WHY DO EMPLOYEES CHANGE THE JOB? INSIGHTS ON EMPLOYEES` NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS BASED ON INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE

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Purpose: The main objective of the study is to identify the current motivations and expectations of employees who are searching for new job opportunities. The theoretical objective is to expand the understanding of motivations to change the job. The practical objective is to assist managers in retaining employees and creating a better workplace.

Design/methodology/approach: Data were collected based on the online questionnaire with open-ended questions. In total 647 respondents participated in this study. Responses were gathered in 2023 from five countries: Portugal (112), Poland (139), Palestine (130), Brazil (109), and Mexico (157). Answers were analyzed using NVivo software.

Findings: Empirical findings revealed seven reasons to apply for a new job post: career development, financial motivation, work environment and culture, ambition, leadership and management, work-life balance, and relocation. Moreover, in the explored countries professional development, management skills and leadership were identified as the most significant employees` expectations in relation to future employers. Other expectations are following: behavioral values, empathy, teamwork, collaboration, work environment, financial compensation, security, stability, autonomy and flexibility in a new workplace.

Research implications: The study provides insights into the motives that cause employees to change jobs. As theoretical implications, revealed insights can be valuable in developing management theories. For managers recommendations were formulated to better understand and react on personal needs of employees to create opportunities for financial and personal development within the organization.

Originality/value: The value of this study lies in the used method (open-ended questionnaires) that allowed to discover insights about current employees` needs. Findings may inspire researchers to develop theory and managers to redesign the personal strategy.

Keywords: employees; management; motivation; change the job, retain employees.

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

Previous research show that employees with proper qualifications and motivations significantly contribute in achieving the goals of organizations, and based on employees` knowledge, skills and competences, organizations build a competitive advantage (Horzela, Ambrochowicz, 2019; Kuzior, Sobotka, 2019; Grzeszczyk, 2020). Therefore, employees are essential to gain success within organizations. Consequently, it is crucial to attract, develop, motivate, and retain employees in organizations. However, remote work popularized during and after COVID-19 created a new approach to leading and managing organizations (Montenero, Cazorzi, 2022).

Pandemic time significantly affected management and organizations, that have to look for resilience and opportunities simultaneously take into account increasing uncertainty (Zadeh, 2022). According to the researchers, human behaviors patterns in organizations have changed after COVID-19 time (Machaczka, Stopa, 2022) and one of the most significant changes is that employees are more open to work remotely and they started to change their jobs more often than they did in the past.

Therefore, it can be valuable to extent the knowledge about employees` motives of changing jobs. Expectations and needs of employers and employees have changed. It is possible to see enterprises` needs based on many job post platforms or directly on enterprises' websites. However, current employees' needs and expectations require the examination. For managers, there is limited knowledge on how to attract candidates and retain employees to manage the organization's needs and meet employees' expectations.

Organizations are facing employee turnover and researchers as well as business practices are searching for the motives of changing new job by employees. Therefore, taking into account the dynamic changes in the labor market, the need to develop theories and support organizations, following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: Why do employees decide to apply for a new job post?

RQ2: What do employees expect from their future employers?

The main objective of this study is to identify the current motivations of employees in different countries. The first research objective is to identify the reasons employees look for new jobs. The second research objective is to identify what employees look for in new jobs. Presented studies are originality taking into account not only the international dimension and collecting data during real recruitment processes, but also using the method based on the open-ended questions, what provides the opportunity to discover insights that are not anticipated.

The structure of the paper includes an introduction, literature review, research methodology with characteristics of the research sample. Next the results and discussions are described. The final part is the conclusion, limitations and future research directions.

2. Literature background

Recent studies underline the significance of new generations of employees who frequently consider the question "Should I stay or should I go?" (Lu et al., 2023) it has been an issue because recently demand for workers in response to continual growth in the global economy has been increased (Zwardoń-Kuchciak, Lipińcka-Grobelny, 2020) and human resources management in 4.0 industry has become more demanding (Piwowar-Sulej, 2020). Moreover, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the employees' desire to leave their current jobs increased. Therefore, dealing with management and turnover became an urgent challenge for organizations and managers (Bokuchava, Javakhishvili, 2022; Bruyneel et al., 2023; Christianson et al., 2023; Wen-Long et al., 2022).

According to existing research literature work expectations were identified as significant reasons for job change and turnover intentions: "Work expectations regarding future work experiences as one important mechanism explaining why and how individuals (...) are less inclined to remain with their organizations. These findings suggest a process whereby systematic improvement or decrement in prior work experiences (...) shapes employees' expectations for future work experiences, which in turn influence their inclination to stay at or leave their organization" (Chen et al., 2011).

Recent studies suggest show different predictors of changing job. Some researchers underlined the role of organizational learning culture, that has a significant impact on employee turnover intentions and job performance. According to empirical studies, employees who experience a higher learning culture have a lower level of turnover intention and better job performance (Lin, Huang, 2021).

In another study, there was an analysis of the impact of psychological contract breaches on organizational distrust and turnover intention. Based on empirical research was confirmed that psychological contract breaches impact organizational distrust and organizational distraction directly influences turnover intention (Abdalla, et al., 2021). In other studies, the adaptation to frequency changes was considered with the role of job crafting and personal needs (Chen, Tang, 2021).

Furthermore, interesting research was conducted to increase knowledge about employee well-being and job change intention (Lee, et al. 2020) taking into account change jobs across organizations (external) and within the same organization (internal). Moreover, in one of the newest studies in the medical sector, the attention was focused on the work environment and the association between burnout and intention to leave the profession (Bruyneel et al., 2023). In another study conducted in this sector, key findings claimed that work-related burnout and compassion fatigue are significant contributors to the intention to leave the profession. Additionally, it was reported that personal financial incentives are a reason for staying on the job despite being burnout (Christianson et al., 2023).

Searching for the answer to what makes employees want to leave their job was considered recently also in the public sector. According to meta-analyses (Hur, Abner, 2023) the relationship between individual demographic variables, work environment characteristics, job characteristics, HRM practices, work motivation and work attitudes, and factors related to the external environment and turnover intention showed that individual demographic predictors have a negligible effect on turn-over intention highlighting the need to find variables in a work environment and organizations (Hur, Abner, 2023).

Taking into account work environment and organizations, also leadership was identified as a significant variable that affected the frequency of changes and turnover intention of employees (Babalola et al., 2016). In another study, relations between work-life balance, satisfaction and intention to leave were investigated (Holland et al., 2019). One of the newest studies revealed that workload is the most significant direct predictor of turnover intention (Jasiński, Derbis, 2022).

These findings from previous research confirmed that this topic is a very pressing issue in this changing and turbulent world. In conclusion, according to the literature review reasons for turnover, burnout, financial rea-sons, well-being, organizational distrust, work environment, leadership, and workload were identified as significant in relation to the intention to leave and look for new jobs.

A few studies were focused not only on changing the job but also on the intention to leave the profession (Christianson et al., 2023). It shows that this is a complex phenomenon. Moreover, due to COVID-19 which accelerated the dynamics of changes, this topic has become a more urgent challenge for enterprises. "The employee stability of organizations is an essential situational variable in enterprise strategic decision-making processes, which can promote the stable development of enterprises" (Lu et al., 2023). Therefore, this study is focused on deepening knowledge about current needs and expectations of employees who are looking for a new job.

3. Research methodology

The theoretical part of this study was prepared based on the literature review. Special attention was focused on the newest primary articles from renowned journals indexed in the *Web of Science* and *Scopus* databases, articles published by the *Academy of Management* and articles published by specialized research journals in the field of international entrepreneurship.

As a result of this review, the problematization methodology described in the *Academy of Management Review* was used. Problematization methodology is recommended to generate re-search questions and challenge previous assumptions to develop research and enrich theory

(Al-vesson, Sandberg, 2011). Based on this methodology two research questions were formulated to conduct the empirical research.

Several approaches were evaluated to select the most appropriate empirical approach and tool for this study. Ultimately, an open-ended questionnaire was employed due to its effectiveness. Open-ended questions provide more varied and textured information than closed-ended questions and can provide insights that are not anticipated. Those new and open answers are considered as the source of insight for the researchers. Summarizing this approach has been chosen because of significantly of building and developing theory (Bratnicka-Myśliwiec et al., 2018)

Respondents` answers were collected using an online questionnaire. Five researchers in five different countries (Portugal, Poland, Palestine, Brazil, and Mexico) collected the database within the same timeframe, beginning in January 2023 and closing in May 2023. After collecting the data, the researchers imported the answers into an Excel file to prepare them for analysis. The methodology assumption was to provide a comparable sample size from each country. In this study answers from 647 respondents were collected. To ensure the relevance of the results, the respondents in this study were actively seeking jobs in real recruitment processes. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the sample.

Table 1.
Statistical data about the research sample

Respondents	Portugal 17,31%	Poland 21,48%	Palestine 20,09%	Brazil 16,85%	Mexico 24,27%	In total	In %
Gender							
Male	33	50	53	46	63	245	37,87%
Female	47	89	77	62	88	363	56,11%
No answer	32	0	0	1	6	39	6,03%
Age							
18-19	3	1	0	1	0	5	0,77%
20-24	63	15	40	5	5	128	19,78%
25-29	16	30	34	22	12	114	17,62%
30-34	10	25	18	23	18	94	14,53%
35-39	4	30	17	17	29	97	14,99%
40-44	7	19	6	16	46	94	14,53%
45-49	2	11	10	5	26	54	8,35%
50-54	4	5	1	9	6	25	3,86%
55-59	3	1	3	6	9	22	3,40%
60 or more	0	0	1	1	6	8	1,24%
No answer	0	2	0	4	0	6	0,93%
Education							
High School	26	15	7	4	2	54	8,35%
Bachelor degree	62	32	59	85	108	346	53,48%
Master of Art	22	90	51	19	47	229	35,39%
Doctoral degree	2	0	13	0	0	15	2,32%
No answer	0	2	0	1	0	3	0,46%
In total	112	139	130	109	157	647	

Source: own study.

According to the characteristics presented in Table 1, respondents from five countries participated in this research – 112 from Portugal, 139 from Poland, 130 from Palestine, 109 from Brazil and 157 from Mexico. Most of the respondents were female (56,11%), while men made up (37,87%). Few respondents preferred not to answer the question about gender (6,03%). The age structure of this sample is evenly distributed. The majority of respondents are between 20 till 49 years old (89,80%). More than half of the respondents graduated with a Bachelor's degree (53%) or Master's studies (35,39%).

The answers from each country were translated from their respective languages into English and imported into a single Excel file. Data such as country, gender, and education level were con-verted to numerical values. The coded responses were imported into IBM® SPSS® Imago PRO software (version 9) for statistical analysis presented in Table 1.

Data were analysed using IBM® SPSS® Text Analytics for Surveys and NVIVO (version 14) for qualitative data. NVIVO (version 14) provides a meaningful analysis of responses to open-ended questions. The analysis procedure involved importing the survey, identifying open-ended and closed-ended questions, creating cases for survey respondents, and creating case attributes for closed-ended questions.

To guarantee complete and systematic identification and the coding of themes, the coding process for open-ended responses involved multiple researchers. To find trends and subjects, keywords and text research searches were used, and categories were generated accordingly. This methical technique allowed for precise and consistent answer coding.

4. Results

The first part of the quality analysis was the coding process for all the respondents` answers to the question "Why do you apply for a job post?" As a result of the coding process, seven main reasons (topics) have been identified as critical. These are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Motivations to apply for a new job post - Topic codebook

| No.	Topic	Code	Description	Keywords
1	Career Development	why1_ career_dev	Exploring opportunities to improve skills, knowledge, and professional development to pursue new challenges and achieve upward mobility	Career, growth, professional, development, skills-building, competency, advancement, new challenges, promotion, upward mobility, position, growth, progress, satisfaction, learning, knowledge, training, evolve, competence
2	Financial Motivation	why2_ financial	Assessing Financial Incentives such as Job Security, Pay, Benefits, and Retirement	Salary, financial, money, income, benefits, retirement, economic, pay, remuneration, compensation, wage, job security, stability

Cont. table 2.

3	Work Environment and Culture	why3_ work_env	Assessing Workplace Culture Evaluating Respectful Collaboration and Working Conditions	Culture, environment, respectful, reception, collaboration, working conditions, atmosphere
4	Motivation and ambition	Why4_ motiv_amb	Exploring the motivation and ambition behind seeking a new job for personal and professional growth, gaining new experiences, and contributing to society	Motivation, ambition, community, contribution, society, giving back, social impact, personal, self-improvement
5	Leadership and Management	Why5_ leader_mngt	Opportunities with good leadership, understanding management, and potential for career advancement and recognition	Leadership, appreciation, recognition, understanding,
6	Work-life balance	Why6_ work_lif	Understanding factors that affect work-life balance, including commute, stress, and flexibility	Work-life, balance, commute, peaceful, stress, relocation, flexibility OR family
7	Re-Location	Why7_ relocation	Relocateon	Relocation

Source: own study using Nvivo Analysis 2023.

Seven main motivations to apply for a new job post were identified, as presented in Table 2. Based on the qualitative analysis of the respondents' answers content the reasons for looking for a new job under into seven categories: career development, financial motivations, work environment and culture, motivation and ambition, leadership and management, work-life balance, and relocation.

Figure 1 presents the results of comparative analyses on motivators among respondents from Portugal, Poland, Palestine, Brazil, and Mexico.
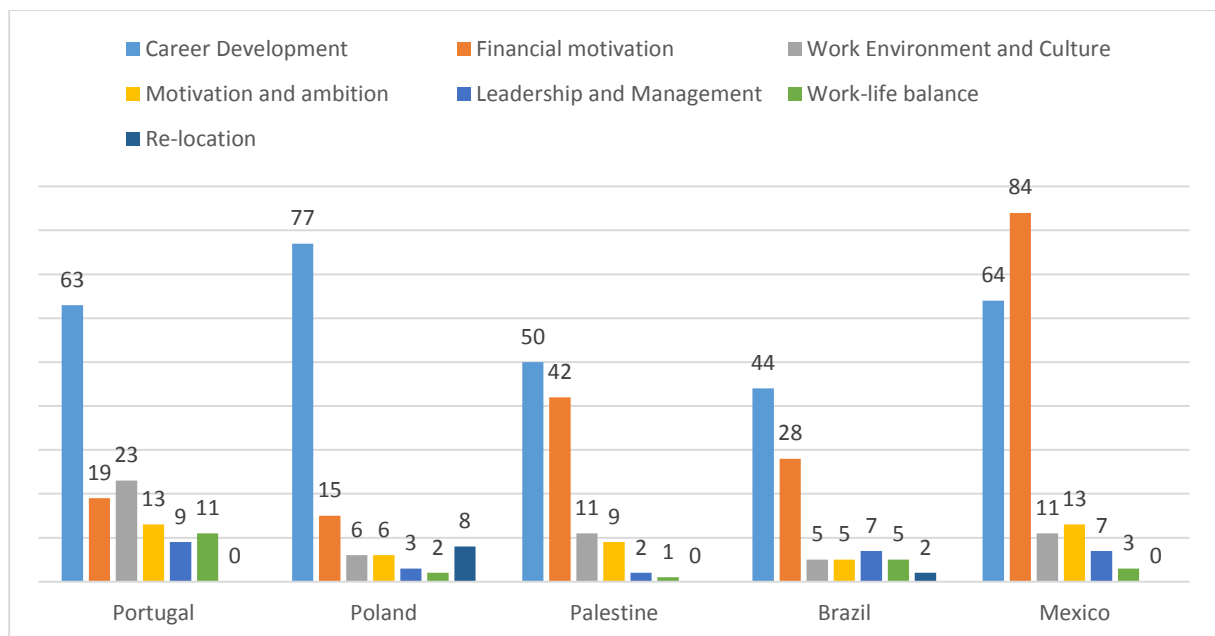
Note: Respondents might mention more than one topic in their answers. Therefore, the number of mentions for each topic should be interpreted as a count of how many times each topic was mentioned, rather than the number of respondents.

Figure 1. Motivators indicated by respondents (RQ1).

Source: own elaboration.

As was presented in Figure 1, career development is a significant motivator indicated frequently by respondents regardless of the country. It is the most important motivator to change the job in Portugal, Poland, Palestine, and Brazil. In Mexico career development was indicated very often, but more frequently financial motivation encourages respondents to change jobs. In Mexico, Brazil, and Palestine those two topics were described the most as reasons to change the workplace.

Moreover, topics covered in Portugal included work environment and culture, motivation and ambition, work-life balance, leadership and management. In Poland, a unique motivator related to relocation was identified, which is not as popular in other countries. The main topics addressed in Palestine apart from a career development and financial compensation included also motivation, ambition and work environment. Brazil prioritizes career development and financial compensation, while leadership, management, work environment, and work-life balance are secondary motivators. Mexico, shares some similarities with Palestine and emphasis on ambition, culture and work environment.

Overall, all the countries included in this study had similar main reasons for looking for new jobs including career development and financial compensation. The main difference among those countries lies in their workforce desires and issues. In addition to career development and financial motivations, employees in Portugal, Palestine, and Mexico value a good work environment, organizational culture, and opportunities for motivation and ambition. Poland stands out in the desire for relocation, what is quite unique in this international picture. Brazil slightly prioritizes leadership and management. Based on the results of comparative analyses following proposition was formulated:

Proposition 1: Career development and financial reason are the most often motivators indicated by respondents regardless the country. It would be valuable for enterprises to create opportunities to career development inside the organization to retain employees. Moreover, the control of the level of compensation can significantly reduce the probability of change the job. The future research focus on this topic could examine deeper what exactly does it mean "career development" and which ways of career development would be the most interesting for employees.

The second part of analyses refers to the codification process of respondents` answers to the question "What do you expect to your future employers?" As a result of the coding process ten main expectations were identified as significant. They are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

Expectations to future employers - Topic codebook

No.	Topic	Code	Description	Keywords
1	Leadership and management skills	What1_leader_mngt	Effective leadership and management skills with clear communication, empathy, and supportive mentorship	Leadership, competence, guidance, delegate, rules, structures, organized, clear, instructions, objectives, clarity, communication, empathy, listening, feedback, support, assistance, mentor, help, competence, decision, opinion
2	Professional development	What2_profesional_dev	Expectations for growth opportunities, career development, and learning through training, promotion, and experience	growth, development, training, promotion, entrepreneurship, experience, responsibilities, career, opportunities, improvement, knowledge, learning, competence
3	Behavioural values	What3_behvav_val	Expectations of respect, kindness, humanism, and fairness from the employer	Respect, kindness, dignity, humanism, patience, fairness, non-judgmental
4	Empathy and understanding	What4_empath_und	A workplace with a culture of empathy and understanding towards employees' needs and concerns	Empathy, understanding, life balance, well-being, health, stress, family
5	Teamwork and collaboration	What5_team_col	The expectation of cooperative teamwork, trust, and support for a collegial and cohesive work environment	Cooperation, teamwork, collegial, rivalry, together, group work, cooperation, trust, cooperative, cohesive
6	Work environment and culture	What6_work_env	A positive work environment and culture that values diversity and fosters collaboration	Atmosphere, environment, culture
7	Recognition and motivation	What7_recognition_mot	Expecting recognition for work and motivation to drive commitment	Recognition, motivation
8	Financial compensation	What8_financial	Providing economic compensation, remuneration, salary, and financial benefits	Remuneration, salary, money, income, economic, financial, compensation
9	Security and stability	What9_security_stab	Expectation for a secure and stable job with permanent employment	Stability, permanent, secure
10	Autonomy and flexibility	What10_auto_flex	Flexibility in work arrangements with options for remote, hybrid work and autonomy in decision-making	Remote, hybrid, flexibility, autonomy

Source: own study using Nvivo Analysis 2023.

As was presented in Table 3, identified expectations to future employers are related to following topics: leadership and management skills, professional development, behavioral values, empathy and understanding, teamwork and collaboration, work environment and culture, recognition and motivation, financial compensation, security and stability, autonomy and flexibility.

The results of the comparative analyses were presented in Figure 2. Firstly, general findings will be presented based on the total numbers of indications of every identified expectation. In general, employees` expectations are mainly focused on two topics. Primarily, employees

expect leadership and management skills (305 indications in total) and professional development (193 indications in total). Furthermore, employees are looking for at a new workplace behavioral values (95 indicators) empathy and understanding (95 indicators OR responses) and the possibility to collaborate in a team (88 indications). Work environment and culture were linked to several indications (65) as well as recognition and motivation (58). Some respondents noticed also financial compensation (35 indications), security and stability (20 indications) and autonomy and flexibility (19 indications).
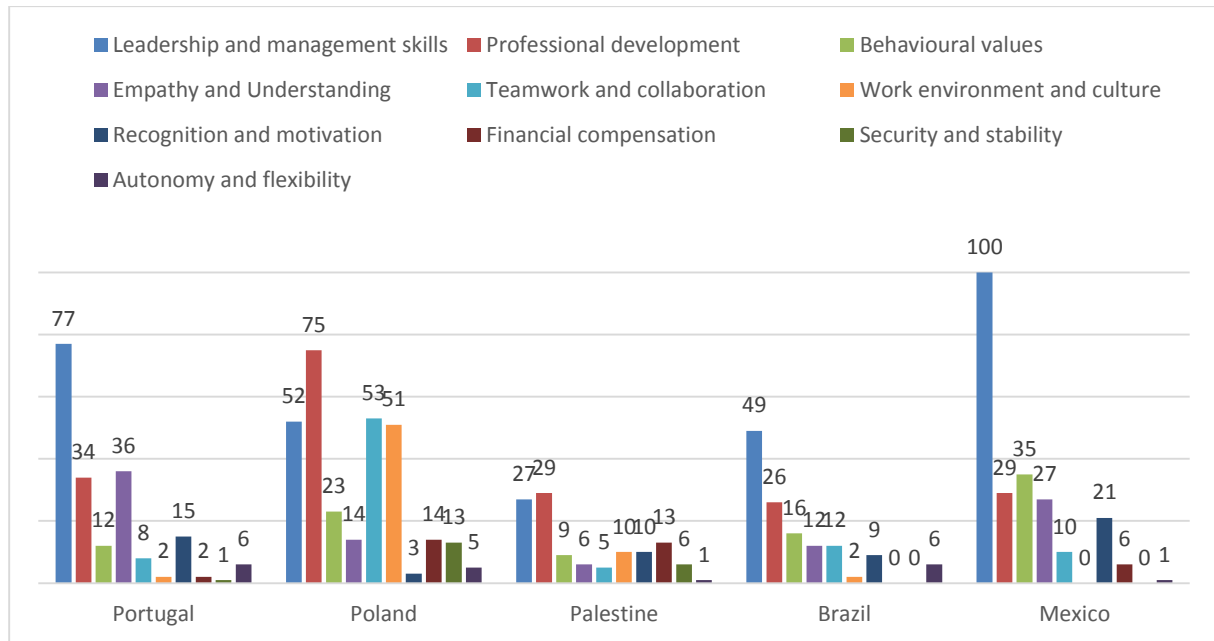
Note: Respondents might mention more than one topic in their answers. Therefore, the number of mentions for each topic should be interpreted as a count of how many times each topic was mentioned, rather than the number of respondents.

Figure 2. Expectations indicated by respondents (RQ2).

Source: own elaboration.

Figure 2 allows for the comparison of results between countries. In Portugal, employees expect to find leadership and management skills in their new enterprises. Moreover, many of them are looking for empathy, understanding and professional development. The expectation related to professional development is prominently visible in Poland. In addition to it, polish employees expect leadership, the possibility to work in a team, collaboration, good work environment and organizational culture. Respondents from Palestine expected that the enterprise will provide opportunities for career development and growth, leadership and management skills in the organization. In the second line, respondents are motivated by financial compensation, work environment, culture and recognition. Brazilians apart from leadership and management skills in a new work place are looking for professional development, behavioral values, empathy, understanding, and possibility to collaborate. The highest number of indications among respondents from Mexico significantly was related to leadership and management skills. Moreover, they explicitly expect behavioral values, professional development, empathy, understanding, motivation and recognition. Based on the results of this comparative study the following proposition can be formulated:

Proposition 2: Understanding the different employees' expectations can be valuable for enterprises to attract and retain employees. Based on insights it is possible to claim that respondents of this study expect from their future employers the most: leadership, management skills and opportunity for personal development. Countries like Portugal, Mexico, and Brazil highlight the most the importance of leadership and management skills, while countries like Poland and Palestine prioritize professional development and growth. Those insights can be an inspiration to dedicate more attention to improve leadership and management skills e.g., by trainings, educational programs, coaching or mentoring to improve those skills. Part of employees could be also included in this educational program to have an opportunity for personal development. It is worth to notice that expectation of "better salary" was not at the top of main employees' expectations. Rather, employees expect from a new organisation empathy, understanding, work and collaboration, so it is crucial to pay attention to shaping work environment and organisational culture.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this study was to identify motivations and expectations of employees who apply for a new job post. To achieve this aim, the research using an open-ended questionnaire were realized. Based on answers from 647 respondents from Portugal, Poland, Palestine, Brazil and Mexico, the study found that career advancement and financial incentives were the primary motivations for changing jobs. Moreover, leadership, management skills and personal development were identified as the most desirable expectations for employees looking for new job opportunities.

The study contributes to the existing literature on management and entrepreneurship, especially focused on relation between employees and enterprises. Findings can be valuable to develop and redesign motivation theories and organizational behaviors research. They could have theoretical contribution also in social exchange theory, which suggests that employees' motivation to remain with an enterprise is based on a reciprocal exchange of resources and benefits. The practical implications can be implemented by enterprises through redesign personal strategy by providing career advancement opportunities, improving leadership and management skills, and fostering a positive work environment and culture. Enterprises interested in understanding motivators and employees` expectations can also refer to similarities and differences across different cultural con-texts.

Despite the effort that has been put into designing this research, this study has some limitations. First, the study was conducted based on respondents from only five different countries. Therefore, there is not enough evidence for the generalization of results. Second, answers were collected using native languages and translated into English, which can create linguistic ambiguities. The third limitation was the software used to analyze the open-ended questions. There was no evidence to prove that other software would be consistent with the current NVivo software and yield the same results.

Future research can be extended in a few directions. Firstly, future research can investigate how cultural differences impact employees' perceptions of professional development opportunities. Secondly, it would be valuable to explore what exactly "professional development" means for employees and what ways of career development enterprises can implement. Moreover, interesting insight was related to leadership and management skills that employees expect from future employers. It is surprising how significantly respondents mentioned them, therefore leadership and management skills as urgent topics are recommended to explore in future research.

Frequent employee turnover caused by leaving the enterprises reduces team cohesion, makes employees feel unstable, and causes additional costs in organization (Lu et al., 2023). Accordingly, understanding employees' motivations and expectations can help enterprises reduce turnover rates and improve team cohesion and stability. Therefore, the authors hope insights about current employees' motivations and expectations will enrich the knowledge on this topic and assist organizations that face challenges in a changing and dynamic world.

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