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Career Development and Employment Branding

A study on Japanese Studies Students' job
expectations in Europe

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要旨

この卒業論文では私の研究テーマであるヨーロッパで日本語を勉強している大学生の将来の就職について論じている。特に日本語を勉強している大学生向けのアンケート調査を作成し、その調査に基づいて結果をまとめていきたいと思う。本論文は四つの章によって分かれている。

第一章では職場と日常生活における Y 世代の特徴、第二章ではヨーロッパでの日本語の学生、特に、日本とヨーロッパの関係、およびヨーロッパの大学における日本研究の発展、第三章では日本語を勉強している大学生向けのアンケート調査の分析、第四章では日本とヨーロッパの雇用制度について論じている。

今日の企業の人材管理にとって最も重要な問題の1つが雇用ブランディングである。1990年代の初めから人気があったこの表現には、社会、経済、人口統計、仕事に対する態度の変化とともに、世界中で絶えず変化しているさまざまな意味が含まれている。世界のすべての企業は、自発的ではないにしても、広告キャンペーンを通じて、そして必然的に販売製品の品質を通じて伝達されるすべての価値とアイデアに由来する雇用ブランディングの戦略を持っている。

「雇用ブランディング」について話すとき、私たちは主に、学生、新卒、または経験豊富な労働者に関わらず、将来のすべての従業員に対して会社の魅力を高めることを指す。「雇用ブランディング」の考え方は会社の従業員の離職率を抑えること、つまり会社への「定着」にもつながっている。この考え方により従業員の離職率が減ることで、1つの会社で長年のキャリアを持つように人材を定着させることが見込める。ヨーロッパのいわゆる Y 世代のキャリアの発展は長年にわたり変化してきた。

第二章では日本とヨーロッパの関係、特にヨーロッパのさまざまな大学で日本に関する研究がどのように発展してきたかについて述べた。さらにこのトピックのより完全な全体像を把握するために、日本語を研究する学者の数、ヨーロッパの教授および大学機関数を分析した。第二章の第二部では、第一部と対比して考察するために、日本企業が国際的な従業員に求めるものを分析し

た。求められている特性（言語レベル、個人特性など）、新卒者が通常実行できる機能、およびこれらの若者が大学で獲得した特性について詳しく説明した。

それから、私の研究の目的は、日本やヨーロッパにある日本企業の会社で働きたいと考える大学生の希望や期待を理解すること、そして日本に関わる分野を研究する学生と新卒者のさまざまなタイプのキャリア開発を調査することである。そのために、学生が何を期待しているのか、従業員が退職する主な原因が何であるのかをよりよく理解するための調査を実施する。この調査は、日本企業で仕事を探している20歳から30歳までの学生を対象とし、仕事を探す際の希望と優先事項、および仕事を離職する要因を理解することを目的としている。調査で収集されたデータは、最初の章で判明した特性と非常に似ている。特に、環境の持続可能性、男女平等、職業生活と私生活のバランスを多くの人が重視しているということである。期待に関しては、多くの人が自分の将来にマネージャーあるいは教師として働きたいと答えた。作業の特性は、最初の章で説明したポイントと一致している。日々学習し、興味深い仕事をする機会を持ち、社内でキャリアを積むことは非常に重要な要素である。Y世代の若者は、会社と社会に多大な貢献をする必要があると思っている。そのため、新卒者は価値観と目的を共有する会社で働きたいと答えた。さらに、得られた結果は、若いヨーロッパ人が内部コミュニケーションと透明性を非常に重視していることを示していた。より良い人間が構築された職場環境で働き、同僚と素晴らしい関係を築くことは、実際に重要な側面である。

一方で最後の第四章では、日本とヨーロッパの雇用程度の違いを分析した。また、私の論文はパリのユニクロヨーロッパでのインターンシップ中に書かれるので、Uniqlo Manager Candidate (UMC) というプログラムをモデルとして、新卒者が会社に入り、モチベーションを高く保つための特徴を説明した。また、国際的な人材を管理するために、近年日本企業が採用した戦略を分析した。外国人の新卒者を日本のスタッフに配置することの難しさ、特にコミュニケーションやイデオロギーの難しさを強調した。日本の雇用制度は、主に年功序列制度、終身雇用、労働組合に基づく3つの賃金の柱に基づいている。

一方で、西洋のシステムはより流動的な労働市場に基づいている。これにより、従業員は別の会社であっても、新しい職を見つける機会が日本に比べて多くあるため、流動的に人材が別の会社へと移りやすい環境にある。したがって、ヨーロッパの人材が日本企業で働く場合、彼らが注意を払わなければならない要因は多岐にわたる。一方、日本企業は多くの内部国際化を行っている。そうすることによって、日本企業はグローバルな企業になり、世界のその他の地域でビジネスをさらに拡大することができる。

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Introduction

During my five years at university, I have repeatedly come up against the uncertainty of the future and the fear of not finding a job suited to my academic and professional skills. Through opportunities offered to me by Ca' Foscari University, I came into contact with numerous job offers and internships not only in Italy, but also abroad, whether in Europe or Japan. In many cases, however, I found myself faced with offers that did not particularly satisfy me or that I did not think could make the most of my knowledge acquired at university. I stopped to think about what kind of preparation my university had given me and what experiences it had allowed me to make, reflecting on my future and how I could be useful to society.

What helped me with my research and reflections was spending a year at Tōhoku University, which allowed me to come into contact with many young people reflecting my own thoughts on the subject, highlighting a sort of widespread uncertainty about the future and the fear of not finding the right way. Then, working for Uniqlo Europe in the Paris office from October to January allowed me to see the other side, that of the company. How does recruiting work? What do companies want? Are our academic skills and professional experience enough, or is it our person that matters most? How do the ways of managing resources change between European and Japanese companies? Why? My thesis therefore stems from this: what are the characteristics that distinguish our Generation Y? What do we students of Japanese know how to do? What do companies want from us in the professional field? What are our job expectations?

I decided to divide my thesis into four parts and address the problem on several fronts. The first chapter is dedicated to an analysis of who the young people belonging to Generation Y are, what their characteristics are, with a specific focus on what historical and economic factors in Europe have influenced their education and growth. The first paragraph of the thesis provides an analysis of characteristics in general terms, with reference to behavioural patterns identified mainly in Europe and America according to the analyzed literature. The second paragraph is dedicated in greater depth to the theories concerning the types of careers Generation Y is seeking, looking at the protean career and boundary-less career theories in particular. These types of careers have influenced their perception of employment but also human resources management in companies, whose managers (usually from Generation X) find themselves having to adapt their leadership style to new demands and needs. In my analysis I have also argued how, despite a

common thread that seems to join together the youth of a generation, it is not possible to identify the whole of Generation Y within a single stereotype. The characterization is in fact due to historical and economic vicissitudes of Europe from the 1980s to now. The second part of the first chapter is dedicated to the social and economic background that has influenced the formation and education of this generation. Factors such as job instability and transnational mobility, not only within the European territory but also abroad, have shaped a way of living and perceiving the world of work very differently from that of previous generations. Complicating the unemployment situation was the economic crisis of 2008, from which only in recent years a glimmer of growth has been seen, albeit minimal. For this reason, many young people have been looking for new jobs even in countries far from their country of origin, despite the separation from the family which weighs heavily on Generation Y in Europe. Together with the breaking down of economic and physical borders, the European Union has seen great technological advancement, which affects millions of young people every day. The peculiarity of this generation is precisely the fact that they were born at alongside information technology, and that every part of their lives has been shaped by the presence of the internet, computers, video games but above all mobile phones and social media.

The third and fourth parts of the first chapter focus instead on the perspective of companies, on how it is possible to make a company and/or a job offer attractive for this generation, based on the characteristics analyzed. The role of employment branding therefore becomes fundamental when it is necessary to attract the best talents, who are already sought-after in an increasingly fluid and diversified labour market. However, attracting talent in a company is not enough. In a generation whose ultimate goal is to profit on a personal and professional level, keeping motivation high becomes a complicated issue worthy of study. For this reason, the final part of the first chapter is dedicated entirely to employee turnover and the reasons for voluntarily leaving the workplace to seek better opportunities. As the characteristics and needs of new employees change, so do the human resources management strategies of companies.

The second chapter is dedicated to students of Japanese language, culture and society in Europe. Despite the little literature available, I have attempted to construct a framework for understanding their academic and personal profiles. In addition to analyzing the history of relations between Japan and Europe, I have focused on the analysis of the number of students and professors who are experts in Japanese language and culture in Europe, and what the main interests that have allowed such a diffusion of

Japanese cultural aspects are. The second half is instead dedicated to an analysis from a professional and academic point of view. Thanks to services such as the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), the Japan Foundation and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, I have attempted to analyze what the knowledge and skills of Japanese studies students are, and how they can find themselves adhering to the characteristics most sought after by Japanese companies in Japan and Europe. In addition, I assess how the profiles analyzed are increasingly searched for in the labour market due to economic reasons and for strategic partnerships between Europe and Japan such as the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). In the final half of the second chapter I analyze how the knowledge of Business Japanese and Japanese corporate culture constitute an added value in the process of candidate selection within a Japanese company.

The third chapter is the core of my research, focusing on an explanation of the methodology used and the presentation of the results obtained in my research. In order to demonstrate the literature analyzed, I have decided to directly involve students between the ages of 20 and 30 years old from different European universities in both undergraduate and graduate courses with majors in Japanese language, culture, and society. The responses obtained were 225, thanks to the incessant help of professors from all over Europe who sent the questionnaire to their students and invited them to pass it around further among their colleagues. Through this research, I analyzed the personal background of the respondents (gender, age, nationality, family), their academic background (level of education, home university, Japanese language level, previous study of the language, study abroad experience, work and internship experiences), their expectations in the workplace (indicating from 1 to 5 what are the values that most motivate them to appreciate an offer and/or a company) and their career ambitions, with open questions regarding their professional and personal goals. The data in the third chapter has been analyzed by sections, with external insights and comparisons with the theories that emerge in the first two chapters. The results collected are of great interest to students themselves who can compare their expectations with those of their colleagues, for professors who can understand the language and preparation levels of students in other universities (such as Japanese language classes, JLPT level, and textbooks used) and for companies who can understand the expectations of future employees in the workplace. The research was in fact carried out to give a broader picture of the situation of Japanese students in Europe and to evaluate and comment on response trends.

In the fourth and final chapter, I discuss human resources management strategies in Europe and Japan, highlighting their differences. The first part of the chapter is dedicated to the negative and positive consequences of turnover, to the solutions to be adopted if possible, and how to stem the phenomenon of voluntary leave from job positions. The second part is instead more focused on human resources management of the Japanese system and the difficulties found in the introduction of foreigners into Japanese companies. The factors analyzed are mainly those of a communicative and organizational nature, to stem these problems, certain strategies are put into place to help the hiring of new foreign employees into Japanese companies. These strategies concern measures to attract foreign new graduates so as to encourage the internationalization of Japanese companies and to create training programs based on the company's main values and philosophies. In this regard, the third part of the fourth chapter looks to the Uniqlo Graduate Programme, called “Uniqlo Manager Candidate”, as a model. After explaining the program, I focus on what are strengths in attracting new graduates, how to develop a job placement strategy for a Japanese company looking for new international talent and what are the weaknesses to work on to implement the programme, taking into account the results of the field research analyzed in Chapter 3.

The object of this thesis is to provide a description of the generation to which I belong, with special focus on fellow students within the European Union, in order to fully understand what the aspirations, expectations, and motivations are for accepting or not accepting job offers. Furthermore, I very much hope that this research will also be useful for both Japanese companies and European companies working with Japan. A thorough understanding of the demands and ambitions of a generation entering the workforce is of great help in managing human resources in the workplace.

Chapter One

1. Graduate Students and Employers: Employment Branding trends

Generation Y represents one of the largest areas of discussion in recent years, from the definition of the category itself to the characteristics that distinguish it. The term “generation” can have different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. In this case, it is essential to specify the connotation we intend to give. Kupperschmidt states that one can define generation as “an identifiable group that shares birth year, age, location, and significant life events at critical development stages, divided by five-seven years into the first wave, core group, and last wave” (Kupperschmidt, 2000: 364). There are different theories regarding the definition of the period in which this generation is placed: according to the Oxford University Press, the people born in the 1980s and 1990s can be considered Generation Y.¹ More precisely, Treuren et al. (2010) provide birth dates between 1977 and 1992, while Maxwell et al. (2014) shifts the end date to the year 2000, thus also including all those born from 1992 onwards. However, what this term of “Generation Y” wants to represent is the workforce that has begun to enter the world economy in recent years. The main peculiarity of this group is driven by the way it differs from previous generations, the so-called baby boomers and Generation X, whose dates of birth are placed respectively between 1946–1961 and 1961–1976 (Treuren et al. 2010: 49).

The literature on this subject points to the considerable differences that this generation has in regard to conceiving work as well as career and job search, due to the great influence of technology, globalization, and socio-economic phenomena (Flowers et al. 2010: 1). These have changed the perception of stable work and career development in a single country at the geographical level. The impact that these social and economic phenomena have had is also supported by the different names that are attributed to this generation: other very recurrent terms for the Generation Y are “millenials,” “nexters” and “Nexus Generation,” to highlight the constant presence of technology and the advent of the Internet in the years of birth and growth of this target population (Burke et al., 2006).

¹ Definition of *Generation Y* in English, Oxford. Available at:
https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/generation_y

1.1 Presentation of Generation Y

1.1.1 Behavioural characteristics of Generation Y

As mentioned earlier, this generation was born and grew up with social and economic phenomena that shaped their character and value system. This is noted mainly in their individualism, especially in terms of career (Arthur et al., 2005), and on the continuous perception of insecurity due to major historical events. The years of birth of this generation are in fact marked by the global economic recession of 1980, and by the subsequent economic uncertainty that pervaded the 1990s (Chin et al., 2014: 204). The greatest influence of these phenomena can be seen in the workplace, with Generation Y having a different perception of career and fundamental values from previous generations. This generation perceives stable work as something to shy away from, with a constant search for changes in growth and promotion, responsibility and mobility (Broadbridge et al., 2007). Extreme difficulty is then found the moment in which this generation begins to approach the world of employment, and more specifically the relationship with its superiors who will inevitably be part of those previous generations of baby boomers or Generation X (Conrad, 2009: 24-25). The modalities of human resources management therefore change, forcing the company, recruiters, and managers to adopt different strategies in order to communicate and maintain high motivation in the workplace for these new employees.

The first step in approaching this new generation is to understand the characteristics that distinguish it and whether these differences actually exist when it comes to job conception, career development, and core values. As pointed out by Ng et al. (2010: 281), the values of this generation cannot be considered homogeneous, but we can see similarities in regard to Generation Y of the Western and economically advanced world (Maxwell et al., 2014: 2), thus taking as reference countries that have experienced a very similar economic and social history (see UK, Australia, USA and Canada). This generation has been defined as the "want it all" and "want it now" generation (Ng et al., 2010: 282), a behaviour that has its roots in the constant presence of technology, especially social media platforms, instant messaging, and search engine systems (Hershatter et al., 2010: 212). Generation Y, living in the economically developed part of the world, has access to all kinds of resources, information, and data. This constant presence and access to information technology has shaped Generation Y, most particularly during the phases of puberty and adolescence, and has contributed to the

development of a mentality aimed at satisfying needs in an instant, whether they are linked to daily life or to a working career (Hill, 2002). In addition, the technological system of social media and research is also reflected in the continuous need for feedback, regarding elements of everyday life (see “likes” on social platforms such as Instagram or Facebook) as well as feedback on work performance. One way to give positive feedback for work is through salary: the higher it is, the more it demonstrates a certain level of responsibility, achievement, and decision-making independence (Hill, 2002: 62). However, despite wages being a way to showcase feedback regarding responsibility in the workplace, that responsibility is often not taken on by the workers themselves. In fact, much research carried out on managers who are working with Generation Y (Hershatler et al., 2010: 217), stresses that these young people constantly need to be followed in order to do a good job, sometimes demonstrating the inability to make decisions independently without the support of a superior. This trend however contradicts the desire of Generation Y for freedom in the workplace and responsibility for decisions that affect them. As previously remarked upon, the problem can be explained by the need to have clearly written instructions regarding what tasks are to be performed in the workplace and what methods are necessary to achieve them in the best possible way (Paul, 1990: 21). Providing the right and adequate training periods is therefore essential for the success and empowerment of the Generation Y worker. As researcher Paul writes, “employees need to be taught how to think not what to think” (Paul, 1990: 21). Regarding Generation Y, this teaching system becomes increasingly true, as it encourages the development of a way of thinking that helps with the performance of daily tasks but also leaves room for reworking and growth.

This need for instant feedback and recognition is noticeable when developing one’s career quickly, with ever higher entry levels into the new job and responsibility (Broadbridge et al., 2007: 524). Generation Y’s vision is that of an individualistic approach to work (Ng et al., 2010: 281), i.e. aimed at continuous personal and professional growth. In fact, the concept of appreciation and development of one's own abilities is fundamental, with a search for jobs that stimulate the worker to increase their personal knowledge (usually obtained through higher education) and that expose them to continuous challenges that will put their decision-making and management skills to the test.

The content of the job, besides being both stimulating and challenging, must be useful for the advancement of the worker’s career. Expectations regarding job offers and

career advancement opportunities are very high (Broadbridge et al., 2007: 524). The demand does not stop at high salaries but is further extended to jobs that allow for the worker to learn on a daily basis and retain their continued interest. The interest factor is what helps to reduce turnover within businesses: the young workers of Generation Y are encouraged to stay with the same company only if they see wide possibilities for growth. The crucial importance of career is underlined by De Hauw and De Vos, who support the trend of this generation to have “high expectations of job content, training, career development and financial rewards” (De Hauw et al., 2010: 293). As we will later analyze in the questionnaire (chapter 3), jobs must not only offer possibilities for growth, but must above all be interesting and possibly come with a high social status. Within this discourse it is necessary to mention the education factor. Generation Y tends to orient their choice of university towards high level institutions for their chosen path. This tendency is motivated by the belief that the working career and the post-graduate opportunities depend, to a great extent, on the institute that was attended during the preparation for the entrance into the world of work (Zemke et al., 2000). In particular, in countries such as the United States or belonging to the European Union, the idea is gradually spreading that in the curriculum vitae the reputation of the chosen university is worth more than the actual experiences both at work and at school (Hershatter et al., 2010: 216). If we then estimate the average cost of a university fee per year, it will be understandable to look for a job that has an income that allows to repay the fees paid for that education.

However, work is always sought by paying more attention to the responsibilities of the company to which one is applying for, in terms of ethics, environmental sustainability, and corporate values (Ng et al., 2010: 283). The set of values of a company is expressed by the acronym CSR, or corporate social responsibility. There are many definitions of this term, but the most widely used is that of Shelley, who defines it as “international private business self-regulation” (Sheehy, 2015: 625). As the survey demonstrates, many young workers of Generation Y express their interest in working for a company where their personal values coincide with those of the workplace. Awareness of the environmental sustainability issues of recent years and environmental movements such as “Fridays for Future” bear witness to the fact that many of today’s youth have taken the climate issue to heart, attempting to change the environmental policies pursued to date, and spreading a different awareness to previous generations as well. It is no coincidence that the average age of the population who took part in demonstrations worldwide against climate change is 21, with the group from 14 to 19 years of age

representing 45% of attendees in all countries that joined the strike (Wahlström et al., 2019: 9). As underlined by Ng et al. (2010: 283), millennials feel the need to “save the world”, committing themselves to fight for the values in which they believe and demanding the sharing of these values by their employers. As a result of these changes within society, companies hiring young talent must pay attention to their CSR agenda, especially in terms of employment branding and communication of their values.

Another feature that differentiates Generation Y from previous ones is the strong ability to work in teams and the propensity to greatly enhance social relations in the workplace (Hershatter et al., 2010: 219). A good relationship with bosses and colleagues is considered of vital importance by employees, who prefer to be able to rely on open communication with bosses regarding work-related and personal issues. A good working environment and generally a positive and encouraging atmosphere are considered necessary (Hershatter et al., 2010). This type of behaviour represents a further challenge for managers who find themselves having to readjust their hierarchical system in order to facilitate the relationship between colleagues and between employees and managers. Generation Y is more conducive to flattening the hierarchy within the workplace, and then aspiring to more positions of seniority (Wasan, 2017). This trend, however, can be challenged with a possible phenomenon of favouritism: the flattening of internal hierarchies and very close personal relationships could trigger a system of aiding and abetting clientelism that would be able to ruin the work environment itself.

Despite their interest in careers and promotion opportunities, Generation Y does not give up the balance between personal and professional life (McDonald et al., 2008). After having witnessed the sacrifices that previous generations (especially baby boomers, often the parents of Generation Y) had to make to reconcile their professional life with building a family (Hershatter et al., 2010: 219), millennials feel it necessary to find a job that allows them to advance within their professional career but also gives them time to devote themselves adequately to their family. Maternity and paternity leave policies and, more generally, guaranteed fair vacation arrangements and the regulation of overtime are therefore taken into account to a great extent. Likewise, flexibility for working hours is gaining ground, as is the possibility of working from home one day a week (Barsh et al., 2016: 3). The concept of teleworking is spreading in many companies, where the employer leaves more freedom for employees to do their work from home thanks to new technological tools that allow them to work exactly as if the employee were in the office (Taskin et al., 2008). This increasingly widespread solution makes it possible to be closer

to one's family and to be more flexible in terms of working hours. In addition, the added value of this new working method is close to the issues of environmental sustainability and increasing employee well-being in terms of reducing commuting time (Russell et al., 2009: 16). This new method also allows workers to organize their working time in a more flexible way, allowing young employees to devote themselves to the family, to their passions, as well as to voluntary activities (Hewlett et al., 2009: 73).

1.1.2 “Protean career” and “boundaryless career” thesis

All these characteristics of Generation Y have been the subject of extensive research, especially with regard to human resource management and retention of talent in the workplace. Given the possible detachment between Generation X and Generation Y in terms of values within the workplace, numerous theories have been developed with the aim of highlighting the main characteristics that define the career aspirations of new employees belonging to Generation Y. The most accredited theories in the literature on the subject are those of the "protean career" and of the “boundaryless career”, both new ways of defining the development of the career path of young people entering the world of work.

The theory behind the "protean career" is individualism (Hall et al., 2005), i.e. the fact that it is necessary to make decisions based on one's own values and needs if one wants to be fully satisfied with his/her own successes and career advancements. Other terms have also been used to define this type of career, including "self-management" (De Vos et al., 2008: 449) and "individual career management" (De Vos et al., 2008: 449), which make it clearer that at the basis of these behaviours there is always attention above all to personal needs. According to Hall's theory (Hall, 1996: 8), the term ‘Protean’ owes its origin to Proteus, the god of the seas who had the power to change the forms and substance of everything around him. Just like Proteus, those who pursue a protean carrier are also able to make decisions and change the course of events by following their own will. For this reason, we can define protean career in a more detailed way as “the extent to which an individual manages his or her career in a proactive, self-directed way driven by personal values and subjective success criteria” (Waters et al., 2014: 405). The framework for this type of career are the factors that have characterized Generation Y: rapid economic progress, globalization, and periods of economic crisis (Hall, 2004). All these challenges of the late 1980s and early 1990s, have brought significant changes in

the workplace, particularly in regard to human resources management and job stability (Herrmann et al., 2015). For this very reason, Generation Y has been pushed to develop specific characteristics that define their way of development in the workplace. We can therefore associate the protean career with behaviours such as proactivity, adaptation to opportunities, and above all to the instability of the workplace in recent years. The choices and decisions of workers are no longer made from a broader corporate perspective, but for personal gain in terms of life, work, and certainly career satisfaction (Rodrigues et al., 2015). Proof of the effective link between protean career and Generation Y are the different pieces of research by Volmer and Spurk (2011) which state that those who have an attitude close to the values of protean career are more likely to perform activities that lead them to develop new skills and knowledge continuously. By doing so, their willingness leads them to achieve their own career goals, targets set by the company itself, and job satisfaction.

A theory often combined with that of protean career is boundaryless career, which according to Briscoe's definition, "emphasizes the seemingly infinite possibilities the career presents and how recognizing and taking advantage of such opportunities leads to success" (Briscoe et al., 2006: 5), while according to Arthur and Rousseau, "boundaryless careers are the opposite of organizational careers —careers conceived to unfold in a single employment setting" (Arthur et al., 1996: 5). The concept of boundary can be understood in different ways, but in the case of the theory applied here we speak of a physical and psychological aspect, interdependent in the perspective of career change (Sullivan et al., 2006). When the physical boundary is removed, the employee is encouraged to change the workplace, the boss, and the job itself more easily while in presence of psychological mobility, the employee is able to make fundamental upheavals in their career and accept them mentally (Sullivan, 2006: 21). Sullivan (2006: 23), however, analyses four main ways in which the attitude to boundaryless career presents itself, underlining the fact that the two aspects of physical and psychological mobility are not always present at the same time (Sullivan, 2006: 23). In his theory, he presents a model with which he analyses the type of career depending on the level of physical and psychological mobility. The above-discussed Generation Y could be therefore located in the third and fourth quadrants, where psychological mobility remains high but physical mobility varies. Psychological mobility allows new career advancements with the aim of developing new skills and knowledge despite remaining within the same company. The physical mobility remains a variable factor in the new generations who are also willing to stay in the same company

as long as there are opportunities for growth, promotion, and recognition (Kim et al., 2009). If the attitudes to protean careers and boundaryless careers are combined, different compounds of factors within these concepts can be underlined: value-driven, self-directed career management, psychological mobility, and physical mobility. Depending on the high or low levels of either, Briscoe et al. (2006: 11) highlights the presence of sixteen different types of careers, which can provide a model for understanding the career path that the employee intends to follow. As mentioned above, these models and theories are still being studied and subject to continuous change and new discoveries. Moreover, they cannot always be applied to every kind of employee as they may have totally different results if oriented towards candidates with non-Western cultural backgrounds or with a non-Anglo imprint (Briscoe et al., 2006).

In conclusion, the analysis that has been conducted so far stresses the characteristics that have been emphasized in the reference literature regarding Generation Y. As numerous studies show, if we compare Generation Y with previous generations, we will not always find great differences with regard to behaviour in the workplace (Treuren et al., 2010). Moreover, it is necessary not to stereotype the generational class in its entirety, as it is not correct to consider a group of people in a homogeneous way, without evaluating reference background and socio-economic factors. In this respect, it can be said that Generation Y has developed characteristics very similar to those of previous generations. However, millennials have been shaped and influenced by entirely different and new historical, social, and economic factors (Chin et al., 2014: 205). If we think only of the massive introduction of new technology at world level, there are many changes that have somehow influenced Generation Y's ways of living and relating to others.

1.2 Economic and Social background: The Role of European Union

1.2.1 Work instability and trans-national mobility

As seen above, the characteristics of Generation Y are very particular and require particular methods of human resource management, especially within the workplace. The factors that led Generation Y to evolve in a certain manner are of an economic and social nature (Hall, 2004; Chin et al., 2014). The years that we will refer to in this chapter range from 1980 to 2000, a year that according to some researchers is indicated as the maximum limit for this generation (Maxwell et al., 2014). From 2000 onward we find the Z

Generation, not yet explored in depth with regard to professional development. Given that the subject of this research focuses on youth in Europe, this section will explore the economic and social background in Europe during the period of time indicated and the current situation with regard to the work environment.

Forecasts show that in 2020 the European population will be around 514,292,912 million people, an increase of almost two million compared to 2018². Among these, the 15-29 age group, described as “youth” by the EUROSTAT service, represents only 17% of the European average, with maximum peaks of 24% in countries such as Albania, and minimum peaks of 15% in countries such as Italy and Slovenia³. As far as the employment rate is concerned, the data are not yet very positive, but the average over the last few years has nevertheless shown growth at European level. The European average of employment for the target age group is 49.8%, a data that is certainly higher than previous years, especially years such as 2013 and 2014 where the percentage of employees was about 45-46%⁴. Although the data are encouraging, the average employment rate at European level remains low in relation to Generation Y, with strong inequalities within the territory of the European community which encourage internal migration especially from southern European countries (Lafleur et al., 2018).

As seen above, the unemployment situation and permanent financial instability have led to the adoption of strategies by young Europeans to reduce living costs and improve their working conditions. Many have chosen the path of returning to live with their families to cut the costs of renting and maintaining their homes. In order to improve the working conditions, one of the most adopted solutions has been the migration to Northern Europe, where the financial crisis of 2008 hit less severely (Lafleur et al., 2018: 325). As Lafleur and Stanek (2018: 326) point out, the protagonists of this migration are youth under the age of 30. The main qualifying characteristic of this group is their very high level of education, which generally corresponds to a bachelor's degree, often integrated with a master's degree. The relocation is carried out not only for basic job search purposes, but also for an improvement of salary or career position. For the

² “Population on 1st January by age, sex and type of projection”. EUROSTAT. Available at : <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

³ “Ratio of young people in the total population on 1st January by sex and age”. EUROSTAT. Available at: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth_demo_020&lang=en

⁴ “Youth employment by sex, age and educational attainment level”. EUROSTAT. Available at: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth_empl_010&lang=en

countries of origin this has represented a great loss in terms of human resources and talents to be employed on the national territory, to increase not only economically the state revenues but also the reputation of a country that manages to maintain its young people (Glorius et al., 2017: 113). Moreover, also as a result of the aging European population, the migration of the population under 30 leads to a further financial burden on origin countries, which must support with a pension system a high percentage of over 65, compared to the youth and middle-age ratio⁵.

The historical and economic factors that led to this situation date back to the period of 1980-1990 in Europe, characterized by a particular economic history for the birth of a strong community still today called the European Community and by a general sense of globalization and freedom of movement in the world (Ferrara et al., 2018)⁶. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, which Generation Y witnessed, the concept of a united Europe came increasingly to life, until the arrival of 1993, which marked the birth of the single European market and the total opening of the borders. From this date the four freedoms are born: freedom of movement of goods, services, people, and money. From this point forward, people living on European territory no longer needed to show their passports to enter the Schengen area, becoming European citizens before they had their own country⁷. In 1987, the Erasmus program began, changing forever the way in which young Europeans study abroad.

Belonging to this European cultural reference system has led Generation Y in Europe to differ considerably from its American counterpart, who are the main focus of research on the subject (Corvi et al., 2007). The European Union has enabled young people not only to develop a new concept of diversity that has shaped their worldview and multiculturalism, but also to develop a remarkable capacity for multilingualism. The proximity between the various states and the almost total absence of borders has allowed, at the educational level, to develop a school predisposition to have the teaching of multiple languages from elementary school. In fact, 99.7% of European millennials speak

⁵ “Proportion of population aged 65 and over”. EUROSTAT. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00028/default/table?lang=en>

⁶ Ferrara, R., Gallo, G., Montanari, A. “Young Italians in European countries: social and economic perspective”. *Belgeo* [En ligne], 3 | (2018). Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/belgeo/29516>
DOI : 10.4000/belgeo.29516

⁷ “The history of the European Union”. EUROPEAN UNION. Available at : https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history_en#1980-1989

at least one or more foreign languages. The most studied language is English, which is a fundamental part of European school education and is often used as a means of communication in the case of communicative difficulties (Corvi et al., 2007).

This freedom of movement within the European territory has not only accentuated the transnational mobility of Generation Y for purely economic reasons, but above all for study reasons, shaping what is defined as the "Erasmus Generation" (Bettin et al., 2008: 15), which places strong importance on the period of study abroad and with the possibility of maintaining great interpersonal relationships across borders (Raffini, 2014: 143). However, it is important to understand how much the "Erasmus generation" is so by choice or necessity, given the continuous migratory flows from south to north⁸. Data on displacement in Europe show that the higher the level of education, the greater the intention to move to another state. Especially in situations of unemployment, young people surveyed by Eurostat have shown a willingness to move both within their own country (about 23%) and also outside their own national territory (16%)⁹.

Although one of the characteristic values of Generation Y is trans-national mobility, the very close relationship with the family remains to be underlined (Corvi et al., 2007). Studies state that about 90% of European millennials are particularly attached to the family and define it as a fundamental part of their lives (Corvi et al., 2007). As seen above, one of the predominant characteristics in Generation Y is the need for a good professional/personal ratio, including the relationship with the family. In this respect, a still widespread problem is the difficulty of leaving home at a very young age. The main reasons for this are that without a permanent job and a salary guarantee, it is not possible to pay a rent independently. The data remain very worrying as the percentage of 16-29-years old living with their parents in 2017 was 68.2% in Europe, with a large gender gap. Among young males in Europe, 73.3% still lived with their parents, 10 percentage points more than the 62.9% female component. The countries with the highest male percentage were registered in Croatia (93.1%), Slovakia (89.2%) and Italy (88.3%), while the highest female percentage was registered in Malta (82.4%) and Croatia (82.3%). For both sexes,

⁸ Ferrara, R., Gallo, G., Montanari, A. "Young Italians in European countries: social and economic perspective". *Belgeo* [En ligne], 3 | (2018). Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/belgeo/29516>
DOI : 10.4000/belgeo.29516

⁹ "Young people – migration and socio-economics situation". EUROSTAT (2019). Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Young_people_-_migration_and_socioeconomic_situation#Education

the lowest percentages are found in northern European countries such as Finland and Denmark (35.4% and 35.7% respectively)¹⁰. From an economic point of view, the European Union has allowed a generation to move freely, but it has also at times developed a sense of insecurity and mistrust on the part of its citizens because of austerity policies that penalize some countries rather than others (Raffini, 2014: 145). This general sense of distrust has reinvigorated nationalist and sovereign movements which are on the rise, especially considering the results of the last European elections where the Eurosceptic parties have had unprecedented results, gaining one third of seats in the European Parliament.

Economic factors still today showcase the aftermath of the world crisis of 2008 which influenced the young Generation Y, and which left a situation of instability at the level of employment. Following the economic crisis of 2008, many measures were taken by the member states of the Union, mainly aimed at increasing the competitiveness of their products and consequently creating more jobs. The result was an expansion of fixed-term and part-time contracts, with a drastic reduction in permanent contracts, a form of employment widespread especially in the years of the post-war economic boom (Alteri et al., 2007). These fixed-term contracts are part of the early stages of the careers of young Europeans, who risk having their first experience of a job that, instead of helping them to increase their skills, can only be aimed at exploiting them (Passaretta et al., 2019). As a result of this first experience, young people are faced with the dilemma of looking for a permanent contract or worse, a future of unemployment. These factors obviously depend on the institution where the first fixed-term contract takes place, and above all also on the role of the labour unions, which are very active in Europe and attentive to the future of young people (Regini, 2000). According to Eurostat, the percentage of young people between 15 and 29 years of age employed on fixed-term contracts is 32.5% for native Europeans, with peaks of 37.5% for young people not born within the EU¹¹. While the fixed-term contract for Generation Y may be an opportunity to enter the world of work, it may nevertheless persist as a static situation of underpayment and exploitation.

¹⁰ “Young people – social inclusion”. EUROSTAT (2018). Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Young_people_-_social_inclusion

¹¹ “Temporary employment in the EU”. EUROSTAT. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20170502-1?inheritRedirect=true>

Despite the fact that the European Union is experiencing its seventh consecutive year of growth, albeit minimal, uncertainties remain not only regarding the types of contracts possible, but also the influences of contemporary historical factors such as trade conflicts, loss of turnover in the manufacturing sector and the question mark on the Brexit issue¹². The Brexit issue in particular affects the situation of young Europeans given the clause in the deal with the European Union that provides for the total elimination of the principle of free movement. Those who reside on European territory will also be subject to the same controls as those from third countries. As can be imagined, the entry of young people with a high level of education who can still contribute to the development of the United Kingdom will be encouraged. According to the latest data from 2019, at least one in five students in the United Kingdom is international and is classified as a temporary migrant. The United Kingdom is in fact the second most popular destination in the world for study abroad, with students who come from mainly Italy, France, Germany, Spain and Greece. The percentage of European students was 30% of international students in the academic year 2017/2018, of which 13,985 were Italian¹³. The greatest difficulty will be from an economic point of view, since young Europeans will be forced to pay university fees at the host institutions just like those who come from outside the community (Marginson, 2017). In regard to employment search, as well as at personal level, Generation Y is encouraged to gain work and study experiences abroad by host institutions because they are valued positively by companies and because they bring benefits in the workplace such as higher wages. Such geographical mobility leads to an appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism, as well as to an increase in communication and language skills that continue to be appreciated in the workplace (Corvi et al., 2007).

1.2.2 Technology and Social Media

The technology factor is fundamental to the development of Generation Y, considered that of the "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001), precisely because the period of birth of this group almost perfectly matches the advent of information technology world-

¹² "Autumn 2019 Economic Forecast: A challenging road ahead". European Commission (2019). Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_6215

¹³ "International Students Statistics in UK 2020". Study in UK. Available at: <https://www.studying-in-uk.org/international-student-statistics-in-uk/>

wide. This generation was born and grew up under the continuous stimulation of IT; not only television, but computers, video games, email, internet and especially mobile phones. As Prensky (2015: 1) reports, the way of thinking and processing information is totally different from that of previous generations. It is not only the functioning of the brain that has changed, but it is the structure itself that develops in a different way. The percentage of 16-29-year old with daily internet access is 95% on a European average, with peaks of 100% in the UK and 99% in Denmark. The most interesting fact is how the data have changed since 2011, when the European average was around 79%, underlining a constant increase in the use of technological means, and more specifically, access to the Internet. But if we compare these data with the daily use of the computer one realizes that Generation Y is constantly connected to the mobile phone rather than the computer. In fact, the European average daily use of the latter drops to 77% of users¹⁴. The use of social media is a characteristic of millennials: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, are just some of the most popular social media in the world and have changed the way of communicating and the way of understanding interpersonal relationships. In 2018, 43% of the European population used social media every day, regardless of age. If we consider the percentage of millennials, data are around 94% of the European average (O' Dea, 2019)¹⁵.

These data make us reflect on the attitudes of young Europeans who have made technology an addiction. As underlined by Dorsey (2010), this generation can no longer be defined as "tech-savvy" as much as "tech dependent" (Dorsey, 2010)¹⁶. This close relationship has influenced and is increasingly influencing the behaviour of young people today all over the world, with responses that are very similar even geographically in countries with high percentages of social media use. The possibility of being continuously connected and having access to all the necessary data, has allowed Generation Y to build a network of contacts around the world, making them feel close to distant affections and

¹⁴ "Being young in Europe today – digital world". EUROSTAT. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Being_young_in_Europe_today_-_digital_world

¹⁵ O' Dea, S. (2019). "Active social media penetration in selected European countries in January 2019". Statista. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/295660/active-social-media-penetration-in-european-countries/>

¹⁶ Dorsey, J. (2010). "Y-size Your Business". Available at: <http://jasondorsey.com/millennials/the-top-gen-y-questions-answered/>

cancelling the physical distance. On the other hand, however, the ability to communicate is reduced to very short and immediate messages, which can be subject to misunderstandings and little ability to rework concepts (Stald, 2008: 145). In this regard, it can be said that immediate access to the internet and to any type of information has gradually deprived Generation Y of the ability to communicate, to reflect in depth, and to develop personal critical thinking. This point is often encountered in the world of work, where employees are asked not only to collect data but also to know how to read and process it (Tapscott, 2009). Furthermore, if we focus on employment strategies, technology has changed the way we understand the relationship between company and future employees and between managers and employees. In the HR department, the way in which job offers are presented has changed; more people are registered with LinkedIn and more online recruiting platforms have been created, including the use of social media such as Facebook Jobs (Sherman, 2019)¹⁷. This process has standardized the selection of candidates, speeding up the review of data but also making the processing of information less personal.

From literature, the effects of technology on European Generation Y are very similar to those of colleagues in other developed countries (Corvi et al., 2007). Communication, information and data research, and human relations, are widely modified by the advent of social media and the immediacy given by instant messaging, which allows to be connected always with anyone in the world. This possibility is also used to seek job offers and opportunities for growth, making it possible to compare different experiences thanks not only to the explanation of the job itself, but also to the ability to read in real time feedback from other users. For all these reasons, attracting and retaining Generation Y in a workplace for a long period of time becomes complicated and requires new strategies upon which today's companies are trying to work, offering programs and opportunities increasingly attractive from the point of view of salary as well as professional development (Gelbert et al., 2012).

¹⁷ Sherman F., (2019). "How Does Technology Impact HR Practices?". Reviewed by Michelle Seidel, B.Sc., LL.B., MBA. Available at : <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/technology-impact-hr-practices-37912.html>

1.3 Job offers and talent acquisition: the role of employment branding

Although opinions regarding Generation Y are discordant, what most researchers agree on is the fact that in order to create an appropriate workplace for all generations working therein, there are changes that need to be made from a managerial point of view to handle the changes brought about by the newer generation. While on the one hand we find authors who define Generation Y as "lazy and filled with a sense of entitlement" (Gelbart et al., 2012: 20), on the other hand Tulgan and Martin define the Generation Y as "a generation of new confidence, upbeat and full of self-esteem, the most educated-minded generation in history, a generation paving the way to a more open, tolerant society" (Tulgan et al., 2001: 4). Whatever the perception of this generation, as we have seen previously, it has specific characteristics given by economic, social, and historical factors that do not always differentiate it completely from previous generations, but simply define it more clearly. How to manage Generation Y in the workplace is a further step to hiring and retaining them in a company. To better define this theme many researchers focused on the subject of the new strategies adopted by companies to assert themselves in the world of competition. As mentioned by Kyle, many hiring managers have reported that "we're not interviewing [Millennials], they're interviewing us" (Kyle, 2009)¹⁸, underlining the great competition not only from the point of view of employees but also of companies, which find themselves in contests geared towards a continuous hunt for talent. What companies must do then is to enhance their offerings in the eyes of Generation Y and above all to sell their brand in terms of reputation among the new generations. The public image of the company has a great influence not only on the number of candidates but also on the quality of the candidates themselves. Employment branding is therefore understood as the development of image and reputation from the perspective of the company and in the ideal of how this can influence the retention of employees (Sivertzen et al., 2013). The positive aspects that must be implemented through this strategy are loyalty to the company, satisfaction, affinity with the boss and a total differentiation from other brands (Davies, 2008). If done correctly, employment branding can have very positive effects for the company, not only in terms of employees but also in terms of productivity, customer satisfaction, and brand advocacy. As an example, especially in the recent years, the right communication of CSR to the company's

¹⁸ Kyle, C. (2009). "Millenials know what they want". Saskatoon Star Phoenix. Available at: <http://www.canada.com/ Business/Millennials?know?what?they?want/1494997/story.html>

customers, can lead to a higher turnover and a greater loyalty of the consumer to the brand (Gaddam, 2008).

The effects of employment branding are not only outward-looking, but in order to develop the right strategy it is also necessary to increase awareness of the values of the company to be communicated, and which employees must be its ambassadors. For this reason, employment branding can be divided into external and internal, as stated by Gardner et al. (2011). Outwardly-oriented employment branding aims to increase the attractiveness of a company. The future employee sees the company as a desired entity, showing a strong desire to work in that environment, to have an interview with that company and to devote all of his energy to the work itself. Obviously, these factors are increased by the characteristics of the work, especially if it is a job for which there are few positions but great competition, by the salary, geographical location, and social responsibility of a company (Gardner et al., 2011). In any case, what will always first influence the choice of a candidate is the level of person-organization fit, i.e. the compatibility between the values and needs of the candidate and those of the organization (Kristof, 1996). In addition to this, the fit between the open position and the candidate's skills, which are assessed through the work of human resources, remains fundamental in the recruitment process.

Modern companies targeting Generation Y will need to rework their branding strategy to be attractive and win the market competition. Each company decides to base its philosophy and values on different factors according to the target of the consumers and their reference values. In recent years, for example, there has been a growth in the number of companies that have branded themselves on environmental sustainability. The message they want to convey is that their company is sustainable from an ethical and environmental point of view, with the aim of reaching that group of young people that is interested in these values (Hermann, 2005).

In order to reach a target of possible employees, the company must be able to attract and encourage the population to apply for a given position. In this first phase, the challenge for the company is to find the right communication strategy so as to attract a high-quality workforce that can provide added value (App et al., 2012). As far as Generation Y is concerned, in addition to the job offer, it will be necessary to sell the work environment and the possibilities for growth and promotion in an appropriate manner, as well as to use the right channels of the communication for the offer itself. As we have seen in the characteristics of this Generation Y, technology plays a fundamental

role, as much as social media and new recruiting platforms. Spending so much more of their days on the screen of mobile phones than computers, companies need to adapt job offers to platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook jobs, and others emerging in recent years (McCabe, 2017: 85). In Europe, for example, there are new sites used to promote companies and new jobs, such as Glassdoor, used in particular for reviews and feedback from employees and former employees, as well as JobTeaser and Welcome to The Jungle, especially widespread in France and Spain. Between all these platforms, LinkedIn remains the most used, where those seeking employment have an updated profile with all professional and academic experiences (McCabe, 2017: 88). Therefore, the use of websites for the publication of new job offers does not allow to draw up the offer in a complete and articulated way for a matter of convenience and navigation. Especially if the targets of the offer are young people who often read the offers from smartphones, the advert must be short, concise, and clear about the tasks and responsibilities. From a stylistic point of view, as underlined by the human resources site Betterteam (2019), posting a job online requires strict rules. The main one is to recognize the difference between the Job Ad and the Job Description, and therefore the different styles to effectively advertise a job. The Job Ad is just to sell the job, starting with a very good title and an introduction that highlights the company's values and the most interesting parts of the job. The offer must include keywords that attract the reader's attention and invite the candidate to apply¹⁹. On the other hand, we have the Job Description, whose role is to define in-depth the job with career opportunities, responsibilities, qualifications to be able to apply, and so on. In the case of Generation Y, therefore, it will be important to highlight the challenges to which the work is subjected, the possibilities for growth, displacement at a geographical level, and also the competitive salary factor. On the subject of growth opportunities, it is recommended to emphasize that the workplace also brings the possibility of work recognition in terms of responsibility and salary increase.

Once the candidate has applied and is deemed suitable for the position, they will become part of the corporate team, through which they will represent the company and the values for which they work. Therefore, from an internal point of view, in order to increase the strength of the strategy of employment branding, the two main characteristics to be carried out are the clear definition of the values of the company and the

¹⁹ Betterteam (2019). "Job Posting Template". Available at: <https://www.betterteam.com/job-posting-template>

communication of these within the working organization (Punjaisri et al., 2017: 4). The decisive component to take into consideration is the product brand; why the product of a company is better than another. Defined as “name, term, sign, symbol, or design or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Keller, 1993: 2), the brand concept has had a boom in recent years but only in purely theoretical terms. From the ideation of a product to its creation and distribution, there will always be a basic philosophy that will define the characteristics of the product or service one wants to offer and how to sell that. In addition to the characteristics of the product, one also needs to know one's own customers and the environment in which one works in order to make the most of the productivity and characteristics of the target group. The socio-economic environment in which the customer lives strongly influences their purchasing behaviour and consequently the promotion and sales strategy to be adopted (Gardner et al., 2011: 6). All these concepts have behind them a very solid reference literature that lays its foundations since 1950, with the economic boom period and the subsequent definition of strategies aimed at increasing profit. The communication of brand values through product and philosophy seems to be no longer enough in a hyper-competitive world subject to continuous change. As underlined by Punjaisri and Wilson (2017: 3), “to be recognized as high-performing rather than mediocre, firms have to understand and orchestrate their employees”. Employees become the first to believe in the brand and represent the set of ideals and values of the product. Through their relationship with the customer, they can also transmit corporate values to the consumer, influencing the consumer's perception of the brand and the company itself. The values that must be communicated to the organization to be successful have been summarized by Balmer in the concept of "corporate marketing mix"(Blamer et al., 2006) as we can see in Figure 1, within which appear the six basic concepts known as the 6C: cultures, character, communication, conceptualizations, covenants and constituencies.

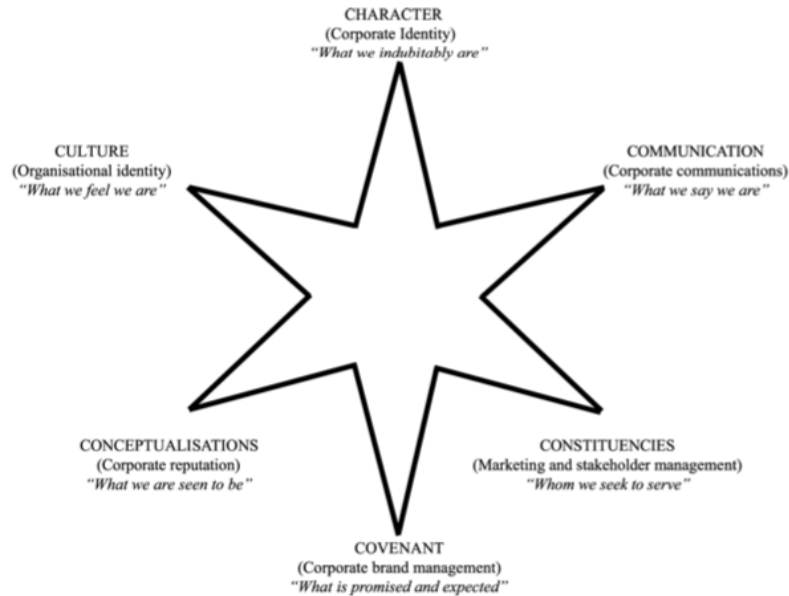


Figure 1: Corporate Marketing Mix, Balmer (2006)

Culture and characters are the basis of any strategy of employment branding, as they mean respectively the collective feeling felt by employees about the company and all the factors that make the company better than all others on the basis of corporate philosophy, type of organization, structure, activities, products, etc. These two concepts can be summarized in "what we feel we are" and "what we undoubtedly are". Linked to these concepts is conceptualization, i.e. the perception that the customer and other actors have around the company. Another important factor is communication, which, as we have seen, is fundamental for increasing awareness and external knowledge of the brand. Communication takes place through different channels such as the behaviour of employees who represent the face of the brand. and the use of different media. Then follow constituencies, or "whom we seek to serve", i.e. the promise to meet the needs and desires of customers, and covenants, i.e. the promise and expectation (Balmer et al., 2006: 735).

As we have seen, internal branding is therefore an integral part of the marketing strategy. However, in order to communicate the brand efficiently to employees, it is essential to have excellent internal communication skills, based mainly on effective employee training techniques (Punjaisri et al., 2017: 6). The strategies implemented will have as their main purpose the internalization by employees of the brand value. The main and essential information about the brand is given to the employees thanks to a continuous reporting and feedback system, such as daily meetings, newsletters, and information

boards. This process serves to increase the employee's effective attachment to the brand and therefore will reduce the chances of leaving (Meyer et al., 2002).

The issue of employee retention in the workplace continues to be more topical than ever, especially with regards to Generation Y and their characteristics. The task of Human Resources is therefore becoming more and more complex, especially during the phase of employment branding prior to recruitment but especially for the subsequent phases in which the employee starts to feel uneasy in the workplace and begins to feel the need to move and seek new opportunities. As Rousseau (2001) points out, if the employer does not keep the promises made during the employment branding phase prior to recruitment, the employee could leave the company and cause damage to the competitive advantage of the company itself. Precisely for this reason, human resources must be aware of the different stages of an employee's growth within the workplace and the changes that may occur over time (App et al., 2012). The theory proposed by App et al. splits the employee's career according to the employee life cycle concept (App et al., 2012: 271). As we have seen before, the pre-employment phase is aimed at making known the company, its values, its philosophy, its products. In addition, as pointed out by Moroko and Uncles (2008), in this phase it is necessary to communicate in an appropriate way the environment and the positive working conditions, so as to attract the possible candidate. In the introduction phase, the function of internal employment branding is involved, through which the employee gains more in-depth knowledge about the company. Then follows the growth phase, where the employee develops and deepens his skills and knowledge, starting to build an individual career that will be different from that of anyone else (Granrose et al., 1987). In this case, all the support from the human resources team will be necessary to ensure that this development takes place according to the needs of the worker.

The maturity phase is a moment of indecision for the worker who is experiencing a moment of stress and difficulty based on the fact that the work has been well understood and that in many cases there is no possibility for growth. Human resources must ensure that they can provide the right tools so that the candidate does not leave the company. These incentives can be new feedback, new responsibilities, and new measures for a fair work-life balance. If the measures taken are useless in the eyes of the employee, there will be a phase of decline and post-employment. In the former, the company must continue to promote its values and the working environment, so as to highlight the possible shortcomings that could arise in the event of voluntary leaving. At the time of

dismissal, the former employee continues to be an ambassador for the company, able to provide feedback on his work and the organization itself. For this reason, the company should provide full understanding to the employee who decides to leave and use his knowledge of the company to speak to new candidates. The role of employment branding is therefore fundamental both in the recruitment phase of new talent and in the work phase. This constitutes a continuous work of engagement towards the company and the manager, who has to handle situations of stress and stagnation and, in the worst cases, voluntary dismissal. The continuous change of staff within the company and the consequent search for new talent leads to a waste of economic resources as well as intangible resources, such as the time dedicated to the continuous search for new employees to fill the remaining gaps.

1.4 Employment retention and turnover decrease

Thanks to a proper strategy of employment branding, it is possible not only to increase the productivity and reputation of the company on the labour market, but also to reduce the number of employees who decide to leave work for new and more stimulating opportunities. Intrinsic therefore to the concept of employment retention is that of employment branding that, as pointed out by Fernon (2008), can keep employees in the same environment that allows them to progress with their careers through the acquisition of new skills and training opportunities. As Gaddam (2008: 47) shows in his “Employer Brand Model” explained in the Figure 2, everything related to employee satisfaction and engagement depends on a successful employment branding strategy. In this figure we see retention as a fundamental factor deriving from the employee's attachment to the company and to those who work in it. The issue has been debated on several fronts, but the most practiced one is from a human resources management point of view. Employee retention is in fact directly linked to talent management, a very topical issue for human resources departments around the world.

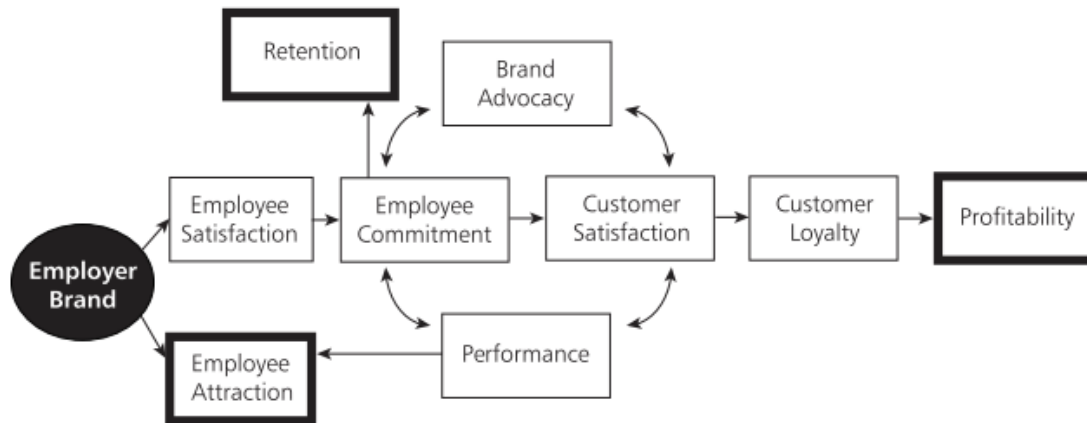


Figure 2: Employer Brand Model, Gaddam (2008).

As Morgan and Jardin (2010: 42) point out, most companies at the moment use the concept of talent management to allow the company to have an employee with the right mindset, the right knowledge, and values in line with the philosophy of the business and its growth objectives. Even if the exact definition of talent is still unclear, and there is no clear description of talent in all the literature, one point that many researchers have in common is that talent must bring something new, extraordinary to the company, that can transform existing resources into something of high value, and that can bring high business growth (Goffee et al., 2007: 72). It is therefore easy to understand why many companies are focusing on the management of these talents and are looking for new methods to make them stay and grow within their business. As explained by Cappelli (2008), talent management is not a department separate from the work of human resources, but rather an improvement. Talent management includes all the activities of traditional human resources but enhances its performance with new targets and strategies. This need for renewal in the human resources departments has occurred especially in the last decade as a result of the 2008 crisis. According to Beechler and Woodward (2009), what led to this race to find talent were four main factors. The first is the global economic and demographic trend, which has seen a sharp decline in the birth rate and a consequent increase in age longevity. This situation has not allowed for the replacement of baby boomers in the workplace, who have received a retirement share often even prematurely. The second factor is the growing phenomenon of globalization, which has allowed many, especially highly skilled, workers to move to other countries to increase their opportunities for growth and learning. The technological revolution is the third factor, as it becomes complicated to find talents able to have the right knowledge in terms of

computer skills and innovations applied to the business. The last factor is one of the effects of globalization: multicultural working environments. It is therefore necessary for a company to look for an international profile that knows how to work in a multicultural environment and how to interact with profiles of different nationalities and geographical backgrounds.

As we have seen, one of the techniques for increasing employee retention and reducing turnover is to increase engagement and enthusiasm within the company itself. The one who can make this possible, and who has the power to change the situation, is precisely the manager whose role is, as stressed by Misra (2017: 185), “to create conditions in which change can occur”. The role of the manager is therefore to increase the quality of the work environment and allow the employee to believe in what they are doing, to feel appreciated enough day after day, and to receive feedback to improve themselves. The demonstration of the intention to make the employee grow professionally is also given by the training that they are allowed to do. A worker who is engaged therefore carries on the values of the company being its ambassador, maintains a high-performance level, and thus helps the business be more successful (Misra, 2017: 188).

In addition to employee engagement, there are other factors that impact on the decision to leave a job. Among these we certainly find the salary and various benefits (which can be health insurance, meal vouchers, etc.), and also the location of the workplace. In this regard, it is particularly difficult to manage the new Generation Y, which has one of the highest turnover rates and one of the lowest average periods of work at a single job (Schawbel, 2011)²⁰. The characteristics that we have seen previously should therefore be used to keep Generation Y in the workplace for as long as possible, to avoid a continuous turnover that causes loss of time and money. According to a study by Deloitte (2011), the main motivation for millennials to change jobs is the lack of career progression. The strategies that could therefore be most successful with Generation Y are precisely those that see promotions and rapid career advancements as the focus. Often, however, the blame for this lack comes from the company itself, which does not allow the advancement in the positions offered, despite the fact that there are talents willing to work for it. Millennials are therefore only evaluating a company for a possible lifetime

²⁰ Schawbel, D. (2011). “Who's at Fault for High Gen-Y Turnover?”. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2011/11/22/whos-at-fault-for-high-gen-y-turnover/#4c5c42f67d98>

career if there is a chance to progress and continue to learn. Positions of responsibility and leadership are also very much appreciated by Generation Y. As we will see in the research, the position most associated with high social status by young people is precisely the CEO or Manager. Given the increasing levels of education, millennials require positions that are consistent with their academic experience both at a personal level of responsibility and leadership, and at a salary level (Thompson, 2011).

The continuous need for feedback is especially seen in the relationship with the boss, which remains fundamental to keeping Generation Y in the workplace. As it is said especially in recent years "people leave managers, not companies". Barnes (2008: 61) reflects on how young people need a "surrogate parent in the form of a coach or a role model" to accompany them in the early stages of the work and to assist them in developing their problem-solving skills. In the "Employee Development Conceptual Framework" developed by Flowers (2010: 6), the mentoring phase is precisely the initial one, in which the supervisor builds a mentor-relationship with the employee and helps them to develop those characteristics that will then serve in the pursuit of their career. Through a SWOT analysis, the employee will always know which skills to implement. The traditional relationship with the manager must therefore be changed in order to maintain a talent within the company for as long as possible. According to the latest research carried out by Deloitte (2019)²¹ in 42 countries, out of about 13,416 millennials, 49% of them leave the job within two years and 25% have already left a job in the last two years. In addition to economic factors such as low wages, the reasons for this include a lack of career advancement and professional development and a poor relationship with the manager in question.

The loss of a talent within the company is not a factor to be underestimated and must always be taken into account given the very high levels of employment turnover that companies are experiencing in recent years. According to John Bersin²², Global Industry Analyst, there are companies mainly in the retail and customer service sectors that experience very high turnover levels of 30-40%. Losing an employee costs about as

²¹ Deloitte (2019). "Deloitte Global Millennial Survey 2019". Available at:

<https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/millennialsurvey.html>

²² Bersin, J. (2013). "Employee Retention Now a Big Issue: Why the Tide has Turned". Available at :

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20130816200159-131079-employee-retention-now-a-big-issue-why-the-tide-has-turned/>

Cost to Value of an Employee

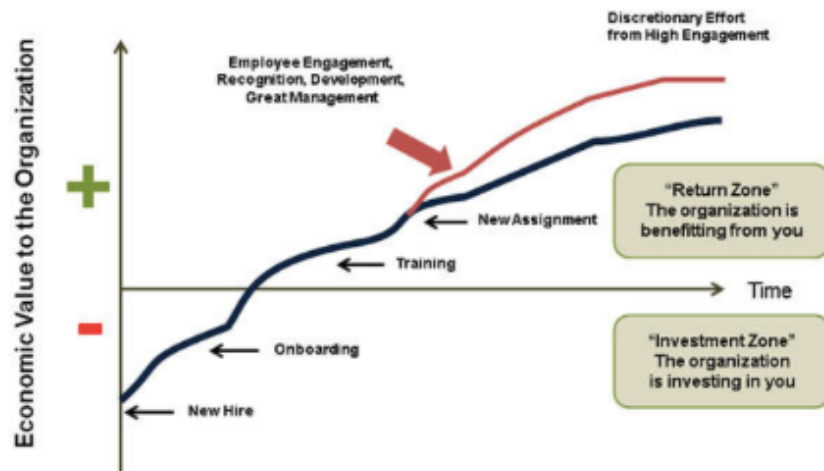


Figure 3: Cost to Value of an Employee, Bersin (2013).

much as twice his annual salary, given the many expenses that have to be put in place to replace him (Fig.3). From a recruiting point of view, there are many costs to advertise the vacancy, to organize interviews and to hire the new candidate. Once the employee decides to start working for a particular company, there will also be many training costs in terms of time and money. As long as the new employee does not reach the level of the previous one, the company will lose a lot in productivity. As far as the engagement of colleagues is concerned, there will also be losses on the participation of those who remain and who are constantly witnessing a change within the work team. As one can imagine, it is also difficult to rebuild a team after a new member joins; even in this case you will see heavy losses on the construction of the new team.

As we have seen in this first chapter, the management of Generation Y is increasingly complicated for today's managers. Retention strategies and engagement activities change radically compared to previous generations, respecting the characteristics that distinguish millennials in the workplace and in the approach to daily life. The ways of doing employment branding also change, as they are subjected to new techniques to meet the use of technology and communication based on social media. For companies, therefore, it is necessary to know the target that makes up the current global workforce and their characteristics, so as to be able to adapt their job offers and recruitment programs to talents seeking employment.

Chapter Two

2. Japanese studies students and their career development

2.1 Japanese studies and European universities: a historical overview

Studies on Japan are becoming increasingly widespread in Europe, with a large number of universities offering courses dedicated to the Japanese language, history, and society. On the other hand, the number of universities presenting programs aimed at raising awareness of the European Union is also increasing in Japan. Proof of this continuous exchange is not only the high number of European students who do study exchanges in Japan, but also the development of programs such as EU-Japan Academic Relations, which allow many Japanese students to continue their studies in Europe²³. Relations between these two countries are relatively recent. The history of Japan has, in fact, been primarily influenced by the geographical position of the archipelago, which has allowed commercial and cultural contacts only with the Chinese territory and the Korean peninsula. Relations with these lands were not only of a political and diplomatic nature thanks to the system of tributes that saw China at the center, but also and above all of a cultural nature (Kshetry, 2008). It is not wrong to say that a large part of the present Japanese traditions and economic system originated in continental Asia (Kshetry, 2008: 37); the cultivation of rice is an example, which was brought by migrants from China and Korea in Japanese territory. Another fundamental form of exchange was writing. Japan imported from China the writing system based on ideograms, the kanji. These relations were also strong from the religious point of view, which allowed the entry of Buddhism and Confucianism, born respectively from South Asia and China (Kshetry, 2008: 37).

Therefore, while relations with these territories were always flourishing, due to a natural geographical distance, the first relations with Europe took place long afterward. The Europeans were already aware of countries such as China and India, but it took a long time before they could physically reach the Japanese land. Many scholars say that the first Europeans may have arrived in Japan via the Silk Road, but there is no evidence or proof that it happened. The first written testimonies about Japan came from Marco Polo's "Million", which was translated into several European languages and became one

²³ "EU – Japan Academic Relations (Erasmus +)". Delegation of the European Union to Japan (2018). Available at: [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan_en/19232/EU-Japan%20Academic%20Relations%20\(Erasmus+\)](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan_en/19232/EU-Japan%20Academic%20Relations%20(Erasmus+))

of the most famous books during the European Middle Ages. Marco Polo reached the Chinese capital in 1275 but never arrived in Japan, just heard about it. In his book he refers to Japan as *Zipangu*, derived from the Chinese word *Jihpenkuo* or “land of the rising sun” (Kshetry, 2008: 35). Although the descriptions of this territory were distant from the historical reality, the interest in this land grew exponentially, driven mainly by the descriptions that implied large quantities of gold in Japanese territories. The Portuguese were the first people to venture into foreign waters, and also the first to reach Japan.

The first approaches with European explorers took place around 1543, when a boat carrying almost 100 foreigners landed in Tanegashima (Garcia et al., 2017). The Portuguese were the first Europeans in 1498 to pass the Cape of Good Hope, the southernmost point of all Africa. They managed during their age of discoveries to build fortresses in almost all the major ports of Asia. These were not defined as colonies, but only point of entry into various Asian countries. When the Portuguese arrived in Japanese territory, they were defined by the indigenous people as *nanban* (南蛮人), a definition that had already been given in earlier times to people from Southeast Asia (Garcia et al., 2017: 163). The term indicates barbaric people who came from the south and was also used concerning Portuguese people perhaps because they arrived in company of people from Southeast Asia and with goods that came from those places. The Portuguese brought with them new technologies in several fields that the Japanese welcomed with great interest and curiosity. One of the first instruments they showed was a musket, new weapon to arrive in Japan which was immediately reproduced (Lidin, 2003). Along with their weapons and gunpowder, the Portuguese also brought their language and religion with them (Lidin, 2003). From a linguistic point of view, many Portuguese words came into common use of the Japanese language, especially to define technologies and objects that did not exist in Japan before the arrival of the Europeans. Another very complex issue was the arrival of Francis Xavier, a Catholic father whose aim was to teach Catholicism to the Japanese people as well. These first exchanges were of great commercial and cultural importance on both sides. The Portuguese began to trade the goods (mainly ceramics, lacquers, iron and metal works) that had been produced in Japan in their territories at much higher prices, and the Japanese likewise began to buy some of the products that had been brought to Japan by the Portuguese, such as the afore-mentioned weapons. For this reason, the period from the arrival of the first European explorers to Japan to the issuing of the first edict on the *sakoku* of 1614, is called the *nanban* trade

period. During this period, in addition to the above-mentioned goods, the diffusion of religious scenes also exploded in Japan, among which the most famous on public display was the “Madonna” and the “Madonna with child” (Miki, 1964). What most surprised the Japanese was the technique of oil painting on canvas, which was different from the use of ink on Japanese canvases. With the spread of Christianity, the demand for sacred objects also spread, which according to the missionary Xavier, helped a lot the diffusion of the religion among the Japanese people, mainly among those who lived near the areas of trade with the Portuguese populations. In addition to the technique of oil on canvas, other techniques such as realism and printing on wooden blocks were also used (Miki, 1964: 387). According to Grassley (1997), all these works, which were mainly made by artists in anonymous form, allow us to understand how the Japanese people perceived the new European influence from an artistic and cultural point of view (Grassley, 1997)²⁴. After the Portuguese, it was the Spanish and the Dutch who arrived and brought new technologies and discoveries. The greatest influence was given by the Dutch who were the only ones who could maintain the right to trade in the period of the *sakoku*. As Kazui pointed out, the period of *sakoku* was an experience only lived by the Japanese people who had as main actors, in addition to the Japanese themselves, Holland, China, Korea and the Ryukyu Islands. This term has its origin in Shuzuki Tadao, an interpreter of Nagasaki who translated part of the “History of Japan” of the German Engelbert Kaempfer and called his work *sakoku ron*. The word opposes the expression *kaikoku* or “opening of the country” and defines the last years of the Tokugawa shogunate (Kazui et al., 1982). However, many scholars have argued that this period has never really existed given the continuation of trade with certain European populations. The Dutch left for Asia with a large fleet, and in 1600 the first ship landed in Japan, on the coast of Kyushu (Tantri, 2016). From the very beginning, the Dutch, as well as the Portuguese, also began to interact with the local people, showing techniques for building ships. However, the ultimate goal of the Dutch was to establish factories at Hirado and to have dominion over trade with Japan over all the other populations who had arrived before them. In 1616 the turning point came when the Tokugawa shogun decided to ban Christianity and the permanence of foreigners on Japanese territory. This decision also influenced the Dutch who were forced to move in 1641 from the port of Hirado to Deshima, a small peninsula

²⁴ Grassley, T. (1997). “What Did Nanban Art Offer?”. Available at:
<http://members.chello.nl/artnv/history2.html>

near Nagasaki, where access was not allowed to the Japanese, except for interpreters, guards, and staff (Tantri, 2016: 145). As stated by Jansen (1984), from the interactions between the two populations a form of intercultural exchange was born, defined as *rangaku* (蘭学) or *yōgaku* (洋学). It should be noted that the closure of the country during the Tokugawa period did not affect the circulation of information, books, and technologies from the European countries (Tantri, 2016: 149). In particular, the outside world was divulged by the Dutch through reports that were compiled by telling what was happening worldwide, the so-called *fusetsugaki*. In this way, the Netherlands functioned as a link between the two worlds, allowing both Japan to know about events abroad, and the Dutch to learn and translate information about the Japanese world (Jansen, 1984: 541). This exchange was very long lasting, until the Meiji period, when Japan began to shape its civil and legal system on the codes derived from the European legislature. *Rangaku* is therefore the system of knowledge brought by the Dutch to Japan, on particularly important subjects such as medicine, science, astronomy, maps and geography and, of course, language (Kazuo, 1982: 1). The first dictionary, called “Halma”, was completed in 1796 and made it possible to overcome the difficulties of a lexical-grammatical nature, facilitating communication (Jansen, 1984: 544). Another great text that widely changed the way of understanding medicine in Japan was the *Kaitai Shinsho* of 1774, one of the first books of anatomy that helped local doctors not only to implement their system of diagnosis but also to introduce the first vaccines. The turning point came in 1771 when for the first time there was a dissection on the body of a 50-year-old, an event told by the physician Sugita Genpaku (1964). All these events marked, as pointed out by Van Sant (2012), a real influence of Portuguese and Dutch science on the already existing Japanese knowledge, which proved open to integrate their findings mainly of Chinese and Korean origins with those of the newcomers. This period of fruitful encounter and mutual contamination began with the arrival of the Dutch in Japan, but its development lasted almost two centuries, to arrive until the Edo *Rangaku* period (Goodman, 2000: 119). During the 19th century knowledge expanded even more, with the training of great scholars specializing in several fields. This technological development began to be no longer in line with the political system that had characterized Japan until now. In fact, at the base of the Japanese social, economic and political system, there was still what could be compared to the feudal system of European medieval matrix, with well-defined hierarchies assiduously respected in daily life (Gordon, 2003: 14). Technological development and stability from an economic point of view were the fundamental factors

for this change of path, with a shift towards an imperialist system in line with the great European powers of the time (Tantri, 2016: 155). For this reason, it was also necessary to implement a reform at the legal level, with a system that was more in line with the values that were going forward with the process of modernization. This reform revolutionized the way of understanding legality in Japan, completely rebuilding the civil and criminal code from scratch, taking as a starting point the European texts, more specifically the texts from Germany and France (Grimmer- Solem, 2005).

The exchange, however, from a cultural point of view, was not unequivocal and changed over time also in Europe. The influence of the encounter with Japan was first felt from a commercial point of view, with the introduction of various native products in the European market. What began with the arrival of the Portuguese can be defined as the period of the *nanban* trade, where many objects of a manufacturing nature such as ceramic and lacquer ones were imported into Europe. However, what began in the 19th century was a much broader movement that valued Japan's influence in numerous European cultural fields, such as art, literature and music. The term *Japonisme* was coined by an art critic Philippe Burty (1872: 25) who defined it as "a new field of study - artistic, historic and ethnographic". The *Japonisme* movement involved many fields in Europe, creating works first using Japanese models directly and only later assimilating these patterns to the European style. In many artists one can see an exact correlation with Japanese works as direct representations of Japanese landscapes or everyday use objects, while in others one can see elements and techniques that can indirectly refer to the style (Weisberg, 1975). The culmination of this interest in Japanese art came in 1867 with the Universal Exhibition in Paris, where many objects such as lacquers, ceramics, and fans, were exhibited and appreciated by the public. In particular, the patterns drawn on ceramics such as animals, flowers, fish and insects were used by the exhibiting artists, taking as reference works by Hiroshige (Weisberg, 1975: 123). Although the greatest impact has been on visual art, such as impressionist paintings, French literature in particular has also been influenced by Japanese models. Because of its diffusion after the direct influence on the paintings, *Japonisme* in literature was less studied and less intense (Hartman, 1981). However, some of the most prominent French authors of the period, such as Mallarmé and Proust, were bewitched by *Japonisme* in art and decided to bring it into the world of literature. The effects on literature mainly influenced the vocabulary and themes, bringing into the books parallels that could be found in visual prints. In addition, syntactic constructions were also intended to represent the immediacy given by the use of

ideograms with particular attention to poetry (Hartman, 1981: 149). All these literary and artistic forms led to an ever-increasing diffusion and interest in Japan, which finally found its own dimension, distancing itself from what until that moment had been *Chinoiserie* and *Orientalisme* (Hartman, 1981: 143). Since the time of the first discoveries, the Japanese world had begun to acquire its own importance, differentiating itself from the Chinese world and in general from the world considered as the East, which referred to countries more like Egypt, Turkey, etc. According to the stereotype of the time, these countries were totally different from the so-called West, fueling a stereotype that still sees its ruins in contemporary society, as underlined by Said (1978). Europe was particularly affected by the arrival of Japan in literature, arts, language and technology, especially thanks to the discoveries made by the Dutch. It is no coincidence that the first university dedicated to Japanese studies was born in the Netherlands, in Leiden, in 1855 (Watanabe, 2016). The birth of this university came about thanks to one of the protagonists of the relations between Japan and Holland, Philip Franz Von Siebold, considered by many Europeans as well as Americans, as the founding father of Japanese studies (Plutschow, 2007: Preface viii). There are many books that deal with his history and his role, both by European and Japanese authors, such as the multi-volume collection of the *Acta Sieboldiana* and the book by Miyasaka Masahide *Shiiboruto to Sakoku Kaikoku Nippon* (Plutschow, 2007: Preface viii). It is not clear, however, what was the main profession of Siebold in Japan; he was a graduate of the school of medicine in Wurzburg, with always a growing interest in ethnography. He was able to put this curiosity into practice when he was asked to work as a military surgeon for the Dutch East India military company, thanks to which he made his first trip to Japan (Plutschow, 2007: 2). There were many returns to Japan, and Siebold's role became fundamental when it came to export the technological and scientific knowledge of the time. However, one of the works for which he is most remembered is the book "Nippon", a collection of notes and thoughts on how Japan of the *sakoku* period could reopen the country to Europeans and for the founding of one of the first teaching centers in Japan in Narutaki (Plutschow, 2007: 30). The influence in Europe, on the other hand, was seen with the creation of the first center for the study of Japanese culture, the above-mentioned University of Leiden. A huge botanical garden and a museum with a collection of animal remains, plants, prints and a great variety of material from Japan were built inside the university. Studies on Japan in Europe spread increasingly, thanks to a more frequent contact between Japan and the countries that had conducted their first missions in foreign countries such as France, UK, Holland, Russia

and Portugal. And this was precisely the itinerary that the mission directly from Japan in 1862 made, with the aim of experiencing first-hand the daily life of Europe and to have a direct political discussion with those involved in trade treaties (Shimamoto et al., 2015: 79).

All these missions allowed to increase the contacts between the two realities and to maintain close relations not only cultural (such as translations of texts, sharing of scientific and technological discoveries) but also commercial and especially economical in nature. The history of relations between Europe and Japan has been continuously marked by major events, such as the two World Wars and the continuous rebirth and economic crises, which have allowed a constant connection between the two territories. The seal of relations between the two countries came with the foundation of one of the largest associations in Europe that brings together all scholars and students, interested in the world of Japan. In 1973, in fact, the European Association for Japanese Studies (EAJS) was founded in London and Oxford. It connects 42 European countries in their research and promotion of Japanese culture²⁵. Despite the geographical distance, Europe still has a strong image of Japan, mainly conveyed by the spread of manga, anime, and video games, which have allowed to show the more everyday side of contemporary Japan. Many Millennials in Europe have approached Japanese culture through the reading of comics, with peaks in reading and distribution in Italy and France. Italy is in fact the largest manga market in Europe, with large sales volumes for the *Dragon Ball* series and *One Piece* (Bouissou et al., 2010: 254). Young Europeans have approached this world thanks to the mass media distribution of cartoons (*anime*) produced by these comics. In Italy in particular, the diffusion of *anime* took place thanks to Italian television, with the purchase by Rai of low-cost television products such as *Barbapapà*, *Heidi*, *Atlas Ufo Robot*²⁶. In addition, an already strong comic book tradition has facilitated entry into the European manga market, although according to research by Manga Network, 29.5% of respondents did not read comics before the arrival of the manga (Bouissou et al., 2010: 258). The growing interest in these comic strips is given by the resulting image of Japan as a dynamic and modern country, which is represented in the various stories told (Bouissou et al., 2010: 258). Manga and anime are just one of the many interests that

²⁵ “History of the EAJS: Story of Growth”. European Association for Japanese Studies. Available at: <https://www.eajs.eu/index.php?id=274>

²⁶ Pellitteri, M. (2012). “Lo sbarco dei manga in Italia (tratto da Il Manga, ed. Tunué)”. Available at: <https://www.lospaziobianco.it/sbarco-manga-italia-tratto-manga-tunue/#fn1-42980>

The Image of Japan in European Countries
 Japanese Culture: Topics of Interest I
 Age groups

Yes, I am interested in	Total	18-29 years	30-44 years	45-59 years	60 years +
Japanese food	79	78	84	84	70
Japanese lifestyle	78	78	79	79	75
Japanese ways of thinking	72	78	74	73	67
Japanese architecture	71	69	75	74	66
Bonsai	64	54	64	67	65
Japanese tea ceremony	58	61	63	59	51
Calligraphy - Shodo	54	56	60	57	46
Japanese flower arrangement - Ikebana	51	47	48	47	59
Sumo or martial arts	51	63	57	53	36

Figure 4: Japanese Culture: Topics of Interest I (Age groups), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2015).

today's youth have in Japan. A detailed research from 2015 carried out by the Embassy of Japan in Germany²⁷, shows the image that five different European countries have of Japan. The great tradition and culture and the strong economy and high technology are the distinctive factors of recognition of Japan for France, Germany, Poland, Spain and the UK. Among the themes that arouse most interest one can find Japanese food and lifestyle, as well as Japanese ways of thinking and architecture (Fig.4).

More specifically, in the second group of Topics of Interest II (Fig.5), Japanese video games, followed by anime and manga, in the age group from 18 to 29 years old have been highly successful and have overcome more classical choices such as literature, music and theater. As we saw in the first chapter, one of the main characteristics that define the age group from 18 to 29 years of age is precisely the fact that they are digital natives, and that they were the first generation to be able to take advantage of information technology in various fields.

²⁷ "Opinion poll: Image of Japan in Five European Countries". (2015). Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Available at: https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/ep/page24e_000152.html

Another very important fact that emerges from this study and that partly justifies the growing interest in enrolling in a faculty that deals with studies on Japan, is certainly

The Image of Japan in European Countries
 Japanese Culture: Topics of Interest II
 Age groups

Yes, I am interested in	Total	18-29 years	30-44 years	45-59 years	60 years +
Japanese movies and dramas	48	48	51	49	43
Japanese fashion	46	53	49	44	40
Japanese literature / Haiku	44	49	46	46	38
Japanese animation	42	52	50	37	31
Traditional Japanese theatre	41	43	44	41	37
Traditional Japanese music	41	40	47	40	39
Japanese comics	36	50	46	34	21
Japanese video / online games	35	60	45	25	17
Japanese pop music	28	36	33	28	18

Figure 5: Japanese Culture: Topics of Interest II (Age groups), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (2015).

the interest in the Japanese language itself. According to statistics, interest in learning Japanese is second only to the Spanish language. Respondents say they want to learn Japanese to understand its culture and way of life, and to travel to Japan.

The interest shown in this research is representative of the number of students who decide to approach the Japanese language and the study of literature, history, and art history. The number of institutions and professors continues to increase over time involving new countries and regions in the world. However, it can be seen that the global number of people studying Japanese has decreased, mainly due to the drastic reduction in the number of Japanese language scholars from countries such as China, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea, which make up the world's top three for the number of Japanese language learners in the world²⁸. The study conducted by the Japan Foundation every three years highlights how the situation from 2012 to 2015 has changed significantly with an increase in percentile basis²⁹. The foundation has conducted worldwide research into the study of Japanese abroad. The institutions examined by the survey were entities recognized by the Japanese government, divided into different levels of study, education, and geographical areas. Japanese language education is implemented in 137 countries

²⁸ "Survey Report on Japanese-Language Education Abroad". (2015). Japan Foundation. 2015. Available at: https://www.jpff.go.jp/j/project/japanese/survey/result/dl/survey_2015/Report_all_e.pdf

²⁹ *Ibid.*

and regions of the world for a total number of about 16,179 institutions involved, an increase of 0.8% compared to 2012. Looking at the European territory, the data are very interesting. Only 9.5% of the world's institutions are located in Europe (Fig.6), with 6.4% of professors compared to the global number, and 4% of Japanese language scholars. The professors and teachers specialized in Japanese language education in Europe are 4,132, united under the Association of Japanese Language Teachers in Europe, founded in 2009 with the aim of “enhancing and promoting teaching and learning Japanese language and culture in Europe”³⁰. On the other hand, the number of Japanese language learners in Europe is approximately 110,713, a negligible number if we consider the world total. In this number, however, it should be considered that only 21.1% of the number of institutions is of a university nature and therefore higher education, while 47.1% of the institutions belong to secondary education (in the case of Italy, this corresponds to middle and high schools)

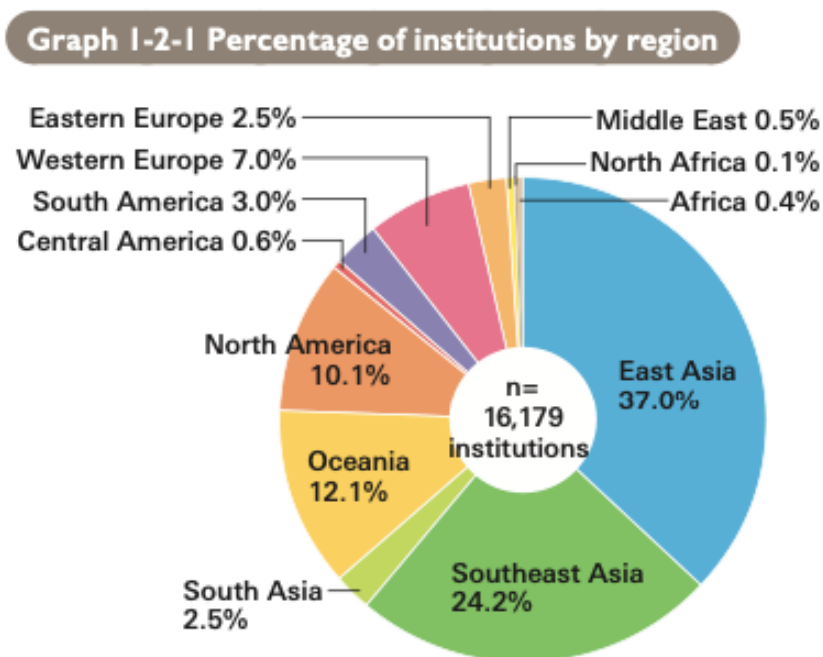


Figure 6: Percentage of Japanese teaching institutions by Region. Japan Foundation (2015).

The number of Japanese-language learners belonging to a higher education (such as bachelor’s degree, master’s degree and doctoral degree) in Western and Eastern Europe amounts about to 49,493 people. Among the institutions there are not only studies focused only on teaching the language, society, and culture of Japan, but often there are programs that deal with East Asian Studies, characterized by a wide range of subjects including

³⁰ “General Information”. AJE. Available at: <https://www.eaje.eu/en/about-us>

usually Chinese, Japanese and Korean language, political economy, international relations, and history and society of these three countries, often placed in a comparative perspective. Therefore, in this number are included all the learners who are studying Japanese as a major, not as a major, and as extra-curricular activity. Among these students, 10,719 are only based in France and are studying in French institutions. In France, in fact, there has been a particularly marked growth at the level of higher education, including in the number of universities and Grandes Écoles. In the UK the number of students has increased by 33.1% compared to the data for 2012, with growth particularly concentrated in primary education and higher education. One of the reasons why the number has grown in primary education is because from 2014 foreign language classes have become mandatory³¹. As far as Italy is concerned, both the number of institutions and the number of teachers increased by about 20% compared to 2012, but the number of students decreased by 5.2%, especially at the level of higher education. One of the reasons for this phenomenon could be the introduction of admission tests for many Japanese language faculties, where a maximum number of students who can follow the courses has been set. An amazing statistic comes from Switzerland, where the number of learners has increased by 82.1% becoming the sixth region in Europe for number of students after France, United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, and Italy. On the other hand, data from Eastern Europe have been subject to several changes since 2012, where the number of institutions has increased in 12 countries, remained unchanged in 8, and decreased in 7³².

As can be deduced from these data, therefore, the countries with the highest number of universities and institutes of higher education dedicated to Japanese language learning in Europe are located in France, UK and Germany, countries that from the beginning of relations with Japan had a great influence on its political and economic system and on trade. In addition, some of the best universities in the world are located in these countries, where high level profiles are formed in the field of studies on the language, society, economy and politics of Japan.

³¹ "Survey Report on Japanese-Language Education Abroad". (2015). Japan Foundation. 2015. Available at: https://www.jpf.go.jp/j/project/japanese/survey/result/dl/survey_2015/Report_all_e.pdf

³² *Ibid.*

2.2 Career possibilities and multinationals' job offers

The careers of students learning Japanese language, society and culture are very different and vary in many fields of employment. The profile of a recent graduate leaving such a faculty is characterized by a diversity of skills and knowledge that, as we shall see, can be applied in various sectors of the world of employment, particularly in the tertiary sector. Students who study Japanese as a major acquire, during their studies, an excellent command of the Japanese language as underlined by the Japanese Language Proficiency Test taken in Europe. Their mastery has been improved also thanks to periods abroad in some of the best Japanese universities in the world. The programs offered to students who wish to spend time in Japan, with study, work or internship activities, are helped by several scholarships offered by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology of Japan. Two of the most popular scholarships are the MEXT and the JASSO, that have allowed a large number of international students to live and sustain themselves in Japan. The number of international students in Japan according to a research by the Japan Student Services Organization amounted to 267042 in 2017, almost reaching the government's goal of having by 2020 300,000 international students who can study and possibly find work in Japan³³. As of May 1st, 2019, The Ministry of Justice's data on international students who apply for a change of visa once they have completed their studies to stay and work for companies in Japan is very interesting. In 2017, of the 27,926 students who applied for a visa change, 22,419 were approved, reducing the number of visas denied by 2,463³⁴. The companies in which international students usually find work are in 80% of the cases small/medium enterprises with less than 999 employees, of which in 40% of the cases there are less than 50 employees. The content of the work that international students are called upon to do is in 23.8% of cases translation/interpreting work, followed by marketing and sales in 14.1% of cases. The commercial industry remains the highest percentage of employment, with 9.5%, followed by the computer and food and lifestyle industries (Fig.7).

³³ "Job Hunting Guide for International Students 2020". (2019). Japan Student Services Organization. Available at: https://www.jasso.go.jp/en/study_j/job/_icsFiles/afiedfile/2019/02/18/guide2020_all_e.pdf

³⁴ *Ibid.*

■ Industries and job content at places of employment

Industry type	Composition ratio (%)	Industry type	Composition ratio (%)	Industry type	Composition ratio (%)
Translation/Interpretation	23.8	General Machinery	3.1	Commerce (trading)	9.5
Sales/Marketing	14.1	Electronics	3.1	Computer-related services	7.7
Overseas work	9.5	Food	2.7	Food and drinks industry	5.2
Technology development (IT)	6.3	Automotive	1.7	Hotels and Inns	5.0
Trade work	4.8	Chemicals	0.7	Construction	3.8
Technology development (other than IT)	4.3	Fiber	0.6	Education	2.7
Planning	4.1	Steel	0.5	Travel industry	2.2
Public relations/advertising	3.9	Other manufacturing industries	6.8	Transportation	1.9
Management/Administrative work	3.5	Manufacturing	19.0	Finance and insurance	1.1
Accounting work	2.9			Health care	0.8
Education	2.3			Other non-manufacturing industries	41.1
Research studies	1.5			Non-manufacturing	81.0
Health care	0.7				
Copywriting	0.3				
Other	18.1				

From *The Employment of International Students by Japanese Companies in 2017* (Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Justice)

Figure 7: Industries and job content at places of employment for International Students by Japanese companies, Ministry of Justice (2017).

As mentioned above, the profile of students of Japanese is characterized by a mastery of the Japanese language and a strong internationalization, expanded by experience abroad and the ability to adapt. What is required by Japanese companies is usually a N1 level of the JLPT or higher if there is not a strong command of the English language. If the candidate is able to speak English fluently, a JLPT N2 level is also accepted by the employer³⁵. In addition to these linguistic characteristics, the candidate's communicative skills are decisive, and if they are accompanied by vitality and enthusiasm, they bring many more points to the choice. Alongside these personality characteristics, leadership

³⁵ “Job Hunting Guide for International Students 2020”. (2019). Japan Student Services Organization. Available at: https://www.jasso.go.jp/en/study_j/job/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2019/02/18/guide2020_all_e.pdf

skills, academic background, specialization and the university of origin are also considered very important³⁶ (Fig.8).

The reasons for hiring an international student rather than a Japanese one are numerous and well-illustrated in the 2015 Survey on Career and Retention for International Students, edited by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan. In addition to merit and recognition of student skills, companies often use knowledge of

Skills/traits which employers consider to be important when hiring international students

Skill/Trait (%)	Manufacturing industry (%)	Nonmanufacturing industry (%)
Japanese language skills	64.8	75.7
Communication skills	55.2	65.4
Vitality	41.9	33.6
Enthusiasm	28.6	29.0
Specialization	26.7	22.4
English language skills	19.0	11.2
Imagination	14.3	14.0
Leadership	9.5	7.5
Where the applicant attended university	4.8	3.7
University academic record	1.9	1.9

Figure 8: Skills/traits which employers consider to be important when hiring international students, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (2012).

territory and language to seek to increase diversity in the workplace and to seize the opportunity to expand and cultivate business in the countries of origin of new employees. International young people have to go through the same process as Japanese students in order to enter the world of work in Japan, the so-called 就職活動 (*shūshoku katsudō*, job hunting).

Job hunting in Japan takes a long time and consists of several steps. As underlined by the above-mentioned guide issued by the Japan Student Services Organization (2019), the schedule concerning job hunting is very rigid, with the schedule articulated over the course of a year. The academic year and the fiscal year in Japan start in March, when the job hunting also begins. In the months prior to March when the student intends to send applications for companies, the student is advised to do an internship at a company through which they can understand the job characteristics and corporate values. Starting

³⁶ “Job Hunting Guide for International Students 2020”. (2019). Japan Student Services Organization. Available at: https://www.jasso.go.jp/en/study_j/job/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2019/02/18/guide2020_all_e.pdf

from March, the various sessions/seminars of presentation of the companies in the universities begin, followed by the submission of applications and aptitude texts. From June to October there are written tests and interviews followed by provisional offers if the results are positive. If the students have not yet been recruited in October, the recruiting activities continue until the research is completed. Especially for international students, drafting applications and preparing for interviews requires a very high level and knowledge of forms and expressions to be used in the workplace, since the interviews are conducted in Japanese and require adequate preparation in the use of business Japanese (Matsumoto, 1993; Mariotti, 2014). The CV and motivation letters must also be written according to certain expressions and fixed rules so that you have access to written tests and interviews (Mariotti, 2019). In Japan, before continuing with the recruitment process, it is required to complete an aptitude test, the so-called SPI3³⁷, which can be completed online as well as in paper format. This test, being in Japanese, is a major obstacle for international students, who have to answer questions of mathematical-logical, lexical, grammatical, aptitude and general knowledge.

If the results of the test are positive, the candidate can then move on to the interview phase, which in Japan can be articulated into three phases: group discussion, group interview and one-on-one interview. In all these phases, what companies are looking for is the candidate's responsiveness in explaining the real reasons why they want to work for that company and especially in Japan³⁸. The difficulty may also be that the working environment and working methods in Japan are not well known. In this case, internship before looking for full-time employment in Japan can be of great help. Internships in Japan are usually unpaid and must serve the candidate to improve his language skills and to have an experience of how it is to actually work in a Japanese company. The duration is generally about three months, but it may vary depending on the type of internship that takes place. In Japan there are usually four different types of internships, which are broken down by purpose: observation of the work, which can last from one day to one week, participation in a conference on the description of the type of industry and sector that usually takes one or two days, task solving, usually in groups and for a duration of one or two weeks, and the experience internship that can last a minimum

³⁷ “Job Hunting Guide for International Students 2020”. (2019). Japan Student Services Organization. Available at: https://www.jasso.go.jp/en/study_j/job/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2019/02/18/guide2020_all_e.pdf

³⁸ *Ibid.*

of one month and that can be extended depending on availability³⁹. To improve their language skills and to have a direct relationship with the business in Japan, many students also decide to work part-time. Approximately 75% of international students do part-time work in Japan⁴⁰, called アルバイト (*arubaito*). For people in possession of a student visa, the working time limit is 28 hours per week and 40 hours in holiday periods. In order to be able to work part-time, the student must apply for permission from the immigration office, called 資格外活動許可 (*shikakugai-katsudokyoka*).

Part-time work, which in most cases involves close contact with customers, allows to increase the students' language level and enter the business environment without having high-level responsibilities such as those that can result from a full-time job. As we have seen in the Ministry of Justice's (2017) documents, the profiles sought in students studying Japanese language and culture in Europe are mainly related to translation, sales and marketing positions. Not all European students, however, decide to move to Japan and stay and work for a Japanese company or other company based in Japan. There are many opportunities to work in Europe for those who do not wish to move abroad. Many Japanese multinationals have offices in the major cities of Europe: some examples are given by Mitsubishi, Toyota, Nissan, which have branches in the main European capitals such as Milan, Paris and London. According to the survey carried out by JETRO⁴¹, the future of Japanese companies in Europe looks bright: in the next 1-2 years, 49.5% of companies say that they will be subjected to an expansion of business in Europe, while 47% believe that it will remain the same. In particular, the responses given by companies based in Italy were in 70% of cases tending to expansion (Fig.9).

³⁹ "Job Hunting Guide for International Students 2020". (2019). Japan Student Services Organization. Available at: https://www.jasso.go.jp/en/study_j/job/_icsFiles/afiedfile/2019/02/18/guide2020_all_e.pdf

⁴⁰ "Getting part-time job in Japan". Motivist Japan. Available at : <https://motivistjapan.com/getting-part-time-jobs-in-japan/>

⁴¹ "2018 JETRO Survey on Business Conditions of Japanese Companies in Europe". (2018). Japan External Trade Organization. Available at: https://www.jetro.go.jp/ext_images/en/reports/survey/pdf/rp_firms_euro201812.pdf

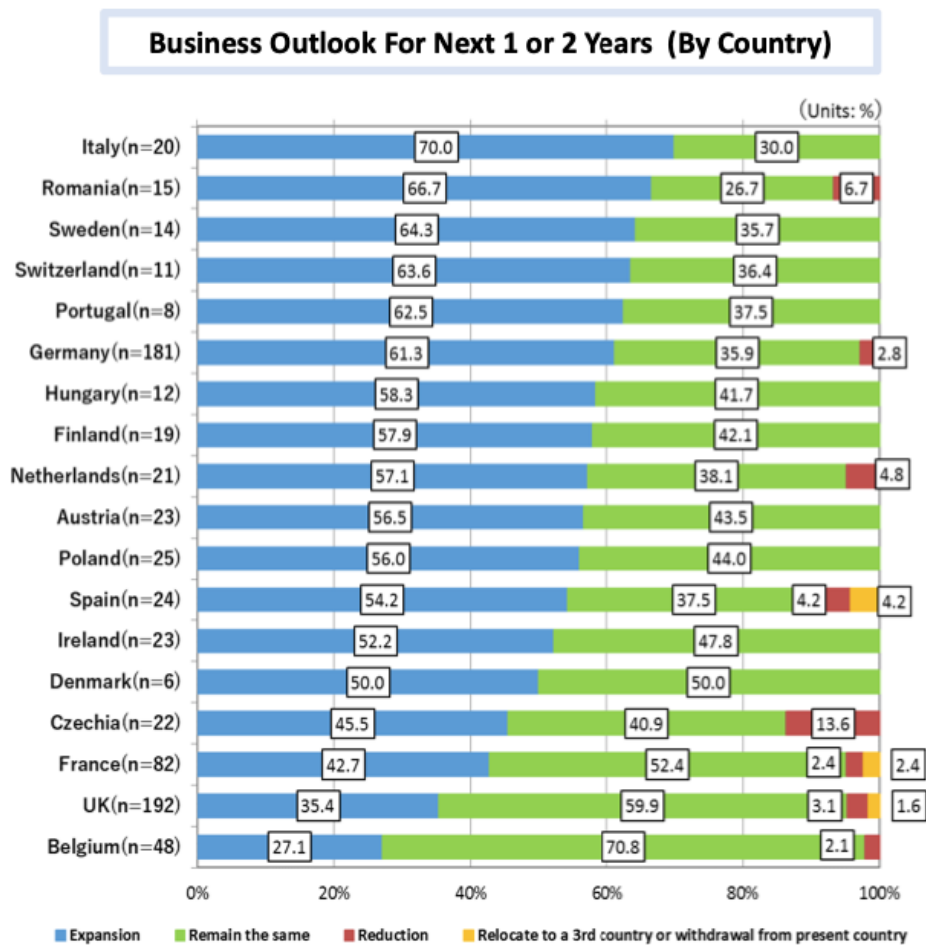


Figure 9: Business Outlook for Next 1 or 2 Years in European countries (By Country), JETRO (2018).

The data are encouraging, especially with regard to the non-manufacturing sector, such as information technology and communication, professional and technical services, and the agri-food sector. What these companies want to expand and therefore look for in new graduates are in particular the sectors of sales and production of high value products. The reasons for hiring international students who study Japanese language and culture are always very similar. Thanks to their knowledge of the language and business not only of Japan but also of the country of origin, they are an excellent asset to increase the profit of the company. There are also many European companies that import and export to Japan, and therefore allow the student to operate in a work environment already known but in constant contact with the Japanese world. The percentage of trade with Japan has increased steadily in recent years, with a visible increase from 2009 to 2018. In particular,

the annual growth rate between 2017 and 2018 was 2.1% for imports and 7% for exports⁴² (Fig.10).

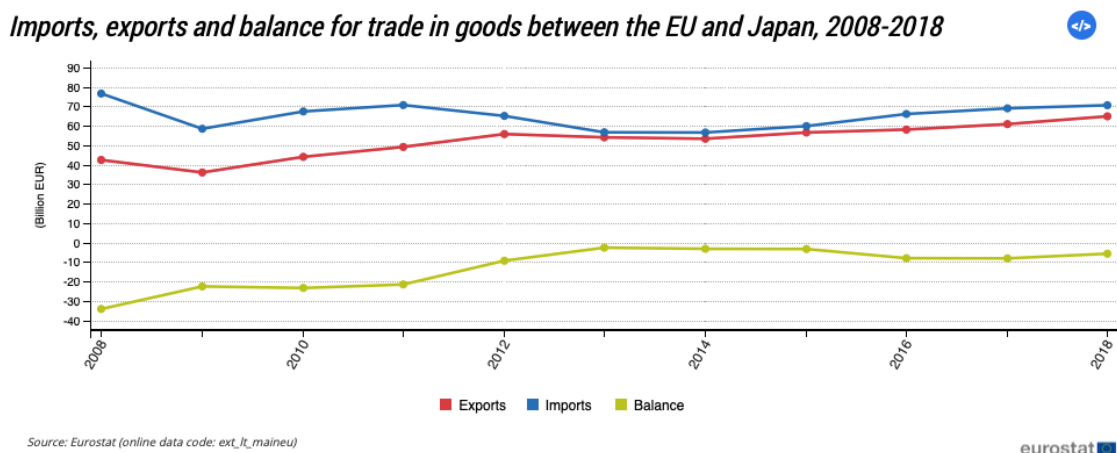


Figure 10: Imports, exports and balance for trade in goods between the EU and Japan, 2008 – 2018, EUROSTAT.

The sectors with the highest imports were mainly three, with growth of 62.5%, 15.3% and 14.4% respectively, i.e. mineral fuels, animal and vegetable oils, and raw materials except fuels. As far as exports are concerned, on the other hand, the mineral fuels sector is still at the top with a 67.7% growth, followed by beverages and tobacco, and machinery. The European Union therefore confirmed its second place after China as the largest country importing from Japan and its third place after China and the United States for exports. On the other hand, Japan ranks sixth as destination of European exports and seventh as country of import of European products⁴³. These data, dating back to 2018, do not take into account the import and export boom of 2019 following the signing of the EPA treaty. The Economic Partnership Agreement entered into force on February 1st 2019, bringing about numerous changes in import and export procedures between the EU and Japan and an increase in the growth rates of products belonging to different sectors. As explained in the press release issued by the European Commission on December 12th 2018⁴⁴, the measures taken by this agreement have been many. The three principal

⁴² “Japan-EU – international trade in goods statistics”. (2019). EUROSTAT. Available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Japan-EU_-_international_trade_in_goods_statistics

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ “Key elements of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement”. (2018). *European Commission*.

Available at: <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1955>

measures taken were the elimination of customs duties, especially on agricultural and food products, the geographical indication of products, and tariffs on industrial products. More than 90% of exports to Japan are in fact tax-free, saving European exporters about a billion euros in taxes per year. This clause has made it possible to reduce taxes on the products most exported to Japan, including pork and beef, whose taxes will be reduced from 38.5% to 9% over the next 15 years. For wine, too, 15% of the tax has been levied since the first day of implementation of the agreement. Many of these European products, about 200, have been recognized and protected on the Japanese market through the special status of geographical origin, which allows to promote and protect these products in Japan as much as in the EU. As we have seen, one of the most fruitful sectors in terms of imports and exports is the chemical sector, which thanks to this agreement is promoted by abolishing all taxes on industrial products. The effects of the EPA were already evident in the first half of its implementation, in the six months from February 2019 to June 2019, especially in the value of European exports to Japan. According to EUROSTAT sources, in fact, compared to 2018 there was a 9% growth in the value of exported products and a 10% growth in the volume of goods. In particular, among the products with a higher growth in volume and value we find wine, with an increase of 25% in export volume, with peaks in France, Italy and Spain⁴⁵.

Job opportunities therefore seem to increase, especially after the signing of this agreement, which simplifies the trade of products and therefore allows to increase production and sales. Given the intensification of relations between the EU and Japan, professional profiles with a broad knowledge of the Asian market, the language and the management system of Japanese companies prove to be of fundamental importance. However, as we noted earlier, the business system in Japan is very complex and full of rules and etiquette to be respected according to the interlocutor, the situation, and the degree of formality.

⁴⁵ “Japan-EU – international trade in goods statistics”. (2019). EUROSTAT. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Japan-EU_-_international_trade_in_goods_statistics

2.3 The added value of Business Japanese

Japan is one of the largest markets in the world, the world's third largest economy after the US and China, despite very slow economic growth of around 1.1% in 2018⁴⁶. The big giants of Japanese multinationals have seen extensive global expansion despite the latest economic crises that have also hit Japan, finding themselves having to adapt to new countries and having to deal with new business systems. The risk one can run in talking about this subject is to fall into essentialisms that stereotype reality and common uses. Every company dedicates a certain amount of attention to the respect of the rules within the company, not necessarily with the same rigidity as other enterprises. The values on which a company is based are often rooted in the Confucian ideal of serving society and showing respect for the law, as well as solemn rites and relationships within the community (Hall, 1987: 65). This respect for ceremonies and solemn rites is also reflected within the company, with daily meetings and common recitation of the company's values used to develop a group identity.

Manners in Japanese business take on a very important function, above all to show respect for the interlocutor and the company. Anyone who approaches the study of the Japanese language will face at an advanced level the honorific Japanese form, which allows one to express concepts in various areas, including business, when interacting with a person to whom one owes their respect (Matsumoto, 1993). Respect in Japanese society is a basic factor, especially towards people with a certain type of professional and academic background (Hall, 1987) and older people (Traphagan, 2005). For this reason, one of the most complicated aspects of the language for students of Japanese is the learning of *keigo*, the honorific form, which comes in different forms if one wants to raise the status of the interlocutor or if one wants to lower one's level using formulas of humility. The honorific language (literally 'language of respect') can be divided into three different sub-parts: *sonkeigo*, honorific language, *kenjogo*, humble language, and *teineigo*, formal language (Wetzel et al., 1999). These forms are taught to children in Japan already at the level of primary and secondary education, with numerous books that help them learn these forms of courtesy from early school years (Bunka-cho, 1985). This honorific language shows real systems of power and hierarchy that characterize Japanese society and its development also in the working environment. According to Ishida (1989), Japanese

⁴⁶ "The World's Top 10 Largest Economies". (2017). Focus Economics. Available at: <https://www.focus-economics.com/blog/the-largest-economies-in-the-world>

society can be divided into six hierarchical classes: the employed class, the bourgeoisie, the professional managerial class, the non-manual working class, the skilled working class and the non-skilled working class, which are carried out according to employment status, level of responsibility, and occupation. All these classes have to respect the hierarchical level when they come into contact with each other, using honorific language and expressions of courtesy. For a European company doing business with Japan, it is thereby necessary to be familiar with Japanese corporate culture and etiquette. For this reason, it is essential that the various departments are equipped with a professional figure who knows how to use the honorific language in various situations in a fruitful and correct manner and who also knows how to prepare colleagues for their relationship with the Japanese business world. In addition to oral and written communication situations, such as in emails and expressions to be used on the phone, the forms of respect and labels to be applied in the business world are also reflected in the behaviour and the way of dressing, so much so that recognized organizations such as JETRO and EU help their clients dealing with Japanese companies to integrate into the business culture with some guidance on how to behave in various types of situations. In fact, in conjunction with the JLPT language certification, a new test called BJT (Business Japanese Test) has also been implemented, which allows the candidates to test their level of knowledge of Japanese business communication⁴⁷.

As pointed out by various official websites dealing with relations between Japan and the EU, the communication issue is not merely reduced to a linguistic problem. When two employees of different companies meet physically, it is necessary to know how to present oneself and introduce the company properly. The most used ritual at the first meeting is that of business cards, the so-called 名刺交換 (*meishi kōkan*), which takes on a very important meaning in the first meeting between two personalities from different companies. In the exchange of business cards, which becomes almost a ritual, it is necessary to present oneself in an appropriate manner with name, surname, company of origin and rank within the enterprise (Hall, 1987: 80; Mariotti, 2014: 182). The structure of business cards itself changes compared to Europe. In fact, the size is slightly larger for a size of 55x91mm, and the layout on the card for foreigners is different, as it is required to add also the English part in addition to the Japanese transliteration. There are a lot of

⁴⁷ “Japan Kanji Proficiency Test Association”, Kanken. 「公益財団法人日本漢字能力検定協会 HP」
Available at: <http://www.kanken.or.jp/bjt/>

Japanese websites as well as official ones that allow to better understand how exactly the self-presentation takes place and what things to avoid. The European Union has implemented a website entirely dedicated to business in Japan, thanks to the partnership and the help of the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation⁴⁸. In this page are explained the points considered pivotal to relate to the Japanese business mentality, from the protocol to be maintained during meetings, to the negotiation process. The European Union also offers courses for companies that need help in their relations with Japan⁴⁹. Courses range from five days to two weeks, at rather high costs for companies.

The preparation of personnel is therefore a factor to be taken into account in the functioning of relations with Japanese companies, whether it is trade or acquisition. In fact, one of the factors that most hinders the understanding and construction of a good business environment is the cultural difference between the interlocutors. In fact, in the communication between two businessmen, it is not only a matter of communication between two different cultures but an intercultural business communication. As underlined by Varner (2000: 44), “business strategies, goals, objectives, and practices become an integral part of the communication process and help create a new environment out of the synergy of culture, communication, and business”. In order to implement a positive and successful communication, it is therefore necessary not only to have a thorough knowledge of the economic environment in which one works (the Japanese one, in the case of exchanges with Japan) but also to improve this knowledge in order to develop a “transnational culture” (Varner, 2000: 45) for expanding the business. Obviously, it is important to know and understand the interlocutor, but often this type of communication in the business environment is mainly aimed at increasing profits and building solid relationships with business partners. Just as there must be understanding on one side of the business, the interlocutor must also be able to understand the opposite corporate culture (Varner, 2000: 46). For this reason, the profile of Japanese language, culture and society students is a valuable asset for companies seeking to expand globally and needing a transition figure who is very familiar with both work environments and communication strategies. Unfortunately, the actual study of Japanese business is still not very widespread in European universities. As we will see in the following chapter, the

⁴⁸ “Information on Japan for EU Companies”. EU – Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation. Available at: <https://www.eubusinessinjapan.eu>

⁴⁹ “Get ready for Japan”. EU – Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation. Available at: <https://www.eu-japan.eu/events/get-ready-for-japan-training-programme>

hours spent studying Japanese business culture are between 0 and 30 hours per year in most of the universities involved in the study. Nevertheless, the data collected in my research are encouraging for those who have had work experience in Japan and who have therefore been able to experience first-hand the difficulties in using the honorific language and the steps to be taken in the search for a job, from drafting the CV to preparing for the first interview. Many people have combined their study experience with part-time work, which allows them to experience personally the Japanese economic and business environment, albeit with reduced hours and responsibilities.

Chapter Three

3. Survey Data Analysis

3.1 Target, purpose of the research and results' overview

3.1.1 Target

This third chapter will be dedicated to the results of my research carried out for a period of about a month and a half from the 11th of November 2019 to the 9th of January 2020. The questionnaire was addressed to European students between 20 and 30 years of age, distinguishing between each age from 20-25 and then a separate category for the over 25 group. This differentiation has been implemented to verify the age trend of the various students enrolled in a university. According to the European education system, the age at which young Europeans enroll in university is on average 19 years old, with a subsequent duration of tertiary education ranging from three to five years. The duration of university education is on average three years for a bachelor's degree and two years for a master's degree⁵⁰. The age for obtaining a first and second level degree is therefore around 24/25 years in the territory of European Union. The people targeted by the research are young Europeans, either enrolled or recent graduates from a university located in Europe. For an economic-political question, I have taken into consideration the countries belonging to the territory of the European Union as member states. The similar educational, political, economic and monetary situations (in 19 member states), allow me to analyze the European Union as a relatively similar background (Gobel et al., 2018). For this reason,

⁵⁰ "The structure of the European Education System 2018/2019". European Commission. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/the_structure_of_the_european_education_systems_2018_19.pdf

I decided to target as object of my study young Europeans with nationality from one of the 28 member states, not counting also the countries that are considered as Europe from a purely geographical point of view. The students who replied to the questionnaire attended compulsory school in a country on European territory and speak a language belonging to European territory as their first language. This distinction was made, as mentioned above, for a question of convenience of data analysis and similarity in the cultural background of the respondents. The 28 countries that have been taken into consideration are therefore: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Not all the appointed countries have universities with majors in language, culture and society of Japan, or institutions that are affiliated with European associations for studies on Japan. For this reason, not all the nationalities foreseen will appear in my research, but only some of them with the major institutes of studies on Japan in their territories.

In order to be able to include all the institutions and universities present in Europe, I used the network of connections of the European Association for Japanese Studies, checking all the institutes present in the various states and asking for help from within the universities. Moreover, I was helped in my research by the network of connections that UNIQLO Europe has established in its activity of promoting the Graduate Programmes and the company⁵¹. Through the search for contacts on the official pages of universities in Europe, I forwarded my questionnaire to 63 professors of Japanese language and culture, receiving answers from 37 professors, who helped me in spreading my research by asking their students to participate in my study. My initial target of 200 students was exceeded, reaching 225 students, with quite homogeneous percentages on nationality and age. Word of mouth from professors, researchers, and students, who passed it to friends, acquaintances, and colleagues through the use of social media, such as Facebook groups and group chat on Messenger, was essential in allowing my Google Form to spread. From an academic point of view, the target students have obtained or are attending a degree

⁵¹ UNIQLO Europe has been participating for several years in the Career Fair of many European universities, promoting its Graduate Programme to recent graduates and sponsoring conferences on issues related to environmental sustainability and green economy.

course in language, culture and society of Japan or have attended courses of East Asian Studies which included studying the Japanese language for a period.

3.1.2 Purpose of the research

The purpose of my research is to investigate the different type of career development Japanese studies students and new graduates, who are enrolled in European universities and are interested to work in Japan as well as in Europe, would like to have and what the main values they search in a Japanese company are. My research hopes to be useful from three different sides, the point of view of students, of professors, and that of companies. Through this study, students can understand what their colleagues' expectations at the European level are, learn about new university realities and the main reasons and motivations for accepting a job offer. In addition, students can become aware of their level of Japanese compared to their European colleagues and see what characteristics and skills Japanese companies are looking for in new international employees. Professors will find from this research very interesting data regarding the average number of students participating in Japanese language classes during the bachelor and master's degree courses, the most used textbooks, and the students' perception of personal preparation regarding the level of written and spoken language. In addition, in the final part where the expectations for the future work are analyzed, professors can understand how students assess the academic preparation given by the university to enter the world of work. Reading then the data discussed in the previous chapters, language professors will have a clearer idea of what language levels and personal skills companies are looking for in a non-Japanese graduate, perhaps directing their classroom work in a more direct perspective to the development of Business Japanese. Japanese or European companies that specialize in dealing with Japan may have an idea of what the expectations of young students in the workplace are and how they evaluate various factors on a scale from 1 to 5. Among these elements, the topics under discussion in recent times, especially in the field of human resources management, have been mainly analyzed. Standing out foremost in this research is students' intention of working for the same company for a lifetime, dispelling the myth of Generation Y's continuous change from one company to another.

In an academic world where the Japanese language is increasingly taking hold, with growing interest from students from all over Europe, I felt it was essential to analyze

what these young people's expectations, future dreams, and ambitions are. The data of this research have left me both astonished and at times unsurprised, confirming thoughts that I already had: the level of knowledge of the Japanese language of these students is very high. Their level of Japanese shows peaks of certifications even at N1 levels and in good percentage. Without stopping at the pure level of language, the knowledge of Japanese society, history and culture of these students, as well as their numerous experiences of study and work in Japanese territory, make them appreciate and enhance their work and academic profile.

3.1.3 Results overview of the survey

The questionnaire was divided into four parts: personal background of the respondents, academic and professional background, job expectations, and career development. The personal background of the respondents was used to obtain data regarding age, gender, nationality, native language, country of elementary and high school, country of birth of mother and father, education levels of both, and the current work situation. All this information was useful to frame the target audience to be analyzed, so that the family situation and cultural background could be clear. The data on age are quite homogeneous, with peaks in the 20s and over 25s, at 17.8% and 17.3% respectively. Then followed 14.7% at 22 years of age and 13.3% at 21 years of age (Fig.11). Among the respondents, 54.2% identified their level of education as a bachelor's degree course, explaining the high percentage of students between 20 and 23 years of age. On the other hand, 28.9% identified themselves as having enrolled in a master's degree course and 8.4% as having graduated from a master's degree course. As far as the gender of respondents is concerned, the data are rather surprising: 69.3% are female, while 27.6% are male. Of the respondents, 3.1% decided not to express their gender in the answer.

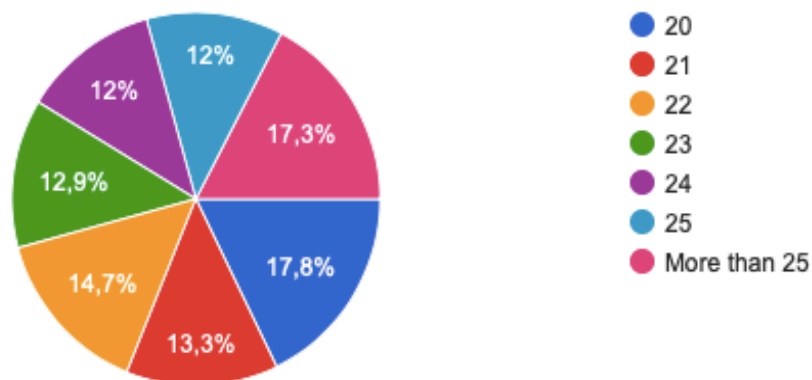


Figure 11: Age of respondents to the study

With regards to nationality, the data saw a slight prevalence of Italian nationality with 24%, followed by Spanish (13,3%), French (11,6%), Bulgarian (11,1%), Austrian (5,8%) German and Danish (5,3%) (Fig. 12). Although in small percentages, almost all countries had a representation in the data collection, with students also coming from countries such as Finland, Slovenia, Denmark, Romania, Hungary, Lithuania, and Estonia (see Appendix for full data). Some countries such as Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland and Portugal have not obtained a sample of representation for two main reasons. The first is that within these countries there are no universities that offer bachelor's or master's degree courses focused on Japan or degree courses in Asian studies that provide also Japanese language courses. The second reason was the inability to reach the professors and students of possible universities and departments, as I did not receive a reply from some professors contacted and could not get more information from the secretariats. Another country that remains almost entirely excluded from research despite the large number of excellent universities present is United Kingdom: the universities I contacted are among the most prestigious in the world, such as SOAS, Cambridge, Oxford, Edinburgh, Manchester. Unfortunately, due to a matter of privacy, the professors were unable to pass the questionnaire that I developed within the various classes, as in the aforementioned universities there is a protocol that does not allow the distribution of material that is not produced by professors or students within the organization⁵².

⁵² Despite this fact, I was able to receive three answers from Oxford University and two from Newcastle University thanks to the direct contact with the students.

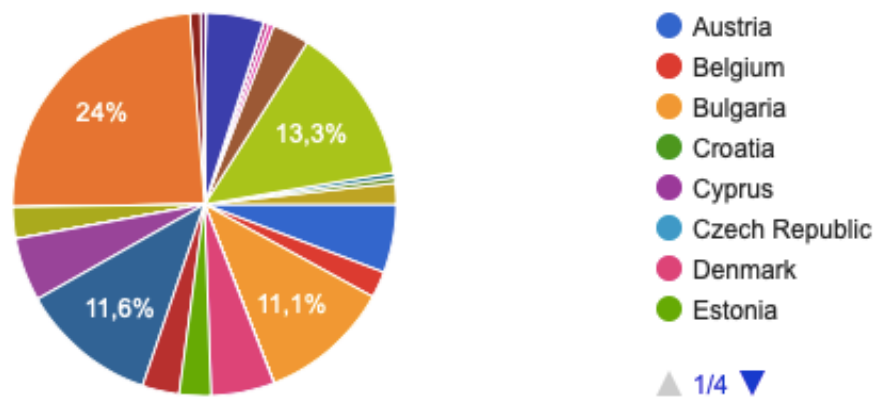


Figure 12: Nationality of respondents to the study

This limitation did not allow me to collect important data on the universities in the United Kingdom and to distribute the questionnaire in large numbers. However, the different cultural background of the respondents gave me a very good insight into the thinking of young people in Europe, which as we will see in the more detailed analysis is a very homogeneous point of view. Some added data that will be counted in the percentages are four answers that I had from students coming from countries outside the European Union but enrolled in European universities. Analyzing their answers, one can see some uniformity with those given by most of the respondents. Moreover, the language spoken and the nationality of one of the two parents of two of the respondents belongs to the European Union.

A quite despicable fact that emerges from this information on the family and cultural background of the respondents concerns the employment contracts of fathers and mothers respectively: despite higher education levels for mothers, who in 50.2% of cases have a bachelor's degree or more, high percentages of part-time work and unemployment characterize female contracts. In fact, 20.9% of mothers are unemployed and 12% are on part-time contracts (Fig. 13). On the other hand, we find the situation of fathers who, despite having a lower level of education (45.4% with a bachelor's degree or higher), in 76.4% of cases have a full-time job, with part-time work reduced to 2.7% and an unemployment rate of 10.2% (Fig.14). The research data are therefore in line with the unemployment trends in Europe, which continues to see women in a disadvantaged position with unemployment rates that are twice as high as those of men. According to Eurostat data from 2018, 30.8% of women aged 20-64 years worked part-time compared

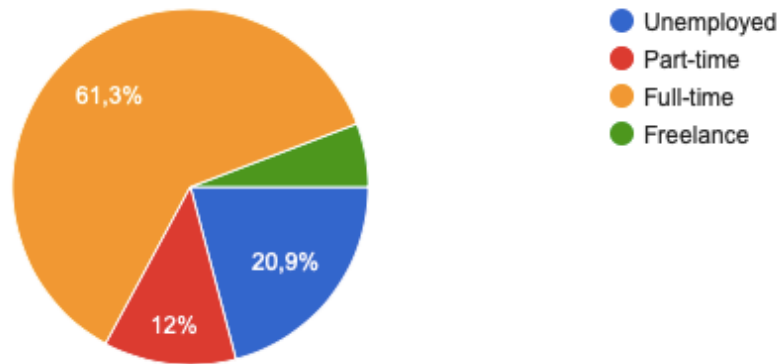


Figure 13: Mother's Job of respondents to the study

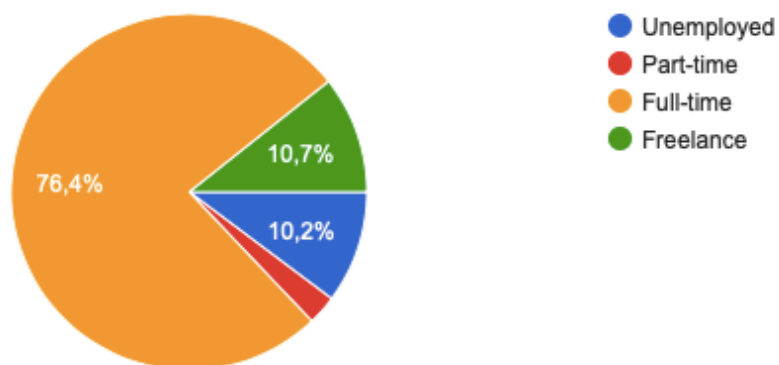


Figure 14: Father's Job of respondents to the study

to 8% of men⁵³. The data emerging from this research therefore seem to be quite in line with the trends officially recorded last year.

According to Eurostat sources⁵⁴, the reasons why women work part-time are very different from those of men: including the difficulty of finding full-time work or the need to take care of a child or family member. As far as women are concerned, only 22.6% have a part-time job because they could not find a full-time one, whereas 28.7% accept this type of contract to take care of a family member compared to 5.9% of men who do so. However, the data does not show a frequency that identifies this trend only in some parts of Europe but involves all countries with approximately the same percentage. Similarly, the level of education is purely random, without finding a pattern in certain countries of origin.

⁵³ "Statistics on Employment". EUROSTAT. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Employment_statistics/it

⁵⁴ "Le donne lavorano in part-time per occuparsi della famiglia. In Italia e anche in Europa". (28/09/2019). Il Sole 24 Ore. Available at: https://www.infodata.ilsole24ore.com/2019/09/28/le-donne-lavorano-part-time-occuparsi-della-famiglia-italia-anche-europa/?refresh_ce=1

3.2 Academic and Professional Background

In this section the most relevant topics related to the academic and professional life of the respondents were discussed, with particular focus on their language preparation and their work and internship experiences. The questions asked are the following: current university, level of education, field of education, self-evaluation about level of proficiency in spoken and written Japanese language, JLPT certification, average number of people in the undergraduate (and graduate, if attending) Japanese language classes, main textbooks used in both undergraduate and graduate courses, total hours of Japanese language classes per year in both undergraduate and graduate courses, total hours of Business Japanese classes per year, “democratic citizenship” or “critical awareness”, study of Japanese before university, abroad experiences and countries, time spent abroad, current work contract, total personal work experience, geographical location of current work experience, internship experience in terms of duration, location, relation with the studies and way of finding the internship. The students subject to research come from the most diverse universities in Europe that offer degree courses in studies on Japan or more generally studies on Asia. The universities that have collaborated in the study are: Aarhus University, Budapest Business school, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, Copenhagen University, Eötvös Loránd University Budapest, Freie Universität Berlin, Ghent University, Granada University, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, Helsinki University, IGR-IAE Rennes, INALCO Paris, KU Leuven, La Sapienza University of Rome, Latvijas Universitāte, Leiden University, Ljubljana University, Lund University, Newcastle University, Salamanca University, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Stockholm University, Tallinn University, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, University of Catania, University of Firenze, University of Naples “L’Orientale”, Universität Wien, Université Paris 7, Université d’Orléans, University of Oxford, University of Zurich⁵⁵, Zuyd University of Applied Science. Five respondents indicated as “current university” a Japanese university where they were probably carrying out a study exchange at the moment of the survey: two students indicated Sophia University, while three others indicated Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Kokugakuin University and Ritsumeikan University respectively. The five respondents are of Italian, Dutch, Hungarian, Bulgarian and Spanish nationality.

⁵⁵ The University of Zurich participated in the study with the response of only one profile, one of the four candidates from a country outside the European Union.

As anticipated in the presentation of the research, 54.2% of the subjects are currently bachelor students, followed by 28.9% of students enrolled in a master's degree course, 8.4% of students having graduated with a bachelor's degree and the same percentage having obtained a master's degree (Fig.15).

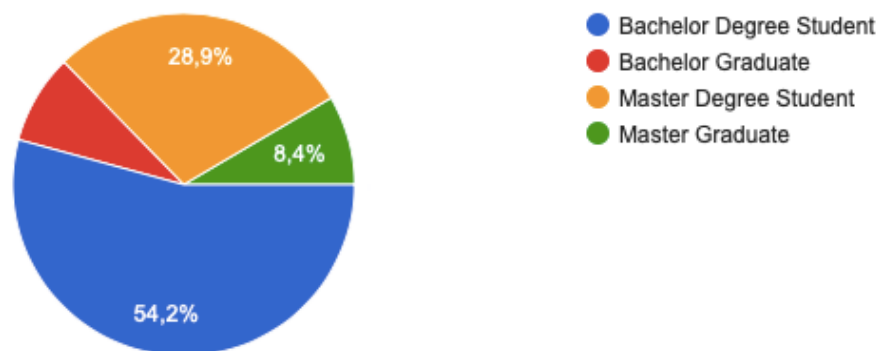


Figure 15: Level of Education of the respondents at the moment of the survey

Depending on the degree course and department, the subjects covered vary with the tendency in almost all faculties to focus courses on more classical/literary subjects. Respondents were asked to indicate which subjects they studied in depth during their degree course: 94.7% of respondents attend Japanese language courses, followed by Japanese social studies at 57.3%, Japanese history at 52%, Japanese literature at 47.1% and Japanese linguistics at 37.8%. From the study it can clearly be seen that economic subjects are not treated frequently: only 25.3% of respondents attended economics courses, while 10.2% attended management courses. Other subjects that are not taught very often are anthropology and Japanese history of art, with 13.8% and 24% of respondents respectively (Fig.16).

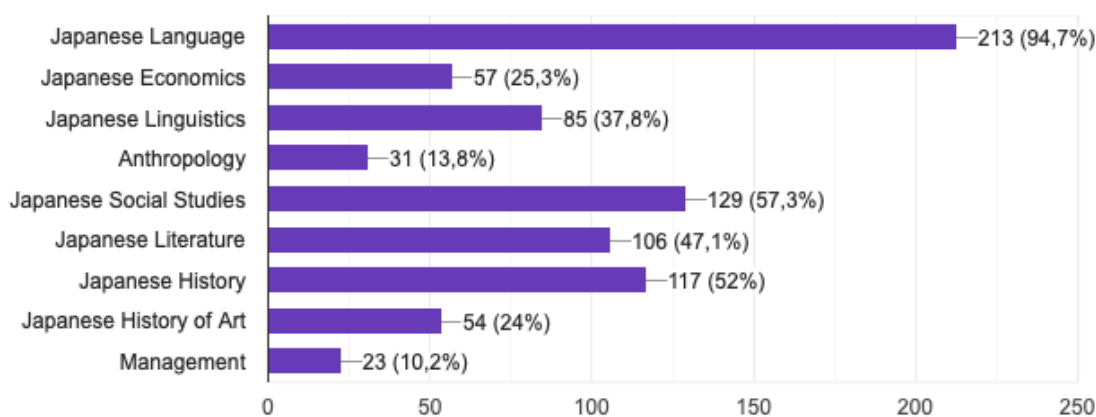


Figure 16: Field of Education of the respondents at the moment of the survey

Japanese language classes in the various universities cover most of the students' time: in 38.7% of cases, bachelor's degree students spend between 100 and 300 hours on

the language per year, followed by 30.2% spending between 300 and 500 hours. The number of hours, on the other hand, decreases in the case of master's degree courses where 30.2% study between 100 and 300 hours per year, with a significant 14.7% of students studying less than 100 hours per year. Also interesting are the data regarding the hours dedicated to Japanese Business, which, as we have already seen among the most studied subjects, does not hold a particularly high position on the list: 71.6% of students in fact do between 0 and 30 hours per year of Japanese Business, while only 11.1% do between 30 and 50 hours per year. Learning the language at a high level is not only achieved through numerous hours of practice but also through smaller, more individualized classes. In this way, especially in classes at the graduate level, teachers are able to follow the students more directly. In language courses at undergraduate level, 30.2% participated in classes with an average of 20-30 people, 26.2% with 10-20 people, and only 11.1% in classes with 30-50 people. Of the respondents, 8.4% said they attended courses with 50-70 people (Fig.17). The percentages change considerably when we look at master's degree courses: 18.2% say they attended classes with less than 10 people, followed by 24% in classes with 10-20 people.

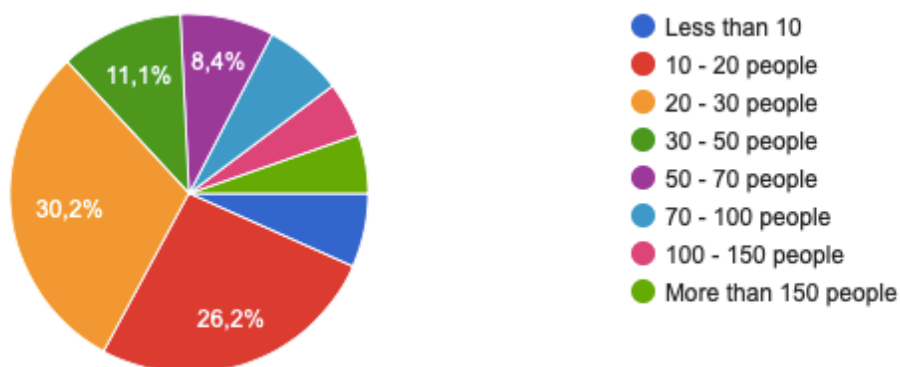


Figure 17: Average number of students in Undergraduate Japanese Language classes

The results of the many hours of study in class and good academic preparation are reflected in the self-assessment of written and spoken language proficiency and the achievement of language certifications such as JLPT. Taking into account the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR), respondents were asked what they consider their level to be from A1 to C2, indiscriminately between undergraduate

and graduate. The six levels identified by the council of Europe⁵⁶ are based on empirical research over almost twenty years and describe the proficiency level of a foreign language. The six levels are divided by type of user: A1 and A2 indicate basic user, B1 and B2 independent user and C1 and C2 proficient user. The skills that describe the various levels are classified according to comprehension, and oral and written production⁵⁷. A basic user is someone who is able to understand phrases and expressions used in everyday life in areas of immediate relevance such as family information, shopping, and geography, and who is able to express in a simple way information about his person and his background. The independent user, on the other hand, can understand the main ideas of complex texts in both concrete and abstract topics and can communicate with native speakers in a rather fluent and spontaneous way. The proficient user understands a wide variety of topics, longer texts, and also recognizes implicit meanings. They are able to express themselves spontaneously and fluently, without hesitating while searching for words or expressions.

The research data on self-assessment show a fair equivalence between written and spoken language, with a slight preference for spoken language. As far as the oral language is concerned, 28.4% believe they have a B1 level, 27.1% a B2 level and 16.4% a C1 level. Only 2.7% claim to have knowledge of C2, a level considered almost native. As far as the written language is concerned, 33.8% of the respondents say they have a B2 level, followed by B1 level with 28%. 14.2% say they have a mastery of level C1, underlining the slight difference between spoken and written language. If one applies a filter to the data and analyses only the self-assessment level of graduate students, 87% of the learners have a level above B1, indicating a level of independent use. The general level is therefore very high, especially the level certified by the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT). This test takes place twice a year in 47 prefectures in Japan and outside Japan in 249 cities in more than 85 countries. In 2018 almost one million students took the test⁵⁸, 42.2% of them belonging to university or higher education institutions, while 27.6% were already

⁵⁶ “Global scale – Common Reference levels”. Council of Europe. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>

⁵⁷ “Global scale – Common Reference levels”. Council of Europe. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>

⁵⁸ “JLPT in charts”. (2019). Japanese Language Proficiency Test. Available at: <https://www.jlpt.jp/e/statistics/index.html>

employed in a company or working as an educator or professor. According to the Japan Foundation, the reasons for taking part in the test are different: in 33.2% of the cases applicants want to measure their level of language proficiency, while 23.1% consider the certificate useful to find a job, increase their salary level or promotion possibilities within their home country. The levels at which applicants can take part in the test are 5, from the lowest to the highest level: N5, N4, N3, N2, N1. According to official JLPT sources, preparation levels are broken down by number of hours and skills acquired. Since the test is based in a part of listening and in part of written understanding, the average hours of study to obtain certification can be divided by candidates with previous knowledge of kanji (Chinese or Korean nationality) and candidates who need the study and practice of ideograms. To reach N1 level, the hours of study required for those who already have knowledge of the ideogram system range from 1700 to 2600 hours, while for other students 3000 to 4800 hours of study. For level N2, the preparation without previous knowledge of kanji ranges from 1600 to 2800 hours of study, while for level N3, 950 to 1700 hours of study⁵⁹. 20% of respondents in my research have an N2 level certificate, followed by N3 level with 12.9% and N1 level with 9.3% (Fig. 18). Proficiency certifications (N1, N2 and N3) are mainly obtained by students at a graduate level, while undergraduate students tend not to take the exam even at a lower level. In general, there is a tendency to take the exam only at proficiency levels N3 and above. This can be confirmed by the fact that 46.7% of respondents do not possess any language certification, in line with the majority of respondents belonging to undergraduate courses.

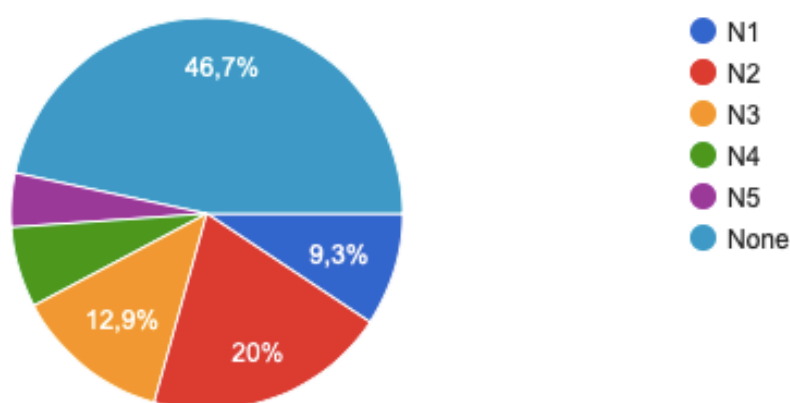


Figure 18: Japanese language Proficiency Test certification obtained by the respondents to the survey

⁵⁹ "JLPT Study Hour Comparison Data 2010-2015". The Japan Language Education Center. Available at: https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/JLPT_Guide/About_JLPT#cite_note-JLEC-1

Such a level of preparation is usually achieved after several hours of preparation as seen above; for this reason, an N1 or N2 level is equivalent to about four to five years of study at universities that provide between 300 and 500 hours of Japanese language training per year. However, a good percentage of respondents, 40.4%, said they had studied Japanese before they started university. In 12.4% of the cases, the study of Japanese took place for more than two years before enrolling in the faculty, while in 11.1% of the cases the study stopped at less than six months (Fig.19). An interesting factor for further research could be the method of study prior to university, whether the student approached Japanese with a self-taught method or whether they attended language courses, both privately and at public institutions.

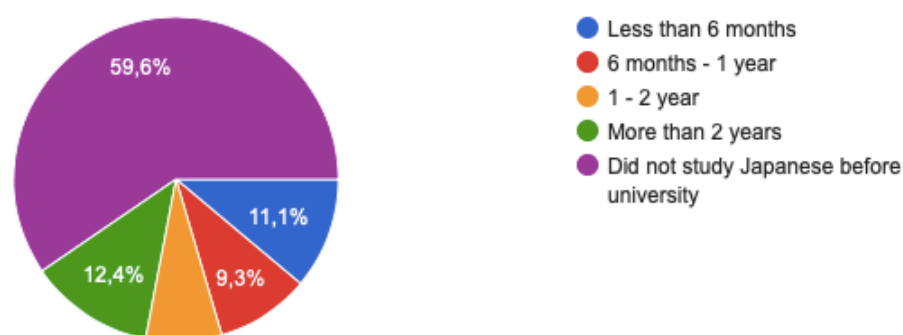


Figure 19: Duration of Japanese language study of the respondents prior to university

The study of the Japanese language and the preparation of language certificates is in many cases carried out abroad through periods of study, research or work. By means of exchange programs such as Overseas, Erasmus, and departmental exchanges, students are encouraged to spend periods abroad with different destinations outside their own country. In fact, 47.1% of respondents say that they have had between one and two experiences abroad, followed by 30.7% who have had more than two experiences. Among the various destinations, respondents could specify all the places where their experience abroad had taken place. The most popular destination is Japan at 66.7%, followed by Europe at 55.1%. The periods of time abroad are always of average length: 33.3% of respondents were abroad for more than 12 months, while 27.6% lived abroad between 6 and 12 months. During this period, in addition to study programs, internship and work periods are also included, although in significantly smaller percentages.

Participants who have never completed an internship were at 65.3%, 19.1% had only one experience, 8.9% two experiences, and 6.7% more than two experiences. The place where the internship was mainly carried out was Europe in 27.1% of cases, while

only 12.9% said they had done it in Japan. Of those who had these experiences only 11.1% worked at a Japanese multinational/non-governmental organization or smaller company. As shown in Figure 20, 48.1% of participants working in internships marked a ‘1’ on a scale of 1-5 (1 being “completely disagree” and 5 “completely agree”) as to their internship being related to their field of study. In searching for an internship, the home university was only helpful in 12.9% of cases, while in 11.1% of cases the research was done independently thanks to the internet, social media, company website and career fairs.

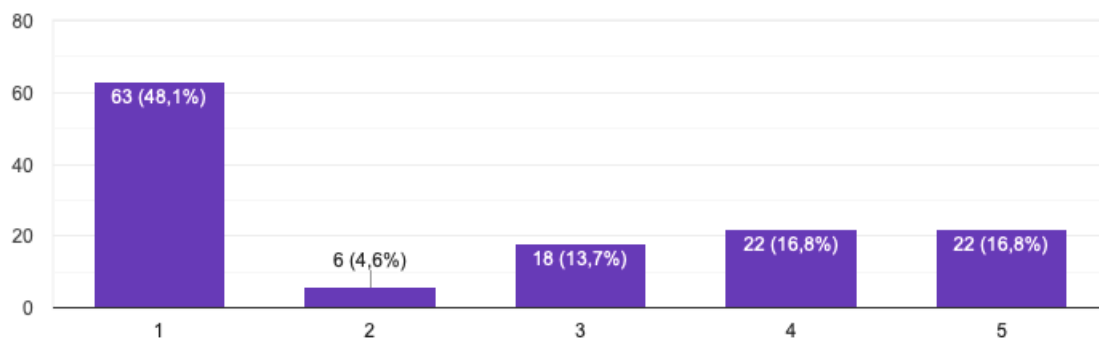


Figure 20: Respondents' internship experience related to their academic studies on a scale from 1 to 5

The data are also interesting with regard to work, which follows the European trends in the 15-29-year-old age group. According to EUROSTAT data⁶⁰, 31.9% of young people between 15 and 29 years of age are working part-time, peaking at 80.1% in the Netherlands. Respondents in my research in 60% of the cases do not work at the moment, while 21.8% have a part-time job. In 65.8% of these cases the work is in Europe and in 16% of the cases in Japan. As far as the correlation between work and study is concerned, the percentages are worse than those regarding internship: 44.1% believe that on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 completely disagrees), the job performed has little or nothing to do with the course of study undertaken. Among those who answered "Full-time" or "Freelance" as an employment contract, only 22% have no connection with the course of study, unlike 63.4% of those who answered "Part-time" or "No regular contract". Those who work with a full-time or freelance contract are all over 23 years of age, outlining how a trend can be identified of finding a permanent job at least at the end of the undergraduate degree. These data can highlight both a tendency to work part-time during

⁶⁰ “Part-time employment as percentage of the total employment for young people by sex, age and country of birth”. EUROSTAT. Available at:

<https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

studies purely for financial support, thus not taking into account the relation with the field of study, and the difficulty in finding a full-time job in the field of interest. These data have allowed for a better understanding of the target audience in the research, giving us a clearer idea of who the ones with certain expectations in the workplace are, as we will see in the following section.

3.3 Job Expectations: the European Trend

The survey factors in this third section of the research were elaborated in part by applying the Work Motivation Checklist elaborated by Leslie E. This and Gordon L. Lippitt (1999) and in part by adding factors that emerged in the discussion about work expectations in the first chapter. Points 1 to 25 in the list are those in the checklist while the following points 26 to 40 have been added according to the research target: the questions were therefore based on the daily use of the Japanese language in the execution of one's tasks, the geographical workplace, and factors to which generation Y seems to be particularly sensitive such as gender equality, environmental sustainability, flexibility of working time, as well as good levels of communication within the company. The factors considered were:

1. Steady employment
2. Respect for me as a person
3. Adequate rest period
4. Good pay
5. Good physical work conditions
6. Chance to turn out quality work
7. Getting along well with others on the job
8. Having a local employee paper
9. Chance for promotion
10. Opportunity to do interesting work
11. Pensions and other security benefits
12. Not having to work too hard
13. Knowing what is going on in the organization
14. Feeling my job is important
15. Having an employee council
16. Having a written job description

17. Being complimented by my boss when I do a good job
18. Getting a performance rating
19. Attending staff meetings
20. Agreement with the organization's objectives
21. Opportunity for self-development and improvement
22. Fair vacation arrangements
23. Knowing I will be disciplined if I do a bad job
24. Working under close supervision
25. Large amount of freedom on the job
26. Use of Japanese language in everyday work
27. Working for a Japanese multinational
28. Working for a European company in Japan-relations department
29. Working in Japan
30. Working in a country of the European Union
31. Working in another country outside Japan and EU
32. Geographical mobility in your work
33. Department mobility in your work
34. Gender Equality
35. Maternity and Paternity leave regulations
36. Corporate values in line with mine
37. Company with strong attention to sustainability
38. Time flexibility
39. Minimal formal or hierarchical structure
40. High level of transparency and shared communication in the company

In the elaboration of the questionnaire, the Likert scale was used, a psychometric scale through which respondents express their level of agreement or disagreement on a given topic on a scale from 1 to 5 (Allen, 2007). The format I used is based on values according to which: 1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree. Respondents were asked to indicate with one of the above-mentioned values how important they consider the factors listed when looking for a job and when considering a job offer. In addition, respondents were asked to indicate with an open answer which are the three most important factors to consider in their search. The results are quite homogeneous with regards to the proposed checklist, while the results are quite different with regards to the willingness to work in Japan or Europe and the choice to

work for a Japanese company or for a European company in the Japan-relations department.

The factors with the highest percentage of respondents on value 5, therefore considered of very high importance by the majority of the respondents, reflect the characteristics of generation Y discussed in the first chapter. These represent a clear demonstration of how the fundamental values for this generation are the balance between professional and private life, the possibility to learn continuously on the job, doing useful and interesting work, respecting the workers as a person and their physical condition. The highest percentage of "strongly agree" was found with regard to gender equality, with 71.1% of respondents marking down a 5. In this regard there are many measures that the European Union is taking, such as the "Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019" which sets out the work of the European Commission for these three years⁶¹. Despite these stances, there are still many problems that lead to unequal treatment between men and women in the workplace. According to the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, the gender pay gap continues to be high, at 16%, which indicates that women are paid 16% less per hour than men⁶². There are many reasons for this. The European Commission has stated that the proportion of part-time contracts is higher for women than for men, with only 8.7% for men compared to 31.3% for women. In addition, women are employed in sectors such as education and healthcare, sectors recognized as underpaid in many European countries, unlike men employed in 80% of well-paid sectors such as science, technology, and engineering. In addition to these factors, management positions are rarely held by women. In fact, less than 10% of the CEOs of various companies are women, a position with the largest gender pay gap, where women earn 23% less than men⁶³. As the results of the research in the Figure 21

⁶¹ "Strategic engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019". European Commission. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/antitrafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/strategic_engagement_for_gender_equality_en.pdf

⁶² "The gender pay gap situation in the EU". (2017). European Commission. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/gender-pay-gap-situation-eu_en

⁶³ *Ibid.*

show, equality between men and women in terms of pay and treatment in the workplace is a very strong factor in the choice of company by participants.

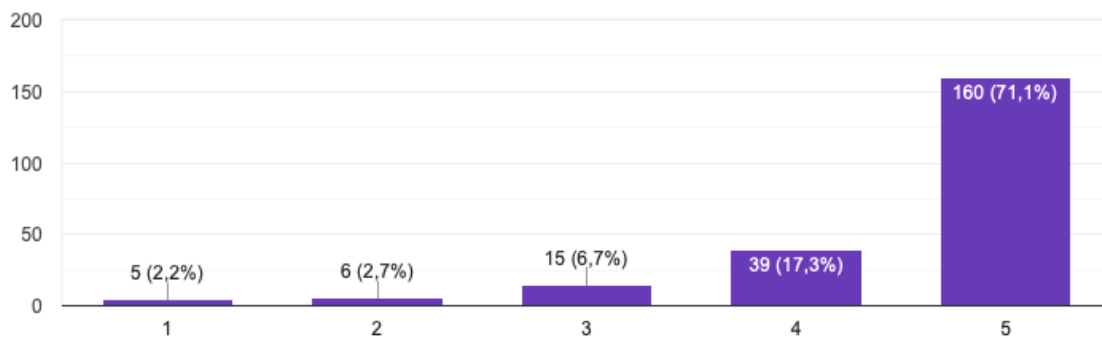


Figure 21: Respondents' interest in having a strong Gender Equality inside the company

The second highest percentage of “strongly agree” responses is in the category of "opportunity to do interesting work" at 64.9%. As pointed out by Broadbridge (2007) and Ng et al. (2010), Generation Y is oriented towards an individualistic vision of work with the aim of professionally improving its skills and knowledge. Continuing to learn on a daily basis, progressing with the career, and gaining recognition for the work done are factors that are particularly taken into account (Thompson, 2011; Barnes, 2008). As a demonstration of this theory, "opportunity for self-development" obtained 52% of responses with a maximum value of 5. Even in the section where it was asked what the three main points to take into account when searching for a job were, many were the answers related to this point. Among the most recurring we find: “possibility to make a career”, “acquisition of valuable skills and experience”, “chance for promotion”, “meaningful/interesting job”, “space for self-improvement”, “stimulating/challenging job”.

In addition to a deep interest with the content of the job itself and the possibility of progressing career-wise, another factor that stands out among the highest percentages is respect for the person and good working conditions. 62.2% of participants indicated with a value of 5 "respect for me as a person", followed by the 40.9% for "good physical working conditions". Among the open answers there were many who stressed that "respect", "adequate working conditions", and "justice" are fundamental in the workplace. What I think is necessary to underline is how many respondents indicated not only respect itself, but respect among colleagues, with the need to work in a serene and non-toxic environment, as Hershatter et al. (2010) pointed out. The good relationship with colleagues was also deemed of considerable importance: 81.3% of respondents strongly agree or agree that in order to deliver quality work it is necessary to live in a tolerant and

respectful working environment that allows for clear and transparent interaction with colleagues and superiors (Fig.22).

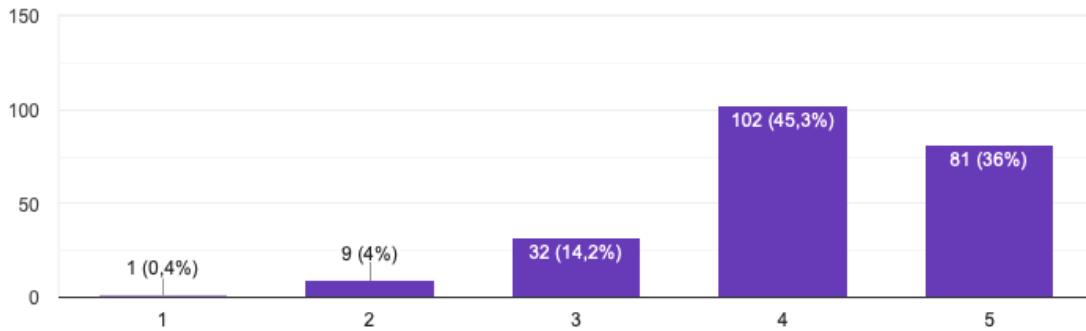


Figure 22: Respondents' interest in getting along well with colleagues on the job

Respondents also pointed to significant factors affecting work-life balance, such as fair vacation arrangements, maternity or paternity leave, flexible working time, pension and benefits. As seen in the first chapter, Generation Y, despite its physical mobility beyond the borders of its home countries, remains very close to its familial relationships and the idea of being able to build a family in parallel with its career (Corvi et al., 2007). For this reason, the above-mentioned values obtained very high percentages of respondents with the rating 4 and 5. Among them, maternity and paternity leave reached 55.1% of "strongly agree" (Fig.23), while fair vacation arrangements 41.3%.

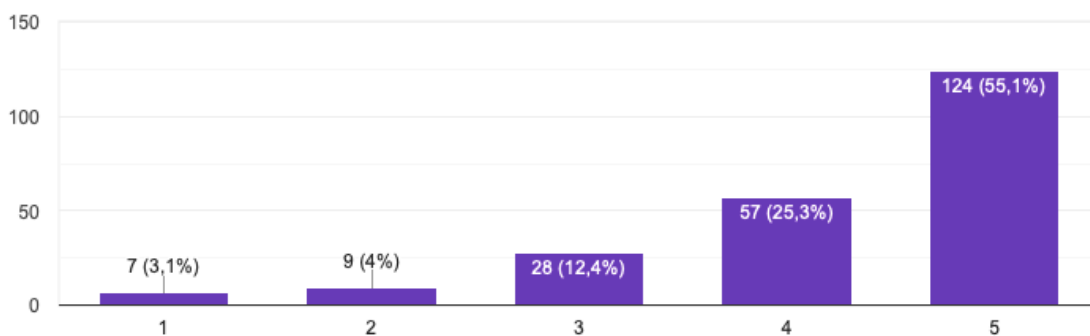


Figure 23: Respondents' interest in having Maternity and Paternity leave regulations

The legislation regulating maternity or paternity leave in Europe is well defined: as of March 2019, new legislation introducing a minimum standard of paternal paid leave throughout the European Union was approved. The directives already in place have established a minimum period of paid maternity leave of 14 weeks, of which 2 weeks are

compulsory before or after childbirth⁶⁴. The regulations for paternal leave, on the other hand, remain quite different from country to country: with the new legislation on parental leave, it is hoped that the father will also be required to take post-natal leave for two weeks⁶⁵. Despite the fact that parental leave is well regulated, the European Union also regulates working hours and paid holidays quite strictly in the event of further need. The annual leave in the EU amounts to 4 weeks paid holiday, which cannot be refunded with a payment⁶⁶. 41.3% of respondents say that they agree very much with having the right to paid holiday. This percentage reflects only a need for good workplace regulations and not a lack of willingness to work hard: 37.8% of respondents say they disagree on having not to work too much, with the addition of 11.6% who strongly disagree. As pointed out by Waters et al. (2014), Generation Y shows a tendency to work hard to achieve its goals with a type of behaviour recognized as “protean” and “boundaryless” (Hall et al., 2005). This type of attitude also implies the need to do one's work freely without close supervision of the manager (Paul, 1990). In fact, 54.7% say they disagree and strongly disagree with working under the close supervision of their supervisor, while 49.8% of them appreciate a great freedom in the work they do.

In regard to the relationship with the company and more specifically the values of the company, the students in the research showed a strong willingness to share their ideas with those of the organization, especially on issues such as respect for workers' rights (as seen above) and sustainability, environmental and ethical. This intention is in line with the literature analyzed in the first chapter (Wahlström et al., 2019; Ng et al. 2010), where the need for new graduates to find employment in a company with shared values and ways of working, was stressed. In particular, the research has asked how important the attention that the company places on sustainability is for the respondents, intended in its overall term of environmental sustainability and ethics. Also in this case, the European Union regulations on the subject are very strict, thanks to the EU 691/2011 regulation and

⁶⁴ “Maternity and paternity leave in the EU”. (2019). European Parliament. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/635586/EPRS_ATA\(2019\)635586_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/635586/EPRS_ATA(2019)635586_EN.pdf)

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ “Working hours”. (2019). European Union. Available at: https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/human-resources/working-hours-holiday-leave/working-hours/index_en.htm

above all thanks to the signing of numerous international treaties dealing with environmental protection⁶⁷.

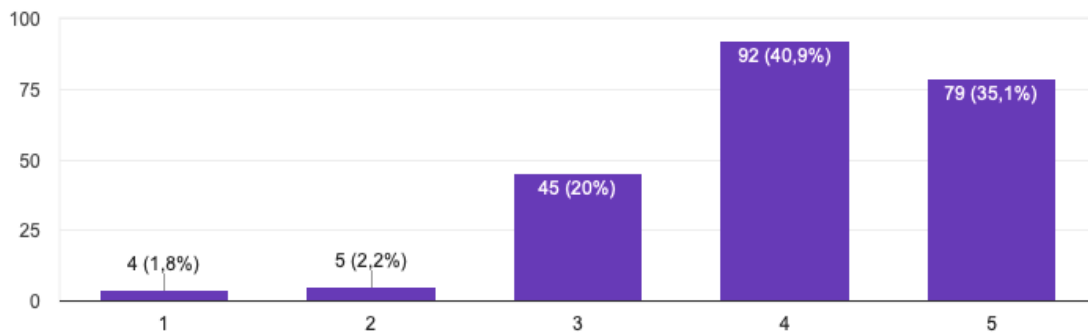


Figure 24: Importance of having corporate values in line with the personal ones

As we can read from Figure 24, 40.9% of the respondents agree that the company's values should coincide with personal values, while 35.1% strongly agree. More specifically, if we look at the percentages relating to environmental sustainability, we see that interest is present in good percentages, with an ample 70% of respondents (Fig. 25) defining themselves as strongly interested in working for a company that respects the standards imposed by the European Union and that shows a strong interest in reducing the environmental impact of their work.

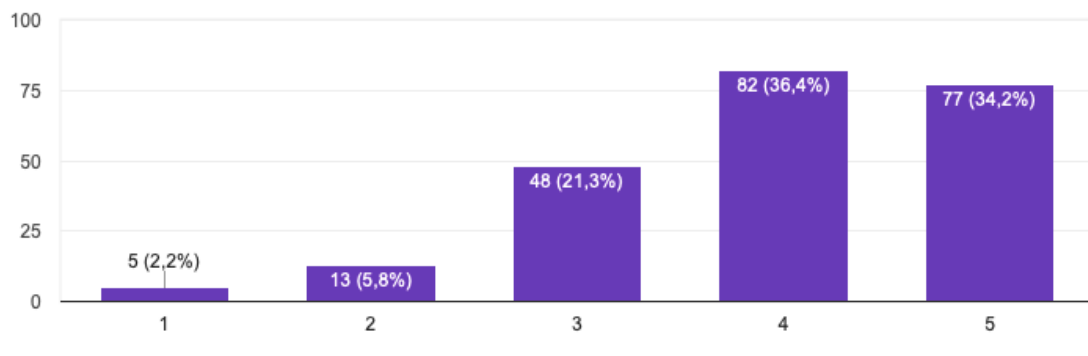


Figure 25: Respondents' interest in working for a company with strong attention to sustainability

The last data worth analyzing is the one concerning pay: as can be expected, given the discussion in the first chapter (Hill, 2002), the interest in good pay is very high (about 80% are in favour of good pay), but the percentage of those who answered with the highest value of 5 are less in percentage than those who answered 5 in the questions

⁶⁷ "Sustainable development". (2020). European Commission. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/policy-making/sustainable-development/#_environmental-protection

concerning the opportunity to do an interesting job or to contribute to the achievement of quality results in the workplace.

3.3.1 Japan-related expectations

The second part of the list of expectations and interests was based on the research targets in a more specific way. The questions were more focused on the use of the Japanese language in the workplace, on the interest of working for a Japanese multinational company or for a European company in the department of relations with Japan, and on the geographical location of the company, be it in Japan, in a European Union country, or in another country outside of Japan and the EU. In addition, respondents were asked how important they consider geographical mobility in their work and internal mobility within the company. By “internal mobility” it is intended the “movement of employees to new opportunities within the same company” (Wallack, 2019)⁶⁸, which may involve different projects in various fields of the company. According to numerous studies (Wallack, 2019; Meister et al., 2016⁶⁹; Erickson et al., 2018⁷⁰), this solution allows the organization to develop the skills of its employees and increase engagement by almost 49%. New opportunities for learning and promotion push the worker to be more productive and effective in their activity.

The results of these questions are quite heterogeneous, with percentages that do not indicate a clear preference as in the cases seen above. In the interest of the use of Japanese language in everyday work, the percentage of those who answered as "strongly agree" is very close to those who answered "neutral" and "agree". As we can see in Figure 26, all three percentages are around 30%, with a peak of 33.8% in the case of "agree",

⁶⁸ Wallack M., (2019). “What is Internal Mobility and Why you Need it”. Available at: <https://www.innermobility.com/what-is-internal-mobility-and-why-you-need-it/>

⁶⁹ Meister, J., Mulcahy K. J. (2016). “The future workplace forecast study”. Available at: <https://workplacetrends.com/the-future-workplace-forecast-study/>

⁷⁰ Erickson, R., Moulton D., Cleary B., (2018). “Are you overlooking your greatest source of talent?”. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/deloitte-review/issue-23/unlocking-hidden-talent-internal-mobility.html>

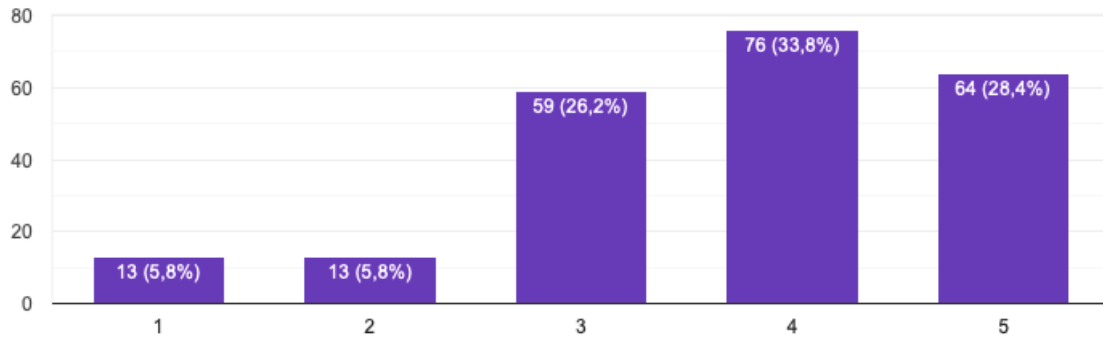


Figure 26: Respondents' interest in using Japanese Language in everyday work

thus underlining how everyday speaking of Japanese in the workplace is important, but not a necessary requirement for a good portion of respondents.

As for the interest in working for a Japanese multinational company, the percentages are quite heterogeneously distributed, with a peak on the "neutral" response, followed by "agree" with 26.7% and "strongly disagree" with 16.9% (Fig. 27). If, on the other hand, we look at the percentages regarding interest in working for a European company in the Japanese-relations department (Fig.28), the majority of respondents say they "agree" in 36.9% of cases, followed by "strongly agree" with 25.8%. These data can be read in several ways: on the one hand there is an interest in staying close to the European modus operandi by working for a company in the European territory but continuing to be interested in relations with Japan. This makes it possible to use the knowledge gained in the academic field, avoiding working according to Japanese standards.

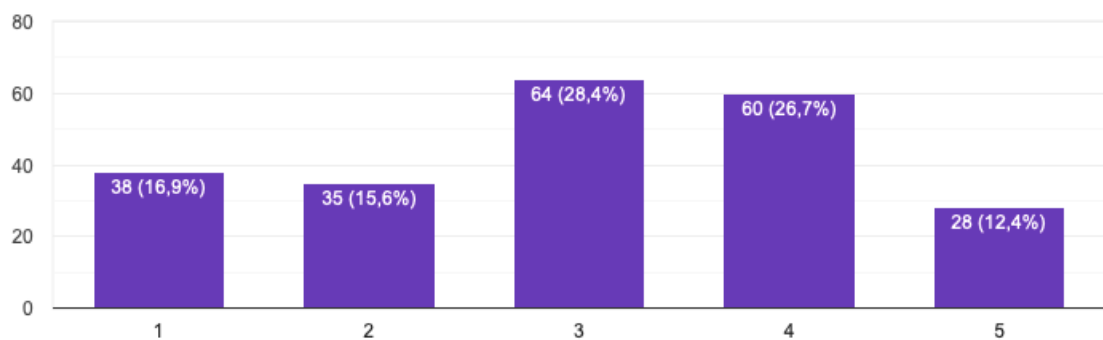


Figure 27: Respondents' interest in working for a Japanese Company

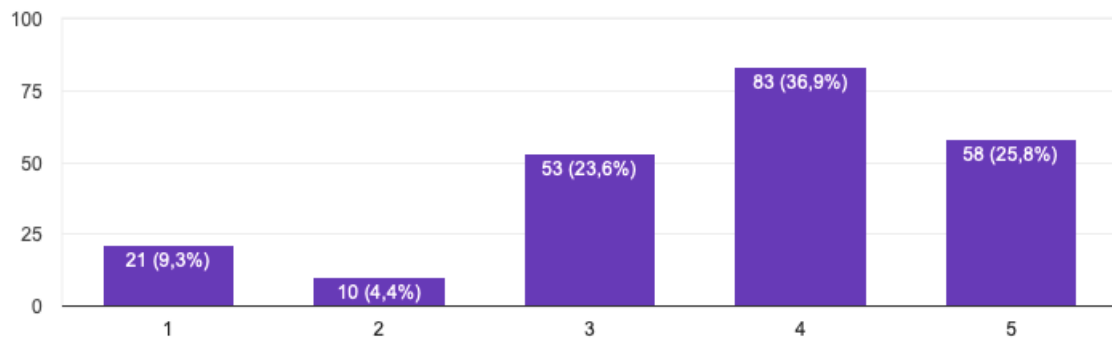


Figure 28: Respondents' interest in working for a European Company in Japan-relations department

On the other hand, behind this choice there could be an intention to work for companies in their own territory and to contribute to the development of the latter in countries such as Japan, by providing their language skills and knowledge of Asian markets. Another explanation for this trend can also be justified by the results on the geographical location of the workplace. Indeed, the data show a greater interest in working in Europe, with higher percentages of "neutral", "agree" and "strongly agree" than working in Japan. In the latter, there are high percentages indicating a strong lack of interest in moving to Japan: 22.3% in fact "strongly disagree" or "disagree". Destinations outside the European territory and Japan are not considered to be desirable by a large percentage: in fact, 43.6% consider themselves not interested or absolutely not interested in working in other countries, while only a low 8.9% consider themselves to be strongly interested. Despite these preferences for the geographical location of the workplace, it remains very important to be able to move as we will see in the next paragraph. About 53% of respondents "agree" and "strongly agree" with the chance of mobility in the workplace (Fig. 29). Internal mobility is not affected in the same way, with a good percentage (38.7%) of respondents calling themselves neutral on the subject. However, the same percentage is defined in favour or strongly in favour, balancing the result of the research and showing that young people do not back away from the possibility of changing projects and field of work.

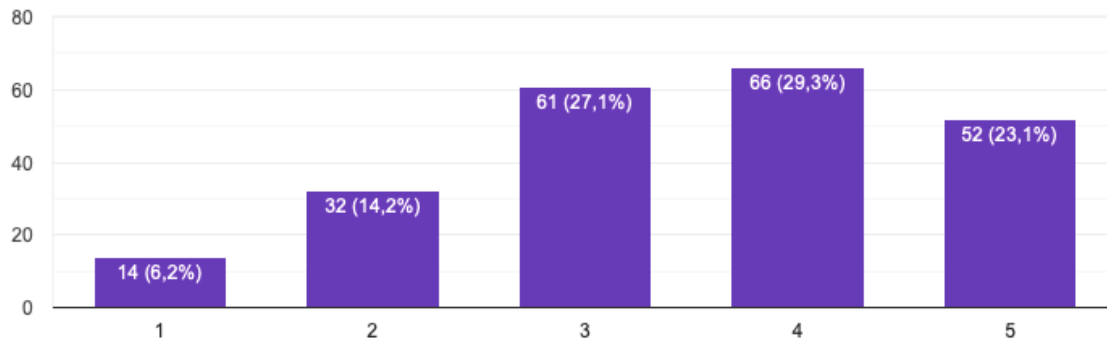


Figure 29: Respondents' interest in the possibility of geographically moving during work

3.4 Career Development

In the fourth and final section of the questionnaire, the respondents were interviewed regarding their career expectations. The questions asked were therefore related to the length of time they would desire to work for the same company, their workplace, the parameters that could make them feel more fulfilled in the job, their personal work ambitions, and the professions they associate with a high social status. The final questions were related to whether their university has made a positive contribution to their preparation for employment and whether they feel ready to work for a Japanese company or to use Japanese as their primary language in the workplace.

When asked "Would you work for the same company for your entire professional life?", respondents were almost entirely split in half with 52.9% "Yes", compared to 47.1% "No". This result breaks down the various theories on Generation Y, indicated by many as disloyal and not at all faithful towards 'the company', and by others as interested in staying in the same enterprise with the possibility of promotion and constant growth. The change from one company to another would occur in 32% only when there is a better opportunity, emphasizing that there is no maximum duration of stay in the same job.

The data on geographical life location over the next five years fully reflect what we have analyzed in the previous section regarding the geographical location of the company. In fact, 52.4% of respondents see themselves in Europe in five years' time, underlining that more than half prefer to stay in Europe to work and live. Only 33.8% of students feel ready to move to Japan and lead their lives there. This preference depends very much on personal career aspirations, what positions one would like to hold, and interests. The question "What are your career ambitions?" was deliberately left open so that everyone could express their dreams and expectations without restrictions of

multiple-choice answers. The results obtained can be divided into two main subgroups: (1) those who clearly expressed the profession they would like to carry out with titles such as "Professor", "Manager" and so on and (2) those who only expressed an expectation regarding the workplace such as "Being happy and enjoying my job" showing that they have no clear ideas about the future position, or those who answered directly with "I do not know" or "I am not sure". The groups divide almost 50/50 as the number of respondents who do not have a clear ambition is around 130. In the answers of the second group, the expectations that return most frequently are the following:

1. Having a steady employment/ full time job
2. Being happy and satisfied with one's job
3. Using Japanese Language/Working in a field related to one's studies
4. Having enough time for family/hobbies/travel (Work/private life balance)
5. Learning and improving every day
6. Having enough money to conduct a good life
7. Do not know/Not sure yet

As we can observe, the open-ended answers also correspond to the parameters analyzed so far in the previous chapters. The characteristics that had been indicated as fundamental in the motivation to work for a certain company also return among the career ambitions. This indicates that a large number of young students involved in research do not have specific aspirations but consider it essential to have a job that meets the above parameters. The first group, slightly less numerous than the previous one, is made up of those who have clearly indicated a desired position in the future. The various careers mentioned can be grouped as follows:

1. Education (university professor/Japanese language teacher/academic research)
2. Business (manager/country manager/entrepreneur)
3. Diplomacy (international organizations/cultural organizations/NGO)
4. Publishing (books/manga)
5. Communication (translator/interpreter)
6. Tourism (flight attendant/hotel receptionist/sales/tour guide)

Professions related to education such as university professors, Japanese language teachers, or researchers in fields related to Japanese studies are the most popular. About 18% of respondents said they would like to do work dedicated to teaching or academic research, mentioning various fields such as Japanese folklore, literature, history and art history. Following this group are the respondents who chose manager, containing therein a set of

the most desirable values among the Generation Y: responsibility, possibility of growth and learning every day, freedom in the workplace and independence, good salary, steady employment, possibility to travel and strong individualism, as discussed in the first chapter. Many respondents indicated that they wanted to be their own bosses, create their own company allowing them to build a bridge between Japan and Europe. Professions such as cultural mediators in non-governmental organizations, international organizations, embassies or ministries of foreign affairs of Japan or the country of origin are also desirable. Because of the academic preparation based on studies of Japanese language, society and culture, the positions that can be held in these organizations meet the characteristics of doing useful and important work for the community, facilitating exchange and cooperation between countries. In addition to the above-mentioned positions, others which concern communication, tourism, and publishing, require a good command of the Japanese language (level N2/N3 as previously described), which allows simultaneous translation and interpretation from the native language in order to interact fluently with customers.

When analyzing these open answers, what is most striking is how career ambitions are in most cases related only to personal well-being. In fact, the students interviewed did not express great ambitions, answering either with expressions of uncertainty or with desires that do not directly concern the professional career, but that only show interest for a job that pays well, is interesting, but also allows to live one's private life without work interference. Unlike the previous section of the questionnaire where the basic parameters for considering a job offer were asked, in this part the respondents were asked what factors (more than one answer) could make them professionally and personally satisfied and thus reduce the probability of leaving a job prematurely.

The parameters analyzed were:

1. High pay
2. Recognition of work
3. Good relationships in the workplace
4. High social status
5. Balance between professional and private life
6. Giving back to community
7. Research
8. Learning day after day
9. Managing a team of people

10. Travel
11. Using skills learned at university
12. Doing something related to what you study
13. Having many responsibilities
14. Making decisions
15. Working close to your family

According to the literature concerning generation Y, the above list is composed of the factors considered important that emerged in the research among various scholars (Fig. 30).

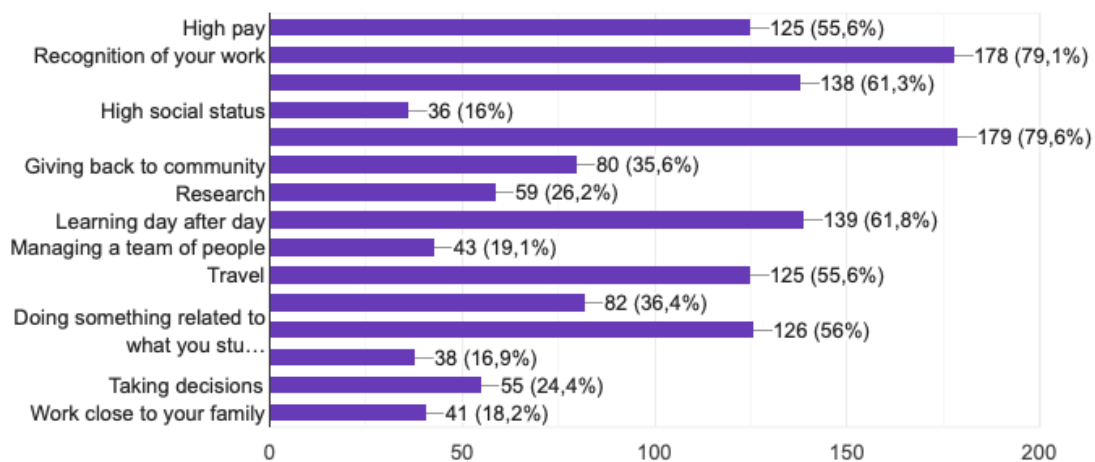


Figure 30: Parameters for professional satisfaction according to the respondents

As a further demonstration of the literature discussed, 79.6% indicate as a factor of professional satisfaction the work-life balance, followed by the recognition of one's work (79.1%) and the possibility of learning day after day (61.8%). The least voted factor was "high social status" with only 16% preference. This factor goes against the trend of the previously analyzed literature that sees Generation Y as individualist, constantly seeking promotion and growth to achieve high levels of career and prestige (Broadbridge et al., 2007; Ng et al., 2010, De Hauw et al., 2010). In order to better understand which professions are associated with a high social status and how the perception of this has changed between generations, respondents were asked to indicate which profession they associate with a high level of prestige. The concept of "high social status" or "occupational prestige" was born around 1947, thanks to research conducted by Cecil C. North and Paul Hatt, who were at the time head of the National Opinion Research Center in the United States (Nakao et al., 1994). As Nakao pointed out, the impossibility of classifying all professions was a fundamental problem in this ranking which took into

account only 90 on a subjective basis, so much so that in 1950 the U.S. Bureau of the Census created a classification system for all occupations, so as to reduce thousands of professions to a hundred. One of the most comprehensive lists of professions was developed in 1989 by NORC General Social Survey, where respondents were asked to rate the social standing scale from 1 to 9 (where 9 is the highest). Establishing the basis upon which one can judge that a job has a high or low social status is a topic discussed by many sociologists. Treiman (2013) has conducted a study in several countries around the world showing that there are no major differences in the ranking of the various professions and therefore these classifications are often the result of personal and subjective judgment. Ellis et al. (2018) suggest instead that this perception is actually given by the years of education needed to perform a certain task and the level of earnings in terms of salary. There are some examples that deny the theory, however, such as professors with high level of education but medium income and actors or models with high levels of income but in some cases low levels of education. The theory explained by Rose & O'Reilly (1998) and Treiman (1976) can instead be valid to justify the answers received in the research I carried out: “high prestige is allocated to those occupations which require a high degree of skill or which entail authority over other individuals or control over capital” (Treiman, 1976: 288). In this regard, 48.7% of respondents defined as professions with high social status those of manager and CEO. These were grouped together as professions with a high level of responsibility and decision-making power, as well as good earnings in many countries around the world⁷¹. Professions such as educators and researchers (university professors, teachers) as well as doctors and lawyers, follow the managerial class, demonstrating the theory of Ellis et al. (2018). High social status is therefore justified by a high level of education that allows jobs to be carried out with high levels of responsibility and control. Respondents in the final part of the fourth section were asked how much they think the university has contributed to their preparation for professional careers, with results that leave much to be thought about. Only 21.8% of

⁷¹ The average salary of a manager in Italy according to Glassdoor is around €52,000, while according to Indeed's estimation, a manager in the United States of America earns around \$55,000.

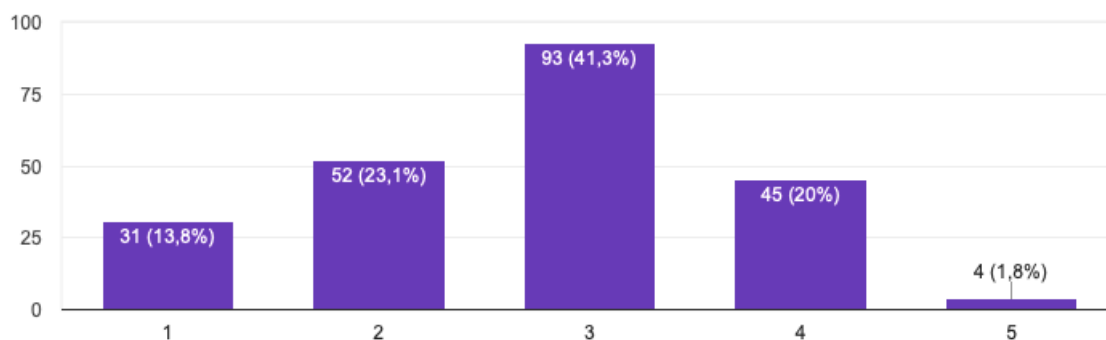


Figure 31: Respondents' perception of preparation given by home university to enter the professional world on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest value and 5 the highest

respondents felt that the university covered an important role in their professional career training, while 41.3% said it was neutral on the question (Fig.31).

On the other hand, 36.9% disagreed totally on this issue, stressing that the university was not at all useful in developing skills and knowledge to be used in future employment. Despite these poorly-encouraging data, the next question concerning personal preparation to work in a Japanese company and/or to use Japanese as a primary language in the workplace is better. 31.1% of respondents consider themselves ready and strongly prepared to face certain work environments, while 34.7% consider themselves neutral, followed by 34.3% who do not feel ready to work in Japanese companies with the use of the language on a daily basis. The latter data should be analyzed taking into account the fact that more than half of the respondents to this research are bachelor students. The data on personal preparation and career development are therefore influenced by the few years of language study and a still unclear idea of the future. In fact, 62.7% of those who responded with vague career ambitions or uncertain answers such as "I don't know", "I still have no idea", are bachelor students or bachelor graduates not enrolled in graduate courses. Despite a good percentage of uncertain careers, the many ambitions that the students interviewed have, with hopes for careers at a high social level, such as managers, professors, translators and interpreters etc., should be highlighted.

In this third chapter, the research I conducted was analyzed with results that I hope will be of wide interest to professors, companies, and students themselves. The research can be further expanded and improved upon by also taking into consideration those who, following a degree in Japanese studies, are already working. They could illustrate how their perception of the workplace has changed over the years, and they could actually explain what fields universities need to explore to improve students' academic preparation. It would also be of great interest for companies to understand the factors that

drive away employees after a short stay, so that they can reduce employee turnover as seen in chapter 1.4.

Chapter Four

4. Employment retention strategies

4.1 Survey results: motivations and possible solutions to high level of turnover

In previous chapters, the characteristics of Generation Y were analyzed from a behavioural and occupational point of view. It was then analyzed with experimental research how these characteristics are reflected in career choices and in parameters taken into account in the employment search by European students of Japanese studies. In this chapter, the reasons why Generation Y left the workplace during the first year of employment will be analyzed, in order to try to clarify what retention strategies could be adopted by companies. By comparing the motivations given during the research and the literature on the subject, it is my intention to outline employees' retention strategies in the workplace.

The problem of turnover has influenced many companies around the world with high percentages in many countries. The overall level of voluntary turnover was around 9.6% in 2016, while the European percentage was 7.1% (Gutmann, 2016)⁷². The fields that suffer the highest global turnover were finance, sales, and human resources (Gutmann, 2016)⁷³. The topic has been addressed by many scholars, who have based their studies mainly on factors related to demography, psychology, and economics, without taking into account problems related to business organization. The definition of turnover given by Shaw et al. (1998) includes both the concept of voluntary turnover and involuntary turnover: “an instance of voluntary turnover, or a quit, reflects an employee's decision to leave an organization, whereas an instance of involuntary turnover, or a discharge, reflects an employer's decision to terminate the employment relationship” (Shaw et al., 1998: 511). The topic of voluntary turnover has been addressed more in the literature than the topic of involuntary turnover: the latter refers to leaving employment for higher reasons

⁷² Gutmann P. (2016). “Tackling Trends in Turnover”. Mercer Webcast Series. Available at: <https://docplayer.net/53650142-Mercer-webcast-series.html>

⁷³ *Ibid.*

such as retirement, death, and as a result of discharge. This issue is inherent to human resources that first hired a person who was not the right fit for the position sought, causing a very high cost for the company (Cascio, 1991). However, the real loss from an economic, social, and motivational point of view lies in the choice of an employee to leave the company voluntarily. The reasons for this choice have been analyzed by numerous researchers, finding as main factors the attractiveness of the current employment and the presence of alternatives (Hulin et al., 1985). As pointed out by Tsui et al. (1997: 1096), "where the exchange is less favourable to the employee than to the employer, the employee is most likely to leave the firm as soon as alternative employment options are available". March and Simon (1958) further state that if the labour market is flourishing and there are therefore many viable alternatives to the position held, then the percentage of turnover will be higher, underlining the relationship between turnover and the economic situation of the labour market. Some different factors such as dissatisfaction with the job, bad relationship with the bosses or few benefits «may "push" the employee to look for alternative employment, while other factors (e.g. the perception of attractive alternative job opportunities) may "pull" the employee to consider alternative employment» (Gerhart, 1990: 467). The factors that drive Generation Y to find alternative employment are numerous. As we analyzed in the first chapter, Generation Y was given the concepts of "protean" and "boundaryless career" (Hall, 1996, 2005; De Vos et al., 2008; Waters et al., 2014), which changed the way companies deal with human resources management in the workplace. The literature is divided between models that indicate the low level of satisfaction in the workplace as the main cause of voluntary turnover (Mobley, 1977) and ones that indicate a decision to leave based on new possibilities and alternatives (Gerhart, 1990; Trevor, 2001). As pointed out by Mirvis & Hall (1994), moving to a new company allows employees to learn something new about employment, about the values of the company itself, and above all about their own abilities. Employees are therefore encouraged to leave their jobs following a search for a new job. The ever-changing labour market and a boundaryless career progression have diminished the feeling of job security (Smith, 2010). Individuals therefore seek to be continuously active in the labour market, increasing their employability and developing new skills to use in the next job. Employability can be defined "as the capacity to control one's employment options through the creation, identification and realization of career opportunities" (DiRenzo & Greenhaus, 2011: 571). These models can be confirmed in the data collected during my research, which saw 32% of respondents stating that they could change jobs if they find

a better opportunity, in a situation of good pay, stable work and good relationships with colleagues and superiors. The correlation between finding a new job and turnover can also be used by the employee to report their value to the employer, who, in order not to lose the resource, could respond with a salary increase and a promotion (Trevor, 2001). In doing so, the employer increases employee satisfaction and reduces the willingness to leave the company. The research also indicates a desire to increase one's own knowledge, as pointed out by Mirvis & Hall (1994). The different work experiences can be defined as learning cycles within one's career, that can take place not only in different organizations but also in the same company in different roles (Mirvis & Hall, 1994). As also underlined by Cascio (1991), the job enrichment occurs mainly in the presence of a variety of skills and tasks and in a situation of task significance. A new interorganizational position allows the development of new skills and the possibility to try a new role that may increase learning cycles and employee satisfaction, without losing important resources for the company (DiRenzo & Greenhaus, 2011). The types of mobility within the company can vary: one type of mobility is upward, a promotion to a higher grade, “defined as moves within an organization to a job that is in a higher administrative rank and usually associated with higher pay, status, responsibilities, and skill requirements” (Bidwell, 2011: 372). However, promotion does not necessarily indicate a change in the content of the work, but in increasing the degree of responsibility requires the use of greater skills than the position previously held (Bidwell, 2011). The second type of mobility is lateral, where the employee is transferred to another department or unit while maintaining the same rank (Stewman, 1986). The effects of these transfers can be seen within the company, as much as on the employee: in many cases the promotion is used as an incentive and as a motivator to keep the employee and reduce turnover (Lazear & Rosen, 1981). However, the company must be careful not to promote by demotivating those who have a lower level of work: what Bidwell (2014: 1037) proposes is to promote in jobs with “high grade rations, i.e. to allow a small group of juniors to be promoted to a small number of senior positions. this system is also advantageous from a business point of view compared to the recruitment of new profiles from other companies. Williamson et al. (1975) emphasizes that every employee has "firm-specific skills" or all the skills acquired during the performance of a job in a given company. Within this definition there are not only skills at a technical level, but also a background acquired thanks to the relationship with colleagues and the working environment. For this reasons, internal candidates for a position are expected to be more productive than candidates from other

workplaces (Bidwell, 2014). Holding new positions allows the employees to experiment new tasks and to increase their knowledge while always remaining within the company that invested money and time in their training and development. The needs expressed by Generation Y as continuous learning, evolving day after day, being stimulated with interesting tasks, can be carried out through an interorganizational mobility strategy in the various forms we have seen.

Within the benefits of internal mobility, we also find a deep knowledge of the field in which employees work and relationship with colleagues. The high percentage of turnover is not only detrimental to the company itself and the costs it ensues, but also to colleagues themselves. This phenomenon is defined by Staw (1980: 257) as “demoralization of organizational membership”, emphasizing how effectively a group member leaving the company for another may influence the decision of other members who may “question their own motivation for staying”. Demoralization varies according to perceived reasons for leaving the job. If reasons are non-organizational such as family or financial problems, the effect will be much lower than turnover due to problems such as salary, supervision or unstimulating work. As pointed out in the first chapter and as also demonstrated in the research in chapter three, the good relationship with colleagues and the good functioning of the work team are key factors for Generation Y to stay within a company. This aspect also includes the relationship with the supervisor or manager, which can in some cases be the cause of high turnover. The concept of inclusive leadership is manifested through openness, communication and availability on the part of the leader, which leads to a better relationship with employees and consequently to a lower turnover rate. More specifically, this form of leadership is based on relationships which are the fundamental basis for the success of the leadership concept, taking the name “relational leadership”. Uhl-Bien (2006: 668) describe this concept “as a social influence process through which emergent coordination (i.e., evolving social order) and change (i.e., new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviours, ideologies, etc.) are constructed and produced”. As demonstrated by Carmeli et al. (2010: 252), this type of leadership leads to a sense of “psychological safety” on the part of employees, who feel compelled to express their creativity. This type of employee-supervisor relationship contributes to the creation of an environment in which worker are able to express themselves without fear of being judged. By “psychological safety”, Kahn (1990: 708) contend that employees “feel able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career”. This type of leadership is appreciated by Generation Y. In the

sample of respondents in my research, one of the main motivating factors in considering a company and in building a career in it is open and transparent communication. Almost 80% of respondents strongly agree with the need to maintain excellent communication and transparency within the company, as well as an excellent relationship with colleagues and superiors. In addition, 44% said they were in favour and strongly in favour of taking part in the company's internal staff meetings. This interest shows the importance of having a clear understanding of what is going on within the organization through clear and open communication. Maintaining open and receptive behaviour in the workplace will encourage employees to express new methods to achieve common goals and growth opportunities (Carmeli et al., 2010). Edmondson (2004), an inclusive leadership theory scholar, also points out that these aspects of openness, availability, and listening can lead to benevolent behaviour and genuine interest in employees. Support from the leader increases trust by improving the quality of interpersonal relationships and the atmosphere in the workplace (Edmondson, 2004). This positivity helps to reduce turnover. As demonstrated above, one of the main causes of departure from a company is a bad relationship between managers and employees (Barnes, 2008; Carmeli et al., 2010), where for bad relationship it is intended a “mistrust, low respect and a lack of loyalty” (Morrow et al., 2005: 682). In addition to a purely relational issue, if the manager is not able to properly manage his team from an organizational point of view, the risks of reducing business productivity and team efficiency are high. According to research carried out by ADP Workforce View in Europe (2018)⁷⁴, 19% of respondents believe that the biggest barrier to a company's productivity is poor management of work, time, and team. As pointed out by Mello (2011), the main task of the manager remains to fully understand the reasons and needs for an employee to stay and to try to increase the team motivation in the working environment. Given the diversity of factors that can drive a new employee to find a new job, each retention program must be tailored to the characteristics of the group. For this reason, there are no official rules to be applied, but through open communication and transparent feedback strategy, the manager can identify existing problems in the group and seek solutions with employees themselves.

The literature seen so far is especially based on the negative consequences of turnover and the costs of recruitment, development, training, and production that the

⁷⁴ “The Workforce View in Europe 2018”. (2018). ADP. Available at:

<https://www.adp.co.uk/assets/vfs/Domain-3/Workforce-View-2018/ADP-Workforce-View-2018.pdf>

company has to face. Although not as numerous as those in the previous literature, some scholars of organizational psychology have approached the problem from an optimistic perspective, analyzing how turnover can also offer positive consequences. Staw (1980) indicates that these positive consequences are certainly less visible in the short term than the costs, but in the long term they can help to increase business and contribute to the success of the organization. As with any theory, however, there are drawbacks. The positive aspects that turnover can bring always vary depending on the employee, the organization, and the team. The examples proposed by Staw (1980) mainly focus on increasing performance, reducing conflict, increasing the possibility of internal mobility, and innovation. As a result of a turnover, the new employee who will arrive will be more motivated than the previous one and will already have previous skills and training. The counter theory could be that the new employee usually has lower performance than the old employee and that only after the experience he or she will be able to reach previous performance levels. The relationship between skills, motivation and experience leads to the creation of what is called the inverted U-shape (Fig. 32). As Staw (1980: 260) points out, “while experience may contribute positively to job skills and knowledge, effort or motivation may be at its highest when the individual first arrives in the organization”. For this reason, employee turnover can help positively to increase business performance by exploiting the motivation and desire to learn of new employees. Despite this motivation, it cannot be said that this curve can be applied to the entire group for reasons of different

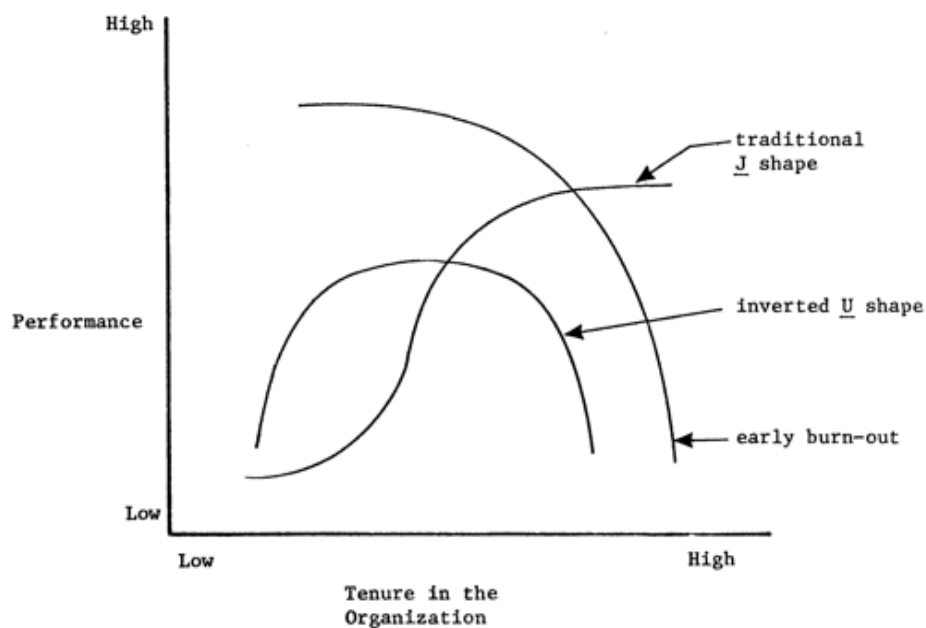


Figure 32: Performance curves in relation to tenure in the organization, Staw (1980).

ages and tenures, as treated by Pfeffer (1979).

By time spent within the organization, we also mean increasing job experience. Campbell (1990) points out that with the accumulation of knowledge and skills performance improves, thus demonstrating how job experience has an effect on performance. As mentioned above, the validity of this model varies according to various factors. Employee's age can be of note as it can also affect performance in the workplace. The theory of aging (Giniger et al., 1983) suggests that with advancing age the ability, skills, and reaction speed deteriorate, thus decreasing the level of performance. It is not necessarily the case, therefore, that a new employee with great experience and motivation is just as attentive as a new, younger employee. On the other hand, however, this theory was discussed by Avolio et al. (1990), who argue the relationship between age and performance, stating that the age factor can be non-linear as it is not valid for some individuals. The possible consequences of aging do not all arise suddenly, but rather it can be said that there are no effects of aging at the beginning of an employee's career. These consequences, such as age as well as loss of motivation and interest, occur later in the career as retirement approaches and opportunities for promotion become fewer. As a second positive consequence Staw (1980) identifies the reduction of conflicts in the work environment. One of the causes of employee turnover is conflict, whether it is hierarchical, between management and employee, or lateral, between employees. In many cases conflicts cannot be resolved despite a large number of studies that have focused on resolving disagreements in the workplace. When the situation becomes unsustainable, it is not uncommon for an employee to leave the company in search of a better working environment from a relational point of view. If this scenario occurs, the positive consequence will be the sudden resolution of the conflict with the departure of the employee. This leads to the third positive consequence of turnover, i.e. the release of a professional position. While the effect that could be achieved is a sense of group demoralization as seen above, there could be an increase in internal motivation to fill the open position through a promotion or department transfer. As seen previously, internal mobility can be a good factor for internal retention and increased motivation (Williamson et al., 1975; Bidwell, 2014).

Fourth and final positive consequence may be the organizational adaptation to the situation (Staw, 1980). If a position remains open following the departure of an employee, the recruiters will proceed with the screening and search for a candidate who has a similar profile to the previous one. In this case, if the search takes place internally within the company, the profile found will work according to a set of rules, standards and

information already known previously. These rules and ways of working may be inappropriate and old compared to other known systems outside the company. Therefore, while internal hiring is beneficial for motivation, it risks isolating the organization from new values and rules used in other workplaces. According to Campbell (1965), therefore, turnover represents one of the major sources of diversity that allow for a rejuvenation of the system and its potential innovation.

As we have seen then in chapter 1, the problem of turnover that is affecting most companies in various countries around the world comes at great cost for replacing the human resource. The solutions we discussed in this first part of chapter 4 apply to a management system that has to do with a basic European Generation Y that believes in the discussed values and desires a certain type of career and professional development. The characteristics that emerged in chapter 3 are the same that emerge here as the main reasons for voluntary job leaving. The retention strategies that can be applied have been analyzed in part, especially with reference to the strategy of internal mobility, open communication and inclusive leadership, indicated as fundamental factors in the workplace by various scholars. The above-mentioned retention strategies vary according to the type of needs that employees claim to have, and according to the management and values of the company itself. What has been analyzed so far sees the case of European or American companies as per the literature but does not take into account the case of Japanese companies and type of management. In the next paragraph we will then analyze Human Resources management style in Japan and its consequent change due to the internationalization phenomenon.

4.2 Japanese Firms and Human Resources Management: a drift to internationalization

The literature analyzed so far has focused mainly on human resources management in Europe and America, as the study focuses on European students who intend to work mainly in a European or Japanese context. For this reason, the next section will be dedicated to the different model of human resources management in Japan, underlining its values and characteristics and the differences compared to countries considered so far. In addition to the social and economic reasons that led to the formation of such a management system, we will also analyze the tendency of Japanese companies to open up internationally with the consequent difficulty of managing non-Japanese employees.

The Japanese management style is considered one of the most particular styles in the world, as it is unique and strongly based on the three principles that forged it. These three elements can be described as seniority wages, lifetime employment, and enterprise unionism (Sekiguchi et al., 2016; Conrad et al., 2017; Moriguchi, 2014). As pointed out by Moriguchi (2014), however, these three pillars do not fully represent the complexity of the Japanese system, which has developed in this way following economic but above all historical events. These characteristics are also justified by the economic system to which the reference markets belong. Conrad et al. (2019) point out that Japan is one of the so-called coordinated market economies belonging to countries such as Germany and the Netherlands. On the other hand, we find the liberal market economies, more typical of countries such as the UK and the USA. As far as industrial relations are concerned, the Japanese system and thus the CMEs are characterized by long-term employment relations, labour regulations, less fluid labour market and greater representation of employees at corporate governance level. The LMEs, on the other hand, are characterized by a freer choice to hire and fire with a much more fluid labour market and less focus on long-term employment relations. The purpose of the Japanese management system is “an employer’s promise to provide human capital investment and employment security to regular employees in exchange for their dedication and skill formation, so as to achieve high productivity” (Moriguchi, 2014: 58). This model, as pointed out by Koike (2012) has also been successful in other countries, which have exported the Japanese model in their companies in territories outside Japan. As mentioned above, this system was made up by a set of historical events that were analyzed and deepened by two historians, Gordon (1988) and Sugayama (2011). Moriguchi (2014) has reworked the texts of the scholars, describing the history of the Japanese business system and passing mainly through four historical phases: the industrial period between 1880 and 1910, the new employment policies between the First and Second World War, the military intervention between 1938 and 1945, and the post-war and post-occupation years from 1945 to 1955. To dispel the belief that the Japanese business system has such a long tradition, Gordon (1988) states that in 1900 the Japanese labour market was particularly different from today's, characterized by strong competitiveness and an extremely fluid market. As a result, employee turnover was very high, with an average stay of less than a year. The importance of work was given only by the type of capacity that could be acquired and the value of the salary received. As Sugayama (2011) points out, the turnover value was very similar

for both blue collars and white collar workers⁷⁵. At the beginning of the 20th century, to try to decrease this turnover, companies started hiring new graduates from universities or high-level institutions and introduced periodic salary increases. It was only in the period between World War I and World War II with the development of intensive industry, that large Japanese industries such as Hitachi, Mitsubishi, Toshiba (at that time still under the name of Shibaura Engineering Works) started hiring large numbers of employees. Due to a great need for workers, in addition to hiring it was also necessary to establish retention strategies within the companies. To do this, large organizations began to launch apprenticeship and training programs for new graduates, so that they could already be developed according to the ideals and values of the host company. In addition, six-monthly salary increases were also introduced. The big difference during this period was that not only wage and benefit measures were introduced for white collar workers and the upper classes of blue collars, but also for specialized and semi-skilled workers. As pointed out by Moriguchi (2014), these measures had a certain effect on worker turnover, with wages starting to be aligned to the length of time employees worked within the company. During the Second World War, the Japanese government-imposed measures that did not allow workers in strategically important factories to change companies. Furthermore, in 1939, the government issued an order that factories with more than 200 employees should establish apprenticeship schemes for skilled workers. Despite these measures, few companies continued to carry out training projects at the end of the war. Also, in the plan of the ordinances imposed by the government there were also regulations regarding salaries which provided for obligatory periodic increases for all employees but based on the employee's performance. This left a lot of freedom for the management class, creating further discrepancies between white and blue collar workers and encouraging the creation of unions to protect less qualified employees. The equalization of the two classes within the company peaked with the American occupation, which launched numerous democratic reforms. During this period workers' unions grew stronger and stronger, leading to numerous clashes between 1949 and 1954. In the post-war period, which in Japan as in the rest of the world was a period of great economic growth (Gordon, 1988), Japanese companies began to invest seriously in hiring and training their employees.

⁷⁵ According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term "white collar" is attributed to the American writer Upton Sinclair, who referred to the American managerial class. This social class was named after the white shirt usually worn in offices, as opposed to the blue overalls used by factory workers. The distinction then took on a social differentiation over the years, indicating white-collar workers who were highly educated.

Training periods were characterized by flexibility in assignments and job rotation, allowing new employees to perform different functions. Thanks to this historical excursus, it is possible to understand the reason for the three main attributes that are given to the Japanese employment style mentioned above, and how it has come to have certain characteristics placed in the historical and economic context.

As pointed out by Morishima (1995) and Peltokorpi (2013), long-term employment, new employee development projects, seniority bonuses, and promotions are factors that have allowed Japanese companies to have a competitive advantage over others. This successful management model has also been adopted in foreign subsidiaries when companies were internationalizing. Matsuda (2013) and Sekiguchi et al. (2016) pointed out that this management model is successful especially in production and operations management, but it suffers considerable difficulties when it comes to human resources management of non-Japanese employees. As a result of the tariff barriers imposed by the US since 1970 against Japan, Japanese multinationals have started a strong overseas production, also transferring their operations and supply-chain management capabilities (Sekiguchi, 2016). As pointed out by Kopp (1994), Japanese multinationals have adopted an approach defined as ethnocentric IHRM approach. According to this view, decisions of foreign offices are centralized in the headquarters and all management positions are entrusted to Japanese employees. Kopp also points out that Japanese multinationals tend to expatriate managers from Japan to top management and control positions in foreign subsidiaries. Therefore, Japanese multinationals rarely fill top management positions with local employees, defined as HCN (host-country national).

This approach is clearly not sustainable for mainly demographic reasons: on January 1st, 2020, Japan's population amounted to approximately 126 million people, of whom 35 million were over 65 years of age, making up 28.5% of the population⁷⁶. Compared to 2010, the population has decreased by about 2 million, underlining a significant demographic decline and a consequent talent shortage (Kemper et al., 2016). In addition to demographic reasons, there are economic ones. Many of the customers of Japan's largest multinationals are located outside Japan, stressing the need to move

⁷⁶ “Statistics on Population”, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. 「人口推計（令和元年（2019年）8月確定値，令和2年（2020年）1月概算値）（2020年1月20日公表）総務省統計局」 Available at: <https://www.stat.go.jp/data/jinsui/new.html>

Japanese multinationals' management and production functions abroad and hire highly qualified local staff to reduce costs. As we can deduce from this analysis, Japanese multinationals therefore need to increase the number of non-Japanese employees not only within Japanese territory but also in foreign offices. This type of phenomenon is described by Yoshihara (2005) as *uchinaru kokusai-ka* (internal internationalization), from the title of his book. On the other hand, the term "external internationalization" is used when referring to the inclusion of local resources within Japanese offices in foreign territory (Sekiguchi, 2016). These two approaches make it easier to introduce non-Japanese personnel into Japanese multinationals and also to achieve "local responsiveness and/or global integration" (Sekiguchi et al., 2016: 11), which play a key role in determining a company's competitive advantage. However, including employees of different nationalities becomes complicated for multinationals from different points of view: as pointed out by Maki et al. (2014) and Froese (2010), due to the socio-cultural homogeneity within the workplace, non-Japanese employees are often left out of the decision-making process and higher management positions. These problems are mainly related to communication and cultural difficulties in the workplace. In terms of language, the low level of English spoken by Japanese managers and the difficulties for employees to express themselves in correct Japanese do not allow for smooth communication. Nevertheless, Keeley (2001) emphasizes that even employees who speak Japanese perfectly and are familiar with the culture of the company can feel outside of the group within the head office. The second reason is that human resource management in Japan is very different, at times incompatible, with global trends of higher job turnover. With the changing trend of recent years, Japanese multinationals are implementing the hiring of non-Japanese graduate students who have studied at Japanese or foreign universities (Liu-Farrer, 2009).

In this context the students subject of the research presented in chapter 3 are included. The phenomenon of hiring non-Japanese new graduates in Japanese multinationals is taking hold, underlining how 37 out of 50 of the best companies in Japan have taken part in career fairs inside and outside Japan to hire the so-called FFG (foreign fresh graduates). This phenomenon is relatively new, as the literature has especially focused on the employment of personnel in foreign subsidiaries within HQ. As pointed out by Conrad et al., (2019), this model allows to increase the bilateral transfer of knowledge and to build especially global teams. The difference with FFG is that they lack experience and are therefore totally flexible in the type of work to be done (Reiche, 2006).

This approach fits into the framework of “internal internationalization”, demonstrating an effort to develop global talent and managerial positions that are more open to globalization. According to the study by Conrad et al (2019), the main reasons for hiring these FFG include increasing diversity, increasing foreign sales, and even skills not available in Japan, as well as a drastic decrease in young Japanese talent due to demographic issues as seen above. While the employment of foreigners with experience in HQ immediately leads to a mutual benefit with the exchange of technology and experience, the hiring of new foreign graduates leads to a more long-term benefit, training individuals to be employed in foreign subsidiaries where they can use their language skills and experience acquired in HQ to foster exchanges and communication. As seen in chapter 2, intakes in companies usually take place in April and the skills sought are often different. Rather than academic or professional achievements, large Japanese multinationals focus on enthusiasm, communication skills and the ability to take on challenges (Conrad et al., 2019). The training will then be carried out by the company with so-called 研修 (*kenshuu*, training programmes) that introduce young people to the philosophy and values of the company and help them to integrate into working groups. Like their Japanese peers, many of the newly hired foreigners begin their employment in the domestic sales sector, with the aim of being able to integrate them into HQ with an in-depth knowledge of the company (Conrad et al., 2019). One problem that arises when hiring is always that of communication. For this reason, according to Liu-Farrer (2009), the tendency of multinationals is to hire non-Japanese employees who are familiar with the Japanese language, culture and society, as well as the style of Japanese business. These employees therefore represent an opportunity for both a push for globalization and an easier integration within the workplace. These figures can also act as "bridge individuals" (Harzing et al, 2015), i.e. employees with native Japanese and host country language level who can facilitate communication between HQ and subsidiaries. As pointed out by Sekiguchi (2016), many companies hire non-Japanese employees with the hope that they can also perform this function in addition to other responsibilities. Multinationals therefore seem to recognize how important it is to have employees who can act as intercultural bridges between Japan and their home country. These employees can also be employed in external internationalization, helping HQ to manage foreign companies. However, the difficulties faced are mainly related to the Japanese employment system and the workplace, especially in relation to Generation Y. As underlined by Conrad et al. (2019), the main values of the Japanese employment system

discussed above, such as pay based on seniority, long-term job stability, frequent sector changes and unclear job descriptions, cannot be changed only in relation to Generation Y. In response to this, multinationals are therefore trying to express these elements more clearly in their recruitment processes, with the aim of inducing self-selection of candidates. The factor of communication and transparency within the company was recognized as very important by the students interviewed in chapter 3, together with the factor of having a clear job description and a clear evaluation of performance. Indeed, 56.9% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the need to have a written job description, in addition to the data on transparency and communication seen above. According to a study by Kazuaki Nagata (2018)⁷⁷, some non-Japanese workers in Japanese multinationals were dissatisfied with receiving unclear performance appraisals, which often do not allow them to be promoted as the Japanese system is strongly based on achieving results.

In addition to problems of internal company transparency, factors causing high turnover and lack of motivation to work in Japan include fear of overtime and the very evident gender gap problem in Japanese society. The phenomenon of *karoshi* in Japan remains highlighted in recent years despite the numerous policies adopted in this regard for the management of working hours. Despite the government's efforts to issue documents and measures concerning overworked deaths, the numbers are still not at all encouraging. According to the latest data for 2017, 190 people were subject to problems or deaths related to overwork. Although measures were taken in 2017 such as 過労死防止大綱 (*Karoushi boushi taikou*, General Rules for Preventing Overwork Deaths)⁷⁸, the situation in the following years remained almost the same. In 2017, the number of people who suffered from serious heart diseases due to work stress increased from 14 to 98, the second highest result in the past after 99 people in 2014⁷⁹. Although decreasing, the 2018

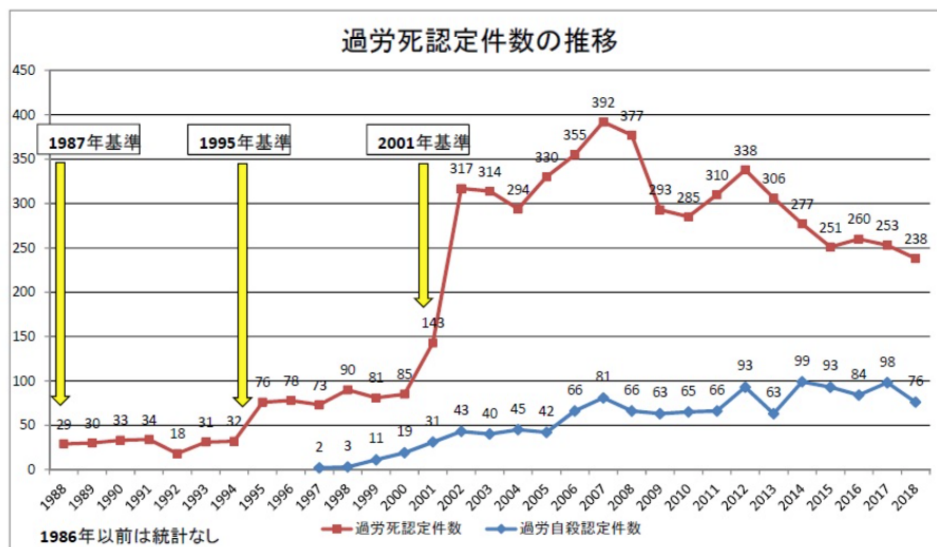
⁷⁷ Nagata, K. (2018). Foreign talent eager to work for Japanese firms, but staid office culture a hindrance, The Japan Times. Available at: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/12/31/national/foreign-talent-eager-work-japanese-firms-staid-office-culture-hindrance/#.XjbYRi-b5QJ>

⁷⁸“Outline of measures to prevent overwork death”, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. 「過労死等の防止のための対策に関する大綱(平成30年7月24日閣議決定)の概要、厚生労働省」 Available at: https://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/houdou/0000101654_00003.html

⁷⁹ Murakami, K. (2018). “Overwork death and suicide to 190 people”. 「村上晃一。2018年。過労死・過労自殺、昨年度190人横ばい状態続」 Available at: <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASL755RQ2L75ULFA02P.html>

data saw 76 people commit suicide due to overwork and 238 people die due to overwork, with causes such as stress, heart, and ischemia problems (Fig. 33). The numbers of recent years can be compared in the figure below, where in red are those who died from overwork due to poor physical condition and in blue those who committed suicide due to overwork.

The objectives of the document issued in 2017 were to reach 5% of employees working 60 hours per week by 2020, to increase to at least 70% or more the percentage of employees taking paid leave and to reach 80% of companies engaged in mental health measures by 2022. Achieving these results still seems a distant goal given the high numbers of overwork in recent years, but the government hopes for an increasing awareness on the part of companies and workers themselves.



厚生労働省「脳・心臓疾患の労災補償状況」「過労死等の労災補償状況」より作成。

Figure 33: Number of Japanese employees subject to death from overwork and suicide from overwork, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2019).

On the other hand, we find the problem of gender gap, an issue that remains very topical in Japanese workplaces, especially following the latest data on gender equality in Japan. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 issued by the World Economic Forum, in 2019 Japan qualified 121st out of 153 countries, down 11 positions compared to the previous year⁸⁰. Furthermore, the percentage of women in Japan who are members of companies' board of directors is 5.3%, making it one of the countries with the lowest

⁸⁰ “Global Gender Gap Report 2020”. (2019). World Economic Forum. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>

percentage. Despite the measures taken by *Womenomics*⁸¹, while the domestic situation compared to previous years is showing signs of improvement, Japan continues to lag far behind globally. After the scandal that involved the Tokyo Medical School in 2018⁸², the discussion of gender equality in Japan has returned to be a topic of extreme importance. The number of movements of gender equality within the Japanese territory has grown and there is hope for a significant improvement in the coming years. On July 17th, 2019 executives of the 14 largest Japanese companies signed a document to emphasize the commitment to reach 30% of women on company boards by 2030⁸³. The issue is not only about management positions, but also the inability to create a good workplace environment for women to come back to their jobs after having had children. This phenomenon has prompted many women to return to work on part-time contracts. From an economic and social point of view, the transition to part-time work takes place particularly after the birth of the first child. Even when women have started a career, the situation of many women is similar when they return to work after maternity leave. In addition to the difficulty of finding a full-time job after the birth of their first child, since the Japanese tax system reward families where one of the two has a lower annual salary than the other, Japanese women are further motivated to limit their career in favour of their husbands (Nagase et al., 2017; Raymo et al., 2017).

One more difficulty lies instead in the workplace, where FFGs are hired. Usually the selection process is carried out by human resources without the help of managers from

⁸¹ The reform of *Womenomics*, promoted by the Abe government in 2013 and introduced in 2014, had as its primary objective to improve the stagnant economy of Japan through the employment of more women in different sectors. The reform included plans for an increase in women's positions at the top of large companies and a general economic empowerment of Japanese women, driven to take on roles of higher responsibilities.

⁸² The scandal surrounding Tokyo Medical School erupted in 2018, when the prestigious medical school admitted that it had tampered with the results of entry tests since about 2006. The tampering consisted in reducing by about 20% all the scores obtained by the candidates and then adding 20 points only to the male candidates. The school explained that they had committed such tampering in order to have fewer female doctors who would shorten or terminate their careers after having children. Source available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/08/tokyo-medical-school-admits-changing-results-to-exclude-women>

⁸³ "30 Percent Club launches Japan chapter to raise women's presence on company boards". (2019). The Japan Times. Available at: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/05/06/business/30-percent-club-launches-japan-chapter-raise-womens-presence-company-boards/#.Xjbpmy-b5QI>

lower departments who may not understand the need to hire foreigners and who may not know how to behave in the presence of them. To stem this problem, Conrad et al. (2019) suggest facilitating the integration of new employees by providing training for colleagues and/or supervisors to better manage cultural diversity. From the analysis carried out we can therefore understand what the greatest difficulties in hiring foreign new graduates are. From a company value point of view, those who already know the characteristics of Japanese society and corporate culture could adapt more quickly to the working environment. However, the factors that frighten foreign workers and risk causing high turnover in Japanese companies are the lack of transparency and communication, the lack of clarity on the content of the work to be done, the issue of gender equality, and the issue of overwork (Yu and Meyer-Ohle, 2008). Especially in a Generation Y that sees gender equality in the workplace (such as the adequate maternal and paternal leave, fair vacation arrangements, pensions, and benefits) and above all the balance between private and professional life as fundamental values, Japanese companies that intend to hire young foreigners must pay particular attention to these factors that can highly influence the relationship between colleagues and between employee and superior, but especially the ability to make the Japanese human resources management system attractive to foreign graduates interested in working in Japan or in Japanese firms (Keeley, 2001; Kopp, 1994). As pointed out by Conrad et al. (2019: 2538), “we find Japanese companies on the way to what we might like to call an attenuated ethnocentric model that is characterized by a growing number of non-Japanese employees working in Japanese headquarters, yet still following the established Japanese work paradigm”. In order to increase the number of employees and the quality of work, especially if the aim is to include more foreign recent graduates, it will be necessary to make changes in the working environment with regard to the factors mentioned above and to prepare Japanese employees for inter-cultural exchange.

4.3 Case study: UNIQLO Manager Candidate Programme

In order to analyze more closely the opportunities for employee integration in Japanese companies, I decided to take the UNIQLO Manager Candidate Programme as a case study, a programme for new graduates to facilitate entry into the company. Uniqlo is one of the world's giants of Japanese clothing, founded in 1949 in Ube, Yamaguchi prefecture. Currently Uniqlo has nearly 1250 stores worldwide, most of which are

located in Japan, Greater China (including the HK and Taiwan territories), South Korea and South East Asia. Since 2001 Uniqlo has also arrived in Europe, first in the United Kingdom, then expanding into France, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark and since September 13th also in Italy⁸⁴. Uniqlo is part of the Fast Retailing group, which according to estimates made last November 2019 is the second largest global apparel manufacturer and retailer in the world after the Inditex group (owner of brands such as Zara, Mango, Stradivarius)⁸⁵. Initially born under the name of “Ogori Shoji”, the company whose head is Tadashi Yanai began as a clothing store for men only, arriving in 1984 in Hiroshima and in 1998 in Tokyo, in the Harajuku district. Over the course of twenty years Uniqlo has been the protagonist of a rapid worldwide expansion, thanks to its brand concept, mission, and business model. The “Lifewear” concept is one of Uniqlo's fundamental traits: the philosophy rejects disposable garments, promoting a system to enhance the quality of the clothes made and the raw materials used. For this reason, many investments are made in research and development, especially with regards to the creation of the two main lines like Heattech and Airism⁸⁶. A strong distinguishing feature of the company, especially in recent years, has been its strong attention to environmental sustainability and ethics. In fact, there are many programmes of clothing recycling and of clothing support for people in need. During the Tōhoku earthquake, the Fast Retailing group was active in clothing and monetary contributions, donating clothes and 300,000 pieces of Heattech clothing worth about 700 million yen⁸⁷. Uniqlo's success and the strong attention to the materials used is possible especially thanks to its business model (Fig. 34), which has allowed it to be the first company in Japan to adopt a SPA-type model, acronym that designates a specialized retailer producing clothing under its own brand. The business model adopted goes from

⁸⁴ The all above-mentioned information can be found in the official website of UNIQLO, available at:

https://www.uniqlo.com/jp/corp/corp_about.html

⁸⁵ “Industry Ranking”, updated to 18. 10.2019. Fast Retailing. Available at:

<https://www.fastretailing.com/eng/ir/direction/position.html>

⁸⁶ “Brand Concept”, UNIQLO. Available at: <https://www.uniqlo-europe-careers.com/who-we-are/#brand-concept>

⁸⁷ “Fast Retailing Efforts for the Earthquake in Japan”, updated to 14.03.2011. Fast Retailing. Available at: <https://www.fastretailing.com/eng/sustainability/news/1103141600.html>

the creation of the garments through production to distribution, always focusing on customer satisfaction⁸⁸.

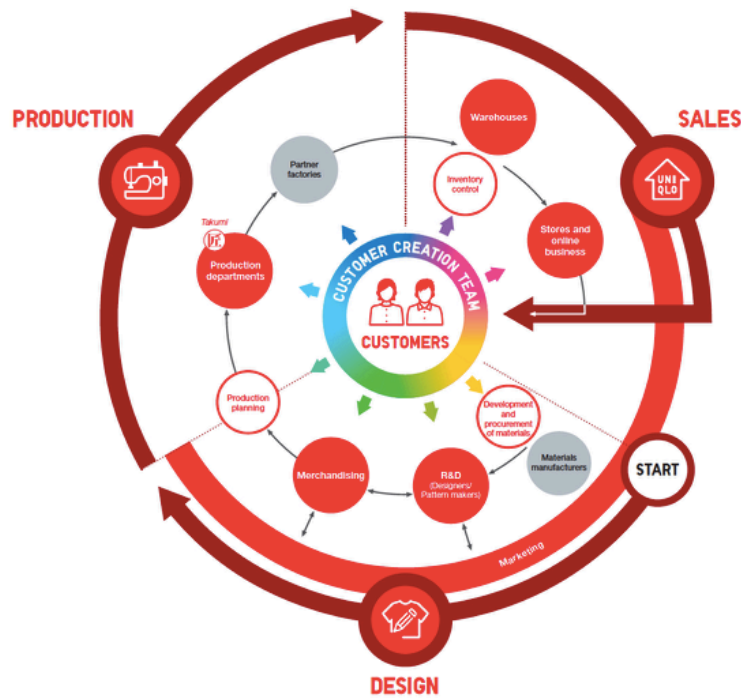


Figure 34: Uniqlo's Business Model

The attention to the customer is testified by the importance Uniqlo gives to its physical sale points: customer care in the store is the fundamental philosophy implemented. The Japanese value of *omotenashi*⁸⁹ is carried out by the sales staff, guaranteeing excellent service in the store. In order to understand in their entirety the values behind the company and the true functioning of the business, new graduates are trained on shop floors. In support of this philosophy, Aoki (1988) states that at the shop floor level, workers' skills are developed step by step. The work process is divided into several tasks and new graduates who arrive without experience are given easier jobs. Koike (1987) states how this kind of preparation can be extremely useful to identify emergencies and malfunctioning: a wide experience in the field allows workers to develop

⁸⁸ “Uniqlo Business Model”, updated to 31.01.2019. Fast Retailing. Available at: <https://www.fastretailing.com/eng/group/strategy/uniqlobusiness.html>

⁸⁹ “The *omotenashi* in Japan has very big significance that is to fulfill the guest’s requirements by presenting super services from the core of the heart without expectation of any return, and the ability to actualize that idea into action”. Source taken from: Belal, H. M., Shirahada, K., & Kosaka, M. (2013). Value co-creation with customer through recursive approach based on Japanese Omotenashi service. *International Journal of Business Administration*, 29.

skills to cope with sudden situations in addition to the abilities needed to administer day-to-day operations. Aoki (1988) points out that since the mid-1960s, Japanese companies have been delegating control of work at shop floor level. This is also the basis for Uniqlo's idea that each store manager is a separate entrepreneur, the head of his business and his store. The philosophy of *zeninkeiei* (lit. everyone is a manager) emphasizes precisely the fact that each member of the company is a manager with his or her own business spirit. The store manager administrates the shop floor level as if it were a separate enterprise, making decisions by consulting with the HQ but having decisional power. This decision-making model has been particularly implemented in Japanese companies that see the decision-making process as "participatory and consensual, with the initiative coming from lower levels" (Lincoln et al., 1987: 299). This model reflects the tendency of Japanese management to assign responsibilities to the group rather than just the individual. In particular, the system defined as *ringi decision-making process*⁹⁰ allows decisions to be made through a process that can start with a low-medium manager that suggests a change within the system. In doing so, the organization provides a delegation of authority to the lower management level, increasing the perception that an internal change can actually take place. The factors analyzed so far can also be put into practice in my chosen case study. To allow a complete preparation for new employees, Uniqlo has launched worldwide the Uniqlo Manager Candidate (UMC) Programme, a graduate programme that trains new employees to become store managers. The course is divided into three different phases for the duration of one year. Another factor that emerges in this programme is the job rotation, intended as "working at different tasks or in different positions for set periods of time" (Jorgensen et al, 2005: 1723). Uniqlo's Graduate Programme is divided into three phases: the first three months the candidate will work as sales advisor, acquiring the basis to maintain adequate standards in the store, from 3 to 6 months they will work as supervisor, acting as a model for newcomers and starting the training of new resources, from 7 to 12 months the candidate will hold the position of Assistant Manager, dealing with sales and profit, inventory, floor layouts, manhours and so on, with the fundamental idea that the on-the-job training technique supports the

⁹⁰ The word *ringi* can be divided into two parts: by *rin*, we intend "submitting a proposal to one's superiors and receiving their approval," and by *gi*, "deliberations and decisions." A general definition can be "obtaining approval on a proposed matter through the vertical, and sometimes horizontal, circulation of documents to the concerned members in the organization". Sasaki, Naoto, Management and Industrial Structure in Japan. 1981, Oxford, England: Pergamon Press, 57.

principle of “learning by practical experience” (Ho et al., 2009: 118). The positions held are therefore different and require the development of different skills. Uniqlo's idea to promote a programme for future managers based on the diversification of teaching was theorized by Eguchi (2005), who believes that rotation can be fundamental for the development of new managers. A progressive career requires very serious levels of experience, acquired through different tasks, new meetings, and above all new challenges that allow to achieve more effective results when compared with outdoor training or orientation programmes (Campion et al., 1994). Moreover, as pointed out by Gallagher and Einhorn (1976), job rotation makes it possible to contribute to managerial decisions on several levels thanks to the knowledge acquired through experience in production processes. Another factor that characterizes Uniqlo's graduate programme is the feeling of being important within the company and having the perception of making decisions related to the future of the company. These two factors increase the level of commitment and motivation in the workplace. According to Eriksson and Ortega (2006: 654), the three theories on job rotation are based on the concepts of “employee learning”, “employer learning” and “employee motivation”. “Employee learning” implies that through the continuous change of functions and tasks, the employee takes on a deeper understanding of different aspects of the business, which allow for the training of future managers. “Employer learning” theory, on the other hand, is based on the fact that through the continuous change of tasks by the employee, the supervisor can better understand the actual skills and talents of the employee. Through this observation, the supervisor can also understand whether certain tasks are difficult for all or just a few and then change the way the task is implemented to make it easier for them. The last one is “employee motivation” (Fig. 35), according to which job rotation makes it possible to perform interesting tasks and to keep employee motivation high. Developing functional flexibility in employees helps to lay the foundations for a senior management position: by gaining a thorough knowledge of various parts of the business and being able to put their skills into practice in different fields, employees develop a multidisciplinary sense that allows them to hold higher positions within the company (Jorgensen et al., 2005; Kaymaz, 2010). As seen in Eriksson and Ortega's theory, motivation is a key factor in reducing turnover. Adomi (2006: 66) supports the previous theory underlining how “moving from one position to another for set periods results in mobility, new skills, a new working environment, new social dialogue, new experiences, new professional fields, removes the

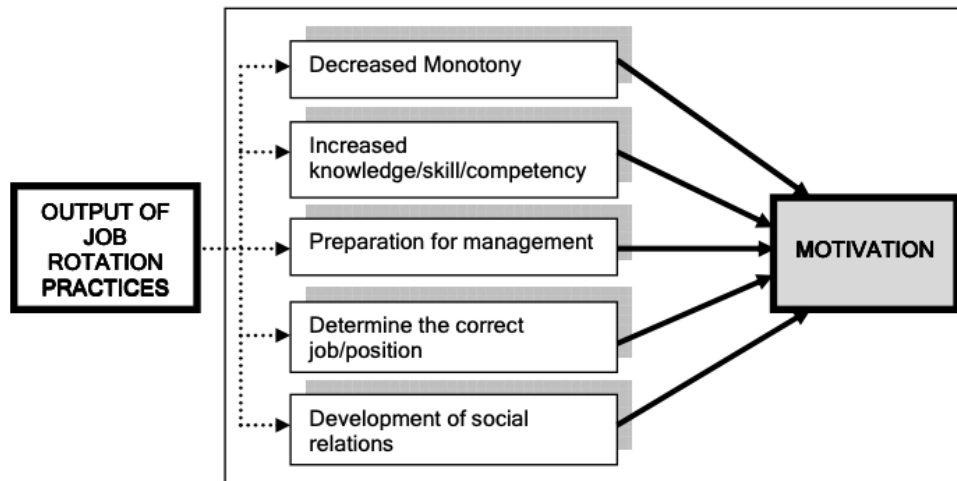


Figure 35: Conceptual Framework of Job Rotation Practices, Kaymaz (2010).

employee from going through the same motions for long periods of time, and increases morale and motivation”. Regarding this graduate programme, another factor influencing motivation is the fast promotion from one level to the next. The transition from one function to the next takes place every three months only after passing the intermediate exams that allow the managers to check the state of preparation of the candidates. In addition to field experience, those who take part in this graduate programme must attend eleven days of frontal lessons, in which the theoretical procedures to be adopted on the shop floor are illustrated. The lessons focus on topics such as marketing, visual merchandising, store operations, etc., and take place through Uniqlo's training and development system. The FRMIC (Fast Retailing Management and Innovation Center) was born with the goal of developing managerial talent around the world. Thanks to this center, candidates can follow the above-mentioned lessons and take part in innovative training as well as in key management projects⁹¹. The process of promotion to store manager in a 12-month-programme goes against the traditional thinking of promotion within Japanese companies, but incorporates the concept of career advancement and promotion opportunities required on the job market by Generation Y. According to the literature on management of Japanese companies, it is stressed that late promotion in the workplace is a rather widespread pattern, stemmed from lateral job rotation that allows a variation in terms of tasks and experience (Owan, 2004; Aoki, 1988; Lincoln et al., 1987). As pointed out by Owan (2004), an early promotion increases the market value of the

⁹¹ “Personnel Development”. (2013). Fast Retailing. Available at: <http://prd01-tky-web-main-fastretailing-62349252.ap-northeast-1.elb.amazonaws.com/eng/csr/employee/career.html>

worker, who will be led to seek new experiences in other companies. On the other hand, "late promotion induces low outside option values to able workers" (Owan, 2004: 956).

In the case of Uniqlo, it is not only the programme that is characterized by fast promotion, but also within the company itself the possibilities for advancement are numerous. During my internship in the human resources department I was able to see that the possibility of internal promotion is high: the reasons that push managers to make this choice are mainly previous knowledge of the values and ways of working in the company by employees, who in many cases enter directly after completing their studies, and the wealth of knowledge acquired. In fact, promoting an employee from another department allows to increase the skills previously acquired without dwelling on training in values, thus wasting less time and increasing productivity. The career possibilities of the programme illustrated here refer to quite high positions also at HQ level, as can be seen in Figure 36.

A problem that we analyzed in the previous paragraph and that is also present in Uniqlo is the ethnocentric approach, according to which the highest positions at management level are held by Japanese personnel. Especially in foreign offices, such as Uniqlo Europe, the highest positions of area manager and general manager are held almost exclusively by expatriate managers that act as Japanese parent-country nationals (Sekiguchi, 2016). Following this ethnocentric approach, host country nationals in foreign offices are usually

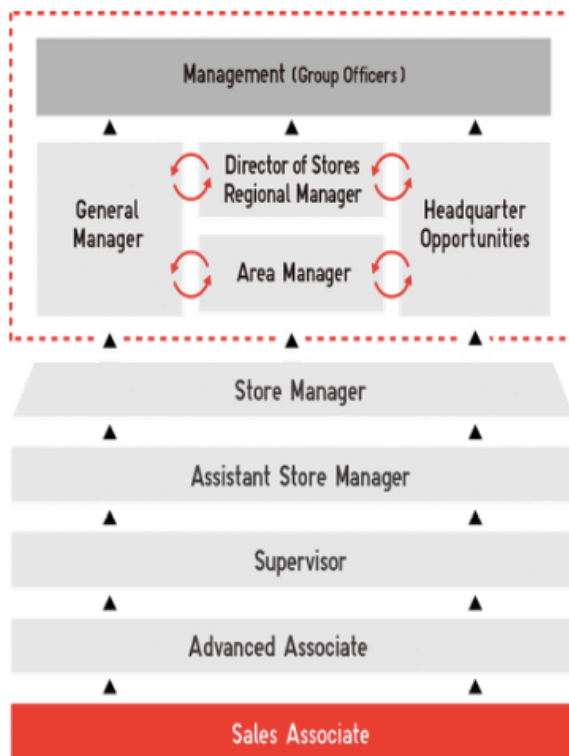


Figure 36: Example of career advancement in UNIQLO

excluded from management and global talent pool programmes. Despite this point that will certainly need to be improved, the Fast Retailing group is showing clear signs of change towards a wider internalization. First and foremost, the drive towards the use of the English language in the workplace and the recognition of English as the official language of the company. This phenomenon, defined as "Englishnization" (Sekiguchi, 2016: 98), has also been adopted by other companies in recent years such as Rakuten, Nissan and Nippon Sheet

Glass. In addition, since last year Uniqlo has promoted programmes such as the Global Management Programme, which allows talented young people around the world to participate in a week of training and business discussion at Uniqlo's HQ in Tokyo. This event allows international talent to be recruited to Uniqlo's various HQs around the world, with a special focus on HQ in Japan. The above-mentioned case study of the UMC Programme is an example of how the Japanese management system has adapted to the needs of the Generation Y, maintaining the main features such as job rotation, employment of new graduates, importance of the shop floor and career advancement starting from sales, implementation of a training system based on field experience, and frontal courses and classes. On the other hand, we find fast career advancement and a strong tendency towards clear and transparent communication, based on objective evaluation systems such as written exams. From a purely corporate point of view, Uniqlo represents the Japanese giant that seeks globalization without losing its identity as a Japanese company: the question of ethnocentrism must be overcome, in order to allow talented local managers to enter high management positions. In addition, the internalization factor brings substantial benefits to the business despite the initial difficulties. As well as the desire to involve foreign new graduates, solutions should be implemented to attract them to work within HQ: language difficulties and communication skills can be overcome with additional English and Japanese language courses, encouraging a fruitful exchange of ideas and innovative management methods, especially aimed at the insertion and understanding of new graduates belonging to Generation Y, and soon, Z.

Conclusion

The themes dealt with in this thesis have been analyzed from different points of view, in order to reflect poignantly on the different facets of the issues presented. The reference literature has been analyzed in the first chapter, where a description has been made from the behavioural and professional point of view of Generation Y. Although it should be emphasized how difficult it is to find a continuous pattern of characteristics that support one another in all cases, scholars on the subject suggest how historical and economic factors have influenced Generation Y in a similar way. Strong changes in the world such as globalization, the advent of technology, the fall of physical and economic borders on European territory, as well as freedom of movement, have changed the way we perceive everyday life, especially working life, so that Generation Y stands out from previous generations. Values such as gender equality and environmental sustainability are the cornerstones upon which the choice of employment company is made, symbolizing a generation close to human rights and environmental movements. In fact, many people have stated in the research presented in chapter 3 that agreeing with the values carried out by the company is fundamental. In addition to external factors regarding a company's values, data and literature confirm a strong interest in balancing professional and private life. Part of the satisfaction for the work done comes from achieving a balance between the two realities. In this regard, aspects such as maternity and paternity leave, benefits, pensions and fair holiday arrangements also appear among the most important factors in choosing a company. Together with these, the ability to learn day after day and to conduct interesting and useful work are considered more important than good pay. What emerges from the research is the image of a generation eager to learn and do a job that stimulates them mentally, with the possibility to travel and always discover something new. These considerations apply especially to Japanese students in Europe who have shown that they are open to travel (having spent a large percentage of their time abroad, whether studying, working or through internship) and to challenges in the workplace. Their expectations in the workplace remain in line with those analyzed in the literature in chapter 1, with a further international push. Among them, many candidates would be willing to work in Japan, in roles such as managers, professors, researchers, translators, interpreters. The mastery of the Japanese language at very high levels (see percentages on JLPT) allows these young people to hold different positions within Europe and Japan. As we have seen in chapter 2, the relationship between Japan

and Europe, both historically and economically, is constantly developing. The signing of treaties such as the EPA in 2019 have allowed an increase in exports as well as an increase in figures that can facilitate intercultural communication between the two. As we have seen in chapter 4, Japanese companies have adopted strong internationalization policies in recent decades to expand their business and to include non-Japanese personnel within their headquarters and their foreign top management positions with the aim of developing a mutual exchange of knowledge, technologies and new management strategies. This choice has brought with it considerable difficulties especially with regard to intercultural communication between the various parties: as we have pointed out in chapter 2 and chapter 4, Japanese corporate culture and human resources management differ in various aspects from the style of European companies. For this reason, many companies have stated that there is a need for managers who have a thorough knowledge of Japanese language and Japanese corporate culture, and that there is a need to be open to non-Japanese staff who are able to relate to employees at home. Students of Japanese are therefore faced with numerous possibilities that in many cases match their ambitions. Many of them however also point out that they are undecided about the future, not showing any particular interests and dreams. This can be explained both by the large percentage of undergraduate students who answered the questionnaire and by the possibility that many students do not know exactly what their passion for Japan can lead to and do not know how they can use their knowledge. One thing emerges above all: the academic preparation and language level achieved by many of the interviewees bodes well for the European university education system, especially in regard to the level of self-evaluation. The language certification of the JLPT still remains unpopular, as most of those who have obtained the certification have achieved high levels such as N1, N2 and N3. This can be seen as an indication that given the large percentage of undergraduates and students who did not take the certification, most of those who attempt the exam do so at high levels during their graduate studies. One point that could be improved upon is the level of Business Japanese and the hours dedicated to this subject. Most participants spend between 0 and 30 hours a year on this subject. As seen in the results, many have also never seen hours of study dedicated to business in Japan.

In a professional world that is looking for more and more people who can act as intermediaries at managerial levels, even in Japanese companies, the in-depth knowledge of Japanese relational language is at the basis of the figure of the "bridge individuals" we talked about in the fourth chapter. To best perform the function of mediator between

international staff and Japanese staff it is therefore useful to know how to communicate fully with both.

In conclusion, the result that emerges is that of a generation that approaches the job market with great curiosity and desire to learn. Companies that have or will have to deal with these students must be ready to motivate and keep up the interest continuously, allowing new employees to perform different functions with solutions such as job rotation, internal mobility, or geographical mobility. More specifically, Japanese language students in Europe will be able to use their knowledge in different fields, both business and academic. Those who decide to work for a Japanese company should be aware of the differences between human resources management systems and especially of their important role as mediators. Further studies on the subject may concern those who are already working for Japanese companies or European companies; in this way the differences between the two management systems and the actual functions covered could be highlighted, to assess whether there is an adherence between expectations, ambitions, and working reality. Given the interest of many companies in expanding outwards, in particular to the European territory thanks to good economic prospects, the future of European students who are passionate about Japanese language, culture and society, seems bright.

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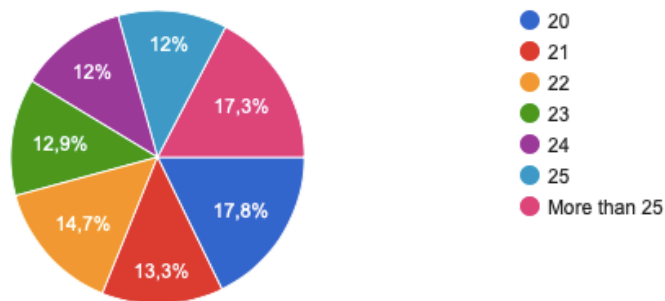
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Appendix

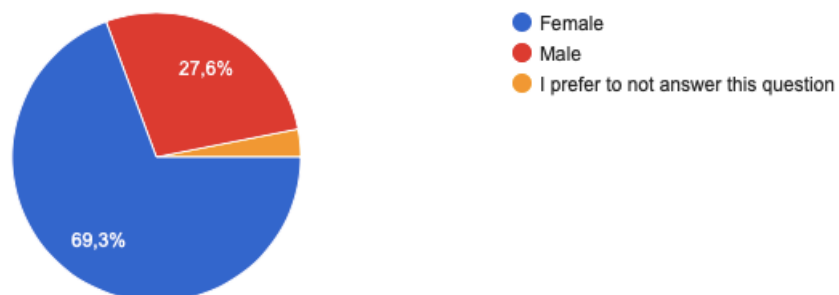
Age

225 risposte



Sex

225 risposte



Nationality

Austria	5,8%	Germany	5,3%	Poland	0
Belgium	2,2%	Greece	0	Portugal	0
Bulgaria	11,1%	Hungary	2,7%	Romania	0,4%
Croatia	0	Ireland	0	Slovakia	0,4%
Cyprus	0	Italy	24%	Slovenia	3,1%
Czech Republic	0	Latvia	0,9%	Spain	13,3%
Denmark	5,3%	Lithuania	0,4%	Sweden	0,4%
Estonia	2,7%	Luxembourg	0	United Kingdom	0,4%
Finland	3,1%	Malta	0	Other country outside EU	1,8%
France	11,6%	Netherlands	4,9%		

Native Language

Bulgarian	11,1%	German	11,1%	Polish	0
Croatian	0	Greek	0	Portuguese	0
Czech	0	Hungarian	2,7%	Romanian	0
Danish	5,3%	Irish	0	Slovak	0,4%
Dutch	6,7%	Italian	24,4%	Slovene	3,1%
English	0,4%	Latvian	0,9%	Spanish	12,9%
Estonian	2,2%	Lithuanian	0,4%	Sweden	0,4%
Finnish	3,1%	Maltese	0	Others outside EU	2,7%
French	12%				

Elementary/High School Country

Austria	6,2%	Germany	5,3%	Poland	0
Belgium	2,2%	Greece	0	Portugal	0
Bulgaria	10,7%	Hungary	2,7%	Romania	0%
Croatia	0	Ireland	0	Slovakia	0,4%
Cyprus	0	Italy	24,9%	Slovenia	3,1%
Czech Republic	0	Latvia	0,9%	Spain	12,9%
Denmark	5,3%	Lithuania	1,3%	Sweden	0,4%
Estonia	2,7%	Luxembourg	0	United Kingdom	0,4%
Finland	3,1%	Malta	0	Other country outside EU	2,2%
France	11,1%	Netherlands	4,4%		

Mother's Country of birth

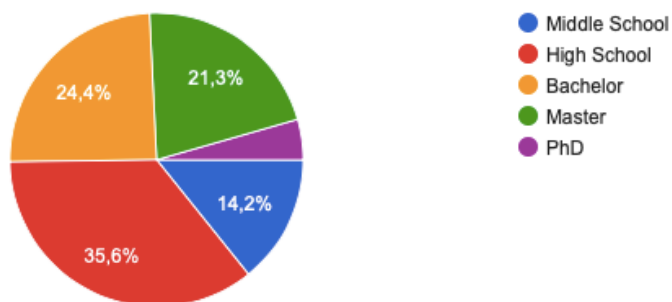
Austria	2,7%	Germany	5,8%	Poland	0,9%
Belgium	2,7%	Greece	0	Portugal	0
Bulgaria	11,1%	Hungary	2,7%	Romania	0,9%
Croatia	0	Ireland	0,4%	Slovakia	0,4%
Cyprus	0	Italy	24%	Slovenia	3,1%
Czech Republic	0	Latvia	0,9%	Spain	11,1%
Denmark	5,3%	Lithuania	0,4%	Sweden	0
Estonia	2,7%	Luxembourg	0	United Kingdom	0,9%
Finland	3,1%	Malta	0	Other country outside EU	5,8%
France	10,2%	Netherlands	4,9%		

Father's Country of birth

Austria	4,4%	Germany	4,4%	Poland	0
Belgium	2,2%	Greece	0	Portugal	0,4%
Bulgaria	11,1%	Hungary	2,7%	Romania	0,9%
Croatia	0,4%	Ireland	0	Slovakia	0,4%
Cyprus	0	Italy	24%	Slovenia	2,7%
Czech Republic	0	Latvia	0,4%	Spain	11,6%
Denmark	4,9%	Lithuania	0,4%	Sweden	0,4%
Estonia	2,7%	Luxembourg	0	United Kingdom	1,3%
Finland	3,6%	Malta	0	Other country outside EU	6,7%
France	10,2%	Netherlands	4,4%		

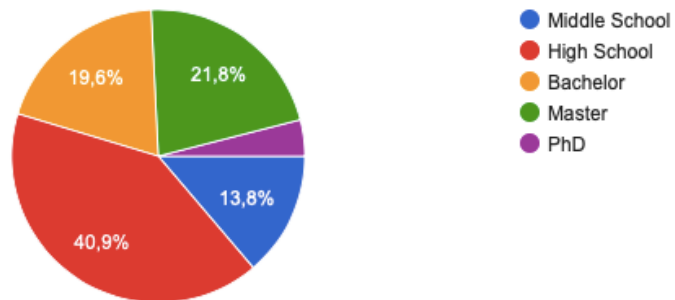
Mother's Level of education

225 risposte



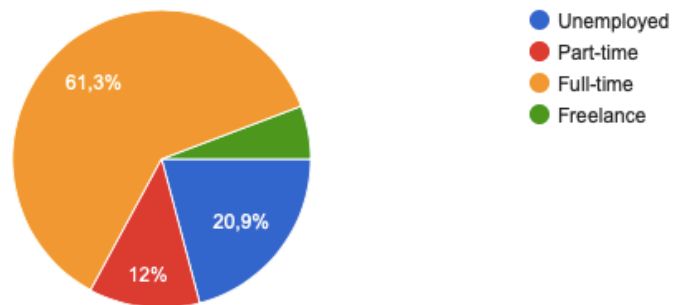
Father's Level of education

225 risposte



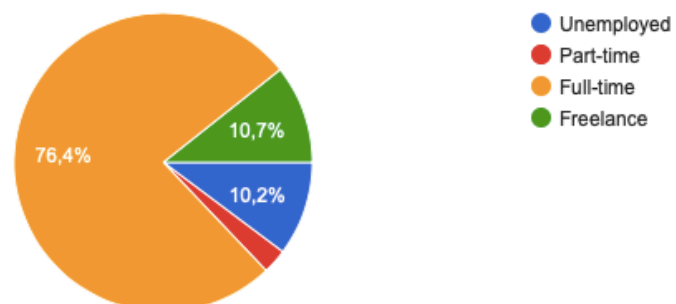
Mother's Job

225 risposte



Father's Job

225 risposte



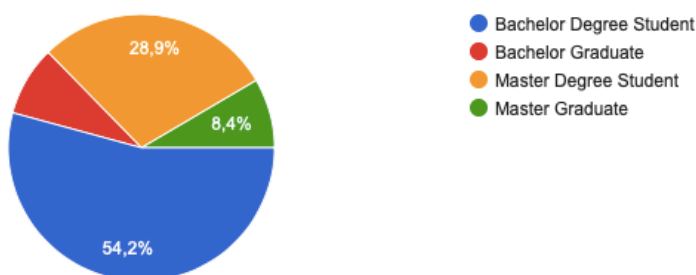
Current University

Aarhus University	0,4%	INALCO Paris	7,1%	Tallinn University	2,7%
Budapest Business School	0,4%	KU Leuven	1,3%	Universidad Autónoma de Madrid	0,4%
Ca' Foscari University of Venice	18,2%	La Sapienza University of Rome	1,3%	University of Catania	0,4%
Copenhagen University	4,9%	Latvijas Universitāte	0,9%	University of Firenze	0,4%
Eötvös Loránd University Budapest	1,8%	Leiden University	4,5%	University of Naples "L'Orientale"	0,9%
Freie Universität Berlin	1,3%	Ljubljana University	3,6%	Universität Wien	6,2%
Ghent University	0,4%	Lund University	0,9%	Université Paris 7	0,4%
Granada University	1,3%	Newcastle University	0,9%	Université d'Orléans	0,4%
Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf	3,6%	Salamanca University	11,5%	University of Oxford	1,3%
Helsinki University	2,6%	Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"	10,7%	University of Zurich	0,4%
IGR-IAE Rennes	4,5%	Stockholm University	0,4%	Zuyd University	0,4%

*The total sum does not give 100% given the presence of five respondents who entered the name of the Japanese university attended at the time of the survey.

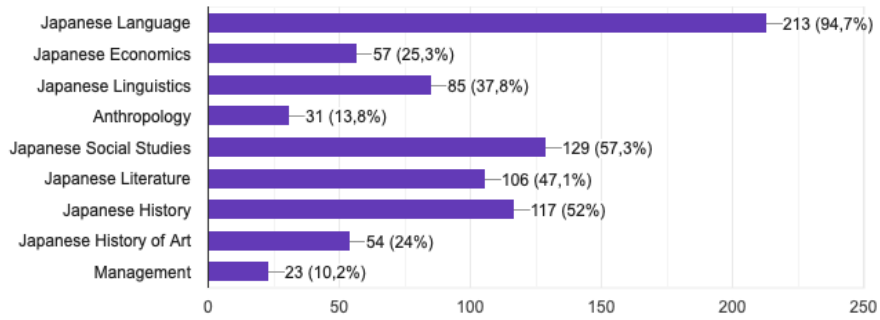
Level of Education

225 risposte



Field of Education (more than one answer)

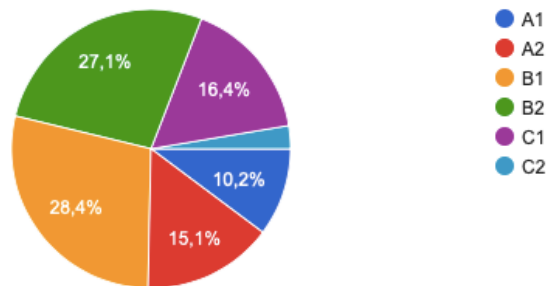
225 risposte



Self-evaluation about Level of proficiency in Spoken Japanese Language

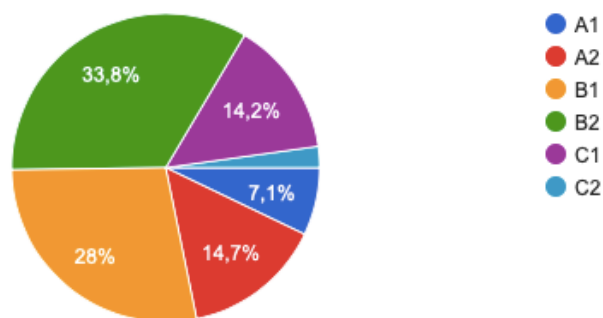
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>

225 risposte



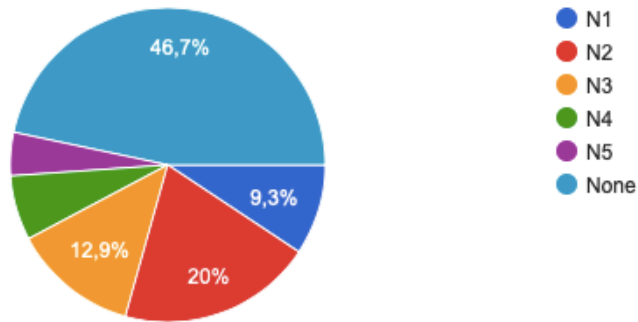
Self-evaluation about Level of proficiency in Written Japanese Language

225 risposte



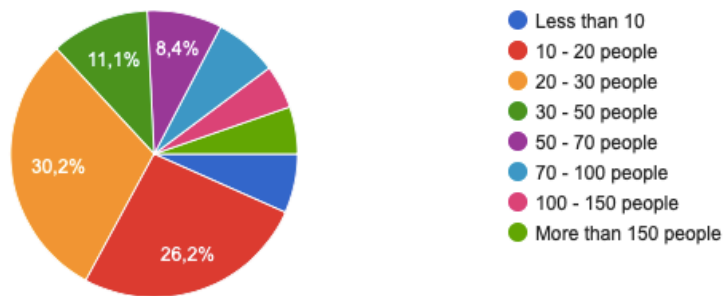
JLPT Certification

225 risposte



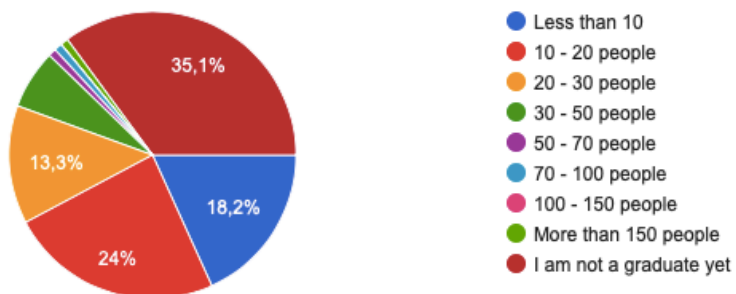
Average number of people in your undergraduate Japanese Language Classes (think of the most attended)

225 risposte



Average number of people in your graduate Japanese Language Classes (think of the most attended)

225 risposte



Main Textbook(s) used during your undergraduate degree

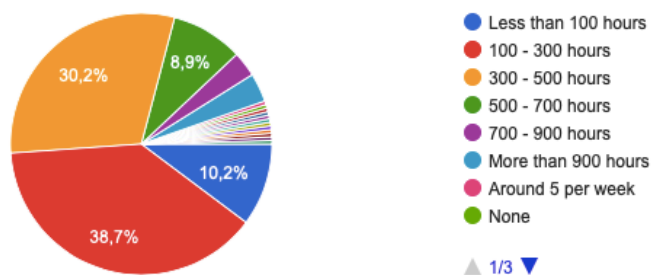
新文化初級日本語・新文化中級日本語	まるごと
とびら日本語	総まとめ
みんなの日本語 1・2	Corso di lingua giapponese (Hoepli)
できる日本語	J Bridge
げんき	Course in Modern Japanese
ひらけ日本語	New Approach Japanese
学ぼう日本語	University's material/Professor's notes

Main Textbook(s) used during your graduate degree

新文化中級日本語	まるごと
みんなの日本語 上級	総まとめ
文化へのまなざし	New Approach Japanese
できる日本語	完全マスター
げんき	ひらけ日本語
University's material/Professor's notes	No textbook

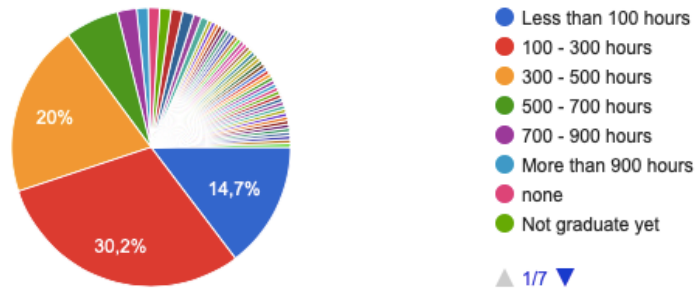
Total hours of Japanese Language Classes per year (Undergraduate, 3rd or 4th year)

225 risposte



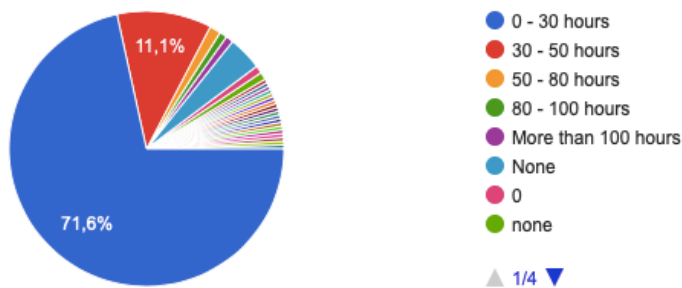
Total hours of Japanese Language Classes per year (Graduate, 2nd year)

225 risposte



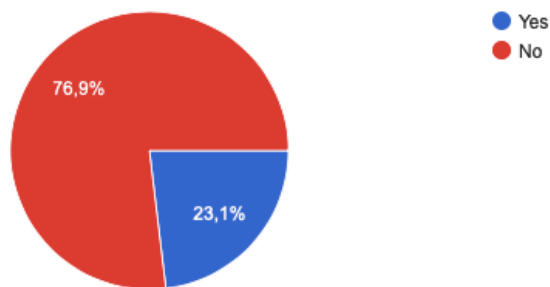
Total hours of Business Japanese Classes per year

225 risposte



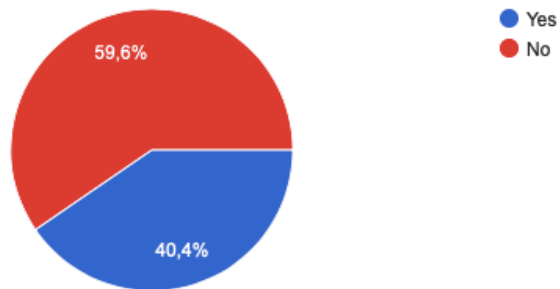
Have you ever heard about “democratic citizenship” or “critical awareness” during your Japanese Classes?

225 risposte



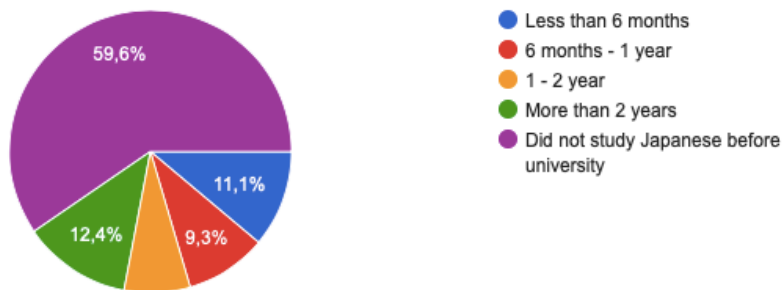
Did you study Japanese before university?

225 risposte



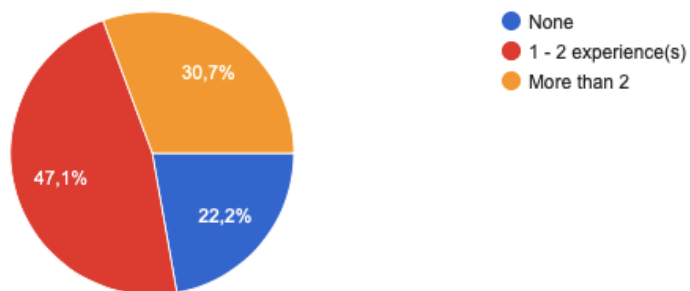
If yes, for how long?

225 risposte



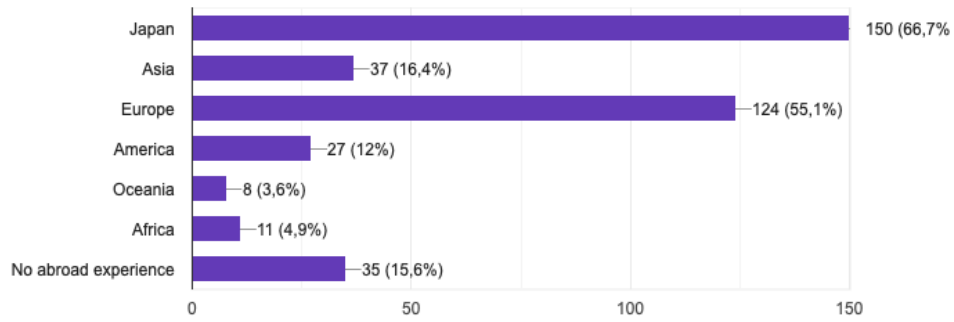
Abroad Experience(s)

225 risposte



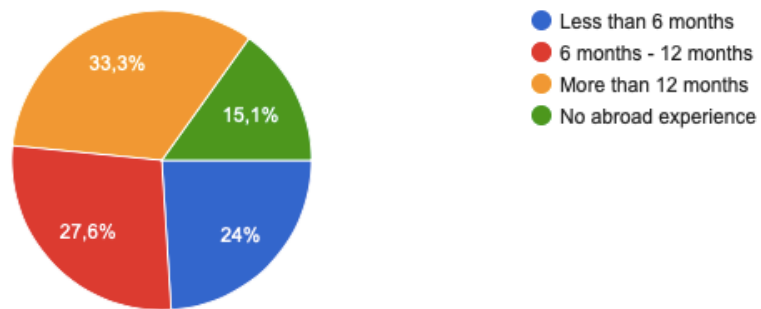
Abroad experience(s) country(ies)

225 risposte



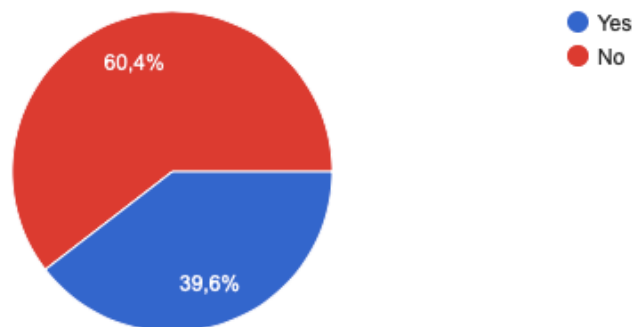
Time spent abroad (sum of different experiences)

225 risposte



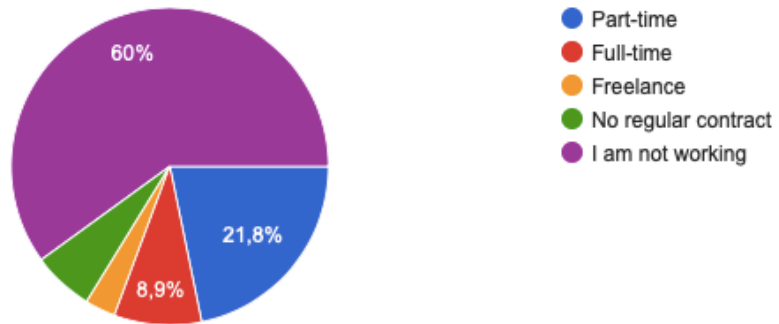
Are you working in this moment?

225 risposte



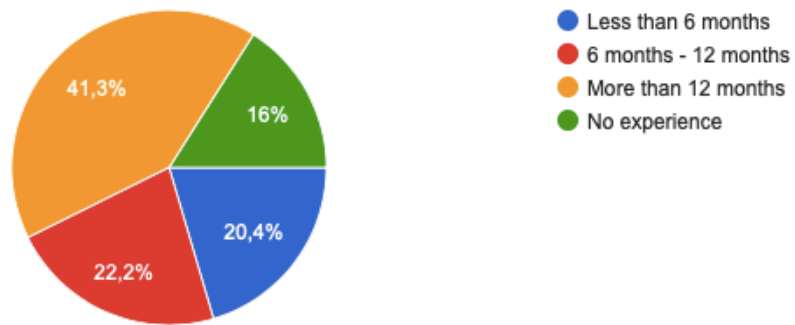
Current Work contract

225 risposte



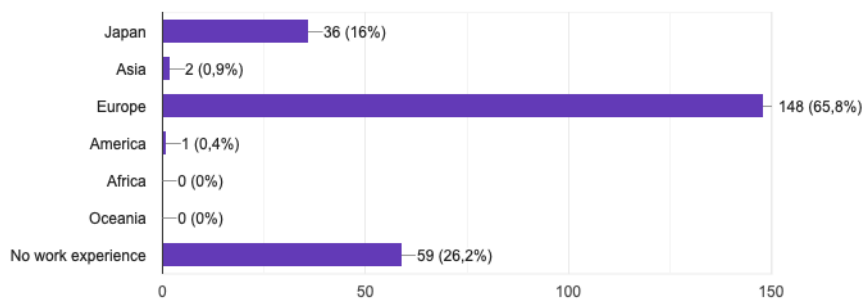
Total personal work experience

225 risposte



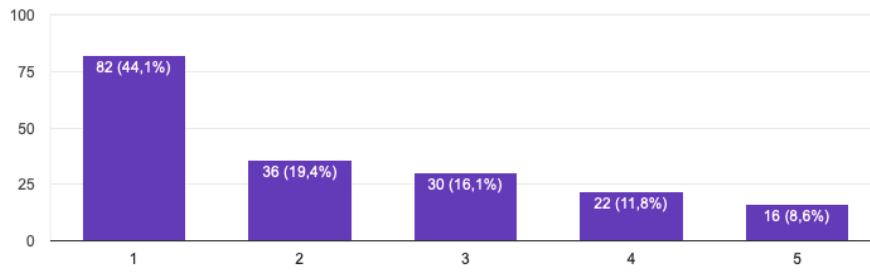
Geographical Location of current work experience

225 risposte



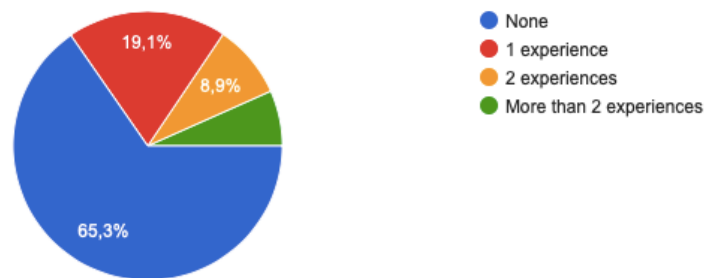
Is your current work experience related to your studies?

186 risposte



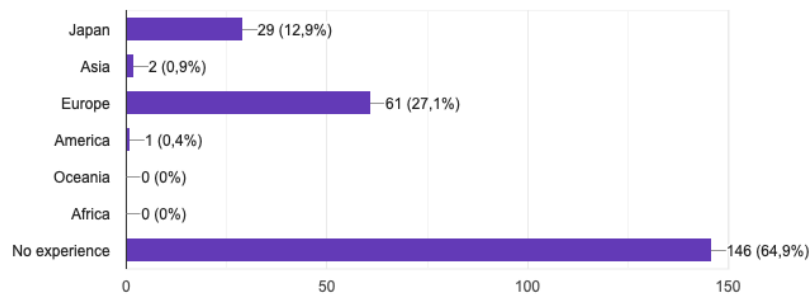
Internship Experience

225 risposte



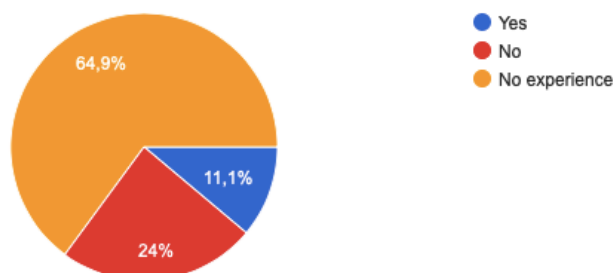
Location of your internship experience(s)

225 risposte



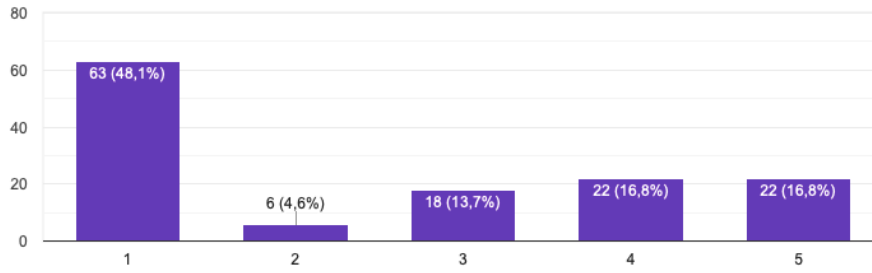
Did you conduct your internship in a Japanese multinational/NGO/smaller company?

225 risposte



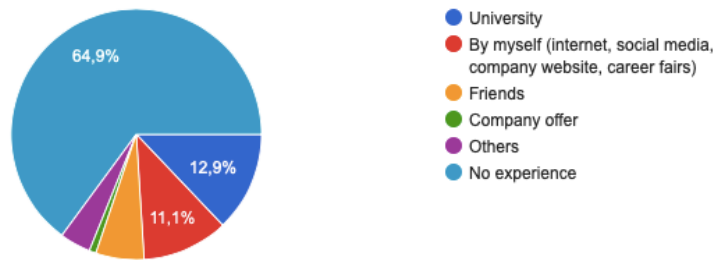
Is your internship experience related to your studies?

131 risposte



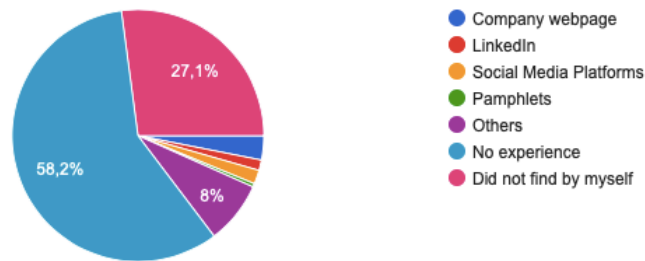
How did you find your internship?

225 risposte



If by yourself, where did you find it?

225 risposte

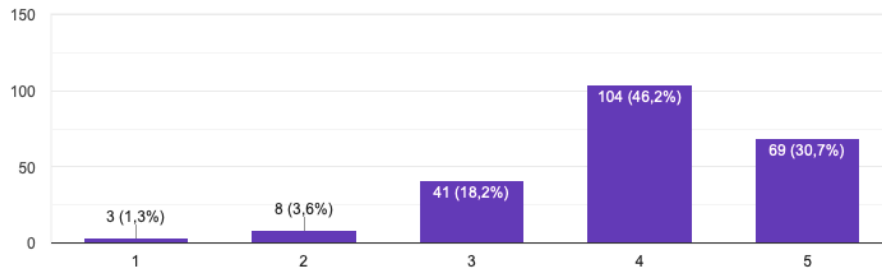


***All the following data in the Section “Job Expectations” describe the respondents’ interest in having certain values within the company where they wish to work on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 is the value expressing maximum interest.**

JOB EXPECTATIONS

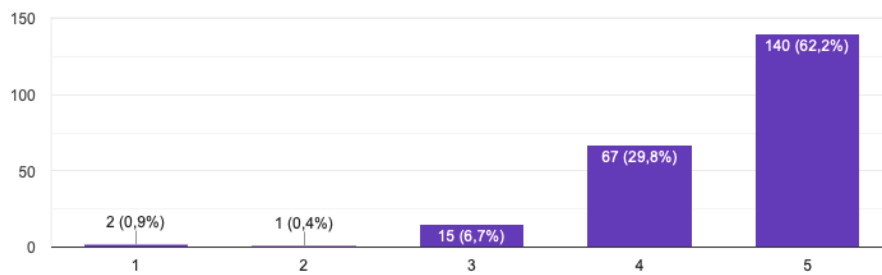
1. Steady Employment

225 risposte



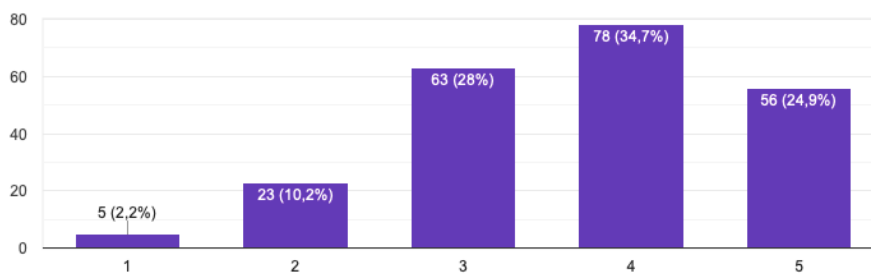
2. Respect for me as a person

225 risposte



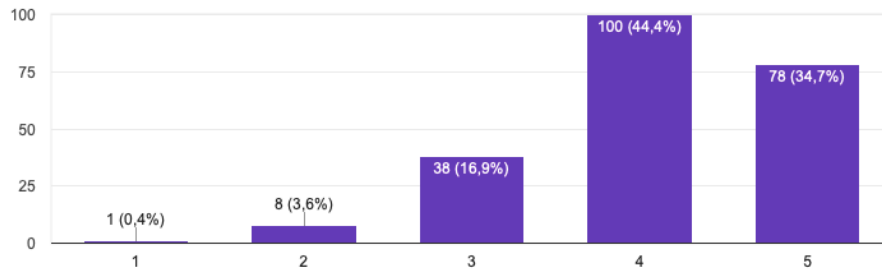
3. Adequate rest periods or coffee breaks

225 risposte



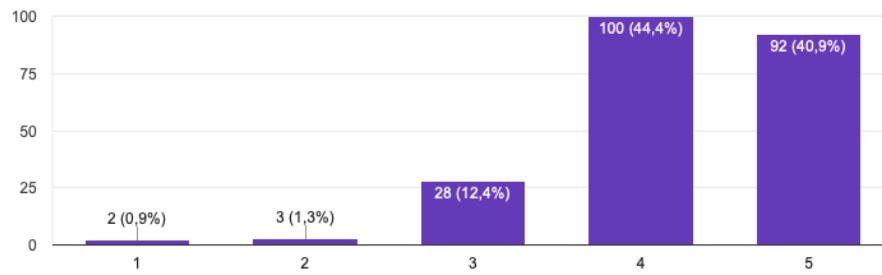
4. Good pay

225 risposte



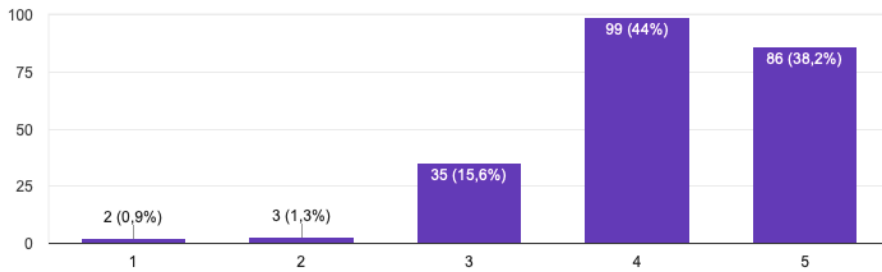
5. Good physical working conditions

225 risposte



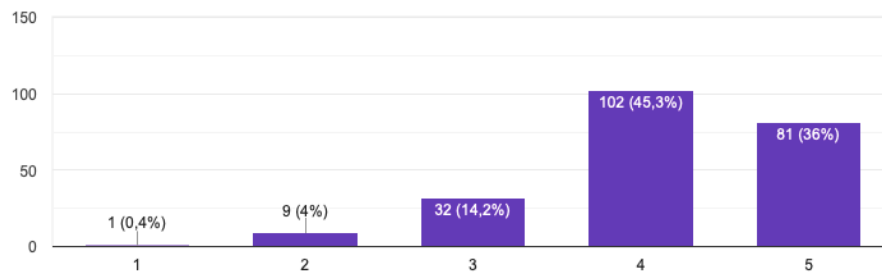
6. Chance to turn out quality work

225 risposte



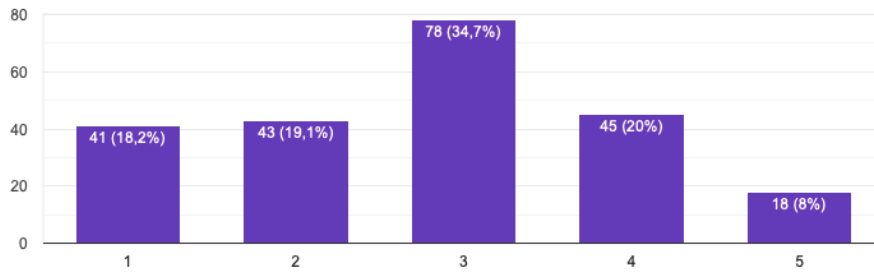
7. Getting along well with others on the job

225 risposte



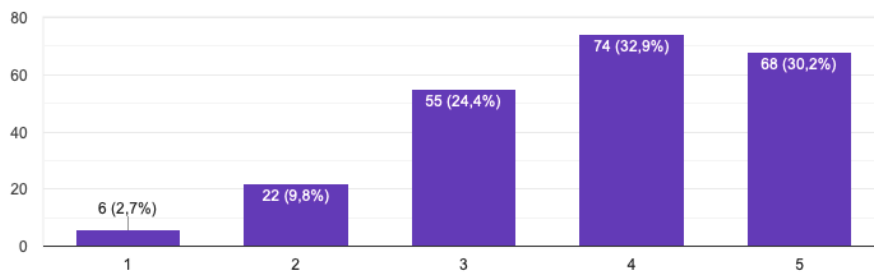
8. Having a local employee paper

225 risposte



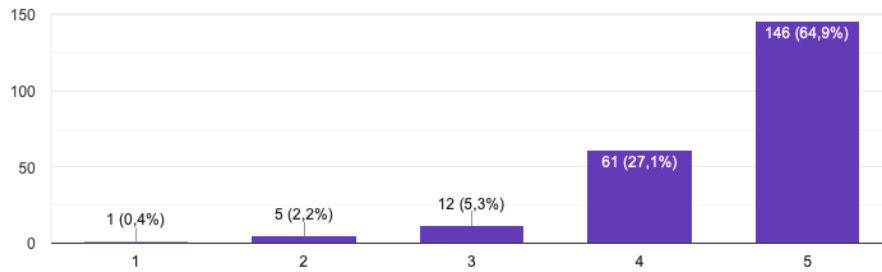
9. Chance for promotion

225 risposte



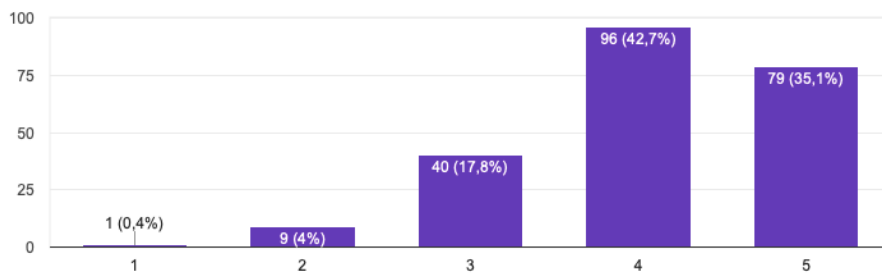
10. Opportunity to do interesting work

225 risposte



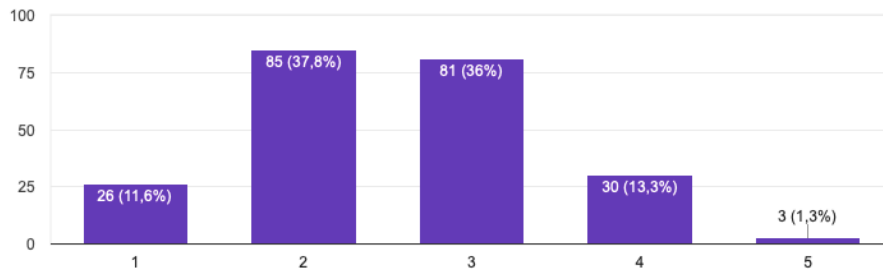
11. Pensions and other security benefits

225 risposte



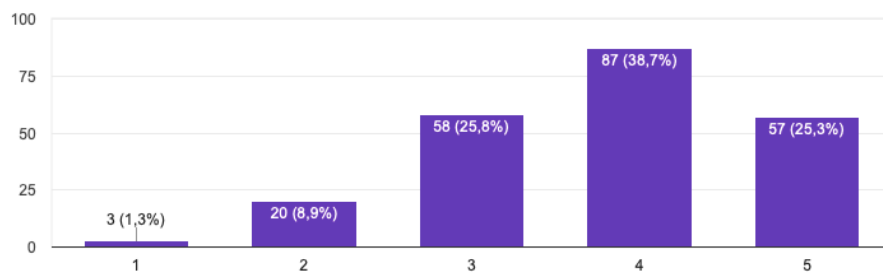
12. Not having to work too hard

225 risposte



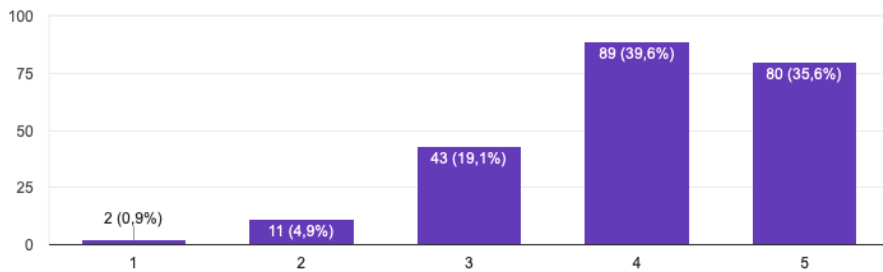
13. Knowing what is going on in the organization

225 risposte



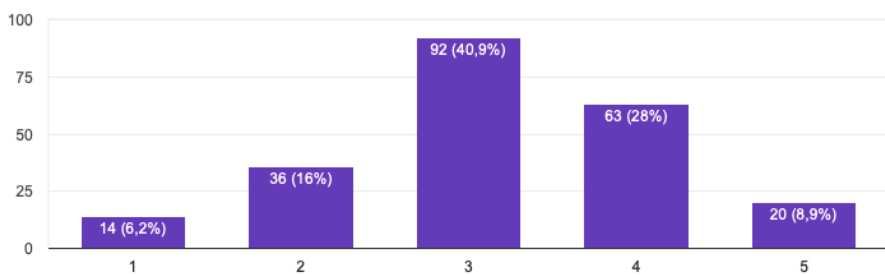
14. Feeling my job is important

225 risposte



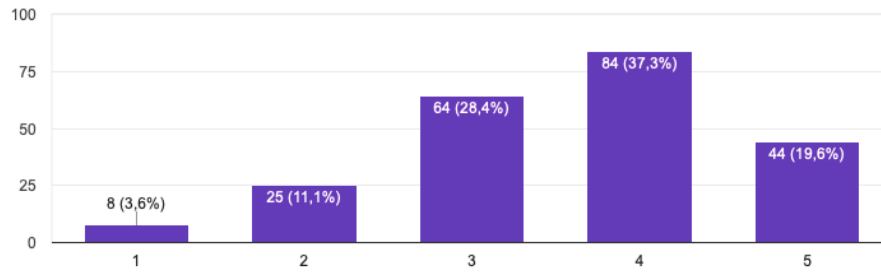
15. Having an employee council

225 risposte



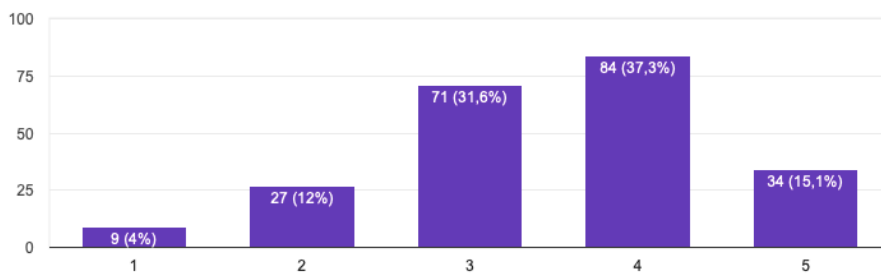
16. Having a written job description

225 risposte



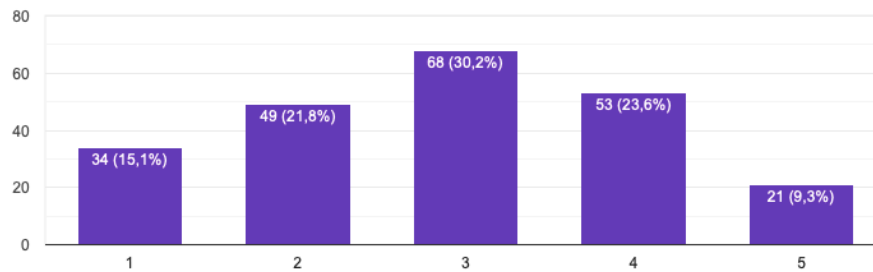
17. Being complimented by my boss when I do a good job

225 risposte



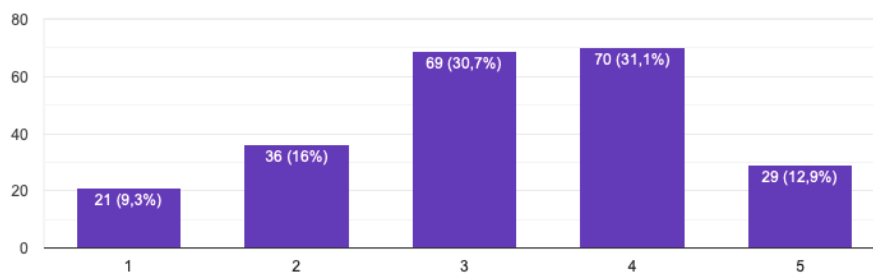
18. Getting a performance rating

225 risposte



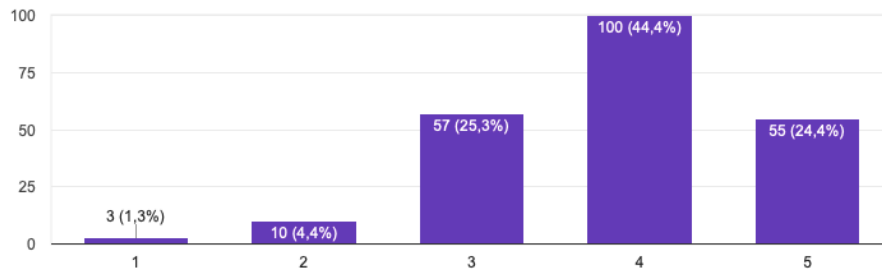
19. Attending staff meetings

225 risposte



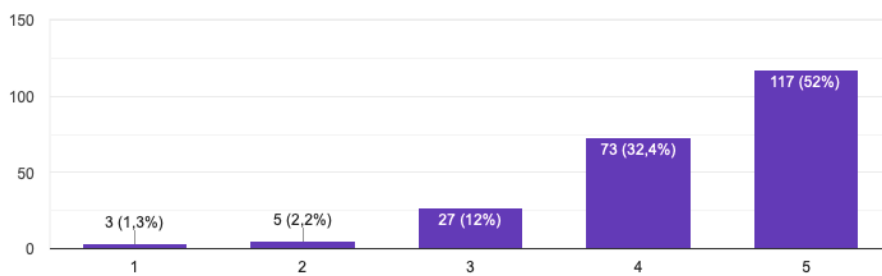
20. Agreement with the organization's objectives

225 risposte



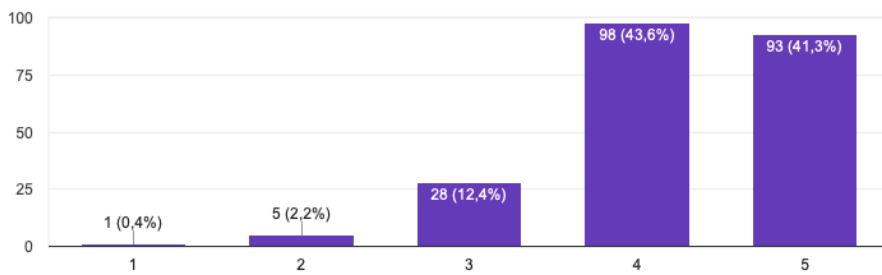
21. Opportunity for self-development and improvement

225 risposte



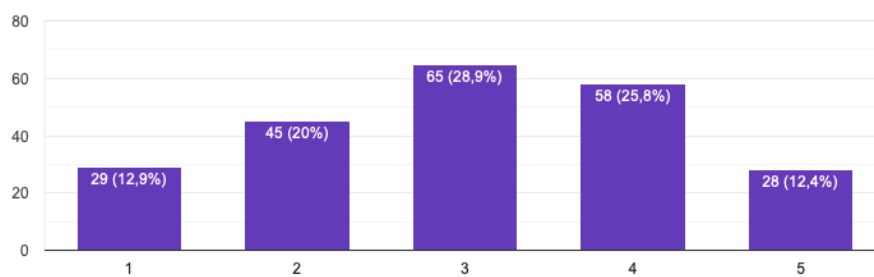
22. Fair vacation arrangements

225 risposte



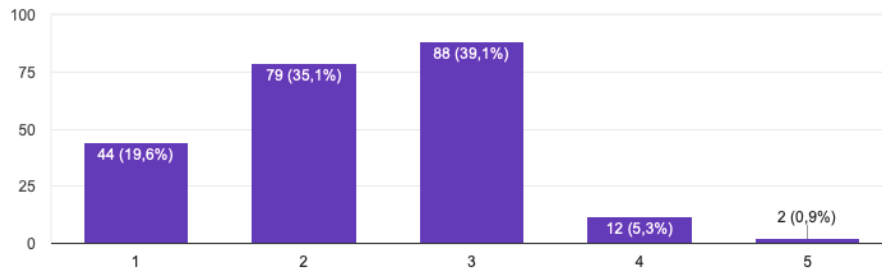
23. Knowing I will be disciplined if I do a bad job

225 risposte



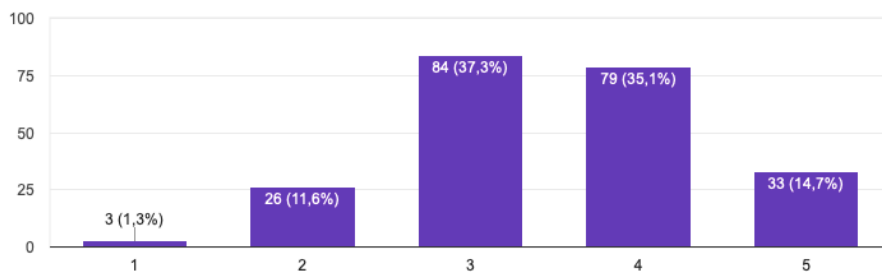
24. Working under close supervision

225 risposte



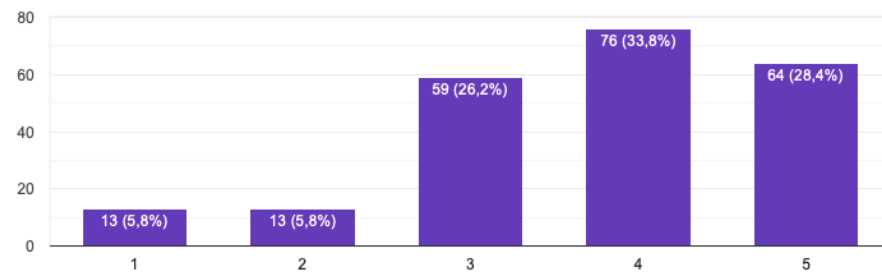
25. Large amount of freedom on the job

225 risposte



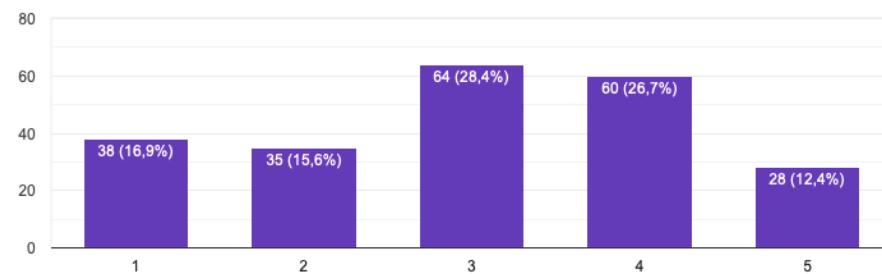
26. Use of Japanese Language in everyday's work

225 risposte



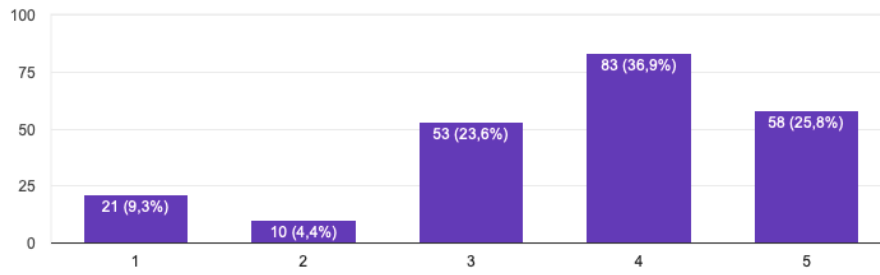
27. Working for a Japanese multinational

225 risposte



28. Working for a European company in Japan-relations department

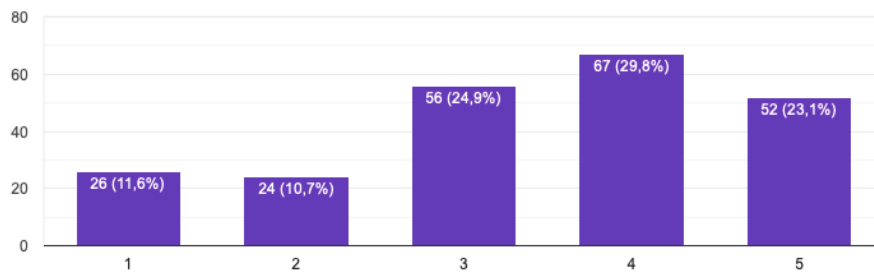
225 risposte



29. Working in Japan

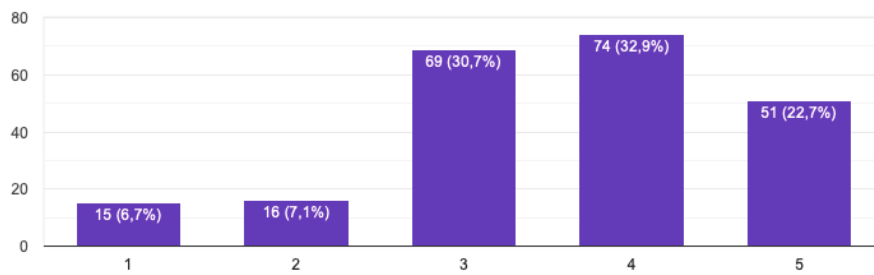


225 risposte



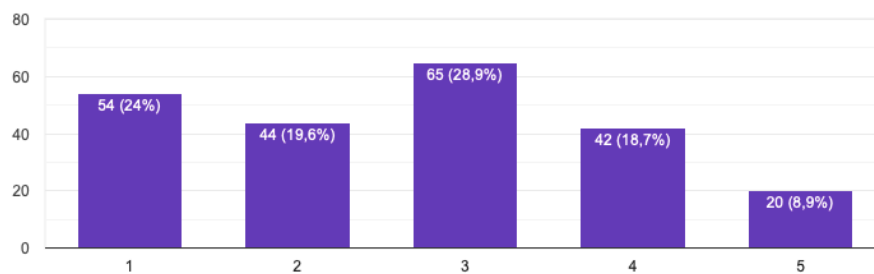
30. Working in a country of the European Union

225 risposte



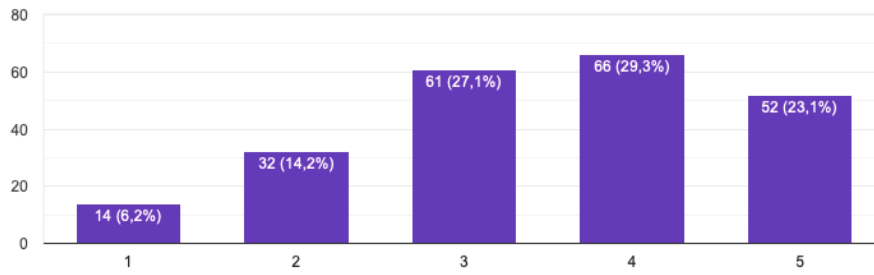
31. Working in another country outside Japan and EU

225 risposte



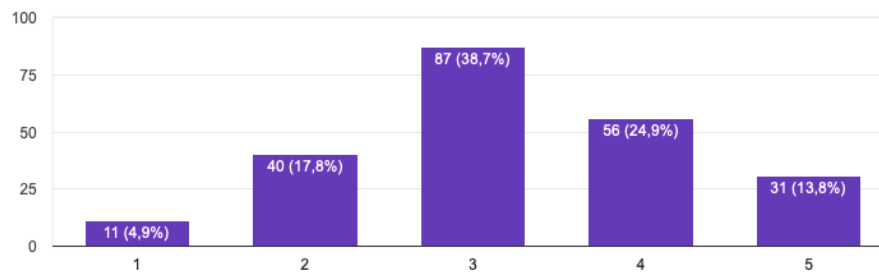
32. Geographical mobility in your work

225 risposte



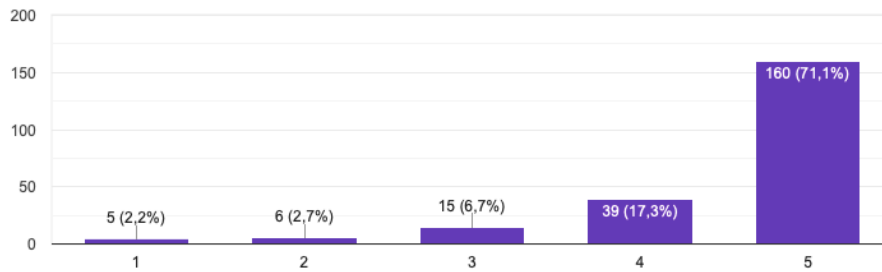
33. Department mobility in your work

225 risposte



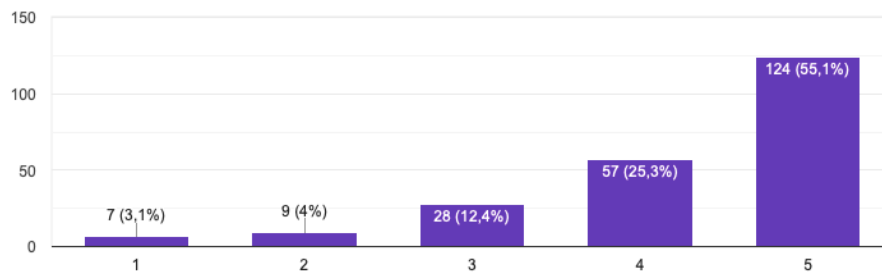
34. Gender Equality

225 risposte



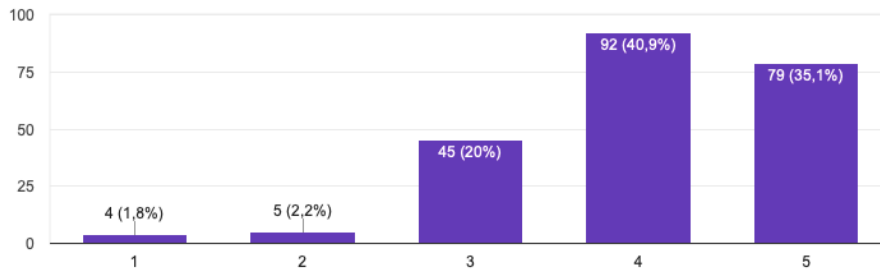
35. Maternity and Paternity leave regulations

225 risposte



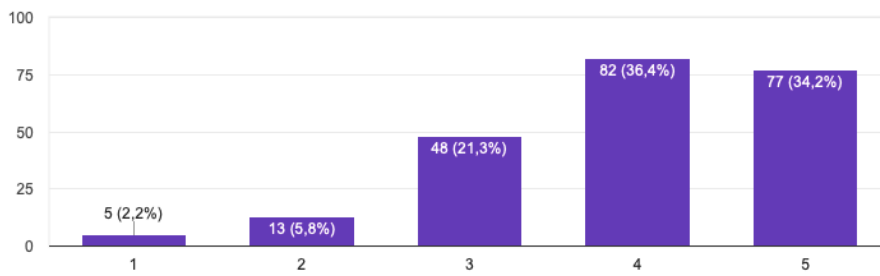
36. Corporate Values in line with mine

225 risposte



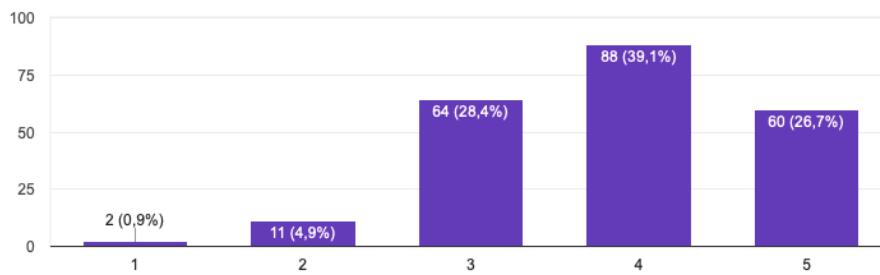
37. Company with strong attention to sustainability

225 risposte



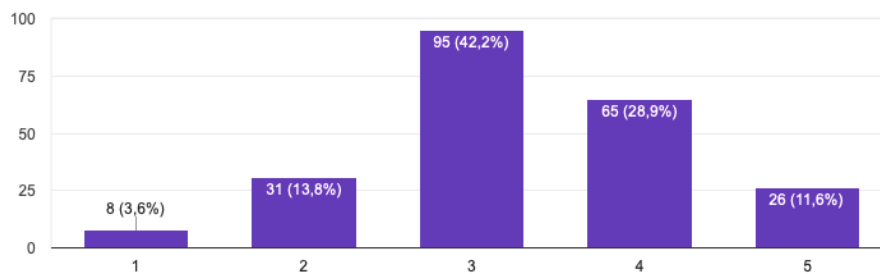
38. Time flexibility

225 risposte



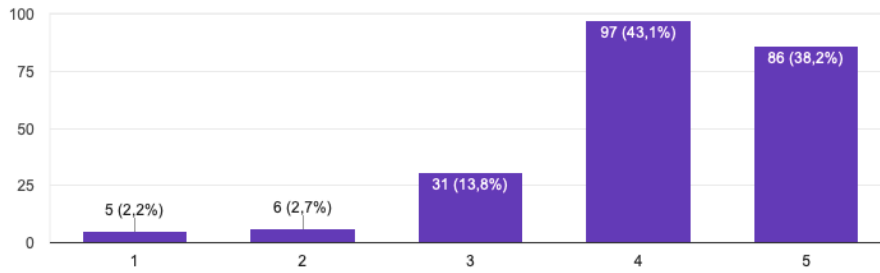
39. Minimal formal or hierarchical structure

225 risposte



40. High level of transparency and shared communication in the company

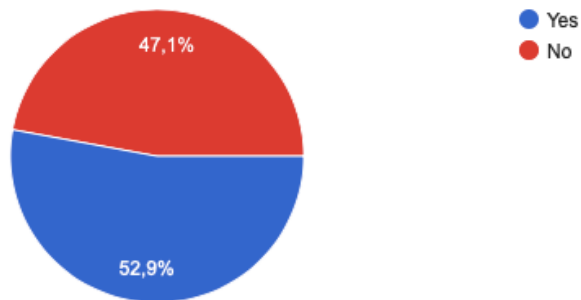
225 risposte



CAREER DEVELOPMENT

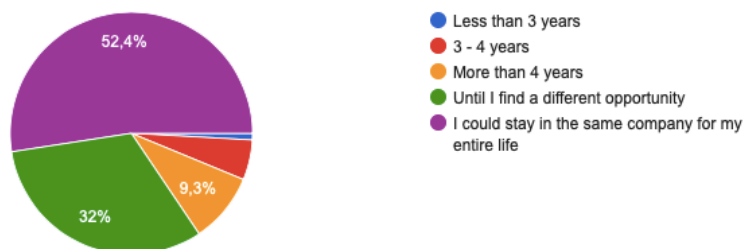
Would you work for the same company for your entire professional life?

225 risposte



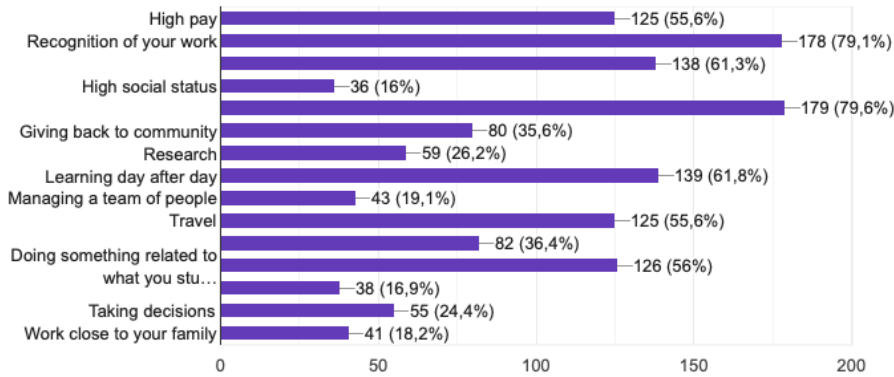
If no, how many years maximum would you work in the same company? (In a situation of good pay, stable job and good relationship with colleagues and managers)

225 risposte



What do you think can make you feel professionally realized? (more than one answer)

225 risposte

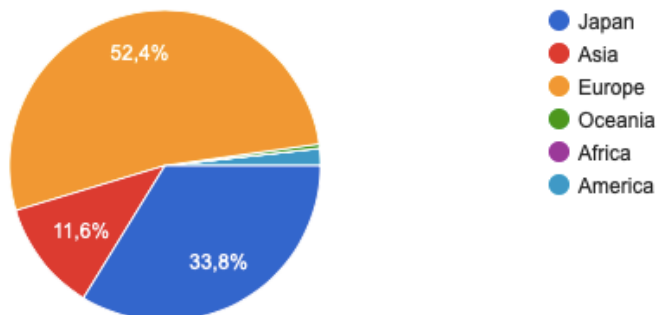


Write a job title that you associate to high social status

Ambassador/ Working for the Embassy (9,3%)	Do not know (5,7%)	Professor (10,2%)
Art Director (0,4%)	Editor (0,4%)	Police officer (1,3%)
Bank employee (0,9%)	Engineer (1,3%)	Politician (2,7%)
Business Owner/Entrepreneur/CEO/Manager (48,7%)	Interpreter/Translator (2,2%)	Researcher (2,2%)
Doctor (8,9%)	Lawyer (5,8%)	

In which country/continent do you see yourself in five years?

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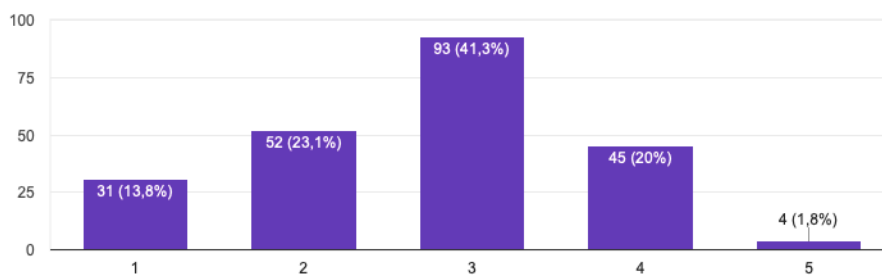
What are your career ambitions?

Having a steady employment/ full time job	Education (university professor/Japanese language teacher/academic research)
Being happy and satisfied with one's job	Business (manager/country manager/entrepreneur)
Using Japanese Language/Working in a field related to one's studies	Diplomacy (international organizations/cultural organizations/NGO)
Having enough time for family/hobbies/travel (Work/private life balance)	Publishing (books/manga)
Learning and improving every day	Communication (translator/interpreter)
Having enough money to conduct a good life	Tourism (flight attendant/hotel receptionist/sales/tour guide)
Do not know/Not sure yet	

* The question required an open answer. As explained in chapter 3, the answers were categorized into professions and future expectations based on the answers received.

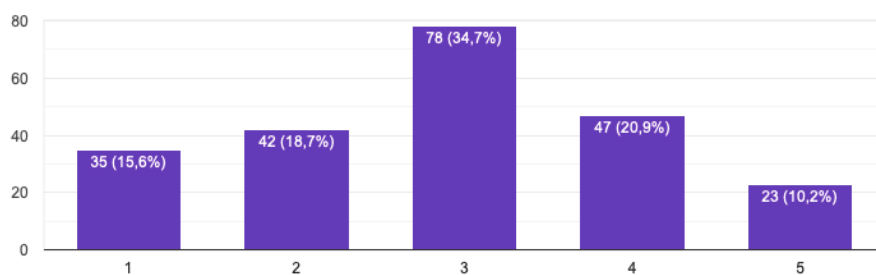
Do you think that your university prepared you properly to enter the professional world?

225 risposte



Do you feel ready to work for a Japanese company and/or to use Japanese as main language in the workplace?

225 risposte



Do you know what is CSR?

225 risposte

