to recruiting and onboarding new staff. A positive company culture is developed and maintained in part by satisfied employees (Schein, 2010). A cohesive and encouraging work environment is fostered by satisfied employees who are more inclined to accept and uphold the company's values, conventions, and behaviors. This helps to integrate different cultural viewpoints in a global setting, fostering cross-cultural innovation and collaboration. Especially for MNCs, employee satisfaction can be a source of competitive advantage. Additionally, organizations with a reputation for having high employee satisfaction levels attract top talent, which strengthens their competitive position in the global market. In the dynamic global business environment, employee satisfaction enhances greater organizational adaptability and innovation and increases the likelihood that employees will embrace change and offer creative solutions, both of which are essential for businesses to stay competitive (Amabile, 1998).

2.2.2 Factors of employee satisfaction

The concept of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is central to understanding employee satisfaction and well-being within organizational settings. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) emphasize the critical role of fostering strong employer-employee relationships, which have been shown to significantly influence various outcomes such as work performance, organizational commitment, and job happiness. Rhoades and Eisenberger's (2002) findings underscore the importance of POS in elevating levels of commitment, reducing withdrawal intentions, and fostering a greater desire to excel in job roles. Research by Kurtessis, Eisenberger, Ford, Buffardi, Stewart, and Adis (2017) highlights the correlation between POS and psychological well-being, indicating that positive work environments contribute to employees' overall health and satisfaction.

In addition to POS, workplace happiness has a big impact on productivity, engagement, and retention rates, making it a crucial component of employee satisfaction (Mousa et al., 2020). When employees are happy at work, they are more likely to feel dedicated and driven, which boosts productivity and decreases turnover. Research indicates a high correlation between job satisfaction and supportive company culture, meaningful tasks, and favorable workplace relationships. Additionally, companies that put a high priority on the happiness and well-being

of their employees tend to create a more positive work environment, which improves their overall performance.

The impact of work culture and environment on employee satisfaction cannot be overstated. Schein (2010) argues that a positive work culture, characterized by open communication, mutual respect, and shared values, plays a crucial role in enhancing employee motivation and fostering a sense of belonging.

Additionally, Locke (1976) states that the degree to which workers are emotionally and cognitively invested in their work is known as psychological engagement, and it is a significant factor in determining job satisfaction. Higher levels of motivation and satisfaction are more likely to be experienced by employees who have a sense of personal investment and ownership in their work. This connection is supported by research indicating that psychological involvement enhances job performance and reduces turnover rates (Saks, 2006). Furthermore, Kahns (1990) study indicates that employees' total satisfaction significantly increases when they believe their employment is meaningful and consistent with their personal values. Therefore, creating an atmosphere at work that encourages psychological involvement might result in more dedicated and satisfied workers.

In the contemporary business landscape, continuous training is imperative for maintaining competitiveness and enhancing job satisfaction (Parvin & Kabir, 2011). Ongoing training has been found to significantly improve work efficiency and satisfaction, with empirical evidence consistently demonstrating its positive impact on individual and organizational performance (Febrianti, Suharto, & Wachyudi, 2020). Building upon the importance of training, initiatives aimed at professional growth are instrumental in fostering employee satisfaction. The positive effect of such initiatives on satisfaction levels is stressed and the role of career development programs in aligning with individuals' professional needs and aspirations highlighted, particularly at different career stages (Sageer, Rafat, and Agarwal, 2012).

Along with clear career paths, employee rewards and recognition have emerged as a key driver of satisfaction. DeCenzo and Robbins (2010) and Haile (2009) highlight the positive correlation between rewards and increased satisfaction levels, emphasizing both monetary and non-monetary benefits as critical factors in motivating and retaining talent.

Based on the findings in the literature, employee satisfaction is defined as the following for this project. An employee's level of satisfaction is determined by individual expectations and perceptions in the form of an emotional response to their work. The individual judgment of organizational practices, interpersonal relationships, and personal enjoyment influence one's level of satisfaction. Specifically, employee satisfaction is impacted by the POS, training and development measures, rewards and recognition, and the work culture. On a personal level, it is workplace happiness and psychological involvement that shape employee satisfaction.

2.3 Diversity management

Having introduced a general concept of employee satisfaction and its factors, the following chapter investigates diversity and inclusion in its definition, scope, and relevance. Based on current findings in the literature, the management of diversity is established and explored in its effectiveness.

2.3.1 Definition of diversity and inclusion

Diversity management, entailing the adoption and implementation of initiatives and measures by institutions, was devised as a mechanism to mitigate the issues of underrepresentation, marginalization, and exclusion of minorities in the workplace (Mousa et al., 2020). Its origins date back to the 1960s in the United States, a historic period highly influenced by the Civil Rights movement (Van Bommel, Hubers, & Maas, 2023). While early interest on diversity was focused on the promotion of opportunities, specifically to those part of racial minorities, the 1970s were marked by a focus of research on gender diversity due to growing concerns regarding gender inequality in the workplace (Van Bommel et al., 2023). Expanding on the definition by Mousa et al. (2020), Edewor & Aluko (2015) refer to diversity management as a highly inclusive process where all employees, even those belonging to the organization's dominant culture are included in the development of a welcoming environment.

Following the focus on diversity management, the concept of inclusion emerged as its expansion, gathering interest from researchers in the 1970s (Anand & Winters, 2008). According to Bernstein, Crary, Bilimoria & Blancero (2019), inclusion alludes to the feelings of acceptance and worth experienced by individuals in the workplace, whereas Mor-Barak & Cherin (1998) definition relies on the creation of an organizational environment where every employee feels like an essential component, with an emphasis on the degree to which

individuals can impact decision-making processes and gain access to important information. Building upon this, Roberson (2006) defines inclusion as the extent to which individuals feel that their involvement in organizational processes and decisions is considered needed by their employers. Furthermore, it is tightly related to the concept of cultural competence, referring to one's ability to accept and value cultural differences and the integration of such into strategic business decisions (Anand & Winters, 2008). Inclusion management thus requires adaptability for both individuals and leaders within organizations, promoted through continuous learning.

Despite its importance and stemming from its later introduction, inclusion remains significantly unresearched, receiving additional limited attention in comparison to diversity by researchers (Roberson, 2006). Nonetheless, a recent increase in interest from researchers aims at further exploring the relationship between these two concepts, due to gaps in evidence suggesting a connection between both (Van Bommel et al., 2023).

For this project, diversity management is defined as the integration and accommodation of diverse workforce elements through the active formulation of initiatives (Collins, 2012; Schneider, 2011). The objective is to mitigate the issues of underrepresentation, the ostracism of minorities, and create a feeling of inclusion in the organizational environment. The challenging complexity underlying the execution of these management practices stems from the necessity to adapt a broadly formulated management approach to the unique contexts of an organization. Because of the individuality of each organizational context, this project will not explore the specifically required adaptations but will focus on the overarching principles of diversity management initiatives. While inclusion is not a part of diversity directly, it is included in diversity management and therefore implied in the following.

2.3.2 Factors of diversity management

The scope of diversity management differs in inclusiveness according to different authors' interpretations. Historically, diversity has had a particular focus on systematically undervalued and marginalized groups, notably women and racial ethnic minorities, with a particular focus on racial issues during the 1960s decade and a growing focus on the gender inequality issue in the 1970s. In the 1990s, the concept expanded beyond the dimensions of gender and racial ethnicity to encompass all individuals perceived as different (Anand & Winters, 2008).

In current research, diversity categorization differs, with authors identifying primary and secondary dimensions, or classifying it according to observable and not observable dimensions (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). According to Loden & Rosener (1991), primary dimensions encompass unalterable elements, thus encompassing dimensions of ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and disabilities. According to Edewor & Aluko (2015), these dimensions have the key role of impacting an individual's self-perception and worldview, having the most impact in groups in the workplace. Secondary dimensions, although not irreversible, encompass categories that nonetheless place employees in a disadvantageous position in the labor force, such as education, nation of origin, matrimonial status, religion as well as reasoning and communication approaches (Anand & Winters, 2008). The categorization that distinguishes between observable and not observable dimensions focuses on the visibility of dimensions. Encompassing cognitive, cultural, and technical differences, non-observational dimensions remain significant characteristics of workforce diversity due to evidence of their impact on interaction patterns within groups (Roberson, 2006; Kochan, Bezrukova, Ely, Jackson, Joshi, Jehn, Leonard, Levine & Thomas, 2003).

Diversity is thus understood as a broad concept, including not only demographic characteristics but other dimensions brought by individuals from diverse identity groups within the workplace (Thomas & Ely, 1996). Nonetheless, diversity as a concept represents groups that, due to their differences, experience discrimination and inequality in the workplace (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015). Despite its broad scope, research on diversity management remains predominantly focused on the observable dimensions of diversity (e.g., ethnicity and gender), while non-observable dimensions of diversity such as religion and sexual orientation have not been as thoroughly researched (Van Bommel et al., 2023; Syed & Özbilgin, 2015).

While both categorizations of diversity dimensions are valid, this project distinguishes between primary and secondary dimensions. As secondary dimensions are more difficult to capture, this project focuses on the primary dimensions of diversity, such as ethnicity, age, and gender, sexual orientation, and disabilities.

2.3.3 Importance of diversity management

The growing discussion surrounding diversity management is motivated by a variety of reasons and fueled by different perspectives. A rise in the implementation of diversity management in MNCs underscores the importance of this topic (Collins, 2012). Furthermore, in the context of

shifting population demographic trends, workforce diversity remains a crucial component for corporations as they address the global workforce crisis (Herrera, Duncan, Ree & Williams, 2013). Linked to the shift in workforce demographics, the growing presence of women and ethnic minorities has additionally motivated corporations to adopt inclusive policies.

Diversity management is commonly perceived as a strategic tool utilized by organizations and institutions to achieve desired financial and organizational outcomes. Such a perspective primarily focuses on its implications on financial performance, productivity levels as well as competitiveness in the market (Yadav & Lenka, 2020). However, the benefits of diversity management go beyond the organizational level, impacting both on an individual and group level as it has shown to promote constructive relationships and enhance team performance (Herrera et al., 2013; Van Bommel et al., 2023; Yadav & Lenka, 2020).

Despite its relevance for both organizational and individual entities, the primary focus of research on diversity management continues to be its financial impact on organizational performance (Van Bommel et al., 2023). Diversity within the workforce enables organizations access to unique customers and resources, such as cross-cultural and language competencies, which in turn consist of a sustainable strategic tool against homogeneous competitors (Collins, 2012; Edewor & Aluko, 2015). By effectively leveraging diversity to increase legitimacy in socially and culturally diverse societies, organizations can successfully differentiate themselves in the marketplace, reaching optimal organizational performance (Richard, Barnett, Dwyer & Chadwick, 2004; Van Bommel et al., 2023). Access to diversity is thus related to positive outcomes such as innovation creation, creativity, and the fostering of learning opportunities within groups (Farndale, Biron, Briscoe & Raghuram, 2015; Collins, 2012). In addition, effective diversity management is associated with lower turnover intentions, as employees tend to have more favorable perceptions of organizations when they successfully manage their diversity (Herrera et al., 2013; Lozano & ESCRICH, 2017). From a strategic perspective, diversity management is related to enhancement in organizational problem-solving and decision-making skills, and it has been positively related to quantifiable outcomes such as an increase in both sales and marketing efforts (Herrera et al., 2013; Van Bommel et al., 2023).

While acknowledging the financial benefits workplace diversity entails, Collins (2012) cautions organizations against dismissing the moral and ethical motivations underlying the

origin of diversity management, rooted in the mitigation of prejudices developed against minorities whose representation has been systematically restricted throughout history.

Possible negative outcomes of diversity in the workplace should not be dismissed, as exemplified by Mousa et al. (2020), who describes workplace diversity as a possible catalyst for stereotyping, fragmentation, tension and discomfort within groups. Furthermore, an inefficient management of diversity can result in undesirable outcomes and conflicts (Van Bommel et al., 2023). Due to cultural and linguistic differences, turnover rates may suffer an increase and other inefficiencies may arise within organizations (Farndale et al., 2015). Despite the possibility of such challenges being experienced, organizations must effectively manage diversity in order to not only capture and benefit from the opportunities that diversity offers as well as to mitigate potential challenges.

2.3.4 Execution of diversity management

While diversity and inclusion are being widely perceived as an important issue by MNCs, it remains complex and unclear how to manage it. The complexity is even greater in a global context, as the interpretation and implementation of equal opportunity laws and laws on the forms of discrimination differ across nations (Özbilgin, 2002). This means that diversity policies require the tailoring of its initiatives according to different contextual factors based on an understanding of and compliance with different legislations and international policies (Collins, 2012). National context is therefore important, to not miss contextual factors and issues, such as Canada's diversity issue with Francophones vs. Anglophones or Japan's ethnic homogeneity.

Most research on global diversity is U.S.-based, with overall limited research to be found. Nishii & Özbilgin (2007) describe the assumption of a pseudo global applicability by North American and Western European research that marginalizes other parts of the world, implicitly implying that there is no generalizability beyond the specific country's context. With this in mind, the following chapter will investigate (global) diversity management initiatives, their impact, and how they can be designed effectively.

2.3.4.1 Typical diversity management initiatives and their motivation

Following diversity initiatives are established as the most common in the literature: diversity training, traditional affirmative action policies, pro-diversity marketing, targeted recruitment

efforts, mentorship programs, diversity committees and specialized diversity management structures, and affinity groups (Berrey, 2015; Dover, Kaiser & Major, 2020; Kalev, Kelly, & Dobbin, 2006; Leslie, 2019). Dover et al. (2020) state that they are often introduced in reaction to openly criticized diversity problems in the company. Starbucks, for example, announced a day of diversity training in all locations after a racist incident in one of their stores (Scheiber & Abrams, 2018). Unconscious bias training for managers, diversity executive positions, hiring targets, monitoring systems or diversity training days are some examples of how they are put into practice.

Dover et al. (2020) differentiate between three rationales behind the initiatives: justice, instrumental, and signaling rationale. Historically, many first diversity initiatives targeted the justice rationale to create just and legally compliant workplaces. Therefore, it can be seen as the fundamental rationale, aiming at reducing workplace discrimination, complying with anti-discrimination laws, and installing a reporting and remediation system to prevent retaliation against claimants. The second generational instrumental rationale is based on the belief that a diverse and discrimination-free workplace improves a company's performance and therefore reflects a fundamental shift. Diversity initiatives are seen as an opportunity and not just as a responsibility. Especially in an increasingly international context, this may be important to maintain competitiveness through diverse backgrounds. Thirdly, the signaling rationale aims at communicating pro-diversity values to stakeholders. It is likely layered on top of the other two, although some organizations might adopt initiatives strictly for signaling purposes. Starbucks was likely interested in signaling that they were taking the incident seriously with concerns about PR and the #BoycottStarbucks movement (Scheiber & Abrams, 2018). But while the concerns of the interested parties can be alleviated with the signaled initiatives, there is no evidence of them creating meaningful change.

The findings in the literature show inconsistent results on how diversity management performs. There is little rigorous empirical evidence that shows diversity initiatives as a causal factor for a fair and inclusive workplace. Some findings suggest that diversity initiatives are associated with these positive benefits (e.g., Avery, McKay, Wilson & Tonidandel, 2007; McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez & Hebl, 2007; Plaut, Thomas, Hurd & Romano, 2009). Others find that they can have positive effects on immediate attitudes but have at best mixed effects long-term with almost no behavioral changes (e.g., Bezrukova, Spell, Perry & Jehn, 2016; Forscher, Lai, Axt, Ebersole, Herman, Devine & Nosek, 2019; Howell & Ratliff, 2017).

Furthermore, there is a potential increase in prejudice and defensiveness. The effectiveness of diversity initiatives can also be hindered by unintended signals they send, which can be triggered even by the mere presence of organizational initiatives (Dover et al., 2020). Because initiatives are interpreted as signals representing the organization regardless of their impact and achievement, challenges in their communication can arise. The presence of diversity initiatives may result in presumed fairness for underrepresented groups, complicating the identification and litigating of discrimination and demonstrating the discrepancy in inclusion. Underrepresented groups can be perceived as less competent or that positive outcomes are unearned. It can also lead to presumed unfairness for overrepresented groups, leading them to potentially perceive themselves as victims of discrimination and backlash against policies or colleagues. Defensive responses are commonly identified in relation to diversity initiatives when traditionally advantaged groups resist information about inequality by defending and insisting on misperceptions of inequality (Knowles, Lowery, Chow & Unzueta, 2014; Kraus, Onyeador, Daumeyer, Rucker & Richeson, 2019; Onyeador, Hudson & Lewis, 2021). Chang, Milkman, Grommet, Rebele, Massey, Duckworth, and Grant (2019) also find in an international field experiment that it is only those with low initial levels of gender or ethnic bias that are slightly (positively) affected by diversity training and solely women and ethnic minority participants that increase their efforts in recognition and mentorship after awareness was created, while whites and men remained unaffected. This raises the question of whether diversity initiatives are the least effective among those most in need of such training. It also implies that the training may not translate to better outcomes within organizations, which makes it questionable whether most initiatives can reduce workplace discrimination (Dover et al., 2020). The empirical data suggests that adopting initiatives as currently done is not significantly successful at creating fair and diversity-supportive environments.

2.3.4.2 Effective design of diversity management initiatives

The mixed findings of the performance of diversity initiatives show that diversity management in its development of the organizational capacity to leverage diversity as a resource is complex (Roberson, 2006). Organizations lack evidence-based strategies for prevention and opportunity creation, which means that many diversity initiatives are formulated non-evidence-based and organized in a decentralized approach (Dover et al., 2020). Often, they are also designed to target multiple objectives that can result in a diluting of the initiatives and overall make the assessment of actual effects challenging. Although current research provides limiting evidence on the effectiveness of initiatives, promising insights on an effective conceptualization have

been formulated and will be examined in the following. All explored practices must be considered with the individual circumstances of each organization in mind.

Firstly, the implementation of organizational structures that address diversity management can be crucial. Structural interventions may be required to comprehensively transform an organization in a way that cannot be achieved by solely focusing on changing individual attitudes (Onyeador et al., 2021).

One form of structural intervention is accountability structures to ensure that executives, units, and committees are responsible for diversity management goals and can be held accountable by leadership. Establishing a central diversity unit improves the development of an integrated diversity strategy and therefore its efficacy (Bezrukova et al., 2016). Accountability structures have been shown to be the most effective approach to increasing the representation of people of color and women in management positions (Kalev et al., 2006). Creating performance standards that apply to everyone and ensuring engagement is valued equally between affected and non-affected groups must be ensured (Bernstein et al., 2019; Hekman, Johnson, Foo & Yang, 2016). As underrepresented group members often face exhaustion, isolation, and marginalization, providing dedicated space and resources can reduce social isolation, improve their representation at the managerial level, and allow to offer support for each other (Onyeador et al., 2021). Demonstrating commitment to diversity management through welcoming and inclusive messaging can increase trust and influence the adoption of inclusive behaviors, in turn reducing performance gaps. The messaging should be authentic and specifically tailored to the organizational context, addressing the concerns at hand.

Additionally, processes should be established so that they bypass interpersonal bias to prevent decision-makers from affecting them (e.g., the hiring process) (Onyeador et al., 2021). By minimizing the likelihood that prejudice and bias can directly affect hiring and other personnel decisions, the workforce can be diversified, e.g. by increasing the inflow of underrepresented groups and enhancing their career trajectory (Bernstein et al., 2019). Jobs can be listed in several outlets, referral system avoided, application and interview processes standardized, and services utilized to remove demographic information and other identity signifiers in the initial screening process (Dover et al., 2020). Bias in the initial screening process has been repeatedly demonstrated in studies and its omission might be especially effective combined with the monitoring of the candidate pool and establishment of predetermined benchmarks (Dover et al., 2020; Quillian, Pager, Hexel & Midtbøen, 2017).

Fostering positive intergroup relations through equal-status, cooperative, and interdependent contact of ingroup- and outgroup-members helps emphasize group commonalities as well as differences, reduces negative emotions, and creates empathy (Dover et al., 2020; Onyeador et al., 2021). Avoiding explicitly mentioning the purpose and discussing group stereotypes might help avoid unintended signaling consequences. This can take the form of project cooperation between diverse employees in an equal-status context. Safe spaces and opportunities to discuss concerns must be ensured. Here it must be mentioned that widespread contact might not be achievable depending on the size of the underrepresented group (e.g., certain religions and identities).

To minimize backlash, it can be helpful to empower autonomy in the work on the internalization of the intervention and allyship, rather than force constraining behavior (Dover et al., 2020). It is found that mandatory diversity training is less effective than voluntary training (Dobbin, Schrage & Kalev, 2015; Kalev et al., 2006). This might only work for those who are motivated to reduce prejudice and prevent discrimination, though. Rather than accommodating defensive responses and backlash, organizations should prepare for them (Onyeador et al., 2021). By planning to document the manifestation of them, correcting misperceptions, and including activities to help recognize and address them, their impact can be reduced.

Correctly framing diversity initiatives may also influence their effectiveness (Dover et al., 2020). By acknowledging that everyone is diverse and that all types of personal attributes and job characteristics contribute to diversity, backlash can be minimized, and the palatability of diversity increased. This broadening of definition must be considered carefully, as it has the potential to inaccurately increase the sense of diversity in organizations which can lead to the neglect of addressing inequality experienced by legally protected groups (Edelman, 2016). Therefore, it might be beneficial to focus on implementing “procedural justice”, the belief that all groups are treated fairly, with respect, and have access to influence the decision-making process (Lind & Tyler, 1988). This way of framing might increase understanding for those who are advantaged while preventing backlash and bias.

Lastly, it is important to track the efficacy of the diversity initiatives through thorough data collection and evaluation (Dover et al., 2020). Consideration of privacy laws should be made

to comply with employee privacy requirements, which vary across regions (Collins, 2012). While this can be challenging, the data analysis can be crucial for the development of the initiatives (Dover et al., 2020). Effects on hiring outcomes, prejudice, employee satisfaction, perceptions of inclusion, and concerns about discrimination are expressive measures. This also requires organizations to specify the objectives of their initiatives, something that can be found to be lacking. As previously mentioned, identifying measurable goals increases the effectiveness and makes their assessment easier. Potential goals are the increased diversity of the applicant pool, increased feeling of inclusion, decreased concerns about discrimination, or decreased experiences with discrimination.

2.3.4.3 Diversity management in a global context

Considering diversity management in a global context raises the question of how it is best organized in its individual environment. It is found that the best approach must emerge through a consideration of its organizational structure, strategic objectives, and demographic environments of operation (Egan & Bendick, 2003; Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007). Reasons for failure in international diversity management are rooted in the failure to recognize contextual differences (Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007). A direct export of the initiatives from the domestic environment ignores differences in treatment and opportunity, such as strict gender divisions (e.g., Saudi Arabia) or racial mix (e.g., homogeneity in Japan). Additionally, if foreign operations are not involved in the diversity initiative planning, cultural inappropriateness is risked and relevant cross-cultural issues are potentially missed (Gelfand, Nishii, Raver & Schneider, 2007). Socio-historical power discrepancies in each cultural context must be considered, definitions of diversity and its local impact examined, and goals for alleviating sources of discrimination locally established (Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007).

When formulating an international approach to diversity management, the appropriateness of a standardized global approach as opposed to multi-domestic approaches can be debated. The optimal degree of centralization and standardization is discussed by literature, leading to dividing opinions regarding multidomestic approaches and global approaches. Multidomestic approaches are appreciated for their sensitivity to local contexts regarding social, political, economic, legal and cultural differences, but criticized due to the resistance they offer (Egan & Bendick, 2003; Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007). Opposingly, an effective global approach is proposed to incorporate the inclusion of subsidiaries into decision-making processes and to develop flexible practices sensitive to the cultural differences each subsidiary unit offers. Such

a balanced approach aims to reflect the interest of both the headquarter and each subsidiary, where the headquarter has an overarching broad role of guideline provision while granting subsidiaries a degree of autonomy and independence. It should be tailored and implemented based on the strategic goals and the corporation's internal structure. In this way, the efficiency of the chosen approach of diversity management is linked to the degree of international operations.

Comparing international approaches to diversity management, Collins (2012) describes the U.S. as having embraced diversity initiatives as a whole, while Europe highlights its commitment to gender diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Pioneering efforts are employed to achieve gender parity in corporate management. Asian countries have implemented progressive quotas to improve the presentation of people with disabilities. While some European countries support soft quotas, such as “comply or explain” provisions in corporate governance codes, others introduced enforceable hard quotas with sanctions for non-compliance (European Corporate Governance Institute, 2024; Martínez-García, Terjesen, Gómez-Ansón, 2021). Norway led the way when introducing that list companies must appoint at least 40% of board seats to women or risk dissolution in 2008. Since then, Belgium and France have also introduced hard quotas. Iceland, India, the Netherlands, Israel, Malaysia, Spain, and Switzerland have introduced sanction-free (i.e., soft) quotas for listed companies. In some countries, these quotas only apply to state-owned companies (Denmark, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Kenya, Poland, and Slovenia) (Kirsch, 2018). Gender diversity has also been increasingly focused on in other roles of corporations, such as senior management (European Corporate Governance Institute, 2024). The U.K. as well as Australia have introduced codes on a “comply or explain” basis to achieve gender diversity in the composition of its senior executives, board, and workforce generally. Overall, the implementation of measures mainly focuses on gender diversity, although it has the “potential for greater diversity across a broad range of factors” (European Corporate Governance Institute, 2024).

2.4 Impact of diversity management on employee satisfaction

After having introduced both the concept of employee satisfaction as well as diversity management measures, their relationship is now investigated. As previously mentioned, employee satisfaction has perceptible implications for a company's performance. Superior levels of employee satisfaction increase a company's value when measured as future stock market returns, decrease turnover rates, and can lead to demonstrations of higher performance

(Edmans, 2012; Judge, Thoresen, Bono & Patton, 2001; Ostroff, 1992). Therefore, the relationship of diversity management with employee satisfaction is important to consider, as it can have implicit implications for a company's performance.

Research finds the relationship between diversity management and employee satisfaction as complex with both positive and negative effects. Because there is a negative potential for demographically diverse teams and organizations, it is dependent on individual factors whether the benefits of diversity can be utilized (Creek, Kuhn & Sahaym, 2019). Diversity brings increased potential for conflict and lower social cohesion that can lead to in-group/out-group distinctions and dysfunctional collaboration dynamics (Kirkman, Tesluk & Rosen, 2004). Effective measures are necessary to guide organizational change that has a positive impact on job satisfaction levels (Creek et al., 2019). While these are related to financial costs, they result in apparent increased employee attitudes. Companies that effectively manage global diversity report worldwide perceptions of inclusion, higher levels of perceived organizational support, job satisfaction and organization commitment, advancement potential, and positive perceptions of organizational justice (Nishii & Özbilgin, 2007).

Board diversity and diversity-related management practices are positively related, meaning that companies with diversity among their top corporate leaders tend to have more non-discriminatory policies, sustainability reporting, and better career opportunities for employees of underrepresented groups (Cook & Glass, 2015; Girón, Kazemikhasragh, Cicchiello & Panetti, 2021; Skaggs, Stainback & Duncan, 2012). It is also found that employee satisfaction is increased by organizational support in the form of work-life benefits, cash profit-sharing bonuses, or innovative giving programs (Creek et al., 2019). So, it is interesting to find that although organizational support programs are more frequent with board diversity, there is a negative association between corporate board diversity and employee satisfaction. Creek et al. (2019) hypothesize that this could be explained by diversification efforts often starting in response to particular problems that are lowering job satisfaction. Similar to the above-mentioned Starbucks diversity training day initiative, Uber added a woman to its board after bad publicity regarding harassment and a toxic organizational culture emerged, as one example (Creek et al., 2019). Onyeador et al. (2021) argue that an initial defensive response to demographic change does not necessarily signal a failed intervention but is often appreciated in the long term. It can mean that change is happening and short-term discomfort needs to be

overcome to adjust. Nonetheless, it shows the importance of effective diversity management, to ensure that employees feel supported and organizations can utilize the arising opportunities.

2.5 Life stages

Based on the belief that the social environment in which individuals are integrated significantly shapes one's system of values (Kolnhofer-Derecskei, Reicher & Szeghegyi, 2017), diversity management can be analyzed through the lenses of life stages. Not only are generational cohorts shaped by common historical marks and influences, leading to shared behaviors and values, but individuals are additionally shaped by significant personal life events such as entering parenthood or approaching retirement. Recognizing that such events also influence workplace engagement, it is highly relevant to categorize employees into the following four life stages: Early career, early parenthood, career maturity and pre-retirement. Each life stage is concatenated by common values, expectations, major life events, and the subsequent implication on workplace needs and preferences. The categorization was chosen based on common assessment in literature, everyday practice, and logical evaluation by the authors. The following chapter explores each of the life stages, focusing on their specific needs, challenges, and preferences.

2.5.1 Life stage 1: Early career

Life stage 1 can be described as the early career stage, with work experience up to five years. This stage assumes childless employees, which is why there will be no differentiation between employees with kids and without. It is recognized though, that there are employees that enter the workforce with children. Those employees are not included in this stage but are counted to life stage 2.

Employees of life stage 1 are made up of older Generation Z (Gen Z) (1997-2010) and younger Millennials/Generation Y (1981-1996) (Gupta, 2020). Some literature refers to these overlapping years that are currently in the early stages of their career as “Zillennials”, a span that display mixed characteristics and expectations of both generations (e.g., Sachdev, Devi & Dutt, 2021).

There are several commonalities in both generations, especially regarding the conditions that are valued at work (Gupta, 2020; Peres & Mesquita, 2018). Both generations appreciate

flexibility, immediacy, work-life balance and mobility as well as an interconnectedness of work with their personal life. There is less distinction between work, family, and fun with the aspiration that life and enjoyment should encompass every moment and all aspects. Therefore, conventional working standards are defied and fixed working hours replaced with flexible work concepts. A difference can be found in their approach and values (Gupta, 2020; Peres & Mesquita, 2018). While Gen Z are more entrepreneurial, idealistic, tolerant, and less money-motivated, Millennials approach their work more realistically, ambitious and with optimism about the future. The technological sophistication of Gen Z makes them highly dependent on technology but also highly knowledgeable and self-reliant. Following the logic, Zillennials show characteristics of both generations, or in a less pronounced manner.

The work-related priorities can also be distinguished for both generations. Information about which attributes are relevant and important for generations is helpful for organizations to match the expectations and therefore create opportunities that allow them to secure a valuable work force and successfully retain them. Job security and having a say can be established as unchangingly crucial attributes for job satisfaction across generations (Pasko, Maellaro & Stodnick, 2020; Peres & Mesquita, 2018). Millennials and Gen Z are found to value potential for advancement more than older generations. They place less importance on leadership that is related to the overall reputation of the company than older generations, especially compared to Baby Boomers (1946-1964). Having a positive impact on society is found to be increasingly important for younger generations. Generally, both Millennials and Gen Z tend to change their employers more often than younger generations, it is expected that they change up to four times (Pasko et al., 2020).

Companies that focus on learning and growth as well as culture and ethics when developing introductory and advancement programs can create an organization that meets the needs and preferences of their incipient employees. Developing a leadership culture that prioritizes relationship building and an active and collaborative problem-solving allows Zillennials to participate and feel included (Pasko et al., 2020).

Numerous studies have shown challenges in organizations' efforts at establishing diversity and inclusion in the career entry stage (e.g., Verwiebe, Seewann, Wolf & Hacıoglu., 2016; Ellemers, 2014). Discrimination and marginalization are found to be present at every stage of the job entry level, both at the initial recruitment process but also in the establishment in an

organization. As previously mentioned, unconscious biases have been found to lead to discrimination in the screening process and selection (Dover et al., 2020; Verwiebe et al., 2016). When employed in a company, forms of marginalization and unequal treatments are present for women, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups. Deitch, Barsky, Butz, Chan, Brief & Bradley (2003) argue that discrimination nowadays is less public and more subtle through avoidance, unfriendly or non-verbal communication. Furthermore, subtle biases can be held by both advantaged and disadvantaged groups and influence what is expected of each other and how actions are responded to (Ellemers, 2014).

Discrimination against disadvantaged groups has implications for their career opportunities, as well as their salary, also in the early career stage. Not only is a gender pay gap detectable in most developed countries, but intersectional nuances show that other discriminatory factors increase the income inequality (Berisha, Dubey & Olson, 2022; Ellemers, 2014). In this way, racial wage gaps are still present and disadvantage ethnic minorities. In the U.S., Whites and Asians have had higher incomes than African Americans and while Asians saw the largest wage growth over the last decades, the racial disparities have remained existing (Berisha et al., 2022). As the gender wage gap tends to be minimal at job entry, it starts to increase with time of employment (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2024). With the increase of income inequality, there is also a disparity in career opportunities for different groups. Disadvantages such as implicit biases, stereotypical enforced expectations of performance, lacking organizational support, and difficult circumstances accumulate to barriers that hinder women and minorities from securing equal career opportunities (Ellemers, 2014). Disadvantaged groups (e.g., women) are often assigned leadership positions with more difficult circumstances which make success more difficult compared to men, even if identical performance and leadership skills are displayed. Then also, successful women and minorities alone are not sufficient for creating equal opportunities, as they might be tempted to distance themselves from “regular” women or minorities due to previously experienced discrimination.

2.5.2 Life stage 2: Early parenthood

Employees in life stage 2 try to balance their career and the responsibility of parenthood with young children (< 10 years old), mainly consisting of Millennials and some older Generation Z. Employees in this life stage face a multitude of challenges, both generally and specific to their gender and generation. Millennials may look for flexible work schedules and policies that

encourage parental leave to balance their career goals with their caregiving duties. On the other hand, as digital natives, older members of Generation Z might favor technology-enabled flexibility to reconcile work and family life, such as remote work choices and digital communication tools (Twenge, 2010).

Generally, parents of younger children may encounter difficulties in managing their time effectively between work responsibilities and the demanding needs of childcare, leading to increased stress and feelings of overwhelm (Craig & Churchill, 2020). Often accompanied by the lack of sleep that often follows when caring for infants and toddlers, which can detrimentally impact cognitive functioning and workplace productivity. Additionally, parents may struggle to find affordable and high-quality childcare options, especially without access to employer-sponsored facilities or subsidies, which can create logistical challenges in arranging childcare during work hours. Research has consistently demonstrated that access to quality childcare positively impacts employee retention, engagement, and productivity, underscoring the importance of such initiatives (Rajadhyaksha, Korabik, Lero, Zugec, Hammer & Beham, 2020).

Addressing such challenges requires a supportive organizational culture valuing work-life balance and recognizing the diverse needs of employees with children is also crucial (Kossek, Lautsch & Eaton, 2006). When individuals transition into parenthood, their needs from organizations undergo significant changes, necessitating accommodations to support their evolving responsibilities. Flexibility in work arrangements is necessary for both men and women to successfully manage their responsibilities as professional and family caregivers. This flexibility can take many different forms, allowing parents to balance their professional obligations and parental responsibilities - e.g., reduced work weeks, remote work opportunities, and flexible working hours. Furthermore, the provision of parental leave policies that are equitable and inclusive for both genders is paramount. Such policies not only facilitate the transition into parenthood but also promote a healthy work-life balance, contributing to increased job satisfaction, productivity, and retention rates within organizations (Glass, 2004; Kossek et al., 2006).

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that men and women may have differing needs due to societal expectations, gender roles, and biological factors (Budig & England, 2001). While both genders value flexibility and support in balancing work and family responsibilities, women may face unique challenges related to childcare responsibilities and career

advancement. Specifically for women, challenges may include facing societal expectations regarding their primary caregiving role, contributing to feelings of guilt or inadequacy when balancing work and family responsibilities. They may also encounter barriers to career advancement due to biases related to caregiving duties, such as being overlooked for promotions. Therefore, they are more likely to prioritize flexibility in work arrangements to accommodate caregiving duties, such as opting for part-time work or flexible hours. As a result, the gender pay gap significantly impacts mothers for a variety of reasons that interconnect. Firstly, research continuously shows that there is a "motherhood penalty" in the workforce, where mothers are frequently paid less than women without children and men with or without children - more specifically, women, compared to men, earn 3-15% less in the EU and up to 19% less in the UK (Correll, Benard & Paik, 2007; Ellemers, 2014). Rimalt (2018) states that despite legislative restrictions against gender-based discrimination mothers may face implicit bias and discrimination in recruiting, promotion, and compensation negotiations. This phenomenon is ascribed to prejudices and preconceived notions about mothers' commitment, competence, and availability for work, which could lead to lower wages and again limited career advancement (Correll et al., 2007).

Conversely, men tend to prioritize job security and job advancement and additionally face pressure to prioritize work commitments over family responsibilities due to societal norms, potentially leading to stigma or skepticism when seeking flexibility or parental leave (Budig & England, 2001; Cooke & Baxter, 2010). Moreover, the age of children has an impact on the needs and implications for parents in the workforce. Parents with children below school age typically face more intensive caregiving responsibilities, requiring greater flexibility in work schedules and possibly extended parental leave to accommodate childcare needs. This demographic may benefit from options such as remote work, flexible hours, and on-site support (Bianchi, Robinson & Milkie, 2012).

Because of institutional, cultural, and economic differences, the demands of employees with children may vary greatly across national borders. Strong social welfare systems, like those in Scandinavia, typically provide greater resources for working parents, such as flexible work schedules, paid childcare, and extensive parental leave policies (Moss & Deven, 2006). These nations value gender equality and work-life balance, believing that men and women should share responsibility for providing care. On the other hand, working parents may encounter more difficulties juggling job and family obligations in nations with less established social welfare

systems or strong cultural norms surrounding traditional gender roles, such as some Asian countries (Hsiao, 2022). Limited access to affordable childcare, long working hours, and societal expectations regarding gender roles can pose significant barriers for employees with children. In regions such as North America, where a variety of cultural influences coexist, the requirements of employees who have children may also vary. For instance, the lack of legally required paid parental leave and the high expense of childcare in the United States may pose serious difficulties for working parents. To attract and retain talent, some businesses in progressive industries provide family-friendly policies (Heymann, Earle & McNeill, 2013). In Europe, there is a wide range of approaches to supporting working parents, influenced by cultural norms and government policies. Countries like France and the Netherlands have robust childcare systems and generous parental leave policies, while others may offer more modest support (OECD, 2017).

2.5.3 Life stage 3: Career maturity

Employees in life stage 3 are characterized as those who are at a stable mature phase within their careers, with significant working experience and often with more independent children. Due to their specific conditions, life stage 3 employees have distinctive working preferences and requirements from their younger counterparts, which should not go unnoticed by organizations. Generation X, encompassing those born within the years of 1965 and 1979, (Pasko et al., 2020) is a fair cohort representation of those in life stage 3. Despite a growing interest in the management of Millennials, it remains equally important to understand the characteristics and requirements of this generation, as it is actively leading the labor force with a 34% presence, the same percentage as Millennials (Pasko et al., 2020).

Generation X, known for their independence, individualist thinking, and need for development and growth (Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al., 2017; Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Boniecka, 2022) is characterized as recognizing diversity in the workplace rather than fully embracing it (Cekada, 2012). Generation X is further characterized as highly career-focused rather than job-focused, thus perceived as less devoted to organizations than older generations (Baugh & Sullivan, 2009). Regarding working preferences, Generation X is found to value personal freedom and a work-life balance with flexible working hours over job security, possibly due to their strong family orientation (Baugh & Sullivan, 2009; Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al., 2017). Despite these priorities, according to research by Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Boniecka (2022), Generation X

shows evidence of being the most committed to work, underscoring the necessity of aligning organizational practices with their requirements. One way of attaining this can be through offering career development opportunities, as it is believed to improve their marketability, both to their current employer as well as outside their organization (Baugh & Sullivan, 2009).

Another key aspect of Generation X is that this is the current leading generation within the labor force, holding positions of leadership and thus heavily impacting organizational dynamics (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2022). Not only has research on top management teams (TMT) found there to be a relationship between top executive's leadership style and patterns of behavior with employees' attitudes towards the organization, but also their composition regarding socio-demographic traits of CEOs and senior managers, such as age, gender and ethnicity, to be linked with the strategic and performance outcomes of organizations (Wiersema & Bantel, 1992; Hambrick, 2007). While Mighty (1996) found evidence of non-Caucasian executives to be more tolerant of diversity practices and have higher rates of adoption, Kalev et al. (2006) found gender and ethnicity diversity within TMT to be positively correlated to their levels of commitment to diversity. Furthermore, approaches to diversity management were found to vary according to TMT age, with younger executives holding more positive perspectives on it (Ng, 2008). However, despite the recognition of such benefits, TMT remains predominantly White with both Black men and women's share of management being below 2% of all senior management positions, in contrast with the 61.4% held by white men and 24.3% white women (Bloch, Taylor, Church & Buck, 2021). Furthermore, gender diversity in senior-level positions can potentially increase the hiring of women and also lead to outcomes such as financial and organizational performance however not by itself. Additionally, Ng & Sears (2017) have found efforts to promote women are constrained by external environments such as the case of high levels of company internationalization. Achieving gender diversity remains complex with challenges both at organizational and individual levels. Women's self-perception as well as perception by others are both identified as hindering barriers for career advancement efforts (Matthews, Monk-Turner & Sumter, 2010). Regardless of such challenges, research has shown female top executives to be supportive of women's careers, developing flexibility initiatives for an improved work-life balance and mentorship programs (Ng, 2008; Mighty, 1996). Leadership development programs hold significant value in promoting the career advancement of minorities, who often face limited access to sources of knowledge and skill acquisition (Konrad, 2007). Furthermore, mentoring opportunities and access to professional and informal networks are mentioned in literature as crucial factors for

increased visibility and career development for both women and racial minorities to achieve leadership positions (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003; Fields, Goodman & Blum, 2005; Lyness & Thompson, 2000).

Despite such efforts, women's work advancement remains obstructed by the glass ceiling effect, which is an invisible barrier keeping them from advancing in their careers (Triana, Richard & Su, 2019; Ng & Sears, 2017). As of February 2023, women represent 40.5% of management occupations, 29.2% in senior-level positions, 32% of board directors, and merely 8.2% of CEOs in the USA (Catalyst, 2023).

2.5.4 Life stage 4: Pre-retirement

Life stage 4 employees, or employees who are getting close to retirement, have unique needs and encounter special problems at work. Baby Boomers, often in their late career stages leading up to retirement, are navigating a period where their contributions and experiences are invaluable, yet they encounter age-related stereotypes and organizational practices that may not fully support their continued engagement (Gupta, 2020). The notion of active aging underscores the significance of acknowledging the vital role that senior employees play in organizations and promoting customized care to meet their requirements. In this context, employees with plans of retiring in the next ten years are considered in life stage 4.

Organizations must create an inclusive climate that promotes intergenerational collaboration since ageism, or the stigmatization of older individuals, can drastically lower their enthusiasm to work (Gupta, 2020). This approach improves organizational performance overall while also increasing motivation among senior employees. Ageist stereotypes not only reduce enthusiasm for work but instill a sense of insecurity within senior employees regarding their own performance (Buyens, Van Dijk, Dewilde & De Vos, 2007). Research has found that such biases within employers are a key area of improvement, given their association with poor training efforts, promotions, and consequently the retention rate of the aging workforce (Kaur & Verma, 2011). The cross-cultural features of active aging suggest the need to differentiate approaches for men and women and further customize support to meet their various requirements (Gupta, 2020).

Research shows that individuals in their 60s and 70s wish to stay in the workforce because they have excellent work ethics, are dependable, loyal, have specialized skills, and have important

institutional memory (Gupta, 2020). Employers, however, face a difficulty in modifying their methods as employees age and their abilities, beliefs, skills, and aspirations change from growth to maintenance and emotional meaningfulness. A component of this adaptation entails providing flexible "fade-out" alternatives to facilitate a simple transition for employees approaching retirement, ensuring that their extensive skills and expertise are efficiently passed on to the following generation of employees (Leibold & Voelpel, 2006). This guarantees continuity and the preservation of organizational culture in addition to helping to preserve important institutional knowledge (Gupta, 2020).

The Baby Boomer generation's approaching retirement, which is marked by a strong desire for job stability, respect for authority, need for recognition, and a sense of belonging, among other traits, highlights how urgent it is to solve these issues. Their departure will undoubtedly leave large gaps in the workforce, underscoring the need for policies that value experience, provide flexible scheduling, and encourage senior staff to use technology effectively (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Boniecka, 2022; Pasko et al., 2020).

In addition, managing an aging workforce necessitates making important choices about the sustainability of employment for senior employees, who could feel discriminated against in comparison to younger talent. Employers are encouraged to get rid of forced retirement dates to promote a culture that values and makes use of the wealth of expertise that senior employees have to give. To ensure efficiency, it is imperative to tailor retention measures to the specific requirements and preferences of each individual senior employee (Buyens et al., 2007). This approach not only aids in retaining valuable institutional knowledge but also in maintaining a diverse and skilled workforce amid trends of high turnover among younger employees (Leibold & Voelpel, 2006).

Although characterized as more willing to sacrifice personal time for work (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Boniecka, 2022), introducing flexible scheduling and policies could be fitting and beneficial for older employees, potentially increasing their retention intentions (Kaur & Verma, 2011). Additionally, Baby Boomers' desire for job security and stability (Pasko et al., 2020; Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Boniecka, 2022) underscores the necessity for organizations to revise and adapt their job performance measurements, where the focus is traditionally on the degree of employee's ambition to outperform and to learn new things, which are not qualities prioritized by older generations (Kaur & Verma, 2011). It is found that senior employees mostly prefer a reduced level of responsibilities together with less intense working schedules

and in return are content with lower compensation. This aligns with the shift in motivation in such groups, where employees pay less attention to extrinsic elements such as promotions and pay (Truxillo, Cadiz, & Hammer, 2014).

Overall, existing literature highlights the importance of enhancing job engagement among senior employees, as it has been proven to increase the desire for career continuity and expansion (Buyens et al., 2007). Strategies for obtaining this can include training programs, as older employees express a need for extra training, with areas of focus on enhancing technological skills, given their relative unfamiliarity with such advancements. Additionally, senior employees tend to favor the refining of already developed skills in earlier stages of their career, as opposed to acquiring completely new, unrelated skills, which is more commonly associated with younger workers starting their careers (Kaur & Verma, 2011).

2.6 Conceptualization

The following section introduces a conceptual framework illustrating how diversity management, tailored to support several life stages, can positively impact employee satisfaction across all groups. The underlying principle centers upon the implementation of diversity management initiatives for the management of a diverse workforce in organizations, thus emphasizing the alignment of overarching diversity goals established by HQs with local legal, regulatory context and social and cultural perceptions on diversity management.

The conceptual framework, displayed in Figure 2, categorizes diversity initiatives, each tailored to address different life stages, as outlined in Chapter 2.5. The aim is to maximize overall employee satisfaction, thus optimizing the impact initiatives may have on the satisfaction by tailoring specific efforts to specific life stages. The framework addresses the challenges of diversity management initiatives, regarding their effectiveness. In response, it outlines the measures identified to ensure equal treatment and opportunities for all. Consequently, the identified measures are applied to the relevant life stages, with the central goal of enhancing employee satisfaction. The framework is to be regarded independent from individual circumstances of organizations and focuses on core principles of the concepts of diversity management, employee satisfaction, and their relationship. That organizations should tailor their measures appropriately according to relevant considerations is presupposed.

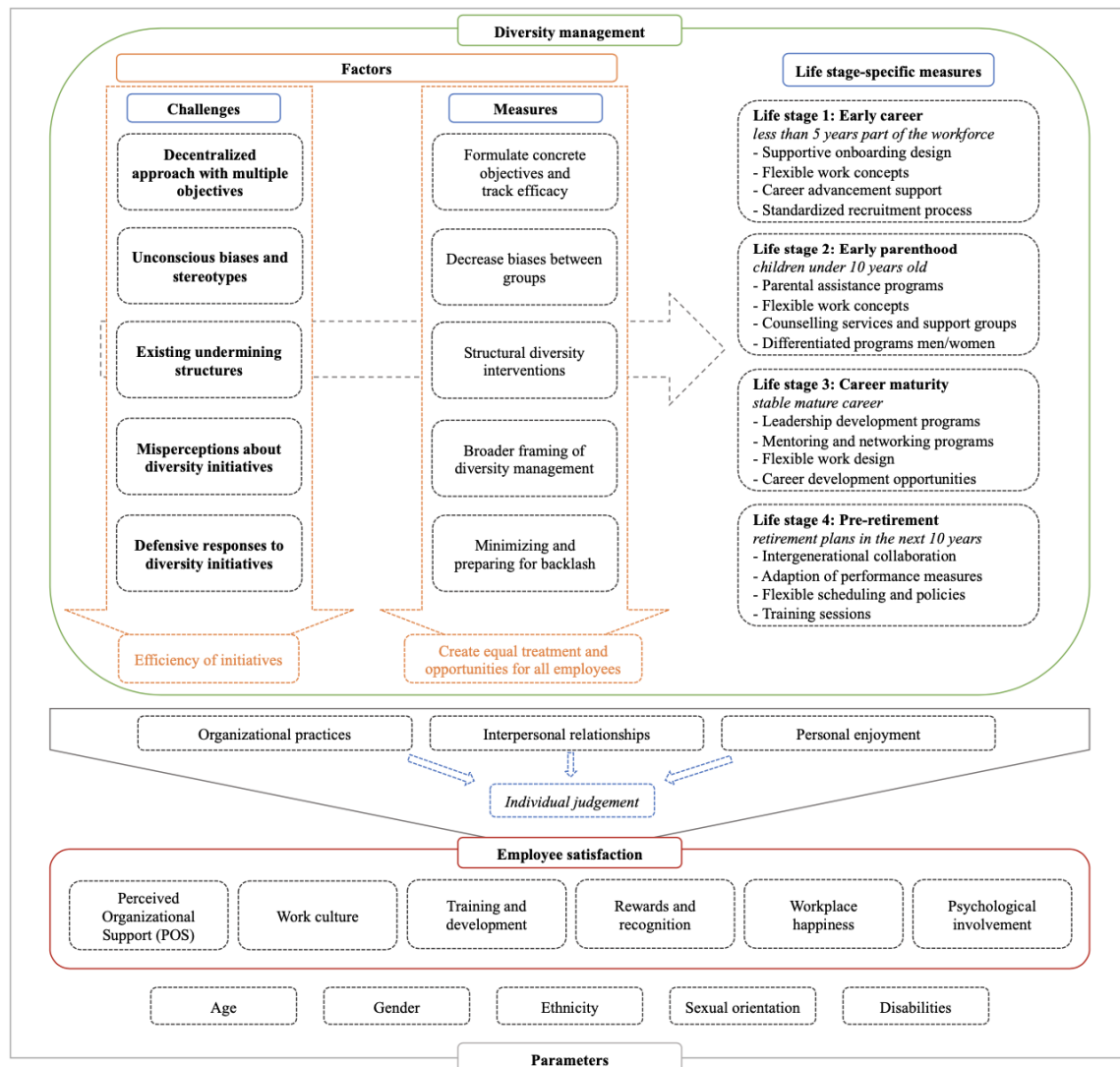


Figure 2 Conceptualization: Relationship between diversity management and employee satisfaction

Source: Own figure

Discussion regarding diversity management and initiatives is deeply polarized, with research reflecting dividing opinions on its benefits and potential drawbacks, leading to concerns regarding its overall impact. More specifically, concerns regarding the enduring impact of diversity management initiatives lead to splitting opinions with some authors claiming certain initiatives may fail to produce long-term effects and show behavioral changes (Bezrukova et al., 2016; Forscher et al., 2019; Howell & Ratliff, 2017). Additionally, the signaling rationale, where the aim is to appease stakeholders, thus failing to create any substantial changes, leads to concerns regarding the impact the underlying motivation can have on the effectiveness of diversity efforts (Dover et al., 2020).

Additionally, inefficiencies in diversity management can be further related to the socio-demographic composition of top-level executives, underscoring the importance of considering such factors in predicting organizational diversity outcomes. Overall research suggests that the presence of minorities in leadership positions can predict the composition of minorities in organizational diversity and their inclusiveness. For instance, female executives often lead to a higher percentage of women in the workforce alongside the implementation of measures such as work-life balance initiatives and mentoring programs (Kalev et al., 2006). Likewise, non-White individuals within top management teams are proven to have a higher commitment to diversity and a widespread adoption of initiatives (Mighty, 1996). Thus, managing the diversity of (top) management teams is a key factor, as it can greatly impact the organization's overall approach to diversity, serving as a core step in the achievement of effective global diversity management.

A positive relationship of diversity management with employee satisfaction is based on an effective design and efficient implementation of initiatives, consisting of different measures. The employees' individual judgment is influenced by the organizational practices, interpersonal relationships, and personal enjoyment, determining their satisfaction levels. Overall, employee satisfaction summarizes the factors of Perceived Organizational Support, work culture, training and development, rewards and recognition, psychological involvement and workplace happiness.

POS refers to employees' perception of how much their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). It is pivotal in influencing various outcomes such as work performance, and organizational commitment. Workplace happiness significantly influences productivity, engagement, and retention rates (Mousa et al., 2020). Work culture encompasses the values, beliefs, and behaviors shared among employees within an organization (Schein, 2010). Continuous training is essential for maintaining competitiveness and enhancing job satisfaction (Parvin & Kabir, 2011; Febrianti et al., 2020), while rewards and recognition further contribute to fostering job satisfaction and talent retention (Sageer et al., 2012; DeCenzo & Robbins, 2010). Employees are more motivated and satisfied when they feel personally invested and find their work meaningful, as psychological involvement enhances job performance and reduces turnover rates, suggesting that fostering such an environment leads to more dedicated and content workers (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). Overall, greater levels of employee satisfaction are linked

with a greater performance, both on a company and individual level (Edmans, 2012; Locke, 1976).

The subsequent section identifies and explores the factors identified in existing literature as compromising the effectiveness of diversity management. Each factor is differentiated in its challenge and measure, representing the complexity of an effective execution of diversity management. All factors have the objective of creating equal treatment and opportunities for every employee.

Firstly, it is imperative to implement an evidence-based diversity management program rather than opting for a decentralized approach with multiple objectives. Such a shift is necessary to increase efficiency and improve the assessment of the impact of the adopted initiatives. Effectively measuring strategies through data collection and evaluation, focusing on a range of key metrics such as hiring outcomes, employee's satisfaction and perceptions of inclusion, prejudice, and discrimination, is a way of combating these challenges. When collecting data, organizations must comply with national and international privacy laws and anti-discrimination laws, ensuring their practices comply with employee privacy laws.

Implicit and unconscious biases can remain even if equal rights are established through laws and policies. Therefore, subtle discrimination and unfair treatment can originate in organizational cultures, expectations, everyday practices, and systems and be displayed by both advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Ellemers, 2014). This means that the existence of initiatives alone might not reduce biases that negatively influence the perceptions and expectations of women and other minorities (Dover et al., 2020). To decrease biases, organizations can focus on creating an environment of equal-status contact between different groups (Dover et al., 2020; Onyeador et al., 2021). Increasing contact helps emphasize commonalities, create empathy, and reduce stereotypes. Organizational support to facilitate equal conditions, such as language choices, help ensure that groups meet on equal footing.

The third challenge of initiatives is that inequalities are deeply embedded in the structures of organizations as well as society. Even though today's society might represent egalitarian values, the societal structures are embedded in history and previous discrimination (Bezrukova et al., 2016; Onyeador et al., 2021). Therefore, interventions on an individual level might not suffice for a meaningful change as long as institutional policies still produce disparate outcomes. Consequently, structural interventions are required (Bernstein et al., 2019; Hekman et al., 2016;

Kossek et al., 2006; Onyeador et al., 2021). Accountability structures allow to ensure that decision-makers and managers can be held accountable for their performance regarding diversity management goals. Generally applicable performance standards allow to focus on equal engagement. Dedicated spaces and resources for underrepresented groups can reduce social isolation, improve representation, and support. Different life situations can be accommodated through adaptable and flexible work concepts. Commitment to diversity management can be displayed through consistent welcoming and inclusive messaging. Overall, processes should be established so that decision-makers and interpersonal biases are prevented from affecting them as much as possible.

Addressing misperceptions in diversity management initiatives requires a strategic shift towards broader framing of diversity management. The challenge lies in overcoming unintended signaling and exclusive messaging, which can isolate groups and provoke defensive reactions (Knowles et al., 2014; Kraus et al., 2019; Onyeador et al., 2021). Procedural justice framing provides a viable solution by emphasizing fairness and inclusivity in the decision-making process. This approach expands the scope of diversity to include all employee attributes and job characteristics, trying to minimize backlash while ensuring that efforts address the specific inequalities faced by protected groups (Lind & Tyler, 1988). By prioritizing equitable treatment and respect for all individuals, organizations can cultivate diversity management initiatives that appeal to everyone, thereby fostering a more inclusive and productive workplace environment.

Lastly, diversity initiatives are often met with resistance from those that have traditionally held power - they often view measures defensively, hindering effectiveness (Bernstein, 2019). Achieving success in promoting diversity and inclusion requires individuals to have a deep understanding of their own and others' social identities, enabling them to navigate social identity issues in the workplace. Members of the dominant group need to embrace the minority groups, challenging their preconceived notions (Edewor, 2007). To reduce backlash, organizations must focus on empowering autonomy and encouraging voluntary participation in diversity training, which research suggests is more effective than mandatory programs (Dover et al., 2020; Dobbin et al., 2015). By proactively addressing potential backlash by documenting occurrences, correcting misconceptions, and facilitating activities to mitigate challenges, organizations can foster a more inclusive and receptive organizational culture (Onyeador et al., 2021).

As this project investigates diversity management and its relationship to employee satisfaction regarding specific life circumstances, the formulated factors are applied to the situational environment of the four life stages.

Concrete situational measures for life stage 1 focus on the needs and expectations in the first five years of employment of late Millennials and early Gen Z. To establish intergroup contact and introduce women and minorities to support groups, onboarding should be designed specifically to achieve these objectives (Dover et al., 2020; Onyeador et al., 2021). Additionally, misperceptions and defensiveness about diversity can be assessed and targeted in the onboarding process. Flexible work concepts can be supported for employees to adapt their daily work design to individual needs (Kossek et al., 2006). Career advancement and equality for women and minorities can be specifically provided through mentoring, transparent salary programs, and opportunity development measures (Bernstein et al., 2019). A standardized recruitment process allows to mitigate the influence of decision-makers and their implicit biases. This is done through avoiding referral systems, listing jobs in several outlets, utilizing services to remove identity signifiers, monitoring the candidate pools, establishing predetermined benchmarks (Dover et al., 2020; Quillian et al., 2017).

To support employees in life stage 2, those with younger children, companies should offer flexible work options like reduced hours, remote work, and flexible schedules to accommodate professional obligations and parental responsibilities (Glass, 2004; Kossek et al., 2006). Providing family-friendly benefits like parental assistance programs, flexible spending accounts for daycare costs, and healthcare coverage for children can lessen financial stress and improve parents' overall work experience (Rajadhyaksha et al., 2020). Fostering a supportive and inclusive organizational culture where employees feel comfortable discussing their family needs and where there is no stigma attached to caregiving responsibilities along with resources such as employee counseling services, and support groups is essential for creating an advantageous work environment and can help manage the challenges associated with balancing work and family life (Kossek et al., 2006). Additionally, addressing gender specific challenges, including societal expectations and the gender pay gap, particularly the motherhood penalty, is crucial for an inclusive workplace (Correll et al., 2007).

Strategies aimed at supporting those in life stage 3 should be tailored to meet the intrinsic characteristics and needs of those characterized as members of Generation X. With a high career focus and individual personality, providing career and professional development

opportunities are crucial for engaging this group (Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al., 2017). Furthermore, their significant presence in top management leadership positions underscores the importance of offering leadership development tailored programs, which is an additional interest of this group (Agnihotri & Bhattacharya, 2022). Recognizing their technological capabilities and also their limitations, providing training in technological literacy could be considered. Placing a high value on work-life balance, reflecting their strong family orientation, fitting initiatives like flexible working design and working hours should be provided for this group, a particular highlight on executive women who play several roles. Additionally, to enhance diversity within top management teams, specially tailored mentoring programs and access to networks are crucial measures, especially for minorities striving to achieve leadership positions, providing them the support needed to overcome barriers to their advancement (Vinnicombe et al, 2003; Fields, Goodman & Blum, 2005; Lyness & Thompson, 2000).

Organizations can support employees nearing retirement, life stage 4, through several key initiatives. Intergenerational collaboration programs bring together younger and older employees, foster mutual learning and reduce age-related stigmas (Gupta, 2020). Providing flexible scheduling options, which allow these employees to tailor their work commitments to fit their transitioning lifestyle, enhancing work-life balance (Kaur & Verma, 2011). Additionally, performance measures can be adapted to recognize the changing work capacity of older employees, through the adjustment of roles to align with their current preferences, such as focusing on the maintenance of existing capabilities rather than introducing new responsibilities, with corresponding salary adjustments (Kaur & Verma, 2011). Tailoring training sessions can be tailored to update older employees on the latest technology and workplace tools, ensuring their skills remain relevant to keep them engaged and productive in their final working years (Kaur & Verma, 2011).

3 Philosophy of science and methods

The philosophy of science and methodology is covered in detail in the upcoming chapter. A thorough explanation of the approach applied in this project is provided. It presents the core principles of the philosophy of science and methodological considerations. By examining these foundations, the chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how scientific knowledge is constructed, validated, and applied, ensuring the credibility of the research findings presented in this thesis.

3.1 Philosophy of science

A key component of the organization, coherence, and the project's investigations is the philosophy of science. It considers reflections on the process of creating and establishing relevant knowledge. Since science is not absolute, it is up to the authors to decide how science should be interpreted and used (Nielsen, 2018). The positivistic philosophical paradigm will be applied in this thesis.

3.1.1 Positivism

The thesis sets its scientific foundation in positivism. This paradigm guides the methodical approach to understanding diversity management in its relationship to employee satisfaction, focusing on observable empirical evidence. Positivism has similarities to critical realism, which delves into the deep domain and subjective epistemology (Park, Konge & Artino, 2020). Positivism emphasizes an objective, observable, and quantifiable approach to understanding reality, anchored in a realist ontology similar to critical realism, but with notable differences in its pursuit of knowledge through empirical verification.

In positivism, knowledge is obtained by sensory experience and is verifiable by using scientific methods. Unlike critical realism, this paradigm usually does not address the intransitive dimensions of reality, those parts that exist apart from human awareness (Park, Konge, & Artino, 2020). Rather, positivism focuses on the transitive dimensions, which are the observable phenomena, models, and the theories developed to account for them. This approach implies that knowledge and understanding are built directly from the empirical data gathered through observation and experimentation.

The positivist ontology is characterized by its belief that there is a reality apart from individual thoughts and experiences, yet it highlights the fact that the only ways we can comprehend this reality are through factual analysis and empirical observation (Park, Konge, & Artino, 2020). Therefore, this research prioritizes empirical evidence and observable effects of initiatives on employees while studying diversity management. The epistemology of positivism is objective, centering on the acquisition of knowledge through empirical research and factual analysis. Positivism emphasizes that knowledge is produced from observable, quantifiable facts, in contrast to the subjective epistemology of critical realism, which recognizes the impact of social conceptions on knowledge.

Thus, the main objective of this research is to investigate the concrete dimensions of diversity management and employee satisfaction using empirical studies based on positivist principles. Examining the empirical domain, observable behaviors, responses to diversity management, and the tangible effects the initiatives have on employees' experiences and behaviors. A positivist approach is used to add new, empirically supported insights to the body of knowledge already existing, leading to a more objective understanding of the phenomena being studied.

The authors' choice of positivism as the project's guiding philosophy is in line with a methodology that prioritizes empirical observation and quantification, which is essential given the nature of the research's objectives. Positivism supports the use of quantitative data to generate knowledge, a core aspect of the project. To provide an objective assessment of how various diversity management strategies improve employee satisfaction, positivism promotes an objective analysis that minimizes subjective interpretations and personal biases in data assessment (Rashid, 2023). Furthermore, the project's methodology of developing and empirically testing theories about the connection between diversity management and employee satisfaction aligns well with positivism's emphasis on testable hypotheses. This helps support or contradict the hypotheses as well as generalize results from the examined samples to a larger population, offering practical insights that can direct efficient diversity management strategies (Meridian University, 2023). Finally, positivism emphasizes the practical application of knowledge to solve real-world problems, which align with the project's objective of improving organizational practices to increase employee satisfaction through efficient diversity

management, thereby underscoring the use and relevance of positivism in the research (Rashid, 2023).

3.1.2 System perspective

The paradigm, positivism, has a connection to the system perspective. It is emphasized that knowledge should be based on observable phenomena and measurable facts. The aim of this methodological approach is to achieve a coherent holistic understanding by dividing components into systems. It is not possible to determine all aspects of a system, based on individual parts alone, but through research of the structures, a deeper insight can be achieved, as synergy effects can occur between the variables. These synergy effects are non-observable and do not only have relations to a single variable but to the entire system (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009).

Within the system theory, it is often distinguished between two types of systems, open and closed. However, it is often assumed that most systems are open. In an open system, there is a focus on external factors which entails the outside world has its role in the system (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2008). In contrast, the closed system is more limited and often used in experiments where conditions can be controlled. Systems consist of various components that can be divided into subsystems and relations exist between these components. In this project respondents of the survey make up components of the system, which form parts of the subsystem - the system is formed based on these components. Since it is an open system, a supersystem also exists. This includes external factors such as the environment, which affect actions and results in the system (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009).

3.2 Methodology

To answer the research question “*How is employee satisfaction impacted by diversity management supporting different life stages?*”, a series of methodological decisions were made to best answer the research question. Quantitative methods were the selected approach and data was collected through a survey, designed to capture employees’ experiences with their current organization’s diversity management initiatives. The survey was developed using SurveyXact and distributed online to a random sample of respondents. A total of 212 respondents completed the survey. The reasoning underlying the above-mentioned decisions is elaborated in this chapter.

3.2.1 Research approach

The research approach encompasses the choices pertaining to data collection and analysis (Phair & Warren, 2021). A deductive approach, as a theory-testing approach, initiates with a pre-established theoretical framework which are evaluated through the data obtained, while conversely, an inductive approach follows a theory-developing approach, where the emphasis is on the development of new theories, thus often associated with exploratory purposes of research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). For the purpose of the project, the research approach leans towards deductive reasoning where a thoroughly developed theoretical framework was tested against quantitative empirical data. Based on the existing research and theories found in literature, three hypotheses were developed to assess the impact of diversity initiatives on employee satisfaction.

Quantitative methods were deemed the appropriate choice to answer the research question *“How is employee satisfaction impacted by diversity management supporting different life stages?”*. With a focus on life stages, the research question aims to understand the relationship between the variables diversity management and employee satisfaction. Due to a lack of research and existing literature regarding life stages in relation to the topic of diversity management, the research assesses the relevance of including life stages in such context, with the purpose of identifying trends in satisfaction levels according to life stages and to find statistical significance, which are inherent characteristics of quantitative methods (Gelo, Braakmann, & Benetka, 2009).

Establishing statistical significance, through the testing of formulated hypotheses, is an essential step for producing generalizable findings, which is one of the main aims of the research. Additionally, the three formulated hypotheses were tested with quantitative data, collected through the implementation of a survey, a tool which allows the simplification of the studied phenomenon to numerical, quantifiable data (Gelo et al., 2009; Creswell, 2013). Qualitative methods emphasize individual experiences and subjectiveness in their interpretation and analysis, which limits their level of standardization, showcasing unsuitability to address the research question.

Regarding the data analysis, the researchers aimed to explore whether several factors, such as life stage, gender, country of employment, and minority status, may influence the relationship

between the mentioned variables. Within the quantitative approach, data analysis has the purpose of testing the formulated hypothesis by analyzing the nature of the relationship between the observable variables. The researchers aim to explore whether several factors, such as life stages, age, gender, minority status, and management position, may influence the relationship between the variables under analysis. Furthermore, data analysis is conducted to discover the statistical significance of the relationship between variables, therefore assessing the ability to generalize them to a larger population. Data analysis additionally resorts to the employment of statistical procedures (Gelo et al., 2009). For the purpose of the project, the choice of statistical testing is a regression analysis and a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

3.2.2 Research design

Based on the chosen methodological approach, the research design is implemented accordingly, which encompasses the methodological procedures and processes taken during the steps of data collection and analysis (Gelo et al., 2009). It is primary research that is based on direct data collection through a survey. The data is analyzed by utilizing quantitative methods. Reflecting upon the choices above, quantitative method designs are classified into three predominant types: experimental, correlation, and survey designs (Creswell, 2013). For this project the correlational design was adopted, characterized as a non-experimental design, allowing the investigation of the relationships between variables without manipulating the independent variable(s). The correlational design thus facilitates the exploration of the degree of association or relation between the variables under investigation, aiming to measure whether the variables are related or if one could predict the other through the use of statistical tools.

3.2.2 Survey

Measuring employee satisfaction and its relationship to diversity management can involve a variety of methodologies aimed at capturing the multifaceted aspects of employee experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward their workplace. Central to these methodologies are surveys, which are the most common tools used for this purpose (Kumar & Pansari, 2015). Surveys enable to systematically gather data on various dimensions of employee satisfaction and diversity management, which can subsequently be analyzed and set into relation. For this reason, a survey was chosen as the method for this project.

The survey was designed to examine the impact of diversity management on employee satisfaction with consideration of different life stages. It is introduced by a short text, which included the objective of the survey, the target group of respondents, how to navigate the survey and an invitation to answer the questions honestly to avoid careless responding and thereby get the most accurate survey.

In total, 25 questions were answered by each respondent (see Appendix D for full questionnaire). 21 questions were displayed to everyone, while the last four questions were specific to one of the four life stages. Therefore, four different overall versions of the questionnaire were developed. The questionnaire was confirmed and adjusted through conducting a pilot study and receiving feedback from 12 respondents to ensure reliability and validity of the results (see Appendix B for an overview over the pilot study).

To start, the respondents were asked demographic questions about their gender, age, country of employment, minority status, and whether they were in a management position. Thereafter, contingency questions about their length of employment, parental status, and retirement plans allowed to categorize the respondents into the previously defined four life stages. Respondents were categorized into their corresponding life stage based on the activations implemented in the survey. Respondents selecting “Under 5 years” about their length in the workforce were assigned for life stage 1 and consequently presented with the questions pertaining to such. Those classified as belonging to life stage 2 indicated both over 5 years of work experience and children younger than 10 years old. Life stage 3 respondents indicate over 5 years of work experience, did not have children under 10 years old and additionally did not plan on retiring within the next 5-10 years. Conversely, respondents assigned to life stage 4 fulfilled the same requirements as those in life stage 3 however revealed intentions of retiring within the next 5-10 years.

Then, questions ten to 21 inquired about the satisfaction levels with their employment and their organization's diversity management, by asking one question per identified factor (six factors for employee satisfaction, five for diversity management) and one general question about the overall diversity management efforts. The final four questions were formulated dependent on the life stage and specifically asked for the relevant factors of each life stage. The questions were formulated with the findings of the literature in mind, the feedback from the pilot study, and to be easily understood, concrete, and of unambiguous meaning (Roopa & Rani, 2012). Necessary key words were supported with definitions and/or examples. All questions are close-

ended questions. The question sequence was chosen so it develops from general to more specific questions.

Except for the first demographic questions which had yes/no questions, drop-down menus, and single-choice questions, the data has been collected with the help of a Likert scale. The options go from positive loaded to negative loaded, as it makes it more convenient for the respondent and analysis. The Likert scale from 1 to 5 was designed in the following way (see Figure 3).



Figure 3 Chosen Likert scale questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed on April 1st, 2024, with 14 days to complete. Personal connections and social media were used to acquire a random sample of respondents that fit the criteria of being employed in a corporate job, which was chosen to ensure a comparable analysis. Therefore, an initial contingency question of whether a potential respondent was employed in a corporate position at the beginning of the questionnaire ensured this. If this criterion was not fulfilled, the respondent was thanked for their effort but informed that they do not qualify for participating. A minimum of 40 respondents for each life stage was intended to ensure generalizability of the results. The online software Survey Xact was utilized to conduct the survey while ensuring easy use and anonymity. In the end, 212 valid responses were collected, with 82 respondents in life stage 1, 41 respondents in life stage 2, 46 respondents in life stage 3, and 43 respondents in life stage 4.

3.2.3 Statistical analysis

The data was analyzed based on statistical tests. In the effort of summarizing and organizing the characteristics of the responses, descriptive statistics are applied. The frequency distribution of the values, the measures of central tendency, and the measures of variability are analyzed. Furthermore, cross tabulations allowed to analyze how means across the categorical variables

vary from each other. The score in the last row “total” reveals the weighted mean for each score, exemplarily calculated for two variables as:

$$\text{Weighted Average} = \left(\frac{\text{mean}_1 \times \text{size}_1 + \text{mean}_2 \times \text{size}_2}{\text{size}_1 + \text{size}_2} \right)$$

Subsequently, the data set was analyzed with parametric tests - statistical tests that make certain assumptions about the distribution of the data being analyzed - to test the three formulated hypotheses. For hypotheses 1 and 2, a multivariate linear regression was explored, while hypothesis 3 is based on a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). Following hypotheses were tested.

H₀₁: The execution of diversity management does not affect employee satisfaction.

H_{A1}: The execution of diversity management affects employee satisfaction.

H₀₂: Life-stage specific diversity management does not affect employee satisfaction.

H_{A2}: Life-stage specific diversity management affects employee satisfaction.

H₀₃: Employee satisfaction and perception of diversity management does not differ across life stages.

H_{A3}: Employee satisfaction and perception of diversity management differ across life stages.

The testing of the hypotheses was conducted either with regression models or comparison tests. The choice of test was made based on the formulation of the hypothesis and intended assertion.

To test hypotheses H_{01/A1} and H_{02/A2}, multivariate linear regression models were utilized. Describing the relationship between variables, this allows to estimate how a dependent variable changes, as the independent variables change.

The regression models were formulated in the following structure:

The model has the form of:

$$y_i = \beta_0 + \sum_{j=1}^p \beta_j x_{ij} + \epsilon_i$$

for $i \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ where

$y_i \in \mathbb{R}$ is the real-valued response for the i -th observation

$\beta_0 \in \mathbb{R}$ is the regression intercept

$\beta_j \in \mathbb{R}$ is the j -th predictor's regression slope

$x_{ij} \in \mathbb{R}$ is the j -th predictor for the i -th observation

$\varepsilon_i \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$ is a Gaussian error term

For $H_{01/A1}$, gender, age, country of employment, country of headquarter, minority, management position, and the six questions of diversity management (X_{16-21}) are identified as the independent variables while employee satisfaction, assessed through employees' perceptions and feelings regarding their organizational culture and practices (X_{38}), is the dependent variable. This variable combines the six questions on employee satisfaction, X_{10-15} .

$H_{02/A2}$ is tested with four regressions, one for each of the four life stages. In each regression, the dependent variable is the overall employee satisfaction (X_{38}), while the dependent variables are the four life stage specific questions (life stage 1: X_{22-25} , life stage 2: X_{26-29} , life stage 3: X_{30-33} , life stage 4: X_{34-37}).

Following assumptions were made in the regression analysis (UCLA, n.d.). Linearity, the relationships between the predictors and the outcome variable should follow a linear pattern. Homogeneity of Variance (Homoscedasticity), the error variance should remain constant across all levels of the predictors. Independence, the errors associated with one observation should be uncorrelated with the errors of any other observation. Normality, the errors should follow a normal distribution. Model Specification, the model should be appropriately specified, including all relevant variables while excluding irrelevant ones.

A one-way MANOVA was employed to analyze and compare the difference of employee satisfaction and perception of diversity management for the four life stages. It is used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference in means between the life stages (UCLA, n.d.). The independent variable (fixed factor) is the categorization of life stages (1-4) (X_{44}), while the dependent variables are the overall employee satisfaction (X_{38}) and overall diversity management (X_{39}). After determining the difference among the levels of the independent variables (MANOVA), a post-hoc test allows to quantify the difference if applicable. In this instance, a Scheffe analysis of variance was utilized.

Following assumptions must be met for the results of the MANOVA to be valid (Statologie, 2020). Firstly, the dependent variable should be continuous, while the independent variable

comprises two or more categorical groups. Observations must be independent, with each participant belonging to only one group. Adequate sample size ensures the reliability of findings, while the absence of outliers prevents undue influence on the results. Although multivariate normality is challenging to directly assess, the normality of each dependent variable within each group offers a proxy for assessing multivariate normality. Additionally, a linear relationship between each pair of dependent variables within each group is tested through regression assumption testing. Homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices ensures equal variances and covariances across groups, while the absence of multicollinearity safeguards against redundancy in predictors.

4 Data analysis

The following chapter summarizes the data analysis regarding the impact diversity management initiatives have on employee satisfaction. The data is explored with descriptive statistics, multivariate linear regressions, and a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The three established hypotheses are tested and analyzed separately. Sequentially, the section examines how factors - life stages, age, gender, minority status, and management position - affect the satisfaction levels. Through such analysis, the research provides insights into both satisfaction levels and perceptions of intersecting identities, establishing a foundation for understanding this relationship in the subsequent discussion.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The initial step in statistical analysis for quantitative research, descriptive statistics, offers an overview of the present data set, comprising the total of responses from the sample. The following chapter will thus detail the main characteristics of the survey responses, including the frequency distribution of the values, the measures of central tendency, and the measures of variability - the three main categories of descriptive statistics.

4.1.1 Frequency distribution

In total, the frequency distribution analysis provides nine frequency tables for the variables of interest: *Gender*, *Age*, *Minority*, *Management_Position*, *Country_Employed*, *Country_Headquarter* and *LifeStage_Category*. The data distribution for each of the categorical variables is depicted in the frequency column, while percentages and cumulative frequencies are provided for an intuitive interpretation. Before proceeding with the analysis, it remains imperative to note that for all of the frequency distribution tables provided, the values for both “Percent” and “Valid Percent” columns remain equal. Such uniformity implies the lack of any missing responses for any of the variables represented in each of the tables, a positive indication of quality and credibility in data.

Table 1 Frequency statistics: gender

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Woman	138	65.1	65.1	65.1
	Man	73	34.4	34.4	99.5
	Other	1	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	212	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 provides the *gender* distribution among survey respondents. With a total of 212 respondents, 138 identifying as “Woman” and 73 as “Male”, 1 respondent identifies with “Other”, resulting in a sample with 65% female and 34.4% male respondents.

Table 2 Frequency statistics: Age

		Age			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 27	51	24.1	24.1	24.1
	28-43	78	36.8	36.8	60.8
	44-59	61	28.8	28.8	89.6
	Over 60	22	10.4	10.4	100.0
	Total	212	100.0	100.0	

For the variable *Age*, 51 of respondents are below 27 years old (24.1%), 78 respondents are between the ages of 28 and 43 years old (36.8%), 61 of respondents are between 44 and 59 years old (28.8%) and lastly, 22 of respondents are aged over 60 years old (10.4%) (see Table 2).

Table 3 Frequency statistics: Minority status

		Minority			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	28	13.2	13.2	13.2
	No	184	86.8	86.8	100.0
	Total	212	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the variable *Minority*, 28 respondents confirm belonging to at least one minority group, representing 13.2% of the sample, whereas 184 (86.8%) respondents do not (see Table 3).

Table 4 Frequency statistics: Management position

		Management_Position			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	70	33.0	33.0	33.0
	No	142	67.0	67.0	100.0
	Total	212	100.0	100.0	

Concerning the variable *Management_Position*, 70 respondents occupy a management position, representing 33% of the sample, while 142 respondents do not (67%) (see Table 4).

Table 5 Cross tabulations: Gender and management position

		Management_Position		
		Yes	No	Total
Gender	Woman	37	101	138
	Man	33	40	73
	Other	0	1	1
Total		70	142	212

Among the 70 respondents holding *management positions*, 37 are women (26.8%) and 33 are men (45.2%) (see Table 5).

Table 6 Cross tabulations: Minority status and management position

		Management_Position		
		Yes	No	Total
Minority	Yes	6	22	28
	No	64	120	184
Total		70	142	212

Furthermore, 6 respondents with managerial roles identify as holding a minority status while 64 do not, resulting in 21.4% of minorities and 34.8% of non-minorities holding managerial roles (see Table 6).

Table 7 Frequency statistics: Country of employment

		Country_Employed			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Austria	1	.5	.5	.5
	Belgium	1	.5	.5	.9
	China	8	3.8	3.8	4.7
	Denmark	70	33.0	33.0	37.7
	France	1	.5	.5	38.2
	Germany	60	28.3	28.3	66.5
	Hungary	1	.5	.5	67.0
	India	6	2.8	2.8	69.8
	Mexico	1	.5	.5	70.3
	Netherlands	2	.9	.9	71.2
	Poland	12	5.7	5.7	76.9
	Portugal	29	13.7	13.7	90.6
	Romania	9	4.2	4.2	94.8
	South Korea	1	.5	.5	95.3
	Spain	1	.5	.5	95.8
	Switzerland	3	1.4	1.4	97.2
	United Kingdom	6	2.8	2.8	100.0
	Total	212	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 7 for the variable *Country_Employment*, respondents are mainly employed in Denmark (33%), Germany (28.3%), Poland (5.7%), and Portugal (13.7%).

Table 8 Frequency statistics: Country of headquarters

		Country_Headquarter			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Austria	1	.5	.5	.5
	China	1	.5	.5	.9
	Denmark	71	33.5	33.5	34.4
	France	1	.5	.5	34.9
	Germany	49	23.1	23.1	58.0
	Iceland	1	.5	.5	58.5
	India	1	.5	.5	59.0
	Ireland	2	.9	.9	59.9
	Netherlands	2	.9	.9	60.8
	Norway	1	.5	.5	61.3
	Poland	2	.9	.9	62.3
	Portugal	27	12.7	12.7	75.0
	Romania	2	.9	.9	75.9
	Singapore	2	.9	.9	76.9
	Sweden	2	.9	.9	77.8
	Switzerland	5	2.4	2.4	80.2
	United Kingdom	10	4.7	4.7	84.9
	United States of America	32	15.1	15.1	100.0
	Total	212	100.0	100.0	

The headquarters of the corporations that respondents currently work at are primarily located in Denmark (33.5%), Germany (23.1%), Portugal (12.7%), and USA (15.1%) (see Table 8). The distribution of respondents from such a limited number of countries failed to provide a great foundation for a global analysis of diversity management, limiting the scope of analysis.

Table 9 Frequency statistics: Life stages

		LifeStage_Category			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Life Stage 1	82	38.7	38.7	38.7
	Life Stage 2	41	19.3	19.3	58.0
	Life Stage 3	46	21.7	21.7	79.7
	Life Stage 4	43	20.3	20.3	100.0
	Total	212	100.0	100.0	

It is additionally relevant to analyze the data distribution for variable *LifeStage_Category*, as depicted in Table 9. For a total of 212 respondents, 38.7% (82) are classified as being in life stage 1, 19.3% (41) in life stage 2, 21.7% (46) in life stage 3 and 20.3% (43) in life stage 4. The data distribution appears to be relatively even, with a majority of respondents falling into life stage 1.

4.1.2 Cross-Tabulations

Cross-tabulations tables are provided for further insights regarding the variables of interest by grouping and examining their mean variations, thus constituting a measure of central tendency. Through this analysis, a clearer understanding of the answering behavior of certain groups within the respondents is possible, allowing an easier comparison of respondents' answers.

For each of the variables under analysis - *LifeStage_Category*, *Age*, *Minority*, *Management_Position*, *Gender* – two tables are established, one focusing on employee satisfaction and one on diversity management. Tables regarding employee satisfaction detail, in their columns, both the *Overall_employee_satisfaction* and employee satisfaction factors, which represent all the individual questions pertaining to employee satisfaction. Similarly, the tables regarding diversity management include, in the columns, both the *Overall_Diversity_Management* and diversity management factors for further analysis.

For an accurate interpretation of the following, it remains essential to emphasize the scoring system employed. The individual questions under analysis utilized a Likert scale and featured five options, ranging from positive loaded to negative loaded (cf. 3.2.3). Furthermore, each combined variable, *Overall_Employee_Satisfaction* and *Overall_Diversity_Management*, represents the sum of the individual scores of all questions regarding either employee satisfaction or diversity management, thus providing an overview of individual's satisfaction levels and perceptions on diversity management. In the following graphs, lower mean values represent more favorable opinions, whereas higher mean values represent less favorable perceptions, contained within a range of 0 to 5.

4.1.2.1 Life stage

The results for employee satisfaction and diversity management are considered in separate tables regarding the four life stages.

Table 10 Means: Life stages for employee satisfaction

Report							
Mean							
LifeStage_Category	Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	POS	Work_culture	Training_development	Rewards_recognition	Workplace_happiness	Psychological_involvement
Life Stage 1	2.11	2.28	1.89	2.18	2.57	1.49	2.27
Life Stage 2	1.83	1.71	1.56	1.98	2.05	1.61	2.07
Life Stage 3	1.75	1.87	1.52	1.80	1.96	1.50	1.87
Life Stage 4	2.28	2.33	1.95	2.37	2.74	1.91	2.35
Total	2.02	2.09	1.76	2.10	2.37	1.60	2.16

According to the *Overall_Employee_Satisfaction* column (see Table 10), all life stages report a moderate level of satisfaction, with mean values ranging from 1.75 to 2.28. life stage 3 appears as the most satisfied life stage (1.75), falling close to life stage 2 (1.83), whereas life stage 4 appears as the least satisfied life stage, with a mean of 2.28. Further analysis of the other graph columns reveals life stage 4 as consistently reporting the highest mean score across all employee satisfaction factors, indicating consistent dissatisfaction within this group.

Furthermore, across all employee satisfaction factors, *Workplace_happiness* reports highest satisfaction whereas *Rewards_recognition* the lowest satisfaction. The order, from highest to lowest is as follows: *Workplace_happiness*, *Work_culture*, *POS*, *Training_development*, *Psychological_involvement*, *Rewards_recognition*.

Table 11 Means: Life stages for diversity management

Mean	Report						
	Overall_Diversity_Management	Diversity_management	Concrete_objectives	Biases_decrease	Structural_interventions	Broader_framing	Minimizing_backlash
LifeStage_Category							
Life Stage 1	2.35	2.13	2.62	2.54	2.38	2.02	2.43
Life Stage 2	2.11	2.00	2.24	2.20	2.29	1.80	2.10
Life Stage 3	2.14	2.00	2.24	2.28	2.15	1.96	2.24
Life Stage 4	2.58	2.58	2.60	2.84	2.53	2.44	2.47
Total	2.31	2.17	2.46	2.48	2.34	2.05	2.33

Similarly, Table 11 reveals through column *Overall_Diversity_Management* a moderately positive level of perceptions towards diversity management across all life stages, despite slightly less positive in comparison to the *Overall_Employee_Satisfaction*, with mean values ranging from 2.11 to 2.58 (see Table 10). Life stage 2 exposes the most positive perceptions, at 2.11, contrasting with life stage 4 which expresses less positive perceptions at 2.58. The order remains similar to the one observed in Table 8, with life stage 2 leading, followed by life stage 3, life stage 1 and life stage 4. Additionally, life stage 4 mirrors Table 10, showcasing consistent less positive values for the individual diversity factors. Table 11 additionally reveals *Broader_framing* factor as the most positively rated factor and *Biases_decrease* as the least positively rated. The complete factor order from most positively perceived to the least is as follows: *Broader_framing*, *Diversity_management*, *Minimizing_backlash*, *Structural_interventions*, *Concrete_objectives*, *Biases_decrease*.

Table 12 Means: Life stage 1 specific diversity management

Mean	Report			
	LifeStage_1_recruitment	LifeStage_1_flexibility	LifeStage_1_onboarding	LifeStage_1_careerdevelopment
LifeStage_Category				
Life Stage 1	2.13	1.96	2.20	2.71
Total	2.13	1.96	2.20	2.71

For the four variables in life stage 1, the perception of their organization's measures on career development is the lowest (2.71), while flexibility is perceived the best (1.96) (see Table 12). Standardized recruitment processes (2.13) and supportive onboarding (2.20) are perceived slightly positive.

Table 13 Means: Life stage 2 specific diversity management

Report				
Mean				
LifeStage_Category	LifeStage_2_flexibility	LifeStage_2_benefits	LifeStage_2_organizationalculture	LifeStage_2_differentiatedprograms
Life Stage 2	1.78	2.10	1.80	2.66
Total	1.78	2.10	1.80	2.66

The four tailored questions for life stage 2 shows that they perceive the flexibility in their organization the best (1.78), while they have the worst perception of how their organization addresses gender-specific challenges (2.66) (see Table 13). A moderate positive perception is found for benefits supporting their parental status (2.10), while there is a positive perception of the organizational work culture supporting their caregiving responsibilities (1.80).

Table 14 Means: Life stage 3 specific diversity management

Report				
Mean				
LifeStage_Category	LifeStage_3_flexibility	LifeStage_3_careerdevelopment	LifeStage_3_leadershipdevelopment	LifeStage_3_networkingmentoring
Life Stage 3	1.98	2.26	2.67	2.67
Total	1.98	2.26	2.67	2.67

Among all diversity management factors, flexibility measures report the most favorable perceptions (1.98) whereas both leadership development and networking and mentoring measures report the least favorable score at 2.67 (see Table 13). In addition, career development opportunities are moderately positively perceived (2.26).

Table 15 Means: Life stage 4 specific diversity management

Report				
Mean				
LifeStage_Category	LifeStage_4_intergenerational	LifeStage_4_flexibility	LifeStage_4_training	LifeStage_4_performance measurement
Life Stage 4	2.63	2.77	2.72	2.95
Total	2.63	2.77	2.72	2.95

Table 15 shows that performance measurement is perceived the least positive (2.95) for life stage 4. Flexibility in work (2.77) and training opportunities (2.72) are close, while intergenerational collaboration is perceived best with a value of 2.63.

4.1.2.2 Age

Table 16 Means: Age for employee satisfaction

Report							
Mean	Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	POS	Work_culture	Training_development	Rewards_recognition	Workplace_happiness	Psychological_involvement
Age							
Under 27	2.02	2.18	1.80	2.08	2.37	1.31	2.31
28-43	1.93	1.96	1.65	2.00	2.32	1.58	2.09
44-59	2.00	2.05	1.82	2.03	2.38	1.72	2.02
Over 60	2.33	2.45	1.86	2.68	2.55	2.00	2.45
Total	2.02	2.09	1.76	2.10	2.37	1.60	2.16

Table 16 and Table 17 reveal significant similarities to the analysis conducted for variable *LifeStage_Category*. Regarding satisfaction levels, those aged between 28- and 43-years old report the highest level of satisfaction at 1.93, whereas those over 60 years old appear as the less satisfied age group within the sample at 2.33. Following a similar trend as for life stages (see Table 10), the order from more satisfied to less satisfied is 28-43 years old, 44-59 years old, under 27 years old, and at last those over 60 years old. Across all age groups, the order of employee satisfaction factors remains consistent, following the sequence - *Workplace_happiness*, *Work_culture*, *POS*, *Training_development*, *Psychological_involvement*, *Rewards_recognition* (see Table 16).

Table 17 Mean: Age for diversity management

Report							
Mean	Overall_Diversity_Management	Diversity_management	Concrete_objectives	Biases_decrease	Structural_interventions	Broader_framing	Minimizing_backlash
Age							
Under 27	2.35	2.06	2.73	2.57	2.33	1.94	2.43
28-43	2.22	2.10	2.32	2.31	2.37	1.99	2.22
44-59	2.22	2.10	2.26	2.44	2.21	2.03	2.25
Over 60	2.78	2.86	2.91	2.95	2.64	2.59	2.73
Total	2.31	2.17	2.46	2.48	2.34	2.05	2.33

Table 17 leads to similar interpretations, with those between 44-59 years old and 28-43 years old holding the best perceptions at 2.22. Those aged 60 over hold the least favorable perceptions over diversity initiatives (2.78). The sequence remains as 44-59 years old, 28-43 years old, under 27 years old and over 60 years old, reflecting a similar pattern to the sequence in diversity management analysis for life stages (see Table 11). Diversity management factors followed a similar perception sequence/trend with *Broader_framing*, *Diversity_management*,

Minimizing_backlash, *Structural_interventions*, *Concrete_objectives*, and *Biases_decrease*. Once again *Broader_framing* and *Biases_decrease* being at the extremes of the ranking.

4.1.2.3 Minority

Table 18 Means: Life stage and minority status for employee satisfaction

Mean		Report						
LifeStage_Category	Minority	Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	POS	Work_culture	Training_development	Rewards_recognition	Workplace_happiness	Psychological_involvement
Life Stage 1	Yes	2.05	1.93	1.93	1.79	2.79	1.43	2.43
	No	2.13	2.35	1.88	2.26	2.53	1.50	2.24
	Total	2.11	2.28	1.89	2.18	2.57	1.49	2.27
Life Stage 2	Yes	1.83	1.60	1.80	1.80	2.00	1.40	2.20
	No	1.83	1.72	1.53	2.00	2.06	1.64	2.06
	Total	1.83	1.71	1.56	1.98	2.05	1.61	2.07
Life Stage 3	Yes	1.72	1.67	1.50	1.83	2.00	1.67	1.67
	No	1.76	1.90	1.53	1.80	1.95	1.48	1.90
	Total	1.75	1.87	1.52	1.80	1.96	1.50	1.87
Life Stage 4	Yes	2.83	3.67	2.00	2.67	2.67	3.33	2.67
	No	2.23	2.23	1.95	2.35	2.75	1.80	2.32
	Total	2.28	2.33	1.95	2.37	2.74	1.91	2.35
Total	Yes	2.03	2.00	1.82	1.89	2.46	1.68	2.25
	No	2.01	2.10	1.75	2.13	2.36	1.59	2.15
	Total	2.02	2.09	1.76	2.10	2.37	1.60	2.16

According to Table 18, employee satisfaction levels differ just slightly for variable *Minority*, with non-minorities reporting a slightly more positive level of satisfaction (2.01) in comparison to those belonging to a minority group (2.03). The consistency in satisfaction factors sequence appears here with *Workplace_happiness* leading, followed by *Work_culture*, *POS*, *Training_development*, *Psychological_involvement* and lastly *Rewards_recognition*.

Table 19 Means: Life stage and minority status for diversity management

Mean		Report						
LifeStage_Category	Minority	Overall_Diversity_Management	Diversity_management	Concrete_objectives	Biases_decrease	Structural_interventions	Broader_framing	Minimizing_backlash
Life Stage 1	Yes	2.50	2.14	2.93	2.43	2.50	2.14	2.86
	No	2.32	2.13	2.56	2.56	2.35	2.00	2.34
	Total	2.35	2.13	2.62	2.54	2.38	2.02	2.43
Life Stage 2	Yes	2.46	2.20	2.60	2.20	2.80	2.20	2.40
	No	2.06	1.97	2.19	2.19	2.22	1.75	2.06
	Total	2.10	2.00	2.24	2.20	2.29	1.80	2.10
Life Stage 3	Yes	2.11	2.00	2.17	2.17	2.17	1.83	2.33
	No	2.15	2.00	2.25	2.30	2.15	1.98	2.23
	Total	2.14	2.00	2.24	2.28	2.15	1.96	2.24
Life Stage 4	Yes	3.44	4.33	3.33	3.33	3.33	3.00	3.33
	No	2.51	2.45	2.55	2.80	2.48	2.40	2.40
	Total	2.58	2.58	2.60	2.84	2.53	2.44	2.47
Total	Yes	2.51	2.36	2.75	2.43	2.57	2.18	2.71
	No	2.28	2.14	2.42	2.48	2.31	2.03	2.27
	Total	2.31	2.17	2.46	2.48	2.34	2.05	2.33

Regarding diversity management, Table 19 reveals non-minorities perceived diversity management initiatives more favorably at 2.28 whereas minorities reveal less positive perceptions at 2.51. Similarly, the sequence for diversity factors is as follows: *Broader_framing*, *Diversity_management*, *Structural_interventions*, *Biases_decrease*, *Minimizing_backlash*, *Concrete_objectives*. Life stage specific considerations lead to no informative findings.

4.1.2.4 Management position

Table 20 Means: Life stage and management position for employee satisfaction

Mean		Report						
LifeStage_Category	Management_Position	Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	POS	Work_culture	Training_development	Rewards_recognition	Workplace_happiness	Psychological_involvement
Life Stage 1	Yes	2.18	2.07	1.71	2.50	2.71	1.71	2.36
	No	2.10	2.32	1.93	2.12	2.54	1.44	2.25
	Total	2.11	2.28	1.89	2.18	2.57	1.49	2.27
Life Stage 2	Yes	1.74	1.61	1.61	1.94	1.72	1.67	1.89
	No	1.91	1.78	1.52	2.00	2.30	1.57	2.22
	Total	1.83	1.71	1.56	1.98	2.05	1.61	2.07
Life Stage 3	Yes	1.80	2.00	1.53	1.82	2.00	1.53	1.94
	No	1.72	1.79	1.52	1.79	1.93	1.48	1.83
	Total	1.75	1.87	1.52	1.80	1.96	1.50	1.87
Life Stage 4	Yes	2.22	2.33	1.90	2.24	2.90	1.62	2.33
	No	2.33	2.32	2.00	2.50	2.59	2.18	2.36
	Total	2.28	2.33	1.95	2.37	2.74	1.91	2.35
Total	Yes	1.99	2.01	1.70	2.11	2.34	1.63	2.13
	No	2.03	2.13	1.79	2.09	2.39	1.58	2.18
	Total	2.02	2.09	1.76	2.10	2.37	1.60	2.16

Based on Table 20, employee satisfaction levels differ according to management position, with those in management positions reporting slightly more positive levels (1.99), compared to those in not management positions at 2.03. Similar to other categorical variables above, the sequence for satisfaction factors is *Workplace_happiness*, *Work_culture*, *POS*, *Training_development*, *Psychological_involvement* and *Rewards_recognition*. Life stage specific considerations again find little significant findings regarding the difference for management position.

Table 21 Means: Management position and gender for employee satisfaction

		Report						
Mean		Overall_Emplo yee_Satisfactio n	POS	Work_culture	Training_devel opment	Rewards_reco gnition	Workplace_ha ppiness	Psychological_ involvement
Management_Position	Gender							
Yes	Woman	1.95	1.97	1.70	2.05	2.41	1.57	2.03
	Man	2.03	2.06	1.70	2.18	2.27	1.70	2.24
	Total	1.99	2.01	1.70	2.11	2.34	1.63	2.13
No	Woman	2.01	2.11	1.73	2.03	2.41	1.59	2.15
	Man	2.10	2.20	1.92	2.27	2.37	1.58	2.25
	Other	1.33	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Total	2.03	2.13	1.79	2.09	2.39	1.58	2.18
Total	Woman	1.99	2.07	1.72	2.04	2.41	1.59	2.12
	Man	2.07	2.14	1.82	2.23	2.33	1.63	2.25
	Other	1.33	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Total	2.02	2.09	1.76	2.10	2.37	1.60	2.16

Among those holding management positions, women report a slightly higher level of satisfaction (11.73) in contrast to men (12.15) (see Table 21).

Table 22 Means: Life stage and management position for diversity management

		Report						
Mean		Overall_Diversi ty_Managemen t	Diversity_man agement	Concrete_obje ctives	Biases_decrea se	Structural_inter ventions	Broader_frami ng	Minimizing_ba cklash
LifeStage_Category	Management_Position							
Life Stage 1	Yes	2.26	2.14	2.14	2.50	2.50	2.14	2.14
	No	2.37	2.13	2.72	2.54	2.35	2.00	2.49
	Total	2.35	2.13	2.62	2.54	2.38	2.02	2.43
Life Stage 2	Yes	1.95	1.78	2.06	2.06	2.06	1.67	2.11
	No	2.23	2.17	2.39	2.30	2.48	1.91	2.09
	Total	2.10	2.00	2.24	2.20	2.29	1.80	2.10
Life Stage 3	Yes	2.10	2.00	2.12	2.06	2.12	2.06	2.24
	No	2.17	2.00	2.31	2.41	2.17	1.90	2.24
	Total	2.14	2.00	2.24	2.28	2.15	1.96	2.24
Life Stage 4	Yes	2.53	2.57	2.48	2.90	2.48	2.48	2.29
	No	2.62	2.59	2.73	2.77	2.59	2.41	2.64
	Total	2.58	2.58	2.60	2.84	2.53	2.44	2.47
Total	Yes	2.22	2.14	2.21	2.40	2.29	2.10	2.20
	No	2.35	2.18	2.58	2.51	2.37	2.03	2.39
	Total	2.31	2.17	2.46	2.48	2.34	2.05	2.33

Diversity management was additionally perceived more favorably by those in managerial roles (2.22) rather than those in non-managerial roles (2.35) (see Table 22). Overall, the sequence for diversity factors remains consistent across categorical variables with *Broader_framing* with the best score followed by *Diversity_management*, *Structural_interventions*, *Biases_decrease*, *Minimizing_backlash* and *Concrete_objectives*.

Table 23 Means: Management position and gender for diversity management

		Report						
Mean		Overall_Diversity_Management	Diversity_management	Concrete_objectives	Biases_decrease	Structural_interventions	Broader_framing	Minimizing_backlash
Management_Position	Gender							
Yes	Woman	2.22	2.14	2.16	2.35	2.19	2.16	2.30
	Man	2.23	2.15	2.27	2.45	2.39	2.03	2.09
	Total	2.22	2.14	2.21	2.40	2.29	2.10	2.20
No	Woman	2.31	2.19	2.51	2.43	2.35	2.06	2.31
	Man	2.47	2.20	2.78	2.75	2.48	1.98	2.63
	Other	1.50	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Total	2.35	2.18	2.58	2.51	2.37	2.03	2.39
Total	Woman	2.28	2.17	2.42	2.41	2.30	2.09	2.30
	Man	2.36	2.18	2.55	2.62	2.44	2.00	2.38
	Other	1.50	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Total	2.31	2.17	2.46	2.48	2.34	2.05	2.33

The data additionally reveals female managers hold more positive perspectives of diversity management at 13.30 in comparison to their male counterparts (13.39) (see Table 23).

4.1.2.5 Gender

Table 24 Means: Life stage and gender for employee satisfaction

		Report						
Mean		Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	POS	Work_culture	Training_development	Rewards_recognition	Workplace_happiness	Psychological_involvement
LifeStage_Category	Gender							
Life Stage 1	Woman	2.10	2.29	1.82	2.14	2.63	1.49	2.22
	Man	2.17	2.30	2.00	2.30	2.53	1.50	2.37
	Other	1.33	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Total	2.11	2.28	1.89	2.18	2.57	1.49	2.27
Life Stage 2	Woman	1.85	1.72	1.50	2.03	2.12	1.53	2.16
	Man	1.78	1.67	1.78	1.78	1.78	1.89	1.78
	Total	1.83	1.71	1.56	1.98	2.05	1.61	2.07
Life Stage 3	Woman	1.86	1.97	1.66	1.83	2.11	1.63	1.94
	Man	1.42	1.55	1.09	1.73	1.45	1.09	1.64
	Total	1.75	1.87	1.52	1.80	1.96	1.50	1.87
Life Stage 4	Woman	2.18	2.25	1.95	2.15	2.80	1.85	2.10
	Man	2.36	2.39	1.96	2.57	2.70	1.96	2.57
	Total	2.28	2.33	1.95	2.37	2.74	1.91	2.35
Total	Woman	1.99	2.07	1.72	2.04	2.41	1.59	2.12
	Man	2.07	2.14	1.82	2.23	2.33	1.63	2.25
	Other	1.33	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Total	2.02	2.09	1.76	2.10	2.37	1.60	2.16

As per Table 24, women are more satisfied (1.99) than men (2.07). Additionally, *Workplace_happiness* scores the best followed by *Work_culture*, *POS*, *Training_development*, *Psychological_involvement* and *Rewards_recognition*.

Table 25 Means: Life stage and gender for diversity management

		Report						
Mean		Overall_Diversity_Management	Diversity_management	Concrete_objectives	Biases_decrease	Structural_interventions	Broader_framing	Minimizing_backlash
LifeStage_Category	Gender							
Life Stage 1	Woman	2.30	2.16	2.61	2.41	2.27	2.04	2.31
	Man	2.47	2.13	2.67	2.77	2.60	2.03	2.63
	Other	1.50	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Total	2.35	2.13	2.62	2.54	2.38	2.02	2.43
Life Stage 2	Woman	2.15	2.03	2.31	2.25	2.34	1.81	2.16
	Man	1.94	1.89	2.00	2.00	2.11	1.78	1.89
	Total	2.10	2.00	2.24	2.20	2.29	1.80	2.10
Life Stage 3	Woman	2.24	2.14	2.29	2.37	2.17	2.14	2.34
	Man	1.83	1.55	2.09	2.00	2.09	1.36	1.91
	Total	2.14	2.00	2.24	2.28	2.15	1.96	2.24
Life Stage 4	Woman	2.52	2.50	2.35	2.70	2.55	2.55	2.45
	Man	2.63	2.65	2.83	2.96	2.52	2.35	2.48
	Total	2.58	2.58	2.60	2.84	2.53	2.44	2.47
Total	Woman	2.28	2.17	2.42	2.41	2.30	2.09	2.30
	Man	2.36	2.18	2.55	2.62	2.44	2.00	2.38
	Other	1.50	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Total	2.31	2.17	2.46	2.48	2.34	2.05	2.33

Diversity management was also perceived better by women (2.28) rather than men (2.36) as indicated in Table 25. The discrepancy in values is higher comparatively to satisfaction levels (see Table 24). *Broader_framing* remains as the best diversity management factor followed by *Diversity_management*, *Structural_interventions*, *Biases_decrease*, *Minimizing_backlash* and *Concrete_objectives*.

4.1.3 Variability

For a deeper analysis of satisfaction levels and diversity management perceptions, the measure of standard deviation is essential to measure the spreadness of the data points relative to the mean of the sample, with lower values indicating less variability and thus more consistency. Tables 26 and 27 are included for a better assessment over the dispersion of the data set.

Table 26 Variability: employee satisfaction

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
POS	212	2.09	.962
Work_culture	212	1.76	.793
Training_development	212	2.10	.995
Rewards_recognition	212	2.37	1.113
Workplace_happiness	212	1.60	.738
Psychological_involvement	212	2.16	.856
Valid N (listwise)	212		

Among all employee satisfaction factors, *Workplace_happiness* consists of the most positively perceived factor with an overall mean of 1.60 and, as referred above, the best score across the categorical variables - *Age*, *Minority*, *LifeStage_Category*. Moreover, *Workplace_happiness* exhibits the lowest standard deviation reflecting a high degree of agreement among respondents. *Rewards_recognition* shows the least favorable overall mean value of 2.37 (see Table 26) and as referred above, the lowest satisfaction across several different groups and demographics. Additionally, the factor indicates the highest standard deviation value, suggesting a high degree of inconsistency/disagreement among respondents' perceptions.

Table 27 Variability: diversity management

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall_diversity_manage ment	212	2.17	1.101
Concrete_objectives	212	2.46	1.077
Biases_decrease	212	2.48	1.037
Structural_interventions	212	2.34	1.007
Broader_framing	212	2.05	.940
Minimizing_backlash	212	2.33	.995
Valid N (listwise)	212		

Regarding diversity management factors, a greater number of factors exhibit a higher standard deviation in comparison to Table 26. *Broader_framing* gathers the most favorable scores (2.05) and simultaneously the lowest standard deviation (0.940). While *Overall_diversity_manage*ment doesn't exhibit the highest mean value (2.17), it reveals the highest standard deviation of 1.101 among all factors (see Table 27).

4.2 Hypothesis testing

To help in answering the research question “*How is employee satisfaction impacted by diversity management supporting different life stages?*” three hypotheses have been developed. They are tested in the following by applying relevant statistical tests and models where an alpha of 5% was chosen to determine the statistical significance. This significance level was chosen to ensure relevancy of the findings.

4.2.1 Hypothesis 1: Effect of diversity management on employee satisfaction

H₀₁: The execution of diversity management does not affect employee satisfaction.

H_{A1}: The execution of diversity management affects employee satisfaction.

For this hypothesis, a multiple linear regression with the overall employee satisfaction as the dependent variable was chosen. The variable consists of the mean value for the six questions of employee satisfaction, combined in variable X₃₈. Gender, age, country of employment, country of headquarter, minority, management position, and the six questions of diversity management (X₁₆₋₂₁) are picked as the independent variables. This allows to investigate how and if the factors of diversity management as well as the characteristics of respondents relate to employee satisfaction.

Assumption testing

Examining the assumptions of linear regression helps mitigate bias in estimated coefficients and standard errors. These assumptions include linearity, homoscedasticity, normality in error distribution, and independence of error terms. This involves analyzing residuals, which measure the disparities between observed and predicted values. Additionally, multicollinearity is taken into account.

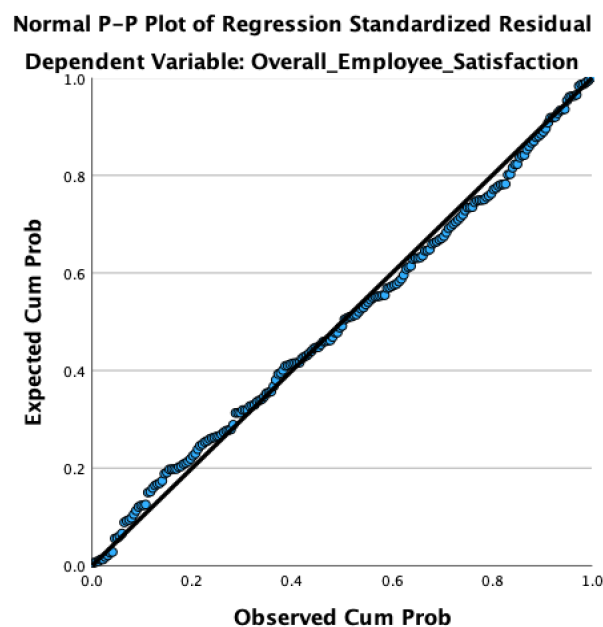


Figure 4 Normal p-plot regression hypothesis 1

Figure 4 shows that the points fall along the diagonal with no significant or systematic deviation.

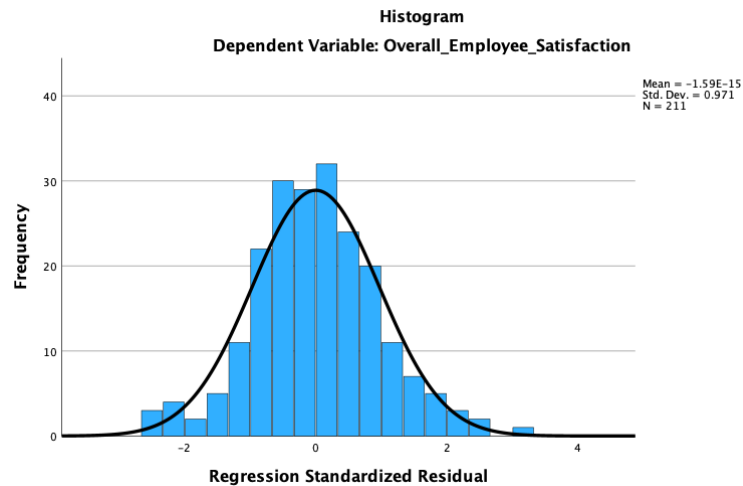


Figure 5 Histogram regression hypothesis 1

Furthermore, the histogram (see Figure 5) shows that the distribution of the error terms follows a bell curve, confirming normality. As the histogram curve is slightly skewed to the right, it suggests that there may be more residuals with positive values than with negative values. This skewness indicates that the model tends to underestimate the dependent variable for some observations, resulting in positive residuals. It could mean that the model systematically misses higher values more often than lower ones. However, this observation does not invalidate the model.

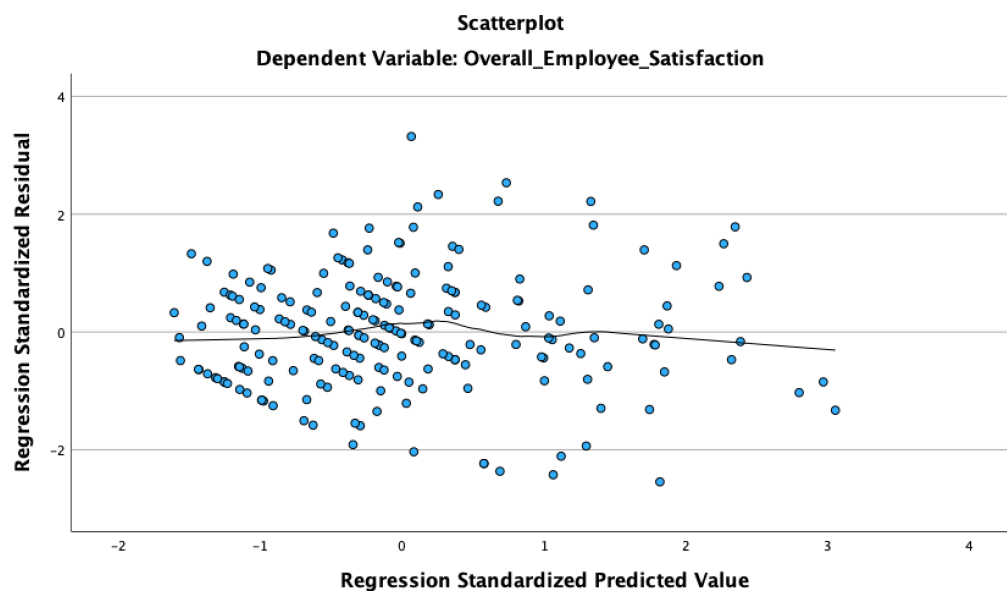


Figure 6 Scatterplot regression hypothesis 1

Figure 6 confirms homoscedasticity, as the residuals are relatively evenly distributed across the range of predicted values. This ensures that the variance of the errors is constant. Looking at the Loess curve, it appears that the relationship between the standardized predicted values and

the residuals is approximately linear and close to zero. Since the relationship between predictors and outcome variables should be linear, this confirms linearity.

The Durbin-Watson statistic with a value of 1,773 confirms the independence of error terms, as the permitted range is from 0,5 - 2,5 (see Table 28). This statistic typically ranges from 0 to 4, with values close to 2 indicating no autocorrelation. Therefore, the analysis suggests that there is no systematic pattern of residual correlation across observations.

Regression analysis

Table 28 Model summary hypothesis 1

Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.770 ^a	.593	.569	2.625	1.773
a. Predictors: (Constant), Minimizing_backlash, Gender, Age, Country_Headquarter, Minority, Management_Position, Country_Employed, Diversity_management, Structural_interventions, Concrete_objectives, Broader_framing, Biases_decrease					
b. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction					

The model summary shows a correlation coefficient at 0.77 (see Table 28). A value close to 1 implies a strong positive correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable, the overall employee satisfaction. This means that when the independent variables change, then there is a tendency for the overall employee satisfaction to follow in the same direction. R Square, the coefficient of determination, has a value of 0.593. Thereby, 59.3% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable. With the relatively high percentage, it seems like the model can explain a meaningful part of the variance in the overall employee satisfaction. More information is needed to increase the percentage. The standard error of the estimate is a measurement of how much of the observed values of the dependent variable differ from the values predicted by the model. With a value of 2.625, there is a short distance between the observed values and the regression line, which is preferred.

Table 29 ANOVA hypothesis 1

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1990.712	12	165.893	24.071	<.001 ^b
	Residual	1364.577	198	6.892		
	Total	3355.289	210			

a. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Minimizing_backlash, Gender, Age, Country_Headquarter, Minority, Management_Position, Country_Employed, Diversity_management, Structural_interventions, Concrete_objectives, Broader_framing, Biases_decrease

In Table 29, the model column indicates the components being evaluated. "Regression" refers to the variation explained by the independent variables in the model, while "Residual" refers to the variation not explained by the model. "Total" represents the total variation in the dependent variable. With a significance level at <0.001, it is safe to say that the regression model statistically significantly explains the variation in overall employee satisfaction. This means that at least one of the independent variables has a statistically significant connection with employee satisfaction. However, with a residual sum of square value at 1364.577, there are still parts of the variation in employee satisfaction that are not captured by the independent variables. This can indicate that either some factors, that impact employee satisfaction, are not included in the model or that some of the included factors are not precise enough.

Table 30 Coefficients hypothesis 1

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.719	1.754		.410	.682		
	Gender	.684	.388	.084	1.763	.080	.910	1.099
	Age	.041	.207	.010	.197	.844	.868	1.152
	Country_Employed	.009	.005	.103	1.923	.056	.717	1.395
	Country_Headquarter	.000	.004	-.003	-.060	.952	.701	1.426
	Minority	.786	.562	.066	1.399	.163	.926	1.080
	Management_Position	.424	.415	.050	1.022	.308	.855	1.169
	Diversity_management	1.117	.258	.309	4.338	<.001	.406	2.463
	Concrete_objectives	.325	.259	.088	1.253	.212	.419	2.386
	Biases_decrease	-.226	.289	-.059	-.785	.434	.365	2.739
	Structural_interventions	.566	.273	.143	2.074	.039	.432	2.314
	Broader_framing	1.692	.312	.399	5.426	<.001	.380	2.632
	Minimizing_backlash	-.015	.301	-.004	-.049	.961	.365	2.742

a. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

12 independent variables related to the dependent variable, overall employee satisfaction, are tested. The results of the regression model are displayed in Table 30.

Firstly, it is relevant to dive into the VIF, variance inflation factor, which is a measure for how much the variance of the regression coefficients is inflated by multicollinearity problems. A rule of thumb is that an acceptable VIF value has a maximum of 5, therefore there are no serious problems with multicollinearity, as the highest has a value of 2.742. The tolerance is the proportion of variation in an independent variable that is not explained by other independent variables. A higher value is here preferred, where a value below 0.2 would be problematic. All values for tolerance in Table 30 are higher than 0.2, with the lowest being at 0.406, thereby all are accepted. Therefore, problematic multicollinearity can be ruled out and all tested variables considered for the interpretation.

The variables X_{16} (*Diversity management*), X_{19} (*Structural interventions*), and X_{20} (*Broader framing*) have a significance level $< 0,05$, which is within the 95% confidence interval and are thereby statistically significant. The Standardized Coefficients Beta reveals which effect they each have on employee satisfaction, the dependent variable. The statistically significant variable all reveals positive effects $X_{16} = 0.309$, $X_{19} = 0.143$ and $X_{20} = 0.399$. This indicates that when organizations actively prioritize diversity management, structurally create equal opportunities and fair treatment, and ensure a fair representation in the decision-making process, then employee satisfaction will increase. A fair representation in the decision-making process, X_{20} , indicates the biggest increase in employee satisfaction.

H_{01} can be rejected with three out of six diversity management factors showing an effect on employee satisfaction. Therefore, employee satisfaction is affected by the execution of diversity management.

4.2.2 Hypothesis 2: Effect of life-stage specific diversity management on employee satisfaction

H_{02} : Life-stage specific diversity management does not affect employee satisfaction.

H_{A2} : Life-stage specific diversity management affects employee satisfaction.

To test this hypothesis, four multiple linear regression with the overall employee satisfaction as the dependent variable are conducted. Again, the dependent variable consists of the mean value for the six questions of employee satisfaction (X_{38}). The four life stage specific questions (life stage 1: X_{22-25} , life stage 2: X_{26-29} , life stage 3: X_{30-33} , life stage 4: X_{34-37}) are the independent

variables. By having a regression for each life stage, it allows to investigate the relationship of each life stage with employee satisfaction individually.

4.2.2.1 Life Stage 1: Analysis

The four variables specific to life stage 1 address the recruitment process, flexibility in work concepts, the onboarding process, and career development (by order).

Assumption testing

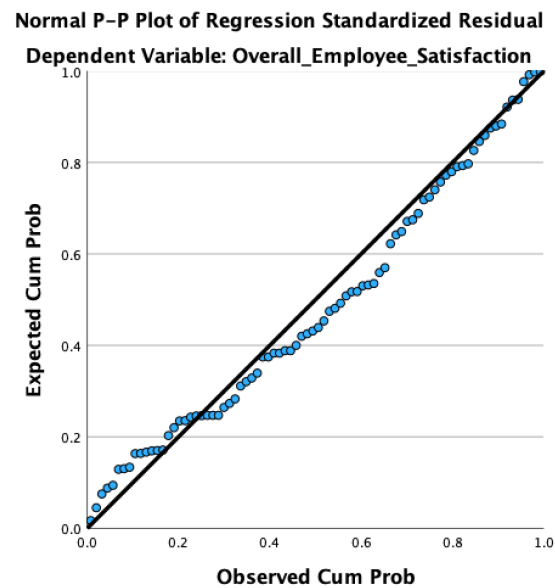


Figure 7 Normal p-plot regression hypothesis 2 life stage 1

Figure 7 demonstrates that the data points align closely along the diagonal with only a small notable deviation.

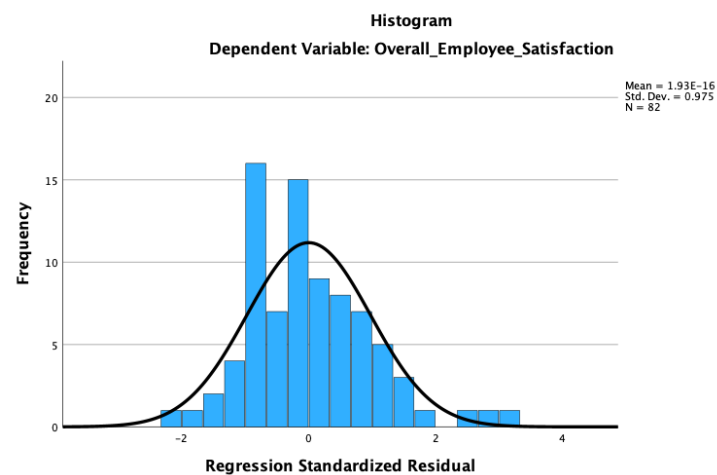


Figure 8 Histogram regression hypothesis 2 life stage 1

The histogram depicted in Figure 8 illustrates a relatively bell-shaped distribution of the error terms, additionally indicating normality. Although the histogram curve displays a slight left skew, implying more negative residuals than positive ones, it suggests that the model tends to overestimate the dependent variable for certain observations, resulting in negative residuals. Again, this does not invalidate the overall validity but shows how the model could potentially be refined.

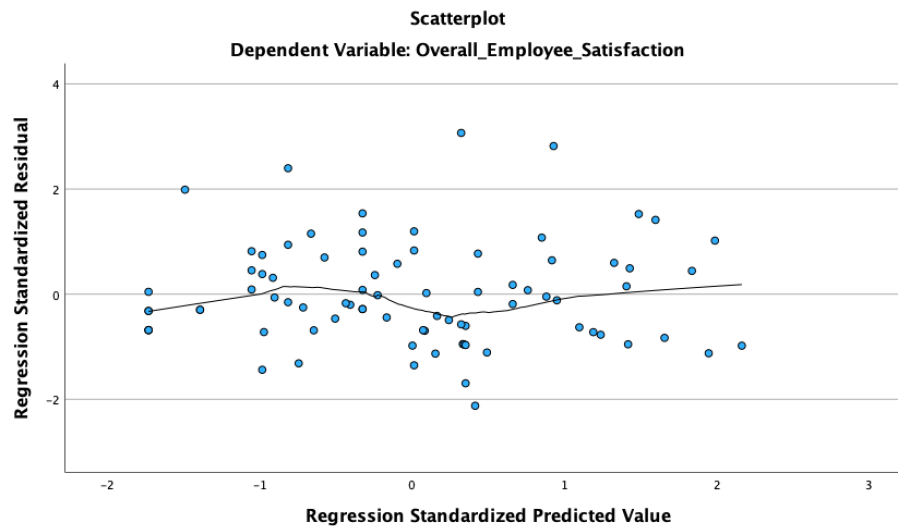


Figure 9 Scatterplot regression hypothesis 2 life stage 1

Figure 9 confirms homoscedasticity by revealing a relatively even distribution of residuals across the predicted value range. The Loess curve reveals an approximately linear and close-to-zero relationship between the standardized predicted values and residuals, confirming linearity.

The Durbin-Watson statistic, with a value of 1.993, as indicated in Table 31, affirms the independence of the error terms, falling within the acceptable range of 0.5 to 2.5.

Regression analysis

Table 31 Model summary hypothesis 2 life stage 1

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.720 ^a	.518	.493	2.746	1.993

a. Predictors: (Constant), LifeStage_1_careerdevelopment, LifeStage_1_flexibility, LifeStage_1_onboarding, LifeStage_1_recruitment

b. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

The model summary shows a correlation coefficient at 0.720 (see Table 31). Therefore, there is a high indication for the dependent variable to follow the independent variables. The R Square value shows that 51.8% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables. The model can thereby explain a significant part of the variance in the overall employee satisfaction. With a standard error of the estimate value at 2.746, there is a short distance between the observed values and the regression line.

Table 32 ANOVA hypothesis 2 life stage 1

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	625.104	4	156.276	20.724	<.001 ^b
	Residual	580.652	77	7.541		
	Total	1205.756	81			

a. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), LifeStage_1_careerdevelopment, LifeStage_1_flexibility, LifeStage_1_onboarding, LifeStage_1_recruitment

It is reasonable to conclude that the regression model statistically significantly explains the variation in total employee satisfaction with a significance level of <0.001 (see Table 32). With a residual sum of square value of 580.652, the independent variables do not fully account for all of the variation in employee satisfaction.

Table 33 Coefficients hypothesis 2 life stage 1

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.977	1.024		3.884	<.001		
	LifeStage_1_recruitment	1.134	.435	.248	2.604	.011	.692	1.446
	LifeStage_1_flexibility	1.164	.317	.320	3.672	<.001	.826	1.211
	LifeStage_1_onboarding	.664	.370	.168	1.798	.076	.718	1.392
	LifeStage_1_careerdevelopment	.939	.268	.298	3.511	<.001	.871	1.149

a. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

Four independent variables related to the dependent variable, overall employee satisfaction, are tested. The results of the regression model are displayed in Table 33.

According to Table 33, the VIF values are all below 5, thereby there are no serious problems with multicollinearity. Additionally, all values for tolerance are higher than 0.2 and thereby accepted. Problematic multicollinearity can therefore be ruled out and all tested variables considered for the interpretation.

The variables X_{22} (*Lifestage_1_recruitment*), X_{23} (*Lifestage_1_flexibility*), and X_{25} (*Lifestage_1_careerdevelopment*) have a significance level <0.05 , thereby within the 95% confidence interval and statistically significant. The statistically significant variables all reveal positive effects $X_{22} = 0.248$ $X_{23} = 0.320$ and $X_{25} = 0.298$. This indicates that when organizations follow a fair and unbiased standardized recruitment process ensuring equal opportunities for all employees, the flexible work-life options support employees personal work-life balance preferences and they implement mentoring and skill development programs as well as transparent salary initiatives that promote fair career advancement for all employees, then employee satisfaction will increase for employees in life stage 1.

4.2.2.2 Life Stage 2: Analysis

The variables specific to life stage 2 represent the questions regarding work flexibility, parental benefits, the organizational culture around parenthood, and differentiated programs surrounding parenthood and biases against mothers, in this order.

Assumption testing

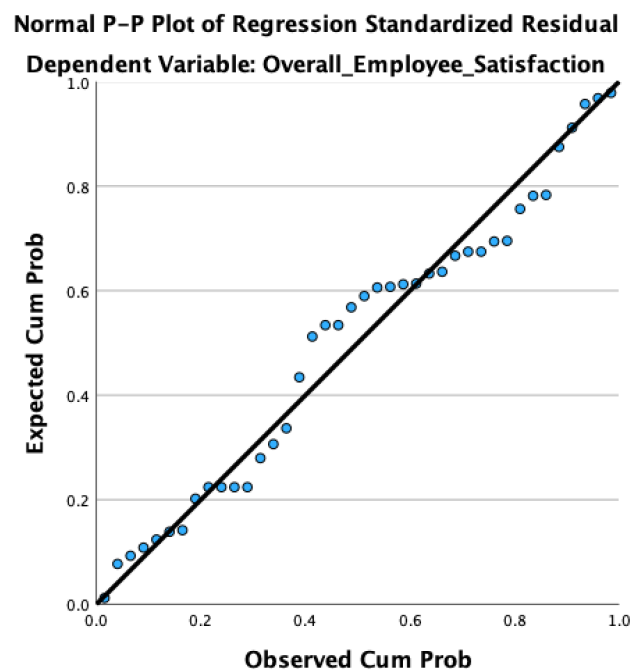


Figure 10 normal p-plot regression hypothesis 2 life stage 2

Figure 10 indicates that the data points closely align along the diagonal with minimal deviation.

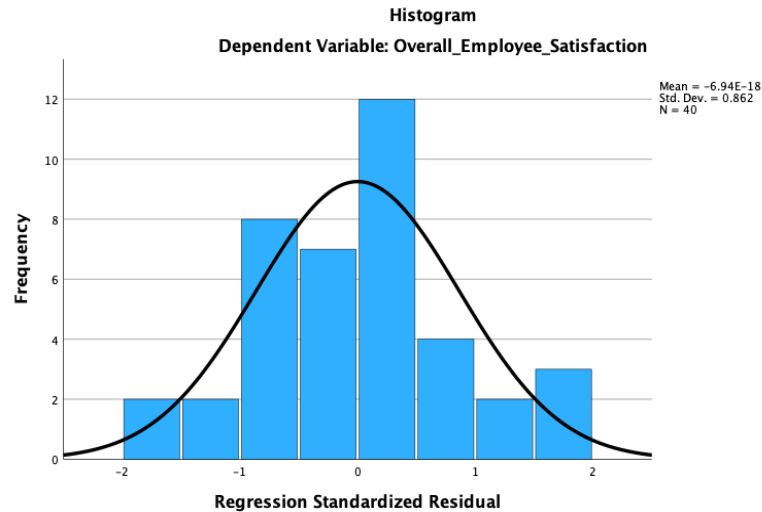


Figure 11 Histogram regression hypothesis 2 life stage 2

The histogram presented in Figure 11 displays a nearly bell-shaped distribution of the error terms, suggesting normality. Despite a slight left skew in the histogram curve, indicating more negative residuals than positive ones, it implies that the model tends to overestimate the dependent variable for specific observations.

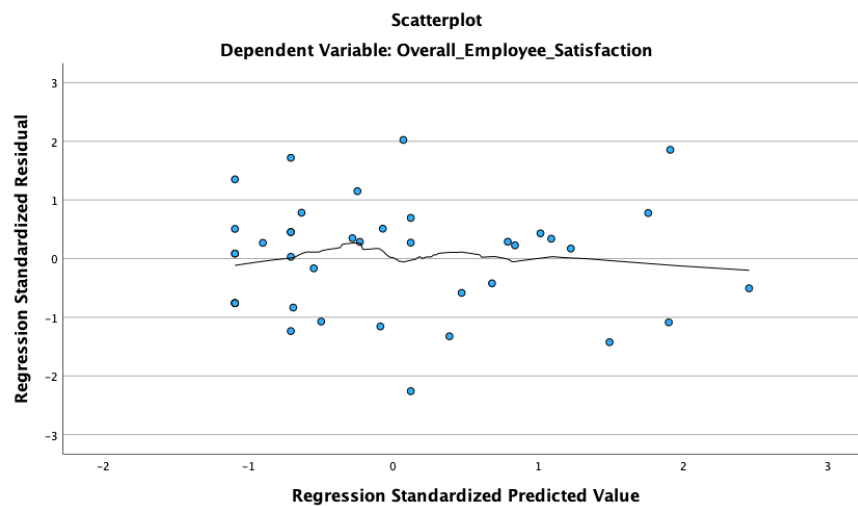


Figure 12 Scatterplot regression hypothesis 2 life stage 2

Figure 12 affirms homoscedasticity by demonstrating a somewhat even distribution of residuals across the predicted value range. The Loess curve illustrates an approximately linear and close-to-zero relationship between the standardized predicted values and residuals, confirming linearity.

Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson statistic, with a value of 1.695, as depicted in Table 34, validates the independence of the error terms.

Regression analysis

Table 34 Model summary hypothesis 2 life stage 2

Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.794 ^a	.631	.589	2.369	1.695

a. Predictors: (Constant), LifeStage_2_differentiatedprograms, LifeStage_2_benefits, LifeStage_2_flexibility, LifeStage_2_organizationalculture

b. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

A correlation coefficient of 0.794 is displayed in the Model Summary (see Table 34). The dependent variable has a strong likelihood of following the independent factors as a result. According to the R Square value, the independent variables account for 63.1% of the variance in the dependent variable. Thus, a sizable portion of the variance in the overall employee satisfaction may be explained by the model. The regression line and the observed values are close together, with a standard error of the estimate value of 2.369.

Table 35 ANOVA hypothesis 2 life stage 2

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	335.604	4	83.901	14.952	<.001 ^b
	Residual	196.396	35	5.611		
	Total	532.000	39			

a. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), LifeStage_2_differientiatedprograms, LifeStage_2_benefits, LifeStage_2_flexibility, LifeStage_2_organizationalculture

The regression model statistically significantly explains the variation in overall employee satisfaction, with a significance level of <0.001, as shown in Table 35. Nevertheless, a smaller part of the variance in employee satisfaction remains unaccounted for by the independent variables, as evidenced by the residual sum of square value of 196.396.

Table 36 Coefficients hypothesis 2 life stage 2

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	4.806	1.026		4.684	<.001		
	LifeStage_2_flexibility	.614	.583	.173	1.053	.300	.389	2.572
	LifeStage_2_benefits	1.030	.541	.367	1.905	.065	.284	3.520
	LifeStage_2_organizational culture	.783	.779	.185	1.005	.322	.311	3.217
	LifeStage_2_differentiated programs	.565	.508	.168	1.113	.273	.463	2.162

a. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

Four independent factors that are connected to the dependent variable, overall employee satisfaction, have been tested. Table 36 presents the multiple regression model's findings.

Table 36 indicates that all of the VIF values are less than 5, demonstrating that multicollinearity is not a significant issue. Furthermore, every tolerance value is greater than 0.2 and is therefore accepted. As a result, problematic multicollinearity can be ruled out and every investigated variable can be taken into account for interpretation.

None of the independent variables are statistically significant with p-values <0.05 thereby flexible work options, benefits, an inclusive organizational culture and organizations openly addressing gender-specific challenges do not have a statistically significant impact on employee satisfaction for employees in life stage 2.

4.2.2.3 Life Stage 3: Analysis

The variables specific to life stage 3 consecutively address flexible work options, career development opportunities, leadership development programs, and networking and mentoring opportunities.

Assumption testing

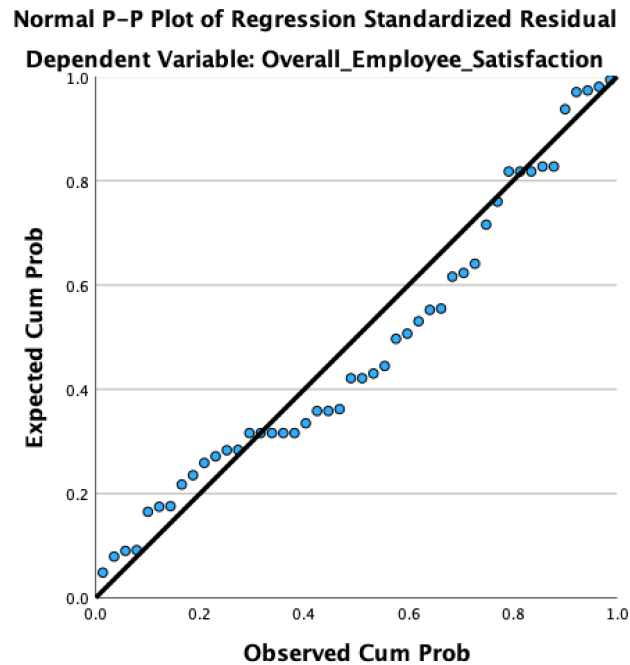


Figure 13 Normal p-plot regression hypothesis 2 life stage 3

Figure 13 illustrates that the data points closely align along the diagonal with minimal deviation.

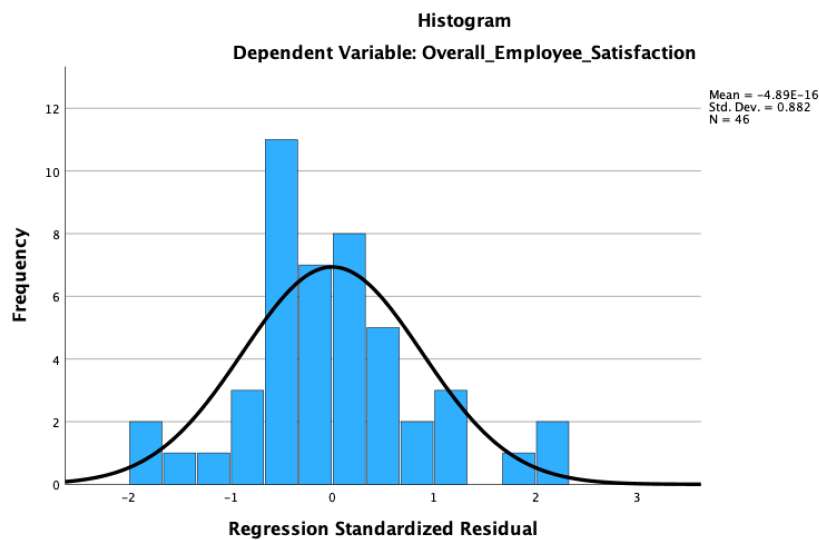


Figure 14 Histogram regression hypothesis 2 life stage 3

Moreover, the histogram showcased in Figure 14 displays a distribution of error terms resembling a bell curve, indicating normality. The slight left skew suggests a prevalence of negative residuals over positive ones, implying that the model tends to overestimate the dependent variable for certain observations, resulting in negative residuals. Again, this does not undermine the overall validity.

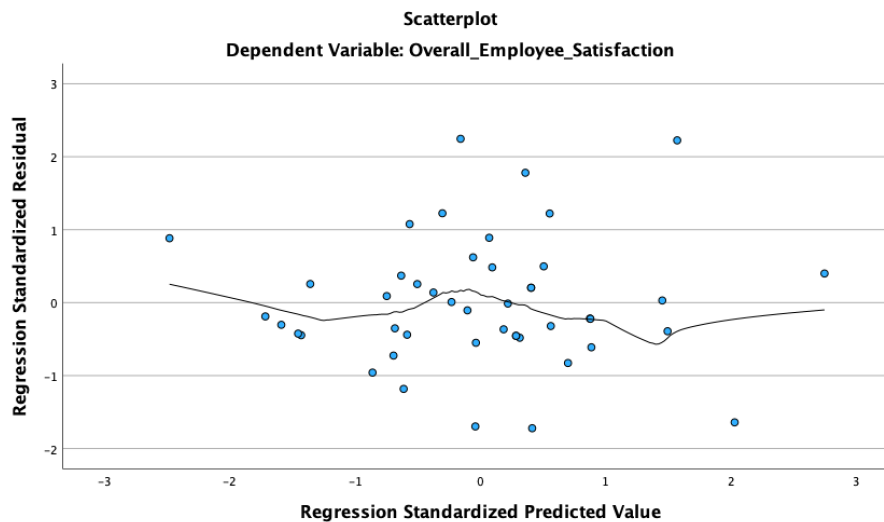


Figure 15 Scatterplot regression hypothesis 2 life stage 3

Homoscedasticity is confirmed in Figure 15 by showcasing a relatively uniform distribution of residuals across the predicted value range. The Loess curve reveals a nearly linear and close-to-zero relationship between standardized predicted values and residuals, confirming linearity.

The independence of the error terms is validated by the Durbin-Watson statistic with a value of 1.227, as indicated in Table 37.

Regression analysis

Table 37 Model summary hypothesis 2 life stage 3

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.628 ^a	.394	.335	2.679	1.263

a. Predictors: (Constant), LifeStage_3_networkingmentoring, LifeStage_3_flexibility, LifeStage_3_careerdevelopment, LifeStage_3_leadershipdevelopment

b. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

According to Table 37, the correlation coefficient in the Model Summary is 0.628. Consequently, there is a strong indicator that the independent factors will lead the dependent variable. 39.4% of the variance in the dependent variable can be accounted for by the independent variables, according to the R Square value. Thus, the model can account for a part of the variation in the overall level of employee satisfaction. The gap between the observed data and the regression line is small, with a standard error of the estimate value of 2.679.

Table 38 ANOVA hypothesis 2 life stage 3

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	191.267	4	47.817	6.664	<.001 ^b
	Residual	294.211	41	7.176		
	Total	485.478	45			

a. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), LifeStage_3_networkingmentoring, LifeStage_3_flexibility, LifeStage_3_careerdevelopment, LifeStage_3_leadershipdevelopment

The ANOVA is statistically significant in explaining the variation in overall employee satisfaction, with a significance level of <0.001 (see Table 38). There are still parts of the employee satisfaction variance that are not covered by the independent variables, with a residual sum of square value of 294.211.

Table 39 Coefficients hypothesis 2 life stage 3

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	4.996	1.342		3.722	<.001		
	LifeStage_3_flexibility	.061	.450	.018	.136	.893	.823	1.215
	LifeStage_3_careerdevelopment	1.324	.590	.394	2.244	.030	.481	2.080
	LifeStage_3_leadershipdevelopment	-.562	.538	-.194	-1.044	.303	.426	2.345
	LifeStage_3_networkingmentoring	1.464	.540	.451	2.708	.010	.533	1.876

a. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

Four independent variables related to the dependent variable, overall employee satisfaction, are tested. The results of the regression model are presented in Table 39.

In Table 39, all VIF values are below 5, indicating no significant multicollinearity issues. Moreover, all tolerance values exceed 0.2, which is acceptable. Therefore, problematic multicollinearity is not a concern, and all tested variables can be considered for interpretation.

Variable X_{31} (Lifestage_3_careerdevelopment) and X_{33} (Lifestage_3_networkingmentoring), have a significance level <0.05, thereby statistically significant. The statistically significant variables have a positive effect of $X_{31} = 0.394$ and $X_{33} = 0.451$. Therefore, there is evidence that employee satisfaction will increase for employees in life stage 3, when organizations commit to the enhancement of networking and mentoring possibilities for all employees, particularly minorities.

4.2.2.4 Life Stage 4: Analysis

The life stage 4 specific variables address intergenerational collaboration, flexibility in work, skill development and training, and networking and adjusted performance measurement, in this order.

Assumption testing

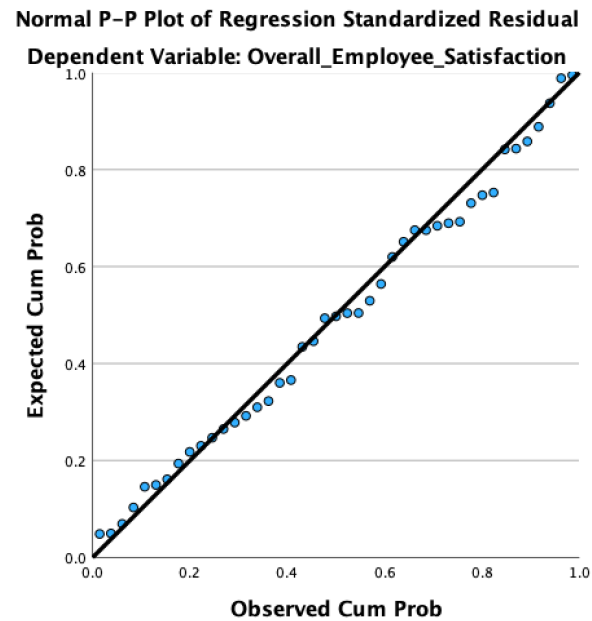


Figure 16 Normal p-plot regression hypothesis 2 life stage 4

The data points align along the diagonal with minimal deviation in Figure 16, indicating normality.

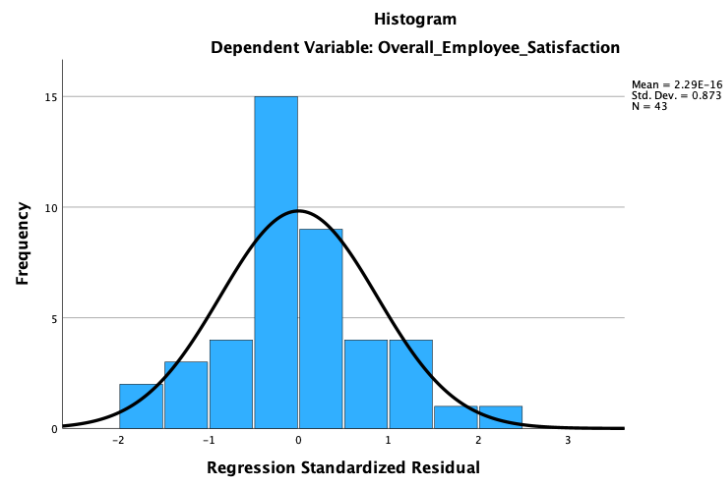


Figure 17 Histogram regression hypothesis 2 life stage 4

Moreover, the histogram (see Figure 17) displays a relatively even distribution of error terms, resembling a bell curve.

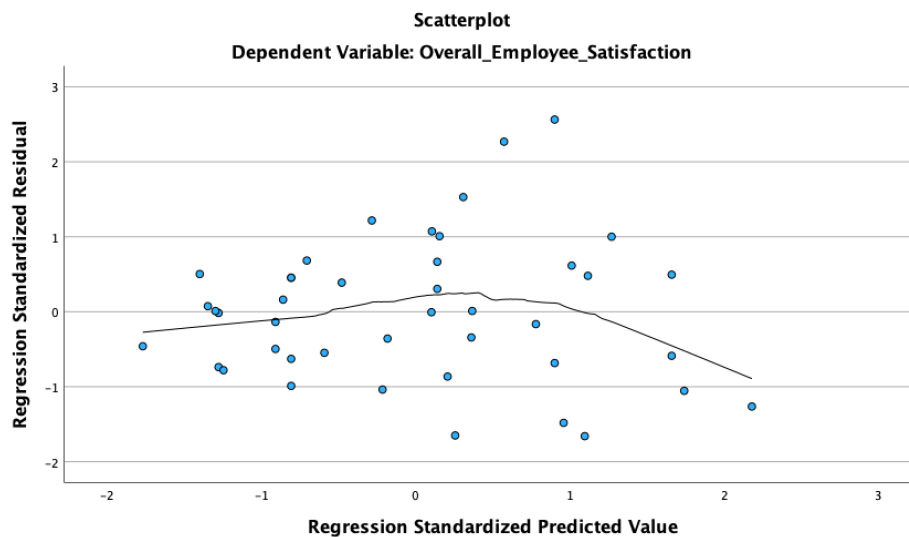


Figure 18 Scatterplot regression hypothesis 2 life stage 4

The scatterplot in Figure 18 confirms homoscedasticity, as the residuals are distributed relatively even across the predicted value range. The Loess curve reveals a nearly linear and close-to-zero relationship between standardized predicted values and residuals, confirming linearity.

Table 40 validates the independence of the error terms by the Durbin-Watson statistic with a value of 1.654.

Regression analysis

Table 40 Model summary hypothesis 2 life stage 4

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.807 ^a	.652	.615	2.771	1.654

a. Predictors: (Constant), LifeStage_4_performancemeasurement, LifeStage_4_flexibility, LifeStage_4_training, LifeStage_4_intergenerational

b. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

The correlation coefficient in the model summary is 0.807 (see Table 40). The likelihood that the dependent variable will follow the independent factors is therefore significant. According to the R Square value, the independent factors account for 65.2% of its variance in the dependent variable. Thus, the variance in the overall employee satisfaction may be well

explained by the model. There is not a big distance between the observed data and the regression line, with a standard error of the estimate value of 2.771.

Table 41 ANOVA hypothesis 2 life stage 4

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	545.903	4	136.476	17.769	<.001 ^b
	Residual	291.865	38	7.681		
	Total	837.767	42			

a. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), LifeStage_4_performancemeasurement, LifeStage_4_flexibility, LifeStage_4_training, LifeStage_4_intergenerational

It is appropriate to state that the regression model statistically significantly explains the variation in the overall employee satisfaction with a significance level of <0.001 (see Table 41). Even yet, some of the variation in employee satisfaction remains unaccounted for by the independent variables, with a residual sum of square value of 291.865.

Table 42 Coefficients hypothesis 2 life stage 4

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.811	1.321		2.885	.006		
	LifeStage_4_intergenerational	-.555	.572	-.138	-.970	.338	.451	2.217
	LifeStage_4_flexibility	.189	.392	.055	.481	.633	.697	1.435
	LifeStage_4_training	2.324	.524	.571	4.437	<.001	.553	1.809
	LifeStage_4_performancemeasurement	1.507	.568	.396	2.654	.012	.411	2.432

a. Dependent Variable: Overall_Employee_Satisfaction

There are four independent factors that are tested in relation to the dependent variable, overall employee satisfaction. Table 42 presents the outcomes of the multiple regression.

Table 42 indicates that there are no significant multicollinearity issues since all the VIF values are below 5. Furthermore, all the tolerance levels are greater than 0.2 and are thus approved. This allows for the elimination of problematic multicollinearity and the consideration of all tested variables in the interpretation.

The variables X_{36} (*Lifestage_4_training*) and X_{37} (*Lifestage_4_performancemeasurement*) have a significance level < 0.05, therefore statistically significant. The statistically significant variables all reveal positive effects $X_{36} = 0.571$ and $X_{37} = 0.396$. This indicates that when

organizations are committed to skill development and training along with recognizing and accommodating employees in life stage 4s work capacity and preferences when approaching retirement, then employee in life stage 4s satisfaction will increase.

H₀₂ can be rejected with multiple regressions in different life stages being statistically significant. Life-stage specific diversity management therefore has an effect on employee satisfaction.

4.2.3 Hypothesis 3: Difference of diversity management in life stages

H₀₃: Employee satisfaction and perception of diversity management does not differ across life stages.

H_{A3}: Employee satisfaction and perception of diversity management differ across life stages.

To statistically compare how employee satisfaction and the perception of diversity management differ across life stages, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) is chosen. This statistical technique allows to simultaneously analyze multiple dependent variables in relation to one or more independent variables. It extends the ANOVA framework to cases where there are two or more dependent variables, allowing for the assessment of overall group differences while controlling for the correlation between dependent variables. In the following, the independent variable (fixed factor) is the categorization of life stages (1-4) (X₄₄), while the dependent variables are the overall employee satisfaction (X₃₈) and overall diversity management (X₃₉). MANOVA is particularly useful when there are multiple outcome measures that may be correlated, and when researchers want to examine the combined effect of multiple independent variables on these outcomes.

Assumption testing

Before analyzing the results, the assumptions must be tested (Statologie, 2020). First, the dependent variables have to be continuous. It can be argued that the Likert scale can be viewed as continuous (Lærd Statistics, 2024). Both dependent variables are with the Likert scale. The independent variable should be two or more categorical, independent groups, which is fulfilled by the four life stages.

The independence of observations is fulfilled by the research execution strategy, as participants are clearly divided in life stages and only answer in this group. The total sample size is adequate with 212 respondents.

Table 43 Residual statistics MANOVA hypothesis 3

Residuals Statistics ^a					
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	2.10	2.49	2.24	.081	211
Std. Predicted Value	-1.733	3.116	.000	1.000	211
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.081	.289	.133	.044	211
Adjusted Predicted Value	2.09	2.59	2.24	.087	211
Residual	-1.490	1.869	.000	1.169	211
Std. Residual	-1.269	1.592	.000	.995	211
Stud. Residual	-1.309	1.602	.000	1.003	211
Deleted Residual	-1.586	1.906	-.001	1.186	211
Stud. Deleted Residual	-1.312	1.609	.000	1.004	211
Mahal. Distance	.005	11.717	1.991	2.127	211
Cook's Distance	.000	.045	.005	.007	211
Centered Leverage Value	.000	.056	.009	.010	211

a. Dependent Variable: LifeStage_Category

The Mahalanobis Distance in a regression analysis confirms no critical outliers, as it is <13.82 for two dependent variables (see Table 43).

Table 44 Test of normality MANOVA hypothesis 3

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	.106	211	<.001	.962	211	<.001
Overall_Diversity_Management	.122	211	<.001	.958	211	<.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As multivariate normality is hard to test for, normality of each dependent variable can be used to assume multivariate normality. In addition, univariate normality can be tested for with the significance level of Shapiro-Wilk (see Table 44). Because the values for both are <0.05, a non-normal distribution is assumed.

Linearity between each pair of dependent variables for each group of the independent variable was confirmed in previous assumption testing (cf. 4.2.2).

Table 45 Correlations MANOVA hypothesis 3

Correlations			
		Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	Overall_Diversity_Management
Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.709**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	211	211
Overall_Diversity_Management	Pearson Correlation	.709**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	211	211

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Multicollinearity is tested for in a bivariate correlation test, with a range from 0.2 to 0.8 or 0.9, which the result is in: 0.709 (see Table 45). This makes it acceptable.

Table 46 Box's test of equality of covariance matrices MANOVA hypothesis 3

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices ^a	
Box's M	12.420
F	1.354
df1	9
df2	233649.496
Sig.	.203

Tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + LifeStage_Category

The assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance is met, as the value of significance in the box's test of equality of covariance-matrices is >0.001 with 0.203 (see Table 46).

Table 47 Levene's test of equality of error variance MANOVA hypothesis 3

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances ^a					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	Based on Mean	2.133	3	207	.097
	Based on Median	1.896	3	207	.131
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.896	3	203.352	.131
	Based on trimmed mean	2.124	3	207	.098
Overall_Diversity_Management	Based on Mean	.130	3	207	.942
	Based on Median	.189	3	207	.904
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.189	3	199.615	.904
	Based on trimmed mean	.152	3	207	.929

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + LifeStage_Category

Levene's test of equality of error variance shows no significance with all values >0.05 , confirming that the variability of scores in the groups are roughly equal (see Table 47). This confirms that the assumption of variance is met.

Multivariate analysis of variance

When conducting the MANOVA, following findings were made.

Table 48 Multivariate tests MANOVA hypothesis 3

Multivariate Tests ^a									
Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ^d
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.907	1001.295 ^b	2.000	206.000	<.001	.907	2002.589	1.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.093	1001.295 ^b	2.000	206.000	<.001	.907	2002.589	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	9.721	1001.295 ^b	2.000	206.000	<.001	.907	2002.589	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	9.721	1001.295 ^b	2.000	206.000	<.001	.907	2002.589	1.000
LifeStage_Category	Pillai's Trace	.095	3.424	6.000	414.000	.003	.047	20.544	.943
	Wilks' Lambda	.906	3.474 ^b	6.000	412.000	.002	.048	20.845	.946
	Hotelling's Trace	.103	3.524	6.000	410.000	.002	.049	21.142	.950
	Roy's Largest Root	.097	6.676 ^c	3.000	207.000	<.001	.088	20.028	.973

a. Design: Intercept + LifeStage_Category

b. Exact statistic

c. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

d. Computed using alpha = .05

Because there is some uncertainty in the fulfillment of the assumption of normality, Pillai's Trace is regarded instead of Wilk's Lambda in Table 48. With a significance of 0.002, it shows that there is some statistically significant difference across the levels of the independent variable on a linear combination of the dependent variables. The Partial Eta Squared shows that 4.7% of the variance in the dependent variables can be explained by the independent variable.

Table 49 Test of Between-Subject Effects MANOVA hypothesis 3

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects									
Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ^c
Corrected Model	Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	294.287 ^a	3	98.096	6.634	<.001	.088	19.901	.972
	Overall_Diversity_Management	222.451 ^b	3	74.150	2.954	.034	.041	8.862	.695
Intercept	Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	27864.442	1	27864.442	1884.331	<.001	.901	1884.331	1.000
	Overall_Diversity_Management	36914.270	1	36914.270	1470.583	<.001	.877	1470.583	1.000
LifeStage_Category	Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	294.287	3	98.096	6.634	<.001	.088	19.901	.972
	Overall_Diversity_Management	222.451	3	74.150	2.954	.034	.041	8.862	.695
Error	Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	3061.002	207	14.787					
	Overall_Diversity_Management	5196.071	207	25.102					
Total	Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	34197.000	211						
	Overall_Diversity_Management	45828.000	211						
Corrected Total	Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	3355.289	210						
	Overall_Diversity_Management	5418.521	210						

a. R Squared = .088 (Adjusted R Squared = .074)

b. R Squared = .041 (Adjusted R Squared = .027)

c. Computed using alpha = .05

For *Overall_Employee_Satisfaction*, the test of between-subjects effects model (see Table 49) shows a statistically significant effect of the model, indicated by a p-value of <0.001. This suggests that there is considerable variation in employee satisfaction that can be explained by the independent variable, *LifeStage_Category*, in the model. The intercept, which represents the average of all observations, also has a statistically significant effect, with a p-value of less than 0.001, which means that the average of *Overall_Employee_Satisfaction* is significantly different from zero. Additionally, there is a significant effect of *LifeStage_Category* on *Overall_Employee_Satisfaction*, shown by a p-value below 0.001. This suggests that employee satisfaction varies significantly across life stages.

For *Overall_Diversity_Management*, a significant effect of the model is shown, with a p-value of 0.034. This suggests that there is significant variation in diversity management that can be explained by the independent variable in the model. The intercept is significant, with a p-value of less than 0.001, meaning that the average of *Overall_Diversity_Management* is significantly different from zero. *LifeStage_Category* additionally has a statistically significant effect on *Overall_Diversity_Management*, with a p-value of 0.034. This suggests that diversity management varies significantly across life stages.

Therefore, the model shows that *LifeStage_Category* has a significant impact on both *Overall_Employee_Satisfaction* and *Overall_Diversity_Management*. The model explains

more of the variation in employee satisfaction with a Partial Eta Square of 8.8% compared to overall diversity management with a Partial Eta Square of 4.1%, suggesting that life stages have a greater effect on employee satisfaction than on diversity management.

To determine how these groups differ from each other an ad hoc test, Scheffe analysis of variance, was performed (see Table 50). This was chosen because of the unequal group size in the four life stages.

Table 50 Scheffe analysis MANOVA hypothesis 3

Multiple Comparisons							
Scheffe							
Dependent Variable	(I) LifeStage_Category	(J) LifeStage_Category	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Overall_Employee_Satisfaction	Life Stage 1	Life Stage 2	1.68	.742	.165	-.41	3.77
		Life Stage 3	2.16*	.708	.028	.16	4.16
		Life Stage 4	-.97	.724	.618	-3.01	1.07
	Life Stage 2	Life Stage 1	-1.68	.742	.165	-3.77	.41
		Life Stage 3	.48	.831	.954	-1.87	2.82
		Life Stage 4	-2.65*	.845	.022	-5.03	-.27
	Life Stage 3	Life Stage 1	-2.16*	.708	.028	-4.16	-.16
		Life Stage 2	-.48	.831	.954	-2.82	1.87
		Life Stage 4	-3.13*	.816	.003	-5.43	-.83
	Life Stage 4	Life Stage 1	.97	.724	.618	-1.07	3.01
		Life Stage 2	2.65*	.845	.022	.27	5.03
		Life Stage 3	3.13*	.816	.003	.83	5.43
Overall_Diversity_Management	Life Stage 1	Life Stage 2	1.50	.966	.495	-1.23	4.22
		Life Stage 3	1.25	.923	.607	-1.35	3.85
		Life Stage 4	-1.34	.943	.568	-4.00	1.32
	Life Stage 2	Life Stage 1	-1.50	.966	.495	-4.22	1.23
		Life Stage 3	-.24	1.083	.997	-3.30	2.81
		Life Stage 4	-2.84	1.101	.087	-5.94	.26
	Life Stage 3	Life Stage 1	-1.25	.923	.607	-3.85	1.35
		Life Stage 2	.24	1.083	.997	-2.81	3.30
		Life Stage 4	-2.60	1.063	.117	-5.59	.40
	Life Stage 4	Life Stage 1	1.34	.943	.568	-1.32	4.00
		Life Stage 2	2.84	1.101	.087	-.26	5.94
		Life Stage 3	2.60	1.063	.117	-.40	5.59

Based on observed means.

The error term is Mean Square(Error) = 25.102.

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The results are assessed for two dependent variables: *Overall_Employee_Satisfaction* and *Overall_Diversity_Management* (see Table 50).

For the dependent variable, *Overall_Employee_Satisfaction*, the analysis showed significant differences among the various life stages. For this it must be considered that the values range from 1 to 30 compared to 1 to 5 in the previous analysis. Employees in life stage 1 generally exhibited a lower level of satisfaction compared to those in life stage 3, with a mean difference of 2.16, which is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.014. Additionally, employees in life stage 2 exhibit higher satisfaction compared to those in life stage 4, with a mean difference

of -2.65, which was also statistically significant with a p-value of 0.010. Employees in life stage 3 similarly exhibited higher satisfaction compared to life stage 4, with a mean difference of -3.13, which is statistically significant with a p-value of <0.001 .

For the dependent variable, *Overall_Diversity_Management*, the analysis did not show statistically significant differences among the life stages. Therefore, it is not possible to determine if there is a difference in the four life stages perceptions of diversity management.

These results indicate that there are clear differences in employee satisfaction across the various life stages. Life stage 4 generally exhibited lower satisfaction compared to the other life stages. These findings highlight the importance of considering employees' life stages in organizational strategies.

H₀₃ can be rejected with multiple p-values below alpha for employee satisfaction, showing the specific differences between life stages. Therefore, employee satisfaction differs across life stages. However, the perceptions of diversity management did not show any significance, thereby no statistically significant difference was found between life stages.

5 Discussion

In the subsequent chapter, the findings are discussed and related to the literature. This has the purpose of exploring the theoretical contributions the research brings to the existing body of literature on diversity management and employee satisfaction followed by its practical implications for organizations. The findings are first considered separately for employee satisfaction and diversity management, ensuring an in-depth examination of all relevant factors. Subsequently, the relationship between both concepts is discussed. The difference of perception in life stages as well as further characterizing factors such as age, gender, minority status, and management position are investigated. Although the findings provide a critical examination of the effects of diversity management initiatives across employees at different life stages, it remains essential to acknowledge the limitations and challenges encountered throughout the elaboration of the study. Recognizing such limitations allows for an exploration of the possibilities for further research within the field of diversity management. Finally, potential areas within future research that build upon the findings of this research are explored.

5.1 Employee satisfaction levels

The following section provides a thorough interpretation of the findings for employee satisfaction in connection with the literature. An overall analysis of the sample reveals respondents show moderately positive perceptions of employee satisfaction at 2.02, a rating slightly better than neutral (cf. 4.1). Amongst employee satisfaction factors, workplace happiness is the most favorably perceived (1.60), suggesting respondents generally experience positive interpersonal relationships and a supportive work environment. Rewards and recognition, however, are the least favorably perceived factors (2.37), indicating a common feeling of unappreciation among employees. This perception is consistent across various life stages, suggesting a systemic issue within organizational reward and recognition practices. The dissatisfaction with rewards and recognition may also be influenced by the demographic composition of the sample, including significant percentages of women and minority groups who often report feeling less recognized for their contributions. Additionally, the variability observed in employee satisfaction factors, compared to other organizational measures, could be linked to differing levels of individual expectations or significant differences in managerial practices toward employee recognition and support (cf. 4.1.3). This variability suggests that perceptions of employee satisfaction are specific to organizational and individual experiences, making it challenging to generalize across different life stages.

Perceptions of employee satisfaction in life stages

Life stage 1 has moderate satisfaction, with their main satisfaction deriving from the overall happiness at work, although they express concerns about rewards and recognition (cf. 4.1.2.1). Similarly, those in life stage 2, typically balancing work with growing responsibilities with children, show high satisfaction particularly with their work culture, suggesting they value supportive environments but feel less satisfied with rewards and recognition. Employees in life stage 3 exhibit the highest levels of satisfaction, appreciating workplace happiness. As a supportive work environment and career development can consequently improve satisfaction levels, as theoretically supported by the RBV (cf. 2.2), this satisfaction level could be attributed to a combination of a comfortable career stability, accrued achievements, and perhaps a sense of advancement as they reach significant career milestones. Despite this high satisfaction, there remains an underlying dissatisfaction with rewards and recognition, suggesting that even the most satisfied employees recognize the potential for improvement in how their contributions are acknowledged (cf. 2.5.3). Conversely, life stage 4 employees report the lowest satisfaction levels. While they still appreciate aspects of workplace happiness, their satisfaction with rewards and recognition is notably poor. The overall dissatisfaction might stem from perceptions of limited career progression opportunities or inadequate recognition of their extensive service as they near the end of their careers. The life stage's challenges highlight the need for organizations to develop strategies that continue to engage and value employees as they transition towards retirement, ensuring that their final years of employment are fulfilling and recognized (cf. 2.5.4). While workplace happiness is a consistent satisfaction across all life stages, the universal dissatisfaction with rewards and recognition across the life stages, suggests that businesses need to reevaluate how they acknowledge and reward all employees, regardless of their career stage.

In the Scheffe post-hoc test of the MANOVA, there are a few life stages that statistically significantly differ. The statistical significance in employee satisfaction across life stages means that the differences observed are not just by chance but are confirmed by the statistical model. Employees in life stage 1 have a lower level of satisfaction compared to those in life stage 3 with a difference of 2.16. Additionally, employees in life stage 2 showed a higher

satisfaction than life stage 4 with a difference of 2.65 and employees in life stage 3 have a higher satisfaction compared to life stage 4 differing by 3.13. It is not possible to determine that life stage 3 is more satisfied than life stage 2. Employees in different life stages thereby actually have varying levels of satisfaction, and interventions to improve satisfaction should be tailored to address the specific needs and expectations of employees at different life stages.

Supplementary to a contemplation of the data regarding the four life stages, a segmentation of the characteristics for the respondents can be discussed. Neither age, gender, minority status, management position, country of employment, or country of headquarters were found to have a statistically significant impact on employee satisfaction in the regression analysis (cf. 4.2.1). This suggests that for the sample of respondents, other factors play a more significant role in determining satisfaction levels. It implies that this relationship is not inherently influenced by the above-mentioned characteristics. Nonetheless, it is valuable to compare the means for the distinguished groups (age; gender; minority status; management position). Noticeable differences and possible implications are explored in the following. The factors country of employment and country of headquarters are not considered in greater detail, as there is not enough variance in answers to gather significant and generalizable insights.

Age

Four age groups are defined in the analysis: below 27 years old, 28-43 years old, 44-59 years old, over 60 years old. Most respondents of the questionnaire are 28-43 years old (78), with 61 respondents between 44 and 59 years old. 51 respondents are below 27 years old while 22 are over 60 years old (cf. 4.1.1).

It is noticeable that for every of the six questions of employee satisfaction, the age group over 60 years old was the least satisfied, which resonate with life stage 4 results (cf. 4.1.2.2). There is an especially big difference to other age groups for the factor training development and workplace happiness. In general, those two factors are those with the biggest span of means for all age groups with over 0.6 of difference: training development with 0.6 and workplace happiness with 0.69. The POS has a span of means of 0.49, while psychological involvement has an overall difference of 0.43. Both work culture (0.21) and rewards and recognition (0.23) have a smaller span in difference of means across age groups. This implies that the companies of employment in the survey might not adequately adapt their strategies and measures to facilitate positive intergenerational satisfaction. Especially the training seems to offer room for

improvement in including age-specific considerations, such as technological advancement or differing priorities. While younger employees might perceive remote training opportunities positively, this could not align with the priorities and values of older employees. Also, older employees seem to favor refining already developed skills compared to acquiring completely new skills (cf. 2.5.4). Recognizing such differences allows to adjust measures accordingly, allowing to fully seize the knowledge and contributions of experienced employees. With retirement approaching, organizations have the opportunity to provide support in planning and adjusting to stepping out of the workforce, something that POS encapsulates. Financial considerations can be supported and flexible work options offered to accommodate individual plans for ending one's career (cf. 2.5.4). Overall, senior employees are invaluable in their experience and knowledge, something that needs to be properly translated for succeeding employees. Therefore, organizations need to focus on generating productive exchange between different generations that is not negatively connoted with ageism but recognizes achievements. The overall difference in satisfaction from the other age groups can be interpreted in that organizations have not fully managed to meet their senior employees with appropriate recognition.

The group of 28–43-year-olds are most satisfied for the majority of factors, except for workplace happiness and psychological involvement (where they are second most satisfied). This is interesting, as this is the typical age for having young children in Western countries (life stage 2) (cf. 2.5.2). This life stage is accompanied by challenges of balancing the demands of parenthood and work. That respondents in this age group feel highly satisfied with their jobs makes it seem as if organizations have generally recognized these challenges and offer measures to support this life stage. A shift in priorities can explain less psychological involvement and focus on workplace happiness that juggling children and a career can encompass. This age group is also characterized by career advancement, which is perceived as adequately supported with training development as well as rewards and recognition. For the context of this survey, it must be considered that most respondents are employed in a country with extensive social welfare that requires parental support (e.g., Denmark or Germany). Therefore, organizations are legally required to provide specific considerations, but it can still be assumed that they embrace parents and their challenges with the positive data in the survey.

Gender

In the perceptions of employee satisfaction between men and women, the data reveals that women generally report higher levels of satisfaction compared to men. However, in life stages 2 and 3, men exhibit slightly higher satisfaction levels. For instance, in life stage 1, women rated their overall satisfaction at 2.10, lower than men at 2.17, indicating a better perception of job satisfaction among women. In Life Stage 2, the trend reverses with men reporting higher overall satisfaction at 1.78, a minimum difference compared to women at 1.85. However, in Life Stage 3, men report a higher satisfaction rating of 1.42 with a higher distance to women at 1.86, suggesting specific factors during these stages, especially life stage 3, that may resonate more positively with men (cf. 4.1.2.5). This is explored in the following.

For men in life stages 2 and 3, higher satisfaction levels might be due to significant career-building opportunities that align with these life stages. This period often coincides with peak career growth, where flexibility and rewards are particularly valued. Men might be experiencing or perceiving greater opportunities for advancement, which is often facilitated by reward systems emphasizing financial incentives and promotions. Furthermore, men might experience less conflict between work and life responsibilities compared to women, due to cultural norms around gender roles. This lesser degree of conflict could lead to a more positive experience for men during these critical life stages, contributing to their higher satisfaction (cf. 2.5.2 & 2.5.3).

The general higher satisfaction levels among women in the life stages 1 and 4 might be linked to a greater appreciation of supportive work cultures, effective communication, and robust development opportunities, which are essential for shaping an employee's satisfaction and could influence their long-term commitment and productivity. Additionally, the presence of robust social support systems within the workplace can significantly boost job satisfaction for women. These systems help foster a sense of belonging and community, which are important for overall satisfaction. Perceptions of workplace happiness and psychological involvement are also with women more favorable, except in life stage 3. These perceptions are influenced by a supportive social environment, a sense of achievement, and engagement in meaningful work, all of which are integral to a positive work experience. However, being a woman in life stage 1 also comes with its challenges according to the literature, which suggests that there still is less space for career growth for women and additionally are battling with the needed

organizational support (cf. 2.5). This is also shown in the data analysis where rewards and recognition are the only factor in life stage 1 and life stage 2, where men score higher than women (cf. 4.1.2.5).

Minority

Regarding employee satisfaction levels according to minority status, which encompasses ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation, those not belonging to minority groups report slightly more positive levels of satisfaction, as expected considering the discrimination and biases that minorities still experience in the workforce (cf. 4.1.2.3).

However, further analysis by life stages reveals contradicting results, with minorities in life stage 1 and life stage 3 appearing more satisfied by 0.08 and 0.04 respectively. Such results suggest that organizations implement measures that align with the values and characteristics of younger generations starting their career through an adapted recruitment process and mitigation of biases between groups (cf. 2.5.1). Additionally, effective leadership development programs, training and career advancement opportunities tailored for minorities, who are mainly subject to restricted access to essential resources, may justify the increased satisfaction level among minorities in life stage 3, a group that is characterized by valuing personal development and their competitiveness in the workforce (cf. 2.5.3). Additionally, organizations might be implementing effective measures by providing mentoring and access to networks, which are crucial for increasing the visibility of minorities and overcoming inherent barriers to achieving leadership positions.

Moreover, there are no reported differences in satisfaction levels for those in life stage 2, whereas in life stage 4 minorities report notable lower values of satisfaction with a difference of 0.50 in comparison to those of non-minority status, suggesting senior employees with a minority status as the most dissatisfied (cf. 4.1.2.3). The distinct dissatisfaction among this group could indicate that, despite organizations investing in the development of career advancement opportunities for those at the beginning of their careers, they may lack consideration of the needs of minorities as they transition into senior roles, thus struggling with maintaining a good level of satisfaction for these employees. Furthermore, the stigmatization of individuals has shown to have a harmful impact on motivation levels and instilling insecurity regarding individual capabilities and performance (cf. 2.5.4).

Management position

Overall, those in management positions report a slightly more positive satisfaction in comparison to their counterparts (cf. 4.1.2.4). However, the overall difference appears insignificant with those in managerial roles with 1.99 and their counterparts with 2.03, amounting to a difference of 0.04. Such observation provides indications of a lack of significant difference in satisfaction according to management position. Further analysis shows those with managerial roles are more satisfied across life stage 2 and 4 and their counterparts are more satisfied in life stage 1 and life stage 3. The biggest discrepancy in satisfaction levels is found in life stage 2, with a difference of 0.17. Regarding satisfaction factors, rewards and recognition stand out showing the biggest difference with those in life stage 2 and managerial roles to be more satisfied by 0.58. Among those holding managerial roles, women report slightly higher levels of satisfaction at 1.95 in comparison to men at 2.03. Although existing literature details women as facing several barriers hindering their career advancements, such as the glass ceiling effect, the data reports better satisfaction for all factors, apart from factor rewards and recognition (cf. 4.2.2). Such suggests the female respondents within management positions may not perceive these barriers negatively or may not experience them to the extent depicted in the literature. Moreover, this observation can indicate the existence of structures and initiatives such as mentoring programs led by other female colleagues and increased network access as justifying factors.

5.2 Perception of diversity management

The following section provides a thorough interpretation of the findings for diversity management in connection with the literature. An overall analysis of the sample reveals respondents show moderately positive perceptions of diversity management at 2.31, a rating still less positive than satisfaction levels. Amongst diversity factors, broader framing is the most favorably perceived (2.05), suggesting respondents acknowledge the existence of fair treatment of all employees in their organizations, Such principle is not only expected in current organizational environments but it is also something more openly communicated in organizations, thus not surprising this factor was the most positively perceived by respondents. Biases decrease was the less favorably perceived factor (2.48), aligning with literature claiming implicit biases persist in organizations even when concrete measures are implemented, with organizations failing to fundamentally effectively address the issue. Additionally, this factor pertains to more specific measures which directly affect only certain groups within respondents. Moreover, the rating can be justified by the gender composition of the sample,

with 65.1% of women, who are often the one of the main targets of implicit biases and thus were expected to perceive this factor the least favorably. In addition, the variability observed regarding diversity management factors could be linked to either varying levels of individual awareness towards diversity management or significant differences in organizational approaches towards diversity management. Such provides indication that perceptions of diversity management are either specific to organizational and/or individual experiences, thus harder to generalize across different life stages.

Perceptions of diversity management in life stages

The perception of diversity management across different life stages reveals insights into their differences. While life stages 1 and 3 reveal moderate positive perceptions of diversity management, the data analysis shows that employees in life stage 2 report the best perceptions, particularly valuing broader framing (cf. 4.1.2.1). This favorable perspective likely stems from organizations providing flexible work policies that accommodate the demands of parenting young children. Such policies not only help in balancing work and family commitments but also signal an inclusive and supportive workplace culture, which is crucial for parents seeking to maintain career aspirations alongside growing family responsibilities (cf. 2.5.2). In contrast, employees nearing retirement, life stage 4, express the lowest perceptions regarding diversity management. With statistically significance, performance measurement and training especially has a need for focus, due to the low perceptions of those. The group's dissatisfaction may be influenced by a perception that diversity initiatives are primarily targeted towards younger or less tenured employees. Older employees might feel overlooked or undervalued, perceiving a lack of genuine commitment to diversity that includes age as a key factor. Their critical view towards efforts aimed at decreasing biases suggests a skepticism born from years of witnessing inadequate or superficial diversity efforts within organizations (cf. 2.5.4).

Diving deeper into the data analysis in hypothesis 3, it does not reveal any statistically significant difference in the perception of diversity management across life stages. This means that there is a generally consistent perception of diversity management practices regardless of the employee's life stage, indicating that diversity management practices might be effectively addressing the needs across different life stages equally, or that these needs are not as dynamically affected by life stages as satisfaction is. However, if an alpha level of 10% had been chosen, there would have been a statistically significant difference. With a p-value of

0.087, the employees in life stage 2 exhibit a more positive perception of diversity management compared to those in life stage 4, with a mean difference of 2.84 (cf. 4.2.3). Therefore, the difference between the life stages for diversity management can be perceived as somewhat significant.

In the following, the data is contemplated regarding the factors age, gender, management position, and minority status, similar to the discussion of the results for employee satisfaction.

Age

Similar to the data on employee satisfaction, diversity management is perceived worst by over 60 years old respondents (cf. 4.1.2.2). In general, the ranking of perception is like employee satisfaction, with 28-43 years old and 44-59 years olds equally perceiving diversity management best, followed by the under 27 years old. Overall, the span of total values is less positive than for employee satisfaction, ranging from 2.22 to 2.78. Furthermore, the span of values for the four age groups is greater than for employee satisfaction with structural interventions having the lowest span with a value of 0.43. Minimizing backlash (0.51), decreasing biases (0.64), broader framing (0.65), and formulating concrete objectives (0.65) succeed. The general diversity management question has the widest range of perceptions across age groups with a value 0.8. This shows that the different age groups seem to perceive the aspects of diversity management more diversely. One possible reason for this is a varying understanding of how the aspects of diversity management might manifest across different generations. Moreover, it could mean that organizations approach their diversity management with less structure and clear communication, which could mean that the overall perception varies. To that comes that the perception of diversity management is highly shaped by the respondents' understanding, even though this was minimized as much as possible through the questions asked.

That the under 27 years old respondents are not as satisfied and do not perceive diversity management as positively as respondents further along in their career can lead to the assumption that organizations do not completely understand yet how to integrate new talent in the workforce and match their values and concerns. For Zillennials, it is important that relationships are prioritized, collaborative problem-solving is encouraged, and culture and ethics are prioritized (cf. 2.5.1). It is especially the factors of formulating concrete objectives, decreasing biases, and minimizing backlash that have a greater difference to the other age

groups (except those over 60 years old). This could mean that there is potentially greater awareness of the effectiveness of measures, especially compared to 28-43- and 44-59-years old employees. Because of a generational awareness, this might mean that younger employees have more context to how biases and backlash actually manifest and how to question the measures of their organizations. Also, they might feel less prioritized by their organizations and face stereotypes by older employees and therefore - similarly to respondents over 60 years old - face their diversity management more critically by feeling treated unfairly. This supports the findings of the literature that discrimination through subtle biases and marginalization presents a challenge in the career entry.

Over 60-year-old respondents feeling less positive about their organization's diversity management can be explained by them not feeling included in considerations of their organization. By doing so, companies miss the chance to honor the employees who have shaped their organization and harness the knowledge and experience that can be especially beneficial in complex processes (cf. 2.5.4). Additionally, this perception can be explained by a greater distance in mindset and priorities to the current values of the company. Here it is questionable how and whether this distance must be bridged, as the future of a company is shaped by current values and priorities. While there are generational differences, it is questionable whether they can and should be compromised in every aspect, or whether there needs to be some conflict to facilitate change. It must also be considered that the difference in perception could be influenced by the amount of experience of senior employees. Having experienced both positive and negative outcomes of situations might make them more realistic about what their organizations can provide for them and how they are valued.

Both age groups from 28-43 years old and 44-59 years old are mostly similar positive for the factors of diversity management. Compared to the other two age groups, most employees in this age group are well integrated in organizations and might therefore be less subjected to discrimination that negatively impacts the perception of their organization's diversity management. Also, respondents in these age frames are likely to shape their organization's strategic outlook, so they might view it more positively as they could be directly involved. As previously mentioned, it is important to note that while employees in early parenthood have challenging demands and diverse needs (cf. 2.5.2), organizations seem to have met these demands well.

Gender

Diving into how men and women perceive diversity management within their organization, the data analysis indicated that women (2.28) have a slightly more positive perception of the overall diversity initiatives than men (2.36) (cf. 4.1.2.5). Women often benefit directly from diversity policies aimed at correcting gender imbalances and promoting inclusivity, which is why they might be more prone to rate it higher compared to men. This direct benefit may lead women to view these initiatives more favorably, as they experience firsthand the positive changes such initiatives aim to bring in workplace dynamics and opportunities. Additionally, it could be due to a perception of diversity efforts as zero-sum, where they might see gains for traditionally underrepresented groups as coming at their expense. Moreover, men might not perceive the subtleties of discrimination as acutely as women, which could lead to a less enthusiastic reception of diversity policies (cf. 2.3.4.1). Additionally, the literature suggests that men may underestimate the need for diversity policies, believing that less intervention is needed. This belief could stem from their generally less frequent experience with barriers related to exclusion or discrimination in the workplace. Women's more positive views might also be influenced by their greater awareness of and sensitivity to issues of inclusion, which are often highlighted by diversity initiatives. This sensitivity can translate into a greater appreciation for the efforts and outcomes of diversity management, seeing these policies as essential for creating fair and inclusive workplace environments.

The results of the data analysis were not expected based on the literature, which suggests a higher overall perception of diversity management among men. However, diving into the different life stages, it is also shown that in life stages 2 and 3, men are more satisfied than women with values at respectively 1.94 and 1.83 compared to women at 2.15 and 2.24 (cf. 4.1.2.5). This could be due to factors like the "motherhood penalty" where women, especially mothers, face significant career and wage disadvantages. This phenomenon is well-documented across various studies and points to implicit biases and systemic barriers that mothers face in the workplace, often resulting in lower satisfaction and career progression compared to men (2.5.2). For men in life stages 2 and 3, higher satisfaction levels might be attributed to significant career progression opportunities that align with these life stages. This period often entails peak career growth, where rewards and recognition are particularly valued. Men might be experiencing or perceiving greater opportunities for advancement, which is often facilitated by traditional reward systems emphasizing financial incentives and hierarchical promotion. Furthermore, men might experience less conflict between work and life

responsibilities compared to women, due to cultural norms around gender roles. This lesser degree of conflict could lead to a more positive workplace experience for men during these critical career stages, contributing to their higher job satisfaction (2.5.2 & 2.5.3). To increase the satisfaction for women in life stage 2 it would be favorable for companies to create a supportive culture where discussing family needs is encouraged and stigma-free. For women in life stage 3 a focus on leadership programs and mentoring, to support advancement would be favorable.

Management position

Data found individuals in management positions to perceive diversity management initiatives more favorably compared to their counterparts by 0.13, possibly due to higher exposure to diversity benefits and often involvement in the implementation of these initiatives. Further analysis across life stages found those in management positions to have a consistently better perception of diversity initiatives, highlighting Life Stage 2 with the bigger discrepancy of perceptions by 0.28. Among managers, there is a noticeable difference in the perceptions of diversity among managers in different life stages.

Notably, those with managerial roles in life stage 2, characterized by their parenthood status, are found to have the best perceptions of diversity management (1.95), suggesting their own situation of disadvantage may promote empathy over the unique challenges inherent in diversity, enhancing their perceptions over the impact diversity initiatives may hold (cf. 2.5.3). Those in life stage 3 follow close behind at 2.10 whereas those in life stage 4, containing those recalled as baby boomers, are reported to have the least favorable perception at 2.53 (cf. 4.1.2.4). Such perception may stem from the outdated inherent misperceptions associated with an upbringing in less culturally diverse environments. Usually subject to ageism and discrimination in comparison to their younger counterparts, despite their managerial status, these factors could additionally contribute to a less favorable perspective on diversity management by individuals in life stage 4 (cf. 2.4.4). It remains imperative to denote that contrary to the literature findings regarding younger executives holding more positive perspectives towards diversity management, as refer above, the data reveals no linear chronological trend regarding the perception of diversity management, with perceptions ranking from highest to lowest by Life Stage 2, Life Stage 3, Life Stage 1, Life Stage 4 (cf. 2.5.3; cf. 4.1.2.4). Influenced by their own experiences of discrimination, women in leadership exhibit slightly better perceptions than men by 0.42 (cf. 4.1.2.4), aligning with literature that

identifies gender diversity as a factor leading to higher commitments towards diversity management and highlighting the role of women as advocates for initiatives that tailor for the unique circumstances faced by disadvantaged groups.

Minority

Individuals with minority status were found to hold less favorable views on diversity management, at 2.51, in comparison to their counterparts, at 2.28, and were observed as consistently holding fewer positive perceptions of diversity management across almost all life stages (cf. 4.1.2.3). For life stage 1, minorities had a less favorable perception by 0.18, whereas in life stage 2 the difference increased to 0.40. In life stage 3, the gap narrowed with minorities appearing to hold more positive perceptions regarding diversity management by 0.04, indicating a very small difference based on minority status for this life stage. Such observations come in agreement with the existing literature, suggesting that minorities in management positions, often associated with those in life stage 3, tend to have a higher tolerance and acceptance of diversity initiatives (cf. 2.5.3). The lack of big discrepancy in life stage 3 could additionally indicate that organizations successfully address the challenges and needs of minorities during career advancement.

Furthermore, perception values for life stage 4 stand out, with those non-minority employees reporting far better perception of diversity management with an offset difference of 0.93 (cf. 4.1.2.3), indicating organizations don't effectively consider the challenges faced by minority employees as they age and progress into more senior roles. Underlying this discrepancy are the accumulated disadvantages experienced by those of older age with a minority status, who due to additional challenges may perceive their opportunities as more limited in comparison to their counterparts, leading to a lack of sense of belonging in the workforce (cf. 2.5.4)

5.3 Relationship of employee satisfaction and diversity management

While the literature finds the relationship between diversity management and employee satisfaction as mixed, the results of the survey confirm a positive relationship. With X_{16} , the variable that represents the general perception of diversity management in the respondents' organizations, a positive effect on employee satisfaction (0.309) is found. Out of the five identified factors of effective diversity management (formulate concrete objectives and track

efficacy, decrease biases between groups, structural diversity management interventions, broader framing of diversity management, minimizing and preparing for backlash), a significant positive relationship is confirmed for structural diversity management interventions (0.143) and broader framing of diversity management (0.399).

That a broader framing of diversity management has the biggest positive impact emphasizes the importance of making everyone feel seen in their individuality. While the broadening of framing has the potential of neglecting the focus on disadvantaged groups, it increases the palatability of diversity (cf. 2.3.4.2). One potential concept that can be introduced is the concept of “procedural justice”, which focuses on treating all groups fairly, respectfully, and integrated in decision-making processes. This can be translated to the categorization of life stages as well. Especially the employees in life stage 1 and 4 are relatively unsatisfied and perceive diversity management worse, which speaks for an ineffective framing of the organizations. This implies that diversity management is not designed in a way, so it effectively encompasses several factors, such as age.

The positive impact of structural diversity management interventions confirms the importance of structural change for making a meaningful and sustainable difference, instead of solely focusing on individual attitudes (cf. 2.3.4.2). Companies can implement structural intervention through accountability structures, creating fair performance standards, and committing to consistent inclusive messaging. In general, processes should be established so that decision-makers are prevented from directly affecting the outcome through their individual perception and so that they are held accountable for their decisions. As this has been shown to be the most effective approach in increasing the representation of people of color and women in management positions, organizations can focus on achieving representation objectives through structural interventions (cf. 2.5.3). Gender and ethnicity diversity within top management is positively linked to their commitment levels of diversity and more supportive of diversity measures and organizational support practices. That 26.8% of women, compared to 41.1% of men, hold a management position in this survey supports the findings of literature that most companies have not achieved equal representation in management (cf. 2.5.3). Similarly, 21.4% of minorities hold management positions, compared to 34.8% of non-minorities. Overall,

structural interventions are a factor that, with a direct choice of every organization, leaves much radius of operation. Therefore, it is not dependent on the employees' attitudes and perceptions but can be directly influenced by the organization's decisions.

That the analysis finds a positive relationship between diversity management and employee satisfaction supports the notion that negative effects are based on ineffective management of an organization's diversity measures. Ensuring that a justice, or even better, instrumental rationale – or both – drives the initiatives circumvents that they are solely based on a signaling intention, resulting in a higher significance (cf. 2.3). While the existence of diversity management does increase the potential for conflict and lower social cohesion, it can also increase employees' attitudes in the form of higher levels of perceived organizational support, advancement potential, organizational commitment, and overall job satisfaction (cf. 2.4). As employee satisfaction has noticeable implications for a company's performance, the data of this survey, therefore, support that effective diversity management positively affects employee satisfaction, which in turn has a positive impact on the overall performance of the company.

The findings of significance for only two (structural interventions and broader framing) out of five identified factors (others: concrete objectives and tracking efficacy, biases decrease, and minimization of backlash) from the literature do not inherently suggest that the other factors are not related to employee satisfaction, as they might be hard to perceive from an employee's perspective. The questionnaire was formulated in a way to minimize confusion on concepts, but it cannot be excluded that interpretations varied for respondents. In this way, the formulation of concrete objectives by the organization, the decrease of biases, and the minimization of backlash might be hard to perceive from an employee's perspective. Also, the findings in the life-stage specific analysis showed significance in some of the factors, therefore, they are considered accordingly.

The relationship of diversity management and employee satisfaction can also be contemplated from a life stage specific perspective. The analysis finds a variation in which factors affect employee satisfaction according to the different stages of the respondents' lives. The results and their implications are explored in the following.

For life stage 1, specific diversity initiatives are found to have a positive effect on the satisfaction levels of those starting their career paths in the form of standardized recruitment processes, flexibility in work concepts, and career development opportunities provided. Flexibility was found to have the biggest effect on satisfaction levels (0.320). Despite being predicted as an influencing factor for all life stages, flexibility was only found significant and positively impactful for those in life stage 1, underscoring the importance of flexible work concepts in catering to young Millennials and older Generation Z who find the integration of work and life as an indisputable value. The importance of flexible work arrangements for this group further highlights the necessity for structural intervention within diversity management that encompasses the needs of all employees. Traditional flexibility models and concepts, such as flexible working hours, may not be sufficient for this group, as they may require a higher level of customization in structuring their daily schedule according to their own individual needs. Additionally, the impact of standardized recruitment processes and career development opportunities provides further evidence regarding the significance of structural interventions. While the respondents rate that their organizations are relatively effective in their recruitment processes, the career development opportunities are somewhat lacking. Standardized recruitment processes reduce the effect of underlying biases and the implementation of concrete measures for career advancement, such as mentoring, and development opportunities as well as more concrete measures like transparency in salaries, must be considered.

In life stage 2, the absence of any significantly impactful factor for those characterized as having young children may imply the model does not encompass critical factors that constitute drivers of satisfaction for this group. Due to the complex nature of the topic under examination, a coinciding understanding of the respondents might not have been achieved in the questionnaire. This is especially interesting, as most organizations offer the most consistent support for parents, which would lead to the assumption that respondents in this life stage would see a big impact. The factor of parental benefits would have been relevant with a positive effect of 0.367 if an alpha level of 10% had been chosen, indicating some relevance to organizational support. Therefore, it remains important to mention that a lack of statistical significance does not necessarily imply that this group's satisfaction remains unaffected by life stage-specific measures, as the study found diversity management factors as significant in explaining employee satisfaction (overall diversity management, structural intervention, and broader framing). These measures support employees in all life stages, especially if they typically face barriers in their working experience - which parents can do.

For those with mature careers, life stage 3, access to supportive networks and tailored mentoring provision (0.451) and career development measures (0.394) are found to have a positive effect on employee satisfaction. This finding aligns with the essential role structural interventions lead in organizations to establish processes that address the diverse needs of all employees. Offering suitable career development opportunities also for those that are in a career maturity phase is deemed an imperative structural intervention that has a positive effect on employees' satisfaction levels. Networks and mentoring are essential not only for establishing diverse relationships but are also crucial in supporting career advancement. While career development opportunities are deemed efficient by employees, leadership development opportunities, networking access and tailored mentoring provided by their organizations appeared as lacking (cf. 4.1.2.1). Despite being often referred as essential for women and minorities to attain managerial positions, these measures are vital for all employees. This finding also supports the notion that the other three measures of effective diversity management that were found by literature have some validity to them. While they were not found to have a significant relationship with employee satisfaction, the factor of networks and mentoring is based on the principles of decreasing biases between groups through intergroup communication.

Those soon to exit the workforce, life stage 4, have their satisfaction impacted positively by measures such as training opportunities (0.571) as well as implementation of performance measures that consider all employees and essentially recognize each individual's work preferences and contributions (0.396). This again highlights the importance of structural interventions for a positive level of satisfaction for employees with senior roles. Not only must concrete measures be implemented but additionally, interventions that mitigate ageism within an organization remain imperative for the increase in the motivation and thus satisfaction for these individuals. Furthermore, they support the formulation of concrete objectives in the design of diversity initiatives.

Additionally, while the overall model – not life stage specific – was found to explain a significant part of the variance in the overall satisfaction levels, the models corresponding to each life stage specific diversity management initiatives, do not fully account for all the variation in the dependent variable of satisfaction. This observation suggests that other factors additionally affect overall employee satisfaction, which were not considered in the current models for each life stage. The acknowledgment of such could indicate the current model did

not fully encompass all life stage specific diversity management initiatives for each of the considered life stages and thus indicates potential for future research.

To contextualize the findings, it can be established that the conceptualization derived from the literature can be somewhat confirmed. A relationship of diversity management and employee satisfaction is confirmed, with the data finding only positive effects of diversity management on employee satisfaction. This supports that an effective design and execution of diversity management is impactful for improved satisfaction levels. While the literature manages to capture the relevancy of overall diversity management, it does not make life stage specific considerations. The findings of the survey confirm that there is reason in considering life stage specific accommodations, something that the literature does not currently capture accurately. While not all life stage specific models in this study displayed significance, it confirms the relevancy of making the distinction between employees' circumstances. That life stage 1 showed the most significance in factors indicates that this life stage is potentially the most aware of the benefits of diversity management but also that it values it the most. Organizations have a chance of attracting top talent and retaining them with higher satisfaction levels if they focus on supporting their career entry with consideration. Similarly, more experienced employees in life stage 4 can be incorporated in diversity management in a way that allows for a smooth transition with minimal loss of organizational knowledge. The data also supports that women and minorities are not fully included in the development of equal opportunities, especially in life stage 2 and 3.

Because broader framing and structural interventions are found to have a significant positive effect on employee satisfaction, these could be focus points for organizations in the design of diversity management initiatives. Overall, the findings confirm that diversity management has to be considered specific to one organization's circumstances. The organizational structure, strategic objectives, and demographic environments of operation are critical for formulating diversity management in a way that it encapsulates the employees' specific needs. Especially in an international corporation, contextual differences such as socio-historical power discrepancies, definitions of diversity and its local impact, and local sources of discrimination must be considered.

5.4 Theoretical contributions

On a theoretical level, by studying the relationship between employee satisfaction levels and diversity management supporting different life stages, the research provides theoretical contributions to existing literature by finding significance of the impact of diversity management initiatives on satisfaction levels of employees through a life stage specific approach. Through the conceptualization, the research introduces a life stage specific framework to diversity management, proposing that effective diversity management initiatives lead to optimized employee satisfaction by addressing both overarching diversity management challenges and their corresponding measures, but specifically through the tailoring of life-stage specific initiatives.

Particularly, the research makes data driven contributions to this relationship. The research finds statistical significance in diversity management positively affecting employee satisfaction through two out of the five proposed factors: structural interventions and broader framing, thus supporting research that has established a positive effect of the two factors. Moreover, the research finds life stage specific initiatives to affect employee satisfaction, with significant factors found for all life stages, except for life stage 2. The research contributes by finding evidence that life stages have an impact on both satisfaction levels and diversity perceptions, the biggest impact being on satisfaction levels. Additionally, the research demonstrates statistically significant differences in satisfaction level among various life stages: between life stage 1 and 3; life stage 2 and 4; life stage 3 and 4. With a confidence level of 95%, the research can confirm these groups as having different satisfaction levels, thus strongly predicting the same patterns would be likely observed in a population, where more specifically those in life stage 3 would likely be less satisfied than those in life stage 1, those in life stage 2 more satisfied than in life stage 4 and those in life stage 3 more satisfied than those in life stage 4.

Additionally, the research identifies life stage 4, the generation of Baby Boomers, as both the most dissatisfied group with the worst perceptions of diversity and life stage 1 as second to last, emphasizing the need for additional research to accurately assess the needs and overall profile of the two groups. By revealing the best satisfaction and perceptions for those in life stage 2 and 3, the research suggests a disproportionately focus on existing literature on career advancement phases of employees, rather than retirement and even entry level. In this regard, the research contributes by providing specific information about the needs, and perceptions of

these life stages concerning certain initiatives while underscoring the importance of achieving a full comprehensive understanding over the drivers of satisfaction for these groups.

The research thereby makes several theoretical contributions to the understanding of diversity management and employee satisfaction. Firstly, with the conceptualized framework, secondly with empirical evidence that structural interventions and broader framing enhance employee satisfaction, thirdly by revealing differing satisfaction levels between life stages, lastly by emphasizing that fairness and inclusivity in decision-making are crucial for successful diversity initiatives. By providing several inputs regarding satisfaction levels across different life stages, the research provides a theoretical foundation for future research to further investigate and incorporate life stages as an imperative aspect of diversity management research. Through a thorough investigation of the preferences and needs of employees as they transition between life stages, future research may facilitate the development of practical initiatives aimed at supporting these changes

5.5 Practical implications

As mentioned in paragraph 4.2.3, the data analysis reveals a statistically significant difference in employee satisfaction across life stages, which indicates that companies should differentiate their employee satisfaction strategies across life stages to achieve an increase and minimize the differences in employee satisfaction. A statistically significant difference was not found between life stages' perception of diversity management. However, diving into the cross tabulations, a difference in perception between life stages is found. Companies might benefit from addressing these differences in perceptions of diversity management to considerably address their employees' needs in certain life phases.

Employees in the early career stage, life stage 1, exhibit moderate-high levels for both employee satisfaction and perception of diversity management. Companies need to prioritize focus on this life stage to ensure these employees remain engaged and satisfied. It would be favorable for companies to implement highly customizable work schedules and career development opportunities to ensure highly engaged employees. Standardizing recruitment processes to mitigate implicit biases and providing mentoring and transparent reward programs can significantly enhance their job satisfaction and improve perceptions of diversity management for these groups. Emphasizing the integration of work and life can cater to their need for flexibility and personal growth.

The data analysis suggests that women in life stage 2 are less satisfied than men, indicating a need for greater focus on supporting female employees. Therefore, companies need to prioritize focus on this life stage to help employees balance professional and parental responsibilities effectively. Implementing flexible work options, such as reduced hours, remote work, and flexible schedules, can enhance job satisfaction for both men and women. However, to specifically address the lower satisfaction among women, companies should dive into the motherhood penalty to minimize its effects and make it more equal among women and men. This can be achieved by implementing special development programs for mothers aimed at their career progression and work-life balance, which will help them to progress in their career even when juggling motherhood and career. While many companies in the countries where the respondents are employed offer support for mothers, programs should be designed in a way that allows for the same opportunities for all. This can be done by sending out an internal survey to find relevant issues to address in each individual organization. Additionally, offering family-friendly benefits like parental assistance programs and healthcare coverage for children can further support employees in this life stage.

Employees in the career maturity stage, life stage 3, show a high level of employee satisfaction but moderate-high perceptions of diversity management, however women are less satisfied than men. Companies should continue to focus on this life stage to sustain their engagement and satisfaction. Implementing career and professional development opportunities tailored to their needs can enhance job satisfaction, with a focus on women creating equal opportunities between genders. Since these employees often occupy top management positions, leadership development programs and mentoring are crucial. Recognizing their technological capabilities and limitations, companies should offer training in technological literacy. Flexible working designs and working hours are particularly beneficial for this group.

Life stage 4 exhibits the worst employee satisfaction and perception of diversity management, with significant disparities between minority vs. non-minority respondents and management vs. non-management positions. Therefore, companies need to prioritize focus especially on this life stage. Implementing intergenerational collaboration programs can foster mutual learning and reduce age-related stigmas. Offering flexible scheduling options can help employees nearing retirement transition smoothly while maintaining work-life balance. The data analysis reveals that older employees (60+), particularly minorities and those in non-management positions, feel less satisfied. Companies should adapt performance measures to recognize the

evolving work capacities and preferences of older employees, focusing on maintenance tasks rather than new responsibilities, with corresponding salary adjustments. Providing tailored training sessions to update older employees on the latest technology and workplace tools is crucial. These measures can significantly enhance satisfaction levels and improve perceptions of diversity management for employees approaching retirement. Additionally, initiatives that specifically address the unique challenges faced by minority and non-management older employees can further enhance their job satisfaction and perception of inclusivity.

5.6 Limitations

The following chapter takes a critical approach analyzing the constraints and challenges the project was subjected to throughout its development, which potentially influenced the findings/outcome and their applicability.

First, the scope of literature may represent a considerable constraint for research. The existing body of research within the field of diversity management is predominantly based on literature from the US, where research initially originated in the 1960s. Although subjected to an expansion on a global scale, a US-centered perspective on diversity management thus may have biased the perspective on diversity management in the existing research. Such bias may have overlooked certain cultural contexts nuances, more specifically from non-Western regions, potentially translating into literature that does not accurately reflect the full spectrum of diversity management. As a consequence, a possible bias in the definition and understanding of diversity management initiatives might have occurred, limiting the research's ability to accurately understand the practice and effectiveness of certain initiatives.

As for the chosen methodological approach, the research faced limitations associated with the positivistic approach and the employment of quantitative data. The chosen methodology potentially limits the research by oversimplifying the complexity underlying employees' perceptions regarding diversity initiatives. Through relying on numeric data, the project might have overlooked the motives and contexts underlying behind respondents' answers. Conversely, the incorporation of qualitative data, such as interviews or focus groups, could have contextualized and provided more depth into the participants' experiences, offering a more thorough exploration of individual perceptions regarding diversity initiatives. Additionally, as the developed survey was answered exclusively by corporate employees, such may have restricted how broadly the findings can be applied and generalized.

Furthermore, the research might have been limited through the categorization of diversity into four life stages. Such might have oversimplified the multifaceted nature of diversity and restricted the capability of accurately representing the full range of diversity factors that impact an employee's experience. As the main goal of the research was to explore the impact diversity initiatives have according to different life and career phases, other relevant aspects of diversity weren't equally addressed. It did not specifically investigate the experience of different minorities, factors such as disabilities, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, but focused on their overall experiences. Although the present research acknowledged differences between gender and minority groups regarding their perceptions on diversity management initiatives, it did not explore the full range of possible experiences within each of these categories. As a result, the research's depth may have been compromised, possibly limiting the extent to which findings could be applied.

Several challenges arose through the independent collection of data. The absence of collaborating with one single organization led to some limitations in the findings obtained. Data collection was conducted through the implementation of a survey to a random sample of respondents, which did not work under the same organization. As a consequence, linking employee perceptions of diversity initiatives with the specific diversity initiatives implemented was unachievable. By lacking a direct connection, the research was constricted in its ability to provide clear evidence regarding the effectiveness of certain initiatives. Furthermore, the absence of collaboration with a single organization posed a restriction as it led to a lack of information on employee related data, such as retention rates. The absence of additional secondary data which would be obtainable by collaborating with a single company thus limited the project by preventing a more targeted analysis and detailed understanding over the efficacy of certain initiatives. In addition, it cannot be confirmed with full certainty whether all respondents answered the initial contingency questions regarding their occupation in a corporate environment accurately, potentially compromising the accuracy of the conclusions.

The project contributes by finding a positive relationship between diversity management and employee satisfaction and by confirming the relevancy of life stage specific considerations in the design of diversity management. The framework for an effective design of diversity management is largely supported and implies that organizations are to consider the factors accordingly, with individual circumstances in mind.

5.7 Implications for further research

The exploration of findings opens a multitude of pathways for further research, each holding the potential to deepen the understanding and unveil new dimensions within the field.

Firstly, further research could explore how different levels of diversity such as gender, ethnicity, disability, religion and sexual orientation have different perceptions on diversity management initiatives. The current findings could be further analyzed by analyzing how different levels of diversity interact and influence the individual perceptions of employees. Within each of the life and career stages, which was the primary focus of this particular research, future researchers could further explore how certain intersections of diversity factors within each life stage influence the levels of satisfaction regarding diversity initiatives. Such could provide organizations and management a clearer understanding of the diverse preferences characteristic of employees who belong to multiple minority groups and thus the elaboration of tailored effective strategies.

Because the conceptualization was only partly confirmed by the data, it prompts questions on the effective design and execution of diversity management. Out of the five identified factors of diversity management, only two were found statistically significant in their effect on employee satisfaction. When examining the data in more detail, their relevancy can be assumed, though. This suggests further investigation in the factors of an effective diversity management.

Furthermore, further research could examine how diversity initiatives are most efficiently implemented in a global context by attempting the most efficient way of harmonizing diversity management initiatives according to different cultural and regulatory environments and local needs. Through a comparative analysis of employee satisfaction across different subsidiaries and headquarters, such could provide insights for multinational corporations to enhance global diversity efforts and ultimately achieve a more satisfied workforce.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the project highlights the critical role of diversity management in enhancing employee satisfaction within organizations, specifically by addressing the unique needs of employees at different life stages. The research demonstrates that effective diversity management, particularly through structural interventions and broad framing that emphasize individuality, significantly improves overall employee satisfaction. It suggests that the specific needs and impacts of diversity initiatives vary across different career stages. Organizations must adopt tailored strategies to meet the diverse needs of their employees at different life stages, thereby fostering a more inclusive and satisfying work environment.

Employees that are entering the workforce and establishing their professional identities in life stage 1 display moderate levels of employee satisfaction. They appreciate the overall happiness at work, which suggests positive interpersonal relationships and a supportive environment. However, they express significant concerns about rewards and recognition, indicating a common sentiment of undervaluation. They highly value flexible work arrangements and opportunities for career development. These employees benefit from diversity management strategies that include standardized recruitment processes, professional growth opportunities, and efforts that help them integrate smoothly into the organizational culture.

Life stage 2 employees, who often balance career responsibilities with parenting, report relatively high levels of satisfaction, particularly valuing a supportive work culture that helps them manage work and family commitments. Despite this high satisfaction, they still feel less recognized in terms of rewards and recognition. They can be supported through policies such as parental leave, flexible working hours, and robust work-life balance initiatives. While there is no statistical significance found in the impact of life stage specific diversity management initiatives that address these needs, it is suggested that these initiatives might enhance their job satisfaction.

Employees in life stage 3, characterized by career maturity, exhibit the highest levels of satisfaction. They appreciate the supportive work environment and opportunities for career development, which align with their achieved career milestones. However, dissatisfaction with rewards and recognition persists, highlighting a systemic issue within organizational reward practices. This stage's high satisfaction level reflects a combination of accumulated achievements and career stability. They are found to value initiatives focused on career

development as well as networking and mentoring. Women are noticeably less satisfied in this life stage, indicating increasing unequal circumstances in career advancement.

Employees nearing retirement in life stage 4 report the lowest satisfaction levels. While they value aspects of workplace happiness, their satisfaction with rewards and recognition is notably poor. They are found to appreciate tailored training and inclusive performance measures to diminish results of stereotypes and ageism and ensure their continued engagement. Minorities were found to have a lower employee satisfaction and perception of diversity management compared to the non-minorities, potentially because of a lack of generational awareness and missing consideration of disadvantages in a late career stage. By valuing the contributions of senior employees and providing avenues for knowledge transfer and mentorship, organizations can maintain high levels of engagement and satisfaction.

This research emphasizes the role of procedural justice in context of framing diversity management, ensuring fair treatment and equal opportunities for all employees. By implementing policies that promote fairness and inclusivity, organizations can enhance employee morale and productivity, contributing to overall organizational success. Structural interventions are critical in facilitating sustainable change that reduces the impact of individual decision-makers and creates a more equal playing field. Overall, implicit biases should be minimized, and environments created that support equal-status contact between diverse groups. Such environments not only reduce prejudice but also enhance collaboration and innovation within teams. It is crucial for organizations to recognize and mitigate subtle forms of discrimination that may persist despite formal diversity policies. By fostering a culture of inclusivity and continuous learning, companies can better support their employees and leverage the full potential of their diverse workforce.

In summary, this study provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between diversity management and employee satisfaction. It supports the necessity for a life stage specific approach and the strategic importance of diverse leadership. The best approach to diversity management should emerge through a consideration of the organizational structure, strategic objectives, and demographic environments of operation. It becomes increasingly important with the level of internationalization of a corporation, making the recognition of contextual differences critical. Organizations that effectively manage diversity not only improve employee satisfaction, but also gain a competitive edge in today's global market.

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