



UNIVERSIDADE
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Age Diversity and Employee Benefits:
A Study on Preferences, Age-related Needs and Work
Attitudes

Dissertation to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain
a Master's Degree in Psychology in Business and
Economics

by

Laura Oppenheim

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September 2024



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Abstract

As the global workforce ages, retaining older employees is crucial to a company's success. The current study examines how employee benefits can be used as a strategic tool to retain and satisfy employees of different ages. The current research examines the relationships between employee benefit satisfaction, job satisfaction, and affective commitment, highlighting the role of benefit satisfaction in fostering positive work-related attitudes across different age groups and fulfilling growth and security needs. The study employs a quantitative approach with a sample of N=159 participants and includes two analyses: a moderated mediation analysis and a correlational analysis. The moderated mediation analysis explores how age moderates the relationship between benefit satisfaction and work-related attitudes, with growth and security need satisfaction serving as mediators. The correlational analysis assesses age-related preferences for specific employee benefits. The results show significant direct relationships between employee benefit satisfaction and affective commitment and job satisfaction. In addition, benefit satisfaction shows a significant relation with the satisfaction of growth and security needs, which in turn mediates their effects on job satisfaction and affective commitment. However, the age variable does not moderate these relationships, which was initially expected. Correlations between age and certain preferences for employee benefits can be found, the correlation coefficient for all significant relations is negative but indicates only small to medium effects. In summary, the present study highlights the strategic importance of benefits satisfaction in influencing work-related attitudes and the fulfillment of personal needs and provides valuable insights for companies offering certain employee benefits to their employees. Given the limited research available, this study shows the potential for more detailed investigation, particularly with regard to the age factor.

Keywords:

employee benefits, affective commitment, job satisfaction, age, needs

Sumário

À medida que a força de trabalho global envelhece, a retenção de trabalhadores mais velhos é crucial para o sucesso de uma empresa. O presente estudo analisa a forma como os benefícios dos trabalhadores podem ser utilizados como uma ferramenta estratégica para reter e satisfazer os trabalhadores de diferentes idades. A presente investigação examina as relações entre a satisfação com os benefícios dos trabalhadores, a satisfação no trabalho e o empenho afetivo, salientando o papel da satisfação com os benefícios na promoção de atitudes positivas relacionadas com o trabalho em diferentes grupos etários e na satisfação das necessidades de crescimento e segurança. O estudo utiliza uma abordagem quantitativa com uma amostra de N=159 participantes e inclui duas análises: uma análise de mediação moderada e uma análise correlacional. A análise de mediação moderada explora a forma como a idade modera a relação entre a satisfação com os benefícios e as atitudes relacionadas com o trabalho, tendo como mediadores a satisfação das necessidades de crescimento e de segurança. A análise correlacional avalia as preferências relacionadas com a idade relativamente a prestações específicas dos trabalhadores. Os resultados mostram relações diretas significativas entre a satisfação com as prestações sociais e o empenho afetivo e a satisfação no trabalho. Além disso, a satisfação com as prestações apresenta uma relação significativa com a satisfação das necessidades de crescimento e de segurança, que, por sua vez, medeia os seus efeitos sobre a satisfação no trabalho e o empenho afetivo. No entanto, a variável idade não modera estas relações, o que era inicialmente esperado. Existem correlações entre a idade e certas preferências em matéria de benefícios dos trabalhadores; o coeficiente de correlação para todas as relações significativas é negativo, mas indica apenas efeitos pequenos a médios. Em resumo, o presente estudo realça a importância estratégica da satisfação com os benefícios para influenciar as atitudes relacionadas com o trabalho e a satisfação das necessidades pessoais e fornece informações valiosas para as empresas que oferecem determinados benefícios aos seus empregados. Dada a escassez de investigação disponível, este estudo mostra o potencial para uma investigação mais detalhada, particularmente no que diz respeito ao fator idade.

Palavras-chave:

benefícios dos empregados, compromisso afetivo, satisfação no trabalho, idade, necessidades

Table of Content

Abstract.....	I
Sumário.....	II
Table of Content.....	III
List of Figures.....	V
List of Tables.....	V
List of Abbreviations.....	VI
1. Introduction	1
2. Structure of the Research	3
3. Literature Review	5
3.1 Employee Benefits.....	5
3.2 Employee Benefit Satisfaction	7
3.3 Employee Job Satisfaction	8
3.4 Organizational Commitment	9
3.4.1 Affective Commitment	10
3.4.2 Affective Commitment versus Job Satisfaction	11
3.5 Employee Age	12
3.6 Motives, Values and Needs	14
3.6.1 Security Needs.....	15
3.6.2 Growth Needs	16
4. Main Theories	17
4.1 Social Exchange Theory	17
4.1 Socioemotional Selectivity Theory	18
4.3 Selection, Optimization, and Compensation Theory.....	19
4.4 Regulatory Focus Theory	20

5. Hypotheses Development	22
5.1 The Relationship between Benefits Satisfaction, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment	22
5.2 The Mediating role of Security and Growth Need Satisfaction	24
5.3 The Moderating Role of Age.....	26
6. Study	30
6.1 Method.....	30
6.2 Sample and Procedure	31
6.3 Measures	33
6.4 Data Analysis.....	35
6.4.1 Moderated Mediation with parallel Mediators – Calendar Age.....	35
6.4.2 Moderated Mediation with parallel Mediators – Perceived Age.....	43
6.4.3 Correlation between Age and Preferences for Employee Benefits	44
7. Discussion	47
7.1 Theoretical Contributions	47
7.2 Practical Contributions	50
8. Limitations	53
9. Further Research	56
10. Conclusion	58
References.....	59
Appendix A: List of Employee Benefits.....	73
Appendix B: Online Questionnaire.....	75

List of Figures

Figure 1. Outline Part 1.	3
Figure 2. Outline Part 2.	3
Figure 3. Proposed Research Model.....	29
Figure 4. Path Values Research Model.	43

List of Tables

Table 1. Descriptive Overview Age	32
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities: Moderated Mediation Analysis	36
Table 3. Correlations of Moderated Mediation Analysis Variables	37
Table 4. Regression results – Employee Benefit Satisfaction predicting Affective Commitment and Job Satisfaction.....	38
Table 5. Regression results - Moderated Mediation predicting Affective Organizational Commitment	39
Table 6. Regression results - Moderated Mediation predicting Job Satisfaction	41
Table 7. Regression results - Moderated Mediation perceived Age.....	43
Table 8. Preferences for Employee Benefits.	45
Table 9. Correlations Age and Employee Benefits.	46

List of Abbreviations

HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
Ibid	Ibidem (in the same place)
JDI	Job Descriptive Index
MSQ	Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire
PNSQ	Porter Needs Satisfaction Questionnaire
SDT	Self-determination Theory
SOC	Selection, Optimization, and Compensation Theory
SST	Socioemotional Selectivity Theory
U.S.	United States

1. Introduction

Given the world's aging workforce (OECD, 2005) and the significant value that older workers bring to their organizations (Ng & Feldman, 2008), companies should reconsider their organizational policies and practices to encourage that older employees to remain engaged, committed and actively contribute to the workplace (Barnes-Farrell & Matthews, 2007). In today's workplace, organizations face two interrelated main challenges: The war for talents and meeting the age-diverse needs of employees. Due to the ever-present labor shortage resulting from demographic change (OECD, 2023), the general population ages and there is an insufficient number of younger people compared to older people in the demographic structure of developed countries (Miles 1999). Organizations are forced to engage in intense efforts to attract, retain, and empower their employees (Armstrong & Murlis, 2007). As a result, an increasingly competitive labor market arises and requires organizations to proactively revise their established practices to compete with other companies and manage this labor transformation. Therefore, companies approach the obstacle of meeting the diverse needs of their workforce, with particular emphasis on the importance of employees of all ages (Ng & Feldman, 2008). Integrating policies and practices considering multiple demands of the entire employee population, especially older people, becomes an obligatory requirement (Barnes-Farrell & Matthews, 2007).

In this context, an established but often underrated strategy can provide companies with a tool to address these challenges: employee benefits. According to Glassdoor's 2015 Employment Confidence Survey, nearly four out of five employees prioritize employee benefits over a pay raise. In addition, about 60% of respondents said the availability of such benefits significantly influenced their decision to accept or decline a new job offer. In 2018, it was also discovered that approximately 60% of job seekers placed particular emphasis on the employee benefits provided by a company when informing about potential job opportunities (Glassdoor, 2018).

Researchers highlight the significant impact of employee benefits on work-related attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Beam & McFadden, 2001; Huber, Seybolt, & Venemon, 1992; Miceli & Lane, 1991; Williams, 1993). Therefore, Dulebohn et al., (2009) state that employee benefits are one of the most relevant factors in

staying competitive in the labor market for companies by facilitating and providing additional compensation varieties for employees.

Although human resource management (HRM) has been widely studied in the literature, limited attention has been paid to employee benefits (Dulebohn et al., 2009). Also, the influence of age on human resource practices as well as the effects on work-related attitudes offer a potential for further research, especially with regard to employee benefits (Kooij et al., 2010). There are only a few empirical studies that address the development of work motivation in the context of aging. Most notably, the work of Kooij et al. (2007); Kooij et al. (2011) and Kanfer and Ackerman (2004) address the impact of aging on labor motivation. They also show that the process of aging influences workplace variables in a dynamic way where some motivations might increase or decrease with age. Moreover, a comprehensive examination of the full spectrum of employee benefits and the impact of benefits satisfaction on other work-related attitudes and behaviors remains relatively limited in academic research (Tremblay, Sire & Balkin, 2000). According to Deadrick and Gibson (2007), research that focuses on areas such as reward management and compensation is relatively modest, although these topics have attracted considerable interest from the organizational perspective. This discrepancy may be due to differences in interest between researchers and professionals (Hulin, 1982). Furthermore, this notable gap in the literature regarding the broad spectrum of employee benefits is also a result of the rapid changes and adaptations in this field (Kaufmann, 2004).

The research is centered on two main objectives. The first objective is to examine the impact of age on the interplay between benefit satisfaction, work-related needs, and the factors of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The second objective is to examine how age influences preferences for specific employee benefits. In enhancement, this study adds to the existing literature on employee benefits by exploring their responsiveness to age-specific needs and through examining the relationship between benefit satisfaction and work-related attitudes. The study is expected to provide valuable insights to organizations on how to strategically improve benefits integration to meet the diverse needs of employees, which is a critical element in maintaining competitiveness, according to Athamneh and Jais (2023). Developing practices that suit all employees in the workforce in this regard emerges as a challenge due to the diverse characteristics and needs of the workforce (de la Torre-Ruiz, Vidal-Salazar & Cerdón-Pozo, 2017).

2. Structure of the Research

This thesis encompasses two complementary analyses, both employing a quantitative approach. The first analysis will investigate the relationship between benefit satisfaction and work-related attitudes, particularly overall job satisfaction and affective commitment. Furthermore, this analysis examines the mediating role of work-related need satisfaction on this relationship, while also considering the moderating role of the demographic variable, age.

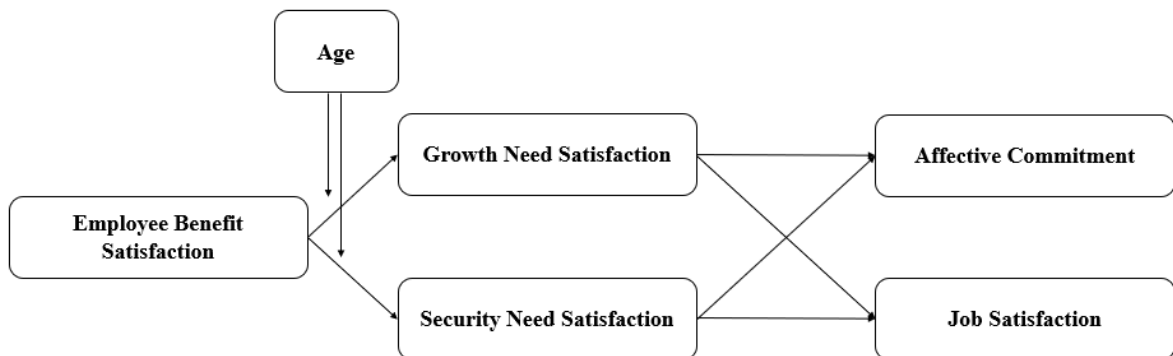


Figure 1. Outline Part 1.

The second analysis of the study serves to fill the gap in the existing literature on the scope of provided and preferred employee benefits for all age-diverse employees and individual preferences. It examines how employee benefit satisfaction can be created and how age influences the desire for specific employee benefits. Given the continuous improvement and adaptation of employee benefit programs, recent changes and additional offerings are often not documented in the literature.



Figure 2. Outline Part 2.

Both parts complement each other and contribute to the existing literature as well as to practical implications for human resource practices to proactively address employees' desires and needs (Athamneh & Jais, 2023; Harsch & Festing 2020) by designing an employee benefit approach that fits the diverse workforce and helps to attract, motivate and retain employees (Rumpel & Medcof, 2006). Through the identification and comprehension of factors influencing benefit satisfaction, employers can attain valuable insights into the

work-related attitudes of their workforce. This understanding empowers organizations to strategically shape the attitudes of employees, fostering increased commitment to the company and job satisfaction across all ages.

3. Literature Review

In this section, an extensive review of the current literature is given. This comprehensive exploration encompasses topics such as employee benefit programs, benefit satisfaction, work-related attitudes of job satisfaction and affective commitment, as well as age.

3.1 Employee Benefits

Employee benefits are an essential part of companies' compensation strategies and come at a corresponding cost to the organization (Cordón-Pozo et al., 2023). Currall et al. (2005) assume three basic components that together constitute compensation and reward management from organizations: total compensation (or total rewards), such as base pay or salary, tangible indirect rewards (benefits), and intangible rewards (work content and context). Intangible rewards and employee benefits have evolved in response to changing employee needs and expectations from companies. They are provided to employees as a form of additional payment in exchange for the time and effort they dedicate to the company to distinguish themselves in a competitive labor market and attract top talent. Companies typically focus on offering a broad range of intangible rewards and employee benefits (Schlechter, Thompson & Bussin, 2015) because employees desire more than just adequate or high compensation to find fulfillment in their work (Torrington, Hall, & Taylor, 2002). However, these rewards are more of a complement to financial compensation than a completely new approach (Lewis, 2001). A well-rounded total rewards system, encompassing various factors, proves to be effective in attracting, retaining, and motivating employees (Rumpel & Medcof, 2006), while also enhancing their knowledge and skills and fostering a positive organizational culture (Lawyer, 1995).

Employee benefits have developed to encompass a wide range of offerings that also consider cultural, social, and legal aspects (Kaufmann, 2004). Today's setup includes a multi-faceted mix of different components that meet the diverse needs of employees. This assortment includes for example educational initiatives, health and financial support, various insurance options, childcare assistance, legal support, and even profit sharing (Barber, Dunham, & Formisano, 1992). Some benefits, like pension payments, sickness days, and financial health support, must be provided by law and are determined by the employee

contract, considering the wage or family status. Other benefits are provided as an initiative from the organization itself to stand out from the competition (Beam & McFadden, 2001).

As mentioned, according to Glassdoor's 2015 Employment Confidence Survey, around 60% of respondents said that the availability of these additional benefits played an important role in their decision to take or decline a new job offer. The survey results also reveal interesting age-related trends. More than 80% of people under 44 years said they preferred employee benefits to higher pay, while that number dropped by about 10% among people of the age of 45 years and older. The most frequently requested additional benefits in this survey included health insurance, paid time off, performance bonuses, and flexible work schedules. In contrast, diversity programs, childcare assistance and commuter support were relatively less in demand among employees. Nevertheless, research shows that various kinds of employee benefits can contribute significantly to employee satisfaction and engagement (Jones, 2017).

From an employee's perspective, nowadays benefits are perceived as mandatory and as indirect rewards provided by the company for their work. It can be described as social pressure from employees to the organizations to provide appropriate benefits and to proactively include new ones (Bergmann, Bergmann & Grahn, 1994). Organizations are aware of employees' expectations regarding the benefits, nevertheless, the significant financial burden arising from offering various financial benefits is enormous. Therefore, organizations aim to shape the benefit programs that are beneficial for both, the company's efficiency and the employees' needs (Danehower & Lust, 1992). Organizations are actively exploring innovative ideas and concepts to create positive experiences for their employees and influence their attitudes toward the company while considering the high expenses for employee benefits (Currall et al., 2005).

For this reason, it is critical for organizations to use this tool strategically to provide employees with the benefits they desire. Bergmann, Bergmann and Grahn (1994) state in their further research that there is often still a discrepancy between the benefits desired and the ones received. Therefore, organizations still face the main question: "*Which of the many available benefits should an organization include in its plan?*" (Barber, Dunham, & Formisano, 1992, p. 56).

The scope of this study encompasses employee benefits that are exclusively voluntary and individually introduced by organizations, free from legal regulations. Legal benefits are

beyond firms' control and cannot be strategically utilized by HRM, moreover, they have many variations across countries (Dulebohn et al., 2009).

3.2 Employee Benefit Satisfaction

Previous studies examining the direct effects of employee benefits on employees' attitudes often use the construct of benefit satisfaction (see Barber, Dunham, & Formisano, 1992; Dulebohn et al., 2009). According to Heneman and Schwab (1985) benefit satisfaction is a sub-category of pay satisfaction and differentiates pay satisfaction into five different categories: payment structure, pay administration, employee benefits, payment level and pay increase. This approach has been examined by many studies (see Carraher, 1991; Judge & Welbourne, 1994) with inconsistent findings. Tremblay, Sire and Balkin (2000) found out that pay satisfaction and benefit satisfaction are two distinct constructs, each with their predictors. Williams et al., (2008) support this approach and divide compensation into two different categories: monetary payment and benefits.

The sole analysis of the perceived value of various benefits within the company is insufficient to draw valid conclusions about the impact of employee benefits. Therefore, measuring employee benefit satisfaction or dissatisfaction represents the individual employees' feelings and attitudes toward the benefits and is an appropriate instrument to draw meaningful conclusions. Employee benefit satisfaction occurs when employees perceive the benefits provided by the organization as aligning accurately with what can be expected for their work and commitment to the company (Williams, 1993).

Benefit satisfaction may be influenced by factors other than the benefits themselves. Ward and Davis (1995) point out that employees also consider the financial capabilities of the organization to provide the desired benefits. In addition, age, gender, marital status, and numerous other variables may influence the need for particular benefits (Danhover and Lust, 1992). For example, younger workers may not value future retirement plans to the same extent as older workers. Additionally, other job-related factors can also influence the perception. If an employee is generally happy within the company, the person might perceive the benefits more positively, compared to a person who is unhappy with the job and the organization (Danehower & Lust, 1992).

Employees who have directly profited from available benefits and are aware of what is offered may exhibit higher levels of satisfaction than those who have not consciously

experienced these benefits (Danehower & Lust, 1992; Ward & Davis, 1995). Also, the comparison with others can influence the perception of own benefits, if other organizations in the same market, provide more, employees might feel disadvantaged and treated unfairly (Ward & Davis, 1995).

3.3 Employee Job Satisfaction

Employee job satisfaction refers to a comprehensive measure of employees' overall satisfaction with their jobs and the company, considering several independent elements (Locke, 1976). Therefore, it is one of the most intensively researched psychological constructs in both theory and practice, providing a wealth of information and insight into various organizational contexts (Judge et al., 2001; Spector, 1997). Hoppock (1935) gave one of the earliest definitions of employee satisfaction and states it is a combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental elements that cause a person to completely affirm, "I am satisfied with my work" (p. 47). According to Locke (1969, p. 316), job satisfaction can be defined as "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values". This emotional state is based on a cognitive evaluation of the relationship between an individual's job expectations and their perception of what the job provides (Judge et al., 2001). Smith (1969) divided job satisfaction into five categories: compensation, opportunities for promotion, relationships with coworkers and subordinates, and the work itself. These main drivers are also extended by factors like working conditions, appreciation and recognition and the organization (Locke, 1976).

Its significance resides in its ability to be influenced by various factors and the effects on organizational behavior. Assessing job satisfaction provides important insights into how employees perceive their treatment in the organization, as well as their psychological state and general well-being. As a result, employees' attitudes toward their jobs can lead to either positive or negative organizational behavior. Particularly, the degree of "job satisfaction" or "job dissatisfaction" (Spector, 1997) of employees plays a key role in influencing organizational performance.

In consideration of this, Herzberg (1967) developed the "Two-Factor Theory," in which he argues that there are two distinct types of factors that can either lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The distinction is between hygiene factors (extrinsic factors) and

motivators (intrinsic factors). While hygiene factors have the task of preventing employees from being dissatisfied, motivators create satisfaction. To foster job satisfaction, organizations are advised to establish a foundation of hygiene factors and subsequently concentrate on motivator factors. However, this theory has faced criticism in the literature for its lack of robust methodology and diverse samples. Some studies have been unable to replicate the original findings (Hulin & Smith, 1967; Judge et al., 2001; Locke, 1969). The literature shows that job satisfaction can arise from both intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Carroll, 1973; Wernimont, 1966). In conclusion, extrinsic and intrinsic factors can both contribute to job satisfaction. Intrinsic factors include aspects such as work climate, and relationships with supervisors and colleagues, while extrinsic factors refer to compensation, promotions, and other benefits (Judge et al., 2001).

Although there is no universally established definition of "employee job satisfaction" authors generally concur that to improve job satisfaction, employees desired needs must be met by the person's assessment of the job and other relevant intrinsic or extrinsic factors that are related to the job or role (Heimerl et al., 2020; Hohberg, 2015; Hulin, 1991; Locke, 1976).

From the organization's perspective, job satisfaction serves as a valuable tool to achieve organizational objectives (Hohberg, 2015). Especially in human resource management, job satisfaction is of immense importance, as it is next to affective commitment a key factor in employee performance and motivation (Ali, Narine, Hill, & Bria, 2023; Athamneh & Jais, 2023; Ćulibrk, Delić, Mitrović & Ćulibrk, 2018; George & Zakkariya, 2015). Studies have shown that a higher level of job satisfaction is associated with lower absenteeism as well as greater employee engagement and adaptability (ibid). Moreover, performance and overall organizational productivity are impacted by employee job satisfaction (ibid).

3.4 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is a psychological state that can be categorized according to Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) into three main types: affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment. This multidimensional construct captures the connection between the employee and the company as well as the intention to stay or leave.

Affective commitment indicates an employee's strong desire to stay with the organization, driven by their deep emotional devotion and personal attachment to the company. This form of commitment is of great value to organizations because it fosters a strong bond between employees and the organization. Normative commitment, on the other hand, is characterized by a sense of responsibility and loyalty to the company. Employees with normative commitment feel a moral obligation to remain loyal to the company, as they believe in the importance of loyalty and dedication to their employer. Finally, continuous commitment is based on a more pragmatic perspective, where employees choose to stay with the company because they recognize that the current benefits and rewards outweigh the potential risks or costs of leaving. This reflects the perception that meeting their needs and retaining their current position is more beneficial than seeking other opportunities. These three types of commitment represent different motivations for employees to stay with the company, each contributing in its own way to the stability and success of the company (Brimhall, 2021; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Park & Rainey, 2007). Additionally, Meyer and Allen (1991) confirm the empirical and conceptual distinction of all three forms of commitment.

According to Ward and Davis (1995), employees who are committed to an organization are more likely to invest effort in the organization, align with its values, and maintain a strong sense of belonging to the organization. Nevertheless, each of the three forms of commitment has a distinct impact on organizational behavior, and employees may experience varying levels of intensity with each form. All play a critical role in reducing employee turnover intentions (Ward & Davis, 1995). However, it is important to highlight that affective commitment has a strong positive correlation with job performance and demonstrates intense intrinsic motivation for employees to engage and stay with the organization, while the two other types of commitment contribute weakly (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). Because of this, organizations find developing affective commitment to be especially interesting (Mansour et al., 2022; Vance, 2006).

3.4.1 Affective Commitment

In detail, affective commitment is a work-related attitude that, according to several studies, can predict work engagement and related outcomes like turnover intentions, motivation, performance, and quality of work (Brimhall, 2022; Mansour et al., 2022;

Nguyen, 2023; Park & Rainey, 2007). Affective commitment refers to the depth of emotional attachment a person feels toward an organization, expressed through feelings of trust, affection, and involvement (Jaros, et al., 1993). This emotional attachment develops through a cognitive process when employees' experiences and circumstances within the organization are evaluated (Mamman, Kamoche & Bakuwa, 2012). When employers make an effort to recognize, appreciate and support their employees, it can significantly increase their emotional motivation (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008). In conclusion, affective commitment arises when individuals perceive and value factors such as integration, appreciation, reward, support, and attentiveness within the organization. When an organization's efforts are perceived positively, this influences the individual's attitude toward the organization as a whole and determines the degree of affective commitment to the organization (Eisenberger, Fasolo & Davis-LaMastro, 1990).

By fostering appreciation, an appropriate reward system and support, and creating a personal connection, HR practices can actively influence and create affective commitment (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003; Eisenberger et al., 1986). Mansour et al. (2022) state that HR policies and practices represent how people are treated within an organization and are a long-term instrument to increase an employee's affective commitment as a strategic tool to remain competitive, retain employees, and promote employee well-being and performance.

3.4.2 Affective Commitment versus Job Satisfaction

Both affective commitment and job satisfaction are work-related attitudes (Kooij et al., 2010), and share some parallels between them. Both reflect an emotional connection to the company and an affective state that influences corresponding behaviors in the workplace. However, it is essential to recognize that despite their similarities, the two concepts remain distinct from one another and exist as separate analytical constructs (Porter et al., 1974).

Job satisfaction can be explained by the emotional involvement tied to the work or the role within the company, whereas affective commitment is related to the individual's emotional attachment to the whole organization (Allen & Meyer, 1991; Hulin, 1991; Locke, 1976).

Affective commitment is more stable than job satisfaction because it is a long-term process to be created. Therefore, it results in resilient and sustainable relationships between the employee and the organization (Porter et al., 1974; Tett & Meyer, 1993). While affective

commitment is a rather "intangible and abstract phenomenon" that encompasses numerous dimensions of the organization, such as general goals, values, and personal identification (Porter et al., 1974, p. 13), job satisfaction, is more "specific and tangible" and relates to certain aspects of the work environment (Porter et al., 1974, p. 14). Consequently, assessing affective commitment can be more challenging and under the influence of a variety of factors. As studies already showed that perceived organizational support has a positive impact on the work-related attitudes job satisfaction and affective commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1997; Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Shore & Wayne, 1993) it is an extension and enhancement for the literature to examine these constructs in relation to employee benefit satisfaction.

3.5 Employee Age

Given the complexity of age and the challenge of categorizing different age groups in the literature, various approaches have been discussed extensively (Spurk et al., 2019). This analysis addresses the multidimensional process of aging, examines age-related methods used in research to approach this phenomenon, and explores differences in the age diversity of workers in the workplace and their corresponding needs and values.

The process of aging includes personal progress, such as an increase in general knowledge, and setbacks, such as a decline in physical abilities (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004). In general, aging is a multidimensional development that cannot be represented by only looking at the calendar age (Arking, 1998). It refers to a variety of transformations in biological, psychological, interpersonal, and even cultural processes through time (Birren & Birren, 1990; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004). Numerous studies employ that the variable age as an indicator for identifying age-related processes may have an impact on work outcomes either directly or indirectly (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004). In total, there are five approaches to measuring age: calendar age, functional or performance-related age, organizational age, psychological age, or the life span approach (Sterns & Doverspike, 1989).

Calendar age refers to a person's chronological age, measured by the amount of time that has passed since birth (Spurk et al., 2019). Functional or performance-based age goes beyond chronological age and accounts for individual differences in functionality. Organizational age refers to the length of service of employees within an organization (Spurk et al., 2019). Psychological age is a person's perceived age, either self-perceived or socially

perceived, as opposed to calendar age, which is the person's actual age (Sterns & Doverspike, 1989). The life span approach focuses on different roles in personal and professional life at specific ages (Spurk et al., 2019).

Spurk et al. (2019) critique in their literature review “Occupational commitment from a life span perspective” that many studies consider age from a life span or career stage perspective using a categorical variable instead of using age as a continuous variable. By using the life span or career stage approach, researchers create “artificially defined age groups” (p. 196), which decreases the variance of the variable and the chance of finding significant effects. They suggest using age as a continuous variable in the analysis to gain deeper insights, increase statistical power, and complement the previous studies. Also, Bohlmann, Rudolph and Zacher (2018) and Kooij et al. (2010) support the approach to operationalization of age as a continuous variable, since age-related changes refer to biological, psychological, and social functioning over time (De Lange et al., 2006; Sterns & Miklos, 1995).

Therefore, the current thesis focuses on calendar age and psychological age because they are the most appropriate measures for answering the research questions, considering the critique from Spurk et al. (2019) and because chronological age remains the most important measure of aging in the workplace for organizations (Bohlmann, Rudolph & Zacher, 2018; Kooij et al. 2011). Also, Rudolph, Baltes and Zabel (2013) state that further research should integrate the assessment of age using a variety of conceptual frameworks. Therefore, the psychological age is analyzed to determine possible differences from chronological age.

Since age changes the needs of employees which determines the affective commitment and job satisfaction, it plays a significant role in analyzing these constructs because changing personal needs affect the effectiveness or suitability of HR approaches and perceived benefits from the employees (Kooij et al., 2010; Kinnie et al., 2005; Piasentin & Chapman, 2006). Also, Lefkowitz and Katz (1969) showed that attitudes do not stay stable over time and can change according to age. At the current state, studies examining the relationship between human resource practices and work-related outcomes at the individual level rarely consider age differences and are sometimes still contradictory (Kooij et al., 2010).

Therefore, the current thesis is highly relevant and can bring valuable insights into the procedures or underlying causes that lead to improved employee-related attitudes towards the company.

3.6 Motives, Values and Needs

Adult development and work experiences throughout life significantly influence motives, values, and needs. Motives are understood in organizational psychology as the desire of people to achieve a specific outcome (Kooij et al. 2011). Values serve as secondary motivators of behavior influenced by needs, experiences, cognition, and socialization (Kalleberg, 1977; Latham & Pinder, 2005), and needs can be defined as unconscious influences, to promote the preference for achieving particular working conditions and outcomes (Mesner Andolsek & Stebe, 2004; Phillips & Bedeian, 1994). Nevertheless, the distinction is often imprecise using measures since the constructs often include similar items (Mesner Andolsek & Stebe, 2004; Phillips & Bedeian, 1994). Therefore, the study focuses on the term “needs” by considering that they are interrelated with the constructs of motives and values.

Maslow (1958) proposed five distinct categories of basic needs: physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization, arranged in a hierarchical order. The first two, physiological and safety needs, belong to basic needs, while the second two, belongingness and esteem, are classified as psychological needs, and self-actualization represents self-actualizing needs. According to Maslow, the lower needs have greater effectiveness than the higher needs. That means, the more these basic needs are satisfied, the greater the individual's psychological well-being.

Following Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory (SDT), the realization of an individual's maximum potential and optimal functioning depends on the effective fulfillment of three inherent psychological needs: "relatedness, competence, and autonomy" (p. 68). However, it is imperative not to overlook other needs as they significantly contribute to human development. Researchers have indicated that needs such as the need for self-confidence (Pyszczynski et al., 2004) and the need for growth (Kooij et al., 2011) play a crucial role in human well-being and impact various outcomes and attitudes.

Kooij et al. (2011) defined three overarching categories for work-related motives that can be similarly applied to work-related needs. They distinguished between “growth-related

motives, social/affiliative motives, and security/maintenance motives“ (p.3). Growth-related needs refer to an individual's perceived importance of work characteristics that promote performance and empowerment, as Dweck (2013) outlines. Social needs are about feeling a sense of belonging, interpersonal interaction, and collaboration with colleagues, supervisors, and customers. In contrast, safety needs emphasize preferences for work characteristics that ensure psychological and physical well-being and safety (Kooij et al., 2011). For this analysis, the focus is particularly on the need for growth and security, without following Maslow's (1958) hierarchical order of needs. Rudolph, Baltes and Zabel (2013) created a conceptual framework of work motivation and assigned to the category of growth the following intrinsic and extrinsic needs: achievement, autonomy, feedback, career motivation, self-esteem, and promotion while they assigned the needs for existence, job security, control, loss prevention and economically related to the category of security.

When the individual needs are met, need satisfaction arises, which is shaped by workplace experiences (Sirgy et al. 2001). In line with job satisfaction and employee benefit satisfaction, need satisfaction occurs when employees evaluate their treatment within the organization and the benefits offered, by rating them as either positive or negative depending on how well these circumstances meet their individual needs.

3.6.1 Security Needs

Security need satisfaction is defined as the individual satisfaction of the desire for psychological and physical well-being and safety in the workplace and as protection for private life (Kooij et al., 2011). Especially the need for security becomes more apparent for older employees which mainly includes three factors. First, the transition from work and retirement and how to ensure a good living standard during and after the working phase whereby the retirement age changes regularly and is raised. Second, changes in health in later life because older people are more prone to injuries and diseases (Phillipson et al., 2013). Around 49% of early retirement reasons are due to health-related issues (Humphrey et al., 2003). And last, the constantly changing working environment (Phillipson et al., 2013), where work can demand too many physical resources or is excessively stressful (Sennett, 2006). To positively influence security need satisfaction, employees have different options, to accommodate the needs of older workers, which include offering flexible employment options, supporting extra training for them to be able to meet the new

requirements, and promoting the employees' health and well-being (Phillipson et al., 2013). Also, contributions for a safe and financially stable life during retirement, are essential for older employees (Dulebohn et al., 2009).

3.6.2 Growth Needs

Growth need satisfaction is defined as the individual satisfaction of the desire for personal growth, performance, learning, and development provided by the company (Dweck, 2013). Kanfer and Ackerman (2000) show that younger employees are more eager to learn compared to older ones. Their focus is more on growth-relevant work factors (Freund, 2006). Creating growth need satisfaction can be achieved by providing employees the opportunity for individual growth and achievement, for acquiring knowledge, and for advancing in their professional journey (Rudolph, Baltes & Zabel, 2013).

4. Main Theories

In this section, the main theoretical frameworks used in this research will be described. Firstly, Social Exchange Theory will be presented as the main theory used to explain why organizations exchange benefits for the work and dedication of employees. Secondly, the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory; Selection, Optimization, and, Compensation Theory and, Regulatory Focus Theory will be described as the age-related theories that justify age differences in security and growth needs.

4.1 Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory represents one of the main theories to describe the social phenomenon where organizations exchange employee benefits for the work and dedication of the employees in addition to the general monetary payment (Ward & Davis, 1995).

According to Emerson (1976), the social exchange theory refers to a social phenomenon in which individuals engage in exchanges of tangible and intangible resources, thereby creating a basis of trust to meet their basic human needs. However, it is relevant to note that social exchange theory is not a single, well-defined theory. In practice, it represents a collection of different conceptual models (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) that aim to explain the transaction of resources between at least two different parties (Gergen, 1969).

Fundamentally, the objective is to explain how social exchanges and interactions occur, with an emphasis on evaluating the underlying principles of balancing the costs and benefits of such interactions. Costs can be defined in terms of what one gives to the other party, while benefits are in terms of what one receives in return (Homans, 1985). However, it is critical to emphasize that these costs and benefits are not solely of an economic nature, they also encompass the values and desires of the individual (Blau, 1968). Thus, the determinants of this exchange include both resources and social norms (Emerson, 1976). According to this theory, an initial action by one party, whether positive or negative, initiates a corresponding response from the other party, resulting in positive or negative behavior. Where the parties expect a return or benefit that is approximately equitable to what they give (Eisenberger et al., 2004; Eisenberger, Cotterell, & Marvel, 1987; Gergen, 1969).

In the context of organizations and in terms of organizational benefits, employees assess whether the forms of rewards for their organizational performance in terms of time, effort, and expertise match what they expect to get from the organization. When employees

perceive a satisfactory balance, they tend to become more engaged (Blau, 1968). The assumption that employee benefits can influence work-related attitudes can be based on the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986), since employee benefits give the employees the feeling of being supported and sends them a positive signal, which can motivate them to give something positive back (Kooij et al., 2010). Employees might increase their commitment since they perceive organizational benefits as an investment in their work and dedication. Subsequently, they reciprocate these positive attitudes and behaviors in response to the organization (Hannah & Iverson, 2004).

4.1 Socioemotional Selectivity Theory

In their Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST), Carstensen, Fung, and Charles (2003) argue that the perception of time is inherently connected to the selection and pursuit of social objectives. According to this theory, chronological age is inherently negatively associated with the remaining life span, which leads to age-related behavioral patterns in motivation for life-related outcomes (Carstensen, 1992). The theory focuses on how own goals lead to a certain behavior rather than analyzing which goals are pursued in which state of age. Two main domains related to the motivation of social behavior are formulated according to the theory: acquiring knowledge and emotional regulation.

Acquiring knowledge refers to general contact with others and observing them as a main source of gaining insights to understand social behavior, values, and norms. Emotional regulation refers to the regulation of emotions that are developed in contact with others. It represents the desire to find purpose in life, emotional closeness, and a feeling of social inclusion. When knowledge-related aims compete with the regulation of emotions, the relative weight of the two objectives is considered, and action or no action is taken correspondingly. Especially the perception of time is a decisive factor during this internal analysis (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999).

According to the theory, older people often perceive their future as more limited than younger people and acknowledge that they do not have an infinite amount of time to pursue their goals. Tracking of time occurs unconsciously, with certain regularity, and with intermittent triggers by occurring events. Younger people perceive time as an abundant resource, which influences their long-term thinking and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, while older people interpret their time as bounded and take a rather short-term

approach to their decisions. As a result, older people often look back in time or are present-oriented, while younger people look forward to their future (Shmotkin, 1991; Heckhausen, Dixon, & Baltes, 1989). Furthermore, older people prioritize goals that are meaningful in life and experience great social interactions over goals to extend their horizons and gain further knowledge or skills, compared to younger people (Carstensen, Fung & Charles, 2003).

4.3 Selection, Optimization, and Compensation Theory

Paul Baltes and Margret Baltes (1990) introduced the Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC) theory to examine how people shape their lives to promote their well-being and personal growth across the lifespan. This framework directly relates to and examines the underlying processes of aging (Freund, Li & Baltes, 1999). It provides a theoretical structure that addresses the entire lifespan and incorporates the progression of development over time. In general, three processes of developmental regulation are included in the model, which are: selection, optimization, and compensation (Freund & Baltes, 2002). Essentially, SOC assumes that individuals constantly strive to maximize gains and minimize losses by strategically selecting desired outcomes and optimizing resources (Baltes, 1997).

Selection is a fundamental step in personal development that involves formulating, evaluating, and committing to specific goals over time, with elective selection targeting desired achievements and loss-based selection addressing goal regulation, particularly in the context of aging (Emmons, 1996; Freund & Baltes, 2002).

Optimization comes after the selection phase and involves generating and allocating resources to achieve predefined goals. Success is influenced by factors like individual traits, socioeconomic circumstances, and the nature of the goal. In this pursuit, individuals emphasize traits like determination, skill acquisition, knowledge enhancement, and strategic resource allocation (Freund and Baltes, 2002).

Compensation is the proactive search for alternative methods to achieve goals in the face of resource limitations or change due to permanent changes and various losses and gains across a lifetime. Individuals manage by applying strategies such as seeking external help, redirecting resources, exploring alternative pathways, or seeking therapeutic support, as described by Freund and Baltes (2002).

SOC represents an enduring life management strategy that is influenced by age-related changes in behaviors and circumstances (Wapner & Demick, 1998). Ongoing research on this theory has found that as people age, they gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of their SOC strategies and become more adept at using them effectively (Freund and Baltes, 2002).

Whereas younger people tend to experiment and explore alternative options in their private and working environments in their current stage of life, older people have gained experience and knowledge from previous life stages. Consequently, they select goals that have been shown to lead to desired outcomes (Erikson, 1968). The pursuit of optimization and growth also tends to decline with age. Instead, older people value maintaining the status quo and mitigating losses through compensatory strategies. They seek cultural fulfillment and a supportive environment to promote their well-being and adhere to a mindset that prioritizes prevention, security, and fulfilling commitments in response to perceptions of limited time. Conversely, those who perceive time as sufficiently available focus on promotion, prioritizing accomplishments, and pursuing gains (Lang, & Carstensen, 2002; Veth et al., 2018). Freund (2006) supports these findings by showing that the focus of regulatory efforts is shifting from promotion in young adulthood to preservation and prevention in old age.

4.4 Regulatory Focus Theory

The Regulatory Focus Theory emerged as part of the psychological study of emotions in the organizational environment (Brockner & Higgins, 2001). The theory assumes that emotions have a great influence on work-related attitudes and behaviors and are individually distinctive among persons in their naturalness and extent (George & Brief, 1996). The theory is based on the assumption of self-regulation, where people align their goals, behaviors and self-understanding with one another (Brockner & Higgins, 2001). In general, same refers to the basic ambition of people to promote pleasure and avoid harm (Higgins, 1997).

Based on these premises, Higgins (1997, 1998) proposes two self-regulation systems in which people have either a promotion focus or a prevention focus. Both are influenced by the people's needs, their type of goal, and their psychological situation. When people are incorporated into a self-regulatory process aimed toward promotion, they seek growth and development and strive for positive outcomes. When people are engaged with the prevention

focus, they seek security and try to avoid negative outcomes or mismatching the goals (Brockner & Higgins, 2001).

Lockwood, Jordan and Kunda (2002) found in their studies that people with a promotion focus were inspired by successful others while people with a prevention focus were more motivated by unsuccessful people. For example, they state that younger people orientate themselves on successful role models, who positively present themselves, while older people see negative role models and want to prevent becoming like them.

Also, younger people can be often identified as having a strong promotion focus (Lockwood, Chasteen & Wong, 2005) and striving to achieve more gains and have fewer goals that avoid losses compared to older people (Heckhausen, 1997). Older people often strive to reduce and prevent losses due to their expectations of having problems and losses that come with age (Heckhausen, Dixon & Baltes, 1989).

5. Hypotheses Development

In this section, a derivation of the research hypotheses is presented based on the literature review, the relevant theories, and the current literature state.

5.1 The Relationship between Benefits Satisfaction, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Commitment

Kooij et al. (2010) identified in their study that HR practices can foster positive work-related attitudes. Their findings highlighted a positive correlation, particularly in the domains of promotion, job enrichment, and participation, with affective commitment and job satisfaction. Therefore, it should be essential in the workplace, that managers ensure that employees are satisfied with the rewards they receive, as employee benefits are part of HR practices. Based on the theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986), it also becomes evident that the influence of rewards on work-related attitudes depends on how these rewards are perceived. If employees evaluate their rewards positively and interpret them as a form of support and a positive signal, this perception can motivate employees to reciprocate with positive contributions. Such reciprocal actions can contribute to higher job satisfaction and greater affective commitment (Kooij et al., 2010).

Numerous studies have examined the effects of pay satisfaction on work-related attitudes and behaviors (e.g. de la Torre-Ruiz, Vidal-Salazar, & Cerdón-Pozo, 2017; Dreher, Ash, & Bretz, 1988; Motowidlo, 1983; Wilson, Northcraft, & Neale, 1985). Their findings indicate that higher levels of overall pay satisfaction are positively correlated with greater job and employee satisfaction (Covin et al., 1996; Summers & Hendrix, 1991; Tremblay & Roussel, 1998) and stronger organizational satisfaction (Covin et al., 1996; Tremblay & Roussel, 1998).

In contrast, employee benefit satisfaction has not been widely studied in research (Tremblay, Sire & Balkin, 2000). Nevertheless, some researchers confirm the same patterns in terms of employee benefit satisfaction and its influence on organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Huber, Seybolt, & Venemon, 1992; Williams, 1993). Related to this research, Covin et al. (1996) note that a variety of workplace attitudes and behaviors can be positively impacted by benefit satisfaction. Also, Barber, Dunham and Formisano (1992) state that “*Benefit innovations can influence employee reactions*” (p. 73).

Ward and Davis (1995) identified employee benefit programs as a potential predictor of organizational commitment. Employees perceive and assess whether the advantages and disadvantages of organizational benefits are proportionate or disproportionate. Workers are more dedicated if they believe there is a satisfactory equilibrium between the time, effort, and expertise they contribute to the company and the rewards they receive (Blau, 1968). Also, Caillier (2013) discovered a positive relation between employee benefit satisfaction and organizational commitment regarding employee benefits that focus on work-life balance, such as health and wellness programs or telework. Furthermore, de la Torre-Ruiz, Vidal-Salazar, and Córdón-Pozo (2019) replicated these results in their research, demonstrating a significant and positive connection between benefit satisfaction and organizational commitment. Another analysis from Williams et al. (2008) indicated that benefit determination satisfaction (satisfaction of individuals with the processes for assessing employee benefits) was positively and significantly linked to perceived organizational support, thereby fostering affective commitment.

In regard of job satisfaction, it has been shown that employee benefits play a decisive and positive role in job satisfaction according to the analysis of Artz (2010). Also, Iqbal, Guohao, and Akhtar (2017) conducted an analysis examining the connection between benefits and employee retention, utilizing job satisfaction as a mediator. Their findings revealed a notable and robust direct influence on job satisfaction. Tessema, Ready and Embaye (2013) analyzed the relationship between benefits and job satisfaction in three distinctive counties (U.S., Malaysia and Vietnam) asking students to indicate their students' job satisfaction. They found that benefits show a statistically remarkable positive influence in explaining the differences in job satisfaction among students.

Also, Igalens and Roussel (1999) argue that the quality of benefits can increase satisfaction. As mentioned above, there is still limited research on the interplay between benefit satisfaction and its effects on work-related attitudes as well as on the following behaviors, which should be further examined. Nevertheless, according to the literature, the following hypotheses are formulated.

H1a: There is a positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and affective commitment, where higher benefit satisfaction is associated with higher affective commitment.

H1b: There is a positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and job satisfaction, where higher benefit satisfaction is associated with higher job satisfaction.

5.2 The Mediating Role of Security and Growth Need Satisfaction

Rybnicek, Bergner, and Gutschelhofer (2019) promote a broader perspective on organizational rewards beyond traditional monetary compensation. In particular, they suggest aligning these rewards with employees' individual needs is necessary to influence their work motivation and attitudes. This approach involves matching rewards to specific needs, ultimately leading to need satisfaction.

However, existing knowledge on need satisfaction in the area of total rewards is currently limited (Thibault Laundry & Whillans, 2018). Ryan and Deci (2017) point out that while there are numerous studies on rewards and compensation, few have focused on the role of need satisfaction and its mediation between compensation and work-related attitudes. These limited studies often focus on needs derived from self-determination theory (SDT) and do not consider needs for growth and security. Consequently, the relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and the satisfaction of growth and security needs remains largely unexplored.

Employee benefit satisfaction should aim to encompass the individual needs and preferences of employees regarding the benefits provided by the organization. Notably, Igalens and Roussel (1999) state that people who feel motivated by employee benefits often have a strong need for the satisfaction of growth and security.

Growth needs refer to the importance of job features that improve performance and empowerment (Dweck, 2013). Employee benefits that promote knowledge acquisition, provide training, and support the cultivation of personal development can effectively fulfill growth needs. These may include employee benefits such as employee development programs (Glassdoor, 2012), training opportunities with official certifications and access to digital e-learning tools, both for business and non-business purposes (LinkedIn 2023).

On the other hand, the need for security can be satisfied by benefits that emphasize work characteristics that ensure psychological and physical well-being and security (Kooij et al., 2011). This includes benefits such as additional healthcare (Jones, 2017), financial support for pension and retirement plans (Dulebohn et al., 2009), access to legal assistance

(Beam & McFadden, 2001), and financial support for life insurance (Rudder & Bortorff, 2023).

This suggests that employee benefit satisfaction is related to the satisfaction of individual work-related needs and especially includes the satisfaction of security and growth needs. In the absence of empirical evidence, but given the literature supporting these conclusions, the following hypotheses are formulated.

H2a: There is a positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and growth need satisfaction, where higher benefit satisfaction is associated with higher growth need satisfaction.

H2b: There is a positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and security need satisfaction, where higher benefit satisfaction is associated higher security need satisfaction.

Examining the complex relationship between employees' needs, human resource practices and work outcomes, Kinnie et al., (2005) found that employees with different needs respond differently to the human resource practices they experience, which affects their emotional engagement. This emotional engagement can be explained by Arthur et al. (2006) who state that "need fulfillment results in favorable attitudes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment" (p. 787). Employees whose needs are met by the company within the organizational context show a stronger commitment to the company because they feel a vigor relation to the organization and desire to stay within the company (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). Regarding job satisfaction, Hofer and Bush (2011) show that need satisfaction leads to positive attitudes toward work, which can result in higher job satisfaction (Richer, Blanchard & Vallerand, 2002).

Other studies examined explicitly the relationship between growth and security needs in the workplace and work-related attitudes. Sverke, Hellgren, and Naswall (2002) showed in their study that job insecurity leads to negative organizational and job-related outcomes and attitudes which include job satisfaction and affective commitment as well as the individual employee's health.

Steindorsdottir, Nerstad and Magnúsdottir (2020) investigated need satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between the work environment and employee retention. Similarly, other studies have examined the role of need satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between compensation and retention, as seen in the work of Olafsen et al. (2015). Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H3a: Growth need satisfaction mediates the positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and affective commitment, so that the higher the level of benefit satisfaction, the higher the growth need satisfaction, and the higher the affective commitment.

H3b: Security need satisfaction mediates the positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and affective commitment, so that the higher the level of benefit satisfaction, the higher the security need satisfaction, and the higher the affective commitment.

H3c: Growth need satisfaction mediates the positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and job satisfaction, so that the higher the level of benefit satisfaction, the higher the growth need satisfaction, and the higher the job satisfaction.

H3d: Security need satisfaction mediates the positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and job satisfaction, so that the higher the level of benefit satisfaction, the higher the security need satisfaction, and the higher the job satisfaction.

5.3 The Moderating Role of Age

In general, research has shown that age can significantly affect individual's needs, as the meaning of life goals and desired outcomes change over time (Fleeson & Heckhausen, 1997; Inceoglu, Segers, & Bartram, 2012; Kanfer, R., & Ackerman, 2004). Therefore, the existent body of theories and empirical findings seem to suggest that security needs are more important to older people and growth needs are more important to younger people.

Younger employees seek to get a high salary, good promotion opportunities, and access to skill development (Finegold, Mohrman, & Spreitzer, 2002). They also show greater motivation for self-development and career planning according to Birdi, Allan and Warr

(1997). Additionally, they strive for growth and new opportunities (Ebner, Freund & Baltes, 2006) and primarily focus on promotion and strengthening their career (Kooij et al., 2010).

Regarding the relationship between age and growth needs, some researchers found a weak negative relationship (e.g. Inceoglu et al., 2009; Markham et al., 1985) while Kooij et al. (2011) and Rudolph, Baltes, and Zabel (2013) found a “moderate negative relationship between age and need for promotion or advancement“ (p. 135). This means that the need for promotion decreases with age. These obtained findings align with established psychological theories that illustrate age-related differences in needs and goal orientation. Higgins' Regulatory Focus Theory (1997, 1998) suggests that individuals' focus shifts with age, with younger people displaying a promotion focus and older individuals adopting a prevention focus. This notion is supported by Lockwood, Chasteen, and Wong (2005), who verified these findings and noted that younger employees tend to emphasize promotion, actively seeking growth and gains. Conversely, older employees generally concentrate on prevention, aiming to reduce and avoid losses.

These findings also correspond with the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST) (Carstensen, 1992; Heckhausen, Dixon, & Baltes, 1989), which posits that younger people perceive time as an abundant resource, which influences their long-term thinking and the acquisition of new knowledge. Also, the Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC) theory states that younger people tend to experiment and explore opportunities to support their personal growth (Lang, & Carstensen, 2002; Veth et al., 2018).

H4a: Age moderates the positive relationship between benefit satisfaction and growth need satisfaction, such that the relationship is stronger for younger employees.

Rhodes (1983) analyzed that the need for security and belongingness rises with age, while the need for self-realization and growth decreases. The need for factors such as job security is more apparent to older people because they have limited opportunities to find new jobs as they age (De Witte, & Näswall, 2003). They often prefer benefits that contribute to their retirement time and protection from economic fluctuations (Dulebohn et al., 2009). Veth et al., (2018) found that extra training or development opportunities might not be appealing for workers who are close to retirement, since they think that they cannot profit from it anymore. This can be also attributed to the fact that older workers may not experience

the same urgency to develop and improve in their professional fields (Maurer, Weiss, & Barbeite, 2003).

In contrast, some studies found no or a weak relationship between age and security needs (e.g. Churchill et al., 1979; Ford et al., 1985; Goulet and Singh, 2002). Nevertheless, Ingram and Bellenger (1983), Markham et al. (1985) and Rowe and Snizek (1995) found that age is positively correlated with the need for job security. Rudolph, Baltes and Zabel (2013) state that it can be derived from the literature that there is a weak but positive relationship between age and security needs since the majority of studies showed that the need for security increases with age. Here, the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory complements the findings as it states that older employees are cognizant of temporal constraints and prioritize prevention, security, and honoring commitments (Carstensen, Fung & Charles 2003; Heckhausen, Dixon, & Baltes, 1989). Additionally, the Selection, Optimization, and Compensation Theory (P. Baltes & M. Baltes, 1990) underlines that older people prioritize prevention and security in response to perceptions of limited time. The Regulatory Focus Theory (Brockner & Higgins, 2001) support the assumption, and state that older people engage with a prevention focus, which means, that they seek for security and try to avoid negative outcomes, because they expect having problems and losses with an increase of their age (Heckhausen, Dixon & Baltes, 1989).

H4b: Age moderates the positive relationship between benefit satisfaction and security need satisfaction, such that the relationship is stronger for older than younger employees.

In summary, the outlined variations in employees' perspectives and requirements based on age, supported by psychological theories and existing literature, highlight the need for tailored attention to employees' diverse needs across various age groups. This underscores that employees across different ages generally have distinct preferences for employee benefits (Barber, Dunham & Formisano, 1992; Kaufmann, 2004).

H5: There is a relationship between the age of employees and their preferences for employee benefits.

The following Figure visualizes the conceptual structure derived from the hypotheses introduced in the present thesis.

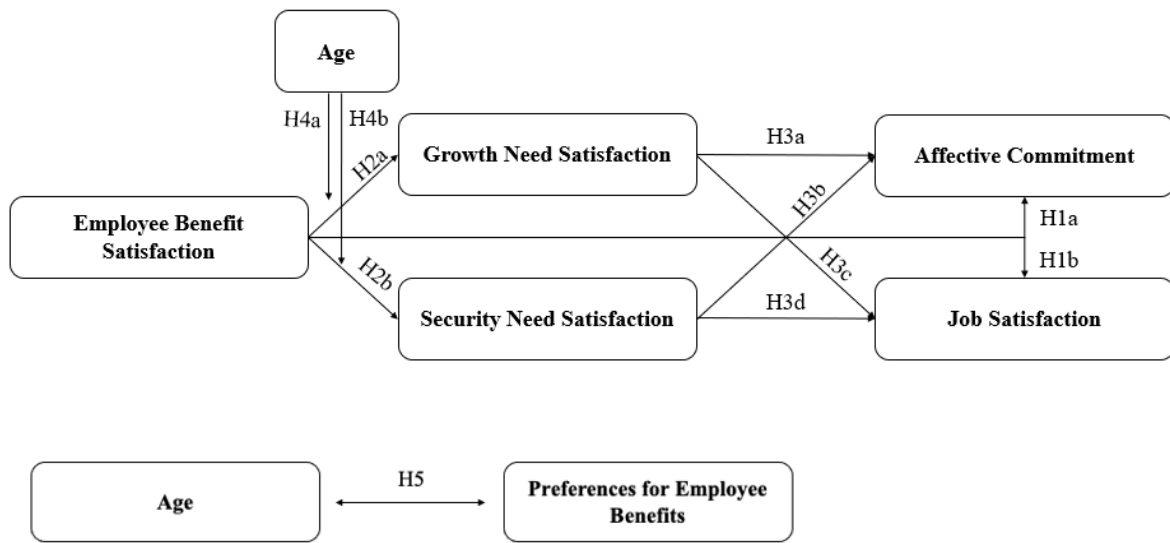


Figure 3. Proposed Research Model.

6. Study

As already mentioned, the study includes distinctive two data analyses. The first part of the analysis is a moderated mediation analysis, which examines the relation between benefit satisfaction and work-related attitudes such as affective commitment and job satisfaction, moderated by age and mediated by growth and security need satisfaction (Hypothesis 1 - 4). The second part is a correlational analysis and explores age-related preferences for employee benefits (Hypothesis 5).

6.1 Method

The study is a correlational cross-sectional study in which phenomena in natural environments are observed, described, and analyzed without manipulating the independent variable (Jepsen et al., 2004).

As stated, the study has two main objectives: firstly, to investigate the role of age (moderator) on the relation among benefit satisfaction (predictor variable), work-related need satisfaction (mediators), and the two work-related attitudes of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (outcome variables). Secondly, to explore how age shapes preferences for specific employee benefits. To achieve these aims, the research employs a quantitative study design, where participants provide self-reports on their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors via an online questionnaire. Conducting online surveys offers the advantages of retaining control over both sampling and survey logic, while also providing benefits such as reduced administration costs and streamlined organization of data analysis (Evans & Mathur, 2005). The research adopts a cross-sectional approach for the moderated mediation analysis, capturing participants of varying ages at a specific moment where the objective is to detect a relation while simultaneously examining multiple outcomes (Mann, 2003).

To achieve the first goal, the current study employs a moderated mediation analysis with parallel mediators where work-related need satisfaction for growth and security act as two distinctive mediators between employee benefit satisfaction and the two work-related attitudes affective commitment and job satisfaction. Additionally, age moderates the relation between benefit satisfaction and need satisfaction for growth and security (Preacher, Rucker & Hayes, 2007). Analysis of mediation variables is relevant to examine the underlying process of how two variables are related (MacKinnon, 2011). Moderation variables show if there are different relations across groups or levels. Therefore, the intensity and nature of a

relationship between two variables could depend on the value of a moderating variable (MacKinnon, 2011).

Additionally, the findings of the moderated mediation analysis will be complemented with a correlational analysis to further understand age differences in preferences for benefits (Cohen et al., 2013).

6.2 Sample and Procedure

The sample is a non-probability sample since participants were recruited first by sharing the questionnaire using Qualtrics within the private circle of friends, family, and colleagues and was additionally distributed via LinkedIn. In the second step, further participants were recruited through the platform Prolific, which serves as an internet-based crowdsourcing platform specifically crafted for the recruitment of research study participants (Palan & Schitter, 2018).

This approach was implemented to maintain cost-effectiveness while ensuring a representative and appropriate number of participants across different age groups to avoid sampling errors regarding the age characteristics of the participants (Bohmann, Rudolph & Zacher, 2018). Therefore, the participant distribution aimed for a balanced representation, with each age group accounting for one-third of the total. The categorization of age groups aligns with the frameworks proposed by Warr (2001) and Stroh and Greller (2003), designating individuals over 50 as "older employees," those between 35 and 50 as "middle-aged employees," and individuals below 35 as "younger employees". Answers were collected anonymously where responses were coded with numbers.

As a cross-sectional study is often associated with a low response rate and may face criticism that it risks overlooking substantial distinctions between those who respond and those who do not respond to the survey (Mann, 2003), a minimum number of 150 participants was required for this study to counteract this criticism (Preacher, Rucker & Hayes, 2007).

To ascertain the suitability of participants for the research, screening criteria were applied, considering both their proficiency in English and employment status. Only individuals categorized as intermediate to native English speakers and currently employed by an organization were invited to complete the questionnaire. This exclusivity was maintained because the questionnaire is solely in English, and the potential language barrier

could introduce distortions in the results. The assessment of participants' current benefit satisfaction, affective commitment, and job satisfaction also depends on the condition that they are at present employed. Participants were only allowed to fill out the survey once.

Following the screening questions, the participants were informed about the conditions of participation and then their consent to take part in the study was obtained. The first section of the questionnaire corresponded to the first part of the study, in which the participants answered questions about their satisfaction with their current employee benefits, their security and growth needs satisfaction within the organization, and their attitude towards the company and their jobs. The second section presented a comprehensive list of 28 employee benefits, prompting participants to express their individual preferences. To adequately control for possible order effects or other interfering factors and to ensure that the results are valid and interpretable, the order of displayed benefits was randomized. Subsequently, participants provided demographic information. Throughout the survey, respondents also responded to an attention check question “Please click 7 - strongly agree - to show that you are paying attention”, and forced responses were implemented for all questions to prevent missing data.

The survey was completed by a total of 164 participants. However, 5 participants had to be excluded due to failing the attention check question. Therefore, the final sample is composed of 159 respondents. The composition of the sample, in terms of gender, age, level of education, and employment, is distributed as follows.

The sample consists of 50.9% female and 49.1% male respondents. The participant’s age was on average 39.86 years ($SD = 12.47$) while their perceived age varied with an average of 33.9 years of age ($SD = 9.40$). The distribution between the three age groups is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive: Overview Age

	<35	35-50	> 50	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Calendar Age	58	61	40	39.86	12.47
Calendar Age %	36.5%	38.4%	25.2%		
Perceived Age	81	70	8	33.92	9.40
Perceived Age %	50.9%	44.1%	5.0%		

Note: N = 159

Their tenure within the organization was 8.3 years ($SD = 8.40$). While their work hours on average were 38 hours per week ($SD = 9.75$). 132 (83%) of the participants had a permanent contract, while 22 (13.8%) were employed on a temporary basis, the other 5 (3.1%) had different work arrangements. 72 (45.3%) participants earned 2000 Euros or less while 41 (25.8%) exceeded the 3000 Euros, and 8 (5.0%) participants preferred not to indicate their monthly income. In addition, most participants were from Germany, in total 73 (45.9%) participants. 21 (13.3%) participants were from Portugal and 12 (7.5%) participants each were from Spain and Italy. In total, 149 (93.7%) participants were from Europe, while 10 (6.3%) live outside of Europe. In terms of their level of education, the majority of participants 124 (together 78%) reported a bachelor's and a master's degree from a university, while 15 (9.4%) participants completed an apprenticeship, and 14 (8.8%) participants graduated from high school. Also, participants reported working in a variety of sectors of activities, most commonly 37 (23.3%) participants worked in Business and Management, 23 (14.5%) participants worked in Information Technology, as well as 22 (13.8%) participants worked in Healthcare, and 16 (10.1%) participants worked in Education.

6.3 Measures

All study variables for the moderated mediation analysis were assessed exclusively using already existing and validated scales.

Employee age – Employee age was measured as a continuous variable by using the calendar age of the participants (Spurk et al., 2019). Psychological (perceived) age was measured as a continuous variable by asking participants to indicate how old they perceive themselves (Sterns & Doverspike, 1989).

Job Satisfaction - Due to the extensive research on job satisfaction in psychological research, a variety of validated questionnaires have been developed to measure this construct. Most notably, the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) formulated by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) developed by Weiss et al. (1967) are widely accepted measurement instruments (Judge et al., 2002). Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969) differentiated job satisfaction into several facets that include compensation, promotion, supervision, colleagues, and the nature of the job itself. Weiss et al. (1967) divided motivational factors into extrinsic (external conditions and interpersonal

relationships) and intrinsic (specific to the job itself) dimensions. However, other studies approach job satisfaction as a global measurement without dividing it into multiple facets. Many researchers are indecisive about the measurement of various facets or whether a global measurement yields the same results. Judge et al. (2002) indicate that the results are mostly congruent. They often use a global five-item scale to measure job satisfaction based on Brayfield-Rothe's (1951), which has internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.8$). The current study also integrated the assessment of overall job satisfaction using the questionnaire developed by Brayfield-Rothe (1951). This choice was justified by its contextual suitability for the research and its global approach because the global approach can measure overall satisfaction which might not be directly measured through the facet measurement (Scarpello, & Campbell, 1983) and avoids facets that are not important for individuals to assess their satisfaction with their job (Tett, & Meyer, 1993).

A sample item is "Most days I am enthusiastic with my work" where respondents indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Affective Commitment - A questionnaire from Meyer and Allen (1990) consisting of 8 items was used to measure affective commitment. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A sample item is: "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me."

Employee Benefit Satisfaction - Benefit Satisfaction was measured using one of the four sub-scales of the Pay Satisfaction Questionnaire from Heneman and Schwab (1985) which is concentrated exclusively on employee benefits. This survey subsection of the questionnaire includes 4 aspects of employee benefits that require participants to indicate their satisfaction on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The scale was raised to 7 points to ensure the uniformity of the survey. A sample item is "Satisfaction with the amount the company pays toward my benefits".

Need Satisfaction - In 1961, Porter introduced the Needs Satisfaction Questionnaire (PNSQ) based on Maslow's theory. To measure satisfaction with growth needs, the measurement scale developed by Porter (1961), which measures the need for self-actualization according to Maslow's (1958) theory, was utilized. Participants were asked to express their agreement with statements related to their current employment using a Likert

scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A sample item is "In my current position, I have opportunities for personal growth and development."

To measure security need satisfaction, the item for the need for security from the Needs Satisfaction Questionnaire (PNSQ) by Porter (1961) was used. Participants were asked to express their agreement with one statement related to their current employment using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The one item from the PNSQ by Porter (1961) is "In my current position, I have the feeling of security."

Employee Benefits - For the second part, a list of various employee benefits gathered from literature and job platforms such as Glassdoor and LinkedIn was created. Participants were then asked to rate each of these benefits in terms of their personal importance using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). The comprehensive catalog of benefits can be found in Appendix A.

6.4 Data Analysis

Statistical analysis and hypothesis testing were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 28.0. First, descriptive statistics, correlations and reliability tests were calculated for all scales using Cronbach's alpha. To test hypotheses 1 - 4, a moderated mediation with parallel mediators was tested via Process Model 7 (Hayes, 2017) where employee benefit satisfaction served as the predictor variable, age as the moderator variable, growth and security need satisfaction as the mediator variables and affective commitment and job satisfaction as the outcome variables. Additionally, the model was also run with perceived age as a moderator. Finally, descriptive statistics and correlations between age, perceived age, and the preference for specific employee benefits were calculated.

6.4.1 Moderated Mediation with parallel Mediators – Calendar Age

The descriptive analysis shows that the mean of all constructs of the moderated mediation analysis is relatively high (between $M = 4.46$ and $M = 5.57$), given that the scales are from 1-7. Affective commitment reveals the lowest mean ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.17$) while security need satisfaction reaches the highest mean ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.42$). The constructs are non-symmetrically distributed, since the Skewness for all variables is negative ranging from -0.34 to -1.27 , which indicates that the distribution is left-skewed and there is a smaller number of participants who rated the constructs below the mean. The greater the negative

skewness, the more left-skewed the distribution is. Security need satisfaction has the highest skewness with -1.27 ($M = 5.57$), while affective commitment is the least skewed construct with $-.34$ ($M = 4.46$).

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics and reliabilities for all variables utilized in the moderated mediation analysis.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities: Moderated Mediation Analysis

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Skew</i>	<i>Kurt</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	Cronbach's α	Items
Benefit Satisfaction	4.55	1.41	-.60	-.51	1.00	7.00	.936	4
Growth Need Satisfaction	4.90	1.27	-.66	.00	1.33	7.00	.867	3
Security Need Satisfaction	5.57	1.42	-1.27	1.26	1.00	7.00	/	1
Affective Commitment	4.46	1.17	-.34	-.21	1.13	7.00	.884	8
Job Satisfaction	5.05	1.22	-.96	.38	1.60	7.00	.898	5

Note: N = 159

Strong internal consistency was observed for the study variables growth need satisfaction, affective commitment, and job satisfaction as indicated by Cronbach's alpha analysis (Hair et al., 2011). The coefficients for these variables were found to be above .80 and approaching .90. However, it is noteworthy that the alpha coefficient for benefit satisfaction significantly exceeds .90, suggesting potential redundancy among the scale items (Hair et al., 2012). Unlike the other study variables, security need satisfaction is assessed using a single item, which prevents the measurement of reliability using Cronbach's alpha (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021).

Table 3 shows the correlations between the variables used in the moderated mediation analysis.

Table 3*Correlations of Moderated Mediation Analysis Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Employee Benefit Satisfaction	1						
2. Growth Need Satisfaction	.428**	1					
3. Security Need Satisfaction	.407**	.388**	1				
4. Affective Commitment	.260**	.547**	.361**	1			
5. Job Satisfaction	.317**	.702**	.346**	.688**	1		
6. Calendar Age	-.083	.035	.032	.190*	.165*	1	
7. Perceived Age	-.109	-.033	.027	.158*	.079	.817**	1

*Note: N = 159**** p < .001*** p < .050*

The results show strong positive correlations between calendar age and perceived age ($r = .817, p < .001$), job satisfaction and growth need satisfaction ($r = .702, p < .001$), and between job satisfaction and affective commitment ($r = .688, p < .001$). Also, affective commitment and growth need satisfaction show a large positive correlation ($r = .547, p < .001$). Moderate positive correlations can be identified between all other constructs ($r = .3-.5, p < .001$), while the positive correlation between affective commitment and benefit satisfaction is relatively small ($r = .260, p < .001$) as well as the correlations between calendar age and affective commitment ($r = .190, p < .005$), calendar age and job satisfaction ($r = .165, p < .005$) and between perceived age and affective commitment ($r = .158, p < .005$). The table shows that there are no significant correlations between calendar age and benefit satisfaction, growth need satisfaction, and security need satisfaction. Also, no significant correlations can be found between perceived age and benefit satisfaction, growth need satisfaction, security need satisfaction, and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1a stated that there is a positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and affective commitment, where higher benefit satisfaction is associated with higher affective commitment. The results in Table 4 show that the relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and affective commitment was significant ($B = .216, s.e. = .064, p < .001$), which implies that higher satisfaction with employee benefits among participants is associated with increased affective commitment to the organization. The

variance in affective commitment explained by benefit satisfaction is 6.8%, which shows that other factors are also contributing to creating affective commitment.

Table 4

Regression results – Employee Benefit Satisfaction predicting Affective Commitment and Job Satisfaction

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Affective Commitment^a					
Constant	3.473	.305	11.404		<.001
Employee Benefit Satisfaction	.216	.064	3.375	.260	<.001
Job Satisfaction^b					
Constant	3.805	.311	12.234		<.001
Employee Benefit Satisfaction	.273	.065	4.181	.317	<.001

Note: N = 159

a: R² = .068

b: R² = .100

Hypothesis 1b stated that there is a positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and job satisfaction, where higher benefit satisfaction is associated with higher affective job satisfaction. The relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and job satisfaction was observed to be significant ($B = .216$, $s.e. = .065$, $p = < .001$), as Table 4 shows. Therefore, a significant relation can be detected, which implies that higher satisfaction with employee benefits among participants is associated with increased satisfaction with the job. The variance in job satisfaction explained by benefit satisfaction is 10%, which shows that other factors are also contributing to creating job satisfaction.

Table 5*Regression results - Moderated mediation predicting affective organizational commitment*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	BOOT LL CI	BOOT UL CI
Mediator variable: Growth need satisfaction ^a					
Constant	4.918**	.091	53.914	4.7385	5.0989
Employee Benefit Satisfaction (a)	.374**	.066	5.696	0.2441	.5033
Calendar Age (b)	.006	.007	.848	-.0083	.0208
a x b (Interplay)	.010	.006	1.839	-.0008	.0216
Mediator variable: Security need satisfaction ^b					
Constant	5.575**	.103	53.918	5.3710	5.7796
Employee Benefit Satisfaction (a)	.404**	.074	5.431	.2569	.5507
Calendar Age (b)	.007	.008	.831	-.0095	.0234
a x b (Interplay)	.007	.006	.994	-.0063	.0191
Outcome Variable: Affective Commitment ^c					
Constant	1.433**	.423	3.386	.5970	2.2696
Employee Benefit Satisfaction	-.018	.063	-.285	-.1429	.1069
Growth Need Satisfaction	.447**	.069	6.441	.3100	.5843
Security Need Satisfaction	.149*	.062	2.413	.0270	.2709

Note: *N* = 159; Bootstrap sample size = 5.000. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval (95%); UL = upper limit.

** *p* < .001

* *p* < .050

^a: *R*² = .206

^b: *R*² = .176

^c: *R*² = .326

Hypothesis 2a stated that there is a positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and growth need satisfaction where higher benefit satisfaction is associated with higher growth need satisfaction. This hypothesis can be supported by the analysis as the results in Table 5 show that there is a positive and significant relation of employee benefit satisfaction and growth need satisfaction ($B = .374$, $s.e. = .0656$, $p < .001$). It means that participants who are more satisfied with the benefits they receive from their organization, tend to feel that their needs for growth are also more satisfied.

Hypothesis 2b stated that there is a positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and security need satisfaction, where higher benefit satisfaction is associated with higher security need satisfaction. The hypothesis can be supported by the analysis as

the results in Table 5 show that there is a positive and significant relation of employee benefit satisfaction and security need satisfaction ($B = .404, s.e. = .0744, p < .001$). It means that participants who are more satisfied with the benefits they receive from their organization, tend to feel that their needs for security are also more satisfied.

Hypothesis 3a stated that growth need satisfaction mediates the positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and affective commitment, which can be supported by the analysis. The results in Table 5 show that employee benefit satisfaction positively and significantly predicted growth need satisfaction ($B = .374, s.e. = .0656, p < .001$), which in turn positively and significant predicted affective commitment ($B = .447, s.e. = .069, p < .001$). The results show that participants who are more satisfied with the benefits they receive from their organization, tend to feel that their needs for growth are also more satisfied and tend to be more committed to their organization.

Also, hypothesis 3b can be supported, as security need satisfaction mediates the positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and affective commitment. Results in Table 5 show that employee benefit satisfaction positively and significantly predicted security need satisfaction ($B = .404, s.e. = .0744, p < .001$), which in turn positively and significantly predicted affective commitment ($B = .149, s.e. = .0617, p < .05$). The results show that participants who are more satisfied with the benefits they receive from their organization, tend to feel that their needs for security are also more satisfied, and tend to be more committed to their organization.

In summary, the mediation explains 32,6% of the variation of affective commitment, as the analysis shows that the predictors employee benefit satisfaction, growth need satisfaction and security need satisfaction accounted for significant variation in affective commitment ($R^2 = .3258; F(3,155) = 24.9717, p < .001$).

Table 6*Regression results - Moderated mediation predicting job satisfaction*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	BOOT LL CI	BOOT UL CI
Mediator variable: Growth need satisfaction ^a					
Constant	4.919*	.091	53.914	4.7385	5.0989
Employee Benefit Satisfaction (a)	.374*	.066	5.696	.2441	.5033
Calendar Age (b)	.006	.007	.848	-.0083	.0208
a x b (Interplay)	.010	.006	1.839	-.0008	.0216
Mediator variable: Security need satisfaction ^b					
Constant	5.575*	.103	53.918	5.3710	5.7796
Employee Benefit Satisfaction (a)	.404*	.074	5.431	.2569	.5507
Calendar Age (b)	.007	.008	.831	-.0095	.0234
a x b (Interplay)	.007	.006	.994	-.0063	.0191
Outcome Variable: Job Satisfaction ^d					
Constant	1.483*	.379	3.911	.7337	2.2315
Employee Benefit Satisfaction	-.006	.057	-.101	-.1176	.1062
Growth Need Satisfaction	.641*	.062	10.306	.5179	.7635
Security Need Satisfaction	.076	.055	1.376	-.3320	.1853

Note: *N* = 159; Bootstrap sample size = 5.000. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval (95%); UL = upper limit.

* $p < .001$

^a: $R^2 = .2055$

^b: $R^2 = .1756$

^d: $R^2 = .4997$

Hypothesis 3c stated that growth need satisfaction mediates the positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and job satisfaction, which can be supported by the analysis. Table 6 shows that employee benefit satisfaction was positively, and significant predicting growth need satisfaction ($B = .374$, $s.e. = .0656$, $p < .001$), which in turn was positively and significant predicting job satisfaction ($B = .641$, $s.e. = .0622$, $p < .001$). The results show that participants who are more satisfied with the benefits they receive from their organization, tend to feel that their needs for growth are also more satisfied, which is positively related to higher job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3d cannot be supported, which stated that security need satisfaction mediates the positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and job satisfaction. Table 6 shows that employee benefit satisfaction was positively and significant predicting security need satisfaction ($B = .404$, $s.e. = .0744$, $p < .001$). Nevertheless, security

need satisfaction did not show statistically significantly a positive relationship between employee benefit satisfaction and job satisfaction ($B = .076, s.e. = .0553, p = .171$). The results show that participants who are more satisfied with the benefits they receive from their organization, tend to feel that their needs for security are also more satisfied. Nevertheless, it is not related to higher job satisfaction.

In summary, the analysis shows the predictors of employee benefit satisfaction and growth need satisfaction accounted for significant variation in job satisfaction and explain 50% of variance of job satisfaction ($R^2 = .50; F(3,155) = 51.6140, p < .001$).

H4a stated that age moderates the positive relationship between benefit satisfaction and growth need satisfaction, such that the relationship is stronger for younger employees. The analysis in Table 6 shows that the interaction term (employee benefit satisfaction x calendar age) was not significant in the model ($B = .010, s.e. = .0057, p = .068$), meaning that the slope for the effect of employee benefit satisfaction on growth need satisfaction does not vary across levels of age. The analysis shows that the relation of employee benefit satisfaction and growth need satisfaction is not stronger for younger employees compared to older ones. This means that for all participants the same sense of satisfaction of growth needs increases as their benefit satisfaction increases.

Hypothesis 4b stated that age moderates the positive relationship between benefit satisfaction and security need satisfaction, such that the relationship is stronger for older than younger employees. Table 6 shows that this hypothesis is not supported by trough the analysis, as the results are not significant ($B = .007, s.e. = .0064, p = .322$). The interaction term (employee benefit satisfaction x calendar age) was not significant in the model, meaning that the slope for the effect of employee benefit satisfaction on security need satisfaction does not vary across levels of age. These results show that the relation between participants who are satisfied with their benefits and their satisfaction with their security needs does not vary across different levels of age and the relation is not moderated by age.

Figure 4 illustrates the results of the moderated mediation analysis considering, indicating the corresponding significance level and path values with the standardized beta weights.

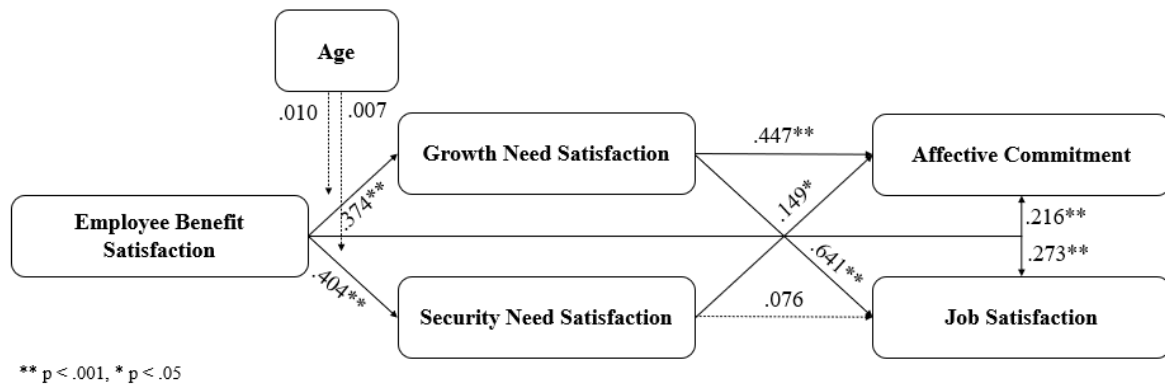


Figure 4. Path Values Research Model.

6.4.2 Moderated Mediation with parallel Mediators – Perceived Age

The results testing for perceived age are displayed in Table 7. All other results for the mediation effects are the same and displayed as in Table 5 and 6.

Table 7

Regression results - Moderated mediation perceived age

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	BOOT LL CI	BOOT UL CI
Mediator variable: Growth need satisfaction ^a					
Constant	4.919*	.092	53.475	4.7365	5.0998
Employee Benefit Satisfaction (a)	.382*	.066	5.832	.2528	.5118
Perceived Age (b)	.002	.010	.204	-.0174	.0214
a x b (Interplay)	.010	.007	1.501	-.0032	.0236
Mediator variable: Security need satisfaction ^b					
Constant	5.581*	.104	53.885	5.3759	5.7851
Employee Benefit Satisfaction (a)	.406*	.074	5.499	.2601	.5517
Perceived Age (b)	.003	.011	.256	-.0190	.0247
a x b (Interplay)	.010	.008	1.322	-.0050	.0252

Note: N = 159; Bootstrap sample size = 5.000. LL = lower limit; CI = confidence interval (95%); UL = upper limit.

* *p* < .001

^a: *R*² = .195

^b: *R*² = .176

Testing for perceived age compared to calendar age, the results do not differ in their significance and are similar, as Table 7 shows. It is noticeable that *R*² is reduced to 19.5% to explain growth need satisfaction while *R*² for security need satisfaction stays the same. Also, the interaction term (employee benefit satisfaction x perceived age) was not significant

in the model for both needs, meaning that the slope for the effect of employee benefit satisfaction on growth and security need satisfaction does not vary across levels of perceived age. These results show that the relation between employees who are satisfied with their benefits and their satisfaction for their growth needs does not vary across different level of perceived age. All other relations can be described similar as for testing calendar age.

6.4.3 Correlation between Age and Preferences for Employee Benefits

Hypothesis 5 stated that there is a relationship between the age of employees and their preferences for employee benefits. First, a comprehensive examination of general preferences for employee benefits was conducted, followed by a correlation analysis to determine whether these preferences were related to the age of the participants.

In summary, Table 8 shows that the employee benefits flexible work schedules ($M = 6.13$, $SD = .80$), health insurance ($M = 6.06$, $SD = 1.29$), work from home options ($M=6.03$, $SD=1.38$), pension/retirement plans ($M = 6.02$, $SD = 1.16$), business-related training and development programs ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 1.14$) as well as performance bonus payment ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 1.27$) are the most preferred benefits of the sample. In contrast, the benefits nutritional counseling ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.64$), companies sports team ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.64$), relaxation offers ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.71$), on-site gym ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.62$), gym membership ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.84$) and childcare support ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.90$) are the least preferred benefits of the sample.

A descriptive overview of the general preferences for employee benefits of the sample are stated in Table 8.

Table 8
Preferences for Employee Benefits

Employee Benefit	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Employee Benefit	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Health Insurance	6.06	1.29	Unlimited Vacations	4.50	1.74
On-site Medical Consultations	4.42	1.62	International Work Options	4.77	1.69
Mental Health Support	5.36	1.46	4-Days Workweek	5.00	1.59
Nutritional Counseling	3.29	1.64	Sabbatical Leave	5.03	1.52
Training / Development Programs (Business-related)	5.75	1.14	Free Food / Drinks at the Office	5.08	1.36
Training / Development Programs (Non-business-related)	5.11	1.44	Unlimited / Free Office Supplies	4.84	1.50
Regular Company / Team Events	4.82	1.50	Gym Membership	4.21	1.84
Volunteering / Non-Profit / Pro Bonus Activities	4.34	1.42	On-site Gym / Fitness Activities	4.06	1.62
Performance Bonus	5.75	1.27	Companies Sports Team	3.30	1.64
Employee Discounts for Company Products / Services	4.67	1.76	Relaxation Offers (Yoga / Pilates / Massages)	4.04	1.71
Day Care Service / Childcare Support	4.25	1.90	Pension / Retirement Plan	6.02	1.12
Part-Time Working	5.13	1.55	Life Insurance	5.10	1.54
Flexible Work schedules	6.13	.80	Disability Insurance	5.01	1.67
Work from Home Options	6.03	1.38	Legal Assistance	4.84	1.41

Note: N = 159

To detect differences between the preferences of age-diverse employees for employee benefits, a correlational analysis was conducted. Here, chronological age and perceived age were analyzed to be correlated with the preferences for the listed benefits in Table 8. Significant correlations ($p < .001$, $p < .005$) were determined for the employee benefits stated in Table 9.

Table 9*Correlations age and employee benefits*

Employee Benefit	Calendar Age	Perceived Age
Health Insurance	-.187*	-.184*
Regular Company / Team Events	-.205**	/
Flexible Work Schedules	-.190*	-.176*
Work from Home Options	-.185*	/
International Work Options	-.306**	-.326*
Sabbatical Leave	-.179*	/
Free Food / Drinks at the Office	-.208**	-.227**
Unlimited / Free Office Supplies	-.271**	-.261**
Gym Membership	-.285**	/
On-site Gym / Fitness Activities	-.196*	/

Note: $N = 159$; Pearson Correlation. Sig. (2-tailed)

** $p < .01$.

* $p < .05$.

Table 9 shows that the correlation coefficient for all significant relations is negative and has only small to medium effects, which indicates that younger employees prefer all these benefits more than older employees according to the calendar age. Since the Pearson Correlation coefficients (r) are between $-.10$ to $-.30$, it means that the variance (R^2) of preferences for employee benefits explained through (perceived) age is relatively low. Only, international work options exceed $r = -.30$, which indicates a moderate negative correlation with age and perceived age and shows that the preferences for international work options decrease with age (Hinkle, Wiersma & Jurs, 2003). Also, only half of the preferred benefits were correlated with perceived age compared to chronological age. Here, the preferences for health insurance, flexible work schedules, international work options, free food and drinks at the office, and unlimited and free office supplies decrease with perceived age. The hypothesis 5 stated that there is a relationship between the age of employees and their preferences for employee benefits, which can be partly supported since the analysis shows that 10 of 28 employee benefits have a negative significant correlation with chronological age and 5 of 28 employee benefits have a negative correlation with perceived age. The results indicate that the stated employee benefits in Table 8 are related to age and show that the preference for these benefits decrease for older employees. Nevertheless, all the significant relations only show small to medium effects.

7. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how age affects the relationship between benefit satisfaction, work-related needs and job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In addition, the influence of age on preferences for certain employee benefits was investigated.

In summary, this study reveals significant direct relationships between employee benefit satisfaction and affective commitment as well as job satisfaction (Hypothesis 1). Additionally, a notable positive effect is identified between employee benefit satisfaction, growth need satisfaction, and security need satisfaction (Hypothesis 2). Specifically, employee benefit satisfaction explains 20.55% of the variance in growth need satisfaction and 17.56% in security need satisfaction. The analysis reveals an indirect mediation effect in the relationship between employee benefit satisfaction, affective commitment and job satisfaction, where about 33% of the variance of affective commitment and 50% of the variance of job satisfaction was explained through growth and security need satisfaction (Hypothesis 3). Notably, positive and statistically significant mediating effects are observed for all paths, except H3d, positing security need satisfaction as the mediator between employee benefit satisfaction and overall job satisfaction. Regarding age as a moderator between employee benefit satisfaction and growth and security need satisfaction (Hypotheses 4), no relation is moderated by age. Contrary to the hypotheses, the relationship is equal for employees of different ages. The relationship between the age of employees and their preferences for employee benefits, shows that 10 of 28 employee benefits of this research have a low negative correlation with chronological age (Hypothesis 5), which indicates that there are differences in the preferences regarding age, but these are relatively minor and do not apply for all employee benefits analyzed in the research.

7.1 Theoretical Contributions

In light of the outcomes of this study, these findings partially confirm earlier findings while also providing novel perspectives that contribute to the literature.

First, this research shows that the limited findings from the literature regarding employee benefit satisfaction can be supported by the significant and positive relationship of employee benefit satisfaction with affective commitment (Caillier, 2013; Ward & Davis, 1995; Williams et al., 2008)) and job satisfaction (Artz, 2010; Huber, Seybolt, & Venemon,

1992; Iqbal, Guohao & Akhtar, 2017; Williams, 1993). Since the area of employee benefit satisfaction remains largely unexplored (Tremblay, Sire & Balkin, 2000), this study enriches the scientific research by examining and providing additional support for the positive relationship. Notably, employee benefit satisfaction explains only a small percentage of the variance in both work-related attitudes. This implies the complex nature of the constructs of affective commitment and job satisfaction, which encompass various facets of the organization and the work itself as well as psychological mechanisms (Allen & Meyer, 1991; Hulin, 1991; Locke, 1976). Also, job satisfaction shows a slightly stronger correlation with benefit satisfaction than affective commitment, which also represents the literature as it is more complex to create affective commitment compared to job satisfaction (Porter et al., 1974).

Furthermore, the findings validate the theory of social exchange (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986), as they indicate that employees who assess their employee benefits (rewards) positively also exhibit higher levels of affective commitment and job satisfaction.

Second, this research supports Arthur et al.'s (2006) proposition that need fulfillment leads to positive attitudes, as growth and security need satisfaction have significant indirect moderating effects between employee benefit satisfaction, affective commitment, and job satisfaction, with the exception of the relationship between security need satisfaction and job satisfaction. Above all, the satisfaction of growth needs proves to be a central factor in this study, which correlates positively with both job satisfaction ($r = .702$) and affective commitment ($r = .547$). The results indicate that factors related to growth, performance, knowledge acquisition, and career advancement (Rudolph, Baltes & Zabel, 2013) are essential for promoting job satisfaction and commitment to the organization.

One possible explanation for the lack of significance of the results relating to security need satisfaction and job satisfaction is the use of a scale with only one item to measure the construct security need satisfaction. Using a single question to assess the construct limits the depth of analysis and risks reduced validity (Allen, Iliescu & Greiff, 2022). In addition, job satisfaction is often closely related to specific work tasks and aspects of the work environment and focuses on factors in the immediate work context (Porter et al., 1974). In contrast, security need satisfaction may extend beyond the work role and encompass a broader sense of security within the organization, more connected to affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1991; Hulin, 1991; Locke, 1976). Consequently, the need for security may

be more closely related to the general sense of security within the organization than to specific job-related factors.

Third, previous research has shown that age can significantly affect individual's needs, as the meaning of life goals and desired outcomes change over time (Fleeson & Heckhausen, 1997; Inceoglu, Segers, & Bartram, 2012; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004). These findings cannot be replicated by the current research since age did not moderate the relation between employee benefit satisfaction and the satisfaction for growth and security. Nevertheless, considering a significance level above $p = .05$, this study detects a significant positive moderating effect of age on the relation employee benefit satisfaction and growth need satisfaction ($B = .010$, $s.e. = .0057$, $p < .068$), which indicates that older participants experience a greater sense of satisfaction of growth needs as their benefit satisfaction increases. Considering the current research state, these findings are contradictory since researchers found a weak negative relationship (e.g. Inceoglu et al., 2009; Markham et al., 1985) or even a moderate negative relationship (Kooij et al., 2011) between age and growth needs. Also, the main theories of this study (Socioemotional Selectivity Theory; Selection, Optimization, and Compensation Theory, and Regulatory Focus Theory) propose that younger people are more attracted to factors that support their personal growth (Lang, & Carstensen, 2002; Veth et al., 2018) compared to older ones. One plausible explanation could be that older people may already have a greater sense of fulfillment of their growth needs in general. This could be because older people no longer pursue their growth needs to the same extent as their younger counterparts. As Carstensen (1992) noted, chronological age is inherently associated with a decreasing remaining lifespan, leading to age-related behavioral patterns in motivation for life-related outcomes. Older people who have accumulated experience and knowledge from previous life stages (Erikson, 1968) may consequently exhibit a more generalized satisfaction of their growth needs. This differentiated view of growth needs may contribute to older employees being able to more naturally experience growth need satisfaction through employee benefits compared to their younger colleagues.

Lastly, as the literature is restricted to a limited range of existing employee benefits, as not all existing organizational employee benefits and the different preferences of employees are included (Dulebohn et al., 2009; Kaufmann, 2004; Tremblay, Sire & Balkin, 2000), the collection of numerous benefits in this study is derived from a search on job

portals rather than relying solely on sources from the literature. This study is intended to complement the literature by providing insights into the variety and scope of employee benefits that have recently emerged and to highlight the different preferences of employees taking into account the age factor.

7.2 Practical Contributions

The current thesis also offers implications for managerial practice as it provides valuable insights for organizations on how to strategically improve the integration of various employee benefits in their business offerings for employees to meet their diverse needs and maintain competitiveness (Athamneh & Jais, 2023).

Despite the complexity of affective commitment and job satisfaction, the current study shows that employee benefits are a strategic tool for influencing work-related attitudes, which can be implemented by organizations to strive for positive work-related attitudes. Studies from Glassdoor (2015, 2018) already highlighted that around 60% of their respondent's paid attention to the availability and quality of employee benefits when considering a job.

Nevertheless, organizations still face the main question of which of the many employee benefits, they should implement (Barber, Dunham, & Formisano, 1992), the current research contributes to this question. Organizations should pay attention to offering a broad range of employee benefits that include flexible work schedules, health insurance, work-from-home options, pension/retirement plans, business-related training and development programs as well as performance bonus payments and actively communicate them in their job advertisements and within the company itself. The main challenge here is to inform workers and job seekers about the existing benefits and to show which personal value they can create (Wilson, Northcraft, & Neale, 1985). Often, organizations have several benefits, but the employees or job seekers are not informed about them and therefore cannot take them into account (Danehower & Lust, 1992). Therefore, adequate communication about the existing benefits is essential (Cordón-Pozo et al., 2023).

In order to meet a diverse workforce (Ng & Feldman, 2008), companies should recognize that certain employee benefits are stronger preferred by distinct age groups. Given these preferences, companies should proactively offer and communicate a comprehensive benefits package to accommodate these differences.

Internally, the introduction of flexible benefits programs for employees can be strategically beneficial. This approach gives employees the opportunity to choose from a variety of benefits that are aligned with their values and individual needs, while promoting perceptions of equity (Cole & Flint, 2004) and satisfaction with their benefits (Tremblay, Sire & Balkin, 2000). In addition, the initial challenge of communicating existing benefits to employees internally will be more manageable. When employees are actively involved in selecting benefits that meet their needs, a better understanding and appreciation of these benefits can be developed (Hallman & Rosenbloom, 1986).

Externally, organizations should differentiate their listed employee benefits in their job advertisements, taking into account the individual characteristics required for the job. Given the limited number of benefits listed explicitly in a job advertisement, these need to be tailored to the preferences of specific age groups. For example, positions such as internships, dual study programs, and junior positions often attract younger people, while positions such as senior positions, project managers, experts or management positions are more attractive to older people with more professional experience. Accordingly, a nuanced distinction can be made when presenting employee benefits in job advertisements. Job advertisements where employees of all ages are addressed should include benefits such as flexible work schedules, health insurance, work-from-home options, pension and retirement plans, business-related training and development programs and performance bonus payments. If there are job advertisements, which are specifically designed for younger and middle-aged employees the following benefits could create positive attention from candidates like team events, international work options, sabbatical leave, unlimited office supplies, and gym membership or an on-site gym. However, it is crucial that the benefits valued by employees of all ages are not overlooked, as they are still generally most preferred and should be highlighted in job advertisements as well. Also important to note is that these recommendations are derived from the results of the current research and are made in the knowledge that each company may offer different employee benefit and has specific target groups for job positions.

Considering the dynamic changes and adjustments in the area of employee benefits (Kaufmann, 2004), organizations should continually evaluate the developing trends in this area. Actively seeking novel benefits tailored to the specific needs of employees will not only provide organizations with a competitive advantage, but it will also serve as a

mechanism to effectively attract, motivate, and retain employees (Rumpel & Medcof, 2006). In this context, internal organizational surveys provide a reliable basis for determining the needs and expectations of the employees.

8. Limitations

The current research also exhibits limitations, which are essential to mention and worth noting. First limitations of the study design and the questionnaire are examined, followed by analyzing the sample.

First, the current study employed an observational cross-sectional design, where phenomena are observed, described, and analyzed in a natural setting and inherently offer no explanation for their results (Mann, 2003). This is because there are no manipulated variables that could be analyzed to uncover underlying causes (Jepsen et al., 2004). Consequently, the explanation of the results had to be derived from the existing literature and previous research on the subject. While these efforts aim to provide explanations, it is important to note that the study itself does not establish a direct causal relationship. When evaluating employee benefit satisfaction, there is a possibility that other job-related factors influence perceptions. An employee who is generally satisfied with the organization may view the benefits more positively than someone who is dissatisfied with both the job and the organization (Danehower & Lust, 1992). In addition, unknown factors may have an influence on the other variables examined in the study as well, and it may be difficult to completely rule out such influences. For example, the length of time an employee has been with an organization has been associated with a decreasing influence of HR practices on work-related attitudes (Kooij et al., 2010).

The questionnaire was created as an online survey, which bears the risk of a low response rate and that the sample may not be representative of the population. Also, participants may have difficulties understanding the instructions, or there may be privacy concerns (Evans & Mathur, 2005). To mitigate these risks, the questionnaire was pre-tested extensively by different individuals to ensure comprehensibility. To preselect, participants were also asked to indicate their English proficiency to eliminate language barriers and an attention check question was included in the questionnaire. In addition, participants were informed about the study and their consent was obtained before completing the survey. The use of the Prolific platform allowed for an even distribution and selection of participants across the different age groups.

Additionally, the use of a one-item scale in the questionnaire to measure security need satisfaction, the scale's reliability remains unverified (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). Capturing a complex psychological construct with a single item may be difficult (Allen, Iliescu &

Greiff, 2022), which leads to skepticism among researchers regarding the ability of single-item scales to provide valid and reliable assessments of important psychological phenomena (Allen, Iliescu & Greiff, 2022). However, this skepticism is questioned by some other researchers, as the single-item measures often show a significant difference compared to scales with multiple items (e.g. Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007; Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2009). When utilizing single-item scales, it is crucial to ensure their reliability and validity and to exactly reflect the intended construct (Allen, Iliescu & Greiff, 2022). Opting for an already validated and widely used measure, such as the need satisfaction scale from Porter's (1961), can improve the reliability and validity of the scale. This approach is particularly advantageous compared to developing an entirely new scale to measure satisfaction with the need for security, as there are currently no other validated questionnaires specifically designed to assess this construct.

Another challenge of using an online questionnaire is the requirement for every question and term to be clear in order to ensure comprehensibility. In the case of the current research, it is considerable that a great number of participants was unfamiliar with the term "employee benefits" and that they had difficulties distinguishing between mandatory and voluntary benefits (Igalens & Roussel, 1999). This makes it challenging to assess employee benefit satisfaction as participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with their existing benefits. To address this challenge, participants were given a brief explanation of the scope and definition of benefits before answering the benefit satisfaction questions. This measure was intended to ensure that all participants had a common understanding of the term "employee benefits".

Regarding the limitations of the sample, this study employs a cross-sectional design, relying on a non-probability sample composed of participants who volunteered to take part in the research. The use of volunteers introduces a potential limitation, as they may not accurately represent the broader population (Mann, 2003). This limitation is evident in the study, where the participants do not reflect the entire population in terms of their ethnical and educational background. Approximately 78% of the participants reported holding a bachelor's or master's degree, and the majority were from Europe, constituting around 94% of the sample. This demographic skew complicates the generalizability of the findings to other continents. Additionally, there is an uneven distribution across sectors, with a

predominant representation from specific work fields. Therefore, the statistically significant results are only applicable to the specific subgroups mentioned above.

Lastly, there was no equal distribution among participants regarding their perceived age, as only 5% of participants perceived themselves older than 50 years, which increases sampling errors regarding the age characteristics of the participants (Bohlmann, Rudolph & Zacher, 2018).

9. Further Research

This section will explore avenues for future research. To increase the robustness of the current research, several methodological improvements are recommended, considering the structure of the current study, and offering recommendations based on its findings.

First, the use of a longitudinal design would increase the accuracy and reliability of the results as it allows for the observation of changes over time. In addition, a more even distribution of participants across variables such as age, country of origin, educational background, and occupation would increase the generalizability of the results to a broader population. A larger sample size would further improve the accuracy of population parameter estimates and minimize sampling error. In addition, achieving an even distribution of perceived age across all age groups would allow for the detection of potential differences between perceived and chronological age. Expanding the survey to multiple organizations in different industries would allow for a more comprehensive assessment of benefits satisfaction and enable for a more nuanced analysis of existing benefits. The inclusion of qualitative interviews could also provide deeper insights into employees' benefits preferences and needs, facilitate the categorization of benefits into segments such as growth and security needs, and allow for the exploration of age-related differences within these categories. Future research should also consider a more thorough examination of the construct of security needs satisfaction, possibly using alternative measurement scales, in order to better scrutinize and validate the results obtained in the current study.

Second, the current body of research examining the relationship between age and the satisfaction of growth and security needs is still relatively unexplored. Several studies have found a weak correlation between age and the fulfillment of growth (e.g., Inceoglu et al., 2009; Markham et al., 1985) and security needs (e.g., Churchill et al., 1979; Ford et al., 1985; Goulet and Singh, 2002). The results of the current study highlight the considerable potential for further research in this area, particularly as they diverge from established research findings. This divergence becomes particularly significant in the context of established theories that assume different needs in different age groups, such as socioemotional selectivity theory, selection, optimization and compensation theory, and regulatory focus theory. This is an opportunity for an in-depth examination of the complex relationship between age and the fulfillment of growth and security needs.

Moreover, the current study identified a small positive correlation between calendar age, perceived age, and affective commitment, as well as between calendar age and job satisfaction. This suggests potential variations in the strength of the relationship among employees of different ages. Hence, it is advisable to conduct a moderated analysis, examining employee benefit satisfaction in relation to affective commitment and job satisfaction, to investigate potential age differences and analyze age as a moderator variable in the relationship.

In the context of need satisfaction related to employee benefits, particularly focusing on the needs for security and growth (Thibault Laudry & Whillans, 2018), the current study provides insights into a direct and positive correlation between employee benefit satisfaction and the fulfillment of growth and security needs. These results suggest that employee benefits have the potential to fulfill both needs for growth and security and contribute to overall satisfaction. This innovative perspective on need satisfaction with employee benefits, which has not yet been explored in the existing literature, provides an opportunity for an in-depth examination of the underlying psychological mechanisms. Also, an examination of the satisfaction of needs related to relatedness, competence, and autonomy, as postulated by Deci and Ryan (2000), could be conducted in the context of employee benefits, which could provide a general deeper understanding of needs satisfaction of employee benefits.

10. Conclusion

In terms of employee benefit satisfaction, the current study revealed new insights into the mediating role of satisfaction of growth and security needs. Despite the direct relationship between benefits satisfaction and affective commitment and job satisfaction, the study emphasizes that psychological mechanisms and need satisfaction play a central role in this context. From both research and organizational perspectives, it is indispensable to disentangle these relationships and investigate the underlying mechanisms. This approach will not only increase the explanatory power of the impact of employee benefit satisfaction, but it will also offer the opportunity for organizations to influence employees' attitudes in a sustainable and positive way.

Although the established theoretical frameworks claim that people's needs vary depending on their age, the current study has not established a direct link between benefit satisfaction, satisfaction of needs, work-related attitudes, and the influence of age. Nonetheless, this study delved into the field of employee benefits and revealed age-related differences in the preferences for specific benefits as well as differences between perceived and chronological age.

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Appendix A: List of Employee Benefits

Category	Benefit	Reference
Health	Health Insurance	Jones, 2017; Glassdoor, 2016
	On-site Medical Consultations	LinkedIn, 2023
	Mental Health Support	Glassdoor, 2023
	Nutritional Counseling	LinkedIn, 2023
Education	Training / Development Programs (Business-related)	Glassdoor, 2012; LinkedIn, 2023
	Training / Development Programs (Non business-related)	Glassdoor, 2012; LinkedIn, 2023
Team & Company Activities	Regular Company / Team Events	Jones, 2017
Social Engagement	Volunteering / Non-Profit / Pro Bonus Activities	Glassdoor, 2023; LinkedIn, 2023
Monetary Advantages	Performance Bonus	Glassdoor, 2012
	Employee Discounts for Company Products / Services	Glassdoor, 2012
Family Support	Day Care Service / Childcare Support	Jones, 2017
	Part-Time Working	LinkedIn, 2023
Work-Life-Balance	Flexible Work schedules	Beam & McFadden, 2001
	Work from Home options	Jones, 2017
	Unlimited Vacations	Jones, 2017; Harvard Business Review, 2012

	International Work Options	LinkedIn, 2023
	4-Days Workweek	LinkedIn, 2023
	Sabbatical Leave	Deale & Lee, 2023
Office Supplies	Free Food / Drinks at the Office	Jones, 2017
	Unlimited / Free Office Supplies	LinkedIn, 2023
Fitness and Wellness	Gym Membership	Jones, 2017
	On-site Gym / Fitness Activities	Jones, 2017
	Companies Sports Team	LinkedIn, 2023
	Relaxation Offers (Yoga / Pilates / Massages)	Deale & Lee, 2023; Jones 2017
Safety	Pension / Retirement Plan	Dulebohn et al., 2009; Glassdoor, 2016
	Life Insurance	Rudder & Bottorff, 2023
	Disability Insurance	Glassdoor, 2023
	Legal Assistance	Beam & McFadden, 2001

Appendix B: Online Questionnaire

Start of Block: Block 1

Introduction: The current research is developed in the context of my Master's Thesis in the field of Psychology in Business and Economics at Universidade Católica Portuguesa. The main objective is to understand employees' preferences for the benefits their companies provide, and how the benefits might be related to employees' attitudes at work.

It takes around 6-8 minutes to complete the questionnaire.
Thanks for your participation!

Laura Oppenheim

*If you have any questions regarding the survey, don't hesitate to contact me:
s-loppenheim@ucp.pt*

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 2

Q23 Please indicate your level of English

- Beginner (1)
- Intermediate (2)
- Advanced (3)
- Professional (4)
- Native Speaker (5)

Skip To: End of Survey If Please indicate your level of English = Beginner

Selection Are you currently employed by a company?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- No answer (3)

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you currently employed by a company? != Yes

End of Block: Block 2

Start of Block: Block 3

Consent Form: You qualify to participate in this university research study. Please read the following consent form and click “next” at the bottom to confirm your consent for the study.

Nature of research study: The study is about employee benefits, individual preferences and their relation to work-related attitudes in the workplace.

Procedures: The study consists of answering questions about employee benefits and attitudes towards the job and organization. Answering the survey will take about 6-8 minutes.

Risks/Discomforts: There are no risks associated with participation in this survey since they are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

Potential Benefits: The results of this study will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of psychology in business and economics.

Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you choose whether to participate. If you want to withdraw from the study, please close your browser.

Confidentiality: No study records will identify you. All answers are confidential. All study materials will refer to you by number, not by name or other identifying information. Data will be stored on a password-protected computer and will only be available to the masters student and the supervisor working on the research.

What your consent means: By clicking, "next" below, you indicate that you understand the information in this consent form and that you agree to participate in the study. By providing your consent, you have not waived any legal rights you otherwise would have as a participant in a research study. If you do not consent, please close your browser to exit the study.

I consent (Click next)

End of Block: Block 3

Start of Block: Block 4

Definition Employee benefits are non-monetary rewards provided to employees in addition to their regular salary. These include initiatives such as educational support, health and financial assistance, various insurance options, childcare support, flexible work options, legal assistance and numerous other benefits.

EBS Please think about the **employee benefits that are offered by your organization** and indicate how much you are satisfied with...

	1 Very dissatisfied	2 Dissatisfied	3 Somewhat dissatisfied	4 Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied	5 Somewhat satisfied	6 Satisfied	7 Very satisfied
...your overall benefit package (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...the amount the company pays toward your benefits (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...the value of your benefits (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...the number of benefits you receive (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

GS/SS Please think about **your job and your organization** and indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have opportunities for personal growth and development in my position. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the feeling of self-fulfillment a person gets from being in my position (that is, the feeling of being able to use one's own unique capabilities, realization of one's own potential). (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the feeling of rewarding accomplishments in my position. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a feeling of security in my current position. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

AC Please think about **the organization** where you are employed and indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Neither agree nor disagree	5 Somewhat agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Please click 7: "Strongly Agree " to show that you are paying attention. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think that I could easily become attached to another organization as I am to this one. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not feel like part of the family at my organization. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not feel emotionally attached to this organization. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me. (9)

I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization. (6)

JS Please think about **your job** and indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Somewhat disagree	4 Neither agree nor disagree	5 Somewhat agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree
I feel fairly satisfied with my present job. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most days I am enthusiastic about my work. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Each day at work seems like it will never end. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find real enjoyment in my work. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider my job to be rather unpleasant. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Block 4

Start of Block: Block 5

Pref Benefits

Now: **Please don't think about your job, your organization, or the benefits you receive at the moment.** Please think about employee benefits in general and indicate how important the following employee benefits are to you (regardless of the benefits offered by your organization)

	1 Not at all	2 Not importa nt	3 Not really impo rtant	4 Neither important or unimportan t	5 Somewha t important	6 Importan t	7 Very importan t
Health Insurance (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On-site Medical Consultations (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental Health Support (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nutritional Counseling (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training / Development Programs (Business-related) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training / Development Programs (Non business-related) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regular Company / Team Events (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteering / Non-Profit / Pro Bonus Activities (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Performance Bonus (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employee Discounts for Company Products / Services (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Day Care Service / Childcare Support (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Part-Time Working (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flexible Work Schedules (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work from Home Options (14)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unlimited Vacations (15)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
International Work Options (16)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4-Days Workweek (17)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sabbatical Leave (18)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Free Food / Drinks at the Office (19)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unlimited / Free Office Supplies (20)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gym Membership (21)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On-site Gym / Fitness Activities (22)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Companies Sports Team (23)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Relaxation Offers (Yoga / Pilates / Massages) (24)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pension / Retirement Plan (25)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Life Insurance (26)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disability Insurance (27)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legal Assistance (28)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Block 5

Start of Block: Block 6

Q22 We are almost done, please just provide the following demographic information about you.



Age How old are you?
Please write the number of years in the field



P. Age How old do you feel?
Information: The question refers to your subjective sense of your own age, which may not necessarily align with your chronological age.
Please write the number of years in the field

Gender What is your gender identification?

- Male (1)
 - Female (2)
 - Non-binary / third gender (3)
 - Other (4)
-



Country What is your country of origin?
Please answer in English

Education What is your highest educational level?

- Elementary school (1)
 - High school (2)
 - Apprenticeship (3)
 - Bachelor's (4)
 - Master's (5)
 - PhD (6)
 - Other (7) _____
-

Contract What is your contract type?

Temporary contract (1)

Permanent contract (2)

Other (3) _____



Working Hours How many hours do you work on average per week?
Please write the number in the field



Tenure How long have you already been employed at your company?
Please write the number of years in the field (if you worked less than 1 year, please write 0)

Sector In which sector do you work?

- Agriculture (1)
 - Business/Management (2)
 - Education (3)
 - Finance (4)
 - Healthcare (5)
 - Information Technology (6)
 - Manufacturing (7)
 - Non-profit/NGO (8)
 - Retail (9)
 - Service Industry (10)
 - Government/Public Sector (11)
 - Other (please specify) (12)
-
-

Income What is your monthly net income (after taxes) in Euros?

- None (1)
 - Less than 500 (2)
 - 501-1000 (3)
 - 1001-2000 (4)
 - 2001-3000 (5)
 - 3001-4000 (6)
 - 4001 or more (7)
 - Prefer not to say (8)
-

End Thank you so much for taking the time to participate. I truly value your effort in completing my survey!

Just click "next" to submit the survey!

End of Block: Block 6
