



Department of Business and Management
Master's Degree in Strategic Management

Chair of Organization Design

**THE GREAT RESIGNATION IN THE HO.RE.CA.
SECTOR: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO
EMPLOYEE RETENTION**

Prof. Sara Lombardi

Supervisor

Prof. Daniele Mascia

Co-Supervisor

Giuditta Procaccini – 743631

Candidate

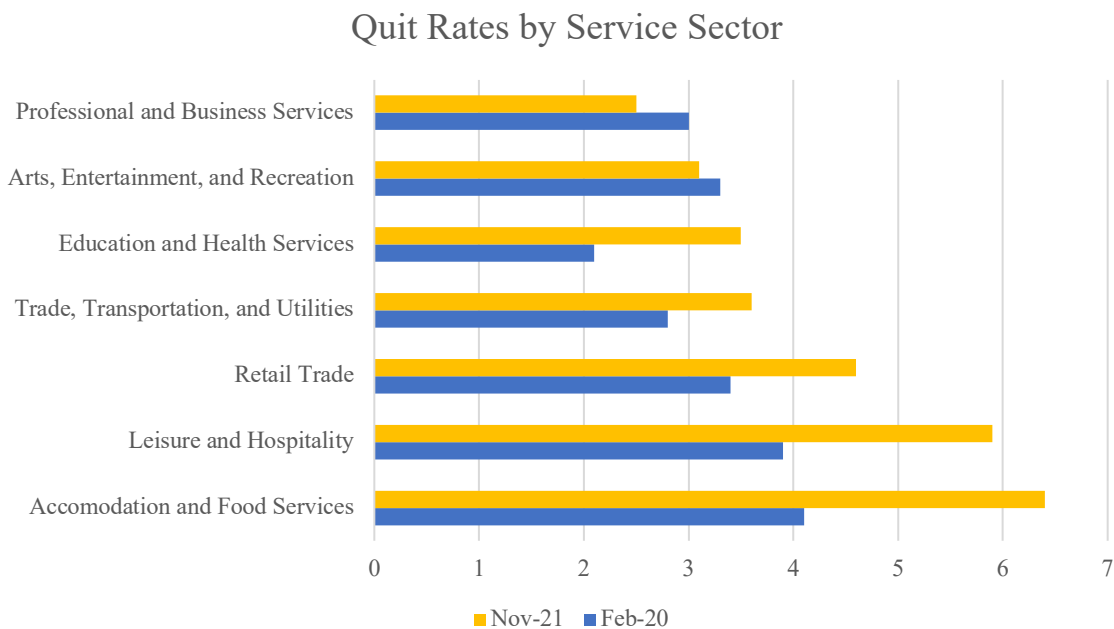
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	5
1.1 BACKGROUND AND GENERAL OVERVIEW	5
1.1.1 Covid-19 pandemic.....	8
1.2 THE GREAT RESIGNATION: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
1.2.1 Great Resignation’s main features	12
1.3 BEYOND THE GREAT RESIGNATION.....	14
1.3.1 Quiet Quitting.....	15
1.3.2 Job Hopping	16
1.3.3 Gig Economy	17
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHOD	19
2.1 EMPIRICAL SETTING	19
2.1.1 Importance of human resources in the ho.re.ca. sector.....	22
2.2 DATA COLLECTION.....	22
2.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE TARGET.....	25
2.4 INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	25
CHAPTER 3: RESULTS.....	29
3.1 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS	29
3.2 GREAT RESIGNATION’S CAUSES	31
3.3 GREAT RESIGNATION’S CONSEQUENCES	34
3.4 STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE GREAT RESIGNATION.....	36
3.5 DISCUSSION.....	39
CONCLUSION.....	42
APPENDIX.....	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY	65

INTRODUCTION

The Great Resignation is a phenomenon characterized by the progressive increase in the number of resignations of workers from their jobs¹. After the economy started to recover from Covid-19, this tendency was first seen in the USA in the second quarter of 2021 and continued to increase in the second half of the year. In particular, as shown in Graph 1, the ho.re.ca. sector is the hardest hit. Ho.re.ca is the sector commonly known as food and beverage, but in technical terms it refers to hotellerie, restaurant, and café (or catering activities).



GRAPH 1. SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, 2022

This argument is of particular interest due to the high percentage of employees that voluntarily leave their jobs. The element associated with this trend can be job insecurity, employee's burnout, mistreatment by employers, etc. This change is driven by two main factors: the search for more favourable economic conditions and the hope to find a better trade-off between private and work life. This is why the hospitality sector is facing the biggest problem: it is the most labour-intensive and low-wage sector.

On the other hand, the problem that the companies are facing is to retain the best talented employees now that the professional jobs have been left by the baby boomers. Moreover, the

¹Randstad HR Trends & Salary Survey, 2022

companies not only need to retain their best talents, but they also need to recruit new talents that will stay in the company in the long-term.

In order to understand in which way companies are facing this threat, this document is based on a critical analysis of related literature and on a qualitative research method. Indeed, this study tries to offer a critical evaluation of this current problem surrounding the Great Resignation. This article expands on its discussion by doing a thorough examination of how the companies are dealing with the phenomena and provides recommendations for overcoming current labour concerns in the hospitality industry-related challenges. The aim is to provide, with deep research, the effects that the Great Resignation has on the companies in the hospitality sector. In particular, the objective of the research is understanding in which way the companies of the target sector will face the phenomenon of The Great Resignation and which steps they will take within the organization to respond to this new challenge.

In order to answer the aforementioned research question, the thesis is based on a critical analysis of the emerging phenomenon of The Great Resignation. The analysis comprehends a literature review and a qualitative analysis. The latter is based on 10 interviews with companies in the ho.re.ca sector: four restaurants, three hotels, and three catering/cafes.

The Great Resignation is a very relevant phenomenon in recent years as it is changing the way employees work and their priorities when looking for a job. This is just one reason why it is important to study the phenomenon and why it is more important to dig deeper to discover the cause, the consequences, and the elements the companies need to face this threat. Indeed, this thesis helps understand the reasons why more and more people are deciding to leave their jobs and what are the challenges that companies are facing in retaining employees.

During the document three different prospective have been highlighted: 1) the causes of the Great Resignation; 2) the elements that contribute to employee dissatisfaction such as lack of career growth opportunities, low pay, lack of balance between private and work life and the lack of a positive work environment; 3) finally, the strategy to improve employee retention: indeed, companies that intend to retain their employees must develop an effective human resources strategy.

To explain as best as possible all the topics addressed so far, the thesis is structured in three main chapters. The first one analyses the literature review of the Great Resignation. It covered some important aspects of the phenomenon, starting with the mere definition going to other similar phenomena, like Quiet Quitting, Job Hopping and the Gig Economy. The second chapter covers two important topics: the ho.re.ca sector and the research method. The inclusion of the ho.re.ca. sector in this chapter serves as an introduction to the explanation of the research

method. This includes the description of data collection and the interview protocol used. To conclude, the third chapter includes the data analysis, the explanation of the target audience used, the analysis of the results collected through the interviews and their related discussion.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 BACKGROUND AND GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Great Resignation originated during the Covid-19 pandemic and led to an enormous economic catastrophe worldwide. In 2020, many companies had to lay off employees or reduce their working hours to cope with the crisis, causing unemployment to rise around the world. However, over the course of 2021, the global economy has started to recover, and many companies have started looking for qualified personnel to cope with the recovery. At the same time, many people have begun to reevaluate their jobs and lives during the pandemic, which has led to the birth of the Great Resignation. Indeed, most of the enterprises, especially in the ho.re.ca. sector, had to face the aforementioned phenomenon. This phenomenon is related to the need of most workers to leave their jobs to find something that satisfies better their life – e.g. a better work-life balance, better opportunities, jobs with more remote work, etc. – especially in a period of economic recovery after the pandemic. Indeed, the rules that ruled the world in the years prior to 2020 have altered, and society is trying to understand the new reality we are living in.

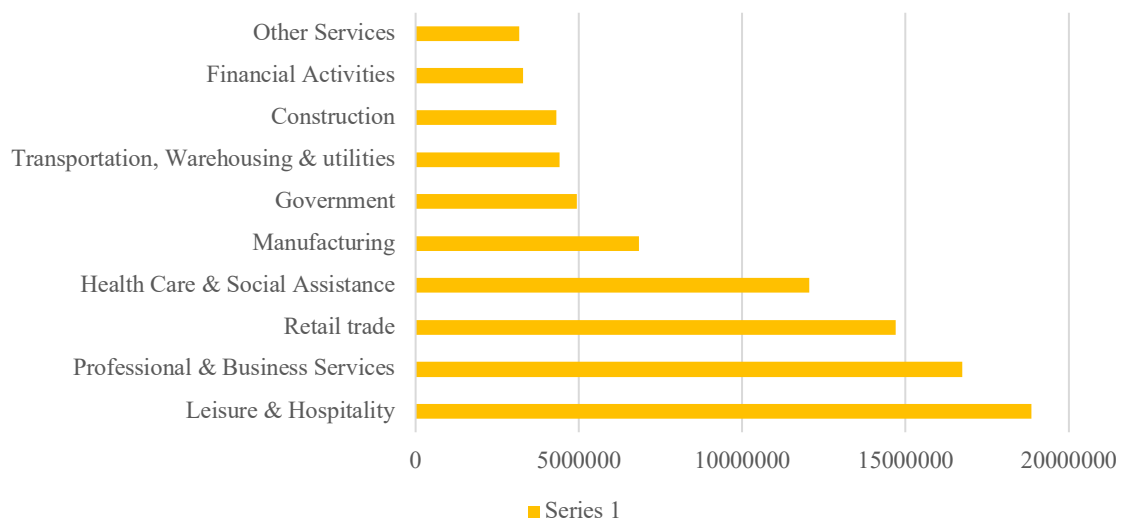
There are many reasons why people are leaving their jobs. First of all, many employees became aware of their work conditions during the pandemic, when the flexibility of remote work let them reconcile better work and private life. Many of them now are conscious that they prefer remote work and that they are not willing to go back to working in a traditional office.

Secondly, the pandemic has caused many workers to reevaluate their priorities in life, and that has included their jobs. Many people are trying to find a better work-life balance and are looking for jobs that allow them to do this. Furthermore, many workers have become aware of wage inequalities and the lack of benefits and job security and are trying to find jobs that offer better working conditions.

The economic recovery after the pandemic has created many job opportunities for workers, and many of them are trying to take them. Companies are struggling to find skilled workers, and workers are taking advantage of this situation to look for jobs that offer higher wages, better benefits and better working conditions. The Great Resignation has a substantial impact on the economy and the world of work. Companies are facing the risk of losing skilled workers and will need to find ways to attract and retain workers. At the same time, workers have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of job opportunities and find jobs that meet their needs and life goals.

The US Bureau of Labour Statistics claimed that since April 2021, close to 33 million individuals had lost their jobs (Zagorsky, 2022), reaching an all-time high. As demonstrated in the graph below (Graph 2), the phenomenon has been observed around the world, particularly in the hospitality, professional services, and retail trade sectors.

Cumulative Number of Quits in the U.S. since January 2021, by industry



GRAPH 2. SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, 2022

Moreover, during the years, there have been other historical moments where a huge number of workers – for different reasons – have decided to leave or have lost their job.

One example is the Vietnam War, when many people quit their jobs to protest the war and the capitalist system. Although the Great Resignation and the Vietnam War are two historical moments very different from each other, there are some similarities.

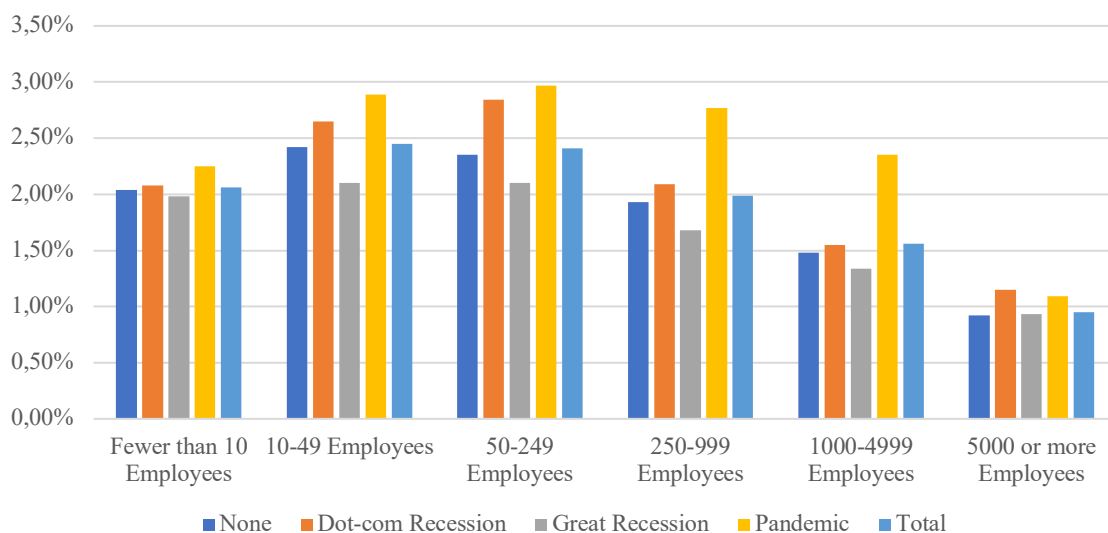
First of all, both events were motivated by a deep feeling of dissatisfaction with the system. In the anti-Vietnam war protests, many people were against US foreign policy and its effect on people's lives. In the Great Resignation, many people are dissatisfied with their jobs, working conditions, business management, work-life balance, and career opportunities.

Secondly, both events had a significant impact on society and the economy. The protests against the war in Vietnam have led to political and social instability, have caused an increase in the budget deficit, and have contributed to a climate of distrust in the government. The Great Resignation, on the other hand, is having an impact on companies in terms of staff loss, with a consequent increase in recruitment and training costs, and can lead to a change in working

patterns and company policies. Finally, both events were amplified by technology. The anti-Vietnam War protests received significant media coverage and were broadcast on television and in newspapers (Kolko, 1998). The Great Resignation, on the other hand, is gaining great visibility on social media and through the sharing of experiences and stories.

In other cases, there have been situations in which many employees lost their jobs due to economic or financial crisis. For example, the Great Recession of 2008-2009, which led to an average of 639,000 jobs lost per month in November/December 2008 in many industries, including the financial sector (Kelter, 2022); the Dot-com bubble of 2000-2001, in which many technology-related companies saw their stocks rapidly rise and then fall equally rapidly, leading to many company closures and job losses; the stagflation of the 1970s, in which the economy was stagnant and inflation was high, leading to significant unemployment and job losses. In the graph below (Graph 3) it is clear how the pandemic had the major effect on the employees; indeed, the graph shows the average quit rates, by firm size and macroeconomic event (December 2000- January 2022).

Average quits rate, by firm class and macroeconomic event,
December 2000 - January 2022



GRAPH 3. SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, 2022

However, it should be noted that these phenomena differ from the Great Resignation in that they occurred in times of economic hardship and led to job losses, while the Great Resignation occurs in a time of economic recovery and sees the people quit their jobs in search of better working conditions. The main difference is that people now can afford to leave their jobs

because they know they will find other opportunities. Previously, mainly due to the crisis, workers could not choose to change jobs to find a better work-life balance. Proof of this is also the fact that in the years of stagflation or in 2008, remote working was much less widespread or even did not exist.

Indeed, this is one of the main causes of the Great Resignation: some employees prefer to work remotely instead of the traditional office.

To review in the best possible way this phenomenon, this thesis aims to investigate the Great Resignation trying to understand the reasons behind this new reality. Further, we will dive into how managers and executives are being forced by the Great Resignation to reconsider their internal marketing and, more broadly, human resources strategies and practices.

1.1.1 COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The global economy had experienced severe cutbacks arising from Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Kuckertz et al., 2020). Measures attempted to suppress the virus by hard-hit nations around the world (such as lockdown and social seclusion) had a significant economic impact. (GDA, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic, spread all over the world starting from the end of 2019, has significantly impacted the global economy and, in particular, workers. The pandemic came as a complete surprise, and the accompanying adjustments to organizational operational procedures had a significant influence on both the labour market and the professional life of the employees. With lockdown and social distancing measures put in place to prevent the spread of the virus, many companies have had to temporarily shut down or reduce their operations, causing a significant reduction in production and profits. In June, it started a significant deterioration, indicating a drop in global GDP of 4.9% and in Italy of 12.8% (IMF, World Economic Outlook, April 2020). Confirming the serious crisis underway, the decrease is, as indicated by the National Institute of Statistics itself, "of an entity never recorded since the beginning of the observation period of the current historical series which begins in the first quarter of 1995". In addition, private consumption has decreased by more than six percentage points on both a quarterly and annual basis, according to ISTAT, and investments in plant, machinery, and armaments have decreased by 12.4% compared to the fourth quarter of 2019 and by 13.3% compared to the same period last year, respectively.

This has led to global job losses, with millions of workers facing layoffs or reduced working hours. Workers in the professional service, hospitality and tourism sectors have been

particularly hard hit, as these sectors have been among the most severely affected by the lockdown measures and falling demand.

Many workers have faced financial hardship due to loss of income and lack of job security. Furthermore, people working in precarious or low-wage occupations have been particularly vulnerable to the economic effects of the pandemic.

In reaction to the economic impact of Covid-19, many governments have adopted support measures, such as unemployment benefits and small business loans. However, despite these efforts, many workers continue to face financial hardship and uncertainty about the future of their jobs.

Most workers were required to stay at home, with limited exceptions, especially in the healthcare sector. The lockdowns related to Covid-19 have provided people with a rare opportunity to pause and reevaluate their life's purpose, relationship to work, and, most significantly, professional self-identity². Indeed, a pandemic like Covid-19 affects people and society and causes physical, psychological, social, and economic hardship in addition to its medical effects. Furthermore, the consequences (e.g. depression, post-traumatic disorder, loss of confidence, etc.) occur quickly and last long after the events that produced them.

With the introduction of smart working in particular, many companies fear that millennials who work from home are not used to social distancing and may become depressed or exhibit psychological side effects. In such cases, counsellors and psychologists have helped these young people to cope with this stage and to concentrate on work while away from the workplace. A particular type of agile work is distance learning, which has been a very stressful tool for teachers and students during the quarantine periods.

Employees have the chance to consider their work and how to start anew after the epidemic era was finished during this protracted period of isolation. There is general agreement that the pandemic's effects have had a negative impact on people's mental health, albeit to differing degrees across different demographic groups, after two years.

1.2 THE GREAT RESIGNATION: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Great Resignation is a trend that became apparent in the spring of 2021 and kept escalating in the second half of the year, just as the economy started to recover from Covid-19 and an

² *The degree to which workers identify themselves as members of their professional group (Crossley and Vivekananda-Schmidt, 2009)*

increasing number of employments became available. This phenomenon refers to a large number of workers who voluntarily leave their occupations. The Great Resignation has been marked by the abrupt departure of a remarkably high number of employees in a short period of time, even though a certain amount of voluntary turnover is always expected, and the loss of a few employees is unlikely to have a long-term irreparable impact on the performance of the organization. Because working during the time of the pandemic has significantly impacted peoples' emotive, cognitive, and behavioural processes, the reasons for resigning during the Great Resignation were different from those during the period before the Covid-19 era (Malmendier, 2021). After the company reopened, several employees chose not to return to the mandatory office presence since they preferred working from home and didn't like the arduous trips. People had the chance to reconsider their connection to work, reevaluate their long-term professional aspirations and life priorities, and understand that work should be more than just a job that pays the bills during the lockdown. They made these choices in order to move closer to family and friends, reduce burnout, appreciate the peace and quiet outside of a big metropolis, experience the desired work-life balance, or early retirement plans (Dean and Hoff, 2021). Others who left stuck with their profession and looked for new jobs in the same industry. Others, however, made the decision to avoid the labour market, which has led to a labour supply and demand imbalance. Indeed, it is normal and understandable to have a work experience gap during and even after the pandemic, due – for example – to a fear of Covid exposure.

Furthermore, the pandemic has highlighted wage inequalities and a lack of benefits and job security, which are driving many workers to look for better jobs. At the same time, many companies are looking for qualified personnel to cope with the economic recovery. However, many of them are struggling to find qualified staff due to competition between companies, remote working, and other factors.

While workers are trying to find jobs that offer more flexibility, better working conditions and more benefits, companies are trying to find ways to attract and retain skilled workers. This phenomenon could lead to more competition between companies for workers, higher wages and better working conditions.

Business executives are finding it difficult to understand what is behind the enormous exodus as the Great Resignation continues. As it is still ongoing, business executives are having a tough time understanding what is driving the massive exodus. Some of the answers include providing consistent schedules, promoting lateral career chances, remote work options, sponsoring social activities, etc. Indeed, it is important to create a relationship between the organization and the

employees. According to the knowledge-based view of the company, which maintains that knowledge is created by and resides within individuals, an organization is seen as an entity that integrates the knowledge of its individual members and employs this information in the creation of its goods and services (Grant, 1996). As long as it is correctly identified, collected, and incorporated in the production processes, organizational knowledge has a great potential for value creation (Hislop, 2003). While tacit knowledge (know-how, skills, contextual knowledge) - when it is possible - is very difficult and expensive to transfer, explicit knowledge (papers, manuals, procedures, films) may be quickly communicated among employees. Although it is believed that individual employees are the primary agents for knowledge development and accumulation, effective application of such information necessitates a high degree of specialization.

Multiple sorts of knowledge must be integrated into manufacturing processes in order to be effective and efficient. The Great Resignation has accelerated the transition to a knowledge economy, where information has emerged as a crucial differentiator determining the success of people, firms, and even governments. Therefore, in order to fully understand the repercussions of the Great Resignation on the individual, organizational, and societal levels, it is imperative to move beyond the restricting labour-shortage viewpoints. This perspective shows that the knowledge-based view of the firm perspective can be used as a lens of analysis to better comprehend the phenomenon of the Great Resignation.

The Great Resignation has had a significant detrimental impact on organizations and will continue to do so in a number of ways because turnover has long been regarded as a knowledge-based company's weakness (Daghfous et al., 2013). The Great Resignation's first and most obvious effect on businesses is knowledge loss when knowledgeable employees leave their employment (Massingham, 2018) and the organizational ability to successfully incorporate the knowledge held by the remaining employees in its business operations is jeopardized by the personnel exodus. Indeed, knowledge adds value through a variety of processes, such as enhanced creativity (Gurteen, 1998), problem-solving (Giampaoli et al., 2017), and invention (Papa et al., 2020), all of which call for specialized knowledge that is held by individuals. Additionally, large-scale, unexpected resignations obstruct the flow of knowledge within an organization. This is because organizations frequently set up formal communication channels, which could be disrupted if departing employees frequently answered questions for other employees (i.e. had the necessary knowledge and connections), or acted as nodes connecting other employees (i.e. had the know-how). In addition, relationship capital loss, which is

described as "the capacity of an organization to interact with a wide range of external stakeholders (such as customers, suppliers, competitors, trade and industry associations), as well as the knowledge embedded in these relationships" (Mention and Bontis, 2013), may also have an adverse effect on inter-organizational knowledge flows. Due to the personal relationships that departed employees had formed with the key stakeholders in other organizations, there is a loss of relational capital that may take years to restore. The sudden departure of multiple co-workers in a short period of time may negatively affect the remaining employees psychologically, leading to tension, worry, and disappointment. Employees exhibiting such poor mental states are less likely to share their knowledge with others (Isaac et al., 2021), which could make intra-organizational knowledge transfers even more difficult. Additionally, when people work together, they typically start interacting socially, form friendships based on shared interests, likes, and values, and eventually create networks of friendship connecting many employees (Sias and Cahill, 1998). Such friendship networks act as an informal route for knowledge distribution and are used for both personal and non-work-related problems (Droege and Hooper, 2003).

1.2.1 GREAT RESIGNATION'S MAIN FEATURES

Due to a lack of time and resources, companies are unable to reconstruct these informal knowledge sharing routes after unexpected resignations that occur within a relatively short time frame. Organizations may find themselves without senior, experienced personnel who can onboard, mentor, and oversee the newly hired staff as a result of the unexpected nature of these resignations. Processes for transferring organizational knowledge may be further endangered. An organization's reputation as a desirable place to work is harmed by a high resignation rate. In order to avoid these behaviours, it is important to understand the reasons that push the employees to search for other opportunities, for example:

- Lack of commitment to career development. The global Gallup study found that for a company to be considered "great", it must prioritize the personal and professional development of its employees (Clifton & Harter, 2019). However, many employers fail to provide opportunities for growth and advancement, leaving employees feeling stuck in a dead-end job (Kelly, 2022). Kruse (2022) explains that this is often due to a lack of communication from employers regarding the company's goals and strategy, as well as a failure to invest in employee development, leading to uncertainty about their future.

- Failure to value employees. Many businesses have managers and supervisors who don't care about their workers, which causes hardship and discontent (Worline & Dutton, 2017). In command-and-control organizations³, employees often experience systemic harassment, micromanagement, and abusive behaviour, which leads to disengagement from work (Matos, O'Neill & Lei, 2018). Providing care and compassion for employees is crucial for their well-being, mental health, and commitment to the organization (Clifton, 2022). When a business shows compassion and care, it consistently lets its employees know that it values them. Evidence demonstrates that when this happens, the employees' personal commitment levels increase. (Hamill, 2019). However, in the post-pandemic working environment, many employees feel pressured by supervisors to work beyond their job description, which can lead to a lack of work-life balance and a perception that the organization prioritizes its needs over the needs of its employees (Coward et al., 2014).
- Increasing employee disconnection. According to Cecilia Herbert (2022), employee belonging, which is related to employee engagement and well-being, is a crucial problem in human resource management for firms. Employee engagement and a sense of belonging are connected ideas, according to researchers and practitioners (Filstad, Traavik, & Gorli, 2019). To develop a sense of belonging, one must be more than merely an organization's member (Andejumo, 2021). Employees who feel excluded from work-related decision-making experience isolation and disengagement, which lowers morale and decreases retention (Garland, 2020). Remote workers may be particularly sensitive to issues of isolation and disconnection. According to recent Gallup data, a substantial part of employees globally feels detached from their jobs, which can further affect employee attitudes due to stress, burnout, and despair (Clifton, 2022).
- Importance of employee autonomy. Autonomy in the workplace involves giving employees the freedom to decide how they will complete their work within predefined outcomes and values, also to see if they fit within the parameters (Yang & Ok Choi, 2009). Autonomous empowerment is essential for employees to feel engaged and committed to their work. Empowering employees with autonomy enable them to make decisions about their work, leading to increased performance and job satisfaction. Contrarily, unneeded and unwanted supervisory behaviours can cause significant negative physiological and emotional

³ “Command-and-control organization” (CCO) refers to a classic organizational model where a single leader or group of leaders has total authority over all communication and decision-making inside the business. This management structure represents a top-down method in which choices are made without much input from employees or team members and are made at the top of the company and implemented at the bottom. It was used more in the past.

reactions in workers, damage relationships with others, and reduce employee commitment (Cooper, 2020). Employee autonomy has been related to higher organizational innovation and better customer service, making it a crucial element of long-term organizational success for forward-thinking firms (Burcharth et al., 2017).

- Decline in organization trust. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer (2022), confidence in organizations and in employees' leaders has sharply decreased. In a Harvard Business Review survey, 58% of respondents said they would prefer to trust a stranger than their boss, due to the decline in faith in leaders (Damron, 2018). A variety of studies have revealed that a lack of trust is the main factor affecting organizational effectiveness (Clifton & Harter, 2019). Employee commitment and leaders' trust are strongly related. When work-related issues are not addressed, employees usually become frustrated, and their lack of participation in decision-making shows that management lacks confidence in them. Leaders and organizations must be able to demonstrate leadership credibility and competency in order to develop the organizational trust that has been referred to as the "glue" for effective partnerships and productive organizations (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Brown and colleagues (2015) discovered a direct relationship between employee trust and the calibre of the company's products and services, productivity, and financial performance.

It is simple to comprehend what motivates an employee to reduce his degree of devotion to their company and look for other employment when each of these factors is considered. Because commitment to an organization and confidence in its leadership are necessary for innovation, engagement, and competitive advantage, organizations will invariably perform poorly and fail to provide the high-quality services and products that are fundamental to each firm's success (Clifton & Harter, 2019).

1.3 BEYOND THE GREAT RESIGNATION

The Great Resignation is not the only phenomenon that describes the behaviour of the employees. Indeed, there are other trends that, like the Great Resignation, create discomfort to the organizations. For this reason, it is important to introduce and explain the next trends: Job Hopping, Quiet Quitting, and – more in general – the Gig Economy.

Quiet Quitting refers to the fact that many workers are quietly and gradually leaving their jobs, rather than explicitly resigning. This phenomenon can be influenced by many factors, including lack of opportunities for growth and professional development, excessive workload, and excessive pressure at work. The phenomenon can be a sign of an unhealthy work environment,

where employees feel overwhelmed and cannot find an adequate solution to solve their problems. However, Quiet Quitting can also be influenced by external factors, such as the economic situation and the job market.

On the other hand, there is also the phenomenon of Job Hopping to include in this explanation, it refers to the phenomenon of many workers that change their jobs frequently, in some cases every few years. This phenomenon can be influenced by various factors, including the opportunity to obtain a higher salary, the possibility of professional growth and development, the search for a more satisfying work environment, or the possibility to have different working hours. Job Hopping can lead to more professional experience and a greater diversity of skills, but it can also be seen as a sign of lack of commitment and loyalty to the company, which is a negative aspect for the employers.

Additionally, the expansion of the Gig Economy has come to signify how the labour is changing. It refers to the rise in short-term contracts rather than permanent or steady roles. Many have applauded it for giving employees, companies, and clients far greater freedom as opposed to the restrictive nature of some traditional employment contracts. Customers and clients can benefit from employers' freedom to choose when and how to hire new personnel. In this way, a lot of people are able to find employment and money that were previously challenging to come by.

However, many companies are starting to reevaluate their recruitment and pay policies, offering better working conditions and professional development opportunities to attract and retain skilled workers.

So, the Great Resignation is not the only phenomenon that is influencing the world of work. Quiet Quitting, Job Hopping, and Gig Economy are also phenomena that are changing the way people think about work and professional opportunities. It is essential for companies to understand these changes and adapt accordingly to attract and retain skilled workers and maintain a healthy and productive work environment. In the next paragraphs we will see these trends in more detail.

1.3.1 QUIET QUITTING

Employees' limited commitment to perform the tasks that have been allocated to them and to renounce any responsibilities that are not part of their job description is referred to as Quiet Quitting. It also implies that little effort is put into labour tasks.

So, quiet quitters are disinterested when working and have no intention of going above and beyond the call of duty. Quiet quitters make up at least 50% of the American workforce (Harter, 2022).

Generation Z and younger Millennials are the generations most frequently represented by quiet quitters. Quiet Quitting was coined by economist Mark Boldger in 2009 and gained popularity in 2022, a year after the start of the Great Resignation, so it is not new (Buscaglia, 2022).

Low pay, demanding shift work, and lengthy hours had always been sources of employee discontent, but the epidemic had heightened their desire to seek out better employment options. Although Covid-19 has accelerated the employees' readiness to change, this need did not originate with Covid-19 in the first place. Lack of (i) sense of belonging, (ii) opportunities for learning and growth, and (iii) a connection to the organization's mission are some of the main causes of Quiet Quitting (Harter, 2022).

Silent departing is characterized by a worker's reluctance to go above and beyond the call of duty and it is typically the result of a business's failure to develop enduring bonds with its employees (Zenger & Folkman, 2022). Quiet quitters in order to protect their personal work-life balance, health, and well-being in a high-pressure work environment, reduce their effort at work (Hare, 2022).

Instead of abandoning their employment, quiet quitters reject the idea that work should rule their lives. When a silent quitter is requested to perform well but is not treated with respect by her manager, she responds by refusing to give his maximum dedication (Smith, 2022). Unfortunately, a lot of businesses frequently fail to see the importance of treating employees with respect and being committed to their professional development (Cameron, 2021).

1.3.2 JOB HOPPING

Job Hopping is a widespread phenomenon among millennials who use it to secure higher salaries and a job with a better work-life balance. It refers to a person's propensity to work in a specific position for a small period of time rather than remain with an organization for an extended period of time.

“Job Hopping is a tendency of switching over jobs in a given period of time” (Pandey, 2019). In fact, it can be challenging for someone to retire from the same company where they first began their career. Employees in private firms frequently engage in this behaviour, and more millennials than any other generation do so. Employees change jobs because they think that taking a new position will provide more prospects for financial gain or career growth than

continuing in their current position. As technology, transportation, and globalization advance, more opportunities are available everywhere. One of the main reasons why people quit their jobs is because it is now easy to search for new job opportunities online. March and Simon (1958) were the first to talk about the different aspects that affect whether employees decide to stay with a firm or quit it. The more nebulous factors for leaving a job, as they stated, can be:

- Low compensation structure
- Low potential for advancement
- Unfair treatment by management
- Conflict with the immediate supervisor/co-workers.

On the other hand, the elements considered when choosing a new job, can be:

- Potential for professional growth
- Higher wage
- Job stability
- Independence at work
- Organizational reputation
- Higher position.

Later, other research contributed to this stream of literature. For instance, Porter-Steers (1973) created a hypothesis that identified three factors that influence an individual's desire to continue working for a company. These factors are (i) organization-related factors (such as pay, promotion, job security, and organization size), (ii) job environment factors (such as the nature of the work, stress, work autonomy and responsibility, role ambiguity and conflict, and work unit size), (iii) job content variables (such as supervisory style, work unit size, and peer group interactions), and (iv) personal factors (such as personality, age, and length of tenure). Job Hopping practice is growing every day. Employers today struggle to retain employees who frequently switch jobs.

In summary, like the Great Resignation, the most popular justification for leaving a job is the desire for better chances.

1.3.3 GIG ECONOMY

The Gig Economy refers to the set of workers who work as freelancers or self-employed for multiple companies, instead of working for a single full-time employer. These workers often have multiple gigs at once and seek to maximize their flexibility and income.

The expansion of the Gig Economy has come to signify how the workforce is changing. It refers to the rise in short-term contracts rather than permanent or steady roles. Many have praised it for offering significantly more freedom for workers, companies, and clients as contrasted to the sometimes restricted nature of traditional employment contracts. Employers are free to select who and when they want to hire staff. This flexibility benefits customers and clients by making it easier than ever to get food delivery right away, engage a web developer, and hail a cab when necessary. In many circumstances, it is up to the employee to decide who, when, where, and how they work. Jobs and income that were formerly hard to come by are now accessible to many people. In particular, the Gig Economy is an economic model where companies use digital platforms to connect self-employed workers with customers in need of services. This model has become increasingly popular in recent years thanks to the growth of digital technologies and the demand for on-demand services. However, work in the Gig Economy often involves precariousness and low job security.

While the Gig Economy and the Great Resignation are distinct phenomena, there are some similarities between them. Indeed, in both cases the employees are searching for better opportunities. Moreover, both reflect a growing dissatisfaction with traditional models of work and a desire for more opportunities and freedom in choosing a job. Furthermore, both highlight the need to strike a balance between flexibility and job security, which can be difficult to achieve in the current environment.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 EMPIRICAL SETTING

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in one of the worst economic shocks in recent memory, and the ho.re.ca industry has been particularly hard hit.

The sector commonly referred to as "Food & Beverage", is known in technical terms as the ho.re.ca sector (acronym for Hotellerie, Restaurant, Cafe) and coincides with the sector of which includes the distribution of food-type products at hotels, restaurants, and cafes (item identified with catering activities). The tourist and hospitality industries have been particularly hard hit by the Covid-19 outbreak, with many closures and later reopening times than in other economic sectors. The Covid-19 pandemic rapidly affected people and environments all around the world, with significant social, psychological, and economic ramifications. Tourism and hospitality have been hit more than any other sector, with catastrophic outcomes. (Dube et al., 2020). While local and international travel decreased amid required lockdowns, the ho.re.ca. sector continued to be the most severely impacted among other industries.

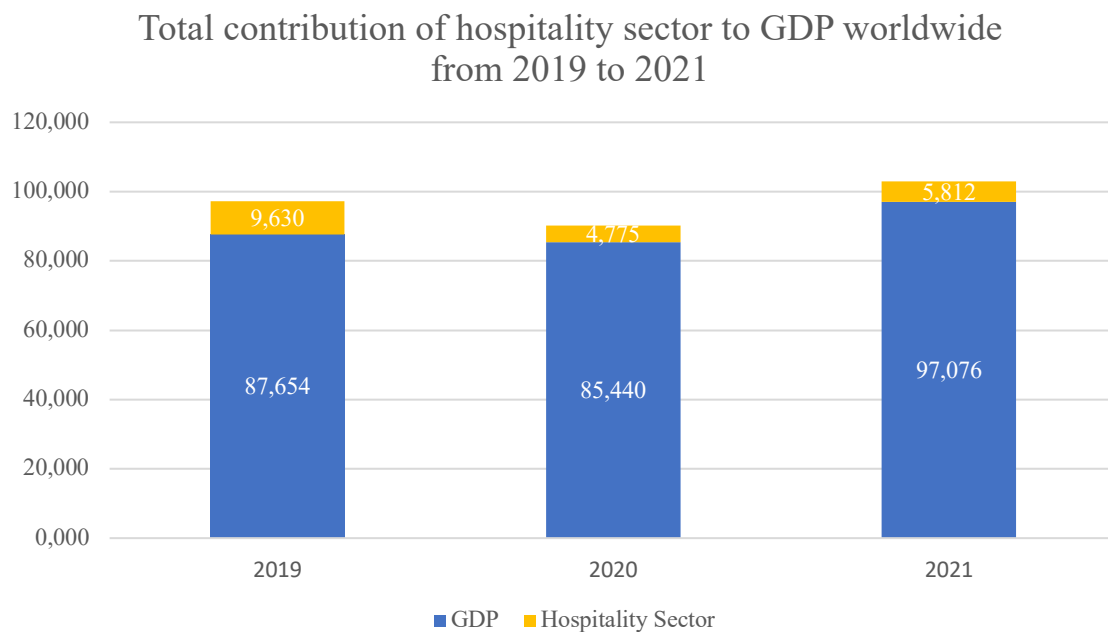
The collection of activities, services, and businesses that offer a travel experience includes attractions, transportation, lodging, dining, and drinking establishments, retail stores, entertainment, business, and other hospitality services provided to individuals or groups traveling outside of their home country (Dayananda, 2014). More specifically, ho.re.ca. is actually an aspect of the service industry. It is mainly about addressing customer satisfaction and meeting guests needs. This can be addressed by directing issues such as accommodation, services, and travel arrangements. Nevertheless, it is essential to separate the concept of hospitality into three sections for the sake of coherence and succinctness: accommodations, food and beverages, and tourism and travel. Restaurants make up a sizable portion of the ho.re.ca. industry as a whole. These locations frequently bear the hotel's branding, and depending on the amenities, some may even include Michelin-starred service alternatives. Guests often base their overall experience on the quality of food offered by restaurants.

In times of crisis, small to medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are typically the most vulnerable (Lu et al., 2020), indeed during the social and economic restrictions due to Covid-19 they were worst-hit given their size, limited resources, lack of preparedness, inability to mobilize resources strategically and limited cash flows (Runyan, 2006). Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are prevalent in industries including hospitality and food services, retail, leisure, and manufacturing that are subject to these types of societal and economic limitations

(McKinsey and Company, 2020). Moreover, frameworks for the tourism and hospitality sectors frequently focus on recovery after well-known, transient natural disasters (Becken, 2013).

Although some enterprises were already in a hazardous situation prior to the pandemic (Baum et al., 2020), the ho.re.ca. industry has been particularly disrupted by the pandemic, reiterating the warning of Sands et al. (2016) that places “dependent on travel and tourism will be more vulnerable to economic disruption from potential pandemics”.

In the following graph (Graph 4) we can see the contribution of the hospitality sector to GDP⁴ worldwide from 2019 to 2021.



GRAPH 4. SOURCE: IMF, 2022

Three key industries, including technology, telecommunications, and tourism, are driving the global economy in the twenty-first century (Adeleke, 2005).

Particularly the world's largest and fastest developing sector is the ho.re.ca. It contributes significantly to the global economy, creating millions of employments and bringing in billions of dollars. In 2019, there were roughly 16.9 million jobs in the United States alone, and travel and tourism globally supported 334 million jobs. In 2018, the hotel sector generated 1.3 million jobs, whereas restaurants in America employed 15.6 million people. In Europe, restaurants

⁴ *Gross Domestic Product*

accounted for the biggest proportion of employment (46%), closely followed by hotels (44%). These statistics⁵ highlight how crucial this industry is not only for global economic development but also for generating worthwhile employment possibilities at home and abroad, making it a vital component of modern society.

The only way the ho.re.ca. sector can grow is by attracting and retaining the skilled labour force that forms the backbone of its superb and efficient service delivery system. This industry generates a variety of employment opportunities in other industries like lodging, restaurants, bars, transportation services, travel agencies, tour operators, and places of natural and cultural interest.

However, the constraints of employment in this sector are:

- Low pay. In this sector, and in particular in Italy, the wages are lower than the European average. Employees are asking for a higher wage considering the shift they have to face, during the night, early in the morning, or during holidays
- Working conditions and long antisocial working hours. Indeed, in this industry they are different from other industries because workers have different shifts from the usual office hours and most importantly, they are always in contact with customers. In fact, this does not allow them to be able to do remote work
- Unequal treatment and discrimination. Not always there is an equal treatment for all the employees. Depending on the job, women or men can be discriminated for their gender. For example, there is a higher request of hostess than steward
- Low education and training. The poorest people may occasionally be prevented from gaining from tourism growth due to a lack of resources and education.
- Seasonality. Because there are fewer visitors during certain months of the year, the tourism and hospitality industries have to reduce their workforce.

These factors⁶ significantly lower the number of visitors, which results in a high staff turnover.

Concerned parties need to act to bring in a sustainable workforce for the growth of the tourism and hospitality industries, including academics, policymakers, and company owners.

⁵ *The Most Surprising Employment In Hospitality Industry Statistics And Trends in 2023 • GITNUX. (2023, March 23). Gitnux.*

⁶ *Aynalem, S., Birhanu, K., & Tesebay, S. (2016). Employment Opportunities and Challenges in Tourism and Hospitality Sectors. Journal of Tourism & Hospitality, 05(06).*

2.1.1 IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN THE HO.RE.CA. SECTOR

The ho.re.ca. industry employs a sizable number of people, and it is quite labour-intensive. It is among the top industries in the world for creating jobs with a range of skill requirements and facilitating fast entry into the labour force (International Labor Organization, 2010).

The tourism and hospitality industries generate a large number of work opportunities in a range of locations, such as housing, transportation, and tourist attractions. Therefore, having employees is a must for the tourism industry, and having employees available is essential to the success of any plan or program for the sector's expansion.

The worst and most evident effects of such a situation are the difficulty in finding qualified employees and high staff turnover, which are detrimental to the industry's development. Workers in the tourism and ho.re.ca. industries have received less of the proper attention. However, the personnel is the engine that drives an excellent and effective service delivery system. As a result, these workers are without a doubt the most crucial resources for the business.

There are two keyways to express the connection between human resources and hospitality. First off, the hospitality sector can only grow if it has access to a sufficient pool of qualified workers. The second issue involves how managers, customers, and vice versa should handle employees in accordance with social equality and fairness. The professionalism of the staff has a big impact on how well tourists are treated and how they view a place.

2.2 DATA COLLECTION

Normally, research techniques are traced to specific methods, traditionally divided into quantitative and qualitative.

Qualitative research aims to collect data in non-numerical form. It usually returns more in-depth information than that obtained through quantitative research, as it aims to identify deep-seated reasons, opinions, and motivations. While quantitative research by definition covers a large number of cases, qualitative research is often based on in-depth studies of one or a few cases. While the quantitative method is codified in rules derived from statistics, on how to select cases and then how to analyse the data collected, the qualitative method, on the other hand, is extremely composite, so much that it is considered a residual category, defined through its not-being a quantitative method (Silverman 2006).

The key differences between these two kinds of research techniques are explained in Figure 1.

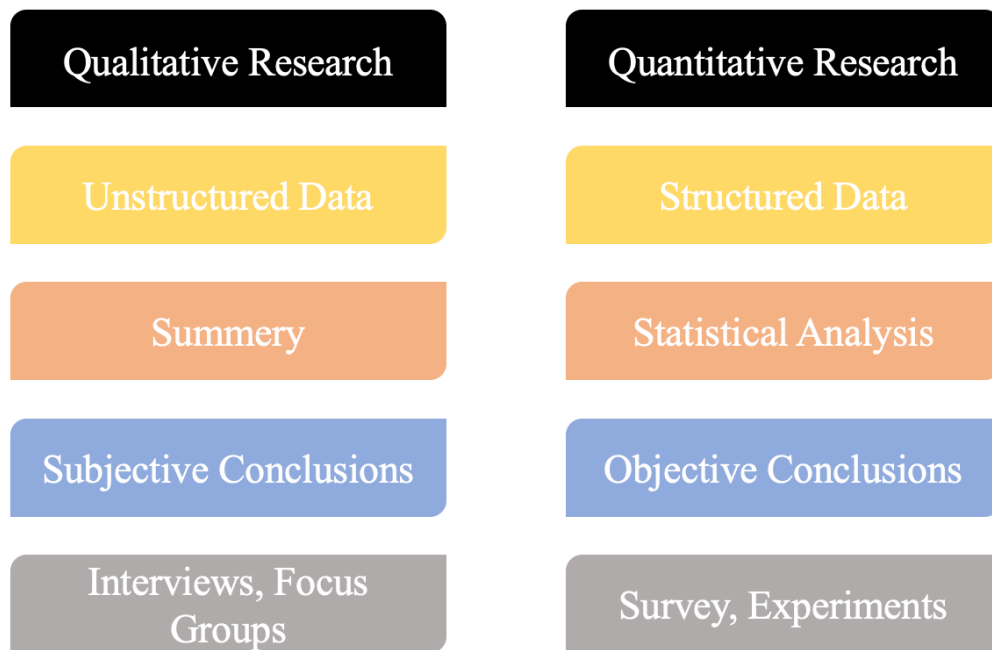


FIGURE 1. SOURCE: SILVERMAN, 2006

Going deeply, a qualitative study is a collection of interview data, studying archival sources or other text-based material in order to interpret and analyse such material.

Qualitative interviewing plays a central role as an information-gathering method and as a triangulation strategy with other methods, in particular it is crucial to the study of political and social sciences. For this reason, qualitative research is called naturalistic, as it considers natural social events occurring in natural contexts. Those involved in this kind of research see their role in social research as a tool for collecting qualitative data. These are types of data that offer subjective information to researchers. Although they are not objective facts, it is possible to interpret these qualitative data to come to useful conclusions that provide more context. For this reason, qualitative research is considered explanatory, and it is often used in social research because it provides insight into behaviours and actions. It is an essential tool of empirical research: "it is the succession of information to produce answers to questions about reality" (Ricolfi 1997). In fact, it is more useful for accumulating knowledge than for testing abstract theories. We can thus define an interview as a technique or procedure used to collect data.

The semi-structured interview represents the most widely used form of qualitative research, but it is only one of the forms through which research can be conducted. Qualitative interviews can vary in terms of structure, number of participants, and modes of communication, as well as according to the interviewer's various communication styles. Each form has its benefits and drawbacks (Leavy, 2014). The most important distinction is between structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews:

- Structured interviews are commonly employed in surveys and typically have the same justification as questionnaires: it is thought that participants will respond similarly to questions when they are asked in standardized ways (Leavy, 2014). Interviewers are instructed to repeat the questions aloud to each responder exactly as written and to stick to the information provided in the questionnaire (Conrad, 2008). While structured interviews have their uses, they do not fully tap into the dialogic potential for knowledge creation that exists in natural human interactions. The problem is that this kind of interview is useful for surveys and questionnaires but sees its greatest limitation in the production of knowledge and does not allow for in-depth exploration of all the aspects that might emerge within a conversation.
- Interviews without a set structure are at the other extreme of the spectrum: unstructured interviews. This type of interview is used, for example, in order to highlight influences, experiences, circumstances, issues, etc. The interviewer cannot prepare a list of specific questions in advance because these aspects of a person can only be discovered during the interview itself (Leavy, 2014). Instead, the interviewer must consider how to make the sharing of the life narrative easier. Therefore, the interviewer's primary responsibility is to listen, interject, and occasionally offer questions that can help to explain the story (Leavy, 2014). It is then the interviewee herself who conducts the interview, directing main themes and topics. They turn out to be completely at odds with the objective of the research work. Indeed, they are useful for telling personal dynamics and life stories, certainly not corporate organizational dynamics.
- Semi-structured interviews are sometimes likened to qualitative interviewing in this way (Warren, 2002). In comparison to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews might make better use of conversations by giving the interviewee useful latitude to explore all the topics they feel are significant. In addition, rather than hiding behind an interview guide, the interviewer is more likely to emerge as a participant in knowledge generation during the interviewing process itself (Leavy, 2014). Thus, the interviewer has a say in how the talk is focused on topics that are pertinent to the study project in her opinion.

For the aforementioned reasons, the semi-structured format is the type of interview that was used for the present thesis, with the purpose of serving the research question.

2.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE TARGET

The description of the channels used to collect the interviews and the analysis of the sample represent a key step in the account of the empirical research carried out. In order to contact people working in the ho.re.ca. sector who were willing to talk about the organizational dynamics of the company in which they work, we decided to send each of the target companies an email in which we asked for availability for a short interview in order to answer some questions related to the phenomenon of the Great Resignation. Importantly, in order to ensure the confidentiality of the information, we informed the companies that the interviews would be published anonymously. The appendix, included at the end of the thesis, contains all the interviews' transcripts.

In order to have a substantial number of interviews, we sent the email to 25 companies, 10 of which confirmed their availability for the interview; some of the remaining companies did not give their availability and the others did not respond to my request.

The next step, after receiving the availability, was to organize video call sessions lasting about twenty minutes in which the interviewees answered questions from the interview protocol presented in the previous chapter. At this point, it is possible to proceed in detailing the sample analysed. The sample consists of ten respondents from ten different companies in the ho.re.ca. sector. Four of them belong to the restaurant industry, three to café/catering, and three to the hotel industry. The employees who allowed me the interview, in order to be consistent with the purpose of the thesis, are general managers of the interviewed establishment or human resources representative figures. In addition, we decided to have a homogeneous sample in order to have consistent responses among them; in fact, all the ten companies have more than one hundred employees and are part of companies with two or more facilities.

2.4 INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

After defining the qualitative research and especially the semi-structured interviews, it is important to analyse the interview protocol. This, indeed, was submitted to each of the 10 participants. The questions of the interview protocol are as follows in Table 1:

1	Question	You have probably heard of the Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?
	Probe Question	In your opinion, what can the phenomenon of the Great Resignation be caused by? What are the main motivations that are fuelling it?
	Source	Serenko, A. (2022). The Great Resignation: the great knowledge exodus or the onset of the Great Knowledge Revolution? <i>Journal of Knowledge Management</i> .
2	Question	Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?
	Probe Question	As a result of Covid-19, did you notice a higher turnover rate? Did it seem unusual compared to the past or were you expecting it?
	Source	Amanor-Boadu, Vincent. (2022, November). <i>Empirical evidence for the “Great Resignation” : Monthly Labor Review: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics</i> .
3	Question	If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?
	Probe Question	If you have not addressed it directly, do you still think it could have an indirect impact on your company (e.g. lack of figures such as, for example, the sales manager)?
	Source	Aynalem, S., Birhanu, K., & Tesefay, S. (2016). Employment Opportunities and Challenges in Tourism and Hospitality Sectors. <i>Journal of Tourism & Hospitality</i> , 05(06).
4	Question	How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?
	Probe Question	On which aspects do you intend to act first and foremost? For example, on employer branding (how I communicate what makes my company unique), on the ability to attract human resources; on revising the organizational structure (e.g. streamlining the structure to make it less hierarchical and more flexible); on human resource management (e.g. revising or incorporating staff development programs, incentive systems, training programs, human capital enhancement, etc.); on rethinking organizational values and how you communicate them to staff?
	Source	Liu-Lastres, B., Wen, H., & Huang, W.-J. (2022). A reflection on the Great Resignation in the hospitality and tourism industry. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i> , 35(1).
5	Question	To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?

TABLE 1. SOURCE: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

As previously anticipated, the semi-structured interview seems the format most consistent with the objective of the research work. Indeed, this format guarantees freedom of action to the interviewer in changing the order of questions and in managing the conversation. In addition, semi-structured interviews allow, through probe-defined questions, to lead the interviewee back

to the subject matter of the interview in case the focus is shifted to topics outside the initial purpose. Finally, it was decided to consider this methodology because the dialogue could lead to aspects and factors not considered in the research work that represent, however, the reality of the facts.

Before starting the interview protocol, it is mandatory to ask the interviewees to register the interview and to be diplomatic and discreet. We also have to take care to ensure that the interview is focused on the research questions, that it is comprehensive and does not contain questions that allow the informant to answer "yes" or "no", in order to allow the interviewer to respond fully.

The interview protocol consists of five questions, each carefully designed to describe the different aspects faced by the interviewed companies after the Great Resignation. The goal of the interviews is precisely to bring out the reality of the facts that can only be told by the people who administer the company as a whole or the figures responsible for human resources. Let us now dive into the different questions asked within the protocol to make the objective of each question clear.

The objective of the first question is to understand what elements the respondent companies are blaming for the Great Resignation. The key to the question is trying to capture whether the company is blaming the youth or their human resource management. The blame that the young people might have could be, for example, that they do not want to work or are not committed to the work they are doing – practicing Quiet Quitting.

The second is a question with the purpose of understanding how the phenomenon is directly impacting the reality of the interview company. In fact, through this question it will be clear if and how companies are facing changes after Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, it is important to understand what elements have most highlighted changes due to this phenomenon. One example, in addition to the fact that employees have left their jobs, may be workers' requests to switch from full to part-time.

The third question was included to complement the previous one. In fact, after asking whether Great Resignation is directly impacting the respondent company, it is important to understand how it is doing so. In particular, what disruptions it is creating within the company. For example, the difficulty in finding and training skilled personnel.

The next question is a more direct and practical question. In fact, through the company's responses we want to grasp whether and how the company itself is dealing with the challenge, what elements and incentives they are putting in place to retain staff.

Examples may include:

- Employer branding, the way a company communicates what elements make it unique
- Ability to attract human resources
- Review of organizational structure (e.g. streamlining the structure to make it less hierarchical and more flexible)
- Human resource management (e.g. incorporating staff development programs, incentive systems, training programs, human capital enhancement, etc.)
- Rethinking organizational values and the way it is communicated to staff.

Finally, with the last question we would like to cover all the aspects that the interviewee can cover with his knowledge about the phenomenon.

Through a careful analysis of the above questions, it will be possible to answer the research question: understanding in which way the companies of the target sector will face the phenomenon of the Great Resignation and which steps they will take within the organization to respond to this new challenge.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

Let us proceed to elaborate on what findings emerged within the qualitative research.

As mentioned in the next paragraph, we used narrative analysis in order to collect and analyse all the results. In the analysis of the responses obtained, it was decided to focus on a few points deemed of interest for the research work and the objective initially set by the following paper. To answer the research question, we begin by analysing why, according to the companies, the phenomenon of the Great Resignation exists and what consequences it is having on them. Through this analysis we can then define the steps that companies are taking to respond to this threat.

3.1 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Before analysing the results that emerged from the interviews, it is important to show how the data were collected. It is a technique called narrative analysis. Social scientists are interested in employing narrative analysis as a way to better understand the social environment and the collection of data, despite the fact that it has its roots in literary theory and is strongly related to media and cultural studies (Rosenweld and Ochburg, 1992). This interest in narratives is a part of a larger trend in social sciences that is moving in the direction of "interpretive turn." (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1979). By giving weight to the informants' interpretations, the methodology avoids the theoretical conceit that drives academics to impose their readings of the interviewees. Because the research is founded on the researchers' interpretations, as well as the structures and processes that the informants employ to create the meaning of their experiences, the method of research is known as "interpretative research" for this reason among others.

The first important thing to point out is that qualitative data analysis is not carried out to affirm existing concepts as much as to give voice to the interviewees and discover new concepts. Indeed, when regarded as a unit, informant and researcher enable not only a qualitatively rigorous demonstration of the relationships between the data and the induction of this new notion but also the kind of insight that is the distinguishing feature of high-quality qualitative research. But being so close to the informants' experiences has drawbacks as well. One of the key ones is the danger of "going native", or adopting the point of view of the informant, and losing the broader viewpoint required for well-informed thinking.

Going on, according to LeCompte and Schensul (1999), narrative data analysis is a process used by researchers to reduce data to a story and interpret it to derive insights. A big amount of

data can be divided up into smaller pieces using the data analysis process. Throughout this procedure, three crucial things happen: data organization; summarization and categorization in order to identify, link, and reduce data; data analysis. Data is nothing more than the response to the question that underlies this study. So, a good data analysis must be based on a precise and concise research question, such as the one proposed by this paper – understanding in which way the companies of the target sector will face the phenomenon of the Great Resignation and which steps they will take within the organization to respond to this new challenge – and, as mentioned earlier, it must be based on semi-structured interviews to obtain retrospective and real-time reports from the researcher.

One of the most important things we must do while analysing data is to keep an open mind and not make assumptions about unanticipated patterns, expressions, and outcomes. When data analysis is started, it might sometimes reveal the most unexpected stories that were not anticipated. The narrative analysis method is specifically used to examine data acquired from a variety of sources, including surveys, in-person interviews, and field observations. In this case, it was used to analyse personal interviews.

In addition, in order to pay attention to protocol revision as the research proceeds, data preparation will consist of the next phases:

- Validation of data. This is done to determine whether the sample of data that was obtained adheres to the pre-established standards or is skewed. There are three distinct stages to it:

- Screening: Ensuring that each responder or participant is picked in accordance with the study criteria
- Procedure: Ensuring that moral principles were upheld while the data sample was being collected.
- Completeness: ensuring that each response has addressed every inquiry

- Editing data. An extensive study data sample typically contains a lot of mistakes. The researchers must ensure that the submitted data is free of these problems during the data editing procedure. During the collection of the results, we will modify the raw edit and prepare material for analysis, do checks and outlier analyses.

Furthermore, knowing the literature thoroughly too early can put blinders on and result in prior hypothesis bias ("confirmation bias"), hence it may be beneficial to avoid doing so in order to conduct a competent data analysis. One may alternatively refer to this attitude as "willing suspension of belief" or "witting ignorance" of prior theorizing in the field of interest because it's crucial to never be fully ignorant of prior work. In particular, in order to exploit in the best possible way the narrative analysis, we decided to divide the results in three fundamental stages:

the causes of Great Resignation, the consequences it has created, and how companies are facing and will face in the future this challenge.

3.2 GREAT RESIGNATION'S CAUSES

Through the interviews, it was possible to highlight which elements led workers more than others to change jobs, to ask to switch from full to part-time and, more generally, to change lifestyles.

The main causes include Covid-19, the ho.re.ca sector shifts, the citizenship income, and the fact that the hospitality sector is not a professionalizing sector. These elements are described in more detail below.

- *Covid-19*

It is clear from the interviews (6/10 opinion) that one of the main causes of the Great Resignation is the pandemic that broke out in late 2019 and still affects a portion, albeit minor (6%⁷), of the Italian population. In addition to the health consequences, in fact, Covid-19 had a lot of psychological effects on people. In particular, many workers valued the time spent at home, devoted to family, hobbies, or simply enjoying leisure time. In fact, for many people it has become more important to have a higher quality of life, perhaps by giving up the working part. During the pandemic, it was difficult to manage the work-life balance: workers worked in attendance and had to cope with the problem of children's distance learning, layoffs, rigid and stressful protocols during working hours, the danger of infection and transmission of the virus to colleagues and loved ones; many mothers, many off-site students, some particularly emotionally or physically fragile workers, have left the workplace because they were forced by the contingent situation, because they were stressed or because they were unable, throughout the emergency phase, to take advantage of special conditions such as smart working. It is for these reasons that workers who returned to work after Covid-19 had a lot of difficulty accepting that they no longer had that much time to devote to activities other than work and requested to work part-time or even quit their jobs. For these reasons, companies are finding it difficult to hire qualified personnel. It is as if Covid-19 has cut off the spirit of enterprise, there is no longer the drive to do better, there is a lack of enthusiasm. To do something, you have to fall in love

⁷ Salvioli, L. (2023, May 12). *Coronavirus in Italia, i dati e la mappa*. *Wwww.ilsole24ore.com*.

with your work a little bit, especially because every job hides pitfalls and sacrifices. In addition to this situation that hit every sector, the ho.re.ca. in particular is the most affected. It is different from the other sector, going from the working hours to the low salary. Many people indeed realized that the tourism industry was fragile because the virus created hardships especially for this sector, this caused many to move into sectors that were growing more (e.g. large-scale distribution and logistics).

- *Inconvenient shifts*

As anticipated earlier, the hours of this industry are different from those of other jobs (such as a salesperson or classic office jobs). In this sector, in fact, employees must be ready to work on holidays or at 6 a.m. or even until 2 a.m. Some companies, given a choice, decide to respect the work-life balance of their employees by closing just before the subways close or by allowing employees not to work on holidays; others, on the other hand, in order to make the most of revenue, decide to stay open late. Hotels, for example, try to organize shifts as best as they can to not allow an employee to have two nights in a row or early morning shift.

- *Citizenship income*

Citizenship income is an economic support provided by the state to those who are in a situation of poverty or economic hardship. It aims to ensure sufficient economic support to meet basic needs, such as food, housing, and other essential expenses. Citizenship income has been introduced in many European countries as a measure to combat poverty and social exclusion. However, it has been the subject of political debate as some argue that it may disincentivize people from seeking work. Indeed, many of the companies interviewed complain that many workers rather than take extra pay working, prefer to stay at home and get the citizenship income. This is one of the biggest causes of the Great Resignation in Italy.

- *Not professionalizing sector*

The ho.re.ca. industry is not often considered as a professionalizing sector. This is because many positions within the industry do not require special skills or specific professional training. The trend is that the ho.re.ca. is not seen as a professionalizing sector (it does not give opportunities of growth and it can be done just in a restricted age) because it does not give a growth perspective. However, there are some exceptions, such as roles as chefs, sommeliers, or restaurant managers, which require specific training and specialization. It is important to note

that the sector's lack of professionalization can lead to precarious working conditions and low wages, which can be a challenge for many workers. In addition, many think that the ho.re.ca. sector, and especially the restaurant industry, does not allow employees to grow within the company. Employees therefore feel that they do not have the opportunity to be able to advance their careers and leave their jobs. In particular the problem is that these kinds of jobs are considered as stopgaps that you only do for a period of your life. It is difficult for the companies to keep the collaborators close because they have a short life cycle (around three years). These jobs, in fact, can be seen as repetitive and strenuous work because employees are always in contact with the public and working very busy.

The table below (Table 2) summarizes the above-mentioned elements, reporting some citations of the interviewed employees.

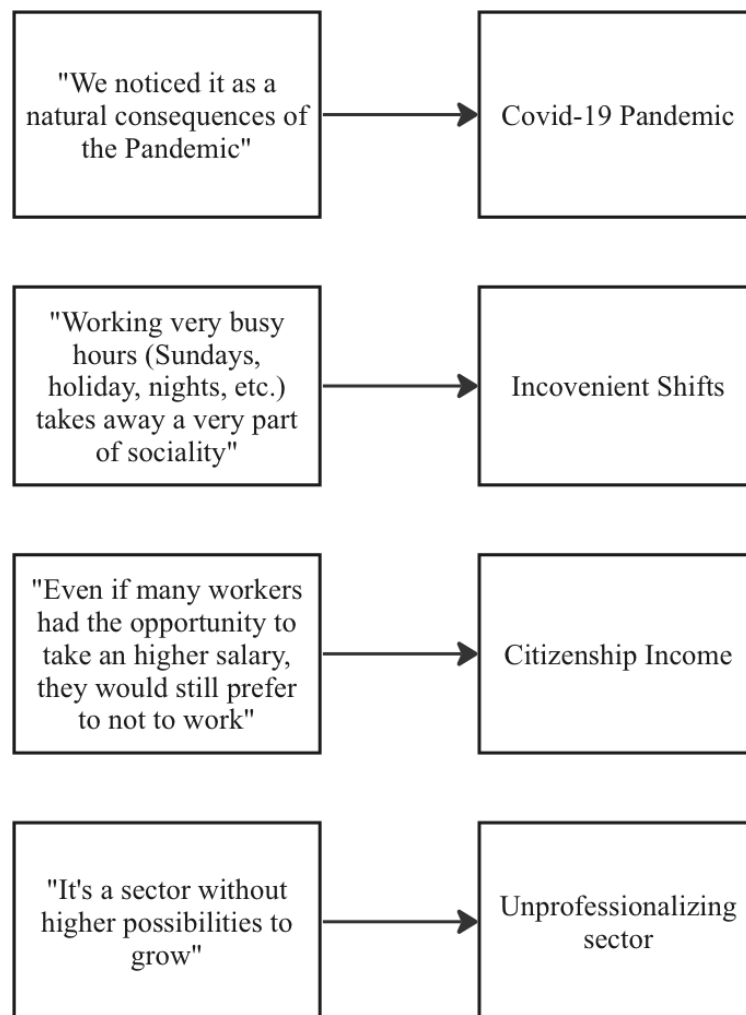


TABLE 2. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GREAT RESIGNATION'S CAUSES. SOURCE: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

3.3 GREAT RESIGNATION'S CONSEQUENCES

To better explore how companies plan to deal with the Great Resignation in the future, it is important to know how this phenomenon is impacting them.

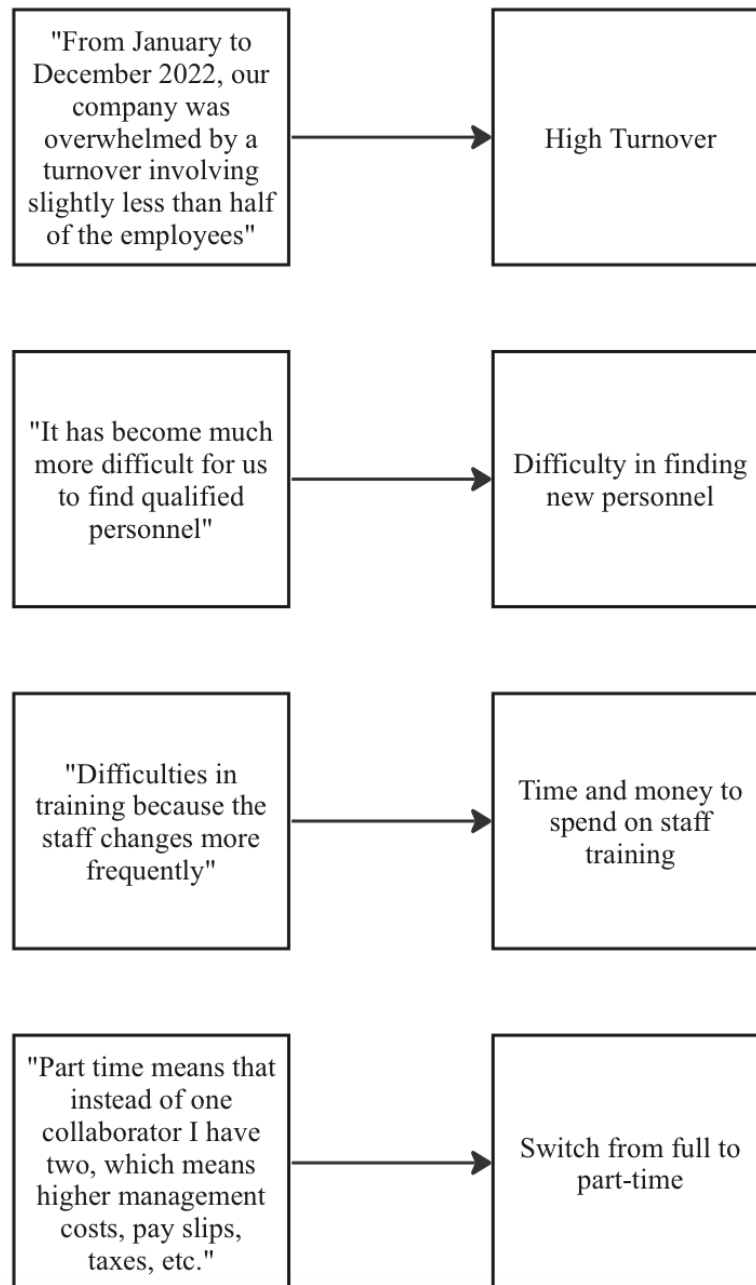


TABLE 3. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GREAT RESIGNATION'S CONSEQUENCES. SOURCE: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

As can be seen from the table above (Table 3), the consequences for companies are varied. In particular, the elements that create the most distress are high turnover, difficulty in finding new staff, the time that has to be devoted to training new staff, and the handling of requests to switch from full to part-time. Below, therefore, we look at these issues in detail.

- *High turnover*

This is probably one of the most significant consequences of the Great Resignation. The main problem created by this phenomenon is that people have left the workplace and created a huge inconvenience for companies. In addition, as we will see shortly, to fill vacancies companies are struggling greatly. This element is also related to the time when the jobs became vacant, for example opening summer seasons, because many young people go for seasonal periods outside the city.

- *Difficulty in finding new personnel*

Given the causes listed in the previous paragraph, one of the major consequences of the Great Resignation, especially in the questioned companies (9/10 opinion), is certainly the difficulty in finding new employees. In particular, the difficulty is not only in finding new employees, but more importantly in finding qualified candidates who are committed to staying within the company. Quite often, in fact, candidates promise to show up for jobs or interviews without actually showing up or cancelling. Many people are now less attracted to this industry, preferring to open their own businesses. The lack of personnel has caused, sometimes, the reduction of services offered; in hotels, for example, it meant that the employer could not make all the rooms available.

- *Time and money to spend on staff training*

Tying in with what was written previously, a big problem is the time that companies spend on training the employees. In fact, the problem is not just related to finding new employees, but also to the energies the employer needs to spend in order to train the workers, also because staff changes frequently. Moreover, in many cases, once trained, employees leave the workplace, creating even more hardship for the company. The money spent for the training included also, beyond the mandatory training, the rise in the salary of the experienced employees that work more hours to educate the new employees. This implies that companies have to make qualified employees work harder to train the new ones and thus pay them a higher salary. Costs therefore increase exponentially.

- *Switch from full to part-time*

One issue that arises in talking with respondents includes the request of many workers to switch from full to part-time. This request is one of the major consequences of workers wanting more free time and/or more time to devote to family or, more generally, to private life. This request

creates discomfort for companies because firstly, employers cannot give precedence to those who prefer to work only in the morning or those who prefer to work only in the evening; they have to create shifts that suit everyone, without making exceptions. In addition, with part-time jobs the company has higher costs: instead of having one employee it has two, resulting in taxes and other costs to be paid.

3.4 STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE GREAT RESIGNATION

To conclude, let's look at how companies are trying to respond to this common threat. In fact, all the companies in the surveyed industry face at least one of the elements mentioned in the previous paragraph. Companies, in order to stop turnover, must be able to develop medium to long-term strategies that, along with business objectives, are aimed at retaining talents. Therefore, each of them is implementing initiatives to increase the retention of their employees and to attract new candidates.

As with the previous paragraphs, it is important to go into detail about what these elements are:

- *Structuring the week 5/7 instead of 6/7*

With the aim of giving employees more time off, some companies are introducing 36-hour weekly shifts instead of 40-hour shifts. This gives employees, with the same salary, the opportunity to have two days off per week instead of one, as before.

- *Salary bonuses*

The two main reasons for the Great Resignation in the ho.re.ca. sector are twofold: wages that are too low in comparison to the European average and to workers' effort, and the need for more free time and thus a better work-life balance. The latter problem is being addressed by companies as described in the previous point; as for wages, however, some companies are moving accordingly. In fact, some of the companies interviewed, to reward employees who have continued to work also during Covid-19, have decided to introduce bonuses or raise as a percentage in salary.

- *Reward employees*

In addition to salary increases, as described a short while ago, there are many initiatives that companies are pursuing. Some initiatives are, for example, birthday bonuses, company parties, discounts in partner stores or in facilities of the same chain. One of the interviewed companies,

for example, in order to invest in employee retention has inaugurated the collaborator of the month. The employees vote anonymously, and the winner wins a parchment, a brooch, and the possibility of being recognized by the public, thus there is an enhancement of the figure of the collaborator also in the world of work. At the end of the year there will be a competition among the best collaborators of all the structures and the winner will have the chance to win a weekend in Europe. In this section, we also have to consider the strategies of some companies that are trying to increase the level of attention towards their employees through targeted interviews: leaders are trained to understand the new needs of resources, personal and professional, collect continuous feedback that will subsequently allow directors to define new policies for building work groups, to draw new search and selection criteria, new grading and pay policies. This allows us to understand that not always, for example, the most secure contractual form for candidates guarantees the company to retain the resource over time.

- *Career opportunities within the company*

An important point that some of the facilities surveyed allow is career growth within the company. In fact, one of the biggest causes of the Great Resignation is precisely the fear of employees that they will not advance their careers because of the industry in which they work. Many facilities, on the other hand, allow this possibility. Indeed, it is the goal of many of the companies to retain staff and allow them to explore different positions within the company. For example, one of the interviewed hotel permits employees to plug into a company's platform and through even the help of the HR manager, formulate their own growth path through modules and tools. Many are software that deal with various hotel activities, from loyalty programs to issue management to sustainability. Training is fundamental to convey the employees to the direction in which the company intends to go in the coming years.

- *Strengthen recruitment on dedicated sites or universities*

To counter the difficulty in finding new personnel, some companies aim to increase their advertising in dedicated sites; others seek personnel in universities or other specialized facilities. The most commonly used sites are LinkedIn, Indeed and InfoJob. Other platforms, however, are widely used for this type of notice, such as social media – Facebook, Instagram and/or TikTok. Some of the intervening companies by increasing advertising on these sites, have indeed noticed an increase in applicants. Moreover, some of the companies interviewed, in addition to posting job offers on dedicated sites, have decided to turn to external agencies

that can then implement the company’s existing strategies or introduce new ones to attract new candidates.

In the table below (Table 4) there is the summary of the aforementioned elements, with some citations taken from the interviews:

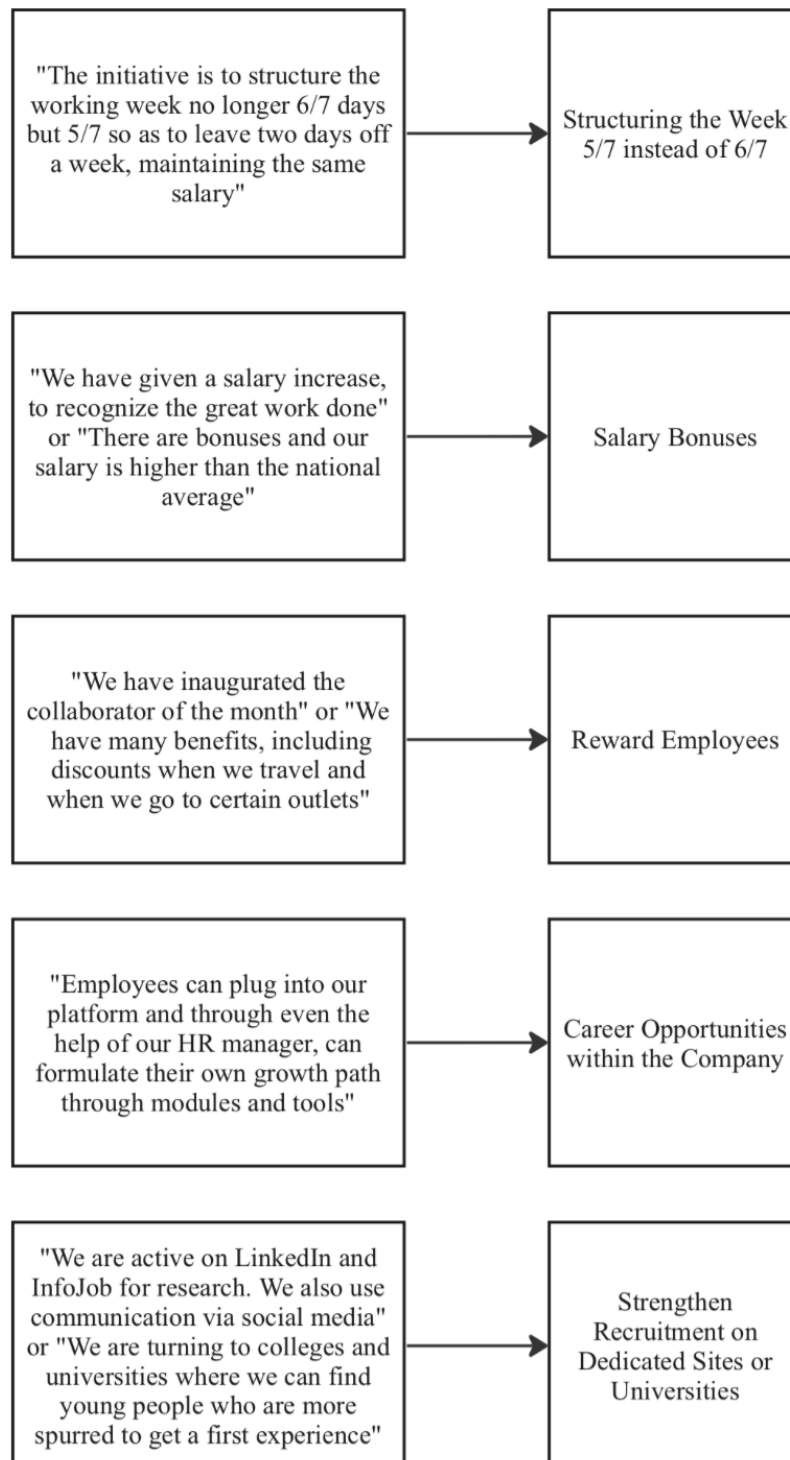


TABLE 4. HIGHLIGHTS OF COMPANIES’ FUTURE STRATEGIES. SOURCE: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

3.5 DISCUSSION

As the collected results show, the Great Resignation is a phenomenon that is creating great discomfort for companies. Many place the blame on Covid-19, but this was only the straw that broke the camel's back; worker discontent arose earlier due to other elements, which were already present before the pandemic.

Let us start by saying that this phenomenon, associated with the concept of crisis⁸, need to not be perceived as a negative and dangerous situation, on the contrary, it can turn out to be an opportunity for growth and progress of the company itself. In such a situation, it is essential that companies implement effective strategies to deal with the risks and consequences. By strategy is meant a real plan of action to be implemented at both the operational and administrative and financial levels in order to ensure consistency between the activities implemented and the external environment.

Critical to our comprehension of dealing with crises is the notion of resilience. The development of procedures that enable actors to recognize, adapt to, and use resources to counter disruptions before, during, and after the crisis is at the heart of resilience (Williams et al., 2017). Also, it exhorts businesses and their personnel to adopt a rather unique strategy in order to quickly restore control (Linnenluecke, 2017). Going deeply, it is useful to introduce the concept of urban and industry resilience.

The urban resilience concept is dynamic and has “fuzzy” boundaries (Meerow et al., 2016). Acknowledging its inherent interdisciplinarity, Meerow et al. (2016) combine theories already in existence to describe urban resilience as “the ability of an urban system – and all its constituent socio-ecological and socio-technical networks across temporal and spatial scales – to maintain or rapidly return to desired functions in the face of a disturbance, to adapt to change, and to quickly transform systems that limit current or future adaptive capacity”. Within a tourism context, Buultjens et al. (2017) define industry resilience as “the capacity of the industry to deal effectively with disasters and self-inflicted crises in order to maintain stability whilst also ensuring the flexibility and diversity necessary for innovation and further development”. Various studies have reported the crippling effects of crises on tourism (Khalid et al., 2020), indicating a lack of industry resilience to major external shocks (Chowdhury et al., 2019). Jamal and Budke (2020) further observe that pandemics are likely to become a

⁸ *The notion of crisis refers to an “unforeseen and unanticipated incident that can jeopardize the attainment of strategic goals in the context of short decision response times available to management” (Hermann, 1963).*

common feature of the tourism industry, requiring greater stakeholder collaboration to plan for and manage resilience. For instance, an effective leadership style in hotels during a crisis can facilitate a fluid communication among employees and customers. Similarly, the entrepreneurial orientation of the owners/managers can facilitate innovation/improvisation in the operational processes and employee relations during the times of a crisis (Hao et al., 2020). Therefore, in order to meet this challenge in a highly dynamic environment, there is a need for companies to respond quickly. So far we have seen that there are indeed a number of elements that they are putting in place, but first an analysis needs to be made of what drove workers out of the workplace. This analysis is fundamental for the ho.re.ca sector. Indeed, the sector can only flourish if the industry can employ and retain qualified staff and a sustainable workforce. According to *Il Sole 24 Ore*⁹, among the main characteristics that young people consider crucial when considering a job offer are adequate pay, the possibility of personal growth, and flexible hours.

Among the most decisive elements that drive workers to change jobs there are 1) wages that are too low compared to the effort of employees, 2) strenuous shifts in the ho.re.ca. sector to deal with, and finally 3) the fact that employees have little opportunity to grow within the company. In addition, as secondary elements, we can also include the fact that employees, in some cases, do not feel part of a community, are not motivated, and do not feel that their values are reflected by those of the company in which they work. Employees, consequently, leave their jobs or, in rare cases, ask to work part-time instead of full-time. The latter request is rarely granted by companies, as it leads to increased costs. In some cases, however, given the hardship that the Great Resignation is creating, employers are forced to comply with their employees' requests in order to not see them leave.

The greatest hardship comes at the time when the company needs a new figure within its structure. In fact, in these cases, companies face two major difficulties: finding new qualified staff and time and money to invest in staff training.

Drawing conclusions from the interviews, companies before focusing on finding new staff, should focus their attention on the retention of who are already part of their structure. As we saw in the previous section, companies are already implementing initiatives to retain existing staff and to meet the needs of young people, such as increasing the salary or reducing the work week from 40 to 36 hours. In fact, according to *Il Sole 24 Ore*, among the main characteristics

⁹ Carli, A. (2023, April 28). *Flessibilità e tempo libero: così i giovani della "generazione Z" valutano le opportunità di lavoro. Il Sole 24 ORE.*

that young people consider crucial when considering a job offer are adequate pay, the possibility of personal growth and flexible hours. In addition to these elements that have already been discussed in previous sections, there are other aspects that companies should take advantage of. For example, it is important to create a positive and collaborative work environment, offering flexibility whenever possible, and benefits such as training and/or performance-related bonuses. Offering training in addition to the mandatory ones allows employees to feel an integral part of the structure in which they work and, more importantly, gives them the opportunity to grow within the company. The more satisfied and engaged employees feel, the more they build a lasting relationship with the company in which they work, allowing the construction of a strong corporate culture that includes aspects such as cohesion, communication and sharing of values. These aspects, of course, depend not only on the employer, but also on managers and colleagues. These, in fact, must have a mutual respect for one another, supporting inclusion and recognition when necessary. In this way, employees will feel motivated and incentivized to work better and better in a healthy environment.

In conclusion, it is important to create a work environment in which employees feel comfortable and heard by their employers. In fact, there is a collapse in the company's sense of belonging, which is especially strong in the younger generation. Only 15% of Generation Z has an intense connection with their company, compared with 64% of baby boomers¹⁰. To foster this, HR managers should mainly choose three paths: 1) the path of trust and respect, 2) give the employees a clear vision of the company's strategy, and 3) making employees feel that they are an integral part of a larger project.

The research work, therefore, offers interesting insights for reflection, but there are many question marks that remain, and which could be explored in future research. Specifically, it would be useful to know what impact each of the strategies implemented by companies is having on them. Which, in particular, is the strategy that works better than the others to attract and/or maintain employees.

¹⁰ Carli, A. (2023, April 28). *Flessibilità e tempo libero: così i giovani della “generazione Z” valutano le opportunità di lavoro. Il Sole 24 ORE.*

CONCLUSION

Having come to the conclusions of the research, it is necessary to draw the lines of argument and analyse what are the main findings from the work.

This master's thesis has explored the phenomenon of the Great Resignation and its impact on the ho.re.ca. sector in Italy. Through qualitative research, including interviews with industry professionals, the study has shed light on the causes and consequences of the Great Resignation, in order to understand how companies are responding to this challenge.

The last two years have brought extraordinary changes and transformation. In Italy, for example, 1.7 million voluntary resignations were recorded in 2022 in 9 months. This is a 22% increase over the same period in 2021 (Barbieri, 2023). The Great Resignation has forced hospitality managers and executives to rethink the way they have approached their internal marketing and, more broadly, human resources strategies and processes. This paper was written to study with deep research the phenomenon just described, in particular to understand in which way the companies of the target sector will face this phenomenon and which steps they will take within the organization to respond to this new challenge. In particular, the document is based on three chapters: the first one includes the literature review of the Great Resignation, its background, the explanation of how Covid-19 has impacted the phenomenon, and finally similar phenomena such as Quiet Quitting, Job Hopping, and Gig Economy; the second chapter, on the other hand, includes an analysis of the ho.re.ca. sector and the methodology used for the qualitative research – including how the data was collected, what target audience was used, and the interview protocol that includes what questions the respondents were asked; finally, the third chapter sheds light on the findings that emerged, and it answers the research question.

In order to draw conclusions, it is therefore important to analyse what emerged from the research work in order to make reflections and identify what are the implications of the research. In this sense, the research work offers interesting insights. The analysis is based on the experience of 10 companies belonging to the ho.re.ca. sector, they have answered 5 questions in order to reveal what the causes of the Great Resignation are, what consequences the phenomenon is having on the companies and which strategies the companies are implementing in order to face this threat. The interviews revealed that several factors contribute to the Great Resignation. The pandemic not only had health implications but also led many workers to reevaluate their priorities and seek a better work-life balance. It brought about challenges such as managing work while dealing with remote learning for children, layoffs, and increased stress due to infection risks. Contrary to the findings of the literature, this is not the only cause of the

phenomenon, indeed it has served as a catalyst rather than a leading cause of this trend. Another significant cause of the Great Resignation is the inconvenient shifts characteristic of the ho.re.ca. industry. The irregular working hours, including early mornings, late nights, and work on holidays, can disrupt work-life balance and contribute to dissatisfaction among employees. The introduction of citizenship income, a form of economic support provided by the state to those in need, has also influenced the Great Resignation. Some workers choose to rely on this income rather than seeking employment, leading to labour shortages and difficulties for companies in finding qualified candidates. Furthermore, the lack of professionalization in the ho.re.ca. sector has been identified as a cause for the Great Resignation. Limited growth opportunities, precarious working conditions, and low wages have contributed to employees perceiving their jobs as temporary and seeking better prospects elsewhere.

The consequences of the Great Resignation for companies are significant. High turnover, difficulty in finding new personnel, the time and resources spent on training new employees, and the increased requests for switching from full-time to part-time work pose challenges for businesses. These consequences require companies to develop strategies to retain talent and attract new candidates.

To address these challenges, companies have implemented various initiatives. Some companies have introduced shorter working weeks to provide employees with more time off, while others have offered salary bonuses as a way to improve compensation. Reward programs, such as birthday bonuses and company parties, have been implemented to enhance employee satisfaction and retention. Companies also aim to provide career opportunities within the organization to address employees' concerns about career growth. Moreover, companies are strengthening their recruitment efforts by advertising on dedicated job sites, targeting universities, and utilizing social media platforms. External agencies are also being utilized to improve the recruitment process and attract qualified candidates.

In conclusion, the Great Resignation has had a significant impact on the ho.re.ca. sector in Italy, leading to labour shortages, high turnover, and challenges in finding qualified personnel. The study of the phenomenon has been important in order to understand the consequences on the labour market, and particularly to analyse how the companies are developing an effective people management strategy, to identify factors contributing to employee dissatisfaction, and which are the activities implemented by the companies in the ho.re.ca. sector to improve employee retention. Indeed, companies are responding by implementing various strategies to retain employees and attract new talent.

However, addressing the causes of the Great Resignation, such as improving work-life balance, professionalizing the sector, participative management cultures, and addressing wage disparities, will be essential for long-term sustainability in the industry.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW N°1

1. *You have probably heard of Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?*

N1: We noticed it as a natural consequence of Covid-19. In fact, for many people it has become more important to have a higher quality of life, perhaps by giving up the working part. Moreover, so many people have decided to devote more time to private life, especially the Italians. Indeed, the hours in this sector are more inconvenient, for example we always work during the holidays.

2. *Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?*

N1: Yes, it has become much more difficult for us to find qualified personnel, and it has become easier to find foreign/less qualified personnel for those who are willing to work this kind of hours, that are long and tiring. Many Italians are less and less attracted to this sector. Those who have been with us for the longest have stayed, especially the older ones, the young ones have also stayed. The difficulty is in finding new personnel.

3. *If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?*

N1: Definitely difficulties in training because the staff changes more frequently. There are numerous tests of personnel which we then do not confirm because they are not qualified. As a result, the level of service has also dropped, especially if the staff is not trained or qualified. In addition, customers who see new faces no longer have a sense of connection with our company, as they no longer see the waiter they were fond of or the service they were used to.

4. *How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?*

N1: The initiative is to structure the working week no longer 6/7 days but 5/7 so as to leave two days off a week, maintaining the same salary. We therefore hope to be able to attract qualified personnel.

5. *To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?*

N1: There are no more elements that I would like to add, thank you.

INTERVIEW N°2

1. *You have probably heard of Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?*

N2: Surely the reasons are many and not necessarily attributable to Covid-19. I approached this world 17 years ago (as a cashier). The trend is that the ho.re.ca. is not seen as a professionalizing sector (it does not give opportunities of growth and it can be done just in a restricted age) because it does not give a growth perspective. On the other hand, I think that companies have taken advantage of this, exploiting this world, and leaving it disappointed. Today these jobs are not seen as jobs seen as professionalizing, which you can therefore carry on for a lifetime and be proud of. They are stopgaps that you only do for a period of your life. It is difficult to keep your collaborators close because they have a short life cycle, say around three years. This, in fact, can be seen as repetitive and strenuous work because you are always in contact with the public, working very busy hours (Sundays, evenings, etc.) takes away a very important part of sociality. There are no longer the desires of the past (house, car, mortgage, etc.), there are no more young people who aspire to a permanent job. Today's goal is different for the younger workers, and so the whole industry is tackling this problem. I think that one of the main causes is the deviation of objectives from those of the past, the life cycle of a worker is much reduced compared to the past, he no longer has specific objectives to achieve.

- *Indeed, in general it can be said that workers, especially of generation Z, feel a greater need for growth.*

N2: The career leap, even where you propose it, is not always interesting or in any case it is passing on this message that a person must obtain without making sacrifices. There has been a controversy against Alessandro Borghese who says you have to pay your way through the ranks.

Right now, it's not the career that matters, because one in a thousand makes it. Cracco and Massari have become them because they have made a life of hell, and if you are in a company that does not protect you and does not respect your rights, it is right that you leave. But companies that guarantee you certain standards, I'm afraid the trend is aimed more at other roles. In China, many people give up managerial jobs to return to more basic jobs. It's just a desire for a title rather than really the sacrifices to be made to get there. By now it seems that the worker should choose the company and not vice versa, it is the company that must advertise in order to be chosen by the workers.

2. *Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?*

N2: There is great difficulty in finding staff and then replacing staff who have left. Even people who have been with us for a long time and who perhaps you didn't expect have left, you have invested time and money in it.

○ *What could be the motivations behind these choices?*

N2: There is certainly a return to university, to rediscover passions/vocations. Those who left to find more routine jobs with more comfortable shifts or to launch start-ups/own businesses. There is a big challenge because everyone wants to be the best, but then you realize you are one of many. Going down the road of the VAT number does not give independence because it takes a lot to achieve important results.

○ *Are there any requests from workers to switch from full time to part time?*

N2: We are trying to make contracts for 36h and no longer 40h to allow two days off a week instead of one. I can't give preference to anyone who tells me he only wants to do mornings or vice versa. Part time means that instead of one collaborator I have two, which means higher management costs, pay slips, taxes, etc.

3. *If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?*

N2: Surely the need to replace them and invest time in training because it is very complex. What customers see is not the same as what collaborators experience, where it seems like a

trivial job there is a myriad of information behind it to do it professionally. Also, a lot of investment in interviews, announcements, research agency, etc. A lot of time invested in those who leave after ten days because they didn't understand that this was the job and therefore you have to start over, etc.

4. *How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?*

N2: In addition to the transition from 40h to 36h, we are proposing many initiatives. We want to invest in employee retention. For example, since last month (03/23) we have inaugurated the collaborator of the month, there is a Google form in which young people vote anonymously (any employee of the group minus themselves) and win the parchment, the pin, and the possibility of being recognized by the public, there is an enhancement of the figure of the collaborator also in the world of work. At the end of the year there will be a competition among the best collaborators of all the ice cream parlours and you will have the chance to win a weekend in Europe, where our company is presented. Today, if one enters as a cashier, he can aspire to be a trainer in the parent company, with the possibility of travelling. There is therefore an added value, for example if a boy has to study in Rome, I give him the opportunity to move and work in our company in Rome.

Some jobs are and those remain, we can't give smart working, or we can't close on Saturday evening.

5. *To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?*

N2: I think that we already cover all the topics, thank you.

INTERVIEW N°3

1. *You have probably heard of Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?*

N3: There have been no major escapes of employees, during the Covid-19 they were all regularly laid off. Most of our employees are students, we have fewer adult employees, who stayed to work anyway. We had the skill to never stop, in Rome we were the first to do delivery

service; therefore, we have decided to stay open and use all our resources for delivery. Our employees are divided into two categories:

- Intermittent contracts (on call). We only pay them when they come to work. This type of contract didn't cause us too many problems because during the Covid-19 we didn't call.

- Permanent contract (to be paid regardless). In this case, layoffs helped us and also the fact that we have a very strong and unique structure in terms of delivery. Having 11 premises, we have a switchboard and delivery manager with 8/9 employees who manages all orders, both internal orders and Glovo, Deliveroo, Uber, JustEat, you need to be very organized. During the pandemic, contractors moved to the switchboard or to make deliveries, which is why they all stayed.

○ *In your opinion, more precisely, why do workers tend to leave their jobs?*

N3: Work inside the restaurant is very complicated regardless of the role. We have a very precise structure: the manager is in charge of the venue; the senior and junior assistants are the vice managers; and then all the dining room operators. Regardless of the location, the timetable is very tiring and complicated – from 11 to 3 and from 19 to 00/01. Surely, therefore, this is one of the factors. We are also very attentive to the cost of personnel, it must be around 30%, by invoicing less you cannot put so many room operators, otherwise the cost of personnel would be too high, and we would not be included in the costs; at the same time working under staff is difficult and much more tiring, consequently it could take you away from this job.

2. *Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?*

N3: Our company has had the opposite problem: we are having difficulty finding staff. Someone objectively left, very few to open their own businesses or change jobs. In particular, we are having trouble finding staff on intermittent contracts. In many cases they say yes and then do not show up, they ask to be paid illegally because they already have basic income, or they complain about traveling because we have nine premises, and we ask them to move. We struggle to find delivery guys for internal deliveries, but everyone prefers to go to work for the platforms (Glovo, JustEat, Deliveroo and Uber) because you can work whenever you want. So, we are looking for personnel, but we can't find them.

○ *Do you also have problems finding qualified personnel?*

N3: Yes, we also have open positions to work as an assistant, but we are unable to fill them. That's why we work understaffed, and when someone leaves because he works too much and works exhausting shifts, he's right.

3. *If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?*

N3: Palombella's restaurant, behind the Pantheon, had been closed and we had already moved the staff to other locations, but in the end we had to reopen it for various reasons. We had to insert new figures, only the manager was internal to us, but the room and kitchen operators were new, therefore new staff to be trained and supported. This is a problem because you have to hire guys with experience (with contracts), you have to make them work more and then pay them overtime to train new staff in another place who are paid anyway. The consequence of this is that the costs are doubled. The problem is that they are not people of the trade, and they are not people who want to do that job and then grow within the ho.re.ca. sector: they are people who want a "little job" or who fall back on the restaurant world, don't want to grow, and therefore don't commit themselves. They have no experience so you can't let them work alone, especially since working under staff they have to be "strong". You need more time to train them and the prices skyrocket.

4. *How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?*

N3: We are known in Rome so it's easier. As far as personnel research is concerned, we are active on LinkedIn and InfoJob for research. We also use communication via social media – Facebook and Instagram – that something has brought us. The one that brings most of all is the communication that arrives via local, for example the flyers with the words "Personnel search". For example, when we opened the restaurant on the Gianicolense street, we started looking for staff a couple of months ago; a month before we put the flyers on the window of the club and objectively that's what brought a lot of people to the interviews.

o *Do you offer incentives to retain staff?*

N3: For new staff we offer a basic contract, it is not for everyone in the restaurant world to offer a real contract with insurance (for example if an employee has an accident with a moped) etc. As far as the people inside our premises are concerned, in the last month, given the commitment of the managers during the pandemic, we have given a salary increase, to recognize the great

work done. The manager does a lot of things and especially after the pandemic, out of necessity, they also put themselves in the kitchen, did delivery, etc. Even room operators have all the extras, extra jobs and miscellaneous shifts are recognized.

5. *To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?*

N3: Nothing special to add, thank you.

INTERVIEW N°4

1. *You have probably heard of Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?*

N4: In my opinion, a big cause is the citizenship income. In fact, even if many workers had the opportunity to take a slightly higher salary than the citizenship income, they would still prefer the latter because it allows them to do no work and, above all, quietly go about their lives without having to refer to managers or specific shifts. In addition, many workers ask to be hired without a contract in order to continue taking the income, which is obviously not possible. Moreover, one of the causes is precisely Covid-19, which has made people realize that they would rather spend their time at home than at work.

2. *Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?*

N4: We started working in early 2020. So, on the one hand it was difficult to find workers because of the fear of being in too much contact with people, and on the other hand as a result of Covid-19 many restaurants closed and so there was a sustained number of workers looking for work. The latter factor, in fact, allowed us to find staff. The following year, on the other hand (2021), it was more difficult to find as workers who had lost their jobs during the year had the opportunity to organize and look for other jobs/take citizenship income. Also, being a restaurant open only in the summer we had more problems than other restaurants because employees prefer to find a job that allows them to have a year-round salary, not just for 3 or 4 months like what we offer.

3. *If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?*

N4: The main problem has been finding new staff, partly because of the hours an employee faces: working 6/7 days, no lunch break, working lunch and dinner, weekends, etc.

4. *How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?*

N4: In response to this threat, we are turning to colleges and universities where we can find young people who are more spurred to get a first experience, even if it lasts only 4 months. So, the goal is to attract people who we have this lifestyle, who prefer to work a few months a year who maybe live in the places where we have restaurants. The big problem is that there is no employee retention because their goal is to find more stability.

5. *To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?*

N4: I have nothing special to add, thank you.

INTERVIEW N°5

1. *You have probably heard of Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?*

N5: What most led workers to change jobs or leave their jobs in this sector was probably the working hours. In fact, the hours in this sector are more inconvenient, they do not allow you to have a good work-life balance, and not during holidays you are forced to work. In particular, Italian hours are higher than the European average in the ho.re.ca. world. Those who start working know that it is challenging, maybe they have to work even on Saturdays, for example in San Babila (Milan) on Saturdays we make 1600 burgers, and we have 1700 people on average.

2. *Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?*

N5: Workers who have been with us for a long time have stayed even after Covid-19 because I know the company and they know that they are treated with respect. There is definitely more turnover than before, many guys in fact do not even stay after their first paycheck. Those who have been with us for five years, on the other hand, have stayed and grown within the company.

○ *Why are they leaving?*

N5: Many workers are first-time workers, so maybe they realize it is a demanding job and look for something else. Those who are already in the working world understand that it's a job that allows you to have a work-life balance. We in particular have a zero-vacation policy, you have to work them off during the year, and that allows you to have more days off during the year which is an important benefit (5 weeks of vacation). Those who stick it out for three months, then they're making a point of not going.

3. *If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?*

N5: Mainly training new staff and having to change staff who leave after a short time.

4. *How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?*

N5: There are bonuses, also the salary is higher than the national average. Generally, in the restaurant industry you do 60h with broken shifts. Our challenge is to make the work seen as office work. For example, if there is Easter (Saturday, Sunday, and Monday), you have three days off, if these are not there, I pay you 120% for the day because it is overtime on the holiday. Or if it's only two days off I'll give you a longer holiday (as if it fell on a Sunday). Also, we don't have night hours because they don't respect employees' rest, despite our potential economic return. In return, however, we require punctuality, no overtime asked at the last minute (if I ask for 30min more I'll make it up to you the next day), tardiness and unexcused absences.

To conclude the demand, we have given all employees a 5% raise on their salary.

5. *To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?*

N5: I can say that in the future the biggest challenge will be to adapt the company policy to the public, now there are 5 outlets and so you manage to convey the policy to the general managers of each outlet. But the moment we grow in numbers, it will be more and more difficult.

INTERVIEW N°6

1. *You have probably heard of Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?*

N°6: First of all, thank you for the question. Then I would start by saying that a first element is the fact that so many jobs in this sector are wearing out because they are on shifts that involve nights and holidays. However, this organization of work is not always matched by a classification with higher wages than classifications at the same level, for example, national collective agreements that, however, have a more stable organization of work, with office hours. So, what has happened and has been greatly accentuated by the pandemic is that the whole travel industry starting from the carriers to the accommodations to the restaurants and the whole collateral industry of excursions and tours, has all been stuck with the pandemic. Consequently, all workers were laid off, and there were two relevant elements. First, by being laid off, the workers were able to savour better living conditions for more than a year. Second, many people realized that the tourism industry was fragile because this virus that spread, and could be repeated, created hardships especially for this sector. This caused many to move into sectors that were growing more (e.g. large-scale distribution and logistics). These, in my opinion, are the main causes of the Great Resignation phenomenon.

- *In fact, many people agree that one of the elements that has caused this phenomenon especially in this area, are the shifts, which are different from traditional office hours.*

N°6: Yes, and also the poor advance notice of scheduling because there are peaks of work that do not allow you to have shifts anticipated by three months. The shifts are done monthly but they can still change, because all it takes is one colleague for whatever reason to be unavailable and there is a need to replace him. So, planning one's life becomes a little bit more complicated and this replaces an unwelcome element.

To conclude, another element is motivation, both economically and as a relationship that an employee can establish with his or her manager. When an employee feels unmotivated and

starts to lose his or her performance at a time like Covid-19, when motivation was also economic, it can lead an employee to look elsewhere.

2. *Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?*

N°6: Ours is a medium-sized hotel. As a company, we operate two accommodation facilities, one of 242 rooms and one of 12 suites and apartments. The headcount is about 90 people, 78 and 12 employees respectively in the two facilities. We have struggled not a little bit since March of the last year, when we came out of the pandemic period and with the reopening of air routes, volumes on Rome have increased a lot. In fact, with the layoff fund still active and with so many workers who had not yet been relocated, we found ourselves suddenly handling pre-pandemic volumes in a couple of months. Obviously, this is a good thing for the hotel, but from an organizational point of view there was a critical issue that started in the middle of last year and still exists. In addition, this discomfort also intersected with new hotel openings that were pre-pandemic projects. So right now, our biggest difficulty is recruiting and placing qualified resources, because obviously competition is high. There are resources that are holding two/three offers and negotiating where they can go. So, we had to adjust the services provided with what we could handle.

3. *If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?*

N°6: The biggest consequence for us was the difficulty in recruiting, onboarding and then training employees. Since we could not handle this element, we contracted with an outside company that gets involved in the recruitment phase and in providing all that information about mandatory training. It is also important to retain the employee because the employee who does not feel satisfied or who does not feel adequately trained is easily attracted to other facilities.

4. How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?

N°6: Since we are part of a larger group, we have the opportunity to raise our employees, to train them, to grow and cultivate their own interests. Already this is an added advantage over

independent facilities. Moreover, employees can plug into our platform and through even the help of our HR manager, can formulate their own growth path through modules and tools. Many are software that deal with various hotel activities, from loyalty program to issue management to sustainability. So, we think that for those who want to make a career path within the hotel industry, it is a great incentive.

- *Specifically, what elements is the outside company you mentioned putting in place?*

N°6: They are definitely trying to refine the selection process. This is made up of several steps: there is a first phase that consists of the cognitive interview where you test the candidate's motivation and experience; then there is a psycho-aptitude test that confirms what came out during the interview; then you make a shortlist of candidates that emerge from the interview and the tests, and they are now tested in groups. In this case, based on the role you are looking for, you test people's specific skills. After the group test, there would be the technical interview with the manager of the function. They are now testing this method, which is a bit slow; it is to be understood whether it can work well for the hotel that has timely needs and therefore risks slowing down the hotel's recruitment process. The goal is to decrease the margin of error and to see if the candidate is really interested.

5. *To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?*

N°6: I think it's relevant for Italy that in addition to the classic pillars, such as hotellerie, catering, etc., are being born structures that are connected to other values of our country, such as the villages and gastronomy that are accommodations that are somewhere between experience and sustainability, I'm talking about the diffuse hotel and the diffuse hospitality networks. All of these are areas where new professions can find a work-life balance that is outside of the shift, both at the entrepreneurial level and at the employee level, these are realities outside of over-tourism that allow you to combine a passion with rhythms of life that also allow you to engage your clientele.

INTERVISTA N°7

1. *You have probably heard of Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?*

N°7: Definitely reasons not only related to Covid-19, for example one reason may be the instability of the market due to economic situation that we are experiencing as a result of wars as well. So, not necessarily in our reality, but in general many employers and many companies cannot guarantee stability of contracts, of salary payments. Also, little investment in personnel, so in terms of training and especially contexts where there are young employees, little willingness on the part of employers to those who are student workers, or those who take training courses to grow and to improve professionally. A final element is the economic factor from the point of view of wages and cost of living. In addition, for this type of industry there is lack of smart working.

- *Do you think wages in this industry reflect the efforts of workers?*

N°7: I think that in cities like Rome and Milan where the cost of living has visibly increased, perhaps an adjustment to what the cost of living is to date would be necessary. Then certainly depending on the fatigue, both physical and mental, required of employees an adjustment from the point of view of wages may be desirable, but the main element is the cost of living and inflation. In conclusion, Covid-19 has expanded this situation. Young people after the pandemic perhaps wanted to seek opportunities abroad where wages are slightly higher.

2. *Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?*

N°7: Our facility opened in 2021, so post Covid-19. However, we have been affected by the subsequent waves. Certainly, there has been an impact more than on discharges, on the operations of the service and the material availability of human resources, because we have found ourselves in different situations, staff with contagions for example. This overall has had a negative impact on what is the operation, but it has definitely had an across-the-board impact on the whole sector. Not to mention the drop in tourists and what is all of our clientele. As far as the Great Resignation phenomenon is concerned, I can't make a big comparison with pre-Covid-19, however, I still can't say that we expected differently or for the better. We were very lucky and good at keeping all our team in the opening and pre-opening period which was quite long. Usually, in fact, facilities like this during the pre-opening period lose a lot of staff because it is a very sensitive period. So, we had a great staff retention capacity because of a whole range of internal services that we were able to provide - work-life balance, para-work activities, etc. Certainly, after a year and a half the phenomenon became more and more widespread and

impacted us a little bit all together. Not too much impacted by what Covid-19 is, though, but by other physiological situations that such a structure entails.

3. *If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?*

N°7: Certainly, we faced a difficulty in recruitment, not so much in the pre-opening because there was so much desire to work especially from young people who were out of work after Covid-19. Then when the turnover started the difficulty increased, and it is mainly related to the time when they became vacant (e.g. opening summer seasons because many young people go for seasonal periods outside Rome). Then certainly the difficulty in finding staff is related to the many openings during the month. As for the impact that staffing has had, obviously it has been very negative because when you work with employees who are not adequate to the needs of the service obviously you suffer both at the level of service and at the level of satisfaction and feeling of the staff working twice as hard. So, because of lack of resources and lack of time, we had to reduce some activities more than training, playful or para-work activities. What is mandatory training we have always provided either remotely or in-person. The more cross-cutting activities unfortunately we had to eliminate them, so that we have all employees active in the field, also because by law there are minimum employee numbers to be met depending on the facility. This number is always controlled, but if it is at the minimum, it is a problem because it happens sometimes that at the last one depends for personal needs cannot work, creating discomfort within the structure.

4. *How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?*

N°7: We are a British company, and we are very focused on staff training and development, for example, ensuring departmental changes. This allows employees to grow within our company, for example, if an employee studies and specializes in another activity, we allow them to change roles. This is something we support a lot.

In addition to salary and annual RAL, we also have many benefits, including traveling with discounts and outlets around the world, giving them the opportunity to discover different realities also related to the brand itself. We offer meritocratic bonuses, based on recognition and appreciation that we receive from our guests. We try to organize fun and recreational

activities outside of work for each department head. We also offer gifts on our employees' birthdays. Then of course everything in the CCNL, all leave and study leave, etc. We also organize two parties a year with employees. Several of our resources started with us from the opening and are still with us now and have also grown within the facility through training and shadowing. Our intention is to get this new wave of hospitality from the inward and outward side to the guests on the Italian territory as well.

5. *To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?*

N°7: I would say that we have already covered all the topics on this issue, and I have told you enough!

INTERVISTA N°8

1. *You have probably heard of Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?*

N°8: Yes, I have heard of Great Resignation before, and I think it is a phenomenon that is becoming more and more prevalent in our country. I think the main causes are having spent so much time at home during the pandemic and having mistakenly become accustomed to this lifestyle. As a result, people and especially workers have had to quickly readjust to the pre-pandemic pace of life.

2. *Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?*

N°8: Unfortunately, we have faced this phenomenon directly. In fact, our company has seen a very substantial increase in employee turnover. As a result, we had, and we are having serious difficulties in finding specialized human resources to fill the vacant positions.

3. *If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?*

N°8: The greatest inconvenience created by Great Resignation is the search for personnel and especially the time spent in training them.

4. *How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?*

N°8: Considering that our biggest issue is personnel research, we are turning to outside agencies to deal with this threat.

5. *To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?*

N°8: I have nothing to add, I still thank you for the questions.

INTERVISTA N°9

1. *You have probably heard of Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?*

N°9: My experience is limited mainly to the sector – ho.re.ca. – in which I work, and it is located on the ground – Ischia. What we have been able to register is first of all a desire to stop working, as if Covid-19 has highlighted so many situations. In our case, the guys we had employed for years, changed sectors after Covid-19; the main reason being the need for more continuity. Covid-19, as far as the hotel sector was concerned, highlighted a certain fragility of the seasonal work system, it no longer gave the security that used to be there. For this reason, many young people went abroad, mainly to Switzerland. What was good for them was that Switzerland in some ways conditioned them by subordinating winter work to summer work. This phenomenon has brought the whole industry, restaurants, bars, reception and hotellerie, to its knees. Another factor is definitely also the citizenship income.

2. *Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?*

N°9: We had a big problem in recruitment and especially a big fickleness. The people we have met and with whom we have made employment contracts, have not passed the probationary

period by their own choice, so they have left the position. This factor is mostly found in young people.

3. *If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?*

Nº9: Last year we had to make a very painful business choice: reduce the number of rooms. We have potentially 72 rooms and we could manage with internal resources 45/50 rooms while still having demand. So, we limited the damage because the few staff we had, we did not want to stress them further, lest we also face the risk of offering poor service.

4. *How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?*

Nº9: In economic bargaining, two aspects have been influential: increasing the salary and then above all ensuring employees more convenient hours.

5. *To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?*

Nº9: We suffer from this phenomenon. In particular, the island reality is even more complicated because it is isolated. It is as if Covid-19 has cut off the spirit of enterprise, there is no longer the drive to do better, there is a lack of enthusiasm. To do something, you have to fall in love with your work a little bit, especially because every job hides pitfalls and sacrifices. Our sector is beyond suffering, because if we have staff members who do not come to work with enthusiasm, they cannot pass it on to guests and other staff members. Within the group if there is someone who is not motivated, the others either adapt to that kind of enthusiasm or somehow have to react.

INTERVIEW Nº10

1. *You have probably heard of Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?*

N°10: The reasons that generated this phenomenon were diverse, partly fuelled by the emotional malaise and uncertainty generated by the pandemic and later post-pandemic environment, and partly by reasons more closely related to the relevant industry, type of work, and finally the company. To name a few:

- The difficulty in managing work-life balance: in our industry (ho.re.ca.), in the first phase of the pandemic, workers worked in attendance and had to cope with the problem of children's distance learning, layoffs, rigid and stressful protocols during working hours, the danger of infection and transmission of the virus to colleagues and loved ones; many mothers, many off-site students, some particularly emotionally or physically fragile workers, have left the workplace because they were forced by the contingent situation, because they were stressed or because they were unable, throughout the emergency phase, to take advantage of special conditions such as smart working;

- The need to manage new and higher costs in the face of lower income or the same as the pre-pandemic phase (consider that our company took advantage of the Cigo¹¹ until July 2021 by receiving a lower salary and linked to the timing of the Inps¹² disbursement): many workers have in fact chosen to resign out of economic necessity, choosing less secure or certain alternatives for the future (moonlighting, part time, switching from permanent to temporary, etc.) in order to access the severance pay or forms of support such as citizenship income or Naspi¹³

- The hope that other sectors, other cities, or other competing companies could offer new and better opportunities, after so much difficulty and suffering, generated, in my opinion, a "movement" of resources throughout 2022, the year of reopening and economic recovery

- The inability of companies, especially in the last period, to offer economic, contractual, and professional growth certainties: this is a more recent finding in my opinion.

2. *Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?*

¹¹ Cassa Integrazione Guadagni Ordinaria (Ordinary Wage Supplementation Fund)

¹² Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale (National Social Security Institute)

¹³ Nuova Associazione Sociale per l'Impiego (New Social Insurance for Employment)

N°10: The phenomenon of the Great Resignations has certainly had an impact on our company, in one of the sectors most affected by the pandemic. From January to December 2022, our company (7 outlets, 150 employees) was overwhelmed by a turnover that involved just under half of the current workforce (60 voluntary resignations or induced layoffs, 60 or so hires). An extraordinary phenomenon, never seen occurring before. To get an idea, we made a comparison with 2019: the hires generated by worker turnover were only 15! This extraordinary turnover has undoubtedly impacted costs, quality of work, stability and stress of work groups, and the inability to train incoming/outgoing people and thus achieve business goals. In 2023 we are fortunately seeing a decrease in this phenomenon. Surely this depends on the ability of companies to understand and correct the factors behind it through strategies aimed at attracting and retaining talent, as well as taking the opportunity during these two years to correct the mistakes made in the past.

3. *If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?*

N°10: In the initial period, this phenomenon generated many difficulties, including that of being unprepared in the massive search for new staff: the company struggled to meet set targets, had to quickly redefine search and selection policies, recruitment and compensation policies, and target audience. Often teams did not have enough workers to meet functions and services, experiencing long periods of uncertainty that generated even more instability. Time for onboarding or training activities were minimized.

4. *How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?*

N°10: The strategies we have implemented are as follows:

- Companies are now experiencing a new phase: in order to stop turnover, they must be able to develop medium to long-term strategies that, along with business objectives, are aimed at retaining talent: the effective construction and communication of a value universe with which workers identify and recognize themselves becomes fundamental at this stage (employer branding)

- A second strategy is to increase, within the organization, the level of listening to workers through targeted interviews: leaders are trained to understand the new needs of resources,

personal and professional, collect continuous feedback that will subsequently allow directors to define new policies for building work groups, to draw new search and selection criteria then, new grading and pay policies. The result allowed us to understand that not always, for example, the most secure contractual forms for candidates then guaranteed the company to retain the resource over time or, that free time, to devote to one's personal or family life, often assumed more importance than a higher pay level.

- Training is the next step. In the coming months, the company intends to invest in the training of work groups (store managers, salespeople, producers, and function managers) to convey to them the direction in which the company intends to go in the coming years. The definition of a new reward system, new objectives/criteria that resources share, the central role of the group, the development of new hard but above all soft skills, skills that have become crucial to face a scenario that is still uncertain and in the midst of change.

5. *To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?*

N°10: Nothing more to add, thank you.

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Department of Business and Management
Master's Degree in Strategic Management

Chair of Organization Design

**THE GREAT RESIGNATION IN THE HO.RE.CA.
SECTOR: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO
EMPLOYEE RETENTION**

Prof. Sara Lombardi

Supervisor

Prof. Daniele Mascia

Co-supervisor

Giuditta Procaccini – 743631

Candidate

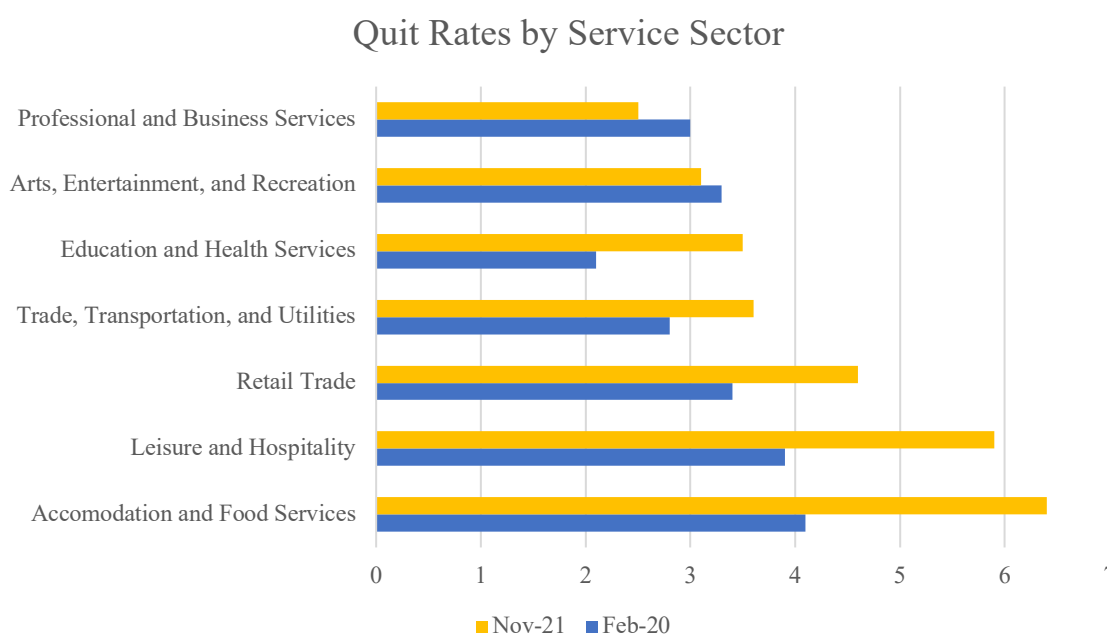
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	4
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHOD	6
CHAPTER 3: RESULTS.....	9
<i>DISCUSSION</i>	9
CONCLUSION.....	12
BIBLIOGRAPHY	15

Introduction

The Great Resignation is a phenomenon characterized by the progressive increase in the number of resignations of workers from their jobs¹. After the economy started to recover from Covid-19, this tendency was first seen in the USA in the second quarter of 2021 and continued to increase in the second half of the year. In particular, as shown in Graph 1, the ho.re.ca. sector is the hardest hit. Ho.re.ca is the sector commonly known as food and beverage, but in technical terms it refers to hotellerie, restaurant, and café (or catering activities).



GRAPH 1. SOURCE: U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, 2022

This argument is of particular interest due to the high percentage of employees that voluntarily leave their jobs. The element associated with this trend can be job insecurity, employee's burnout, mistreatment by employers, etc. This change is driven by two main factors: the search for more favourable economic conditions and the hope to find a better trade-off between private and work life. This is why the hospitality sector is facing the biggest problem: it is the most labour-intensive and low-wage sector.

On the other hand, the problem that the companies are facing is to retain the best talented employees now that the professional jobs have been left by the baby boomers. Moreover, the

¹Randstad HR Trends & Salary Survey, 2022

companies not only need to retain their best talents, but they also need to recruit new talents that will stay in the company in the long-term.

In order to understand in which way companies are facing this threat, this document is based on a critical analysis of related literature and on a qualitative research method. Indeed, this study tries to offer a critical evaluation of this current problem surrounding the Great Resignation. This article expands on its discussion by doing a thorough examination of how the companies are dealing with the phenomena and provides recommendations for overcoming current labour concerns in the hospitality industry-related challenges. The aim is to provide, with deep research, the effects that the Great Resignation has on the companies in the hospitality sector. In particular, the objective of the research is understanding in which way the companies of the target sector will face the phenomenon of The Great Resignation and which steps they will take within the organization to respond to this new challenge.

In order to answer the aforementioned research question, the thesis is based on a critical analysis of the emerging phenomenon of The Great Resignation. The analysis comprehends a literature review and a qualitative analysis. The latter is based on 10 interviews with companies in the ho.re.ca sector: four restaurants, three hotels, and three catering/cafes.

The Great Resignation is a very relevant phenomenon in recent years as it is changing the way employees work and their priorities when looking for a job. This is just one reason why it is important to study the phenomenon and why it is more important to dig deeper to discover the cause, the consequences, and the elements the companies need to face this threat. Indeed, this thesis helps understand the reasons why more and more people are deciding to leave their jobs and what are the challenges that companies are facing in retaining employees.

During the document three different prospective have been highlighted: 1) the causes of the Great Resignation; 2) the elements that contribute to employee dissatisfaction such as lack of career growth opportunities, low pay, lack of balance between private and work life and the lack of a positive work environment; 3) finally, the strategy to improve employee retention: indeed, companies that intend to retain their employees must develop an effective human resources strategy.

To explain as best as possible all the topics addressed so far, the thesis is structured in three main chapters. The first one analyses the literature review of the Great Resignation. It covered some important aspects of the phenomenon, starting with the mere definition going to other similar phenomena, like Quiet Quitting, Job Hopping and the Gig Economy. The second chapter covers two important topics: the ho.re.ca sector and the research method. The inclusion of the ho.re.ca. sector in this chapter serves as an introduction to the explanation of the research

method. This includes the description of data collection and the interview protocol used. To conclude, the third chapter includes the data analysis, the explanation of the target audience used, the analysis of the results collected through the interviews and their related discussion.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The first chapter provides a background and an overview of the Great Resignation phenomenon. It explains that the Great Resignation emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic and resulted in a global economic crisis. Many companies had to lay off employees or reduce working hours, leading to a rise in unemployment worldwide. However, as the global economy started to recover in 2021, companies began searching for qualified personnel to cope with the recovery. Simultaneously, many individuals began reevaluating their jobs and lives during the pandemic, giving rise to the Great Resignation. The chapter highlights that the phenomenon particularly affected sectors like hospitality, professional services, and retail trade.

The reasons behind the Great Resignation are explored, including the preference for remote work and a desire for a better work-life balance. The pandemic made many employees realize they prefer remote work and are not willing to return to traditional offices. Workers also seek jobs that offer better working conditions, wage equality, benefits, and job security. The economic recovery after the pandemic created numerous job opportunities, prompting workers to seek higher wages and better conditions.

The chapter also draws comparisons between the Great Resignation and historical events such as the Vietnam War and economic crises like the Great Recession of 2008-2009 and the Dot-com bubble. While these events led to job losses, the Great Resignation occurs during a time of economic recovery, allowing workers to have more options and leave their jobs for better opportunities.

Furthermore, the chapter discusses the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the global economy and workers. Lockdown measures and reduced operations of companies resulted in job losses and financial hardship. The pandemic also prompted individuals to reflect on their work and reconsider their priorities and career goals. The mental health effects of the pandemic are also acknowledged, with individuals experiencing distress and psychological side effects.

The chapter also focuses on the Great Resignation from a literature review perspective. It highlights that the phenomenon gained traction in 2021 as the economy recovered and more jobs became available. The reasons for resigning during the Great Resignation differed from

pre-pandemic times, with factors like a preference for remote work and a reevaluation of work-life balance and career goals playing significant roles.

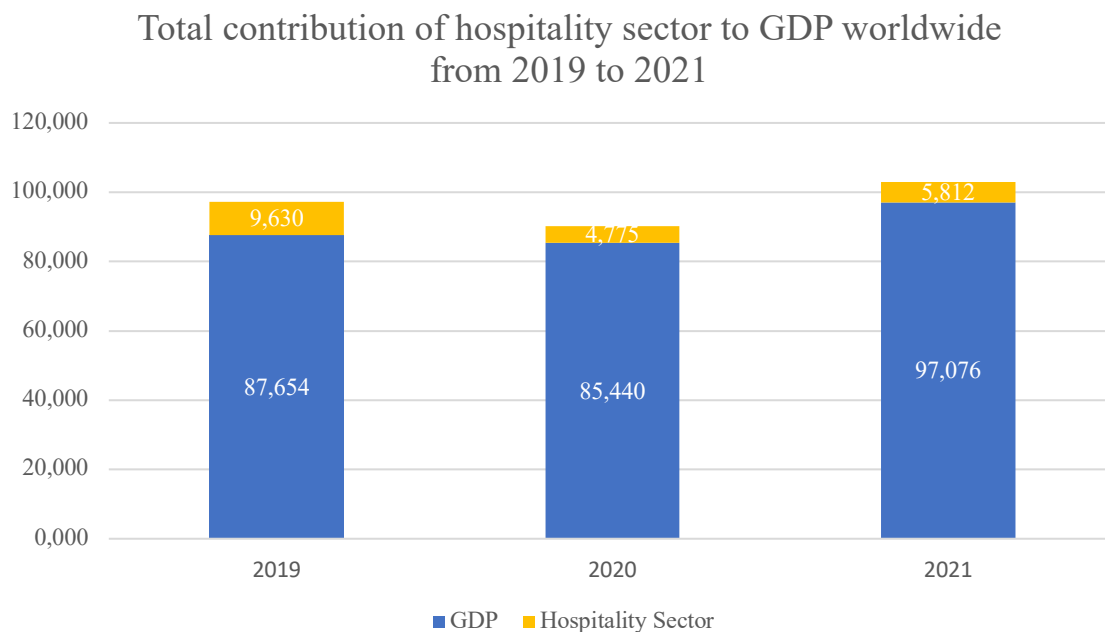
The Great Resignation has implications for both employees and organizations. Employees seek better working conditions, while organizations struggle with knowledge loss and the need to attract and retain skilled workers. The knowledge-based view of the firm is presented as a lens to understand the Great Resignation, highlighting the importance of knowledge integration and its impact on productivity and innovation.

Moreover, the chapter analyses the trends beyond the Great Resignation that are reshaping the behaviour of employees in the workforce. Three key trends to consider are Quiet Quitting, Job Hopping, and the Gig Economy. Quiet Quitting refers to employees gradually disengaging from their jobs without explicitly resigning. This phenomenon is influenced by various factors, including a lack of growth opportunities, excessive workload, and high-pressure environments. It can be a sign of an unhealthy work environment and can also be influenced by external factors such as the job market and the economic conditions. Job Hopping is the practice of frequently changing jobs, often seen among millennials. Factors driving this trend include the desire for higher salaries, career growth, a more satisfying work environment, and flexible working hours. Technology, transportation, and globalization have made it easier to search for new job opportunities online. Factors that influence employees to leave a company include low pay, limited growth potential, unfair treatment, and conflicts with supervisors or co-workers. When choosing a new job, individuals consider factors such as career growth, salary, job security, workplace freedom, organization reputation, and higher positions. The Gig Economy represents a shift in the workforce, where individuals work as freelancers or self-employed for multiple companies instead of having a traditional full-time job. This model offers flexibility for both employees and employers, allowing them to choose when and how to work. It provides opportunities for people to access jobs and income that were previously difficult to obtain. However, work in the Gig Economy can be precarious and lacks job security. While distinct from the Great Resignation, these trends share similarities. Employees in both cases are seeking better opportunities and expressing dissatisfaction with traditional work models. Both trends highlight the need for a balance between flexibility and job security, which can be challenging to achieve. Companies must understand and adapt to these changing trends to attract and retain skilled workers while maintaining a healthy and productive work environment. This may involve offering better working conditions, professional development opportunities, and reevaluating recruitment and pay policies.

Overall, the chapter introduces the Great Resignation phenomenon, its background, causes, and implications for individuals and organizations.

Chapter 2: Research method

Chapter 2 of the thesis discusses the empirical setting of the study, focusing on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the ho.re.ca (Hotellerie, Restaurant, Cafe) sector, also known as the Food & Beverage industry. The pandemic has had a negative effect on the tourism and hospitality sectors, resulting in widespread closures and delayed reopening compared to other industries. The chapter emphasizes the vulnerability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the sector, which often lack resources, preparedness, and cash flow. The graph presented (Graph 2) shows the contribution of the hospitality sector to global GDP from 2019 to 2021.



GRAPH 2. SOURCE: IMF, 2022

The significance of the hospitality and tourism sectors is discussed, as they contribute to the global economy by providing employment and generating revenue. The ho.re.ca industry is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries, creating diverse employment opportunities across various sectors. However, this industry faces challenges such as low wages, long and antisocial working hours, unequal treatment, lack of education and training, and seasonality, which contribute to high employee turnover. The importance of human

resources in the ho.re.ca sector is highlighted, emphasizing the sector's labour-intensive nature and its role as a significant source of employment. The success of the industry relies on the availability of qualified staff and the treatment of employees, which impacts customer satisfaction and perception. The availability of qualified workers is crucial for the industry's growth and success. The chapter also discusses the impact of employees on customer satisfaction and the perception of destinations, emphasizing the need for professionalism and equality in the treatment of employees.

Going on, the chapter provides an overview of data collection methods, distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to collect non-numerical data, providing in-depth information and understanding of reasons, opinions, and motivations. Qualitative research is considered explanatory and useful for accumulating knowledge, particularly in social research. For these reasons, it is the focus of this study. Qualitative interviewing is described as a central method for gathering information and serves as a triangulation strategy in conjunction with other methods. Semi-structured interviews are highlighted as the most widely used form of qualitative research, allowing for dialogue and in-depth exploration of important aspects. The interviewer has the flexibility to focus the conversation on relevant topics, leading to a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The chapter then describes the target of the study and the process of contacting companies in the ho.re.ca. sector for the interviews. Indeed, we sent emails to 25 companies, but only 10 of them confirmed their availability for the interview. The sample consisted of general managers or human resources representatives from 10 different companies in the restaurant, café/catering, and hotel industries. The interview protocol used in this study is based on a semi-structured format, chosen to allow flexibility and exploration of relevant topics. Before starting with the interview, participants were asked if it were possible to record the conversation and were informed that the interview would be published anonymously. The protocol emphasized comprehensive and open-ended questions to encourage in-depth responses.

The protocol shows in the table below (Table 1) consisted of five questions aimed at understanding the impact of the Great Resignation phenomenon on the interviewed companies:

1	Question	You have probably heard of the Great Resignation: in your opinion, what are the factors underlying this trend? What has generated it and is fuelling it?
	Probe Question	In your opinion, what can the phenomenon of the Great Resignation be caused by? What are the main motivations that are fuelling it?
	Source	Serenko, A. (2022). The Great Resignation: the great knowledge exodus or the onset of the Great Knowledge Revolution? <i>Journal of Knowledge Management</i> .
2	Question	Considering that the Great Resignation phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread especially after Covid-19 in our country – so after June 2020 –, could you tell us if and how it has impacted/is impacting your company?
	Probe Question	As a result of Covid-19, did you notice a higher turnover rate? Did it seem unusual compared to the past or were you expecting it?
	Source	Amanor-Boadu, Vincent. (2022, November). <i>Empirical evidence for the “Great Resignation”</i> : <i>Monthly Labor Review: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics</i> .
3	Question	If you believe that the Great Resignation has also affected your company, what consequences do you think it has generated for you (e.g. difficulty in finding new qualified staff, time to devote to training new employees)?
	Probe Question	If you have not addressed it directly, do you still think it could have an indirect impact on your company (e.g. lack of figures such as, for example, the sales manager)?
	Source	Aynalem, S., Birhanu, K., & Tesefay, S. (2016). Employment Opportunities and Challenges in Tourism and Hospitality Sectors. <i>Journal of Tourism & Hospitality</i> , 05(06).
4	Question	How are you responding to this phenomenon or how do you intend to act in the future to meet this challenge?
	Probe Question	On which aspects do you intend to act first and foremost? For example, on employer branding (how I communicate what makes my company unique), on the ability to attract human resources; on revising the organizational structure (e.g. streamlining the structure to make it less hierarchical and more flexible); on human resource management (e.g. revising or incorporating staff development programs, incentive systems, training programs, human capital enhancement, etc.); on rethinking organizational values and how you communicate them to staff?
	Source	Liu-Lastres, B., Wen, H., & Huang, W.-J. (2022). A reflection on the Great Resignation in the hospitality and tourism industry. <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i> , 35(1).
5	Question	To conclude, in addition to the topics already covered with the previous questions, would you like to add any information that you think would be useful in this area?

TABLE 1. SOURCE: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Overall, this chapter provides an overview of the empirical setting, the importance of human resources in the ho.re.ca. sector, the data collection methods, the description of the target sample, and the interview protocol used in the study.

Chapter 3: Results

This section provides an overview of the findings from a qualitative research study on the Great Resignation phenomenon. The research utilized narrative analysis to collect and analyse data from interviews. The analysis focused on understanding the causes of the Great Resignation, its consequences for companies, and the strategies being implemented to address the challenge. The qualitative data analysis process involved data organization, summarization, categorization, and interpretation. The research aimed to give voice to the interviewees and discover new concepts rather than affirming existing ones. It emphasized the importance of staying open and unbiased towards unexpected patterns and results.

The causes of the Great Resignation identified through the interviews included the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, inconvenient shifts in the hospitality industry, the presence of citizenship income, and the perception of the sector as not being professionalizing. The pandemic had psychological effects on individuals, making them prioritize a higher quality of life and reconsider their work-life balance. The hospitality sector's irregular working hours and low salary were also contributing factors. Additionally, the availability of citizenship income led some workers to prefer staying at home rather than seeking employment.

The consequences of the Great Resignation for companies varied. High turnover was a significant challenge, resulting in difficulties finding new staff and requiring time and resources for training. The shift from full-time to part-time work was another consequence, driven by employees' desire for more free time and better work-life balance.

To address the Great Resignation, companies implemented strategies aimed at retaining talent and attracting new candidates. These strategies included restructuring the workweek to provide more time off, offering salary bonuses to improve wages, and implementing employee well-being initiatives.

Overall, the qualitative research study shed light on the causes, consequences, and strategies associated with the Great Resignation phenomenon. The findings emphasized the need for companies to develop medium to long-term strategies focused on talent retention and addressed the specific challenges faced in the hospitality sector.

Discussion

As the collected results show, the Great Resignation is a phenomenon that is creating great discomfort for companies. Many place the blame on Covid-19, but this was only the straw that broke the camel's back; worker discontent arose earlier due to other elements, which were already present before the pandemic.

Let us start by saying that this phenomenon, associated with the concept of crisis², need to not be perceived as a negative and dangerous situation, on the contrary, it can turn out to be an opportunity for growth and progress of the company itself. In such a situation, it is essential that companies implement effective strategies to deal with the risks and consequences. By strategy is meant a real plan of action to be implemented at both the operational and administrative and financial levels in order to ensure consistency between the activities implemented and the external environment.

Critical to our comprehension of dealing with crises is the notion of resilience. The development of procedures that enable actors to recognize, adapt to, and use resources to counter disruptions before, during, and after the crisis is at the heart of resilience (Williams et al., 2017). Also, it exhorts businesses and their personnel to adopt a rather unique strategy in order to quickly restore control (Linnenluecke, 2017). Going deeply, it is useful to introduce the concept of urban and industry resilience.

The urban resilience concept is dynamic and has “fuzzy” boundaries (Meerow et al., 2016). Acknowledging its inherent interdisciplinarity, Meerow et al. (2016) combine theories already in existence to describe urban resilience as “the ability of an urban system – and all its constituent socio-ecological and socio-technical networks across temporal and spatial scales – to maintain or rapidly return to desired functions in the face of a disturbance, to adapt to change, and to quickly transform systems that limit current or future adaptive capacity”. Within a tourism context, Buultjens et al. (2017) define industry resilience as “the capacity of the industry to deal effectively with disasters and self-inflicted crises in order to maintain stability whilst also ensuring the flexibility and diversity necessary for innovation and further development”. Various studies have reported the crippling effects of crises on tourism (Khalid et al., 2020), indicating a lack of industry resilience to major external shocks (Chowdhury et al., 2019). Jamal and Budke (2020) further observe that pandemics are likely to become a common feature of the tourism industry, requiring greater stakeholder collaboration to plan for and manage resilience. For instance, an effective leadership style in hotels during a crisis can facilitate a fluid communication among employees and customers. Similarly, the entrepreneurial orientation of the owners/managers can facilitate innovation/improvisation in the operational processes and employee relations during the times of a crisis (Hao et al., 2020).

² *The notion of crisis refers to an “unforeseen and unanticipated incident that can jeopardize the attainment of strategic goals in the context of short decision response times available to management” (Hermann, 1963).*

Therefore, in order to meet this challenge in a highly dynamic environment, there is a need for companies to respond quickly. So far we have seen that there are indeed a number of elements that they are putting in place, but first an analysis needs to be made of what drove workers out of the workplace. This analysis is fundamental for the ho.re.ca sector. Indeed, the sector can only flourish if the industry can employ and retain qualified staff and a sustainable workforce. According to Il Sole 24 Ore³, among the main characteristics that young people consider crucial when considering a job offer are adequate pay, the possibility of personal growth, and flexible hours.

Among the most decisive elements that drive workers to change jobs there are 1) wages that are too low compared to the effort of employees, 2) strenuous shifts in the ho.re.ca. sector to deal with, and finally 3) the fact that employees have little opportunity to grow within the company. In addition, as secondary elements, we can also include the fact that employees, in some cases, do not feel part of a community, are not motivated, and do not feel that their values are reflected by those of the company in which they work. Employees, consequently, leave their jobs or, in rare cases, ask to work part-time instead of full-time. The latter request is rarely granted by companies, as it leads to increased costs. In some cases, however, given the hardship that the Great Resignation is creating, employers are forced to comply with their employees' requests in order to not see them leave.

The greatest hardship comes at the time when the company needs a new figure within its structure. In fact, in these cases, companies face two major difficulties: finding new qualified staff and time and money to invest in staff training.

Drawing conclusions from the interviews, companies before focusing on finding new staff, should focus their attention on the retention of who are already part of their structure. As we saw in the previous section, companies are already implementing initiatives to retain existing staff and to meet the needs of young people, such as increasing the salary or reducing the work week from 40 to 36 hours. In fact, according to Il Sole 24 Ore, among the main characteristics that young people consider crucial when considering a job offer are adequate pay, the possibility of personal growth and flexible hours. In addition to these elements that have already been discussed in previous sections, there are other aspects that companies should take advantage of. For example, it is important to create a positive and collaborative work environment, offering flexibility whenever possible, and benefits such as training and/or performance-related bonuses.

³ Carli, A. (2023, April 28). *Flessibilità e tempo libero: così i giovani della "generazione Z" valutano le opportunità di lavoro. Il Sole 24 ORE.*

Offering training in addition to the mandatory ones allows employees to feel an integral part of the structure in which they work and, more importantly, gives them the opportunity to grow within the company. The more satisfied and engaged employees feel, the more they build a lasting relationship with the company in which they work, allowing the construction of a strong corporate culture that includes aspects such as cohesion, communication and sharing of values. These aspects, of course, depend not only on the employer, but also on managers and colleagues. These, in fact, must have a mutual respect for one another, supporting inclusion and recognition when necessary. In this way, employees will feel motivated and incentivized to work better and better in a healthy environment.

In conclusion, it is important to create a work environment in which employees feel comfortable and heard by their employers. In fact, there is a collapse in the company's sense of belonging, which is especially strong in the younger generation. Only 15% of Generation Z has an intense connection with their company, compared with 64% of baby boomers⁴. To foster this, HR managers should mainly choose three paths: 1) the path of trust and respect, 2) give the employees a clear vision of the company's strategy, and 3) making employees feel that they are an integral part of a larger project.

The research work, therefore, offers interesting insights for reflection, but there are many question marks that remain, and which could be explored in future research. Specifically, it would be useful to know what impact each of the strategies implemented by companies is having on them. Which, in particular, is the strategy that works better than the others to attract and/or maintain employees.

Conclusion

Having come to the conclusions of the research, it is necessary to draw the lines of argument and analyse what are the main findings from the work.

This master's thesis has explored the phenomenon of the Great Resignation and its impact on the ho.re.ca. sector in Italy. Through qualitative research, including interviews with industry professionals, the study has shed light on the causes and consequences of the Great Resignation, in order to understand how companies are responding to this challenge.

⁴ Carli, A. (2023, April 28). *Flessibilità e tempo libero: così i giovani della “generazione Z” valutano le opportunità di lavoro. Il Sole 24 ORE.*

The last two years have brought extraordinary changes and transformation. In Italy, for example, 1.7 million voluntary resignations were recorded in 2022 in 9 months. This is a 22% increase over the same period in 2021 (Barbieri, 2023). The Great Resignation has forced hospitality managers and executives to rethink the way they have approached their internal marketing and, more broadly, human resources strategies and processes. This paper was written to study with deep research the phenomenon just described, in particular to understand in which way the companies of the target sector will face this phenomenon, and which steps they will take within the organization to respond to this new challenge. In particular, the document is based on three chapters: the first one includes the literature review of the Great Resignation, its background, the explanation of how Covid-19 has impacted the phenomenon, and finally similar phenomena such as Quiet Quitting, Job Hopping, and Gig Economy; the second chapter, on the other hand, includes an analysis of the ho.re.ca. sector and the methodology used for the qualitative research – including how the data was collected, what target audience was used, and the interview protocol that includes what questions the respondents were asked; finally, the third chapter sheds light on the findings that emerged, and it answers the research question.

In order to draw conclusions, it is therefore important to analyse what emerged from the research work in order to make reflections and identify what are the implications of the research. In this sense, the research work offers interesting insights. The analysis is based on the experience of 10 companies belonging to the ho.re.ca. sector, they have answered 5 questions in order to reveal what the causes of the Great Resignation are, what consequences the phenomenon is having on the companies and which strategies the companies are implementing in order to face this threat. The interviews revealed that several factors contribute to the Great Resignation. The pandemic not only had health implications but also led many workers to reevaluate their priorities and seek a better work-life balance. It brought about challenges such as managing work while dealing with remote learning for children, layoffs, and increased stress due to infection risks. Contrary to the findings of the literature, this is not the only cause of the phenomenon, indeed it has served as a catalyst rather than a leading cause of this trend. Another significant cause of the Great Resignation is the inconvenient shifts characteristic of the ho.re.ca. industry. The irregular working hours, including early mornings, late nights, and work on holidays, can disrupt work-life balance and contribute to dissatisfaction among employees. The introduction of citizenship income, a form of economic support provided by the state to those in need, has also influenced the Great Resignation. Some workers choose to rely on this income rather than seeking employment,

leading to labour shortages and difficulties for companies in finding qualified candidates. Furthermore, the lack of professionalization in the ho.re.ca. sector has been identified as a cause for the Great Resignation. Limited growth opportunities, precarious working conditions, and low wages have contributed to employees perceiving their jobs as temporary and seeking better prospects elsewhere.

The consequences of the Great Resignation for companies are significant. High turnover, difficulty in finding new personnel, the time and resources spent on training new employees, and the increased requests for switching from full-time to part-time work pose challenges for businesses. These consequences require companies to develop strategies to retain talent and attract new candidates.

To address these challenges, companies have implemented various initiatives. Some companies have introduced shorter working weeks to provide employees with more time off, while others have offered salary bonuses as a way to improve compensation. Reward programs, such as birthday bonuses and company parties, have been implemented to enhance employee satisfaction and retention. Companies also aim to provide career opportunities within the organization to address employees' concerns about career growth. Moreover, companies are strengthening their recruitment efforts by advertising on dedicated job sites, targeting universities, and utilizing social media platforms. External agencies are also being utilized to improve the recruitment process and attract qualified candidates.

In conclusion, the Great Resignation has had a significant impact on the ho.re.ca. sector in Italy, leading to labour shortages, high turnover, and challenges in finding qualified personnel. The study of the phenomenon has been important in order to understand the consequences on the labour market, and particularly to analyse how the companies are developing an effective people management strategy, to identify factors contributing to employee dissatisfaction, and which are the activities implemented by the companies in the ho.re.ca. sector to improve employee retention. Indeed, companies are responding by implementing various strategies to retain employees and attract new talent. However, addressing the causes of the Great Resignation, such as improving work-life balance, professionalizing the sector, participative management cultures, and addressing wage disparities, will be essential for long-term sustainability in the industry.

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