

**Understanding How Pay Transparency Shapes Generation Z Organisational
Commitment in the Fashion Retail Industry**

By

Thin Nadi Thwe

A Thesis

Submitted to the Auckland University of Technology

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Business

2026

Faculty of Business, Economics and Law

Department of Management

Abstract

Pay transparency has gained increasing attention as organisations reconsider how pay information is communicated within contemporary employment relationships (Schnauffer et al., 2022; Brown, 2022). At the same time, organisational commitment remains a challenge in sectors characterised by high workforce mobility and insecure employment, such as fashion retail (Kalleberg, 2009). While these issues have often been examined separately, less is known about how they intersect for Generation Z employees in retail settings, particularly in New Zealand (Baker et al., 2019).

This study explores how Generation Z employees in the New Zealand fashion retail industry experience pay transparency and how these experiences relate to their understanding of organisational commitment. Using an interpretivist phenomenological orientation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven Generation Z retail employees in Auckland. Data were analysed through inductive thematic analysis, informed by Organisational Commitment Theory (Meyer & Allen, 1991), Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964) and Organisational justice theory (Greenberg, 1987).

The findings suggest that pay transparency is experienced less as a direct driver of commitment and more as a reference point through which employees evaluate organisational justice, particularly fairness in outcomes, processes, and managerial communication (Castilla, 2015; Bamberger & Belogolovsky, 2017). Commitment was commonly described as provisional and shaped by both fairness perceptions and economic constraints (Kalleberg, 2009). The study offers context-specific insight into the conditional role of pay transparency in shaping organisational commitment among Generation Z retail workers.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	vi
Attestation of Authorship.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	2
Chapter One: Introduction	3
1.1 Introduction.....	3
1.2 Fashion Retail Employment Context in New Zealand	4
1.3 Research Aim and Questions	6
1.4 Thesis Structure	6
1.5 Chapter Summary	7
Chapter Two: Literature Review	9
2.1 Introduction.....	9
2.2 Theoretical Framework.....	10
2.2.1 Organisational Commitment Theory	10
2.2.2 Equity Theory	11
2.2.3 Vroom’s Expectancy Theory	13
2.2.4 Organisational Justice Theory.....	15
2.3 Organisational Commitment.....	16
2.3.1 Organisational Commitment in New Zealand Workplaces	18
2.4 Generation Z in the Workplace.....	19

2.5 Pay Transparency	22
2.5.1 Pay transparency practices in New Zealand	23
2.6 Pay Transparency, Organisational Commitment and Generation Z	26
2.7 Literature Gaps.....	28
2.8 Chapter Summary	29
Chapter Three: Research Methodology	31
3.1 Introduction.....	31
3.2 Philosophical Framework	31
3.3 Research Design.....	32
3.4 Ethical Considerations	33
3.5 Participant Recruitment	35
3.6 Data Collection	37
3.7 Data Transcription Process	38
3.8 Data Analysis	39
3.9 Chapter Summary	41
Chapter Four: Findings	43
4.1 Introduction.....	43
4.2 Overview of Key Themes	43
4.3 Theme 1: Pay Fairness	45
4.3.1 Equal Pay, Equal Work.....	45
4.3.2 Negotiation Power Imbalance.....	46
4.4 Theme 2: Trust in Management.....	47

4.4.1 Socially Sensitive Topic	48
4.4.2 Pay Secrecy and Trust.....	49
4.4.3 Communication and Commitment.....	50
4.5 Theme 3: Expectations Shaping Commitment	51
4.5.1 Minimum Pay as Baseline, Recognition as Motivation.....	51
4.5.2 Expected Transparency	53
4.5.3 Career Visibility.....	54
4.6 Theme 4: Job Scarcity and High Living Costs	55
4.6.1 Transitional Employment.....	55
4.6.2 Economic Insecurity	56
4.6.3 Financial Survival	58
4.7 Cross-theme Patterns and Contrasts.....	59
4.8 Chapter Summary	59
Chapter Five: Discussion	61
5.1 Introduction.....	61
5.2 Interpretation of Key Findings.....	61
5.3 Implications for HR Practice	66
5.4 Limitations of the Study.....	68
5.5 Chapter Summary	70
Chapter Six: Conclusion	71
6.1 Introduction.....	71
6.2 Summary of Key Findings	71

6.3 Contributions to Identified Gaps in the Literature	72
6.4 Directions for Future Research	74
6.5 Concluding Reflection	75
References	76
Appendices	90
Appendix 1: Ethics Approval Letter	90
Appendix 2: Participant Recruitment Advertisement	91
Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet	92
Appendix 4: Consent Form	97
Appendix 5: Indicative Interview Questions	98

List of Tables

Table 1: Characteristics of The Participants	36
Table 2: Overview of Themes	44

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Thin Nadi Thwe

Date: 4/02/2026

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor for her patience, guidance, and support throughout this research journey. Her understanding, reassurance, and thoughtful feedback helped me navigate moments of uncertainty and find clarity when the process felt overwhelming.

I am profoundly thankful to my parents, whose unwavering financial support made it possible for me to pursue my dream of studying abroad. Their sacrifices, trust, and belief in my aspirations gave me the freedom to focus on this work and the resilience to continue, even when the journey felt challenging.

I am especially grateful to my partner for being a constant source of emotional strength throughout this entire journey. His encouragement, patience, and presence, during the most demanding moments, provided comfort, motivation, and reassurance when I needed it most.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends, who supported me in quieter but equally important ways. Although they were not directly involved in this research, the time spent with them, through conversation, laughter, and moments of light-hearted distraction, offered much-needed relief from stress. Those moments of connection allowed me to rest, regain perspective, and return to my work with renewed focus and energy.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study and establishes the context for examining pay transparency and organisational commitment within the New Zealand fashion retail industry. As organisations increasingly reconsider how pay information is communicated to employees, questions have emerged about how such practices are understood and evaluated by workers in different employment contexts (Schnauffer et al., 2021; Stofberg et al., 2022). However, there is limited understanding of how employees make sense of pay transparency in their daily work and how these interpretations influence their overall evaluations of their organisation. At the same time, organisational commitment remains an ongoing concern for employers, particularly in sectors characterised by high workforce mobility and short-term employment arrangements (Van Rossenberg et al., 2018). This is particularly relevant in fashion retail, as high turnover rates and predominantly young workforces influence how pay information is shared, interpreted, and contested. In these settings, perceptions of pay transparency can significantly influence trust, attachment, and decision-making regarding whether to stay with an employer.

This study integrates these issues by examining Generation Z employees in fashion retail, a group whose early work experiences may influence their longer-term expectations of work and organisations. As Generation Z employees start their careers, they are actively forming judgements about what constitutes fair and legitimate organisational practices, making their perspectives particularly valuable for this study (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Parry & Urwin, 2011). By examining pay transparency from the perspective of employees themselves, the study seeks to understand how pay-related practices are interpreted and how they relate to employees' sense of attachment to their organisation, responding to calls for more employee-centred and context-

sensitive research on pay transparency and commitment. Thus, the study considers organisational justice as a lens through which employees interpret pay transparency and its effects on their relationship with the organisation.

1.2 Fashion Retail Employment Context in New Zealand

Fashion retail involves the sale of clothing and related products directly to consumers through physical stores, online platforms, or integrated multi-channel systems (Easey, 2009; McCormick et al., 2014). While the sector shares core operational features with the wider retail industry, such as supply chain coordination, store operations, and customer service, it is distinguished by rapid shifts in consumer preferences, short product life cycles, and the need for continuous brand engagement across multiple channels (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010; Wen et al., 2018). These industry characteristics create a fast-paced and highly adaptive operating environment, shaping how work is set up, how pay is shared, and how Generation Z employees feel about fairness in fashion retail.

Within New Zealand, the fashion retail industry operates primarily through small and medium-sized enterprises, alongside a limited number of international retail chains. Retail is a major contributor to the national economy, accounting for approximately 6% of GDP and comprising around 42,000 businesses, many of which are small or sole traders (Ringa Hora, 2023). Fashion retailers operating within this context include a mix of international and domestic brands such as H&M, Cotton On, Glassons, and Hallenstein Brothers. However, employment practices within the sector are often less formalised, particularly among smaller firms, with limited regulatory requirements around pay disclosure in recruitment (Trusaic, 2025).

Job advertisements in fashion retail frequently emphasise non-wage benefits such as flexible hours, staff discounts, and development opportunities, while providing little clarity around salary ranges (Seek, 2025; Indeed, 2025; Cotton On, 2025). For Generation Z workers, many of whom have limited labour market experience, this lack of transparency can contribute to unclear or inflated expectations when pay is framed through vague language such as “fair wages”. In the absence of explicit pay bands, remuneration outcomes often depend on individual negotiation confidence and experience, which can advantage some employees while disadvantaging others performing comparable work (Babcock et al., 2017). These conditions affect how employees understand pay transparency and their perceptions of fairness and trust in the organisation.

At the same time, fashion retail is associated with demanding working conditions, including high levels of customer interaction, sales pressure, and emotional labour, which have been linked to elevated stress and turnover (Wong et al., 2008; Ha-Brookshire & Hawley, 2014). Evidence from New Zealand further indicates that many small fashion retail businesses lack formal HR systems, contributing to issues such as inconsistent scheduling, unclear promotion pathways, and limited transparency around pay and overtime (WorkSafe, 2023, 2024). WorkSafe’s national survey also highlights persistent challenges related to low role clarity, limited supervisor support, and exposure to workplace stressors, including bullying and threats, particularly in front-line sales roles (WorkSafe, 2024). These conditions highlight ongoing problems with leadership, employee recognition, and fairness within the sector. This employment context highlights the importance of examining how pay transparency is experienced and evaluated by Generation Z employees, and how these evaluations relate to organisational commitment in fashion retail. The following section outlines the research aim and questions that guide the study.

1.3 Research Aim and Questions

The aim of this study is to explore how pay transparency is experienced and evaluated by Generation Z employees, and how these evaluations relate to organisational commitment in the New Zealand fashion retail industry.

To achieve this aim, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Generation Z employees in the New Zealand fashion retail industry experience pay transparency, and how do these experiences influence their organisational commitment?
2. In what ways do Generation Z employees in fashion retail interpret pay transparency in relation to fairness and organisational justice?

Together, these research questions establish an employee-centred and interpretive framework for the study. The first research question examines Generation Z employees' experiences of pay transparency and how these experiences relate to organisational commitment. The second research question focuses on the interpretive processes through which pay transparency is evaluated, drawing attention to perceptions of fairness and organisational justice fashion retail employment.

1.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised into six chapters that progress from conceptual framing to empirical analysis and interpretation. The opening chapter introduces the research topic, briefly outlines the

rationale for focusing on pay transparency and organisational commitment within fashion retail employment, and presents the research aim and guiding questions that frame the investigation.

The literature review examines existing research on pay transparency, organisational commitment, and generational perspectives on employment. This chapter engages with key theoretical and empirical work in these areas and identifies gaps in current knowledge that inform the focus and direction of the study. The methodology chapter outlines the research approach adopted in this thesis, including the philosophical positioning, research design, data collection methods, participant selection, and analytical strategy used to explore Generation Z employees' experiences within the fashion retail context.

The findings chapter reports the key themes that emerged from the interview data, focusing on participants' perspectives and experiences. Building on this, the discussion chapter moves beyond description to interpret these findings in relation to existing literature and relevant theoretical frameworks, while remaining attentive to the specific conditions of fashion retail employment.

In the final chapter, the conclusion chapter, the study brings together its key insights, articulates its empirical and contextual contribution to existing knowledge, and proposes directions for future research.

1.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the focus and purpose of the study and outlined the rationale for examining pay transparency and organisational commitment among Generation Z employees in the New Zealand fashion retail industry. The research aims and guiding questions have been presented, establishing an employee-centred approach to understanding how pay transparency is experienced and interpreted within this context. The structure of the thesis has also been outlined,

providing a clear overview of how the study is organised. The following chapter critically synthesises relevant literature on pay transparency, organisational commitment, and generational perspectives on employment, in order to position the study and clarify the research gap it addresses.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review examines the theoretical foundations and empirical findings relevant to the relationship between pay transparency and organisational commitment, with a focus on Generation Z employees in New Zealand's fashion retail industry. The purpose of this chapter is to synthesise existing literature on the different factors that are influencing employee attitudes and behaviours, with a particular focus on how pay transparency has been examined in relation to organisational commitment among younger workers.

The review is organised into several key sections. It begins with an overview of the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, led by Meyer and Allen's (1991) Organisational Commitment Theory. Additional motivational and fairness-based theories are used to complement this framework. Together, these models provide the conceptual foundation for understanding how employees may interpret and respond to transparent or unclear compensation systems.

Following this, the review examines literature on Generation Z in the workplace and the factors shaping commitment in early-career employment. It then synthesises research on pay transparency with definitions, mechanisms, and outcomes before turning to New Zealand-specific pay transparency developments relevant to retail employment.

Lastly, the chapter synthesises the literature to identify gaps that justify the study and inform the research questions.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Organisational Commitment Theory

Meyer and Allen's (1991) organisational commitment theory, commonly referred to as the three-component model, conceptualises commitment as a psychological state comprising affective, continuance, and normative commitment. These components represent different, though potentially overlapping, reasons why employees choose to remain with or leave an organisation.

Affective commitment reflects an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation. It develops through positive work experiences and a sense of belonging, leading employees to remain because they want to. This form of commitment is often regarded as the most desirable, as it is associated with stronger engagement and lower turnover intentions, particularly in high-turnover sectors such as retail (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Jaros, 2007).

Continuance commitment is based on an employee's awareness of the costs associated with leaving an organisation, such as loss of income, benefits, or difficulty securing alternative employment (Jaros, 2007). Employees with strong continuance commitment remain because they need to, rather than because of emotional attachment. While this form of commitment may contribute to short-term retention, it is generally less effective in sustaining motivation and engagement, particularly among younger employees (Culpepper, 2011).

Normative commitment refers to an employee's sense of moral or ethical obligation to remain with an organisation. This obligation may arise from cultural norms, social expectations, or feelings of indebtedness when organisations provide support such as training or development opportunities (Khalip, 2016; Al-Madi et al., 2017). Employees with high normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to, rather than because they want to or perceive high costs of leaving.

These three components are not mutually exclusive, and employees may experience one dominant form of commitment or a combination of all three, with each arising from different motivations (Khalip, 2016). In this study, organisational commitment theory provides a useful lens for examining how organisational practices such as pay transparency may shape different forms of attachment among Generation Z employees. This cohort is frequently characterised as valuing openness, fairness, and ethical organisational behaviour, suggesting that transparent practices may support affective commitment by fostering trust and a sense of being valued (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019).

However, organisational commitment theory also has limitations when applied to contemporary retail and early-career employment contexts. The model assumes relatively stable employment relationships in which commitment has time to develop, an assumption that is often incompatible with short tenure, casualised, or precarious work arrangements common in fashion retail (Cohen, 2007; Kalleberg, 2009). For Generation Z employees whose employment may be transitional or instrumental, affective and normative commitment may remain weak, while continuance commitment may be shaped more by labour market constraints than organisational practices. These limitations suggest that organisational commitment theory should be applied cautiously and complemented by additional perspectives when examining commitment in high-mobility retail environments (Cohen, 2007).

2.2.2 Equity Theory

Equity theory, developed by Adams (1963), offers a psychological framework for understanding employee motivation by focusing on individuals' perceptions of fairness in the workplace. It suggests that employees are more motivated when they perceive rewards as

proportional to their contributions and experience psychological discomfort when they perceive a sense of unfairness.

At the core of the theory is the concept of inputs and outputs. Inputs refer to what employees contribute to their jobs (e.g., time, effort, and loyalty), while outputs include what they receive in return as an inducement (e.g., pay, recognition, and benefits). Employees assess fairness by comparing their input-output ratio with that of a referent, which may be a colleague, a group, or organisational norms (Cook & Parcel, 1977). When these ratios are perceived as balanced, positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and loyalty are more likely to emerge. Conversely, perceived inequity can lead employees to reduce effort, seek increased compensation, or reassess their relationship with the organisation (Al-zawahreh & Al-Madi, 2012).

Equity theory is particularly relevant to this study because pay transparency shapes the comparative information employees rely on when evaluating fairness. Transparency can make pay differences more visible, intensifying input-output comparisons and influencing how compensation decisions are interpreted. Wright (2015) illustrates this process through scenarios in which employees compare their effort-to-reward ratios with those of others in similar roles. When organisations clearly communicate how pay decisions are made and ensure consistency across roles, perceptions of equity are more likely to be maintained. These perceptions are especially important for Generation Z employees, who are often characterised as highly sensitive to fairness and equity issues in the workplace (Schroth, 2019). For this cohort, pay transparency may help reduce uncertainty surrounding pay systems and support fairer comparisons.

However, equity theory also has important limitations when applied to contemporary retail employment and pay transparency contexts. The theory assumes that employees can accurately assess both their own inputs and outputs and those of relevant comparison others, an assumption

that may not hold in workplaces where pay information is incomplete, informal, or unevenly disclosed (Adams, 1963; Cook & Parcel, 1977). Under such conditions, transparency may increase perceptions of inequity rather than resolve them.

Equity theory also places limited emphasis on broader structural constraints such as labour market insecurity, job precarity, and restricted career pathways, which are common in retail employment (Kalleberg, 2009). For Generation Z employees in roles characterised by short tenure and limited bargaining power, perceived inequity may be recognised but tolerated due to economic necessity. When applied to pay transparency, this creates a tension: transparency may strengthen fairness perceptions when inequities are acknowledged and addressed, but it may also undermine trust and organisational commitment when disparities are revealed without corrective mechanisms in place (Wright, 2015; Schroth, 2019).

2.2.3 Vroom's Expectancy Theory

Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory explains motivation as a cognitive process in which individuals assess the likelihood that their effort will lead to valued and desired outcomes. Building on this view, Sobaih et al. (2024) describe expectancy theory as a framework in which employees evaluate the relationship between effort, performance, and rewards when deciding how much effort to invest at work. Often referred to as VIE theory, it comprises three core components: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence (Kumar, 2018). Expectancy reflects the belief that effort will improve performance, instrumentality captures the belief that performance will lead to rewards, and valence refers to the value employees attach to those rewards (Lokman et al., 2022). Motivation is therefore perceived to be the strongest when all three components are present. Because of its emphasis on the alignment between effort and valued outcomes, expectancy theory has been widely applied across industries, including the retail sector (Fang, 2023).

In fashion retail, where employee performance directly affects customer satisfaction, sales outcomes, and operational efficiency, expectancy theory offers a useful lens for understanding motivation (Kurdi et al., 2020; Maulidiyah & Parahyanti, 2024). However, several limitations arise when applying the theory to retail contexts. Expectancy theory assumes that employees engage in rational decision-making and have a reasonable degree of control over how effort translates into performance (Vroom, 1964). In many retail roles, this assumption is weakened by low job autonomy, routine task structures, and inconsistent performance feedback, which make it difficult for employees to perceive a stable link between effort and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Wong et al., 2008). Furthermore, the theory presumes that rewards are clearly defined and within organisational control. In practice, extrinsic rewards in retail, such as bonuses, commissions, or promotions, are often ambiguously specified or constrained by organisational and economic pressures (Kalleberg, 2009).

These limitations are further intensified by casualised and precarious employment arrangements common in retail, including variable hours, short-term contracts, and limited progression opportunities, which reduce employees' perceived influence over reward outcomes (Kalleberg, 2009; Croucher et al., 2024). Under such conditions, motivation is less likely to follow the linear and predictable process proposed by expectancy theory.

Within this context, pay transparency may partially mitigate these constraints by clarifying how pay structures operate, how rewards are determined, and how performance is recognised. By improving the visibility and predictability of reward systems, transparency can strengthen employees' understanding of motivational linkages, even in constrained retail environments (Colella et al., 2007; Bamberger & Belogolovsky, 2017). For Generation Z employees, who tend

to value clarity and fairness, such transparency may support motivation and engagement despite structural limitations.

2.2.4 Organisational Justice Theory

Organisational justice theory, originally conceptualised by Greenberg (1987), examines how employees form perceptions of fairness within organisational settings and how these perceptions influence workplace attitudes and behaviours. The theory offers a useful framework for understanding how organisational practices, including pay transparency, are evaluated through fairness judgements.

Within the theory, justice is commonly conceptualised as comprising three interrelated dimensions: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Colquitt et al., 2001). Distributive justice refers to perceptions of fairness in the allocation of outcomes such as pay and rewards. Procedural justice concerns the perceived fairness of the processes used to determine outcomes, including consistency, transparency, and opportunities for employee voice. Interactional justice focuses on the quality of interpersonal treatment and communication employees receive during decision implementation, particularly whether explanations are respectful, honest, and timely (Greenberg, 1987). Practices related to pay transparency can impact all three aspects by influencing what employees understand about pay, how legitimate they find the criteria for setting pay, and how respectfully and clearly pay decision are conveyed. In this sense, pay transparency functions as a multi-dimensional fairness signal rather than a single organisational practice. Research indicates that justice perceptions are closely associated with trust in management, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment (Adamovic, 2023; Lee, 2023).

The limitations of organisational justice theory should be acknowledged. The framework assumes that employees have access to adequate information to form fairness judgements;

however, this assumption may not hold in retail settings where pay information is often incomplete or inconsistently communicated (Greenberg, 1987; Colquitt et al., 2001). In addition, perceptions of justice may be influenced by structural constraints, such as job insecurity or limited alternative employment opportunities, which can shape how fairness is evaluated in practice (Kalleberg, 2009).

Given the focus of this study on how Generation Z employees interpret pay transparency in relation to fairness and organisational justice, the theory of organisational justice serves as a suitable interpretive framework that aligns well with equity and expectancy theories.

2.3 Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment (OC) refers to the psychological bond that employees form with their organisation, reflected in the extent to which they identify and align their goals with the organisation's vision, values, and purpose (Ghosh & Swamy, 2014). It influences not only employees' intentions to remain with an organisation, but also their motivation and performance at work. Thus, organisational commitment is widely recognised as a critical construct in employment research due to its role in shaping employee attitudes, behaviours, and long-term workforce stability.

In the context of the fashion retail industry, organisational commitment is particularly important given the sector's high employee turnover and workforce instability. Therefore, understanding how pay transparency influences the organisational commitment among Generation Z employees is essential for examining retention, motivation, and sustainable employment relationships in this industry.

A substantial body of research has shown that organisational commitment is associated with job satisfaction, performance, and organisational citizenship behaviours, and negatively associated with turnover intention, absenteeism, and workplace burnout (Bashir & Gani, 2020; Salleh et al., 2016). Employees who are committed to their organisation are more likely to exhibit their discretionary effort on even their basic job duties, search for continuous improvement, and engage in collaborative behaviours that will enhance overall organisational resilience and competitiveness (Yew, 2011). These outcomes are particularly relevant for industries such as fashion retail, where high staff turnover and inconsistent workforce engagement present ongoing challenges.

Furthermore, organisational commitment is not formed in isolation but is influenced by various internal and external organisational factors. Key contributors include perceptions of fairness, opportunities for career progression, supportive leadership, open communication, and equitable reward systems (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Al-Madi et al., 2017). These factors influence employees' overall experience of the employment relationship and signal the degree to which their needs and contributions are acknowledged and valued.

However, despite its widespread use, organisational commitment theories also been critiqued for being grounded largely in Western and individualistic employment models that often assume stable, long-term organisational relationships (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Wasti, 2003). That assumption can limit the applicability of traditional organisational commitment frameworks in contemporary work, such as casual or part-time work, gig work and short-term contracts work, which are characterised by flexibility and insecurity, especially in high turnover industry like fashion retail (Kalleberg, 2009). In addition, research suggests that organisational commitment may even be expressed differently across generations. In this context, younger employees like Generation Z may prioritise flexibility, extrinsic rewards and career mobility over long-term

organisational attachment (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Twenge et al., 2010). These limitations highlight the need to interpret organisational commitment cautiously when examining Generation Z employees in the fashion retail industry.

2.3.1 Organisational Commitment in New Zealand Workplaces

In New Zealand, organisational commitment has become an increasingly important concern in human resource management, particularly amid shifting workforce expectations and post-pandemic economic conditions. Comparative research by Croucher et al. (2024) suggests that organisational commitment levels in New Zealand may be lower than those observed in countries such as the United States, underscoring the need for strategies that strengthen employee loyalty and engagement within the local context.

Cultural and institutional features of New Zealand workplaces—most notably an emphasis on egalitarianism, work-life balance, and employee well-being—shape how commitment is developed and maintained. Employees tend to place strong value on fairness, inclusiveness, and ethical leadership, indicating that organisational practices aligned with these principles are more likely to foster commitment (Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021). Within this context, pay transparency has been identified as a potentially relevant mechanism for supporting trust and reinforcing organisational cohesion. However, there remains very little evidence on how pay transparency is experienced by retail employees in New Zealand, and how it relates to commitment in high-turnover, early-career employment contexts.

2.4 Generation Z in the Workplace

Generation Z, generally defined as those born between the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2010s, is rapidly becoming a vital part of the global workforce (Schroth, 2019; Vieira et al., 2024). As they enter their careers, they bring distinct perspectives, evolving expectations, and particular approaches to work. This presents both opportunities and challenges for organisations (Zahra et al., 2025), making it increasingly important to understand the factors shaping Generation Z employees' workplace attitudes and behaviours.

Evidence also suggests that a substantial proportion of Generation Z has already entered the labour market. In many job markets in New Zealand, Generation Z is becoming increasingly prevalent in entry-level and customer-facing roles, including those in retail, and now represents a substantial share of younger workers in the labour market (Stats NZ, 2025). As such, their early work experiences are particularly important for understanding how organisational commitment develops. Despite this growing participation, Generation Z is often characterised as less committed than previous generations (Zahra et al., 2025). However, this characterisation may oversimplify their employment behaviour. Rather than reflecting disengagement, higher job mobility has been linked to strong aspirations for meaningful work and continuous skill development, which can lead Generation Z employees to move more frequently between roles when these expectations are unmet (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). From a human resources perspective, this shifts the challenge from attraction alone to the question of how organisations can sustain engagement and retention.

For Generation Z, organisational commitment appears to be shaped less by traditional employment factors such as job stability or pay levels alone, and more by the perceived alignment between individual values and organisational practices. Prior studies indicate that this cohort

places particular emphasis on ethical conduct, fairness, and transparency in organisational decision-making, including how pay and opportunities are allocated (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). Opportunities for personal and professional development, emotional connection, and a clear sense of purpose have also been identified as important drivers of engagement (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022; Surugiu et al., 2025). Collectively, these expectations shape how Generation Z evaluates organisational credibility and fairness, especially in sectors characterised by limited job security.

These dynamics are particularly salient in the retail sector, where employment is often casualised and turnover rates are high. In this context, organisational practices that demonstrate fairness and ethical intent can play a significant role in shaping employees' willingness to remain with an employer. Pay transparency represents one such practice. Transparent compensation structures provide clarity around salary arrangements, incentives, and pay-related decisions, which can reduce uncertainty and support trust (Yadav & Rai, 2017; Scheller & Harrison, 2018). Existing research suggests that Generation Z places considerable value on openness in compensation when assessing potential employers (Symplicity, 2023). Although this evidence is drawn from a U.S. student sample and is not directly generalisable to the New Zealand retail workforce, it offers an illustrative indication of how pay disclosure may function as an evaluative signal for younger labour market entrants. In this sense, transparency operates not simply as an optional organisational practice, but as an increasingly expected feature of contemporary employment relationships. By adopting transparent pay structures, organisations may therefore signal fairness and ethical values in ways that support attraction, motivation, and longer-term commitment (Trotter et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2022). Despite the growth of international research on

Generation Z, empirical studies examining these issues within New Zealand's retail workforce remain limited, highlighting the need for context-specific investigation.

Although Generation Z is frequently discussed as a distinct group in the workplace literature (e.g., Schroth, 2019; Vieira et al., 2024; Zahra et al., 2025), scholars have highlighted the risk of over-attributing employee attitudes and behaviours to generational identity rather than to structural conditions (Lyons & Kuron, 2013; Costanza et al., 2020). Research suggests that work experiences are strongly shaped by contextual factors such as industry characteristics, labour market conditions, and the growth of insecure and short-term employment, which affect workers across age groups (Kalleberg, 2009; Parry & Urwin, 2011; Lyons & Kuron, 2013). In sectors such as retail, where casualised employment and limited job security are common, these structural conditions may play a more influential role in shaping workplace behaviour than generational membership alone (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Additionally, the literature cautions against that treating Generation Z as a uniform group, noting substantial variation within the cohort related to socio-economic background, education, employment status, and career stage (Ng et al., 2010; Costanza et al., 2020). Recognising these limitations helps ensure that analyses of Generation Z in the workplace remain balanced and grounded in organisational and labour market context.

Accordingly, this study treats Generation Z as an analytically relevant cohort while situating their experiences of pay transparency and organisational commitment within the broader structural conditions of fashion retail employment, including industry norms, labour market constraints, and employment arrangements.

2.5 Pay Transparency

Pay transparency can be understood as the extent to which organisations openly communicate pay-related information, including information about individuals' own salaries as well as the pay of others within the organisation. This communication may take the form of formal organisational policies that voluntarily disclose pay structures, ranges, or decision criteria, and may also enable employees to freely share pay information with others both inside and outside the workplace (Ramachandran, 2012; Trotter et al., 2017; Lam et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2022; Avdul et al., 2023).

According to Brown et al. (2022), the amount and type of pay information made available by organisations, both to and among employees, can have significant effects on employee attitudes, behaviours, and overall organisational performance. Employers benefit from transparency by building trust, reducing turnover, and boosting staff productivity. These outcomes contribute to greater job satisfaction and career development opportunities for employees, fostering a more positive and supportive work environment. Ultimately, such an approach enhances employees' organisational commitment. While the degree of transparency may vary across organisations, the overarching goal remains the same: to promote openness and trust in pay practices.

According to Scheller and Harrison (2018), employees often lack clear information about pay, not only regarding what their co-workers earn but also what they might earn in the future or at another firm. This lack of information often arises from rules or social norms that limit sharing pay details, legal restrictions, strategic employer secrecy, or individual preferences for privacy. In response, pay transparency policies are one of the few ways to address these information gaps. When salary ranges, bonus criteria, and advancement paths are openly shared, employees report higher trust in management, better motivation, and greater willingness to collaborate. In a U.S.

based study by Scheller and Harrison (2018), findings indicated that pay transparency significantly influenced employees' pay satisfaction and affective commitment, supporting the perspective they claimed.

Additionally, recent studies on pay transparency, such as Ramachandran (2012) and Obloj and Zenger (2022) also show that pay transparency creates social pressure on organisations to address both unfair and unequal pay practices. Moreover, it assists employers in fulfilling their legal responsibilities, further strengthening the case for adopting transparent pay systems.

Nevertheless, while pay transparency holds significant potential, it is not a comprehensive solution to all workplace challenges. Poorly managed pay transparency practices might result in counterproductive peer comparisons and privacy concerns. Cullen and Perez-Truglia (2022), for example, found that employees who discover they are paid less than peers may experience lower morale, whereas those who learn they are better-paid can feel awkward about it, creating unnecessary tension in the workplace. Meta-analyses such as Grasser et al. (2023) likewise find that transparency boosts motivation only when it reveals “unfair” underpayment; when employees are already fairly or generously paid, the motivational lift is muted or even negative. Despite these challenges, the right usage of pay transparency policies within the organisation will help eliminating pay discrimination and reduce the gender pay gap (Cullen, 2024). Furthermore, the benefits of implementing pay transparency practices can lead to more accurate and optimistic beliefs about the employees’ earnings potential, which in turns will increase their motivation, then, organisational commitment.

2.5.1 Pay transparency practices in New Zealand

There has been growing attention and debate among researchers and policymakers about whether pay transparency laws and policies are effective in reducing pay gaps in general (Baker

et al., 2019; Reilly, 2019; Frey, 2021; Gulyas et al., 2023). In New Zealand, the public sector has taken the lead for this debate through initiatives, showing sustained transparency and targeted action can lead to measurable change. Under the leadership of the Public Service Commission (Te Kawa Mataaho), focused pay equity initiatives over the past six years have reduced the public sector gender pay gap from 12.2% in 2018 to 6.1% in 2024, alongside with the continued progress in narrowing Māori, Pacific, and other ethnic pay gaps (Te Kawa Mataaho, 2024). In more recent report, the data showed that on 30 June 2025, the gender pay gap further declined to 5.9%, which is the lowest level since measurement began in 2000, reflecting faster wage growth for women compared to men within the public service (Te Kawa Mataaho, 2025).

Recent changes in New Zealand employment law have strengthened protections for employees who discuss their pay and have increased public attention to pay transparency practices (New Zealand Legislation, 2025). Under this new legislation, employers are prohibited from taking adverse actions, such as demotion, dismissal or disciplinary measures, against the employees for disclosing their own pay, participating in a discussion about pay or asking other employee about their pay. In here, employees are not compelled to disclose their salary but are protected if they choose to do so. However, it is still within law to put pay confidentiality clauses in employment agreements since discussing other people's pay without their permission or consent remains a serious breach of trust (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2025).

However, despite these advances, pay transparency in New Zealand's private sector remains limited with many employers continuing to discourage employees from discussing salaries (Ramachandran, 2012; Trotter et al., 2017). This transparency gap between public and private sector has important implications for Generation Z workers, specifically in the industry like fashion retail, where the employments are often casualised and with high turnover. For Generation

Z employees, this limited transparency can reinforce perceptions of unfairness and reduce trust in their employers, which can result in disengagement or early exit from organisations (Dwiyanti et al., 2019; Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022).

Although there is an increasing pressure on private organisations to adopt more transparent pay practices (Charlesworth & Macdonald, 2014; Baker et al., 2019), pay transparency alone cannot resolve all forms of pay inequality as well. If the inequality in wages exposed using transparency without a systematic and guaranteed corrective action, it will potentially lead to dissatisfaction, conflict, or reduced morale (Castilla, 2015; Baker et al., 2019). In some cases, organisations may even respond by compressing wages or constraining promotion prospects, which can bring disadvantages for lower-paid or younger workers like Generation Z (Frey, 2021). Although the regulation for pay transparency is introduced, these policies are still relatively new. As a result, there is still limited research evaluating how well they reduce overall pay inequality (Baker et al., 2019; Reilly, 2019; Frey, 2021; Gulyas et al., 2023). Thus, while New Zealand has made some progress, particularly in the public sector, more work is needed in the private sector to improve transparency and address unjustified pay gaps.

Despite these developments, existing research consistently cautions that pay transparency does not produce the same outcomes across organisational contexts and does not guarantee fair or positive results when implemented in isolation (Colella et al., 2007; Marasi & Bennett, 2016; Burroughs, 2017; Scheller & Harrison, 2018). Studies also indicate that the effects of pay transparency are strongly shaped by organisational conditions, including the processes through which pay decisions are made, the clarity of communication surrounding pay-setting criteria, and the availability of mechanisms to address perceived inequities (Colella et al., 2007; Marasi & Bennett, 2016). Where transparency reveals pay differences without accompanying explanation or

corrective action, employees may perceive these disparities as unjust, which can increase dissatisfaction, reduce morale, or generate interpersonal conflict rather than strengthen trust or organisational commitment (Castilla, 2015; Frey, 2021).

2.6 Pay Transparency, Organisational Commitment and Generation Z

Existing research on pay transparency and organisational commitment has largely developed along separate lines, with limited integration of generational perspectives. Studies of pay transparency have primarily examined its effects on outcomes such as fairness perceptions, trust, and pay satisfaction, often within relatively formalised organisational settings (Ramachandran, 2012; Scheller & Harrison, 2018; Obloj & Zenger, 2022). In parallel, research on organisational commitment has focused on explaining why employees remain with organisations, frequently assuming stable employment relationships and longer-term attachment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Van Rossenberg et al., 2018). Less attention has been given to how pay transparency is experienced by younger workers whose relationship with work may be more conditional and time bound.

Generation Z employees are frequently described in the literature as entering the workforce with different expectations shaped by economic uncertainty, technological change, and shifting employment norms (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Parry & Urwin, 2011). Research suggests that younger employees place greater emphasis on openness, fairness, and respectful treatment, while also approaching employment more pragmatically than previous generations (Twenge et al., 2010). Within this context, pay transparency may take on particular significance, not only as a source of information, but as an indicator of how organisations treat employees and whether organisational practices align with stated values. Integrating these elements indicates a likely pathway in which pay transparency influences the information employees use to interpret fairness

and organisational justice judgements, which could subsequently affect their affective, normative, or continuance commitment especially in early-career, high-mobility retail contexts.

At the same time, research cautions against assuming that pay transparency uniformly strengthens organisational commitment. As discussed earlier in this chapter, transparency can produce mixed or unintended outcomes when not supported by clear pay-setting processes, credible managerial behaviour, or mechanisms to address identified inequities (Castilla, 2015; Bamberger & Belogolovsky, 2017). For Generation Z employees, who often occupy lower-paid or early-career roles with limited bargaining power, transparency may therefore function less as a direct motivator and more as a reference point through which organisational fairness and intent are evaluated.

Taken together, these strands of literature suggest that the relationship between pay transparency, and organisational commitment is likely to be shaped by both generational expectations and employment context. In sectors such as fashion retail, where work is frequently casualised, progression opportunities are constrained, and employment may be framed as transitional, commitment may be expressed differently than in more stable organisational settings (Kalleberg, 2009). Under these conditions, pay transparency may influence how employees make sense of their employment relationship, rather than whether they develop long-term attachment to the organisation.

This study builds on this literature by examining how Generation Z employees in the New Zealand fashion retail industry experience pay transparency and how these experiences relate to their understanding of organisational commitment. By focusing on employees' lived experiences, the study responds to calls for more context-sensitive and employee-centred research that captures

how pay transparency is interpreted in practice, particularly within low-wage and high-turnover employment settings.

2.7 Literature Gaps

Despite the growing interest in pay transparency and Generation Z in the workplace, several critical research gaps remain. Existing studies have largely examined pay transparency conceptually (Scott et al., 2020; Avdul et al., 2023), through generational comparisons (Fiorentino & Tomkowicz, 2021), or in the context of gender equity and pay gaps (Heisler, 2021; Duchini et al., 2024). However, there is limited evidence directly examining how pay transparency relates to organisational commitment among Generation Z employees, particularly within frontline retail roles.

This gap is especially pronounced in the fashion retail which is characterised by high employee turnover, emotionally demanding conditions, and youth-dominated workforce (Wong et al., 2008; Ha-Brookshire & Hawley, 2014; WorkSafe, 2023; 2024). While retail research has explored organisational commitment in relation to job attitudes and ethical climate (Lee & Ha-Brookshire, 2017; Park et al., 2021), there is little empirical work to compensation transparency as a factor shaping commitment and retention (Arnold et al., 2023; Madhani, 2021). Within the New Zealand context, research on pay transparency has predominantly focused on the public sector or the gender pay gap (Parker & Donnelly, 2020; Baker et al., 2019; Reilly, 2019).

In addition to these empirical gaps, there is a theoretical gap in how pay transparency has been examined in relation to organisational commitment from a generational and fairness-based perspective. While models like Organisational Commitment Theory (Meyer & Allen, 1991), Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964) and Organisational justice

theory (Greenberg, 1987) are well-established, they have not been extensively applied to examine how transparency interacts with Generation Z values such as fairness, open communication, and ethical alignment (Scheller & Harrison, 2018; Rzemieniak & Wawer, 2021). The current literature tends to address these theoretical frameworks separately from generational considerations, missing an opportunity to offer a more integrated understanding of how transparency-based policies may strengthen affective, normative, and continuance commitment among Generation Z employees, particularly in employment contexts characterised by short tenure, constrained choice, and limited pay clarity (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Cohen, 2007; Kalleberg, 2009).

Addressing these gaps, this study draws on established commitment and fairness-based theories while adopting an employee-centred qualitative approach to examine how Generation Z employees in New Zealand fashion retail experience and interpret pay transparency in relation to organisational commitment.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter critically reviewed existing literature on pay transparency, organisational commitment, and Generation Z, establishing the conceptual and empirical foundation for this study. Three complementary theoretical lenses, Organisational Commitment Theory, Equity Theory, and Vroom's Expectancy Theory, are used to explain how transparency relates to fairness and commitment.

The review then highlighted the challenges within the fashion retail industry, such as high employee turnover, insecure and casualised employment, irregular working hours, and relatively low wage structures. These conditions make sustaining organisational commitment difficult and as Generation Z now represents a significant share of that workforce, it has become increasingly

important to understand their expectations. The literature suggests that their strong preferences for openness, fairness, and ethical organisational practices, make them particularly sensitive to pay transparency and related managerial behaviours.

The review then synthesised definitions and evidence on benefits and unintended consequences of transparency. Furthermore, despite growing interest in both pay transparency and Generation Z workforce dynamics, the existing literature has not yet captured enough of the intersection between pay transparency, Generation Z expectations, and organisational commitment, particularly within the context of the fashion retail industry in New Zealand. In response to this gap, the present study adopts an employee-centred, qualitative approach to explore how Generation Z employees in fashion retail experience and interpret pay transparency in relation to organisational commitment. The following chapter outlines the research methodology and design used to address this purpose.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework and research methods adopted in the study. First, it introduced the philosophical foundation guiding the research, followed by the rationale for employing a qualitative, phenomenological design to explore Generation Z employees' experiences of pay transparency in the fashion retail industry. The chapter then details the research design, including participant recruitment, data collection, procedures and the analytical approach. Ethical considerations and strategies to ensure trustworthiness and rigour are also discussed.

All combined, this study adopts an interpretivist phenomenological methodology to address the research questions by examining how Generation Z employees perceive and experience pay transparency within the fashion retail industry. In doing so, the methodological approach ensured that participants' perspectives are meaningfully captured, while maintaining clear alignment between the research aim, the research questions, and the overall study design.

3.2 Philosophical Framework

Methodology refers to the overall strategic framework that guides a research study by outlining the systematic processes and techniques for collecting and analysing data, while also articulating the underlying philosophical rationale that informs and justifies the chosen research approach and methodological decisions (Kazdin, 2016; Harvey et al., 2023). As such, before a research project can be effectively designed, it must be grounded in a clear philosophical position that informs how reality and knowledge are understood. Ontology refers to assumptions about the nature of reality, epistemology concerns how knowledge is generated and understood, and the research paradigm

represents the overall worldview guiding the research process (Moon & Blackman, 2017). These assumptions shape how meaning is interpreted from participants' experiences and how the study is conducted, supporting an interpretivist research perspective.

For this study, relativism offered the most appropriate ontological position, as it recognises that experiences and realities differed from person to person and may shift depending on individual perspectives and circumstances (Levers, 2013). This stance connects naturally with subjectivism as the epistemological position, since adopting a subjectivist epistemology usually involves exploring phenomena that are deeply personal, contextual, and variable, such as attitudes, perceptions, values, and lived experiences (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022).

Therefore, building on these philosophical positions, an interpretivist paradigm was selected, as it focuses on understanding social phenomena through the perspectives of those directly involved (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Pretorius, 2024). It was particularly relevant in this study, which sought to explore how Generation Z employees in the fashion retail industry make sense of pay transparency and how their interpretations of it influenced the commitment towards their organisations.

3.3 Research Design

Following the establishment of the philosophical foundation on which this study is built, the research approaches and design were outlined as specific tools and procedures on how to collect and analyse those data (De Aguiar, 2024). This study adopted a qualitative research approach to develop a deeper understanding of how Generation Z employees experience pay transparency within the fashion retail sector. By focusing on participants' subjective interpretations, qualitative

research allowed for the exploration of contextual meanings and complexities that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measures (Lim, 2024).

Following the research approach, an interpretive phenomenological research design was selected instead of other qualitative designs, such as case study or grounded theory. In contrast to grounded theory, which aims to generate explanatory theory from data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007), and case study research, which focuses on an in-depth examination of a bounded organisation or context (Turhan, 2019), this study sought to understand how individuals within the fashion retail sector make meaning of their lived experiences. Therefore, interpretive phenomenology was the most appropriate research design, as it allows researchers to examine how individuals construct meaning through their perceptions, emotions, language, and prior understandings of a phenomenon (Given, 2008; Frechette et al., 2020). Altogether, this research design enabled an in-depth examination of how Generation Z employees make sense of pay transparency and its influence on organisational commitment, capturing both cognitive and emotional dimensions of their lived experiences (Testa & Karpova, 2021; Williams, 2021).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

As a student researcher at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), ethics approval was obtained prior to the commencement of the research. This step was necessary to ensure that the study established to uphold the ethical principles and protected the rights, dignity, and well-being of participants who shared their personal experiences within the research processes. As the researcher did not have prior experience working in the fashion retail industry, an initial informal consultation was conducted with a Generation Z employee currently working in a fashion retail store in Auckland, New Zealand. This preliminary discussion helped to refine the research

approach and ensure that the interview questions were relevant, clear, and appropriate to the study context.

Given that the study focused on pay transparency practices and organisational commitment, participants were required to discuss potentially sensitive topics, including salary perceptions, fairness, and workplace culture. Therefore, participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty if they experienced any psychological discomfort or distress. After the data collection, interview transcripts were sent back to participants for a review and an approval prior to the commencement of data analysis.

All data were securely stored and retained for a minimum of six years, after which they were to be permanently deleted and destroyed in accordance with AUT ethics requirements. The research related processes and procedures were developed in alignment with the guidelines from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH), as well as established ethical research frameworks (e.g., Klykken, 2021; Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023). While the research did not focus on specific cultural groups, the researcher also took the time to familiarise the ethical guidelines including *Te Ara Tika: Guidelines for Māori Research Ethics* and the *Pacific Health Research Guidelines* to ensure that the research was conducted in a respectful, inclusive, and culturally mindful manner for all participants' values and backgrounds. The ethics approval for this research was granted on 21st of May 2025 with AUTECH reference number 25/117 (See Appendix 1).

3.5 Participant Recruitment

The process of recruiting participants for the research first began with the researcher posting participant recruitment advertisements across social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. In the advertisements, all the information related to the research interview was provided, along with the contact information of the researcher to get in touch if interested (See Appendix 2). During that process, potential participants were also asked to confirm whether or not they met the eligibility criteria, which was a Generation Z employee who is currently working in the fashion retail industry, either part-time or full-time.

To get additional participation, snowball sampling was also utilised, leveraging social networks to reach more Generation Z employees who meet the eligibility criteria. In accordance with Naderifar et al. (2017), snowball sampling in qualitative research refers to a type of non-probability sampling method where initial participants who provided data are then requested to provide referrals to other potential participant who also fit the study's requirements, creating a chain or "snowball" of contacts.

As an incentive, participants were informed through the recruitment advertisement that they would receive a \$30 gift voucher as a token of appreciation. Woolworths vouchers were specifically chosen since the majority of participants were students based in Auckland CBD, ensuring the incentive was practical and relevant to their daily needs.

3.5.1 Sample Characteristics

The study involved seven participants who were currently employed in the fashion retail industry in Auckland, New Zealand. All participants belonged to Generation Z, ranging from early (18-21), mid (22-25), to late (26-28) Generation Z. The sample included four female and three male participants. Most participants were students, international, or recent graduates and were

employed in part-time roles, with one participant working full-time. In terms of job roles, six participants were employed as sales assistants, while one participant held a department manager position, allowing the study to capture perspectives from both frontline retail employees and a participant with greater responsibility, decision-making influence, and employment stability.

Participants’ length of employment in their current roles also varied. Two participants had been in their roles for approximately five months, indicating relatively recent entry into their workplaces. One participant reported around one year of employment, while another had been employed for almost one and a half years. Two participants had worked in their current stores for around three years, and one participant reported the longest tenure, with five years of employment. This range of experience enabled the study to capture perspectives from both newer employees and those with more sustained exposure to retail workplace practices. Table 1 summarises the key demographic and employment characteristics of the participants, including gender, age range, employment status, role, and length of employment. Pseudonyms have been used to protect participant confidentiality.

Overall, the sample reflects variation in roles, tenure, and career stage within the fashion retail industry, supporting an in-depth qualitative exploration of how Generation Z employees experience and interpret pay transparency at different points in their employment journey.

Table 1: Characteristics of The Participants

Participant	Gender	Age Range	Employment Status	Current Role	Employment Duration
<i>Holly*</i>	Female	Early Generation Z	Part-time	Sales Assistant	3 years
<i>Brian*</i>	Male	Early Generation Z	Part-time	Sales Assistant	5 months

<i>Dennis*</i>	Male	Early Generation Z	Part-time	Sales Assistant	5 months
<i>Freya*</i>	Female	Mid Generation Z	Part-time	Sales Assistant	3 years
<i>Serena*</i>	Female	Late Generation Z	Full-time	Department Manager	5 years
<i>Paul*</i>	Male	Late Generation Z	Part-time	Sales Assistant	1.5 years
<i>Bloom*</i>	Female	Late Generation Z	Part-time	Sales Assistant	1 year

3.6 Data Collection

At the data collection stage, the process started by contacting potential participants who had expressed interest and met the eligibility criteria via email. The email included documents such as the Participant Information Sheet (See Appendix 3), Consent Form (See Appendix 4), and Indicative Interview Questions (See Appendix 5), which provided details about the study, participation requirements, the voluntary nature of participation, ethical considerations, and participants' rights. Potential participants were given at least one week to consider the invitation to participate before any follow-up contact, and further clarification could be inquired during this period. After the consent form was signed, the date and time for the interview were scheduled.

For the purpose of collecting in-depth qualitative data consistent with a phenomenological research approach, a semi-structured qualitative interview method consisting of open-ended questions was employed. This approach allowed participants to describe their lived experiences in their own words, enabling the researcher to explore the meanings they assign to these experiences in depth (Kallio et al., 2016). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews also encouraged

participants to bring out the unexpected insights, which is valuable for revealing deeper complexities and emotions related to the research topic (Sessoms-Penny et al., 2022). Participants were able to choose either online or offline (in-person) interview, with each session lasting around 20-50 minutes, allowing sufficient time to discuss the research topic in detail while maintaining the participant's comfort.

3.7 Data Transcription Process

After all the data were collected, the next step was to transcribe those data from the interviews. As the first step, the interview recordings were initially transcribed using automated transcription software. Then, all transcripts were reviewed, corrected and refined manually by the researcher while listening to the original audio recordings. By using this combined method, the data transcripts had both accuracy and credibility for a semi-structured qualitative method, while also preventing the high level of time consumption that may occur when manual transcription is conducted alone.

In addition to the verbal transcription, relevant non-verbal cues such as pauses, emphasis, laughter, or changes in the participant's tones were noted where appropriate. This was helpful in preserving the intended meaning and emotional context that participants wished to share, thereby strengthening the depth and authenticity of the qualitative data.

Following the transcription, the participants were given the opportunity to read and review their interview transcripts, suggest edits, provide additional information, or leave comments before the transcripts were used for data analysis, ensuring the transparency and ethical engagement throughout the research process.

The transcription process was conducted using an AI-based transcription tool trusted by Auckland University of Technology (AUT), known as “Kaituhi”. All interview data, including audio files and transcripts, were stored securely and accessed only by the researcher to ensure confidentiality and data protection. Pseudonyms were also used in place of participants’ real names during transcription and analysis.

3.8 Data Analysis

Once the transcription process was completed, a thematic analysis approach proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006) was conducted to identify, analyse, and interpret recurring patterns and themes within the data. An inductive thematic analysis was utilised, meaning that themes were generated directly from participants’ meanings rather than being imposed by pre-existing theoretical framework (Naeem et al., 2023). This approach was considered appropriate given the interpretivist phenomenological design of the study. While the research questions guided the overall analytical focus on participants’ experiences of pay transparency, organisational commitment, and perceptions of fairness, theme development remained grounded in the data.

There were six phases in thematic analysis framework, and the first phase started with the researcher becoming familiar with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts to gain an overall understanding of the content. During the phase, initial notes and reflections were recorded to capture early impressions. After that, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments of text that were relevant to the research questions and objectives. These codes were applied systematically across the entire dataset. In the third phase, these codes were then reviewed and grouped into potential themes based on similarities, patterns, and shared meanings. Fourth, the identified themes were again reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflect the coded

data and the overall dataset. Following that was the fifth phase where the themes were clearly defined and named to fully capture their core meaning and relevance to the study. Finally, the themes were interpreted and reported by using the support of the direct extracts from the participants' responses to enhance the transparency and credibility.

3.9 Trustworthiness of The Study

According to Tariq (2025), ensuring the trustworthiness of the study is a key consideration throughout the research process, as it enables readers to have confidence in the quality and integrity of the findings. In this qualitative study, trustworthiness was addressed through the principles of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, which guided decisions made during data collection and analysis (Ghafouri & Ofoghi, 2016; Ahmed, 2024).

First, credibility, defined as the extent to which findings accurately represent participants' meanings and experiences (Adler, 2022), was supported through member checking and the use of rich, verbatim quotations. Participants were given the opportunity to review and confirm the accuracy of their interview transcripts prior to analysis, reducing the risk of misinterpretation. The inclusion of direct quotations in the findings chapter further strengthened credibility by demonstrating clear links between participants' accounts and the derived themes (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

Second, dependability refers to the consistency and transparency of the research process (Ghafouri & Ofoghi, 2016). To support that, a clear and systematic analytical process was followed, with all stages of data collection and analysis documented to provide an audit trail of methodological decisions (McLeod, 2024). Coding was conducted systematically using NVivo software, and themes were reviewed and refined multiple times to ensure coherence across the

dataset. This transparency demonstrates that the findings were generated through a structured and traceable process that could be followed and understood by the readers.

In addition, confirmability was addressed through the adoption of a reflexive approach, ensuring that findings were grounded in participants' data rather than the researcher's personal assumptions (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). The researcher remained aware of their positionality and potential influences during analysis, particularly given the lack of prior experience in the fashion retail industry. Reflective notes and the use of participant quotations supported transparent and data-driven interpretation (Ahmed, 2024).

Finally, transferability is understood as the degree to which research findings may be applicable to other contexts (Adler, 2022). In line with Korstjens and Moser (2017), transferability in this study was supported through the use of thick description by providing detailed and contextualised accounts of participants' roles, employment status, length of employment, and the New Zealand fashion retail environment, enabling readers to assess the relevance of the findings to other retail or service-based settings.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined all the methodological procedures of the methodological framework guiding this study by providing a clear justification for the philosophical stance, research design, and analytical approach adopted. Grounded in a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology, the study was placed within an interpretivist paradigm, enabling an in-depth exploration of Generation Z employees' lived experiences of pay transparency and organisational commitment

in the fashion retail industry. Then, the qualitative interpretive phenomenological design was selected to explore the nuanced meanings participants attribute to these experiences.

The chapter also detailed the ethical considerations underpinning the research, including participant consent, confidentiality, data protection, and adherence to AUTECH guidelines. Procedures for participant recruitment, data collection through semi-structured interviews, transcription, and thematic analysis were also systematically described. By applying Braun and Clarke's six-phase inductive thematic analysis framework and maintaining reflexivity throughout the research process, this methodology ensured a systematic and coherent approach aligning with the study's research objectives. Together, these methodological choices provide a strong foundation for the analysis and discussion presented in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study exploring Generation Z employees' experiences of pay transparency within the fashion retail industry. The findings are acquired from semi-structured interviews with seven Generation Z employees working in the fashion retail industry in New Zealand, ranging from retail assistants to the department manager. The purpose of this chapter is to report the patterns and perspectives that emerged from the data, addressing the research questions without interpretation which is reserved for the subsequent discussion chapter. The findings are organised thematically and presented in relation to the two research questions:

- (1) How do Generation Z employees in the New Zealand fashion retail industry experience pay transparency, and how do these experiences influence their organisational commitment?
- (2) In what ways do Generation Z employees in fashion retail interpret pay transparency in relation to fairness and organisational justice?

Throughout the chapter, direct quotes are used to highlight important themes and ensure that the voices of the participants remain central to the presentation of the findings.

4.2 Overview of Key Themes

After analysing the data using thematic analysis, the findings are organised into four main themes that capture how Generation Z employees experience and interpret pay transparency within fashion retail. These themes were: *pay fairness*, *trust in management*, *expectations shaping*

commitment, and *job scarcity and high living costs*. Together, these themes reflect how participants discussed pay-related practices, their interactions with management, and the wider employment conditions influencing their decisions to remain with or disengage from their organisation.

Each theme is presented with associated subthemes to illustrate the different ways participants articulated their experiences. Participant quotes are used throughout to demonstrate how these themes were expressed in their own accounts. As mentioned in the previous chapter, pseudonyms have also been used throughout this chapter to protect participant confidentiality. Table 2 provides an overview of the main themes and their associated sub-themes, which structure the findings of this chapter.

Table 2: Overview of Themes

Main Themes	Sub-themes
Pay Fairness	Equal Pay, Equal Work
	Negotiation Power Imbalance
Trust in Management	Socially Sensitive Topic
	Pay Secrecy and Trust
	Communication and Commitment
Expectations Shaping Commitment	Minimum Pay as Baseline, Recognition as
	Motivation
	Expected Transparency
	Career Visibility
Job Scarcity and High Living Costs	Transitional Employment

4.3 Theme 1: Pay Fairness

Pay fairness emerged as a central theme across participant accounts. Participants frequently discussed fairness in relation to how pay levels were determined, how pay differences were explained, and whether effort and responsibility were reflected in pay outcomes. Rather than focusing solely on the absolute amount of pay received, participants described fairness as something that was evaluated through comparison, transparency, and consistency within the workplace. This theme is organised into two subthemes: equal pay, equal work, and negotiation power imbalance, which capture how participants described fairness in both day-to-day work and during pay discussions.

4.3.1 Equal Pay, Equal Work

Generation Z participants commonly evaluated pay fairness by comparing their earnings with their colleagues. When employees of similar age, role, and experience received the same level of pay, it was generally viewed as a baseline indicator of fairness. However, equal pay alone was not always described as sufficient for participants to view pay as fair. As participant Bloom explained:

Most retail jobs pay about the same, but just because everyone pays the same doesn't mean it's actually fair though. If they could pay more, that would be better for the amount of work we do. (Bloom)

Holly also explained that, with extra responsibilities absorbed into her role because of the store having a relatively small team, she did not think her pay was fair:

I don't think the pay is fair because we've taken on multiple roles and extra tasks, along with heavy online orders and customer service, which makes the workload so stressful. (Holly)

These statements show that participants discussed pay fairness in relation to both standard pay structures and the level of effort and workload required in their roles. When responsibilities increased without corresponding pay recognition, participants expressed perceiving pay as unfair.

4.3.2 Negotiation Power Imbalance

Whereas equal pay and work concerns relate to fairness within the workplace, participants described that pay fairness is shaped much earlier in the employment process, such as during recruitment and salary negotiation. A lack of pay transparency at this stage was perceived as creating unequal conditions, as employers held greater control over pay information than applicants. When job advertisements described pay as “negotiable,” participants felt unsure about what level of pay was reasonable to request, reinforcing a sense of imbalance in the negotiation process.

Several participants noted that younger workers, first-time job seekers, women, and international students felt more of the disadvantage in these situations due to limited confidence, work experience, or knowledge of market rates. Without clear salary guidance, being asked to state pay expectations often generated uncertainty, and negotiation was commonly viewed as

ineffective, as employers could easily select other applicants willing to accept the base rate. This was illustrated by Freya, who explained:

When a job ad says, “open to negotiation” and you’re young, it’s your first job, and you don’t know how the system works, how can you negotiate? They’re thrilled to hire you, and they’ll give you the lowest rate they can legally. (Freya)

This imbalance was further reinforced when pay information was withheld until the final stage of recruitment, after applicants had already invested time and effort in the process. As Brian noted:

Not advertising pay is a problem, because you only find out your salary at the final stage, just before you sign a contract. So, even starting the application process without knowing pay feels like a problem. (Brian)

Overall, participants linked the use of “negotiable” pay and the absence of advertised salary ranges to feelings of uncertainty during the recruitment process. This uncertainty was most often discussed in relation to Generation Z employees at early career stages, as well as those unfamiliar with the New Zealand labour market, who described having less confidence and information when navigating pay discussions.

4.4 Theme 2: Trust in Management

Trust in management was also identified as one of the crucial factors shaping Generation Z employees’ workplace experiences in fashion retail. Participants did not describe trust as

something that existed automatically within managerial relationships, but as something formed through everyday interactions, particularly how managers communicated about pay, responded to concerns, and handled sensitive conversations with employees.

4.4.1 Socially Sensitive Topic

This sub-theme reflects how participants perceived pay as a socially sensitive topic, shaped by cultural norms that frame salary discussions as intrusive, rude, or inappropriate. Open conversations about pay were often avoided, and in the absence of such discussions, participants described making assumptions rather than relying on direct information. Brian illustrated this by stating:

Discussing pay is like a cultural or social thing, it's considered rude to ask. So, I just assume everyone is on the same minimum wage. (Brian)

Beyond social norms, participants also referred to workplace experiences where pay discussion was limited or discouraged, even when transparency was viewed as important. Paul explained:

I think transparency is important, but because of past experiences and being told not to share pay, I don't discuss it with colleagues. (Paul)

While Brian and Paul described avoiding pay discussions more broadly, other participants reported feeling comfortable discussing pay with peers but not with management. Holly indicated this difference as follows:

With my coworkers, we're all quite open about discussing pay, but not so much with my manager. Someone once asked the manager, but she said, "we don't do that here."

(Holly)

Taken together, these accounts show that pay conversations were limited and often shaped by social norms, workplace experiences, and relational context.

4.4.2 Pay Secrecy and Trust

Alongside social norms discouraging pay discussions, participants described organisational pay secrecy in relation to trust in management and whether they felt comfortable raising pay-related issues with managers. Despite recent legal protections allowing employees to discuss their own pay, some participants continued to express hesitation. Freya linked this to concerns about being identified as the source of pay discussions:

I still need to protect myself even though they cannot come after me for talking about pay...if they find out I am the reason, who do you think they're going to get angry at?

(Freya)

Several participants also described transparency as important to trust in management and linked openness around pay information to their relationships with managers. As mentioned by Paul:

If the organisation is not transparent, it will negatively affect how I perceive my work and my relationship with managers. But if they are transparent, including about pay, that becomes the foundation of trust. (Paul)

Together, these accounts illustrate how participants described pay secrecy alongside feelings of hesitation and expectations around managerial behaviour.

4.4.3 Communication and Commitment

In addition to pay-related practices, participants described everyday communication with managers and how this related to their experiences of trust and commitment at work. Participants spoke about communication styles, responsiveness, and clarity around expectations, highlighting differences in how communication was experienced in their roles.

Freya characterised communication with managers as requiring mutual adjustment, particularly in relation to generational differences in preferred communication methods:

*It's a two-way relationship, so you have to be flexible and willing to listen...
Generation Z prefers texting, while older managers may prefer calls, so meeting halfway with those communication styles is important. (Freya)*

Holly also pointed out the situations where delayed responses from her manager affected how work was coordinated within the team:

*The main manager often doesn't respond to messages, even when things are urgent...
this puts pressure on the assistant manager and creates stress for the whole team.*

(Holly)

Building on these experiences, Dennis raised issues related to role clarity, referring to the absence of formal communication about responsibilities:

I would like a proper job description in my contract, since there wasn't one when I signed, so I know what my responsibilities are and what they aren't. (Dennis)

These accounts collectively describe how participants discussed communication practices in relation to responsiveness, clarity, and expectations, and how these experiences featured in their accounts of trust and commitment in the workplace.

4.5 Theme 3: Expectations Shaping Commitment

Participants described expectations that shaped how they viewed commitment within fashion retail work. These expectations were reflected in accounts of entry-level pay, openness during recruitment, and the visibility of progression and future opportunities.

4.5.1 Minimum Pay as Baseline, Recognition as Motivation

Minimum wage was positioned as a standard and generally accepted starting point within fashion retail. When describing their early retail jobs, several participants indicated that they did not expect their pay to increase. This was also reflected in Brian's account, who stated:

I go into most jobs assuming minimum wage... realistically, we're still retail assistants, so I'm okay with that. (Brian)

Acceptance of minimum wage was also linked to individual circumstances that constrained negotiation. For Paul, student status shaped how pay was approached at entry:

Since I'm a student, I can't really negotiate, so I have no choice but to accept minimum wage. (Paul)

While participants accepted minimum pay as a starting point, recognition was also raised in their accounts of what mattered in their work experiences. Serena stated:

Small gestures, recognition and checking on employee wellbeing, those things matter. ... that's what makes you want to come to work the next day. (Serena)

By contrast, some accounts pointed to situations where recognition was limited to verbal praise. Dennis described this with an instance in which strong performance was acknowledged without any tangible outcome:

Last week, the daily target was down for the whole week and I did a sale, which was a record breaking. But they just praised me verbally, there's no actual benefit for my hard work... there was no return for what I did. (Dennis)

Altogether, these accounts show that, alongside minimum pay being treated as a baseline, participants also referred to other aspects of work, such as recognition, transparency, and everyday treatment within the organisation.

4.5.2 Expected Transparency

For Generation Z employees, pay transparency was something that should be expected rather than treated as an optional organisational practice, particularly during recruitment. Several participants stated that decisions about pay disclosure should rest with employees rather than organisations.

Holly described this view by stating:

If I have to think, people should have the choice to be opened or not, about their own pay. (Holly)

For some participants, this preference extended to the recruitment stage, where transparency was viewed as particularly important. Paul illustrated this by stating:

I would rather have a job that is transparent about its pay structure because I spent time and effort getting to the interview, just to find out the salary wasn't what I expected. (Paul)

Dennis similarly stressed the importance of transparency before employment begins, noting that clarity around pay could motivate him to apply without further inquiry:

If companies clearly state how much we will get, I might even apply without reading the job description, simply because of their transparency. (Dennis)

Overall, participants linked pay transparency to how they evaluated employers and navigated recruitment decisions, including whether to apply for roles, continue with interviews, or accept job offers. Organisational control over pays information was also featured prominently in these accounts.

4.5.3 Career Visibility

Beyond immediate pay transparency, many participants raised concerns about commitment in relation to career visibility, particularly whether transparency extended to progression pathways, promotion criteria, and future earning potential. In these accounts, transparency was discussed alongside the availability of advancement opportunities.

Freya introduced this idea with a distinction between what she described as “systematic” and “random” transparency:

It would motivate me only if pay transparency is linked to clear career progression. I don't want to know my manager earns more if I can never get her job. Systematic transparency matters, not random transparency. (Freya)

In addition to this, some participants described how the absence of visible progression pathways also reduced their motivation to remain in fashion retail. Holly stated:

There's no real way to work your way up. There are no pay rises... I'd want to stay longer if there were promotions or ways to work up within the company. (Holly)

Together, these accounts describe that participants discussed pay transparency in close relation to career visibility. Transparency was only meaningful when it supported an understanding of progression and future opportunity.

4.6 Theme 4: Job Scarcity and High Living Costs

While pay transparency was valued and influenced perceptions of fairness, trust, and commitment, participants repeatedly connected decisions about whether to stay within the organisation with wider economic conditions. Across previous themes, job scarcity and rising living costs were also raised in relation to staying in retail roles, searching for other work, and managing income from week to week. Within this context, participants described retail employment in terms of short-term arrangements, economic uncertainty, and the practical challenge of covering everyday living costs.

4.6.1 Transitional Employment

Most participants viewed fashion retail as a temporary form of employment, such as casual or part-time work, rather than a long-term career pathway. Freya reflected this view by noting that her decision not to stay long-term was shaped by the industry itself:

I might not stay long-term, simply because of the industry. I don't want to be in retail or fashion, but I would consider staying longer if it were an industry I was interested in. (Freya)

Other participants similarly referred to retail as a temporary role, often in relation to limited career visibility. Holly supported this perspective by linking her short-term commitment to both pay and career direction:

Working in this role is not long-term. Maybe for the next few years while I'm studying, but definitely not after that. The pay is a big reason, and it's just not the line of work I want to stay in. (Holly)

Taken together, these accounts describe how, for Generation Z employees, the fashion retail industry functions as a stepping stone to meet short-term income needs rather than as a long-term career destination.

4.6.2 Economic Insecurity

Decisions to remain in fashion retail were rarely framed as a matter of preference. Instead, limited job alternatives and difficulties in securing other employment shaped how pay dissatisfaction and decisions about staying or leaving were discussed. Serena reflected on this by explaining:

I've completed a degree and ultimately want a corporate role, but the job market is really tight. Even getting a retail job is difficult, so I'm working in retail for now.

(Serena)

Freya further reinforced this sense of constraint by referring to cost-of-living pressures and the appeal of flexibility her current work:

Given cost of living, inflation and the general crap of state in New Zealand's economy, I'm not willing to leave the job because it's a flexible, good job that everybody wants to get. (Freya)

In a context where securing work was difficult, some participants described adjusting their expectations during job searches. As Bloom described:

At that time, I was really desperate for a job, so I didn't even choose a salary. I just went ahead with the job. (Bloom)

Dennis further extended these views by contrasting the New Zealand labour market with Australia, highlighting how labour market imbalance restricted his capacity to respond to pay dissatisfaction:

New Zealand job market is really limited at the moment, so you can't really be selective. If it's like Australia where the job demands and supplies are equal, I could compare the pay conditions, but for now I'll just stay. (Dennis)

Overall, these accounts showcase that under economic insecurity and limited job options, participants described remaining in retail as tied to job stability and income continuity, even when pay conditions were viewed unfavourably.

4.6.3 Financial Survival

Financial pressure featured in participants' accounts in relation to unstable working hours and rosters, with income adequacy discussed in terms of whether weekly hours were sufficient to meet basic living costs. Dennis linked this directly to hours worked, noting that limited shifts made it difficult to meet even the essential expenses:

With the basic retail wage, limited hours make it hard to cover rent and expenses. If I can't get enough hours, I'd have to leave for a better-paying job. (Dennis)

After that Paul explained how unpredictable scheduling affect daily life beyond finances, stating:

Work schedules change every week, and rosters are sometimes given only one or two days in advance, which makes it difficult to plan personal commitments. It's a bit inconvenient. (Paul)

Collectively, these accounts describe how financial survival in fashion retail was shaped by income sufficiency and the stability of working hours.

4.7 Cross-theme Patterns and Contrasts

Across the findings, several recurring patterns emerged that cut across themes. In particular, pay transparency was consistently discussed alongside broader considerations of fairness, trust, recognition, and future opportunity, rather than as an isolated issue. As a result, themes relating to *Pay Fairness*, *Trust in Management*, and *Expectations Shaping Commitment* frequently overlapped, particularly in how participants linked transparency to managerial behaviour and organisational practices.

At the same time, contrasts appeared in how participants navigated these expectations under economic constraint. The theme of *Job Scarcity and High Living Costs* highlighted how limited job options and rising expenses also constrained participants' ability to act on dissatisfaction, even when concerns about pay or transparency were present. While many participants shared similar concerns, their responses varied depending on their role, stage of life, and personal circumstances.

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored how Generation Z employees in the fashion retail industry discussed pay transparency within their everyday work experiences and economic context. Across the findings, pay transparency was not treated as a standalone organisational practice but was raised alongside considerations of fairness, trust, recognition, and future opportunity.

Although pay transparency was not always presented as an immediate priority, participants frequently spoke about it in relation to job scarcity and rising living costs. Employment security and income continuity were prioritised, shaping how limited transparency was accepted despite

ongoing expectations of respectful and fair treatment. In this way, transparency appeared less as a short-term decision factor and more as a background reference through which employers and managerial behaviour were assessed.

The findings also show that organisational commitment in fashion retail was commonly framed as conditional and time limited. Retail roles were often discussed as transitional rather than career-oriented, with commitment shaped by practical circumstances such as study, financial pressure, and restricted job alternatives. Economic conditions further limited participants' capacity to respond to dissatisfaction, influencing how decisions about staying or leaving were approached.

To conclude, this chapter shows a tension between Generation Z employees' expectations for openness and fairness and the limits of the current labour market, which together provide important context for understanding how pay transparency relates to organisational commitment in practice. Accordingly, the following chapter interprets these findings in relation to the theories and literature outlined earlier, focusing on how they are connected under conditions of economic constraint and pressure.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to existing literature to deepen understanding of how pay transparency influences organisational commitment among Generation Z employees in the fashion retail sector. Rather than restating the results, the discussion focuses on interpreting participants' experiences within the context of everyday workplace practices and the broader economic conditions shaping retail employment.

In doing so, the chapter remains attentive to the realities of medium-sized fashion retail organisations operating within the New Zealand labour market, where limited pay progression, high labour turnover, and economic pressure influence both managerial practices and employee decision-making. This contextual focus allows the findings to be examined not as isolated outcomes, but as situated responses to organisational and labour market conditions.

5.2 Interpretation of Key Findings

After analysing the findings through the theories and literature presented in earlier chapters, this study found that pay transparency influenced organisational commitment less through the provision of pay information itself, and more through what it revealed about organisational values and managerial conduct. For Generation Z employees, transparency became a baseline reference point for judging whether fairness claims were credible, whether effort was respected, and whether remaining with the organisation was worthwhile. These judgements align closely with organisational justice theory, particularly distributive justice (fairness of pay outcomes), procedural justice (fairness of pay setting processes), and interactional justice (the quality of

explanation and respect shown in pay-related communication). These positions pay transparency as an interpretive cue shaping employees' perceptions of fairness, trust, and managerial intent, aligning more closely with affective commitment than with continuance commitment. At the same time, continued employment was often maintained despite dissatisfaction with pay transparency due to economic constraint and limited job alternatives, reflecting elements of continuance commitment. Conversely, normative commitment appeared relatively weak, as participants rarely expressed a sense of obligation or moral duty to remain with their organisations, particularly within the context of retail work being framed as transitional or temporary. This extends prior research that has largely conceptualised pay transparency as an informational intervention (Ramachandran, 2012; Obloj & Zenger, 2022), suggesting that it operates more as a socially and emotionally interpreted organisational signal.

Building on this, the findings indicate that judgements about pay fairness were shaped through comparison and context rather than fixed expectations about pay levels. In here, participants often assessed fairness by weighing effort, responsibility, and workload against the rewards received, particularly within fashion retail roles where emotional labour and informal role expansion were common. When additional demands were not matched by tangible recognition, dissatisfaction emerged, even when the base pay met minimum or equal standards. This reflects equity-based reasoning, in which employees assess fairness by comparing their effort and rewards (Adams, 1963), aligning with WorkSafe (2024) evidence that workers are often required to assume additional responsibilities without equivalent pay or recognition; from an organisational justice perspective, such assessments represent distributive justice judgements concerning whether outcomes appropriately reflect employees' contributions.

These fairness evaluations were not confined to everyday work experiences but began earlier in the employment process through recruitment and negotiation practices. The absence of advertised pay ranges and the use of “negotiable” salary language were commonly interpreted as shifting uncertainty about the role value, appropriate pay levels, and bargaining boundaries onto applicants. For Generation Z employees with limited labour market experience, this ambiguity reduced confidence and made it harder to judge whether the roles were fair at all, highlighting procedural justice concerns about how pay decisions were structured and communicated. Extending the work of Babcock et al. (2017), which demonstrates that pay negotiation can produce unequal outcomes among applicants for the same position, this study highlights how negotiation-stage uncertainty shapes fairness perceptions prior to employment and carries into ongoing engagement with both the role and the employer, particularly in New Zealand’s fashion retail sector where pay information is rarely disclosed in advance (Baker et al., 2019).

As participants moved beyond their initial evaluations of pay, managerial behaviour became increasingly important in shaping how pay practices were understood. This finding aligns with research emphasising the role of managerial communication in building trust (Scheller & Harrison, 2018), but reveals that transparency was judged through everyday interactions rather than through the availability of formal information. Participants paid closer attention to how managers communicated, responded to concerns, and handled pay-related discussions, and when managers avoided these conversations or provided unclear responses, confidence in managerial intent weakened. These reflect interactional justice evaluations, where perceptions of respect, honesty, and responsiveness shaped trust in managerial intent.

Given the socially sensitive nature of pay discussion, employees were also often reluctant to initiate these conversations themselves, which further amplified the importance of managerial

openness and responsiveness. Unlike policy-focused approaches to transparency, this study supports existing critiques, including Castilla (2015), that transparency initiatives have limited impact when organisational culture and informal power dynamics remain unchanged.

Alongside trust, expectations regarding recognition and future opportunities also played a key role in shaping how participants evaluated their ongoing commitment. These evaluations intersected with justice perceptions, as recognition signalled whether effort was valued in ways employees considered fair and legitimate. Rather than pay levels alone, participants explained that motivation was influenced by whether their effort was translated into outcomes they perceived as meaningful, reflecting the logic underpinning Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964). In the context of fashion retail, where minimum wage was widely accepted and normalised as a baseline condition, recognition became an important way for employees to assess whether their contributions were genuinely valued. Participants differentiated between effort that was merely acknowledged and effort that led to tangible outcomes, noting that verbal praise or informal appreciation was insufficient in the absence of material rewards or improved working conditions. Under these conditions, recognition was perceived as symbolic rather than substantive, reducing its motivational effect. This reflects a key limitation of expectancy-based motivation in retail contexts, where employees often lack control over whether effort can realistically translate into valued outcomes (Wong et al., 2008; Kalleberg, 2009). This suggests that recognition functioned not only as encouragement, but also as an indicator of whether the organisation was willing to reward effort in meaningful ways.

When immediate recognition failed to translate into concrete outcomes, participants began to shift their focus toward longer-term considerations. At this point, pay transparency became more salient, particularly in relation to whether sustained effort could realistically lead to progression or

improved earning potential. Rather than seeking rapid advancement, participants were concerned with whether any clear pathway existed at all, and whether future possibilities were visible or attainable within the organisation. Transparency was therefore experienced positively only when it clarified future opportunities rather than merely confirming existing pay structures. While some pay transparency literature assumes that simply disclosing pay information strengthens commitment (e.g., Yadav & Rai, 2017; Scheller & Harrison, 2018; Brown et al., 2022), these findings indicate that transparency alone is insufficient. When pay information reflected static roles or unclear progression pathways, participants described difficulty imagining a future within the organisation; in this context, pay transparency reinforced feelings of being stuck rather than motivated or encouraged.

Considered together, these dynamics help explain why organisational commitment was conditional and time-bound rather than long-term. Participants did not describe commitment as a stable or lasting attachment, but as something reassessed in response to changes in perceived fairness, recognition, and managerial behaviour. Adding a generational dimension, this study shows that Generation Z employees regularly reconsidered their commitment as workplace conditions and expectations evolved. As a result, commitment functioned less as a fixed psychological state and more as an ongoing evaluative process embedded in everyday work experience. This pattern aligns with critiques of traditional organisational commitment models, which assume stable, long-term employment relationships, that do not reflect the realities of contemporary retail work (Cohen, 2007; Kalleberg, 2009; Twenge et al., 2010).

Despite these ongoing evaluations, participants' ability to act on dissatisfaction was largely constrained by broader economic conditions. Decisions about whether to remain in their roles were shaped by job scarcity, rising living costs, and unstable working hours, aligning with research on

continuance-based employment under economic pressure (Jaros, 2007). This study further shows that these constraints were especially noticeable in the fashion retail sector, significantly limiting employees' capacity to respond to unfavourable pay or transparency practices. Rather than treating pay transparency as an isolated factor, the findings demonstrate that its effects were bounded by labour market insecurity. Therefore, fashion retail was framed as a temporary solution and not a long-term career path, with pay transparency shaping how participants justified staying in their roles without actually determining their decision to stay.

Overall, the findings suggest that the influence of pay transparency on organisational commitment is highly conditional. In particular, this study builds on existing research by demonstrating that transparency enhances commitment only when it is reinforced by credible managerial practices, meaningful recognition, and clear opportunities for progression. Conversely, in the absence of these conditions, transparency served to make organisational realities more visible; however, it did not deepen employees' attachment to the organisation. Taken together, these findings emphasise the importance of viewing pay transparency within a wider relational and structural context, where justice evaluations mediate how transparency is interpreted, instead of as a singular strategy for strengthening commitment among Generation Z employees in the fashion retail sector.

5.3 Implications for HR Practice

Pay transparency in this study did not operate as a standalone retention tool; instead, it shaped organisational commitment by signalling how the organisation values effort, responds to concerns, and makes future opportunities visible. For HR in fashion retail, the practical implication is that *'the credibility of transparency matters more than the act of disclosure itself.'* When employees

can see pay information but cannot see fair role boundaries, consistent treatment, or a plausible pathway forward, transparency is more likely to intensify dissatisfaction than to support emotional attachment, particularly in roles already framed as temporary or transitional.

First, HR practice needs to treat role design and workload control as part of pay transparency. Participants' fairness judgements were repeatedly tied to "extra tasks" and informal responsibility expansion. In retail settings where lean staffing is common, job boundaries often drift in practice. When additional responsibilities become normalised without formal acknowledgement, such as updated role expectations, loading, step-ups, or structured recognition, transparent pay rates can read as confirmation that increased effort is not matched by meaningful return. Practical responses that fit store operations include clearer duty allocations per shift, documented expectations for acting-up responsibilities, and routine check-ins that restore balance between contribution and reward, rather than allowing effort to be absorbed informally.

Second, recruitment transparency should be treated as a fairness intervention, not just an efficiency tactic. Participants interpreted "negotiable" language and delayed disclosure as shifting risk onto applicants, particularly those early in their careers or unfamiliar with local pay norms. Posting pay bands and stating what informs the starting points, such as experience, availability, or responsibilities, helps align expectations and establish a clearer basis for how decisions are made from the outset. Importantly, this also reduces the likelihood that employees enter with a sense that pay decisions are subjective, an early impression that can linger into later trust evaluations.

Third, HR can support commitment by improving career visibility, even where hierarchies are thin. Participants did not necessarily expect fast promotion; they wanted evidence that sustained effort could realistically lead to some form of progression or recognition over time. In retail organisations with limited roles and steps, "progression" can be made more credible through

transparent criteria for step changes (e.g., senior sales, key-holder duties, training responsibilities), clearer pay steps tied to competence, and realistic timelines for movement. The aim is not to promise advancement that the structure cannot deliver, but to make the link between effort and outcome visible, replacing ambiguity with understandable pathways and honest boundaries.

Finally, these practices all depend heavily on store-level managerial capability, as this is where transparency is interpreted and tested day-to-day by the workers. Where managers avoided pay conversations or responded inconsistently, participants read this as a signal about intent and respect, weakening emotional attachment even when employees continued working out of necessity. HR therefore needs to equip managers with simple guidance on what can be shared, how to explain pay decisions clearly, and how to respond to concerns without defensiveness. In this context, managerial consistency is not a “soft” issue; it directly shapes whether transparency supports trust and engagement or reinforces disengagement under constrained employment conditions.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

The findings offer interpretive insight into how pay transparency is understood in low-wage fashion retail; however, they should be read within the boundaries of the study design and research context. In methodological terms, the study draws on seven semi-structured interviews with Generation Z employees in New Zealand fashion retail. While this qualitative approach supports depth and nuance, it necessarily limits the range of perspectives captured across different regions, retail formats, and organisational pay systems.

Beyond the issue of sample size, the analysis is based on employee accounts rather than organisational evidence. The study did not include access to internal pay frameworks, HR

documentation, or managerial decision-making processes, which means it cannot verify whether participants' interpretations align with formal policy or how pay decisions are justified internally. This limitation is particularly salient given the study's central argument that pay transparency operates as a signal: signals derive their influence from interpretation, yet those interpretations may diverge from organisational intent. Incorporating HR and managerial perspectives in future research would help clarify where such divergences arise and how they shape employee commitment.

Related to this, the transferability of the findings is also shaped by the sectoral and demographic focus of the research. Fashion retail is characterised by minimum-wage baselines, variable hours, lean staffing models, and limited progression ladders, all of which influence how transparency is experienced and evaluated. Other areas of retail, as well as higher-paid or union-represented sectors, may operate under different fairness benchmarks and career expectations. In addition, the focus on Generation Z captures an early-career perspective in which bargaining confidence, labour market knowledge, and time horizons differ from those of older cohorts. These differences are likely to shape both how pay disclosure is interpreted and how commitment is understood.

Lastly, the timing of the research adds a further boundary to interpretation. Data were collected during a period of economic constraint in New Zealand, where job scarcity and rising living costs reduced participants' capacity to act on dissatisfaction, even when concerns about pay or fairness were present. This context likely intensified continuance-based pressures and shaped how participants described remaining in their roles despite weak attachment. Under more favourable labour market conditions, employees may respond differently to similar transparency practices, particularly where mobility is higher and exit becomes a more viable option.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This discussion in the chapter showed that pay transparency influenced organisational commitment mainly through organisational justice evaluations, particularly perceptions of fairness, managerial intent, and the possibility of improvement. In participants' accounts, disclosure mattered less as information and more as a test of whether the organisation's claims about respect and equity were credible in everyday practice.

Commitment therefore appeared fluid rather than settled. Participants repeatedly evaluated whether effort was recognised, whether treatment was consistent, and whether any pathway existed beyond static pay. Where transparency exposed limited progression or unacknowledged workload increases, it intensified perceptions of stagnation instead of building attachment. At the same time, labour market pressure constrained choice, meaning continued employment often reflected external necessity more than internal loyalty.

These insights reframe pay transparency as a context-dependent organisational practice, operating less as a direct motivational lever and more as an interpretive cue through which employees evaluate fairness, decision-making processes, and managerial conduct. In this study, transparency supported organisational commitment only when it was reinforced by credible management practice, meaningful recognition, and attainable opportunities. The conclusion chapter draws these threads together to clarify the study's contribution to debates on pay transparency and organisational commitment, and to identify directions for future research that move beyond employee interpretation toward a fuller account of how transparency is designed, enacted, and experienced.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter brings the thesis to its final stage by consolidating the study's key insights and clarifying what they contribute to understanding pay transparency and organisational commitment within contemporary fashion retail employment. Instead of revisiting back to empirical analysis, the chapter synthesises the findings to show how pay transparency acquires meaning through employee interpretation, managerial practice, and labour market constraint. In doing so, it consolidates the study's contribution to existing debates on pay transparency and organisational commitment and identifies directions for future research that emerge from both gaps in the literature and the boundaries of the present study.

6.2 Summary of Key Findings

This study set out to examine how Generation Z employees in New Zealand fashion retail experience and interpret pay transparency, and how these interpretations influence organisational commitment. The findings show that pay transparency was not understood as a discrete organisational practice capable of directly producing commitment. Instead, it operated as part of a broader evaluative process through which participants assessed fairness, managerial credibility, and the viability of remaining in their roles.

In relation to employees' experiences of pay transparency, the findings demonstrate that transparency functioned primarily as an interpretive reference point rather than as a motivational tool in its own right. Participants used available pay information, or the absence of it, to judge whether effort was acknowledged, whether treatment was consistent, and whether organisational

claims about fairness aligned with everyday practice, particularly in how pay outcomes were determined, explained, and enacted by managers. Transparency therefore shaped how participants made sense of their employment relationship, rather than determining commitment outcomes in a straightforward or uniform way.

In addition, the findings demonstrate that organisational commitment among Generation Z employees was inherently provisional, characterised by continual reassessment in response to changing workplace conditions. Participants did not describe commitment as a stable attachment or moral obligation, but as something contingent on ongoing evaluations of recognition, trust, and future opportunity. Where pay transparency clarified processes, reduced uncertainty, or aligned with credible managerial behaviour, it supported perceptions of fairness and legitimacy. However, when transparency revealed static pay structures, limited progression, or unrecognised increases in workload, it intensified dissatisfaction by making organisational constraints more visible.

Importantly, these interpretations were embedded within broader economic conditions. Job scarcity, rising living costs, and unstable working hours consistently constrained participants' capacity to act on dissatisfaction. As a result, continued employment in fashion retail was often framed as a pragmatic response to external pressure rather than as an expression of strong organisational commitment. Taken together, the findings demonstrate that pay transparency influenced how participants rationalised staying, rather than whether they stayed at all.

6.3 Contributions to Identified Gaps in the Literature

This study makes three key contributions to the literature on pay transparency and organisational commitment by responding to gaps identified in the existing body of research.

Firstly, the findings advance understanding of pay transparency by repositioning it as an interpretive organisational practice instead of a purely technical or informational intervention. While much existing research treats pay transparency as a policy lever capable of improving fairness perceptions, trust, or organisational commitment when implemented appropriately (Ramachandran, 2012; Yadav & Rai, 2017; Scheller & Harrison, 2018; Brown et al., 2022; Obloj & Zenger, 2022), the findings of this study demonstrate that transparency derives its meaning from how it is experienced in everyday organisational practice. In particular, transparency mattered less as the provision of pay information and more as what it revealed about managerial intent, recognition, and the credibility of fairness claims. thereby positioning transparency as a socially interpreted signal embedded within workplace relationships and justice evaluations shaped by short tenure, constrained labour market choice, and opaque pay practices in retail employment.

Secondly, the study contributes empirical insight into pay transparency within low-wage fashion retail employment, a context that remains underrepresented in existing research. Much of the pay transparency literature has focused on professional, managerial, or public-sector settings, where pay systems are relatively formalised and career pathways are more structured (Ramachandran, 2012; Obloj & Zenger, 2022). By centring the experiences of Generation Z employees in fashion retail, this study shows how transparency is interpreted under conditions of minimum-wage pay, limited bargaining power, and constrained progression opportunities. In this context, transparency often served to expose structural limitations rather than to signal organisational investment or long-term reciprocity, extending understanding of how pay transparency operates in precarious and transitional employment settings.

After that, the study contributes to organisational commitment research by reinforcing and extending existing critiques of models that assume stable, long-term attachment or strong

normative obligation. Traditional conceptualisations of organisational commitment have tended to emphasise enduring psychological attachment and moral obligation (Meyer & Allen, 1991), assumptions that have been increasingly questioned in research on contemporary and insecure employment (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Kalleberg, 2009; Twenge et al., 2010). The findings of this study align with and build on these critiques by showing that commitment among Generation Z employees in fashion retail was fluid, conditional, and continually reassessed in response to justice-based evaluations of fairness and recognition, alongside external economic constraint. Rather than functioning as a stable psychological state, commitment emerged as an ongoing evaluative process shaped by labour market insecurity and limited mobility, particularly within low-wage retail work.

6.4 Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study point to several directions for future research. Further studies should examine pay transparency across a broader range of employment contexts, particularly in sectors characterised by low pay, high turnover, or insecure working conditions. Comparative research within the public sector, where pay transparency frameworks are more formalised, would enable examination of how institutionalised transparency shape employee interpretation and commitment differently.

Future studies should also consider generational comparisons to assess whether the conditional and evaluative forms of commitment identified here are specific to Generation Z or reflect broader shifts in employment relationships under sustained economic pressure. Longitudinal research designs would also be valuable in tracing how interpretations of pay transparency and organisational commitment evolve over time as career stages and labour market conditions change.

As the last suggestion, incorporating organisational-level data, including HR policies, pay structures, and managerial decision-making processes, would enable closer examination of the alignment or disconnect between organisational intent and employee interpretation. Such work would deepen understanding of how pay transparency is designed, enacted, and experienced in practice, and would help bridge the gap between policy aspirations and lived workplace realities.

6.5 Concluding Reflection

By foregrounding employee interpretation and structural constraint, this thesis demonstrates that pay transparency does not operate as a universal solution for strengthening organisational commitment. Instead, it functions as a situated organisational practice whose meaning and impact are shaped by managerial conduct, economic conditions, and career stage. In this context, transparency is evaluated through employees' assessments of pay outcomes, decision processes, and managerial communication, rather than through formal policy intent alone.

In highlighting the conditional and interpretive nature of both transparency and commitment, the study offers a more critical and context-sensitive account of pay transparency within contemporary fashion retail employment. In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing debates on fairness, commitment, and work in low-wage sectors by emphasising the need to examine organisational practices through employees' lived experiences, rather than assuming that policies produce intended outcomes simply by virtue of their design or theoretical framing.

References

- Adamovic, M. (2023). Organizational justice research: A review, synthesis, and research agenda. *European Management Review*, 20(3), 453-470. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12564>
- Adams, J. S. (1963). Towards an understanding of inequity. *Journal of Abnormal & Social Psychology*, 67(5), 422-436. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0040968>
- Adler, R. H. (2022). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 38(4), 598-602. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08903344221116620>
- Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine Surgery and Public Health*, 2, 100051. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051>
- Alharahsheh, H. H., & Pius, A. (2020). A review of Key Paradigms: Positivism vs Interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 39-43. <https://doi.org/10.36348/gajhss.2020.v02i03.001>
- Al-Jabari, B., & Ghazzawi, I. (2019). Organizational commitment: A review of the conceptual and empirical literature and a research agenda. *International Leadership Journal*, 11(1), 78-119.
- Al-Madi, F. N., Assal, H., Shrafat, F., & Zeglat, D. (2017). The impact of employee motivation on organizational commitment. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 9(15), 134-145. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343141142>
- Al-zawahreh, A., & Al-Madi, F. N. (2012). The Utility of Equity Theory in Enhancing Organizational Effectiveness. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, 46, 158-170.
- Arnold, A., Sender, A., Fulmer, I., & Allen, D. (2023). Variable Pay Transparency in Organizations: When are Organizations More Likely to Open Up About Pay? *Compensation & Benefits Review*, 56(1), 16-36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08863687231200802>
- Avdul, D. N., Martin, W. M., & Lopez, Y. P. (2023). Pay Transparency: Why it is Important to be Thoughtful and Strategic. *Compensation & Benefits Review*, 56(2), 103-116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08863687231181454>

- Babcock, L., Recalde, M. P., Vesterlund, L., & Weingart, L. (2017). *Gender differences in accepting and receiving requests for tasks with low promotability*. *American Economic Review*, 107(3), 714-747. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20141734>
- Baker, M., Halberstam, Y., Kroft, K., Mas, A., & Messacar, D. (2019). *Pay transparency and the gender gap* (NBER Working Paper No. 25834). National Bureau of Economic Research. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25834/w25834.pdf
- Bamberger, P. A., & Belogolovsky, E. (2017). The dark sides of transparency: How and when pay administration practices affect employee helping. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(4), 658-671. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000184>
- Barnes, L., & Lea-Greenwood, G. (2010). Fast fashion in the retail store environment. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 38(10), 760-772. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09590551011076533>
- Bashir, B., & Gani, A. (2020). Testing the effects of job satisfaction on organizational commitment. *Journal of Management Development*, 39(4), 525-542. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jmd-07-2018-0210>
- Benítez-Márquez, M. D., Sánchez-Teba, E. M., Bermúdez-González, G., & Núñez-Rydman, E. S. (2022). Generation Z Within the Workforce and in the workplace: A Bibliometric analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.736820>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brown, M., Nyberg, A. J., Weller, I., & Strizver, S. D. (2022). Pay Information Disclosure: Review and recommendations for research spanning the Pay Secrecy-Pay Transparency continuum. *Journal of Management*, 48(6), 1661-1694. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01492063221079249>
- Burroughs, S. M. (2017). Pay transparency and pay secrecy: The impact on employee perceptions of fairness and trust. *Compensation & Benefits Review*, 49(3), 143-155. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886368717710500>
- Castilla, J. I. (2015). *Accounting for inequality: The politics of pay and promotion in organizations*. Stanford University Press.

- Cennamo, L., & Gardner, D. (2008). Generational differences in work values, outcomes and person–organization values fit. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(8), 891-906. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940810904385>
- Cennamo, L., & Gardner, D. (2008). Generational differences in work values, outcomes and person–organisation values fit. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(8), 891-906. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940810904385>
- Cennamo, L., & Gardner, D. (2008). Generational differences in work values, outcomes and person-organisation values fit. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(8), 891-906. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940810904385>
- Chandra, S., Ghosh, P., & Sinha, S. (2023). Addressing employee turnover in retail through CSR and transformational leadership. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 51(5), 690-710. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-07-2022-0237>
- Charlesworth, S., & Macdonald, F. (2014). Australia’s gender pay equity legislation: how new, how different, what prospects? *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 39(2), 421-440. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/beu044>
- Cohen, A. (2007). Commitment before and after: An evaluation and reconceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 17(3), 336-354. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2007.05.001>
- Colella, A., Paetzold, R. L., Zardkoohi, A., & Wesson, M. J. (2007). Exposing pay secrecy. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(1), 55-71. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2007.23463695>
- Colquitt, J. A., Conlon, D. E., Wesson, M. J., Porter, C. O. L. H., & Ng, K. Y. (2001). Justice at the millennium: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 425-445. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.425>
- Cook, K. S., & Parcel, T. L. (1977). Equity Theory: Directions for future research*. *Sociological Inquiry*, 47(2), 75-88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682x.1977.tb00781.x>
- Costanza, D. P., Finkelstein, L. M., Imose, R. A., & Ravid, D. M. (2020). Generational differences in the workplace: A meta-analytical review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 105(3), 233-249. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000449>

- Cotton On. (2025). *Sales assistant job advertisement*. Cotton On Careers.
<https://ekxm.fa.ap1.oraclecloud.com/hcmUI/CandidateExperience/en/sites/CX/job/48554>
- Cousins, C. (2025, August 29). *Navigating NZ's new pay disclosure laws: What employers must know in 2025*. <https://www.canterburylegal.co.nz/2025/08/29/navigating-nzs-new-pay-disclosure-laws-what-employers-must-know-in-2025/>
- Croucher, S. M., Rocker, K., Singh, R., Feekery, A., Ashwell, D., Green, M., Murray, N., & Anderson, K. (2024). Organizational commitment and burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic: A comparative analysis in the United States and New Zealand. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 1-14.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2024.2368471>
- Cullen, Z. (2024). Is pay transparency good? *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 38(1), 153-180. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.38.1.153>
- Cullen, Z., & Perez-Truglia, R. (2022). How Much Does Your Boss Make? The Effects of Salary Comparisons. *Journal of Political Economy*, 130 (3), 766-822.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/717891>
- Culpepper, R. A. (2011). Three-component commitment and turnover: An examination of temporal aspects. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 79(2), 517-527.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2011.03.004>
- De Aguiar, G. J. M. (2024). Distinguishing between Method and Methodology in Academic Research. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4857923>
- Duchini, E., Simion, S., & Turrell, A. (2024). A review of the effects of pay transparency. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Economics and Finance*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190625979.013.860>
- Dwiyanti, R., Hamzah, H. B., & Abas, N. A. H. B. (2019). The correlation between organizational commitment, psychological contract and turnover intention of sales clerks at retail companies in Purwokerto. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 239, 194-197. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icset-18.2019.47>
- Easey, M. (2009). *Fashion Marketing* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Fang, J. (2023). Application and Limitations of the expectancy theory in organizations. *Advances in Economics Management and Political Sciences*, 54(1), 7-12.
<https://doi.org/10.54254/2754-1169/54/20230868>

- Fiorentino, S. R., & Tomkowicz, S. M. (2021). Can millennials deliver on equal pay? Why the time is finally right for right for pay transparency. *Hofstra Labor & Employment Law Journal*, 38(2), 253-284. <https://scholarlycommons.law.hofstra.edu/hlelj/vol38/iss2/3>
- Frey, V. (2021). *Pay transparency tools to close the gender wage gap*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). <https://doi.org/10.1787/e5b91d-en>
- Ghafouri, R., & Ofoghi, S. (2016). Trustworth and rigor in qualitative research. *International Journal of Advanced Biotechnology and Research (IJBR)*, 7(4), 1914-1922. <http://www.bipublication.com>
- Ghosh, S., & Swamy, D. R. (2014). A Literature Review on Organizational Commitment - A Comprehensive summary. *International Journal of Engineering Research and Applications*, 4(12), 04-14. https://www.ijera.com/papers/Vol4_issue12/Part%20-%201/B0412010414.pdf
- Given, L. M. (Ed.). (2008). *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vols. 1-2). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909>
- Frechette, J., Bitzas, V., Aubry, M., Kilpatrick, K., & Lavoie-Tremblay, M. (2020). Capturing lived experience: Methodological considerations for interpretive phenomenological inquiry. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920907254>
- Grasser, R. A., Newman, A. H., & Xiong, X. G. (2023). The effect of horizontal pay transparency on employee motivation when pay dispersion is performance based and Non-Performance based. *Journal of Management Accounting Research*, 36(2), 99-122. <https://doi.org/10.2308/jmar-2023-025>
- Greenberg, J. (1987). A taxonomy of organizational justice theories. *Academy of Management Review*, 12(1), 9-22. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1987.4306437>
- Gulyas, A., Seitz, S., & Sinha, S. (2023). Does Pay Transparency Affect the Gender Wage Gap? Evidence from Austria. *American Economic Journal Economic Policy*, 15(2), 236-255. <https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.20210128>
- Ha-Brookshire, J. E., & Hawley, J. (2014). Trends of Research published by Clothing and Textiles Research Journal (1993–2012) and Outlook for Future Research. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 32(4), 251-265. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302x14541543>

- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1976). Motivation through the design of work: Test of a theory. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 16(2), 250-279.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073\(76\)90016-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(76)90016-7)
- Harvey, O., Regmi, P. R., Mahato, P., Adhikari, S. D., Dhital, R., & Van Teijlingen, E. (2023). Methods or methodology: terms that are too often confused. *Journal of Education and Research*, 13(2), 94-105. <https://doi.org/10.51474/jer.v13i2.716>
- Heisler, W. (2021). Increasing pay transparency: A guide for change. *Business Horizons*, 64(1), 73-81. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.09.005>
- Herrera, J., & De Las Heras-Rosas, C. (2021). The organizational commitment in the company and its relationship with the psychological contract. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.609211>
- Indeed. (2025). *H&M jobs in Auckland, New Zealand* [Job listings]. Retrieved December 5, 2025, from
<https://nz.indeed.com/jobs?q=h%26m&l=Auckland&from=searchOnHP&vjk=690f035fed31cb45>
- Jaros, S. (2007). Meyer and Allen Model of Organizational Commitment: Measurement Issues. *The Icfai Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 6(4). <http://stevejaros.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Jaros-ICFAI-2007-Meyer-and-Allen1.pdf>
- Kalleberg, A. L. (2009). Precarious work, insecure workers: Employment relations in transition. *American Sociological Review*, 74(1), 1-22.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240907400101>
- Kallio, H., Pietila, A., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 72(12), 2954-2965. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031>
- Kazdin, A. E. (2016). Methodology: What it is and why it is so important. In A. E. Kazdin (Ed.), *Methodological issues and strategies in clinical research* (4th ed., pp. 3-21). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14805-001>
- Khalip, N. A. (2016). A three-Component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 6(12).
<https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v6-i12/2464>

- Klykken, F. H. (2021). Implementing continuous consent in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 22(5), 795–810. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941211014366>
- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120-124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092>
- Kumar, P. (2018). Personality and work motivation: A decisive assessment of Vroom's expectancy theory on employee motivation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Research*, 1(86), 174-179.
- Kurdi, B. A., Alshurideh, M., & Alnaser, A. (2020). The impact of employee satisfaction on customer satisfaction: Theoretical and empirical underpinning. *Management Science Letters*, 3561-3570. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2020.6.038>
- Lam, L., Cheng, B. H., Bamberger, P. A., & Wong, M., (2022). Research: The unintended consequences of pay transparency. *Harvard Business Review*, 1-7. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363761773_Research_The_Unintended_Consequences_of_Pay_Transparency
- Laryeafio, M. N., & Ogbewe, O. C. (2023). Ethical consideration dilemma: systematic review of ethics in qualitative data collection through interviews. *Journal of Ethics in Entrepreneurship and Technology*, 3(2), 94-110. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jeet-09-2022-0014>
- Lee, H. W. (2023). The effects of organizational justice on employee satisfaction and motivation. *Sustainability*, 15(7), 5993. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15075993>
- Lee, S., & Ha-Brookshire, J. (2017). Ethical Climate and job Attitude in fashion Retail Employees' turnover intention, and Perceived Organizational Sustainability Performance: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Sustainability*, 9(3), 465. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9030465>
- Levers, M. D. (2013). Philosophical Paradigms, Grounded Theory, and Perspectives on Emergence. *SAGE Open*, 3(4), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013517243>
- Lim, W. M. (2024). What is qualitative research? An overview and guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, 33(2), 199-229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264619>
- Lokman, A., Hassan, F., Ustadi, Y. A., Rahman, F. a. A., Zain, Z. M., & Rahmat, N. H. (2022). Investigating Motivation for learning via Vroom's Theory. *International Journal of*

- Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(1), 504-530.
<https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v12-i1/11749>
- Lyons, S. T., & Kuron, L. K. J. (2013). Generational differences in the workplace: A review of the evidence and directions for future research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 35(S1), S139-S157. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1913>
- Madhani, P. M. (2021). Enhancing retail stores' performance: Managing compensation costs with optimal retail workforce sizing. *The IUP Journal of Business Strategy*, 18(1), 7-21.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Dr-Pankaj-Madhani/publication/354921415_Enhancing_Retail_Stores'_Performance_Managing_Compensation_Costs_with_Optimal_Retail_Workforce_Sizing/links/615435df39b8157d90054088/Enhancing-Retail-Stores-Performance-Managing-Compensation-Costs-with-Optimal-Retail-Workforce-Sizing.pdf
- Marasi, S., & Bennett, R. J. (2016). Pay communication: Where do we go from here? *Human Resource Management Review*, 26(1), 50-58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2015.07.002>
- Maulidiyah, L. A., & Parahyanti, E. (2024). Emotional challenges in the retail industry: Uncovering the role of emotional exhaustion in shop attendants' performance. *Asian Journal Collaboration of Social Environmental and Education*, 2(1).
<https://doi.org/10.61511/ajcsee.v2i1.2024.793>
- McCormick, H., Cartwright, J., Perry, P., Barnes, L., Lynch, S., & Ball, G. (2014). Fashion retailing – past, present and future. *Textile Progress*, 46(3), 227-321.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00405167.2014.973247>
- McLeod, S. (2024). *Rigor of qualitative research*. ResearchGate.
<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.15444.51840>
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 1(1), 61-89.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822\(91\)90011-z](https://doi.org/10.1016/1053-4822(91)90011-z)
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1997). *Commitment in the Workplace: Theory, Research, and Application*. SAGE.
<https://books.google.co.nz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=jn4VFpFJ2qQC&oi=fnd&pg=PP10&dq=organizational+commitment+theory+allen+and+meyer&ots=IZOY->

[Vir16&sig=Y5mRW6xIyO_3Pk8pzzwGozm2I6o&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=organizational%20commitment%20theory%20allen%20and%20meyer&f=false](https://www.employment.govt.nz/news-and-updates/new-protections-for-employees-discussing-pay#:~:text=protections%20for%20employees.-,The%20Employment%20Relations%20(Employee%20Remuneration%20Disclosure)%20Amendment%20Act%202025%20passed,discuss%20or%20disclose%20their%20pay)

- Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment. (2025, September 8). *New protections for employees discussing pay*. [https://www.employment.govt.nz/news-and-updates/new-protections-for-employees-discussing-pay#:~:text=protections%20for%20employees.-,The%20Employment%20Relations%20\(Employee%20Remuneration%20Disclosure\)%20Amendment%20Act%202025%20passed,discuss%20or%20disclose%20their%20pay](https://www.employment.govt.nz/news-and-updates/new-protections-for-employees-discussing-pay#:~:text=protections%20for%20employees.-,The%20Employment%20Relations%20(Employee%20Remuneration%20Disclosure)%20Amendment%20Act%202025%20passed,discuss%20or%20disclose%20their%20pay)
- Moon, K., & Blackman, D. (2017, May 2). A guide to ontology, epistemology, and philosophical perspectives for interdisciplinary researchers. *Integration and Implementation Insights*. <https://i2insights.org/2017/05/02/philosophy-for-interdisciplinarity/>
- Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball sampling: a purposeful method of sampling in qualitative research. *Strides in Development of Medical Education, 14*(3). <https://doi.org/10.5812/sdme.67670>
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A step-by-step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 22*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>
- New Zealand Legislation. (2025). *Employment Relations (Employee Remuneration Disclosure) Amendment Act 2025*. [https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2025/0045/latest/whole.html#:~:text=to%20personal%20grievances\)-,\(1\),%2C%20insert%20%E2%80%9C110AB%2C%E2%80%9D%20](https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2025/0045/latest/whole.html#:~:text=to%20personal%20grievances)-,(1),%2C%20insert%20%E2%80%9C110AB%2C%E2%80%9D%20)
- Ng, E. S. W., Schweitzer, L., & Lyons, S. T. (2010). New generation, great expectations: A field study of the millennial generation. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 25*(2), 281-292. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-010-9159-4>
- Obloj, T., & Zenger, T. (2022). The influence of pay transparency on (gender) inequity, inequality and the performance basis of pay. *Nature Human Behaviour, 6*(5), 646-655. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01288-9>
- Park, J., Ahn, J., Hyun, H., & Rutherford, B. N. (2021). Examining antecedents of retail employees' propensity to leave. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, 49*(6), 795-812. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijrdm-02-2019-0035>

- Parker, J., & Donnelly, N. (2020). The revival and refashioning of gender pay equity in New Zealand. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 62(4), 560-581.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185620929374>
- Parry, E., & Urwin, P. (2011). Generational differences in work values: A review of theory and evidence. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 13(1), 79-96.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2010.00285.x>
- Parry, E., & Urwin, P. (2011). Generational differences in work values: A review of theory and evidence. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 13(1), 79-96.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2010.00285.x>
- Pervin, N., & Mokhtar, M. (2022). The Interpretivist Research Paradigm: a subjective notion of a social context. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v11-i2/12938>
- Pretorius, L. (2024). Demystifying research paradigms: Navigating ontology, epistemology, and axiology in research. *The Qualitative Report*, 29(10), 2698-2715.
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2024.7632>
- Ramachandran, G. (2012). Pay Transparency. *Penn State Law Review*, 116 (4), 1043-79.
<http://heinonline.org.ezproxy.library.qmul.ac.uk/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/dlr116&id=1051>
- Reilly, A. (2019). Why New Zealand employers should be subject to mandatory pay transparency. *Journal of the Australasian Law Academics Association*, 12, 86-95.
- Ringa Hora. (2023). *Retail & Distribution Workforce Action Plan*. <https://ringahora.nz/for-industry/skills-leadership/workforce-development-plan-2023/retail-distribution-workforce-action-plan/>
- Rzemieniak, M., & Wawer, M. (2021). Employer Branding in the Context of the Company's Sustainable Development Strategy from the Perspective of Gender Diversity of Generation Z. *Sustainability*, 13(2), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020828>
- Salleh, S. M., Zahari, A. S. M., Said, N. S. M., & Ali, S. R. O. (2016). The influence of work motivation on organizational commitment in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Environmental and Biological Sciences*, 6(5S), 139-143.

- Scheller, E. M., & Harrison, W. (2018). Ignorance is bliss, or is it? The effects of pay transparency, informational justice and distributive justice on pay satisfaction and affective commitment. *Compensation & Benefits Review*, 50(2), 65-81.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886368719833215>
- Schnauffer, K., Christandl, F., Berger, S., Meynhardt, T., & Gollwitzer, M. (2021). The shift to pay transparency: Undermet pay standing expectations and consequences. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 43(1), 69-90. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2575>
- Schroth, H. (2019). Are you ready for Generation Z in the workplace? *California Management Review*, 61(3), 5-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125619841006>
- Scott, D., Antoni, C., Grodzicki, J., Morales, E., & Peláez, J. (2020). Global Pay Transparency: An employee perspective. *Compensation & Benefits Review*, 52(3), 85-97.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886368720905693>
- Seek. (2025). *Glassons job listing* [Job listing]. Retrieved December 5, 2025, from <https://www.seek.co.nz/glassons-jobs?jobId=86312940&type=standard>
- Sessoms-Penny, S., Underwood, K. M., & Taylor, J. (2022). A decade later: exploring managerial insights on millennials. *Management Matter Journal*, 20(1), 36-52. <https://doi.org/10.1108/manm-03-2022-0044>
- Sobaih, A. E. E., Benameur, D., Gharbi, H., & Aliane, N. (2024). What makes you feel motivated? Examining Vroom's expectancy theory in the Tunisian banking sector. *Environment and Social Psychology*, 9(7). <https://doi.org/10.59429/esp.v9i7.2870>
- Starks, H., & Trinidad, S. B. (2007). *Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory*. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1372-1380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732307307031>
- Stats NZ. (2025, June 10). *Working lives are getting longer*.
<https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/working-lives-are-getting-longer>
- Stofberg, R., Bussin, M., & Mabaso, C. (2022). Pay transparency, job turnover intentions and the mediating role of perceived organisational support and organisational justice. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 33(17), 3467-3494.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2021.1985987>

- Surugiu, C., Surugiu, M., Grădinaru, C., & Grigore, A. (2025). Factors Motivating Generation Z in the workplace: Managerial challenges and insights. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(1), 29. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15010029>
- Symplicity. (2023). *2023 State of Early Talent Recruiting Report: How Generation Z approaches looking for work in a post-pandemic workforce*.
- Tariq, M. U. (2025). *Ensuring trustworthiness and rigor in qualitative research*. IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-7200-5.ch012>
- Te Kawa Mataaho. (2024). *Pay gaps and pay equity*. New Zealand Government. <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/system/public-service-people/pay-gaps-and-pay-equity>
- Te Kawa Mataaho. (2025). *Pay gaps*. New Zealand Government. <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/data/workforce-data/remunerationpay/pay-gaps>
- Testa, D. S., & Karpova, E. E. (2021). Executive decision-making in fashion retail: a phenomenological exploration of resources and strategies. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 26(4), 700-716. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jfmm-08-2020-0169>
- Trotter, R. G., Zacur, S. R., & Stickney, L. T. (2017). The new age of pay transparency. *Business Horizons*, 60(4), 529-539. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2017.03.011>
- Trusaic. (2025). *New Zealand Pay Transparency Reporting Law Guide*. <https://trusaic.com/resources/global-pay-transparency-center/new-zealand/>
- Turhan, N. S. (2019). *Qualitative research designs: Which one is the best for your research?* *European Journal of Special Education Research*, 4(2), 118-130. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3234969>
- Twenge, J. M., Campbell, S. M., Hoffman, B. J., & Lance, C. E. (2010). Generational differences in work values: leisure and extrinsic values increasing, social and intrinsic values decreasing. *Journal of Management*, 36(5), 1117-1142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206309352246>
- Van Rossenberg, Y. G. T., Klein, H. J., Asplund, K., Bentein, K., Breitsohl, H., Cohen, A., Cross, D., De Aguiar Rodrigues, A. C., Dufлот, V., Kilroy, S., Ali, N., Rapti, A., Ruhle, S., Solinger, O., Swart, J., & Yalabik, Z. Y. (2018). The future of workplace commitment: key questions and directions. *European Journal of Work and*

- Organizational Psychology*, 27(2), 153-167.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432x.2018.1443914>
- Vieira, J., Da Costa, C. G., & Santos, V. (2024). Talent Management and Generation Z: A Systematic Literature Review through the Lens of Employer Branding. *Administrative Sciences*, 14(3), 49. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci14030049>
- Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and motivation*. Wiley.
- Wasti, S. A. (2003). Organizational commitment, turnover intentions and the influence of cultural values. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 76(3), 303-321.
<https://doi.org/10.1348/096317903769647193>
- Wen, X., Choi, T., & Chung, S. (2018). Fashion retail supply chain management: A review of operational models. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 207, 34-55.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2018.10.012>
- Williams, H. (2021). *The meaning of "Phenomenology": qualitative and philosophical phenomenological research methods*. The Qualitative Report.
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4587>
- Wong, M., Gardiner, E., Lang, W., & Coulon, L. (2008). Generational differences in personality and motivation. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(8), 878-890.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940810904376>
- WorkSafe. (2023). *Mentally healthy work in retail: Case studies*.
<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/work-related-health/mental-health/mentally-healthy-work-in-retail-case-studies/>
- WorkSafe. (2024). *Psychosocial survey of the retail sector*.
<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/research/psychosocial-survey-of-the-retail-sector/>
- WorkSafe. (2024). *Retail store: What risk looks like in your industry*.
<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/managing-risks/what-risk-looks-like-in-your-industry/retail-store/>
- Wright, J. D. (2015). *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed.). Elsevier Science.
- Yadav, G. P., & Rai, J. (2017). The Generation Z and their Social Media Usage: A Review and a Research Outline. *Global Journal of Enterprise Information System*, 9(2), 110.
<https://doi.org/10.18311/gjeis/2017/15748>

Yew, L. T. (2011). Understanding the antecedents of affective organizational commitment and turnover intention of academics in Malaysia: The organizational support theory perspectives. *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(7), 2551-2562.

<https://doi.org/10.5897/ajbm10.284>

Zahra, Y., Handoyo, S., & Fajrianti, F. (2025). A comprehensive overview of Generation Z in the workplace: Insights from a scoping review. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 51.

<https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v51i0.2263>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval Letter



Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

21 May 2025

Betty Ofe-Grant
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Betty

Re Ethics Application: **25/117 Understanding the Influence of Pay Transparency on Gen-Z Organisational Commitment in Fashion Retail Industry**

Thank you for your responses to AUTEC's conditions.

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 21 May 2028.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. In the feedback section of the Information Sheet, we suggest removing the last paragraph and replace with something like 'you are welcome to review the transcript of your interview before data analysis, this can be indicated in the Consent Form'.

Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC unless requested but must be completed before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC.
2. All public facing documents must have the AUTEC approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented.
4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
5. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project.
6. Any serious or adverse events must be reported to AUTEC, this includes unforeseen issues that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
7. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

For any enquiries, please contact the Secretariat at ethics@aut.ac.nz
(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: thinnadithwe4@gmail.com

Appendix 2: Participant Recruitment Advertisement



PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FOR A STUDENT RESEARCH STUDY

Are you a Generation Z employee working in fashion retail store?

Do you feel like your salary is unfair? Should companies be transparent about all pay-related information with their employees?

We are looking for interview participant to our research for “Understanding the Influence of Pay Transparency on Generation Z Organisational Commitment in Fashion Retail Industry” and we want you!

As a Generation Z employee in the fashion retail industry, we would like to hear your experiences with pay transparency and how it has influenced your commitment to your organisation (sensitive data are not required.)

Your insights will significantly help my research and contribute to a deeper understanding of this topic.

WHAT TO EXPECT?

-  30 - 60 mins one-on-one interview (You won't even know time passed 😊)
-  \$30 Gift voucher (OR) Shopping voucher for the appreciation of your time.
-  Either Online or In-person interview, your choice!
-  The interview will be voluntary, and the information will be kept confidential.

If interested or have any questions, feel free to reach out to us!

REQUIREMENTS

- Generation Z employee (aged between 18-28)
- Live in Auckland, New Zealand
- Currently working at Fashion Retail store

Student researcher name
Thin Nadi Thwe

Contact information
thinnadithwe4@gmail.com
+64 20 484 2402



Approved by the AUT Ethics Committee on 21/05/2025
AUTEC Reference number 25/117.



Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Project Title

Understanding the Influence of Pay Transparency on Gen-Z Organisational Commitment in Fashion Retail Industry

Main researcher (Primary Researcher): Thin Nadi Thwe

Research supervisor: Dr. Betty Ofe-Grant

Date that data collection process (interview) will start: 20/07/2025

Welcome introduction

Kia Ora,

You are invited to take part in a research study about how pay transparency (how openly salaries and pay structures are shared within an organisation) affects Generation Z employees' commitment in the fashion retail industry.

This study is being conducted by Thin Nadi Thwe, a master student at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand, with the guidance of Dr. Betty Ofe-Grant (research supervisor). This research is part of the requirements for completing a Master of Business degree in Management.

This Participant Information Sheet provides all the necessary details about the study, including why you have been invited, what your participation involves, potential benefits and risks, your rights as a participant, and what happens after the study is completed. It is designed to help you understand the purpose of this research and how your participation will contribute to a better understanding of how pay transparency and Gen-Z employees' commitment are connected in the fashion retail industry. By reading this information sheet, you will be able to make an informed decision about whether you would like to take part.

This document is six pages long, and we encourage you to read it carefully to fully understand the study. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

What is the purpose of this research?

The main purpose of this research is to explore whether pay transparency truly influences Gen Z employees' commitment in the fashion retail industry, which faces high turnover rates. While reviewing existing academic research, I found that although factors like work-life balance, career development, and growth are well-studied in relation to organisational commitment, pay transparency remains largely

underexplored. This gap in knowledge sparked curiosity about whether openly sharing pay information could improve job satisfaction, trust, and long-term commitment among Gen Z employees to their respective organisations.

To investigate this, the study will use a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews, gathering insights and opinions from approximately 10-12 Gen-Z participants who are currently working in fashion retail stores in Auckland, New Zealand. The results and findings from this study will contribute to academic research, industry practices, and discussions on workplace transparency, helping fashion retailers develop better strategies to engage and retain Gen Z employees. The results may be used for academic publications and presentations

This research study has been approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21/05/2025, AUTEK Reference number (25/117).

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Potential participants have been invited to take part in this research because they may have responded to a recruitment advertisement on social media, shown interest during in-person visits to fashion retail stores, or been referred through the snowball sampling technique.

For the final participant selection, the study will be following the provided inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion Criteria (Who may be selected):

- Participants must belong to Generation Z group (aged 18-28).
- Participants must be currently employed in the fashion retail industry (either part-time or full-time).
- Participants can be male or female.
- Participants must be based and worked in Auckland, New Zealand.
- Participants that consent to being interviewed.

Exclusion criteria (Who may not be selected):

- Former employees who have already left the fashion retail businesses.
- Individuals with a direct personal relationship to the researcher (e.g., close friends or family members) to ensure unbiased findings.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you decide to take part in the study, you can contact the researcher via email and you will be provided with a Consent Form, either in physical or digital format, depending on your choice in doing online or in-person interview. You will have the opportunity to review the information, ask any questions, and only after voluntarily signing the Consent Form will your participation be confirmed. The research will proceed once the consent is given.

You are also given to make a choice to withdraw from the study at any time by informing the researcher if you ever feel any discomfort or unsafe regarding the research. When you choose to withdraw, you may request for any information collected up until your withdrawal to be deleted unless you withdraw after the study analyses have been undertaken, in which case your data may be used to maintain the study's integrity.

What rights do I have as a participant?

As a participant, you have several important rights:

Confidentiality: All study files and the information you provide will remain strictly confidential. No material that could personally identify you will be included in any reports or discussions.

Access to Information: You have the right to access the information collected about you during the study. If any findings appear that may be beneficial to you, the researcher will contact you as well.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. There will be no pressure to take part.

Interview Environment: In order for you to share your thoughts and insights freely and honestly, the researcher will choose an environment that is quiet and private and create a neutral setting for the interview process.

What will my participation involve?

After confirming your participation and signing the consent form, face-to-face interviews will take place in AUT private study rooms, Auckland Library, and various cafeterias that provide a quiet atmosphere suited for the interview. For online interviews, video call applications such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams will be used.

Before the interview process, a set of questions will be sent in advance, along with the consent form, to guide you through the research interview. The one-on-one interview will take around 30 - 60 minutes to complete, depending on the flow of the conversation. Data will be collected through recorded interviews (audio only, unless otherwise agreed upon), and confidentiality will be maintained using pseudonyms. You will have two weeks to review and offer any feedback on the transcript before it is used in the study.

What are the benefits?

This study will help fill the academic gap in understanding how pay transparency influences Generation Z employees' organisational commitment, particularly within the fashion retail industry. By exploring on employee perspectives, the research will contribute to management and human resource literature on workplace transparency, motivation, and retention.

For fashion retail organisations in New Zealand, The findings may also provide valuable insights into how pay transparency affects young employees' job satisfaction, engagement, and long-term commitment. This can help businesses develop better salary policies to attract and retain Gen Z talent while fostering a fair and transparent work culture.

Participants will benefit by having the opportunity to voice their experiences and perspectives, contributing to meaningful research that may improve workplace practices. The researcher will gain new valuable insights for their master's thesis, advancing knowledge in organisational management.

What are the costs?

The main cost for participants will be their time, depending on the flow of the conversation. For face-to-face interviews, participants may incur costs related to transport and parking while traveling to the interview location. For online interviews, participants may need to cover their internet fees. However, these costs will not be reimbursed.

As a token of appreciation for their time and participation, every participant who completes the interview process will receive a token of appreciation a \$30 gift voucher or shopping voucher in recognition of their contribution to the research.

Will the results of the study be published?

The results of this research will be published in a Master's thesis, which will be accessible to the general public through the AUT Library.

What are the discomforts and risks and how will they be alleviated?

Since no sensitive data is required for the research, any discomfort should be minimal, though some interview questions might cause discomfort for the participants as the research topic is related to pay information and transparency. The data collected will only reflect the participants' personal experiences and perceptions without revealing their identities or organisations, ensuring there is no risk involved in this research. Since everything will remain confidential, any concerns related to cultural, employment, financial, or similar pressures will not be an issue. Participants are also free to skip any questions they do not feel comfortable answering.

What will happen to information about me?

All the information related to you will be handled as follow:

Identifiability of Data: The data collected will be non-identifiable with the use of pseudonym where participants' names will be changed to numerical pseudonyms to protect anonymity. No personally identifiable information will be linked to responses.

Types of Information Collected: The study will collect opinions and experiences regarding pay transparency and organizational commitment. No sensitive personal data such as health, education, or organizational records will be requested.

Data Storage and Access: All collected data, including interview recordings and transcriptions, will be securely stored on AUT's OneDrive with restricted access only to the primary researcher and the research supervisor. The paper Consent Forms will also be kept in a locked drawer in the supervisor's office at AUT University. The data will be stored for a minimum of six years, in accordance with AUTECE ethical guidelines. After this period, all electronic data will be permanently deleted, and any physical documents will be securely shredded.

Coding and Anonymization: Each participant will be assigned a participant number or pseudonym, ensuring that no responses can be traced back to an individual. The list linking participant names to pseudonyms will be securely kept by the primary researcher.

Use of Data: Participants are only consenting to the use of their data for this specific research project. No future or extended research use is planned. The data will not be stored in an open scientific repository or linked to other data sources.

Participant Rights: Participants have the right to access and review their own interview transcripts to ensure accuracy. They may also request corrections to their information.

Legal and Ethical Compliance: Identifiable information will only be disclosed outside the study if required by law or if the participant provides explicit permission.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Potential participants will have at least one week to consider the invitation. During this period, they may contact the primary researcher for further clarification. Additionally, a follow-up invitation will be sent via email one week after the initial invitation to remind those who expressed initial interest but have not yet confirmed their participation.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

If participants request for the summary of the findings in the consent form, they will receive a digital copy of a one- or two-page summary via email after the study is completed.

You are also welcome to review the transcript of your interview before data analysis; this can be indicated in the Consent Form. This is to ensure that the participants perspectives are accurately represented in the research.

Who do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Supervisor Contact Details:

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Supervisor.

Full Name – Dr. Betty Ofe-Grant
Email – betty.ofe-grant@aut.ac.nz

Primary Researcher Contact Details:

Full Name – Thin Nadi Thwe
Email – qtq0891@autuni.ac.nz (OR) thinadithwe4@gmail.com

AUTEC (Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee):

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21/05/2025

AUTEC Reference number 25/117.

Appendix 4: Consent Form



CONSENT FORM

Project title: ***Understanding the Influence of Pay Transparency on Gen-Z Organisational Commitment in Fashion Retail Industry***

Project Supervisor: ***Betty Ofe-Grant***

Researcher: ***Thin Nadi Thwe***

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 21/05/2025.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.

- I wish to receive a transcript of the interview for checking and commenting
(please tick one): Yes No

- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings
(please tick one): Yes No

Participant's signature :

Participant's name :

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate) :

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 21/05/2025

AUTEC Reference number 25/117

Appendix 5: Indicative Interview Questions

Indicative questions for the semi-structured interview

(These are the overview questions that will guide out conversation in the interview process. Since this is a semi-structured interview, I'll ask open-ended questions and may follow up depending on your responses. ☺)

Section 1: Your Background

- Can you tell me about your role and experience in the fashion retail industry?
- How long have you been working at your current company?
- What are the most important things that make you feel satisfied and committed to your job?

Section 2: Thoughts on Pay Transparency

- Have you heard of pay transparency?
- What does pay transparency mean to you? How would you describe your company's approach to it?
- Do you think pay transparency affects your sense of fairness at work?
- How open do you think your company is when it comes to salaries and pay decisions?
- Has your employer shared information about salaries, pay scales, or how promotions work?
- Do you feel comfortable talking about pay concerns with your employer or coworkers? Why or why not?

Section 3: How Pay Transparency Affects You

- Does knowing (or not knowing) how pay works in your company impact your trust in your employer? If so, how?
- How does pay transparency (or lack of it) affect your motivation and engagement at work?
- Have you ever felt underpaid at work? How did that affect your commitment to the company?
- If your company became more open about pay, do you think it would make you more likely to stay long-term?

Section 4: Expectations vs. Reality

- Before working in fashion retail, what did you expect when it came to pay transparency?
- How does your actual experience compare to what you expected?
- Have you ever thought about leaving or staying at a job because of how they handle pay transparency? If yes, can you share what happened?

Section 5: Ideas for Improvement

- What could your company do to be more open about pay and career growth?
- What advice would you give to fashion retail employers about pay transparency and keeping employees committed?