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Gen Z perceptions of preferred employer: A study
further contributing to dimensions of Employer
Branding

By
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Abstract

Purpose: The objective of this dissertation is to assess the inclusion of Physical Health (PH) within the comprehensive measurement model of Employer Branding (EB), which encompasses several well-established dimensions, such as Brand Value (BV), Development Value (DV), Interest Value (IV), Work-life Balance (WLB), and Economic Value (EV). Additionally, this proposed model was examined to determine its efficacy in influencing the intention of Generation Z (Gen Z) individuals to apply for employment opportunities with a company.

Design/ methodology /approach: This study employed a survey strategy using an online structured questionnaire to collect primary data from a sample population that belonged to the Gen Z cohort.

Findings: The study indicates that PH is part of the comprehensive measurement model of Employer Branding. Additionally, EV, DV, and WLB proved to have a positive and significant relationship with Gen Z's intention to submit a job application. PH and IV possessed a positive but weak relationship with Gen Z's intention to submit a job application.

Practical Implication/ Originality: This research marks a pioneering endeavour by examining the significance of physical health as an integral facet of EB with the aim of influencing the prospective workforce, particularly Gen Z. Consequently, these findings serve as a foundational point for further investigation into a new dimension of EB related to Gen Z's interest in PH.

Keywords: Generation Z, Employer Branding, Physical Health, Prospective Employee Intention.

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List of Abbreviations

AT - Attractiveness of such as organisation

BV - Brand Value

CFA – Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

DV - Development Value

EB – Employer Branding

ENWHP - European Network for Workplace Health Promotion

EVP - Employer Value Propositions

EV - Economic Value

FHRD - Foundation for Human Resources Development

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation

Gen Z – Generation Z

GFI - Goodness-of-Fit index

HR - Human Resources

INT - Interest towards such an organisation

IV - Interest Value

MVPA – Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity

NFI - Normed fit index

PA – Physical Activity

PH - Physical Health

PRT - Prestige such an organisation

RMSEA - Root mean square error of approximation

SD – Standard Deviation

SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UREC – University Research Ethics Committee

UoM/ UM – University of Malta

WHO – World Health Organisation

WHP – Work Health Promotion

WHM – Work Health Management

WLB - Work-life Balance

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the research and problem

In the past two decades, there has been a significant surge in the interest in EB among both researchers and practitioners (Theurer, Tumasjan, Welppe and Lievens, 2018). EB refers to the comprehensive effort made by a company to convey to its current and potential employees that it is an appealing workplace (Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann, 2019). The endeavours of a company in EB significantly shape the perception of the organisation as an employer and, more broadly, in the business community. Over time, EB has transformed from being an optional strategy employed by some, into a vital business necessity considered by most employers (Sarabdeen, Balasubramanian, Lindsay, Chanchaichujit and Streejith, 2023). The shifting landscape of generations, societies, and cultures, notably driven by technological advancements, coupled with labour shortages, global talent competition, and the growing propensity for career changes, have heightened the competition for talent. Consequently, organisations are investing greater efforts in the recruitment and retention of top professionals (Backhaus, 2016). This phenomenon is particularly prominent in the service sector, where organisations constantly seek ways to attract and manage employees to ensure consistent delivery of high-quality service (Chebat, and Kollias, 2000). Effectively branding an organisation as an attractive employer, whether for potential or current employees, can confer a substantial advantage in the "war for talent," enabling the company to attract and retain a skilled workforce (Almaçık, Almaçık, Eratb and Akçin, 2014; Santiago, 2019). EB exerts a significant influence on both the quantity and quality of job applicants that a company attracts. Additionally, it also plays a role in enhancing the productivity, job satisfaction, and retention

rates of current employees (Verčić and Čorić, 2018). Consequently, an EB has become a potent asset in recruiting employees for service-oriented roles and attracting new candidates.

The importance of Employer Branding has heightened in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, as both potential and current employees vividly recall how employers rose to support their employees, customers, and communities (Sarabdeen et al. 2023). Despite recent years presenting challenges such as employee turnover and labour shortages (Gorgenyi-Hegyes and Fekete-Farkas, 2019), businesses now face new challenges linked to employee well-being. Given the impact of the pandemic, remote work, flexible hours, and a balance between work and personal life are highly valued by employees. There is a growing imperative to comprehend how the efforts made by employers to promote workplace health and well-being have affected their employees' actual well-being, satisfaction, and loyalty to the company (Gorgenyi-Hegyes, Nathan and Fekete-Farkas, 2021).

1.2 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this research is to explore the gap in the Physical Health (PH) element, considered an internal part of the employee well-being package, within the context of EB promotion. Specifically, the study aims to determine whether PH constitutes a new dimension in the comprehensive measurement model of EB. Building upon previous research, the attractiveness of EB is identified as comprising Brand value (BV), Development value (DV), Interest value (IV), Work-life Balance (WLB), and Economic value (EV).

Additionally, the model is tested to establish evidence of whether EB consisting of the six dimensions, including the new dimension, PH value, influences the intention of Generation Z (Gen Z) individuals to submit a job application with a company. This involves assessing whether a company's EB, promoting BV, DV, IV, WLB, EV and PH, enhances the recruitment strategy by positioning the company as an employer of choice. Ultimately, this research aims to bolster the competitive edge of employers in attracting the emerging workforce, Gen Z, in the competitive landscape of the talent economy.

1.3 Structure of the study

The dissertation is structured into five chapters. This chapter presented the introduction to the study by highlighting the background of EB and outlining the research objectives. Chapter 2 delves into the academic literature revolving around EB. Chapter 3 discusses the philosophical standpoint, approach to theory development, sampling technique, research method, research strategy, pilot testing procedure, time horizon, and data collection and data analysis procedures selected for acquiring and analysing primary data. Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of the step-by-step analysis conducted on the collected data. Finally, Chapter 5 serves as the conclusion, summarising the findings obtained through data collection and literature review. It also includes discussions and recommendations for future research, thus bringing the dissertation to a comprehensive end.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Organisations are confronted with critical challenges to maintain competitive parity and distinctive resources and capabilities, which are essential for achieving competitive advantage and superior performance in a globally competitive market (Johnson, 2019). One of the critical resources for differentiation is human capital, which is why attracting and recruiting the right talent is a critical success factor of an organisation's strategy. However, talent is experiencing an increasing shortage in the labour market, leading to the heightened recognition of EB as an effective recruitment and retention strategy among researchers and practitioners to cultivate a competent workforce.

Additionally, researchers and practitioners have become much more concerned with the future labour workforce, namely Gen Z, aiming to comprehend how to effectively engage this audience through EB. Gen Z comes with its own baggage of particular needs, preferences and expectations from the labour market (Pandita, 2021). In the realm of marketing and branding, understating the customer is a prerequisite for a marketing strategy to reach its objectives. The same principle applies to EB, however, keeping pace with the dynamic preferences and expectations of the labour market is a critical challenge to employers. Within the Maltese context, the Human Resources (HR) Pulse 2022 Survey Report underscores the significance of "keeping up with workforce expectations" (Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD) and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Malta, 2022, p.21) as the most prominent challenge reported by 56% of employers across various sectors in the context of EB. This

underscores the critical issue faced by employers in developing effective EB strategies that resonate with their target audience, such as Gen Z.

The chapter commences with a thematic analysis of varied definitions of EB to distil recurring themes. The next section lays the theoretical foundation of EB employed by previous authors in conceptualising EB. The subsequent section identifies empirically supported dimensions of EB, selecting those relevant to the research scope. Following this, the author highlights important studies to support the proposed new dimension of EB. Additionally, the dimensions of intention to apply with the organisation are outlined. Lastly, the proposed model for this research and research question are outlined.

2.2 Defining Employer Branding

The definition of EB has undergone an evolution over time, shaped by contributions from various authors and literature. Table 1 presents a compilation of several definitions of EB derived from the existing literature. Furthermore, academic discourse has explored EB in the context of diverse fields, including human resource practices, marketing, communication, organizational behaviour, strategic management, psychology, and public relations (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010; Otken and Okan, 2016). As a result, the definition of EB may vary depending on the specific field of research.

Table 1- Definitions by authors

Author/s	Definition	Journal
Ambler and Barrow (1996)	“The package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (p. 187).	The Journal of Brand Management
Backhaus and Tikoo (2004)	Involves "building an identifiable and unique employer identity” (p. 502), differentiating a firm from its competitors.	Career Development International
Sullivan (2004)	A mechanism to manage awareness and perceptions of a firm’s recruited and potential employees as well as other stakeholders with regards to a particular firm as a form of a targeted and long-term strategy. Moreover, positive EB portrays the image of a firm as an ideal place to work.	ER Daily
Edwards (2010)	As an application of marketing principles, especially branding, within the context of HR employment	Personal Review

	initiatives that involve both existing and potential employees.	
Dabirian, Kietzmann and Diba (2017)	A company's collective efforts to communicate to current and potential employees that the organisation is an appealing and favourable workplace.	Business Horizons
Theurer, Tumasjan, Welpe and Lievens (2018)	A strategic process of enhancing the employer brand to both internal and external audiences using brand marketing initiatives. The primary aim of this process is to cultivate a favourable employer image among the organisation's target groups, while also distinctively setting the employer apart from competitors in the labour market.	Internal Journal of Management Review

The author of this study identified the following critical themes of employer branding that emerge from the above definitions:

- Package of employment benefits (Ambler and Barrow, 1996)
- Unique employer identity (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al.,2018)
- Brand awareness and perceptions (Sullivan, 2004)
- Targeted and long-term strategy (Sullivan, 2004; Theurer et al.,2018)

- Perceived employer of choice (Sullivan, 2004; Dabirian, Kietzmann and Diba, 2017)
- Internal and external branding (Theurer et al., 2018; Edwards, 2010; Dabirian, Kietzmann and Diba, 2017)
- The employer brand process (Theurer et al., 2018)

2.2.1 Package of employment benefits, unique employer identity, brand awareness and perceptions and perceived employer of choice

EB involves showcasing different attributes of the employment package offered by the employer that consists of tangible and intangible benefits. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) describe EB as a concept that relates closely to the product brand's image: "the amalgamation of perceptions related to the product-related/non-product related attributes and the function/symbolic benefits that are encompassed in the brand associations that reside in consumer memory" (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, p.505). These authors define EB in analogous terms, the functional benefits can be described in the context of employment such as salary, monetary benefits, and leave allowances. Whilst symbolic benefits consist of the perceived notion of the firm's prestige and the anticipated social approval that candidates envisage upon affiliating with the organisation.

Lievens and Highhouse (2003) characterise this amalgamation as an 'Instrumental-symbolic framework' wherein attributes of an employer's image are classified into "functional, utilitarian (i.e. instrumental) job and organisational attributes (e.g. pay, location, job security) vs. self-expressive (i.e. symbolic) organisational attributes (e.g. sincerity, innovativeness, prestige)" (Theurer et al., 2018, p.163). EB serves as a platform to showcase an organization's distinctive

employment benefits or environment, setting the firm apart from competitors and attracting, motivating, and retaining both current and potential employees. Consequently, if managed properly, EB creates value contributing to a unique employer identity or image associated with the package of employment advantages and benefits together with organisational values, characteristics, and attributes (Edwards, 2010). Some authors refer to the association of an employer's identity with particular benefits as 'brand associations' (Ambler and Barrow 1996; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). Furthermore, the resultant creation of value by EB is sometimes referred to as the "Employer Value Proposition" (EVP) (Edwards, 2010, p. 7; Theurer et al., 2018, p.161). Thornton, Mansi, Carramenha, and Cappellano (2018) define EVP as a "set of traits and attributes that sustain the positioning of a brand, combining tangible and intangible attributes" (Thornton et al., 2018, p.100). The impact of EB on employer identity or image lies in its ability to enhance brand recognition and perceived value among employees and other stakeholders.

2.2.2. Targeted and long-term strategy

The application of EB is founded on the principle that human capital serves as a crucial driver of a firm's overall value proposition. Strategic investments in human capital, as emphasised by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), have the potential to significantly enhance organisational performance. Therefore, organisations must differentiate themselves from competitors through sustainable EVPs, fostering a unique employer identity for both potential applicants and current employees. The fundamental premise of EB suggests that a distinctive EB can attract competent human capital, contributing to the development of unique organizational capabilities and providing a competitive advantage.

This aligns with the resource-based view theory (Barney, 1999), asserting that resources and capabilities must meet the VRIO criteria, meaning human capital must be valuable, rare, inimitable, and supported by the organisation for a firm to achieve a superior competitive advantage. Consequently, organisations should not perceive EB as a short-term tactic; instead, they should adopt a long-term approach to establish an employer identity that is both distinctive and recognisable, echoing the views of Srivastava and Bhatnagar (2010) and Backhaus and Tikoo (2004).

2.2.3 Internal and external marketing

Literature has prominently distinguished between two levels of EB, in which each level pertains to different outcomes and assets. Internal EB aims to retain existing employees of a firm, this is commonly termed “internal marketing” (Ambler and Barrow, 1996, p.189). The expected outcomes of internal marketing entail the creation or improvement of “organizational identity and culture, employee loyalty, productivity, engagement, innovation and reputational capital” (Theurer et al., 2018, p.161). Secondly, the objective of external EB is to attract and recruit new employees through "external marketing" (Ambler and Barrow, 1996, p.191) of EB. The expected outcomes of marketing EB externally entail “employer familiarity, brand associations, employer image [and] employer identification” to increase “organizational attraction, job pursuit intentions and favourable applicant pool” (Theurer et al., 2018, p.161). This study focuses on the external marketing of EB, specifically in the recruitment of potential employees, with a particular emphasis on Gen Z.

2.2.4 The Employer Branding process

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) conceptualised the implementation of EB as a three-stage process, as outlined in HR practitioner literature. First step entails the development of EVP offered by the firm. Subsequently, the second step focuses on externally marketing the EVP to targeted potential employees using an appropriate marketing strategy. Thirdly, the third stage involves internal marketing of EB, ensuring alignment between the promised brand associations of employment with the particular firm and the firm's external marketing messages. Theurer et al. (2018) incorporated the three-stage process as part of the initial stage of their “Employer Branding Value Chain Model” (Theurer et al., 2018, p.166).

2.3 Theoretical foundation for Employer Branding

EB draws various theories, the topmost ranked according to Theurer et al. (2018) is the Brand Equity theory (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). EB seeks to build brand equity to increase employer attractiveness to potential employees through external marketing and employee retention through internal marketing. Brand equity is given significant attention in literature due to the perceived value that a brand instils in the minds of stakeholders, which ultimately confers a prestigious status upon a company as a preferred employer (Thornton et al. 2018). Literature uses the term “Employer Branding Equity” (Theurer et al., 2018, p.156) to refer to brand equity in terms of EB. Thus, EB Equity is an “intangible asset in the minds of existing and potential employees” (Ambler and Barrow, 1996, p.188) that can be valued and measured similarly to traditional brand equity. In the next section, the author delves into the scholarly discourse

surrounding the development and empirical validation of distinct models aimed at measuring the equity of employer branding across its different dimensions.

In accordance with Theurer et al. (2018), the second-ranked theory associated with EB in literature is the Social Identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 2004). The principle of this theory states that people possess an innate inclination to associate with social groups and such groups form an integral component of one's personal identity (Edwards, 2010). As brand equity heightens, consumers are more likely to identify with the product. Hence, in the context of EB, when potential employees perceive positive aspects of the employer image, they are more likely to seek recruitment with the firm due to the perceived enhanced self-image and person-organization fit promised by the firm (Backhaus and Tikoo 2004; Edward, 2010).

According to Wallace, Lings and Cameron (2012), the signalling theory is the most appropriate conceptual framework for studying candidate behaviour. The theory posits that jobseekers rely on signals from various sources, such as brands, to make informed decisions to decrease the probability of making an incorrect decision (Banerjee, Saini and Kalyanaram, 2020). Therefore, the theory is highly relevant when researching job-search behaviour, as candidates typically lack complete information to make employment decisions. In response, companies utilise EB signals to gain a competitive advantage over rivals (Wallace, Lings and Cameron, 2012).

Other theories which resonate with the concept of EB are used by literature (Appendix I).

2.4 The dimensions of Employer Branding

Numerous works of literature have investigated and experimented with various dimensions involved in the measurement of EB. Primarily conducted with the objective to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework for a standardised measurement. Table 2 provides a list of dimensions of EB empirically tested by numerous authors.

Table 2 - Dimensions of EB

Dimensions	Authors
Social Value	Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann (2019), Chiu, Fajardo, Lopez and Miranda (2020)
Development Value	Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005), Hadi and Ahmed (2018), Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann (2019), Chiu et al. (2020), Sarabdeen et al. (2023)
Application Value	Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005), Hadi and Ahmed (2018), Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann (2019)
Interest Value	Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005), Hadi and Ahmed (2018), Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann (2019),

	Chiu et al. (2020), Sarabdeen et al. (2023)
Economic Value	Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005), Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann (2019), Sarabdeen et al. (2023)
Work-life balance	Hadi and Ahmed (2018), Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann (2019), Sarabdeen et al. (2023)
Management Value	Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann (2019), Sarabdeen et al. (2023)
Functional Value	Sarabdeen et al. (2023)
Brand image	Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann (2019)
Brand value	Sarabdeen et al. (2023)
Ethical and moral value	Sarabdeen et al. (2023)

For this study, as depicted in the model (Figure 1), the following dimensions have been chosen as constructs of EB. The selection criteria for these constructs in the model were based on the consideration that other dimensions are more closely associated with the internal marketing of EB, which goes beyond the scope of this study. Thus, the model of this research illustrates that an attractive EB is composed of:

- **Work-life balance** refers to the attraction towards an employer that allows employees to “work in harmony with all their identities” (Hadi and Ahmad, 2018, p.4). Hence, employees desire to balance work and non-work-related activities, such as leisure activities. This includes flexible working times and work arrangements such as remote working (Sarabdeen et al., 2023). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between Work-life Balance and Employer Branding

- **Interest value** refers to the extent to which potential employees are attracted to an employer that provides an “exciting work environment, has novel work practices and makes use of its employees’ creativity” (Sarabdeen et al., 2023, p.156). Much literature suggests that the IV of employers is based on challenges and requires an element of creativity to accomplish the job or task (Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann, 2019; Hadi and Ahmed, 2018; Kashyap and Verma, 2018). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: There is a positive relationship between Interest value and Employer Branding

- **Development value** assesses the “degree of attractiveness of an employer in providing career-enhancing experience, vertical career growth and a springboard for future employment” (Sarabdeen et al., 2023, p.156). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: There is a positive relationship between Development value and Employer Branding

- **Economic value** refers to the degree of attractiveness of an employer providing a competitive salary and an attractive overall compensation package (Sarabdeen et al., 2023). According to Dabiriain et al. (2019), the primary EV of an employer is the salary however other employment benefits such as incentives, health insurance, holidays and “unconventional” benefits such as free meals and others. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: There is a positive relationship between Economic value and Employer Branding

- **Brand Value** refers to the degree of attractiveness of an employer based on “how the brand is perceived by the prospective and current employees” (Theurer et al.,2018, p.155) including reputation, financial market performance such as stock price and overall market share (Theurer et al.,2018) and brand’s quality and innovative products and services offerings (Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann, 2019). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: There is a positive relationship between Brand value and Employer Branding

2.5 Proposed new dimension of Employer Branding

The importance of PH is considered one of the equally important dimensions of wellness (Montoya and Summers, 2021; Stoewen, 2017; Strout and Howard, 2012). It is also considered as one of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly directly associated with “SDG 3 (Good health and wellbeing), however indirectly to SDG 8 (Decent work and economic

growth) through satisfied and healthy employees and SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) through healthy nutrition and sustainable consumption” (Gorgenyi-Hegyey, Nathan and Fekete-Farkas, 2021, p.4).

In the context of organisations, sustainability is often termed as corporate social responsibility (CSR). The most accepted and cited definition is the by European Commission: “CSR is the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society” (European Commission,2010). CSR activities are distinguished into external activities and internal activities. The responsibility for employees’ PH falls under the branch of Health and Safety activities related to internal stakeholders (Gorgenyi-Hegyey, Nathan and Fekete-Farkas, 2021).

Through the Ottawa Charter, The World Health Organisation (WHO) emphasises the importance of health promotion as it enables individuals to “increase control over, and to improve, their health” (WHO, 1986, pp. 3). The WHO emphasises that neglecting employee health has two sides to it. The work environment can affect employees' physical and mental well-being, and in turn, the health of employees impacts the company and its performance (Gorgenyi-Hegyey, Nathan and Fekete-Farkas, 2021). The European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) defines workplace health promotion as a “modern corporate strategy which aims at preventing ill-health at work and enhancing health-promoting potentials and wellbeing in the workforce” (ENWHP, 2007, p. 3)

2.5.1 *Empirical evidence on workplace health promotions*

Fehér and Reich (2020) statistically verified that Workplace Health Management (WHM) has a significant positive impact on employers' attractiveness. Adding that "WHM may be able to improve company image" (Fehér and Reich, 2020, p.250). The authors consider Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) as a crucial part of WHM. PH of employees forms part of one of the aspects of health involved in WHM and WHP. These findings support Reich's (2017) research results.

Additionally, Gorgenyi-Hegyessy, Nathan and Fekete-Farkas (2021) statistically verified that PH has a positive impact on employee well-being and satisfaction, with the latter leading to employee loyalty. Kaveh, Layesghiasi, Nazari, Ghahremani and Karimi (2021) claim that the inclusion of physical activity (PA) within the workplace, along with the promotion of employees' physical and mental health, results in significant economic benefits and increased employee participation for organisations. Hence, the above evidence highlights the responsibility of employers to consider the health aspect of employees.

2.5.2 *Physical activity in young adults*

A mixture of results from empirical studies focusing on exploring the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on PA in Gen Z exists.

Karuc, Sorić, Radman, and Mišigoj-Duraković (2020) examined the influence of 30-day restriction on PA among young adults ($n=91$, mean age \pm SD = 21.6 ± 0.4). Overall, the study

indicates that PA levels of young adults had decreased during restriction. However, prior PA status was found to be a "significant moderator of change in MVPA (moderate-to-vigorous physical activity) during the 30-d of restrictions" (Karuc et al., 2020, p.6). Such that the group of participants classified as physically inactive prior imposition of restrictions have increased their MVPA during the 30-day restrictions. The authors suggest that this might be the result of the availability of more free time in which participants utilised to exercise. Whilst PA decreased among participants who were highly active prior to COVID-19 restrictions. Giustino, Parroco, Gennaro, Musumeci, Palma, and Battaglia (2020) examined PA levels in the Italian active population ($n = 802$, mean age \pm SD: 32.27 ± 12.81) before and during the last seven days of the COVID-19 quarantine. Highly active participants decreased by 26% ($n = 193$), while low and moderately active subjects increased by 19% ($n = 200$) and 7% ($n = 409$) respectively. Hence, in the above studies an overall trend can be observed such that PA levels among highly active subjects drop whilst, among non-active subjects, PA levels increase during restrictions.

Tan, Tan, and Tan (2021) examined the influence of confinement on PA among university Malaysian and Indonesian students ($n=254$, mean age \pm SD = 21.7 ± 1.3). Results revealed that 78.9% of subjects were physically active during COVID-19 confinement. The study concludes that "the majority of students were more physically active...during the pandemic" (Tan, Tan, and Tan, 2021, p.8). Additionally, these findings align with Van Bakel, Bakker, Vries, Thijssen and Eijsvogels (2021) who reported that walking had increased among individuals during the pandemic. Cigrovski, Knjaz, Rupčić, and Škovran (2021) examined the influence of confinement on PA among Zagreb and Beijing Sport University students ($n=222$, mean age \pm SD = 23.03 ± 1.39). In contrast with the aforementioned studies, this study compared PA levels during and after the pandemic. Results of this study show that PA levels after lockdown are

higher than during lockdown amongst subjects, PA levels were "several times higher than the 600 metabolic equivalent min-week recommended by World Health Organisation" (Cigrovski et al, 2021, p.12). The total difference in university students' median values recorded during and after lockdown is +2666 MET-min/week, indicating an overall increase. Gallè, Sabella, Molin, Giglio, Caggiano, Onofrio, Ferracuti, Montagna, Liguori, Orsi, and Napoli (2020) part of their aim was to investigate the behaviours adopted during the lockdown amongst Italian undergraduates (n=2125, mean age \pm SD = 22.5 \pm 0.08). One of the behaviours was PA. Overall, PA levels decreased amongst half of the sample (48.6%). However, part of the sample (21.3%) increased PA levels than usual. Sekulic, Blazevic, Gilic, Kvesic and Zenic (2020) investigated the change in the trend of PA levels in Croatian adolescents (n=388, mean age \pm SD = 16.4 \pm 1.9). Results confirmed that overall, PA reduced. However, the change was gender specific, such that during the follow-up measurement, there was a significant decrease in PA levels among boys, while no significant changes were observed for girls.

The above literature suggests that COVID-19 may have impacted Gen Z's PA, potentially increasing it. Given the increasing significance of WHP, is PH support becoming an attractive employment benefit for Gen Z? The author of this study would like to test the potential new dimension of EB, which is PH. The PH refers to the degree of attractiveness of an employer in providing initiatives that cater for the physical well-being of the employee. Therefore, the researcher aims to investigate the potential emergence of PH as a novel dimension of EB. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: There is a positive relationship between Physical Health and Employer Branding

2.6 Dimensions of Intentions to Potentially Submit a Job Application to the Organisation

Based on the findings of Highhouse, Lievens and Sinar's (2003) study, the intention to apply with an organisation consists of three dimensions. These dimensions have received validation through numerous preceding research.

- ***Attractiveness of an organisation*** is evident by individuals' emotional and cognitive evolution of the organisation as a potential employer. This phenomenon may result in a passive response as it may not guarantee active actions towards the organisation. Hence, passivity allows for attraction to multiple companies (Highhouse, Lievens and Sinar, 2003; Santiago, 2019).
- ***Interest towards the organisation*** unlike company attractiveness, involves active actions related to a company. These intentions are more dynamic but often focus on a smaller group of potential employers. However, like company attraction, intentions do not need an external social reference (Highhouse, Lievens and Sinar, 2003; Santiago, 2019).
- ***Prestige of the organisation*** aligns with the theory of reasoned action's social norms aspect. Company prestige is rooted in social perception. A company becomes prestigious when it evokes notions of distinction and reputation among people who learn about it. This status reflects a shared agreement on how positively or negatively the company's traits are seen. Unlike company attractiveness or intentions, which focus

more on individuals, company prestige's distinguishing feature is its normative quality (Highhouse, Lievens and Sinar, 2003; Santiago, 2019).

2.7 The relationship between Employer branding and Intentions to Potentially Submit a Job Application to the Organisation

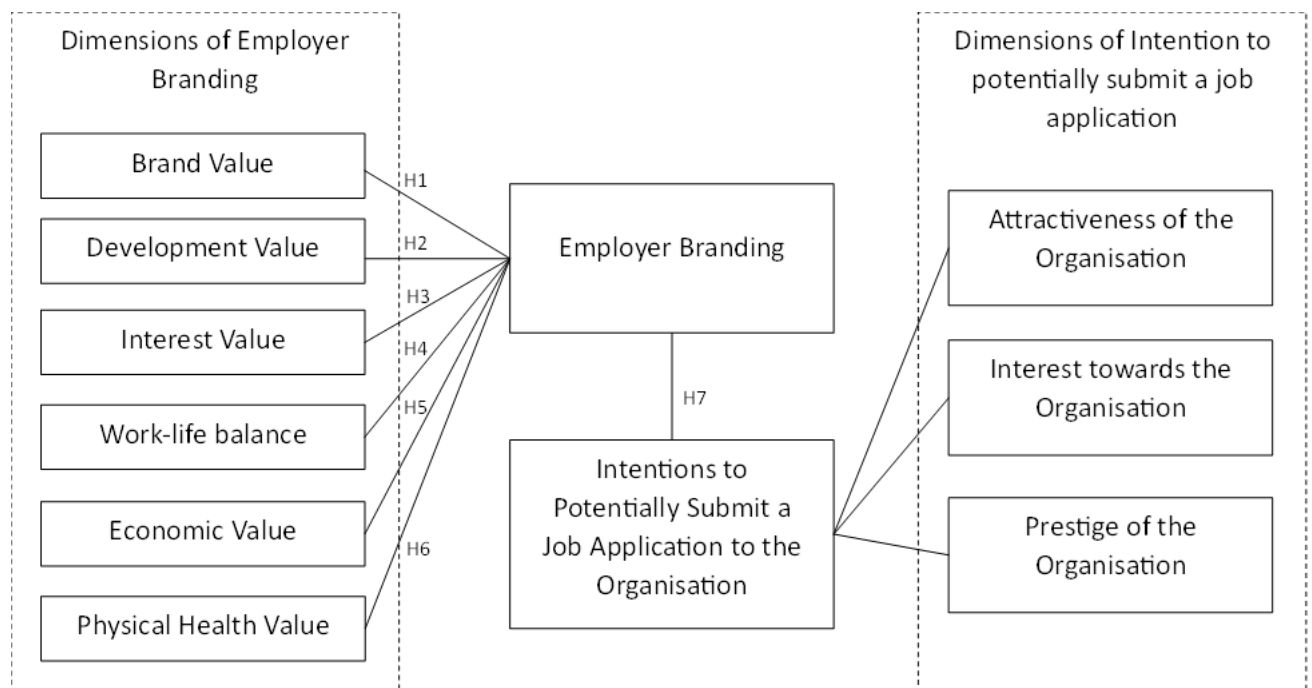
Empirical evidence demonstrates the positive relationship between EB and applicants' intention to submit a job application. Santiago (2019) found EB attractiveness has a positive relationship with the three dimensions of intention to submit a job application (i.e. organisational attractiveness, intention and organisational prestige). Additionally, Saini, Gopal and Kumari (2015) found that EB influences an applicant's employment choice decision.

H7: There is a positive relationship between Employer Branding and the intention to potentially submit a job application to the organisation.

2.8 Proposed model

The purpose of this study is twofold. Firstly, to comprehend the dimensions of EB and potentially discover an emerging new dimension based on the changed behaviour and outlook of the health of Gen Z. Secondly, to examine the influence of EB on the attraction of the Gen Z future workforce to work for organisations/companies. This study proposes a conceptual model (Figure 1) that connects the two purposes together. Hence, it focuses on the dimensions of EB and the intention to submit a job application to an organisation that promotes the particular dimensions.

Figure 1- Conceptual Model



2.9 Research question

As a result of the above literature review and conceptual model the following question is proposed:

Does workplace physical health promotion fit as part of EB's dimensions potentially attracting Gen Z to submit a job application with an organisation?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the key research design decisions are explained and justified, focusing on the study's core objective, investigating the fit of WPH promotion within the dimensions of EB, with a specific focus on its potential influence in attracting Gen Z individuals to express interest and submit job applications to an organisation. Within the same objective, the study investigates the strength and cause-effect relationships between the dimensions of EB, including the new proposed dimension, with the intention of potentially submitting a job application. Hence, the main aim of this chapter is to present the philosophical standpoint and justify the way data was symmetrically collected and analysed to achieve the objectives of the study.

3.2 Philosophical standpoint and approach to theory development

Based on Burrell and Morgan's (2016) 2x2 matrix forming four distinct sociological paradigms for organisational analysis, this research falls within the functionalist paradigm. Since it is concerned with developing rational explanations of Gen Z's inclination/declination/unaffected behaviour towards an employer that promotes the PH of employees. Thus, the resultant research findings add to the current literature on EB strategy targeting Gen Z, aimed at enhancing the organisation's overall appeal to this demographic.

The study adopts a positivist stance, as the research is grounded in the belief that knowledge is derived from measurable phenomena, as evidenced by the constructed conceptual model and hypotheses. The measurability of EB and job application intentions is also observed in existing literature (Sarabdean et al., 2023; Santiago, 2019), and their research design is integrated into this study's research design. A systematic quantitative approach is employed in the collection of numerical data and statistical analysis to ensure the validity and reliability of findings. Thus, the belief that EB is measurable is present in this study to enable the testing of causal and predictive relationships between dimensions/constructs of EB and job application intentions of Gen Z, establishing law-like generalizations. Therefore, this research follows a deductive approach, where initially theory-driven hypotheses were formulated, outlined by a conceptual framework/model specifying the expected outcomes and causal links. Data was then collected and analysed, and finally, hypotheses were accepted or rejected.

3.3 Sampling Technique

Choosing the appropriate sampling technique is an important decision regardless of what the research question would be. The selected sample should relate to the population heightened in the research question and objective (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). In the case of this study, the population is Gen Z as the research question and objectives concern investigating a number of factors related to Gen Z's perceptions on the company's EB. Hence the sample selected for this study are individuals that belong in this cohort, in other words, aged between 18 – 26 years old (Beresford Research, 2023). Consequently, the sample of this research may be further defined as Gen Z individuals that are potentially seeking employment or are already employed. Since such target population would be better exposed to EB efforts of different

companies through various channels. However, due to time constraints it is impossible to collect all responses of the target population, hence a sample of 215 responses was collected. This sample size was deemed to be appropriate as the validity and reliability of findings were drawn.

The technique employed to gain access to responses is called haphazard sampling, also known as convenience or availability sampling. This method involves a random selection of potential respondents due to convenient accessibility (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). The majority of respondents were manually selected from the researcher's social network's friends list, and they were sent a message containing a URL link, which was automatically generated from Google Forms, to access and fill in the online survey. This technique was considered acceptable, as Sarabdean et al. (2023) had used the same approach, resulting in reliable and empirically validated findings. Additionally, the researcher obtained approval from the Registrar of the University of Malta (UoM) to share the survey with all UoM students who agreed to receive such emails, aiming to increase the response rate. The researcher was aware of the limitations of this sampling technique, acknowledging that data collection could be prone to bias and influences beyond control. However, this was mitigated by sending the majority of the survey to individuals whose background was little known to the researcher.

3.4 Research Strategy and methodology

A structured online survey is the chosen instrument for data collection in order to effectively answer the research question and hypotheses. This instrument was deemed to be reliable since it had previously been used by Sarabdeen et al. (2023) and Santiago (2019) together with

numerous other studies conducted in the field of EB research. The survey's digital format facilitated its dissemination to individuals, also providing a sufficient timeframe for completion, thus safeguarding the reliability of the gathered responses.

3.4.1 Development of structured questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of validated five-point Likert-rating scale item questions adopted from previous studies. The choice of the adoption of these scale item questions was to safeguard the response's validity and reliability since such scale items had been validated using exploratory factor analysis and adopted by numerous studies in the field of EB. A full list of scale items used in the survey is given in Table 3.

EB was measured by adopting an 18-item scale to measure five constructs (Sarabdeen et al., 2023). These constructs form part of Sarabdeen et al. (2023) comprehensive measurement model of EB. Additionally, the 4-item scale of the PH is developed by the researcher with reference to Kaveh et al. (2021) and Gorgenyi-Hegybes, Nathan and Fekete-Farkas (2021). Moreover, the 15-item scale, consisting of three dimensions measuring the intention for job application submission, was adopted from Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003) and later adopted by Panday, Almira, and Navanti (2022).

The questions were presented on a five-point Likert-rating scale, specifically known as agreement-type rating questions. Respondents were required to rate scale items from 1 - strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree, displayed in a matrix format grouping each set of scale items to represent a construct. The five-point Likert-rating scale was deemed appropriate

because, as mentioned above, it has been validated numerous times by previous studies, and the matrix format was confirmed for clarity through pilot testing. These scales provided quantifiable/measurable data, which were transferred to SPSS for analysis using statistical techniques to answer research questions and hypotheses. A similar process can be observed in Sarabdeen et al. (2023) and Santiago (2019) research. Moreover, demographic information (i.e., age, gender, education, and occupation) of respondents was gathered in case secondary analysis could have been conducted by testing the potential influence of control variables when testing H7. The survey was divided into four sections. Section 1 consisted of brief information about the study together with a tick option box for participation as obliged by the Ethics Committee board. Section 2 consisted of a set of scale item questions grouped together representing each construct in order to measure EB. Section 3 consisted of the set of scale item questions grouped together representing each construct in order to measure the intention to submit a job application. Lastly, Section 4 consisted of a set of demographic questions. The layout of the survey was deemed to be important as Section 2 led respondents to answer Section 3. Participants answering Section 3 i.e. rating attractiveness, interest and prestige of such an organisation were made aware that “such an organisation” referred to an organisation characterised by the dimensions described in Section 1 (brand value, development value, interest value, work-life balance, economic value and physical health). This clarification was important in order to measure the correlation, strength and cause-effect relationship between the dimensions of EB and the intention to submit a job application with an organisation that promotes the EB dimensions at the analytical stage.

Table 3 - Constructs and scale items

<u>High-order latent construct</u>	<u>Observed constructs</u>	<u>Scale items</u>
Employer Branding (EB)*	Brand Value (BV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation has a good reputation (BV1) • Organisation is financially strong (BV2) • Organisation has market success (BV3) • Organisation offers good products and services (BV4)
	Development Value (DV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee development opportunities are available (DV1) • Training programs are available (DV2) • Learning opportunities are available (DV3) • A career progression path is offered (DV4)

	Interest Value (IV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive working environment (IV2) • Challenging workload (IV2) • My work pushes me to be creative (IV3)
	Work-life Balance (WLB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company promote work-life balance (WLB1) • Possibility to work from home (WBL2) • Flexible working hours (WBL3)
	Economic Value (EV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The incentive scheme is fairly designed and implemented (EV1) • The welfare and compensation package are at par with industry standards (EV2) • Benefits offered are at par with industry standards (EV3)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary offered is at par with industry standards (EV4)
	Physical Health (PH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company promotes physical health (PH1) • The organisation offers yearly free or discounted gym membership (PH2) • The organisation has an on-site gym with professional trainers, changing rooms, showers and nutritious snacks and meals (PH3) • The organisation actively organizes corporate sports events or partners with third parties for activities like volleyball, kayaking, football etc. (PH4)
Intentions to submit job application to such an	Attractiveness of such an organisation (AT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In my opinion, such an organisation sounds like a good place to work (AT1)

<p>organisation (INTENTION)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would only be interested in such an organisation as a last resort (AT2) • Such an organisation would be attractive to me as a place of employment (AT3) • I would be interested in learning more about such an organisation (AT4) • Playing a role in such an organisation would be very appealing to me (AT5)
	<p>Interest towards such an organisation (INT)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would accept an offer of employment from such an organisation (INT1) • I would choose such an organisation as one of my first choices as an employer (INT2) • If such an organisation invited me for a job interview, I would accept (INT3)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would be willing to give my best to work in this organisation (INT4) • I would recommend this organisation to a friend who is looking for a job (INT5)
	<p>Prestige such an organisation (PRT)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think employees would be proud to say that they work in such an organisation (PRT1) • I think such an organisation would have a good reputation (PRT2) • I think such an organisation would have a reputation for being an excellent employer (PRT3) • I would consider this organisation to be a prestigious place to work (PRT4)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would imagine that employees enjoy working in this organisation (PRT5)
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* Abbreviations in the brackets are the assigned variable names given to each respective construct/scale item in SPSS and to herein after refer to the respective construct/scale item whenever used in the terminology of the research.

3.5 Pilot Testing

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) claim that pilot testing is an essential process to be part of quantitative data collection. This process is beneficial to enable the researcher to refine the study’s questionnaire to enhance clarity and consistency among responses. Hence, ensuring the validity and reliability of data collected to answer the research question. The survey instrument was pre-tested with a sample size of ten individuals that belong to the Gen Z cohort. The pilot testing sample size was considered suitable, guided by the recommendation provided by Sauder, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019). The survey was shared with selected individuals as a form of an online survey accessed from a URL link automatically generated from Google Forms as part of a message. Table 4 demonstrates the feedback of pilot testing questions which were at the end of the survey as a separate section following Section 4. These questions were adopted from Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019).

Table 4 - Pilot testing result

Feedback Question	Question Type	Results
How long did the questionnaire take to complete?	Short-text answer	On average 5 minutes
How clear were the questions?	Five-point Likert-rating scale. 1–Very Unclear to 5 – Very Clear	On average 4.5
Which, if any, questions were unclear or ambiguous in Section 1?	Checkbox list categorizing question sets under dimension name e.g. “Brand Value questions”	One respondent ticked “Interest Value questions”
Any suggestions on how they can be improved?	Long-text answer	Respondent A commented to give examples
Which, if any, questions were unclear or ambiguous in Section 2?	Checkbox list categorising question sets under dimension name e.g. “Attractiveness of such organisation”	Two respondents ticked “Attractiveness of such organisation” One respondent ticked “Intentions towards such organisation”

		One respondent ticked “Prestige of such organisation”
Any suggestions on how they can be improved?	Long-text answer	Respondent B recommended clarifying the referred organization in questions by including its description within each question, as the initial section might be skipped by respondents
Overall are the topics clear of what the survey is asking?	Multiple-choice question either Yes or No	100% of respondents ticked Yes
Is the layout of the questionnaire attractive?	Multiple-choice question either Yes or No	100% of respondents ticked Yes
Any other comments?	Long-text answer	Respondent C commented that questions might be written more straight to the point providing an example.

3.5.1 *Post-pilot test survey amendments*

The majority of amendments were centred on enhancing the clarity of the questions related to interest in submitting job applications to such an organisation. To address the potential of the

phrase ‘such an organisation’ in relation to each dimension - Attractiveness of such an organisation, Intentions towards such an organisation and Prestige of such an organisation - a definition was included in the description of each dimension. In addition to these amendments, minor rectifications addressing spelling errors and rephrased lengthy questions to be more concise and direct. The section that consisted of pilot testing questions was removed after the survey was amended and the survey was disseminated to the larger sample.

3.6 Time horizon and data collection

A cross-sectional research design was chosen as it was deemed appropriate to gather enough responses. While longitudinal studies may have offered more comprehensive insight, the scope of the research was also restricted to be completed within a fixed timeframe imposed by the submission deadline. The survey data were retrieved in the form of an MS Excel file automatically aggregated by Google Forms, then subsequently imported into the IBM SPSS Statistics and later on in IBM SPSS Amos. This data collection procedure was deemed to be effective as a similar procedure was adopted by Sarabdeen et al. (2023). The initial examination involved a comprehensive assessment for the presence of any data omissions. As a result, a total of 215 responses, comprising the complete dataset, were devoid of any discernible missing values. Consequently, the entire set of 215 responses was utilized for subsequent analytical procedures. Table 5 delineates the demographic characteristics of the study's participants.

Table 5 - Sample demographics

	Responses	Percentages %
Age		
18	11	5.1
19	5	2.3
20	14	6.5
21	47	21.9
22	77	35.8
23	28	13.0
24	20	9.3
25	6	2.8
26	7	3.3
Total	215	100.0
Gender		
Female	131	60.9
Male	82	38.1
Other	2	0.9
Total	215	100.0
Education		
Doctoral Degree	1	0.5
Graduate	84	39.1
Masters/Post-Graduate	40	18.6
O-Levels	3	1.4

Pre-Tertiary Certificate, Matriculation Certificate, A-Levels, I-Levels	34	15.8
Undergraduate	53	24.7
Total	215	100.0
Occupation		
Employed (Full-time)	67	31.2
Employed (Full-time); Freelancer/Contractor	2	0.9
Employed (Full-time); Freelancer/Contractor; Student (Part-time/Full-time)	2	0.9
Employed (Full-time); Self-Employed	3	1.4
Employed (Full-time); Self-Employed; Freelancer/Contractor	2	0.9
Employed (Full-time); Student (Part-time/Full-time)	11	5.1
Employed (Part-time)	16	7.4
Employed (Part-time); Employed (Full-time)	1	0.5
Employed (Part-time); Employed (Full-time); Student (Part-time/Full-time)	1	0.5
Employed (Part-time); Self-Employed	1	0.5
Employed (Part-time); Self-Employed; Student (Part-time/Full-time)	1	0.5
Employed (Part-time); Student (Part-time/Full-time)	58	26.9
Freelancer/Contractor; Student (Part-time/Full-time)	2	0.9
Self-Employed	3	1.4

Student (Part-time/Full-time)	38	17.7
Unemployed	4	1.9
Unemployed; Student (Part-time/Full-time)	3	1.4
Total	215	100.0

3.7 Data Analysis procedure

The analytical procedure to test H1-H6 and the model required a two-stage multivariate analysis. The first-order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess construct validity between a set of scale items with corresponding six EB constructs (BV, DV, IV, WLB, EV and PH) and respective model fit validity. This analysis required an initial test for construct reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. The second-order CFA was carried out to test the hypothesised relationships outlined by H1-H6 in order to verify if the six constructs are governed by a high-order construct (EB). This analytical procedure was deemed to be acceptable and would lead to conclusions on whether to accept or reject H1 - H6 and assess model fit as a similar procedure was conducted by Sarabdeen et al. (2023) to test the comprehensive EB measurement model.

Moreover, a correlation and regression analysis were conducted to test H7. The type of correlation test conducted on the data depended on the distribution of data, hence a normality test was first conducted. The correlation test was conducted to indicate any association between the six constructs of EB with the intention to submit a job application by Gen Z to serve as a foundation to carry out a regression analysis. The test indicated the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables, hence, a simple and multiple linear regression was

conducted. The simple linear regression assessed the predictive significance of EB (consisting of six constructs) on the intention (consisting of three constructs). In addition, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive significance of each individual construct (i.e. BV, DV, IV, WLB, EV and PH) in the model to predict the higher-order construct (i.e. the intention for Gen Z to submit a job application). Hence H7 was tested by confirming the strength and the cause-effect relationship between EB and the intention to potentially submit a job application to the organisation. This simple linear and multiple regression analysis was deemed to be acceptable and would lead to conclusions on whether to accept or reject H7 as a similar procedure was conducted by Santiago (2019) to test hypothesised relationships between EB constructs and intention for job application submission.

3.8 Ethical concerns

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019), the term ethics refers to “the standards of behaviour that guide [researcher’s] conduct in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of [researcher’s] work or are affected by it” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p.253). Ethical issues may arise at different stages of the research, such issues should be mitigated by designing a research methodology that minimizes ethical risks.

Prior to distributing the survey to potential respondents, the researcher obtained clearance from the University Research and Ethics Committee. Furthermore, due to the online nature of data collection for this study, it was imperative to create an informative consent letter. The researcher followed UM's official guidelines for online and remote data collection ethics, which had been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). The first section of

the survey provided participants with essential details, including a brief introduction to the researcher's identity and academic program. It also outlined the study's purpose and objectives, facilitating a better grasp of the significance of respondents' active participation. Respondents were assured that the collected data would be utilised solely for the study's purposes. Additionally, respondents were informed that participation carried no direct benefits or anticipated risks. Moreover, respondents were informed that participation is entirely voluntary, hence, free to accept or refuse participation. The survey maintained complete anonymity and did not request any personally identifiable information. Informed consent was indicated by respondents ticking the "I agree to participate" option before proceeding to the next section of the survey. Consequently, both data aggregation and analysis remained entirely anonymous. The researcher's contact information, including their university email, was provided for any inquiries. In essence, the data collection process and tools employed in this study adhered rigorously to the Research Ethics guidelines set forth by the UoM, as well as the regulations of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Act of 2018.

3.9 Summary

In conclusion, this research study embraced a positivist philosophical standpoint, employing a deductive approach to theory building. The sampling technique utilised was haphazard or convenient sampling, enabling the collection of data from a diverse group of respondents. The research strategy and methodology were centred around an online survey-based approach, incorporating scale items adapted from existing studies, with the exception of the physical health section. The pilot testing phase, involving 10 participants, significantly enhanced the validity and reliability of data responses. Post-pilot survey amendments focused on improving

clarity regarding participants' interest in submitting job applications to organisations, addressing minor spelling errors, and rephrasing lengthy questions for conciseness.

During the data collection phase, a total of 215 responses were collected without any omissions. Demographically, the sample predominantly consisted of 22-year-olds (36%), with 61% being female, 39% holding graduate degrees, and 31.2% in full-time employment, while 27% were part-time employed or students. Ethical considerations were integrated into the research process from its inception. The study obtained clearance from the UREC and diligently adhered to official university guidelines in structuring the online survey and conducting data collection. These ethical measures ensured the protection and confidentiality of participants while upholding the principles of responsible research conduct. Overall, this research demonstrates a commitment to robust methodology, ethical integrity, and data quality in contributing to the field of study.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the analytical procedure outlined in section 3.7 in a logical manner without interpretations. Consequently, recommendations and feedback are presented in Chapter 5.

The analytical procedure commenced by importing into the IBM SPSS Statistics and checking for any missing data. Data was checked for any missing values through visual inspection and frequency descriptive statistics. Appendix X demonstrated that there was no missing data present in the dataset. Additionally, the initialising process of labelling, setting of variables' values (e.g. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree etc.) and setting the right variable measure (e.g. ordinal, scale, nominal) was conducted before any analysis. Once the dataset was checked for any missing values and coded correctly in IBS SPSS Statistics the analytical procedure was conducted.

4.2 Testing Normality

The normality test holds significance in the field of econometrics or statistical analysis as it serves as a fundamental component for constructing statistical or econometric models. The null hypothesis of these tests is that data is normally distributed. Additionally, if the null hypothesis is rejected, this means the data is not normally distributed (Shapiro and Wilk, 1965). The dataset of this study has been tested for normality through the skewness and kurtosis test statistics,

Shapiro Wilk (SW) test and through a graphical representation using Histogram and Normal Q-Q plots. The selection of these tests was deemed to be accepted as Santiago (2019) conducted similar tests. Additionally, Khatun (2021) advises the combination of graphical methods and test statistics to enhance the judgment on normality of the data.

4.2.1 *Skewness and Kurtosis*

The z-values of the Skewness and Kurtosis must lie within the ± 1.96 range (corresponding to a 0.05 error level) for data to be normally distributed. Thus, z-values lying outside this range are considered not normally distributed. In Table 6, the z-values have been obtained by dividing the statistics with standard error (Hair, Barry, Rolph, and William, 2022).

4.2.3 *Shapiro-Wilk Test*

The Shapiro-Wilk test is utilised to assess the normality of data in frequentist statistics. Its null hypothesis posits that the population under examination follows a normal distribution. Consequently, if the calculated p-value falls below the selected alpha (0.05) threshold (i.e. $p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected, signifying that there is compelling evidence that the tested dataset does not conform to a normal distribution. In simpler terms, the dataset would be non-normal distributed (Khatun, 2021; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Conversely, if the p-value exceeds the chosen alpha level (0.05) (i.e. $p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis is accepted, and there is compelling evidence that the tested dataset conforms to a normal distribution. Hence, the dataset would be normally distributed (Khatun, 2021; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

4.2.4 *Histogram and Normal Q-Q plots*

Data is normally distributed if the data values cluster around the variable's mean in a symmetrical pattern forming a bell-shaped frequency distribution (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Additionally, data is normally distributed if the data points fall on the 45-degree reference line (Shapiro and Wilk, 1965).

For this study, the normality test was carried out on each scale item of constructs (BV, DV, IV, WLB, EV, PH, AT, INT and PRT). Table 6 shows as a result of the above statistical tests, that the majority of the dataset is not normally distributed, since statistics lie outside the range for data to be considered normally distributed. In other words, the Skewness and Kurtosis z-values lie outside -1.96 and +1.96, the p-value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test significantly lower than 0.05 (almost 0).

Additionally, normal distribution variables were created for each construct (BV, DV, IV, WLB, EV, PH, AT, INT and PRT) by averaging Likert scale items values. These new variables were tested for normality by observing the histogram graphs and normal Q-Q plots are present in Appendix V. Since the results of the graphical representation of data points do not conform to the criteria mentioned above, the data is not normally distributed. In other words, the histogram shows data skewed to the right and not bell-shaped and the Normal Q-Q plot shows data points outside the 45-degree reference line.

As a result, graphical methods confirm statistical methods result, thus it is a fair judgment to conclude that the sample data is not normally distributed.

Table 6 - Normality test on scale items

Construct	Scale Item	Skewness			Kurtosis			Kalmogorov-Smirnov	Shapiro-Wilk
		Statistic	Std. Error	Z-values	Statistic	Std. Error	Z-values	P-value	P-value
BV	BV1	-1.939	0.166	-11.687	4.457	0.330	13.493	0.000	0.000
	BV2	-0.832	0.166	-5.013	0.730	0.330	2.210	0.000	0.000
	BV3	-0.709	0.166	-4.276	0.264	0.330	0.799	0.000	0.000
	BV4	-1.368	0.166	-8.244	2.087	0.330	6.317	0.000	0.000
DV	DV1	-1.713	0.166	-10.327	3.037	0.330	9.194	0.000	0.000
	DV2	-1.184	0.166	-7.135	1.449	0.330	4.387	0.000	0.000
	DV3	-1.538	0.166	-9.273	2.622	0.330	7.936	0.000	0.000
	DV4	-2.353	0.166	-14.185	6.565	0.330	19.873	0.000	0.000
IV	IV1	-0.123	0.166	-0.743	-0.621	0.330	-1.879	0.000	0.000
	IV2	-0.283	0.166	-1.703	-0.196	0.330	-0.592	0.000	0.000
	IV3	-0.979	0.166	-5.901	0.843	0.330	2.552	0.000	0.000
WLB	WLB1	-2.440	0.166	-14.706	6.183	0.330	18.718	0.000	0.000
	WLB2	-1.815	0.166	-10.940	3.094	0.330	9.368	0.000	0.000
	WLB3	-2.444	0.166	-14.732	7.397	0.330	22.394	0.000	0.000
EV	EV1	-1.271	0.166	-7.664	1.786	0.330	5.407	0.000	0.000
	EV2	-1.110	0.166	-6.690	1.166	0.330	3.531	0.000	0.000
	EV3	-1.399	0.166	-8.435	2.089	0.330	6.325	0.000	0.000
	EV4	-1.731	0.166	-10.433	3.067	0.330	9.286	0.000	0.000
PH	PH1	-0.986	0.166	-5.945	0.902	0.330	2.731	0.000	0.000
	PH2	-0.778	0.166	-4.690	-0.022	0.330	-0.067	0.000	0.000
	PH3	-0.626	0.166	-3.776	-0.534	0.330	-1.617	0.000	0.000
	PH4	-0.423	0.166	-2.548	-0.473	0.330	-1.433	0.000	0.000
AT	AT1	-1.648	0.166	-9.932	3.626	0.330	10.977	0.000	0.000
	AT2	0.775	0.166	4.672	-0.287	0.330	-0.869	0.000	0.000
	AT3	-1.246	0.166	-7.513	2.237	0.330	6.773	0.000	0.000

	AT4	-1.087	0.166	-6.551	1.427	0.330	4.320	0.000	0.000
	AT5	-1.259	0.166	-7.587	1.929	0.330	5.841	0.000	0.000
INT	INT1	-1.275	0.166	-7.683	2.307	0.330	6.985	0.000	0.000
	INT2	-0.911	0.166	-5.490	0.735	0.330	2.224	0.000	0.000
	INT3	-1.323	0.166	-7.975	1.841	0.330	5.574	0.000	0.000
	INT4	-1.361	0.166	-8.204	1.654	0.330	5.008	0.000	0.000
	INT5	-1.156	0.166	-6.967	1.304	0.330	3.948	0.000	0.000
PRT	PRT1	-1.217	0.166	-7.335	1.704	0.330	5.158	0.000	0.000
	PRT2	-1.261	0.166	-7.601	1.777	0.330	5.380	0.000	0.000
	PRT3	-1.086	0.166	-6.546	1.408	0.330	4.262	0.000	0.000
	PRT4	-0.957	0.166	-5.769	1.058	0.330	3.204	0.000	0.000
	PRT5	-1.163	0.166	-7.011	1.315	0.330	3.982	0.000	0.000

4.3 Construct Reliability Test

“Construct reliability indicated the consistency, precision and repeatability of the items within the construct. Ideally, 0.7 or greater shows good reliability of constructs” (Sarabdeen et al.,2023, p.160). The Cronbach’s Alpha was used to test the reliability of constructs. Table 7 indicates that Cronbach’s Alpha of the nine constructs are within an acceptable level of reliability. Additionally, AT2 was removed from the subsequent analysis as its deletion generated improved AT’s reliability score from 0.612 to 0.920 (as shown in Table 7).

Table 7 - Reliability test of Constructs

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Improved Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted
BV	0.831		BV1	0.762

		-	BV2	0.805
		-	BV3	0.775
		-	BV4	0.805
DV	0.915	-	DV1	0.891
		-	DV2	0.888
		-	DV3	0.878
		-	DV4	0.898
IV	0.718	-	IV1	0.611
		-	IV2	0.630
		-	IV3	0.647
WLB	0.888	-	WLB1	0.847
		-	WLB2	0.869
		-	WLB3	0.812
EV	0.936	-	EV1	0.930
		-	EV2	0.909
		-	EV3	0.904
		-	EV4	0.923
PH	0.857	-	PH1	0.858
		-	PH2	0.783
		-	PH3	0.799
		-	PH4	0.822
AT	0.612	0.920	AT1	0.435
		0.920	AT2	<u>0.920</u>
		0.920	AT3	0.365
		0.920	AT4	0.358
		0.920	AT5	0.356
INT	0.936	-	INT1	0.927
		-	INT2	0.918
		-	INT3	0.918
		-	INT4	0.918

			INT5	0.925
PRT	0.942	-	PRT1	0.934
			PRT2	0.927
			PRT3	0.926
			PRT4	0.924
			PRT5	0.935

4.4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Construct validity refers to the extent to which a set of scale items accurately measure the corresponding construct which are intended to be measured. Construct validity could be assessed by fit establishing good model fit (fit validity) during a CFA.

The CFA loadings as the result of pattern matrix in SPSS statistics for each individual scale item used to measure the corresponding construct of EB are given in Table 8. Hence, as can be seen in Table 3, out of 22 items measuring six constructs, 19 items were loaded to their respective construct with factor loadings greater than 0.50 (Sarabdeen et al.,2023). Hence indicating reasonable construct validity of the theoretical constructs. The three items (PH1, BV1, BV4) failed to load under their respective construct and, hence were removed from subsequent analysis including the next step to assess model fit.

Then the data set was inputted in AMOS 26 to complete the first-order CFA and test for overall model fit by assessing the Chi-square/degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), Comparative fit index (CFI), Goodness-of-fit index (GFI), Normed fit index (NFI), and Root mean square error of

approximation (RMSEA) values. Table 9 demonstrates that such values lie within acceptable ranges indicated in brackets (Sarabdeen et al.,2023). Hence, resulting that the confirmatory measurement model fits the data relatively well. The full output of this first-order CFA can be observed in Appendix VI. One can note that standardised factor loadings are greater than 0.7 indicating high construct validity. According to Hair et al. (2022), “a good rule of thumb is that standardised loading estimates should be 0.5 or higher, and ideally 0.7 or higher” (Hair *et al.*, 2022, p. 675)

Additionally, a second-order confirmatory analysis was conducted to test whether the six constructs are governed by a higher-order construct. The results of the overall model fit are given in Table 10. The results in Table 10 indicate that the second-order confirmatory measurement model fits the data well since values lie within acceptable ranges indicated in the brackets (Sarabdeen et al.,2023). Table 11 demonstrates that all standardised factor loadings meet the threshold of greater than 0.5 and are significant at $p < 0.001$ for all the constructs. According to the ranking of factor loadings, WLB resulted in the maximum factor loading hence explaining that it contributed to the maximum variance in EB. DV scored second as an important contributor to EB. EV and BV emerged as third and fourth respectively. The contribution of IV to EB emerged as the fifth. Lastly, PH was found to explain the least contribution to EB. However, despite that PH scored the least in variance to EB , this research has proven that PH still to some degree contributed to EB amongst Gen Z. The full output of this second-order CFA is demonstrated in Appendix VII.

Table 8 - CFA loadings of EB

	Factor					
	EV	PH	DV	WLB	IV	BV
EV2	0.994					
EV3	0.957					
EV4	0.773					
EV1	0.711					
PH3		0.878				
PH2		0.845				
PH4		0.803				
PH1		<u>0.449</u>				
DV2			0.975			
DV3			0.861			
DV1			0.832			
DV4			0.547			
WLB3				0.917		
WLB2				0.914		
WLB1				0.714		
IV2					0.768	
IV1					0.660	
IV3					0.554	
BV3						0.899
BV2						0.622
BV1						<u>0.349</u>
BV4						<u>0.203</u>

Table 9 - First order CFA Model fit indices

X2/df	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA
1.597 (<3)	0.973 (>0.90)	0.903 (>0.90)	0.931 (>0.90)	0.053 (<0.10)

Table 10 - Second-order CFA model fit indices

X2/df	CFI	GFI	NFI	RMSEA
1.551 (<3)	0.973 (>0.90)	0.902 (>0.90)	0.929 (>0.90)	0.051 (<0.10)

Table 11 - Second-order CFA results and hypothesis test result (H1-H6)

Second-order relationship	Standardised estimate (factor loading)	P-value	Hypothesis
EB → EV	0.854	<0.001	H1 supported
EB → PH	0.560	<0.001	H2 supported
EB → DV	0.909	<0.001	H3 supported
EB → WLB	0.913	<0.001	H4 supported
EB → IV	0.674	<0.001	H5 supported
EB → BV	0.757	<0.001	H6 supported

4.5 Assessing strength of each relationship between EB and intention to submit a job application (Correlation)

As a result, from the normality test, the Spearman correlation test was conducted since data was not normally distributed. The Spearman correlation (r) serves as a non-parametric alternative to the Pearson correlation, assessing the strength and direction of the relationship between two continuous variables, with values falling within the -1 to 1 range. It is particularly suitable for situations where the data comprises ratings, rankings, or measurements exhibiting a skewed non-normal distribution. A correlation coefficient close to 1 indicates a very strong positive relationship; a correlation coefficient close to -1 indicates a very strong negative relationship and a correlation close to 0 indicates a weak relationship that may be attributed to chance (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Hence, this test determined the strength and direction of the relationship hypothesized in H7.

Table 12 shows that overall, EB has a positive relationship with the intention to submit a job application, hence supporting H7. This is concluded as the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.6$) is close to 1. Hence EB potentially increases the intention for Gen Z to submit a job application. However, this relationship is not strong.

Table 13 demonstrates the correlation significance between intention and individual construct of EB. EV resulted in the strongest relationship with intention ($r=0.583$). While DV resulted as the second strongest relationship with intention ($r=0.457$). BV ($r=0.472$) and WLB ($r=0.457$) resulted as the third and fourth strongest relation with intention respectively. However, PH ($r=0.346$) and IV ($r=0.301$) may be interpreted as holding a weak relationship with intention,

since r is close to 0. Nevertheless, the direction of all hypothesized relationships is positive. In other words, an EB promoting EV, DV, BV and WLB has a positive relationship with the intention to submit a job application. PH and IV have a weak relationship with the intention of submitting a job application. Appendix VIII demonstrates the strength and direction of each construct of EB with each construct of intention.

Table 12 - Spearman Correlation results

			INTENTION
Spearman's rho	EB	Correlation Coefficient	.600**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

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

Table 13 - Spearman Correlation results

			BV	DV	IV	WLB	PH	EV
INTENTION	Correlation		.472**	.526**	.301**	.457**	.346**	.593**
	Coefficient							
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

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

4.6 Assessing the strength of cause-and-effect relationships between dependent and independent variables (Regression)

In this section, the cause-and-effect relationship outlined by H7 is assessed by a simple linear regression at a 95% confidence interval. This analysis is carried out as an addition to the correlation test to assess the predictive significance of the positive relationship identified between EB and intention identified in the previous section.

Tables 14 and 15 demonstrate the results of the simple linear regression analysis, showing that EB accounted for 58.8% variance in GenZ's intention to submit a job application ($R^2 = 0.586$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.588$, $F(1,213) = 304.214$, $p < .001$), showing evidence of significant effect of EB on Gen Z's job application intentions ($\beta = 0.767$, $CI = 0.822, 1.032$, $P < 0.001$).

Thus, the regression model is represented as follows:

$$Y = 0.359 + 0.927X + \epsilon$$

Where Y: is intention to submit a job application, X: is scale attractiveness of the EB and ϵ : are the model errors.

Table 14 - Model Summary

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.767 ^a	0.588	0.586	0.50076	0.588	304.214	1	213	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), EB

Table 15 - Coefficients table

Coefficients										
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
		1	(Constant)	0.359			0.217		1.651	0.100
	INTENTION	0.927	0.053	0.767	17.442	0.000	0.822	1.032	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: INTENTION

Additionally, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis at a 95% confidence interval was performed to assess in more detail the predictive significance of each individual construct (i.e. BV, DV, IV, WLB, EV and PH) in the model to predict the higher-order construct (i.e. the intention for Gen Z to submit a job application).

The results of this multiple hierarchical regression are present in Appendix IX. The analysis also met the assumptions of multicollinearity given that the tolerance values range from 0.351 to 1.000 (needed to be greater than 0.1) while the value inflation factor (VIF) ranges from 1.000 to 2.848 (need to be less than 10) indicating that multicollinearity is not an issue in this study. The analysis of the hierarchical regression shows that the inclusion of BV accounted for 31.7% variance in Gen Z's intention to submit a job application ($R^2 = 0.317$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.317$, $F(1,213)=99.0$, $p<.001$), showing evidence of significant effect of BV on Gen Z's job application intentions ($\beta =0.563$, $CI = 1.420, 2.321$, $P <0.001$). Also, the inclusion of DV into model 2 added an additional 23.3% variance in predicting Gen Z's intention to submit a job application ($\Delta R^2 = 0.232$, $F(1,212)=109.381$, $p<.001$) and it significantly predicted Gen Z's intention to submit a job application ($\beta =0.610$, $CI = 0.467, 0.683$, $P <0.001$). The inclusion of IV into model 3 did not add additional variance in predicting Gen Z's intention to submit a job application ($\Delta R^2 = 0.000$, $F(1,211)=0.090$, $p = 0.764$) and it does not significantly predict Gen Z's intention to submit a job application ($\beta =0.016$, $CI = -0.092, 0.125$, $P=0.764$). The inclusion of WLB into model 4 added an additional 5.2% variance in predicting Gen Z's intention to submit a job application ($\Delta R^2 = 0.052$, $F(1,210)=0.090$, $p<.001$) and it significantly predicted Gen Z's intention to submit a job application ($\beta =0.327$, $CI = 0.193, 0.425$, $P <0.001$). The inclusion of EV into model 5 added an additional 3.4% variance in predicting Gen Z's intention to submit a job application ($\Delta R^2 = 0.034$, $F(1, 209) =109.381$, $p<.001$) and it significantly predicted Gen Z's intention to submit a job application ($\beta =0.295$, $CI = 0.150, 0.394$, $P <0.001$). The inclusion of PH into model 6 added an additional 0.3% variance in predicting Gen Z's intention to submit a job application ($\Delta R^2 = 0.003$, $F(1, 208) =1.732$, $p=0.190$) and it does not significantly predict Gen Z's intention to submit a job application ($\beta =0.065$, $CI = -0.025, 0.124$, $P =0.190$). Thus, the regression model is represented as follows:

$$Y = 0.418 + 0.101X_1 + 0.317X_2 - 0.026X_3 + 0.154X_4 + 0.270X_5 + 0.050X_6 + \epsilon$$

Where Y: is intention to submit a job application, X_1 : is BV, X_2 : DV, X_3 : IV, X_4 : WLB, X_5 : EV, X_6 : is PH and ϵ : are model errors.

4.7 Summary

The normality test revealed that the dataset did not conform to a normal distribution. Consequently, the Spearman Correlation test was employed. The Cronbach's Alpha test was utilized to assess construct reliability, and it yielded nine constructs that met an acceptable level of reliability, with Cronbach Alphas exceeding 0.7. However, in order to enhance the overall reliability of construct AT, item AT2 was excluded.

In the resulting model, the first-order CFA indicated that out of the 22 items measuring six constructs, 19 items exhibited factor loadings exceeding 0.50 for their respective constructs. Three items (PH1, BV1, BV4) failed to load onto their respective constructs and were subsequently removed from further analysis, including the subsequent step to evaluate model fit. The first-order CFA model demonstrated favourable fit statistics, with the Chi-square/degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) being less than +3, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) exceeding +0.90, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) surpassing +0.90, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) greater than +0.90, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) less than +0.10, thus indicating good model fit. Additionally, the standardized factor loadings for each scale item on their respective constructs met the desirable threshold of $\leq +0.7$ (≤ 0.5 is also deemed acceptable). Consequently, the first-order CFA confirmed construct validity and

model fit. Subsequently, a second-order CFA was conducted, which indicated that the standardized factor loadings of each construct (BV, DV, IV, WLB, EV, and PH) onto the higher-order construct (EB) met the acceptable threshold of ≤ 0.5 , also achieving model fit and providing support for H1 - H6.

This was followed by a Spearman correlation analysis, which demonstrated evidence that EB had a positive and significant relationship with the intention to submit a job application, thereby supporting H7. However, when examining the significance of the correlation between intention and the individual constructs of EB, it was found that the individual relationships of EV, DV, and WLB with intention were positive and significant, indicating a strong relationship. In contrast, the relationships between PH and IV with intention were positive but not significant, suggesting a weak relationship.

To further explore the positive and strong relationship between EB and intention, a linear regression analysis was conducted at a 95% confidence interval. As a result, EB was found to account for 58.8% of the variance in GenZ's intention to submit a job application, confirming a cause-and-effect relationship. Additionally, the regression model is represented as follows:

$$Y = 0.359 + 0.927X + \epsilon$$

Where Y: is the intention to submit a job application, X: is the scale attractiveness of the employer's brand and ϵ : are the model errors

Furthermore, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis, conducted with a 95% confidence interval, delved deeper into evaluating the predictive significance of each individual construct (BV, DV, IV, WLB, EV, and PH) within the model for forecasting the higher-order construct, which is the intention of Gen Z to submit a job application. Table 16 below summarises the regression results.

Table 16 - Summary of regression results

Construct	% predictive significance to Intention	Significance level
BV	31.7%	p<0.001
DV	23.3%	p<0.001
IV	0%	p=0.764
WLB	5.2%	p<0.001
EV	3.4%	p<0.001
PH	0.3%	p=0.190

Thus, the regression model is represented as follows:

$$Y = 0.418 + 0.101X_1 + 0.317X_2 - 0.026X_3 + 0.154X_4 + 0.270X_5 + 0.050X_6 + \epsilon$$

Where Y: is the intention to submit a job application, X_1 : is the BV, X_2 : DV, X_3 : IV, X_4 : WLB, X_5 : EV, X_6 : PH and ϵ : are the model errors.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter reflects on the results obtained in the previous chapter by comparing and contrasting with existing literature referred to in Chapters 2 and 3. Additionally, the limitations of this study are recognised and discussed. Ultimately, the recommendations are suggested for future research opportunities within the field of EB.

5.2 Findings Implications and Interpretation

The findings of this study demonstrated that Work-life balance (WLB), Development Value (DV), Economic Value (EV), Brand Value (BV), Interest Value (IV) and Physical Health (PH) contribute to EB. As such, this study has effectively accomplished its initial objective of proving that the conceptual model (Figure 1) reflects Gen Z's real preferences pertaining to the information they seek from prospective employers on the condition of employment.

According to this research, Gen Z ranks Work-life Balance as the most important factor contributing to EB. Nowadays, a critical component of employment sought by many generations is flexible working arrangements and working hours in order to balance personal and work life. This flexibility is quickly becoming a norm in many countries stimulated by an increase in regulations promoting better work-life balance including local Maltese regulation. Hence, quickly becoming perceived as a right by current and potential employees. The significance of work-life-balance in EB aligns with other literature (Sarabdeen et al.,2023;

Figurska and Matuska,2013; Jain, Neha and Bhatt ,2015; Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann, 2019; Hadi and Ahmed, 2018).

Development value proves to be the second most significant contributor to EB for Gen Z. Evidence indicates that employees show a keen interest in self-improvement and tend to view organizations positively when they consistently invest in the development of their workforce. This opportunity for development can range from lateral to vertical career growth and professional development (Dabirian, Paschen, and Kietzmann, 2019). Offering development opportunities aligns with arguments presented in numerous studies on strategic management, emphasizing the importance of companies investing in their workforce. This fosters a workforce that aligns with the VRIO Framework, achieving a competitive edge by creating valuable, rare, and inimitable human resources. Many service companies, such as Alphabet Inc., Microsoft Corporation, Amazon Inc., Apple Inc., Deloitte, Ernst and Young Limited, and PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, significantly allocate investments to foster the development of their internal workforce. Therefore, promoting professional development to existing and potential employees positively affects the firm's image as an ideal employer (Hadi and Ahmed, 2018).

Economic value resulted to be the third important contributor to EB for Gen Z. Interestingly, WLB and DV are given more weight by this cohort than economic value and this seems to be evident in other studies. Such that while salary is deemed to be an important determinant of perceived career stability, it is subordinate to Gen Z's self-confidence, perceived self-worth and clear career expectations (Barhate and Dirani, 2022). However, the importance of economic value to Gen Z is not to be underestimated, Gen Z is considered to be cost-conscious due to

access to current affairs on economic fluctuations from multimedia and observance of the parents' career resilience during periods of financial and political crises (Barhate and Dirani, 2022). Nevertheless, Gen Z's expectations are to receive a generous salary for the fulfilment of their ambitions to embark on a path towards financial independence.

Brand value resulted to be the fourth important contributor to EB for Gen Z. A company's brand and reputation are directly affected by the company's efforts in its product and services. A company of higher-quality and innovative products together with other decisions taken such as CSR actions has a greater chance to be perceived as a desirable supplier in the consumer market, the same concept applies to attract talent in the labour market (Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann, 2019; Sarabdeen et al.,2023; Gorgenyi-Hegyey, Nathan and Fekete-Farkas, 2021). Once again, companies that offer high-quality innovative products and services, such as Alphabet Inc., Microsoft Corporation, Amazon Inc., Apple Inc., and Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd, are considered to have substantial employment rates due to a well-regarded reputation determined by respective high-quality products and customer service.

Interest value resulted to be the fifth important contributor to EB for Gen Z. Hence, Gen Z individuals are attracted to an employer that offers a stimulating workplace atmosphere, employs innovative work methods, and harnesses the creative potential of its staff (Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann, 2019; Sarabdeen et al.,2023; Figurska and Matuska, 2013). Consequently, repetitive tasks are more likely to result in diminished interest value and heightened frustration (Dabirian, Paschen and Kietzmann, 2019; Sarabdeen et al.,2023). Gen Z demonstrates a strong inclination towards a work environment characterized by openness,

which fosters the appreciation of creative ideas and cultivates a culture of inclusivity, thereby enhancing the overall appeal and engagement of the work (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

Lastly, Physical health resulted as the sixth important contributor to EB for Gen Z. To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first time ever PH was tested as part of the conceptual measurement model of EB, to bridge Workplace Health Research and EB research. This result supports other literature that emphasises the emerging importance of promoting physical health activity at the workplace, particularly by Gen Z individuals. Some studies suggest that this emerging perception of the importance of physical activity among Gen Z might be the result of confinement of COVID-19 restrictions. During restrictions, individuals would have more time to exercise since most of the other activities would have been prohibited (Karuc et al. 2020; Bakel et al. 2021; Galle et al. 2020). Additionally, at the time a lot of emphasis and importance was marketed to citizens by public bodies to stay active during time of confinement such as WHO and Ministry of Health in the local context. Consequently, this influence may have shaped Gen Z's behaviour, encouraging ongoing engagement in physical activities even post-pandemic. In general, there is a growing global trend towards prioritising employee well-being, as a response to the unrelenting demands of contemporary life, which often results in the neglect of individuals' personal well-being. Many local and international companies spanning diverse industries have embraced this paradigm shift of placing employee well-being at the forefront, incorporating it as a foundational element of their corporate culture and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. In 2021, Frank Salt Real Estate introduced the "#LetsBeActive" initiative, aimed at improving the physical and mental well-being of its employees and also promoting teamwork and a stronger sense of unity among them. Additionally, CareMalta Group has initiated a corporate strategy and policy that places a strong

emphasis on the well-being of its employees. Moreover, Deloitte Malta, KPMG Malta, Accenture plc, Oracle Corporation, Google LLC, Microsoft Corporation, Evolution Gaming Group and others offer free or discounted gym membership to its employees. This, in turn, demonstrates the employers' commitment to nurturing the physical health and overall well-being of both its current and prospective employees.

Nevertheless, the findings of the research support that promoting employees' physical health may be able to improve an organisation's image (Feher and Reich, 2020). Hence, the findings of this study confirm that WLB, DV, EV, BV, IV and PH contribute to EB.

Once the conceptual model of the study was confirmed to reflect reality, the second objective focused on whether the efforts of promoting the various attributes of EB had an actual influence on Gen Z's intention to submit a job application with a company. The findings of this study validate the positive relationship between EB and Gen Z's intention to submit a job application, aligning with Santiago (2019) and Saini, Gopal, and Kumari (2015) results emphasizing that EB attractiveness has a positive relationship with the intention to submit a job application.

Hence, WLB, DV, EV, BV, IV and PH of EB positively increase the intention of Gen Z to submit a job application to the company. Out of these dimensions, EV, DV, and WLB were found to have a strong relationship with the intention of Gen Z to submit a job application. In other words, favourable EV, DV, and WLB conditions significantly increase the likelihood that a Gen Z individual would be inclined to apply for a position with a company. However, PH and IV resulted in having a weak influence on Gen Z's decision to apply for the job. In other words, to some degree, PH and IV do increase the chance for a Gen Z individual to apply, although

this statement is not very strong. Thus, the results make sense as PH and IV were ranked to be the last contributors to EB, as previously discussed.

These findings exhibit both alignment and divergence in comparison to Santiago's (2019) research. In parallel with Santiago's findings, this study affirms the positive impact of DV on individuals' intention to apply for a job. However, in contrast to Santiago's (2019) findings, this study presents contrary results regarding the relationship between IV and EV and their influence on the intention to submit a job application. Santiago's (2019) research did not establish evidence of a positive influence of interest value and economic value on intention, whereas this study substantiates the presence of such a positive relationship.

In conclusion, the results of this study affirm and extend the foundational concepts outlined in the conceptual model proposed by Santiago (2019) and Sarabdeen et al. (2023). Specifically, the findings of this study support Sarabdeen et al. (2023)'s measurement model of EB, which comprises WLB, DV, EV, BV and IV. However, this research contributes to this measurement model of EB by recommending the inclusion of PH as an additional factor when applying it to the context of Gen Z. Furthermore, our study challenges Santiago's (2019) conceptual framework by revealing that both IV and EV demonstrate a positive influence on the intention to submit a job application. Additionally, the findings of this study suggest the incorporation of DV, WLB, PH, and BV into Santiago's (2019) conceptual model for a more comprehensive assessment of EB's effectiveness, particularly in its ability to attract prospective employees to apply for positions within the organization.

5.3 Limitations of the study

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, the sampling is confined to respondents from Malta and Gozo, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader cross-national context. To better understand potential cultural or national differences in preferences within the Gen Z cohort, it would be advisable to conduct the research into larger cross-national studies. Secondly, this study adopts a cohort-based perspective, treating Gen Z as a homogeneous group. This oversimplification may not fully capture the nuanced effects of Gen Z preferences on employer branding. Exploring additional variables (e.g. gender, occupational experience) could provide a more accurate picture of this topic. Additionally, the use of a five-point Likert scale in the survey may restrict response options and might not capture the complexity of respondents' opinions and behaviours adequately. Moreover, while the sample size is deemed adequate, considering the introduction of a new dimension (i.e. PH), a larger sample could have enhanced the clarity of generalization from this study. Furthermore, the cross-sectional timeframe of the study may impact the generalisability of findings to the entire Gen Z population, as preferences and perceptions may change over time. Lastly, the limitations of the statistical techniques employed, including CFA correlation, and regression, should be acknowledged.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

To address the limitations and enhance the comprehensiveness of this study, several recommendations could be considered for future research. Firstly, it is advisable to incorporate an additional qualitative methodology stage to delve deeper into the intricate nature of Gen Z

preferences regarding EB and how these preferences influence their intentions to submit job applications, providing a richer understanding.

Secondly, a more comprehensive approach to factor analysis, such as a full-fledged exploratory factor analysis, should be undertaken, specifically in relation to physical health. This can help improve the accuracy and reliability of the factor loading model, ensuring that the physical health dimension is adequately represented and measured.

Moreover, during the analysis stage, it is crucial to consider control variables as potential moderators. Variables such as gender, age group, and level of experience can significantly influence the cause-and-effect relationship between different dimensions of EB and the intention to submit a job application. This consideration would allow for a more nuanced and accurate interpretation of the study's findings. Lastly, to enhance the generalisability of the results, it is recommended to increase the sample size. A larger and more diverse sample will provide a broader representation of the Gen Z population, improving the ability to draw meaningful conclusions and generalize the findings to a wider context.

5.5 Conclusion

In efforts to enhance comprehension of the evolving workforce expectations of Gen Z, this study provides empirical evidence regarding this cohort's expectations and preferences concerning EB, which potentially positions an organisation as an employer of choice to enhance the inclination to apply for a position. The findings of this research show evidence that all six dimensions of EB, which are, WLB, DV, EV, BV, IV and PH contribute to the branding

of an ideal employer. Furthermore, all six dimensions have a positive influence on Gen Z's intention to incline towards submitting a job application. However, Gen Z may perceive PH and IV as exerting relatively less influence on their decision to pursue a position compared to the other dimensions.

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Appendix I - Theories and frameworks applied in Employer Branding research

Theory/framework (order by frequency of occurrence in literature)	Key elements of theory
Brand equity theory (e.g., Aaker 1991; Keller 1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brand equity assets allows the interpretation, processing and storage of information about products (i.e., jobs) and brands ▪ Different sub-constructs (e.g., awareness, image) ▪ Added value of a brand to a product/service (i.e., job) ▪ Built and strengthened through marketing programs
Social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel and Turner 1986; Ashforth and Mael 1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Based on individuals' social classification of themselves and others ▪ Positioning of oneself in the social environment has an impact on attraction to that group (i.e., the organization)
Signaling theory (e.g., Spence 1973; Rynes 1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Based on assumption of information asymmetries and incomplete information ▪ Individuals interpret signals or cues (in-) consciously sent by organizations as organizational characteristics ▪ Perception of organizational characteristics can predict attraction to an organization
Instrumental-symbolic framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Based on brand image construct (e.g., Keller 1993)

(e.g., Lievens and Highhouse 2003)

- Distinction of brand (image) associations into:
 - (1) instrumental functions and
 - (2) symbolic meanings
- Instrumental: product (i.e., job)-related attributes
- Symbolic: non-product (i.e., job)-related attributes (i.e., inferred traits)

Employer knowledge framework (e.g., Cable and Turban 2001)

- Based on brand equity theory (e.g., Keller 1993)
- Three dimensions of employer (brand) knowledge: (1) employer familiarity (i.e., awareness), (2) employer reputation (i.e., affective evaluation), (3) employer image (i.e., attribute recall)
- Organizational attraction as outcome of job seekers' employer knowledge

Resource-based view (e.g., Wernerfelt 1984; Barney 1991)

- (Human capital) resource heterogeneity across firms as a source of (sustained) competitive advantage
- Distinct brand as an employer supports acquisition of (valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable) human capital

Accessibility-diagnostics model (e.g., Feldman and Lynch 1988)

- Likeleihood that an early response will be used as input for subsequent responses is determined by perceived accessibility in memory and diagnosticity (i.e., helps to discriminate between alternative hypotheses) of information in comparison to other inputs

(Self-) Image congruency theory (e.g., Sirgy 1982; Sirgy 1985)

- Image congruency when consumers' (i.e., employees') self-image in line with perceived product (i.e., job) or brand image
- Congruency / match of images determines attraction or job choice

Theory of psychological contract (e.g., Hendry and Jenkins 1997)

- Employers and employees have “set of practical and emotional expectations of benefits” of each other (p. 38)
- In recruitment context employers promote their employment benefits in exchange for e.g. people's job pursuit intentions and future efforts

Attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework (e.g., Schneider 1987; Bretz *et al.* 1989)

- Organizational behavior is determined through attraction, selection and attrition from it and yields certain kinds of persons in an organization (p. 440)
- Consequentially, people with similar characteristics (e.g., personality, values) are attracted to like organizations

Elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (e.g., Petty and Cacioppo 1986)

- Persuasion and information processing through two possible routes (i.e., central or peripheral)
- Determination of route “through person's motivation and ability to evaluate the communication presented” (p. 129)
- Distinction of processing type influences e.g. shaping of job seekers' employer knowledge

Expectancy theory (e.g., Vroom 1964)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individuals attracted by organizations that offer (perceived) valued characteristics in line with own needs and desires (expectancy) ▪ Positive signals (e.g., reputation) can increase valence of employer
Theory of reasoned action (e.g., Fishbein and Ajzen 1975)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Behavioral intention as function of individual's attitudes combined with subjective norms ▪ In recruitment context application intentions predicted through organizational attractiveness (attitude) based on certain organizational attributes
Social exchange theory / Norm of reciprocity (e.g., Gouldner 1960)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reciprocity as a "mutually contingent exchange of benefits between two or more units" (Gouldner 1960, p. 164) ▪ In employer-employee context, employees likely to reciprocate desired organizational outcomes or experiences with enhanced commitment to organization
Source credibility framework (e.g., Eisend 2004; Pornpitakpan 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Superiority of high-credibility sources over low credibility sources on persuasion in terms of changing attitudes and gaining behavioral compliance ▪ Source credibility stronger for sources communicating personally than other sources
Need theory (e.g., McClelland 1962)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People motivated by different types of needs: (1) affiliation, (2) power, and (3) achievement

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual profile influences attitudes, desires and/or behavior, i.e., attraction to a source that could fulfill their needs
Stakeholder theory (e.g., Freeman 2010)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shift from pure shareholder view to all groups or individuals affected by or having an affect on organization's objectives and thus a stake in the organization ▪ Employees as key stakeholders or internal customers whose needs have to be satisfied
Media richness theory (e.g., Daft and Lengel 1984; Daft <i>et al.</i> 1987)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Media are selected based on information requirements ▪ Richer media (e.g., oral face-to-face communication) more effective in comparison to leaner media (e.g., written brochures) at conveying ambiguous information
Extended marketing mix framework (e.g., Booms and Bitner 1981)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "Four Ps" of marketing mix (i.e., product, place, price, promotion) extended by an additional three Ps to account for services (i.e., process, people, physical evidence)
Transactional view of marketing (e.g., Webster 1992)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sole focus on sale and the transaction as target of marketing activity ▪ No consideration of people or social processes
Relationship view of marketing (e.g., Grönroos 1994)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishment, maintenance and enhancement of customer relationships in in order to fulfill objectives of all parties involved

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achievement through “mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises” (p. 355) ▪ Fulfilling promises equally important than only giving promises
<hr/> <p>Schema congruity theory (e.g., Mandler 1982)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schemas reflect representations of experience that influence “action, perception, and thought”, and are based on frequency of confrontations with relevant situations (Mandler 1982, p. 3) ▪ Schema-event-congruity creates familiarity, acceptability, and basic sense of liking
<hr/> <p>Information integration theory (e.g., Anderson 1971)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In situations that require putting together different pieces of information, attitude is formed or modified as a result of previous attitudes and the process to evaluate and integrate them (i.e., adding it to similar information pieces) of the information ▪ The emphasis on each piece of information is dependent on credibility and reliability
<hr/> <p>Multi-level theory (e.g., Kozlowski and Klein 2000)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizations seen as multilevel systems based on integrating micro and macro perspectives and negligence of it leads to inaccurate results ▪ In recruitment context individuals receive both individual and organizational-level signals that impact recruitment outcomes <hr/>

Activity theory (e.g., Engeström 1987)

- Explains interrelations between the individual subject and his/her community (i.e., interacting activity systems)
- Understanding actions of the individual based on cultural artifacts

Institutional theory (e.g., DiMaggio and Powell 1983)

- Assimilation of organizations over time through isomorphic institutional processes
- In the field of HR, management's desires for peer acceptance leads to benchmarking and publication pressure of best practices

Source: Theurer et al. (2018) TableA3 in Appendix E

Appendix II - Popular Social Media Platforms

Facebook	Online networking service to find similar activity with the friends or meet new people that have in common shares. All posts are being shared in the News Feeds Section and aims that create a multiplying effect
Twitter	Micro-blogging or mini blogging service with limited text-based messages of 140 characters or less. Users subscribe to the other accounts as Followers and tweets appear in Followers' news feeds
LinkedIn	One of the biggest online professional networks in the world. Set up a professional profile, also for the business or organization to add "Connections" or "Contacts" for networking. It is also useful for job search and recruitment
Google+	-Social network platform owned by Google, it has similar features with Facebook. Connections are called "Circles" and users can access the "Stream" on their platform pages easily to interact with others
Pinterest	Virtual online bulletin that allows users to store and find any images or videos that needed. All content shared on Pinterest is driven entirely by visuals. It may be considered as personalized media area
YouTube	Video-sharing website where users can upload, view, share videos up to 15 min in length. It also provides a forum to connect, inform, and inspire and reach other users in the social platform
Instagram	Free photo sharing and editing application. It provides taking pictures or videos with the mobile phone then chooses one of the filter to transform into professional-looking snapshots in fast and efficient way

Source: Otken and Okan (2016) p. 250

Appendix III - Characteristics of Gen Z at the workplace

Barhate and Dirani (2022) identified four overarching themes that encapsulate Gen Z's career aspirations. These themes include intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors, career expectations and perceived career development. The author of this study utilises these themes to gain a deeper understanding of Gen Z's workplace expectations and factors that influence their career decisions. This literature serves as a valuable foundation for the development of an EVP tailored to meet the needs of Gen Z.

A. Intrinsic factors

Barhate and Dirani (2022) construct three main intrinsic factors comprising of attitudes, relationships and motivations.

Attitudes. Current literature describes that Gen Z exhibits a disposition characterised by traits of confidence, tenacity and an entrepreneurial attitude. These could be attributed to the wide access of knowledge facilitated by technology, which enables the cohort to become successful entrepreneurs. As a result, Gen Z develops a sense of self-assurance and perseverance, contributing to the cultivation of a positive and self-assured attitude (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

Relationships. Academic literature reveals a lack of consensus regarding the specific kinds of relationships that Gen Z aspires to foster with colleagues. On one hand, some literature emphasises Gen Z's strong desire for good working relationships and social contact with co-workers. Consequently, Gen Z seeks a supportive work environment that invites collaboration

between colleagues in order to meet organisational and personal goals. On the other hand, some studies express Gen Z's desire to work independently and discomfort towards working in a team (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

Motivations. Gen Z's motivations at the workplace manifest through recognition and awareness of contribution by an instant gratification yielding to a promotion or career advancement opportunities. Furthermore, the pursuit of perceived achievement and self-realization represents an additional motivational factor for Gen Z. Consequently, career orientation motivates Gen Z to "pursue their values and serve a meaningful purpose" (Barhate and Dirani, 2022, p.148). Gen Z's motivation to work for the firm grows when organisational goals align with personal goals (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

B. Extrinsic factors

These factors emerge from Gen Z's closet environment, family and organisations that impact the perception of career outlook of this cohort.

Environmental. Gen Z are commonly characterised as digital natives leveraging technology for a range of purposes, including knowledge acquisition, social interaction and work. Consequently, with the ease of access and dependence on technology in current times, the cohort anticipates employers to provide proper equipment in order to execute tasks (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

Familial. Gen Z has observed parents' career resilience during periods of financial and political crises. The redundancy certain jobs and the collapse of the stock market have led to the possible erosion of trust towards employers and the stock market by this cohort. Consequently, familial influences may serve as a subjective norm guiding Gen Z's career aspirations. Furthermore, this cohort anticipates a substantial salary to facilitate ambitious career purists and to support a family, which the cohort aspires to establish by the age of 33 (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

Organizational. Gen Z's career aspirations include a preference for technologically driven firms and employers that support independence within the organisational culture. Additionally, the size of the organisation also influences Gen Z's intention to apply for the job opportunity, this cohort tends to prefer large multinational corporations followed by mid-sized enterprises. Moreover, the cohort aspires to secure employment that fosters personal gratification, as individual principles align with those of the organization (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

C. Career expectations

The themes that emerge from the literature to describe Gen Z's career expectations are organisational culture, work-life balance and stability.

Organisational culture. Gen Z are attracted to organisations that lead with professional conduct, effective communication, career advancement opportunities, offer opportunity to build interpersonal relationships, diversity and inclusivity. As mentioned above, Gen Z preference leans towards an open setting workplace characterised by an open-plan layout to exhibit the support of an open culture (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

Work-life balance. Gen Z places a considerable emphasis on work-life balance and anticipates that employers provide means for its provision, such as flexible working hours, leave entitlement for personal pursuits and remote work arrangements. Empirical findings suggest that organisation that promote and deliver the work-life balance practice are more likely to attract and retain Gen Z (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

Stability. Gen Z's attainment of perceived career stability is contingent upon personal fulfilment and employment benefits such as a healthcare insurance plan, paid leave, retirement fund, job security, occupational health and safety and competitive salary. Empirical research has revealed the paramount importance of career stability to this cohort. While salary is deemed to be an important determinant of perceived career stability, it is subordinate to Gen Z's self-confidence, perceived self-worth and clear career expectations (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

D. Career advancement

The majority of Gen Z individuals place an organisation's career advancement opportunity as the top priority (Iorgulescu, 2016). Gen Z exhibits confidence in the ability to achieve career progression through learning, mentoring and growth.

Learning. Literature demonstrates Gen Z's inclination toward informal learning methods characterised by both autonomous and cooperative approaches. Autonomous learning method deviates from traditional learning methods as it permits Gen Z to learn at a decided pace. Concurrently, cooperative learning entails collaborative learning with participants' interactions. The latter fosters Gen's affinity for organisations that facilitate learning through

networking. Moreover, this cohort anticipates life-long learning initiatives on emerging trends (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

Mentoring. Gen Z express a proclivity to model the conduct of successful individuals in the immediate environment. Research demonstrated that Gen Z exhibits an inclination for mentorship, with a significant proportion preferring to work for managers who possess leadership and mentoring capabilities (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

Growth. Gen Z's preferences are oriented towards lateral growth as opposed to hierarchical growth, in which the former enables the attainment of functional competency and technically within the selected career field. Hence, Gen Z's perception of growth is characterised by the acquisition of competencies that enable career advancement. Consequently, opportunity for growth also drives Gen Z's loyalty towards the organisation. The availability of prospects for growth influences the loyalty of Gen Z towards the organisation (Barhate and Dirani, 2022).

The distinction of Gen Z's workplace preference and characteristics is based on generational cohort theory. Noble and Schewe (2003) define a generational cohort as a group of people born around the same period and experiencing identical or similar events in their formative life. Hence, each generational cohort represents important historical life events, social change and a set of values that are emphasised in a particular period which are likely to influence the personal values, attitudes and beliefs of members of each generational cohort (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman and Lance, 2010; Brosdahi and Carpenter, 2011). The theory has been predominantly adopted by studies exploring generational differences in work-related variables such as work values, attitudes, motivation, leadership and others (Jones, Murray and Tapp,

2018). As it facilitates the construction of profiles that offer valuable segmentation insights into distinct generational cohorts (Brosdahl and Carpenter, 2011). However recent studies have revealed that factors such as “geographical environment, environment, professional experience, national culture, gender” (Egerová, Komárková and Kutlák, 2021, p. 105) may be more influential in shaping employment expectations the generational differences.

Appendix IV - Employer Branding on social media

The digital economy is enabling employers to form and nurture secure relationships with target audiences, in employment terms, with talented potential employees from the labour market and existing employees (Lukić and Lazarević, 2022).

The role of human resources has progressed beyond the conventional function of hiring and selecting candidates, to a more strategic role of attracting high potential young talent with a sustainable employer brand from social networks (Mihalcea, 2017). Social media platforms (Appendix II) offer a range of tools for companies to manage the recruitment process effectively, including the creation of a company profile that showcases the employer brand image and identity to prospective employees (Otken and Okan ,2016). Hence, social networking sites provide a viable avenue for augmenting social networks, thus facilitating active job seekers’ employment search and enabling employers to identify both active and passive job seekers (Sivertzen, Nilsen and Olafsen, 2013).

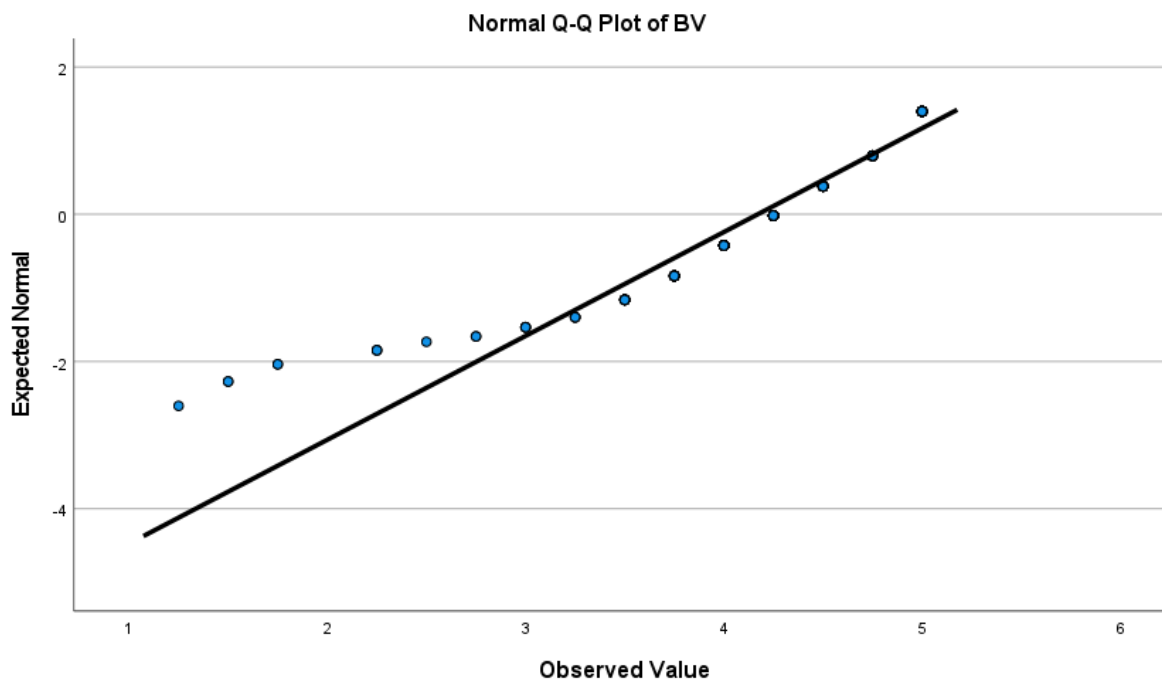
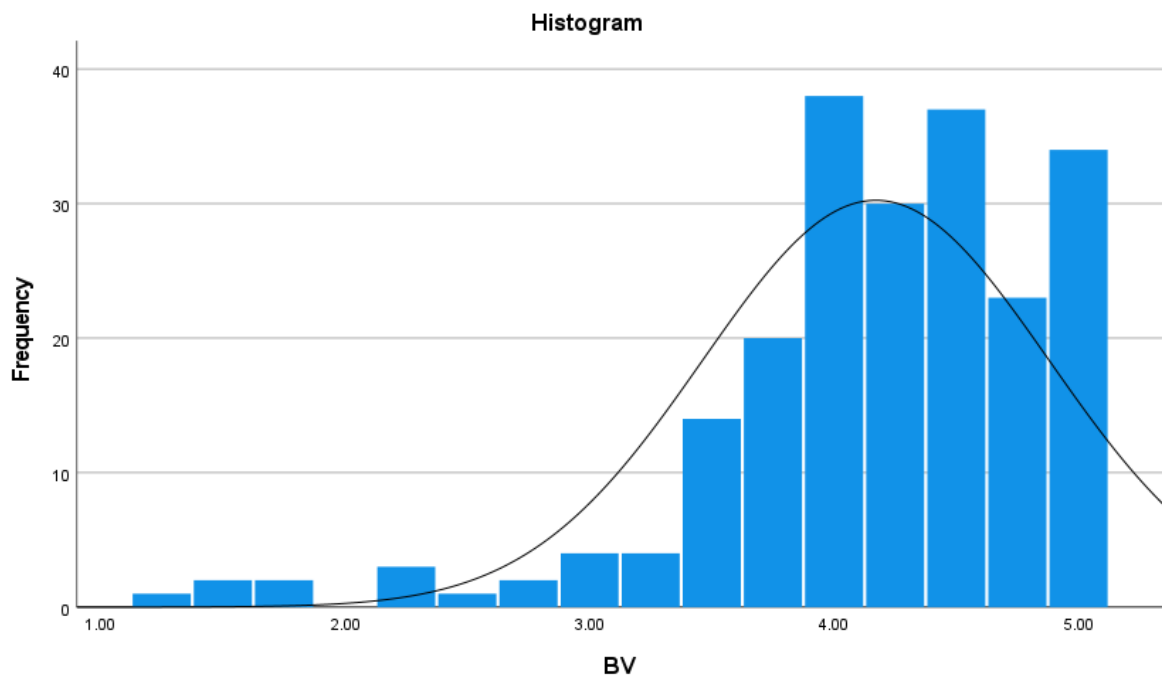
Social media influences individuals’ decision-making, Panday, Almira and Navanti (2022) outline that social media could significantly influence the interest in applying for a job by

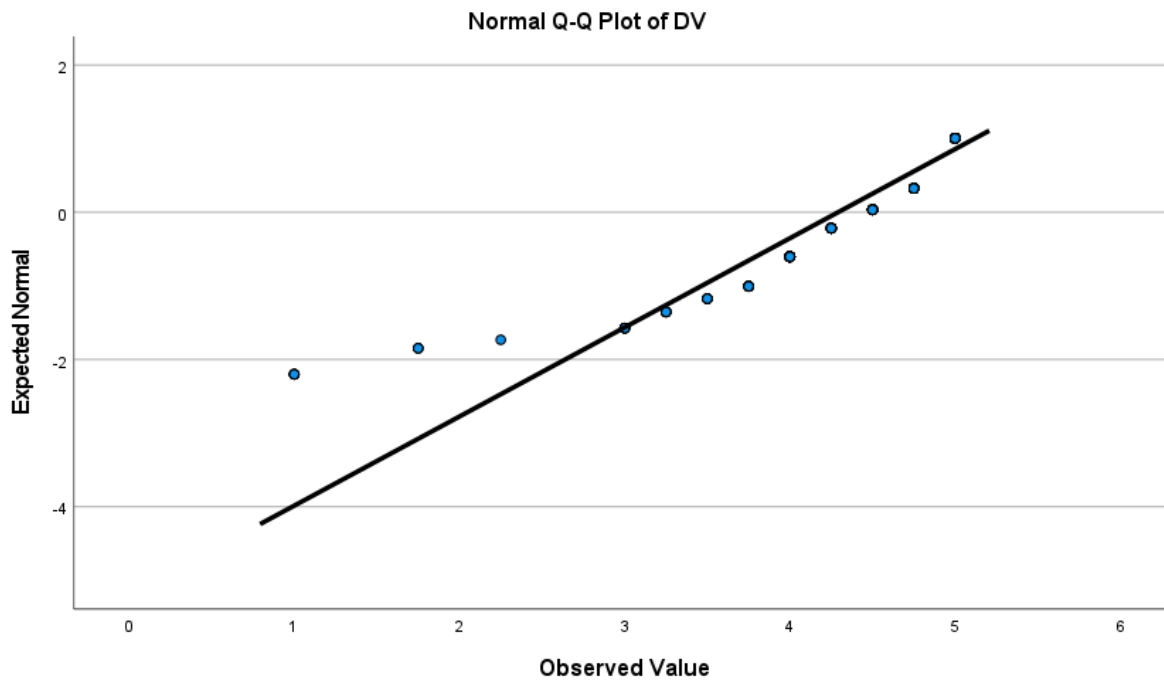
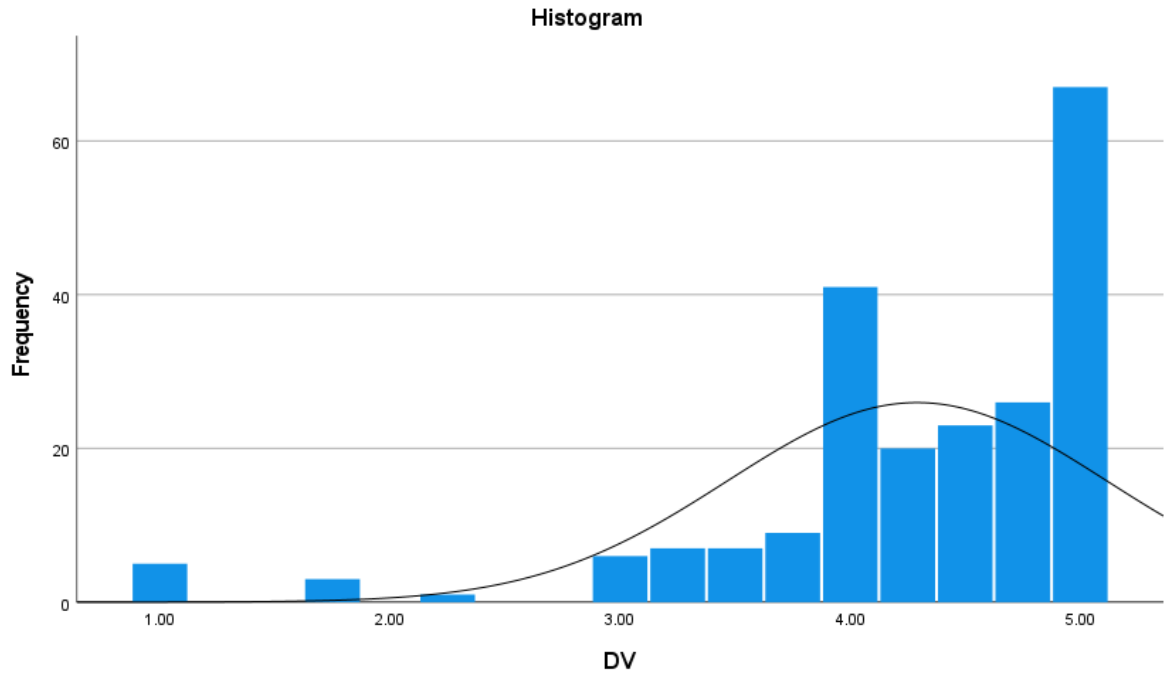
32.6%. Hence effective management of a firm's social media as a marketing tool is important (Karácsony, Izsák and Vasa, 2020). Additionally, Otken and Okan (2016) discovered that social media "might be a strong tool in creating a positive image in the minds of prospective employees and society" (p. 257).

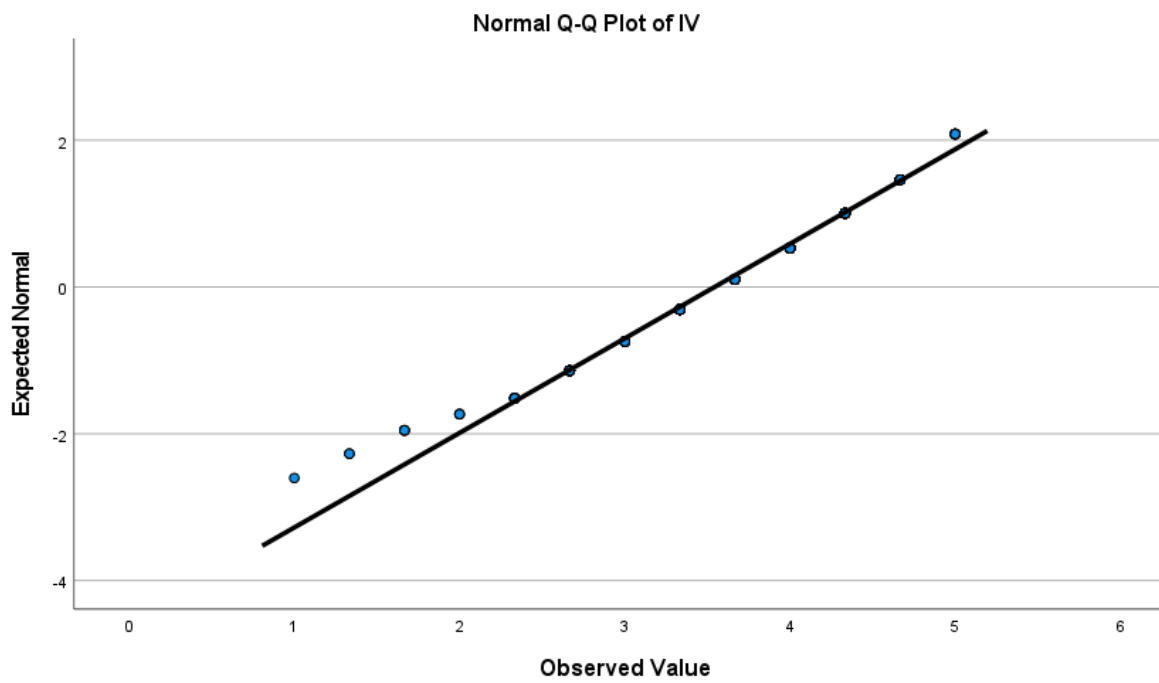
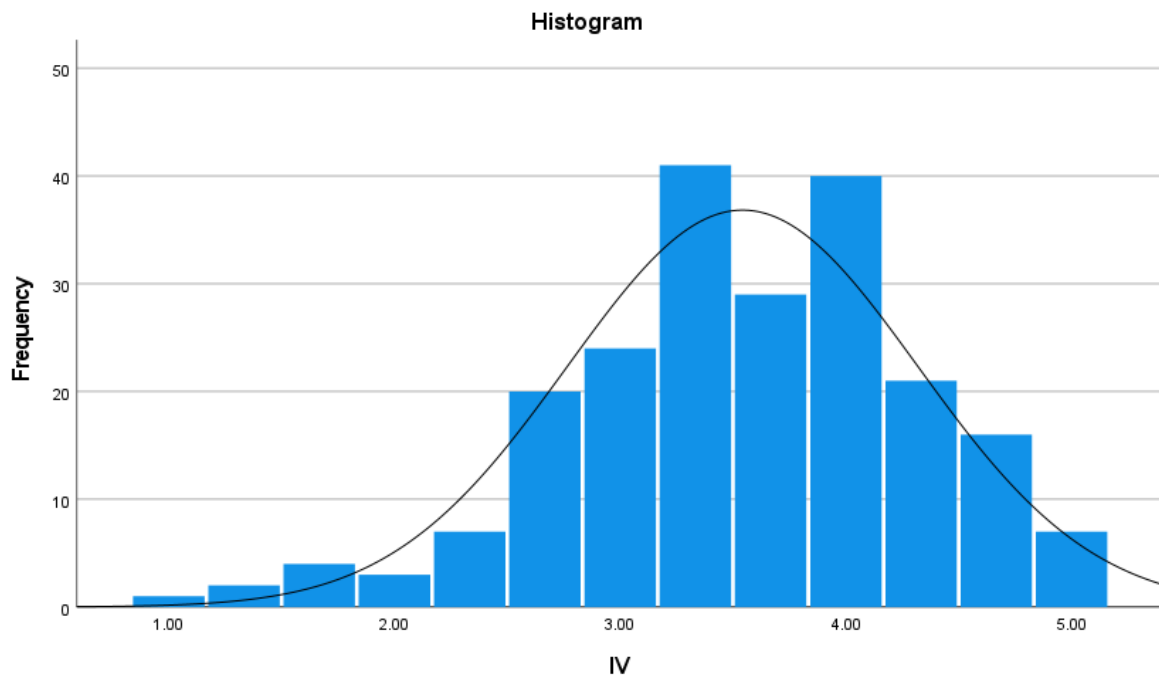
Consequently, employer branding campaigns executed through social media messaging represent a means by which organizations can cultivate their brand image to engage the interest of the right talent and establish a favourable reputation. Sivertzen, Nilsen and Olafsen's (2013), study results indicate that an organisation's reputation-building process is facilitated by the use of social media in employer branding campaigns. Thus, employer branding campaigns through social media channels enhance the reputation of a firm.

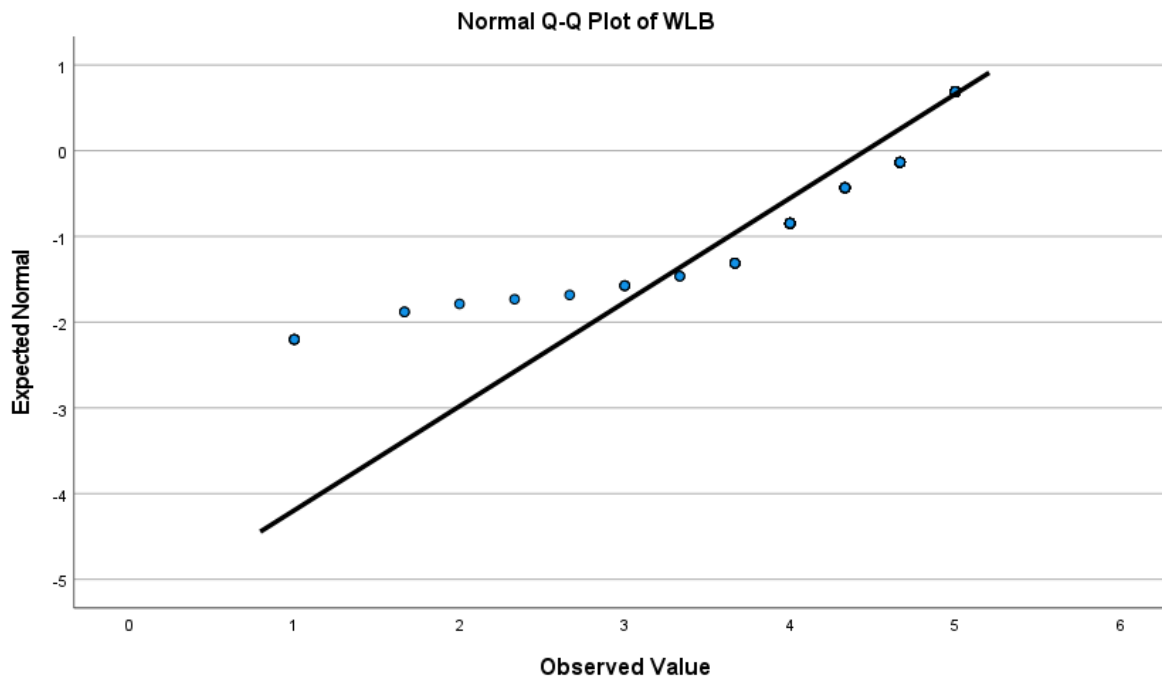
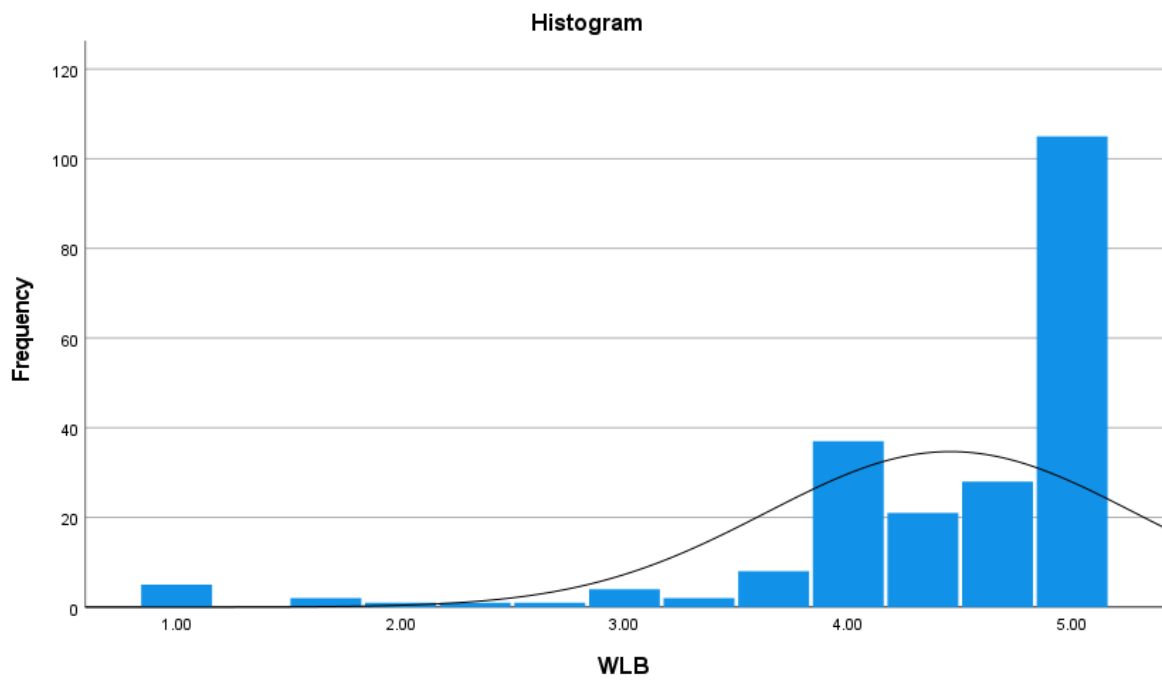
However, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) emphasize that such messages need to be realistic and well-balanced messages that provide both negative and positive information about employment opportunities. Realistic job previews are expected to reduce turnover due to establishing more accurate expectations, enhancing trust and the perception of honesty and minimising job role ambiguity. Additionally, Otken and Okan (2016) state that EB messages on social media should be "coherent, consistent and unified" (Otken and Okan, 2016, p. 258) to the firm's particular brand association i.e. job/organisation attributes and benefits.

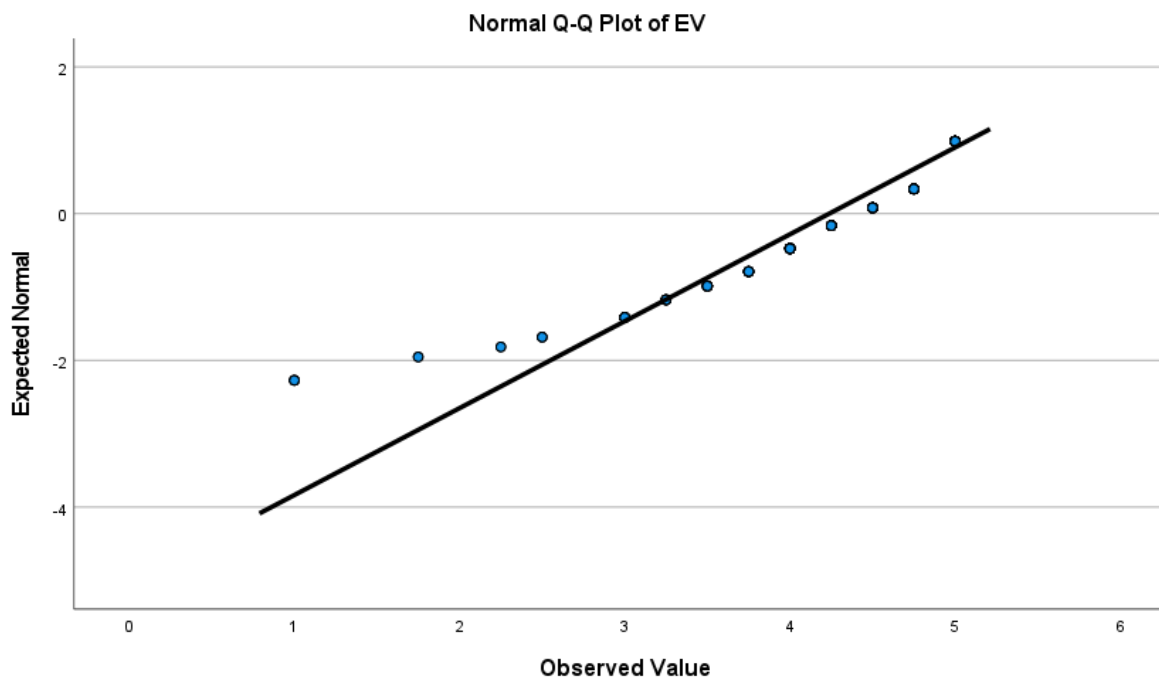
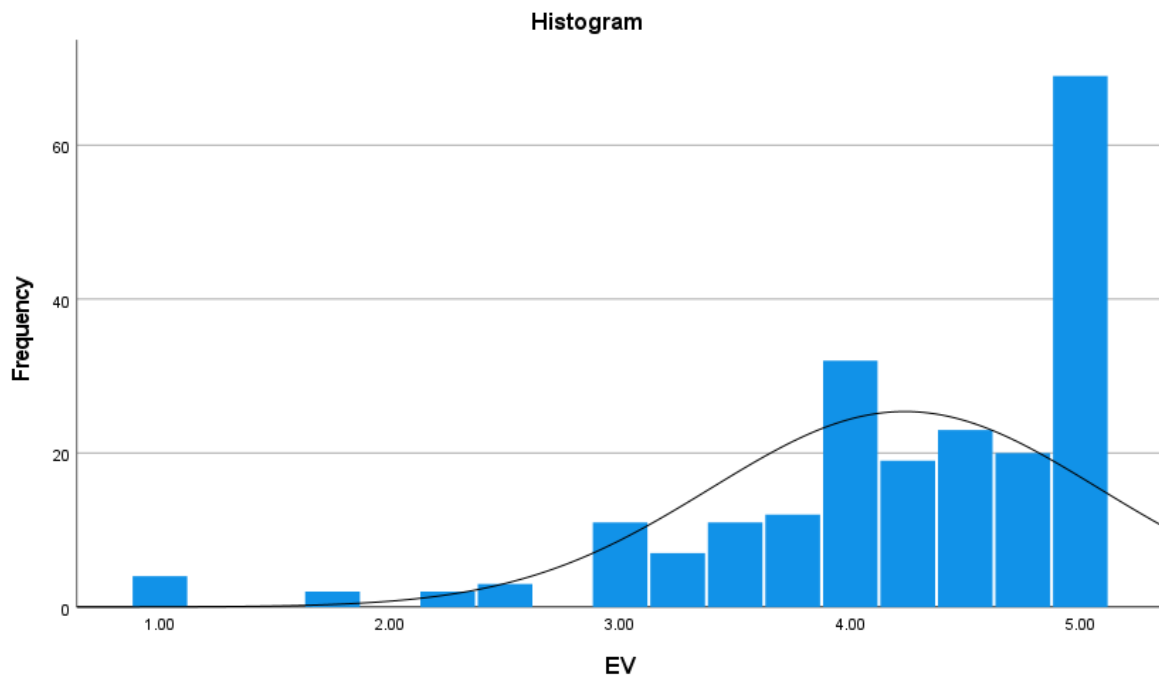
Appendix V - Histograms and Normal Q-Q Plots

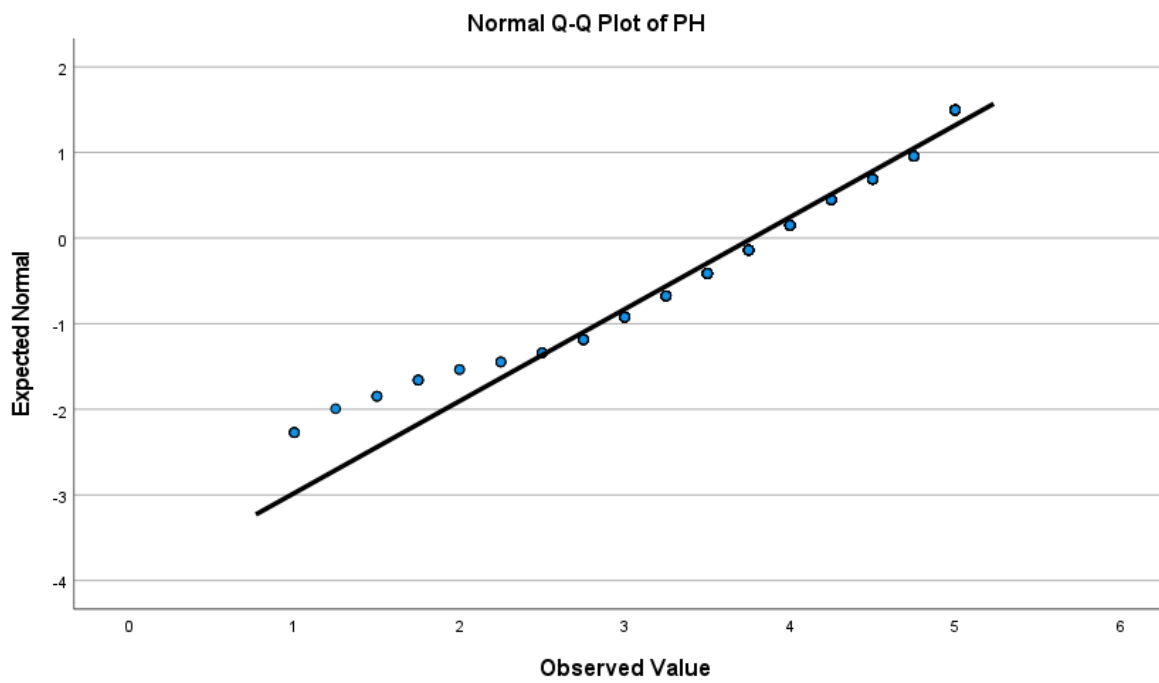
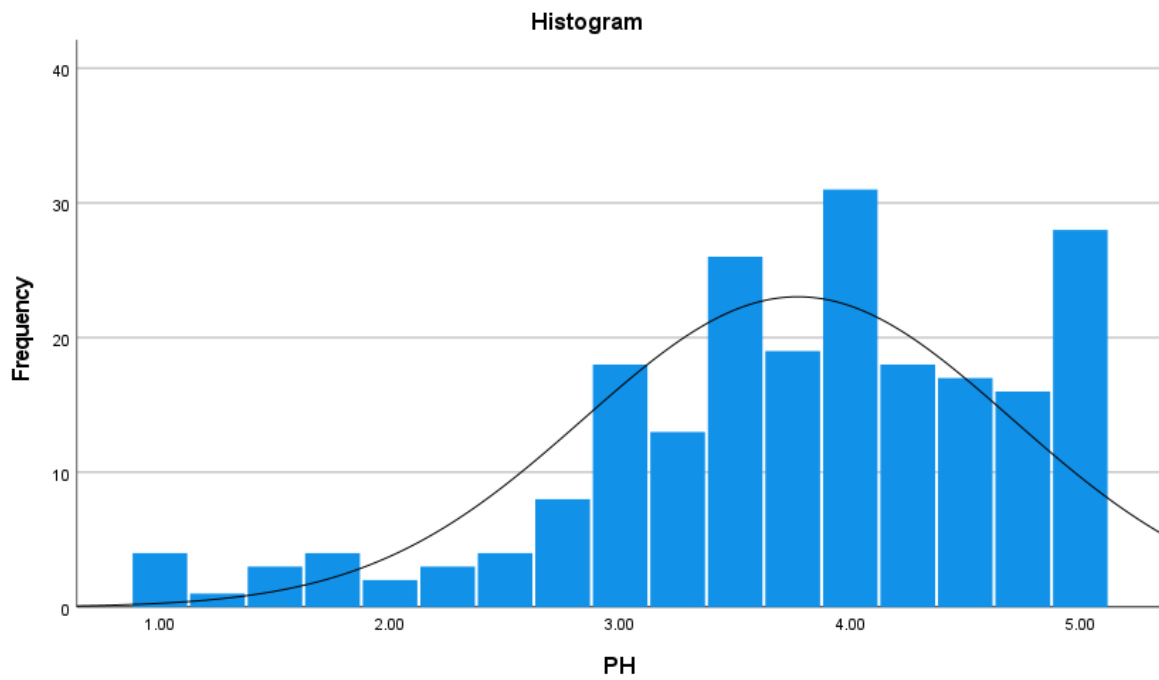


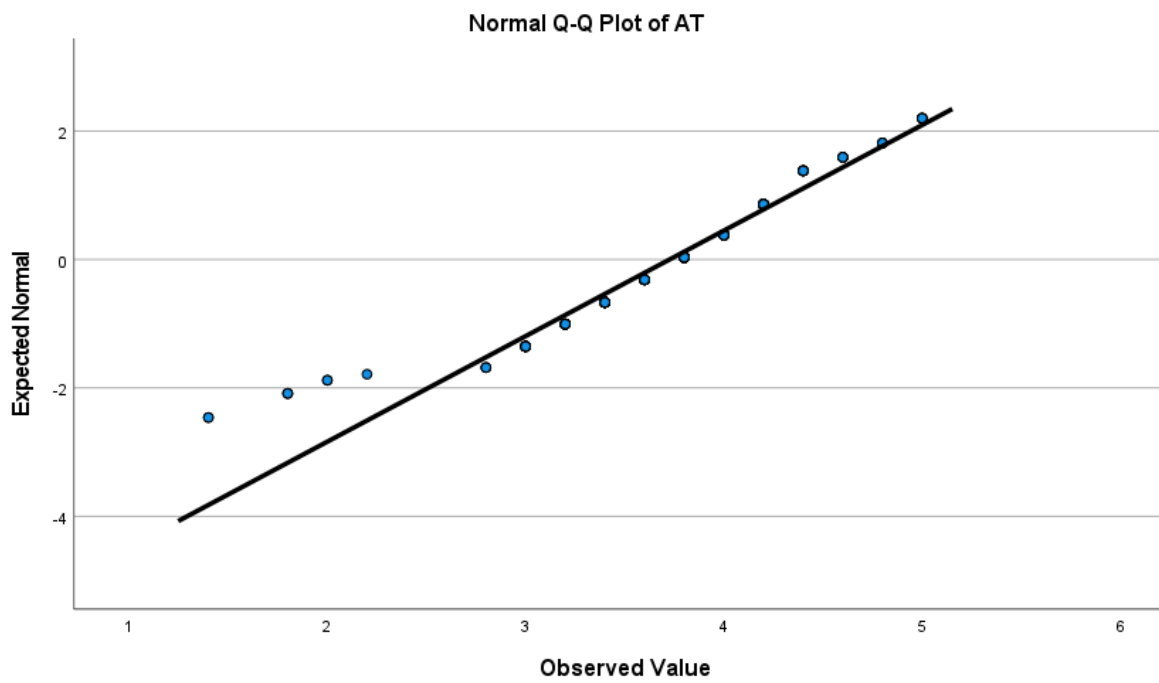
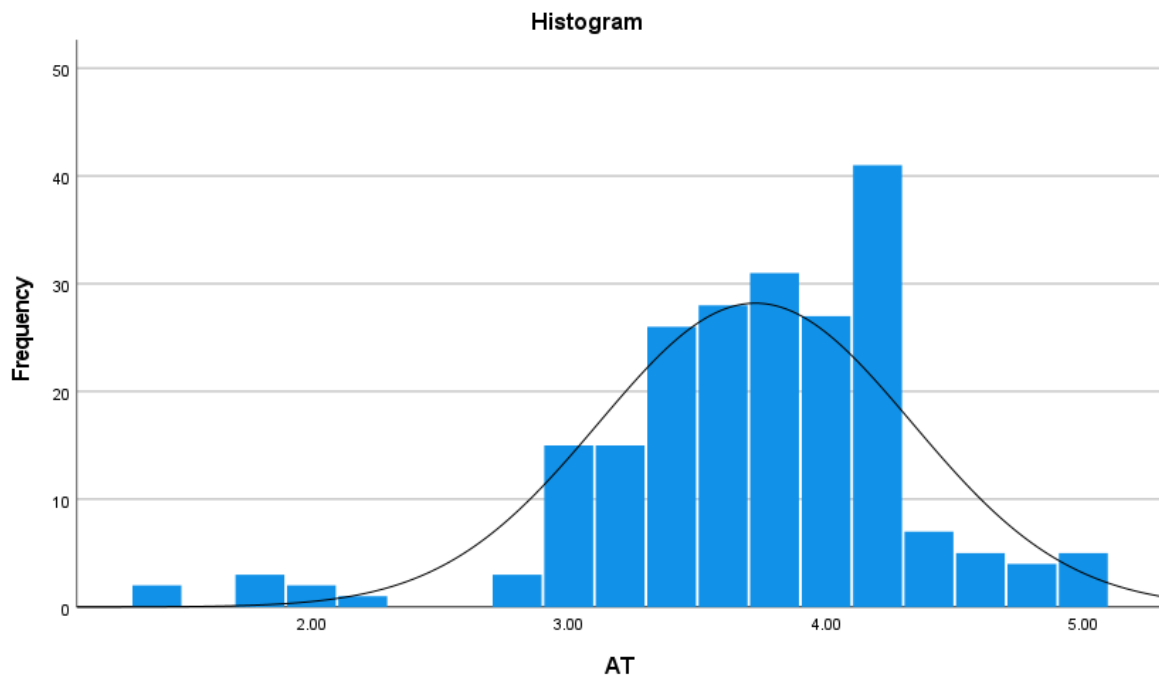


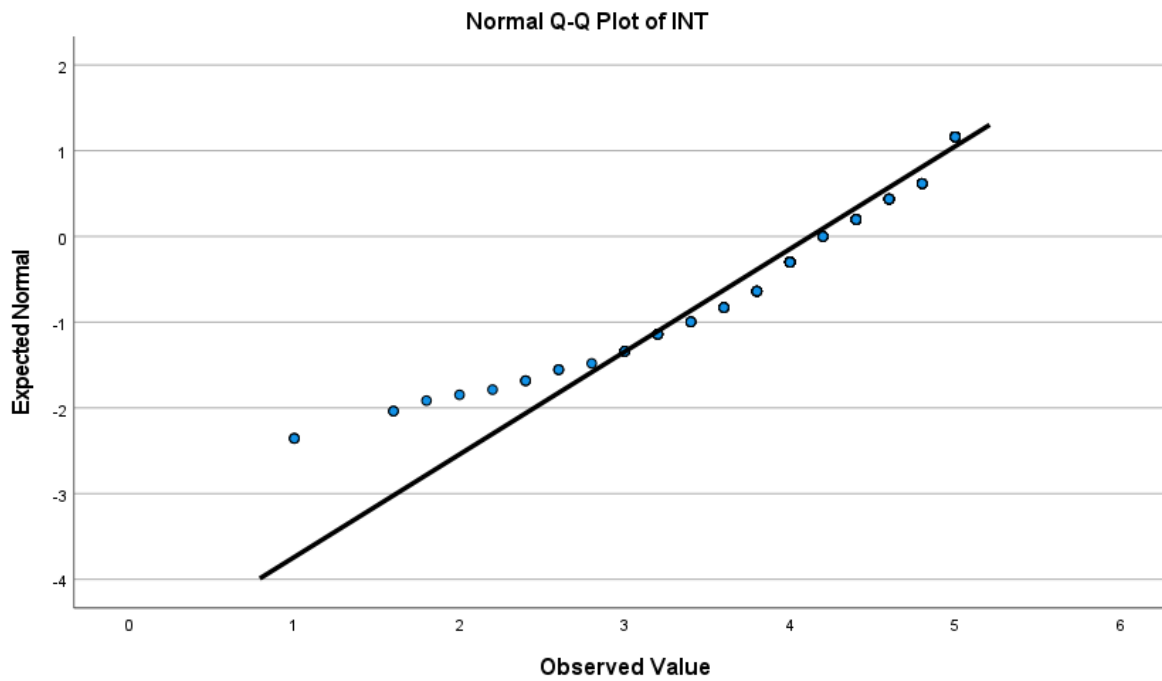
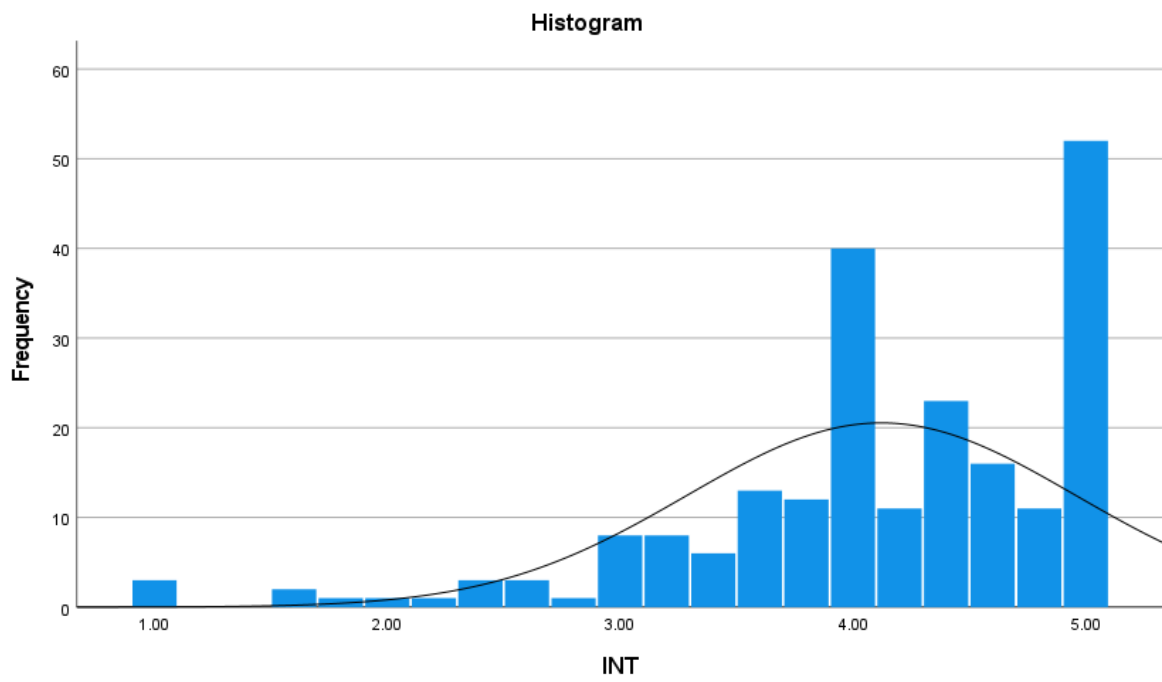


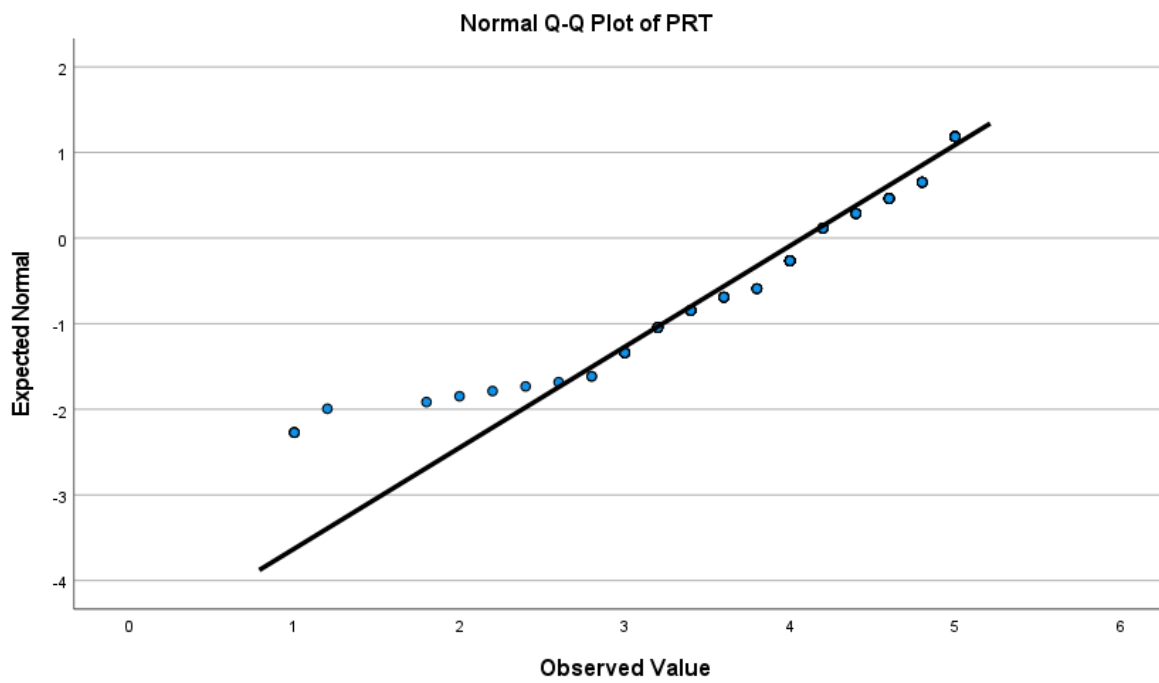
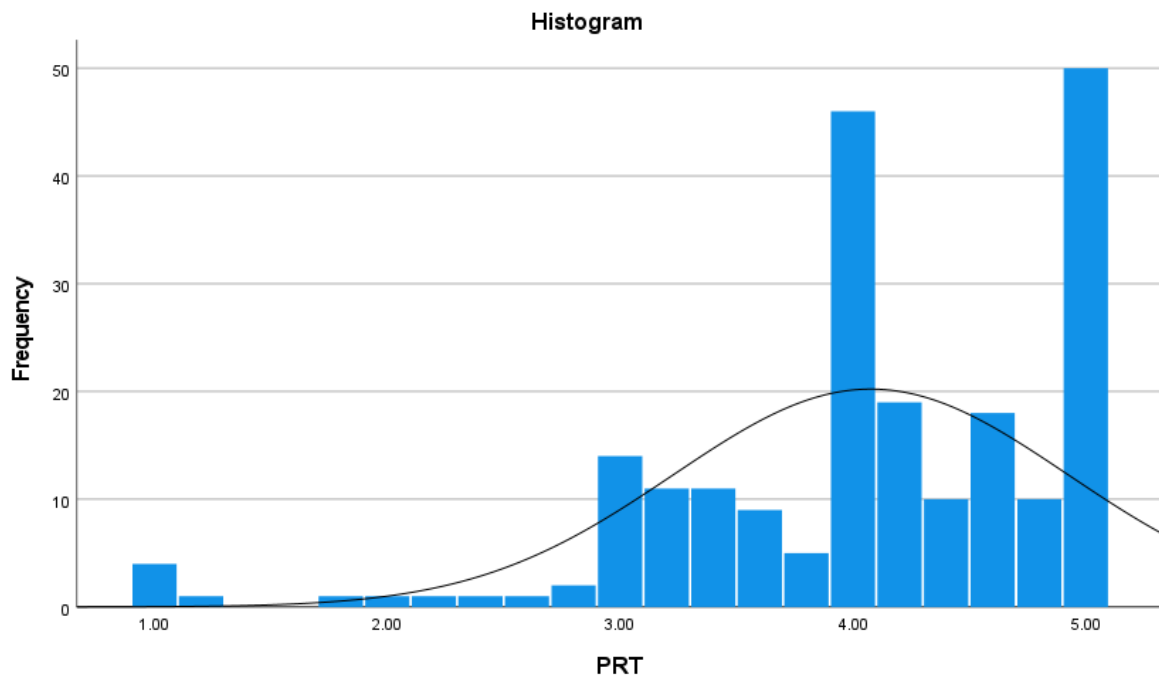




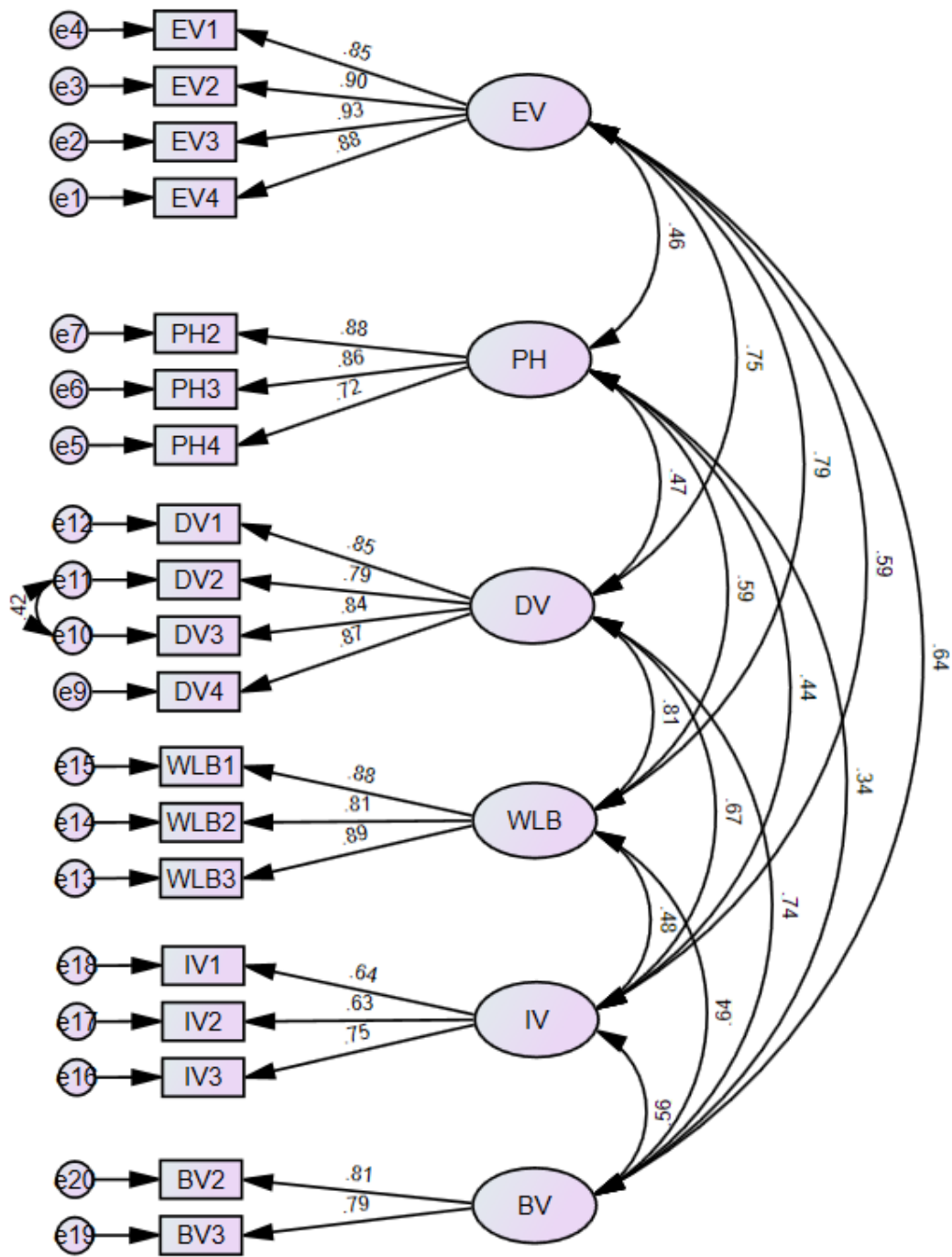




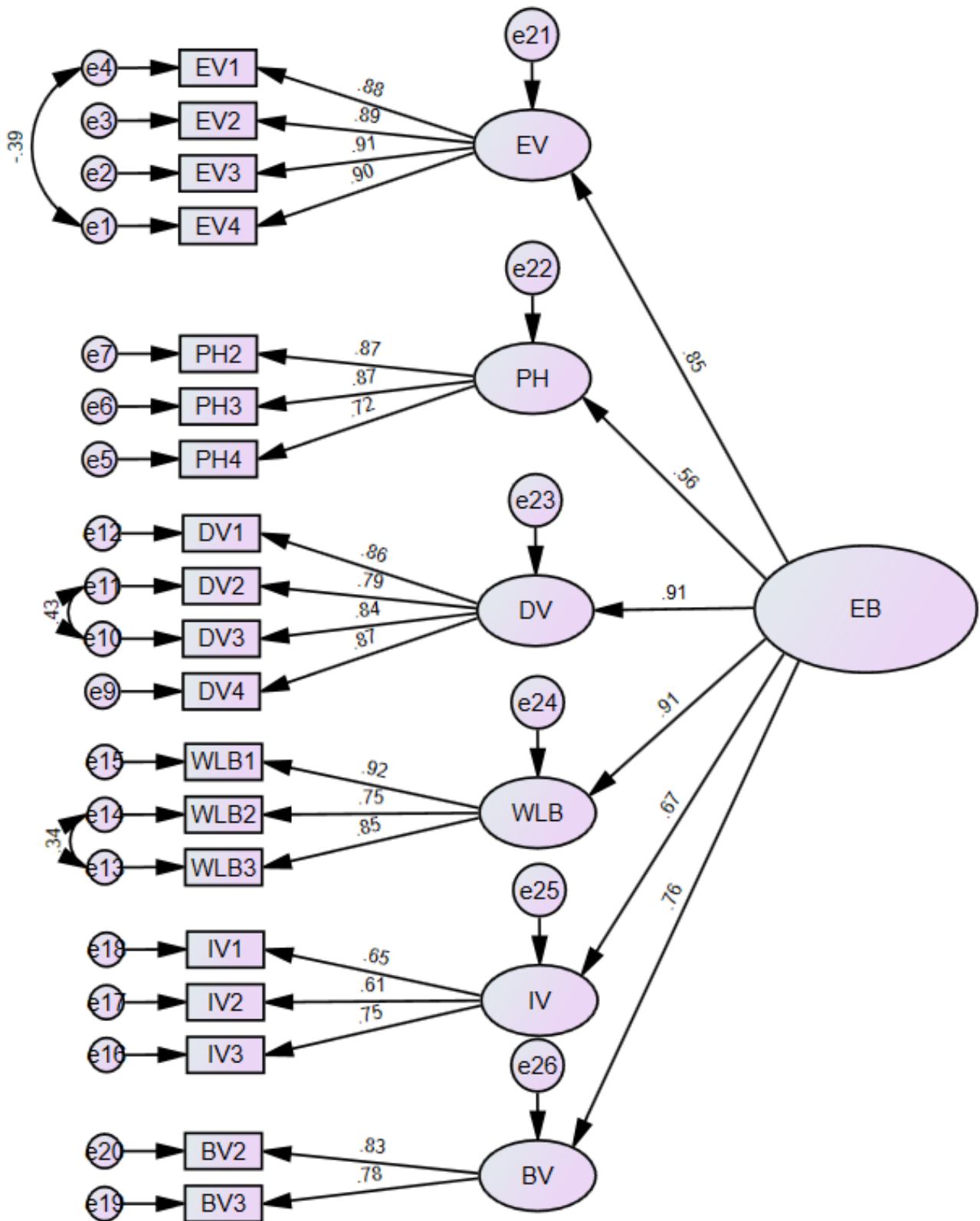




Appendix VI - Output of the first-order CFA



Appendix VII – Output of the second-order CFA



Appendix VIII – Spearman Correlation results

			BV	DV	IV	WLB	PH	EV
	INT	Correlation	.443**	.466**	.286**	.419**	.283**	.591**
		Coefficient						
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	PRT	Correlation	.430**	.485**	.283**	.423**	.297**	.494**
		Coefficient						
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	AT	Correlation	.417**	.481**	.252**	.430**	.352**	.541**
		Coefficient						
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								

Appendix IX – Results of multiple hierarchical regression

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.563 ^a	0.317	0.314	0.64475	0.317	98.999	1	213	0.000
2	.741 ^b	0.550	0.545	0.52489	0.232	109.381	1	212	0.000
3	.742 ^c	0.550	0.543	0.52602	0.000	0.090	1	211	0.764
4	.776 ^d	0.602	0.595	0.49572	0.052	27.585	1	210	0.000
5	.797 ^e	0.636	0.627	0.47541	0.034	19.323	1	209	0.000
6	.799 ^f	0.639	0.628	0.47458	0.003	1.732	1	208	0.190
a. Predictors: (Constant), BV									
b. Predictors: (Constant), BV, DV									
c. Predictors: (Constant), BV, DV, IV									
d. Predictors: (Constant), BV, DV, IV, WLB									
e. Predictors: (Constant), BV, DV, IV, WLB, EV									
f. Predictors: (Constant), BV, DV, IV, WLB, EV, PH									

Coefficients ^a						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0%	Collinearity Statistics
					Confidence Interval for B	

		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.871	0.229		8.181	0.000	1.420	2.321		
	BV	0.558	0.056	0.563	9.950	0.000	0.447	0.668	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	0.885	0.209		4.240	0.000	0.473	1.296		
	BV	0.188	0.058	0.190	3.254	0.001	0.074	0.302	0.625	1.601
	DV	0.575	0.055	0.610	10.459	0.000	0.467	0.683	0.625	1.601
3	(Constant)	0.865	0.219		3.949	0.000	0.433	1.297		
	BV	0.185	0.059	0.187	3.165	0.002	0.070	0.301	0.611	1.638
	DV	0.568	0.059	0.603	9.576	0.000	0.451	0.685	0.538	1.858
	IV	0.017	0.055	0.016	0.300	0.764	-0.092	0.125	0.707	1.413
4	(Constant)	0.483	0.219		2.205	0.029	0.051	0.914		
	BV	0.132	0.056	0.134	2.362	0.019	0.022	0.243	0.591	1.692
	DV	0.376	0.067	0.399	5.625	0.000	0.244	0.508	0.377	2.654
	IV	0.028	0.052	0.028	0.538	0.591	-0.074	0.130	0.706	1.416
	WLB	0.309	0.059	0.327	5.252	0.000	0.193	0.425	0.487	2.051
5	(Constant)	0.446	0.210		2.124	0.035	0.032	0.860		
	BV	0.096	0.054	0.097	1.767	0.079	-0.011	0.203	0.577	1.732
	DV	0.321	0.065	0.341	4.917	0.000	0.192	0.450	0.363	2.754
	IV	-0.015	0.051	-0.015	-0.296	0.768	-0.115	0.085	0.680	1.470
	WLB	0.178	0.064	0.189	2.793	0.006	0.052	0.304	0.381	2.622
	EV	0.272	0.062	0.295	4.396	0.000	0.150	0.394	0.387	2.586
6	(Constant)	0.418	0.211		1.986	0.048	0.003	0.834		
	BV	0.101	0.054	0.102	1.850	0.066	-0.007	0.208	0.575	1.739
	DV	0.317	0.065	0.336	4.852	0.000	0.188	0.445	0.362	2.761
	IV	-0.026	0.051	-0.026	-0.503	0.615	-0.127	0.075	0.663	1.509

WLB	0.154	0.066	0.163	2.313	0.022	0.023	0.285	0.351	2.848
EV	0.270	0.062	0.293	4.373	0.000	0.148	0.392	0.387	2.587
PH	0.050	0.038	0.065	1.316	0.190	-0.025	0.124	0.719	1.391
a. Dependent Variable: INTENTION									

Appendix X – Missing data test

<u>Item Scale</u>	<u>Valid</u>	<u>Missing</u>
BV1	215	0
BV2	215	0
BV3	215	0
BV4	215	0
DV1	215	0
DV2	215	0
DV3	215	0
DV4	215	0
IV1	215	0
IV2	215	0
IV3	215	0
WBL1	215	0
WBL2	215	0
WBL3	215	0
EV1	215	0
EV2	215	0
EV3	215	0
EV4	215	0
PH1	215	0
PH2	215	0
PH3	215	0
PH4	215	0

AT1	215	0
AT2	215	0
AT3	215	0
AT4	215	0
AT5	215	0
INT1	215	0
INT2	215	0
INT3	215	0
INT4	215	0
INT5	215	0
PRT1	215	0
PRT2	215	0
PRT3	215	0
PRT4	215	0
PRT5	215	0
Age	215	0
Gender	215	0
Education	215	0
Occupation	215	0