




THE GREAT LABOR DISCONTENT, A REVIEW OF THE TRENDS TO CONSIDER

CYNTHIA M. MONTAUDON-TOMAS¹, INGRID N. PINTO-LÓPEZ^{2*}, ANNA AMSLER³

1 ESCUELA DE NEGOCIOS, FACULTAD DE ADMINISTRACIÓN DE EMPRESAS; UNIVERSIDAD POPULAR AUTÓNOMA DEL ESTADO DE PUEBLA; 21 SUR 1103, BARRIO SANTIAGO, PUEBLA, MÉXICO; CYNTHIAMARIA.MONTAUDON@UPAEP.MX;
 [HTTPS://ORCID.ORG/0000-0002-2595-6960](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2595-6960)

2 ESCUELA DE NEGOCIOS, FACULTAD DE INTELIGENCIA DE NEGOCIOS; UNIVERSIDAD POPULAR AUTÓNOMA DEL ESTADO DE PUEBLA; 21 SUR 1103, BARRIO SANTIAGO, PUEBLA, MÉXICO; INGRID.PINTO@UPAPEP.MX;
 [HTTPS://ORCID.ORG/0000-0002-1580-1375](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1580-1375)

3 OBSERVATORIO DE COMPETITIVIDAD Y NUEVAS FORMAS DE TRABAJO; UNIVERSIDAD POPULAR AUTÓNOMA DEL ESTADO DE PUEBLA; 21 SUR 1103, BARRIO SANTIAGO, PUEBLA, MÉXICO; ANNAAMSLER95@GMAIL.COM;
 [HTTPS://ORCID.ORG/0000-0003-3183-0878](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3183-0878)

* CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

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Abstract: This article analyzes some of the current topics in the world of work, especially the Great Labor Discontent and the Great Resignation. The general objective is to present the conditions surrounding the Great Resignation that allow a better understanding of the changes that are taking place in the workplace. The general background and the main characteristics of the great discontent are presented, and the positive effects that these changes are generating are analyzed, as well as emerging movements such as the return of boomerang employees. The study is based on a literature review and stems from the analysis of news, research, and publications of consulting companies, as well as the most relevant publications that have been developed on the subject to date.

Keywords: Great Resignation, workplace conditions, labor discontent, organizational culture, balance, employee's market.



EL GRAN DESCONTENTO LABORAL, UNA REVISIÓN DE LAS TENDENCIAS A CONSIDERAR

Resumen: Este artículo analiza algunos de los tópicos vigentes en el mundo del trabajo, especialmente lo relativo al “gran descontento laboral” y la “gran renuncia”. El objetivo general consiste en presentar aquellos efectos que se han generado en torno a la gran renuncia que permiten comprender los cambios que se están generando en el entorno laboral. Se presentan los antecedentes generales y las características principales asociados al gran descontento, y se analizan de manera particular los efectos positivos que los cambios en el contexto laboral están generando, además de condiciones emergentes como el retorno de los empleados boomerang. El estudio es de tipo documental, elaborado a partir del análisis de noticias, investigaciones y publicaciones de empresas consultoras en materia laboral; también integra como fuente las publicaciones más relevantes que a la fecha se han desarrollado sobre el tema.

Palabras clave: gran renuncia, condiciones de trabajo, descontento laboral, cultura organizacional, balance, mercado de empleados.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past couple of years, various studies analyzing the Great Resignation phenomenon have been published. Research has focused on this work-related phenomenon that is present primarily in the United States but has spread to other regions, predominantly Western Europe (Kuzior et al., 2022). The Great Resignation has been considered a virus that spreads quickly, raising concerns that contagion may occur (Miralles, 2022), transferring its effects across the globe. Researchers have established that the Great Labor Discontent will become an unstoppable phenomenon that can potentially create a new era in work cultures. More and more people are looking for jobs where they feel valued, and their mental health and wellbeing are considered priorities (Williams, 2021).

Studies that analyze the Great Resignation and the Great Labor Discontent depict an uncertain and complex future for the world of work, mainly from the perspective of employers and the labor market. Recent publications have established that a silent revolution in employment is taking place and will undoubtedly bring about positive changes in the future, especially concerning employee wellbeing. This has created a shift in how work is conceptualized, how it is structured, and how priorities will be established.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, work-life balance has become imperative. Movements like the Great Resignation are a call to action to achieve decent work, not only in terms of salaries but, more importantly, work conditions, from an employee-centered approach. It is the first time employees feel empowered enough to put their wants and needs first before the traditional ideas of employment (Corbett, 2021).

2. METHODOLOGY

This article integrates a review of the existing literature regarding the Great Labor Discontent and the Great Resignation to reveal some of the positive consequences of the phenomenon and its impact on the future

of employment and new ways of working. In this sense, the main objective of this article is to present the most relevant conditions recent labor movements have had and will have in the workplace and the overall employee experience. These changes include better salaries, more flexibility in the form of remote and hybrid work, digitalization, the rise of freelance work, and incentives for entrepreneurship. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Background

In 2019, Professor Antony Klotz of Texas A&M University coined the term “the Great Resignation” to explain an increase in voluntary resignations due to worker dissatisfaction with their jobs. The phenomenon reflects a massive exodus of the workforce, as employees are choosing to resign, citing working conditions, personal dignity, and even health concerns as some of the determinant factors for their decision (Sull et al., 2022).

Research indicates an apparent disconnect between what employers assume employees want, especially during turbulent times, and what workers are actually searching for. Even though the Great Resignation started before the health crisis, during confinement, resignations developed into a growing trend. Many people quit their jobs without a backup plan or ideas for an alternative career. Regarding the motivations for resigning, people highlighted the desire to recover time lost during confinement, the search for better working conditions, and a better understanding of the value of time that encourages them to use it differently. The phenomenon has also been linked to certain conditions generated by the health crisis, particularly which employees have become accustomed to greater flexibility after having worked remotely and refuse to go back to the way things were.

The reasons behind the Great Resignation are far more complex and comprehensive than just a desire or need for better wages; its causes range from ethical, cultural, and relational factors to personal preferences and expectations (Kuzior et al., 2022). This has led to growing interest in the subject, which has started to be analyzed from diverse perspectives, including business, strategy, leadership (Hopkins & Figaro, 2021), organizational culture, wellbeing (Kuzior et al., 2022), and even spirituality at work.

Considering this new business environment, it is essential to note that the origin of these massive resignations cannot be located in a particular industry or sector; they are primarily boosted by workplace conditions regardless of the type of work being carried out. Mass resignations are not random but rather a response to job demoralization (Lipman, 2017), which can occur anywhere. They are not intrinsically related to roles, job descriptions, or salaries; it is a widespread problem in organizations. In order to illustrate this generalized sentiment in the workforce, Figure 1 reflects the variations in people’s satisfaction with their jobs from 2019 to 2022.

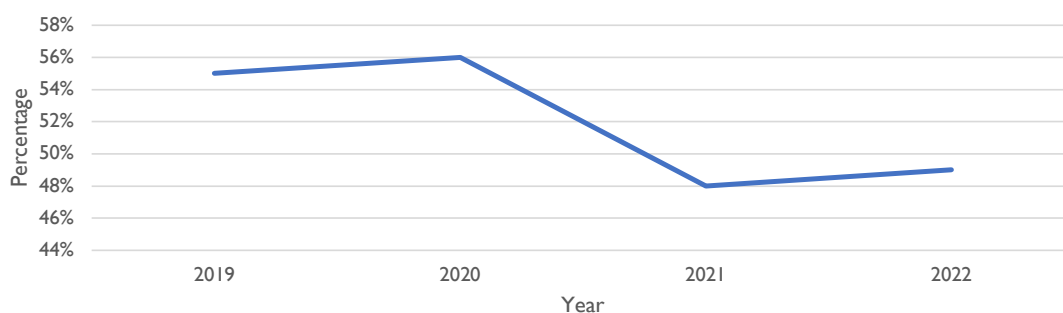


Figure 1. Percentage of people who are completely satisfied with their jobs

Source: Developed by the authors with data from Gallup (2023).

As previously stated, the Great Resignation has many contributing factors that may seem like isolated situations or personal reasons but, when put together, create one of the most disruptive events the world of work has ever faced. Some employees do not want to return to their workplace because they do not feel safe (Lepisto, 2021); there are those who no longer want to spend hours in traffic on the way to work; others are tired of working and dealing with housework or childcare and are withdrawing, at least temporarily, from the workforce (Andrewsen, 2021a). Whatever personal reasons are, the highest resignation rate is among disengaged employees (Gandhi & Robison, 2021), which indicates a common denominator under which more specific causes can be grouped or classified.

The Great Resignation has helped understand the challenges being faced by the workforce. Even though resignations have occurred mainly in highly developed countries, worker discontent seems to be a recurrent phenomenon worldwide, with variations in the nuances and characteristics in which it occurs in different countries. Although first started in the United States, “figures now show that resignations have jumped in the United Kingdom, Australia, and France, too. Moreover, while experts say a wave of quitting has not materialized in countries like Germany and Singapore, surveys indicate workers there are also eyeing the exits” (Horowitz, 2022). Workers from different latitudes have begun to disapprove, publicly or silently, jobs that jeopardize or do not prioritize human dignity at work, where they do not feel valued, or where they perceive that the salary does not reflect the time and effort invested. Nevertheless, resigning is not always an option in the face of labor discontent, therefore, many employees stay in their jobs without having a real chance to leave their position because they depend on them for their subsistence. Under these conditions, unhappy workers may opt for face-to-face absenteeism (Professional Leadership Institute, 2023), that is, showing up to work without being invested in the job, which may negatively affect not just individual or team performance but also the overall organizational climate.

In this same line of thought, labor discontent is undoubtedly having adverse effects on individuals, employment relationships, and organizations as a whole (Collins, 2022); however, positive effects for all three have also been identified, and will be discussed further in the following sections. Generalized disappointment and frustration with the workplace have drawn the attention of employers, governments, and the media. This wake-up call has forced a positive change in public policies that will help guarantee decent working conditions and wellbeing for all, leading to healthier organizations (Field, 2021).

2.2. Positive effects of the Great Resignation

2.2.1. A change in favor of employees

One of the questions surrounding the Great Resignation is where to go from here (Walters, 2021). What is needed is a fundamental re-examination of workplace systems (Field, 2021). People around the world are starting to think about what work should look and feel like in this new era, imagining alternatives that take into account what employees want and need, including the desire for increased flexibility (Johnson, 2021). Under these conditions, organizations will benefit from a shift in their focus from creating value only for the consumer to promoting value creation for their employees and including them as critical stakeholders of the business instead of just as a means of production.

The Great Resignation as a social movement has highlighted that retaining talent is a critical issue (AON, 2021) that must be addressed and that rapid change is very much needed. People and organizations change because they have to adapt to survive in new and more complex environments, and, in many cases, they are changing because the context -particularly during the pandemic- has placed the value of work on a different level (Castelló, 2021). More and more people want to work for a company with a vision that aligns with their values (Ziglar, 2021), which means becoming a part of the organization and not only working for it.

The last few years have shown society and organizations worldwide that employees are looking for a more human perspective at work, to the point that they are leaving or considering leaving their jobs. According to De Smet et al. (2021), employees are tired and trying to find purpose in their work, but they are also looking for better working conditions in general. People seek more connections, a sense of group identity, and better pay, benefits, and other perks. There seems to be a growing interest in more meaningful workplaces that create and promote a sense of belonging in which the organizational culture fosters authentic relationships (Whitehead, 2022).

The world of work will be forced to take a step forward in favor of workers (Kuzior et al., 2022). According to the World Economic Forum, companies can avoid the Great Resignation by building brands that are attractive not only to customers but also to employees (Mayer & Bravery, 2021). Marketing and human resources departments must collaborate to develop and consistently promote brand values at every level.

2.2.2. Better salaries

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center found that the main reasons Americans quit their jobs in 2021 included low wages, lack of opportunities for advancement, and not feeling valued at work; likewise, people who quit and now have another job consider that they have a better salary than before, more opportunities for promotion, and more balance and flexibility between work and their private lives (Parker & Horowitz, 2022).

As a consequence of the Great Resignation, employers are facing almost twice as many vacancies as the number of available workers; this implies greater demand of workers, so wages tend to increase, as well as benefits including greater flexibility and mobility (White, 2022), in order to draw more people into the active workforce.

According to information from the Society for Human Resource Management, these conditions have pushed business leaders to take action in combating the Great Resignation by offering higher pay and better benefits, which makes them more competitive when it comes to attracting recruits and also increasing employee retention (Miller, 2021). A report from the ADP Research Institute shows that in 2022 workers' wages in the United States increased by 5.9% compared to the previous year, while those who changed jobs received an 8% wage increase (Bruner, 2022). Additional data shows that, in the United States, people who joined the Great Resignation are getting raises up to twice as large as those who did not (Berger, 2022).

In general, "job hoppers" are experiencing their most significant median pay increase in over 20 years (Lalljee, 2022). This reflects the efforts of companies to retain talent. People who have benefited the most from these increases are those who work in companies with 500 to 1,000 workers, while the sectors with the greatest variations are professional business services and information technologies, with increases of 12% in wages (Bruner, 2022).

It would seem that balancing the effects of the Great Resignation by pushing people back into the workforce would end these benefits; however, experts suggest that the current demand for workers is so high that the entry of new workers into the labor market will only moderate but will not reverse the trajectory of wage increases (White, 2022).

2.2.3. Greater Competitiveness of Remote Work

As the effects and magnitude of the health crisis have been subsiding, many organizations are bringing employees back to the office, perhaps with hybrid work models first and then fully face-to-face. However, due to the demand for workers, individuals now have more influence than they used to in getting what they expect and need from their employer. How organizations deal with this will determine how work will be done in the future and the role of companies and employees in this dynamic (Molla, 2022).

The Great Resignation is pressing companies to acknowledge evolving employee preferences that have been partially inspired by remote work during the pandemic (Andrewsen, 2021b). One of the big questions that need to be answered is how organizations should respond to these changes. Today, employees have much more bargaining power, which could encourage some companies to change their policies to attract and retain top talent (Ranger, 2022), especially in technology-related areas.

If this phenomenon has given indications of anything, it is that many employees want to keep working from home. Numerous employees resigned from their jobs when they returned to work face-to-face. They tend to think that working remotely improves their productivity, while managers worry that these flexible arrangements could affect the quality or the quantity of work being done (Molla, 2022).

In terms of productivity, Owl Labs' 2021 State of Remote Work Report revealed that 90% of full-time remote workers felt they were as productive or more productive working remotely compared to working at the office (Robinson, 2022). Similarly, 74% stated that, after the pandemic, they would prefer to work from home because they believe it is better for their mental health and 84% consider that working remotely after the pandemic would make them happier, many even stating that they were willing to accept a pay cut in exchange for a more flexible work scheme (Robinson, 2022).

Christoph Riedl, a professor at Northeastern University, has been studying collaboration for nearly a decade and has found that it is possible to directly compare the performance of teams working together remotely with teams that work face-to-face and, in general, no differences have been found (Molla, 2022).

It is no longer just about what employers require of their workers; it is time for organizations to adapt to the wants and needs of employees. This means placing more emphasis on employee wellbeing and empowerment in relation to how, when, and where they choose to work and the workplace or employment conditions. Analysts have described this new employer-employee dynamic as the rise of a human-centered work model that emphasizes what the company can do for the worker rather than just what the worker should do for the business (Ranger, 2022).

Benefits such as remote work, flexible hours, and four-day work weeks are starting to appear in vacancy announcements and job offers as a way to stand out from the competition (Fox, 2022a). Before the pandemic, remote opportunities accounted for less than 4% of high-paying jobs; by the end of 2020, the figure increased to around 9% and in 2022, it became more than 15% (Robinson, 2022).

This proliferation of remote work since the start of the pandemic has provided workers with many more employment options than before and appears to be on an upward trend going forward (Fox, 2022a). It is estimated that 25% of high-paying jobs in North America will be available remotely by the end of 2022, and opportunities in this type of work model will continue to increase through 2023 (Robinson, 2022).

With talent movements still playing a role in the daily life of societies around the world, companies that decide to return to normal, that is, the traditional ways of doing things, will witness a changing labor market that evolves around them while they remain static, which may prolong discontent (Robinson, 2022). If the dichotomous relationship between workers' demands and what companies have to offer is not handled correctly, it could give employees a new opportunity to get involved in that movement (Ranger, 2022), generating what could be called the second wave of the Great Resignation.

2.2.4. Greater investment in digitalization

With resignations affecting many companies, HR managers are concerned about the burden it places on the remaining employees. It has become necessary to redistribute workloads among the employees that stayed while finding people to fill the vacancies; this has the capacity to produce burnout syndrome and generate a domino effect of resignations versus that of rewarding employees and implementing practices to retain them (Scannell, 2022).

In this context, the question is how organizations can effectively protect themselves from the Great Resignation by retaining employees who have not yet left (Scannell, 2022). Digital transformation can play a crucial role in supporting retained employees who are at risk of having to overwork (Mahoney, 2022). "Digital workers" or software have the ability to take over 30-40% of the work of those who quit, particularly the routine, repetitive work that often causes people to leave a job (Scannell, 2022).

Automation and digital work powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning offer organizations the ability to further motivate employees by facilitating their productivity, especially in a remote or hybrid work environment (Plumb, 2022). These technologies can provide tangible and intangible benefits that improve job satisfaction by supporting programmable tasks that can be boring or seem like a waste of time (TechTarget, n.d.).

Companies in various industries increasingly rely on digital workers to automate and streamline various tasks (Plumb, 2022). A digital worker can be an algorithm or a robot that can send emails, schedule meetings, get approvals, and access information and act accordingly. This allows employees to spend that time on high-value responsibilities like customer service relationships, idea and strategy development, and collaboration (TechTarget, n.d.), which can contribute to a sense of greater purpose or value in terms of the work that is done.

It is also a benefit for companies, which can expand the capacity of their team with digital workers who never get tired, are not distracted, and do not get sick (Plumb, 2022). These technologies can provide 8,760 hours of work each year, while the best human employee works around 2,000 hours a year; furthermore, digital workers cost around one-seventh of what it costs to employ a person (Scannell, 2022).

If the Great Resignation is viewed as an opportunity for the Great Improvement, investing in these technologies may be one of the best ways to attract and retain employees by offering jobs where workers can better use their skills and time (TechTarget, n.d.). This implies increasing the capacity of organizations to promote effective digital transformations to solve current problems (Srinivasan, 2022) and to prepare for the future.

Companies need to take advantage of automation in a way that matches modern expectations (Mahoney, 2022). Many are already doing so. In a recent study, 29% of organizations listed digital transformation as their top priority for 2022, after candidate acquisition (Mahoney, 2022). It has been established that automation will transform 80% of jobs in some way by 2030 (Plumb, 2022).

2.2.5. The Reinvention of Independent Careers

With growing interest in more flexible work arrangements, professionals are not only considering other full-time jobs that allow them to work remotely but also becoming self-employed (Ozimek, n.d.). This trend is in line with many of the factors of the Great Resignation as, historically, self-employment has always been more flexible than traditional employment.

There has been an increase in the freelance workforce, particularly as millions of professionals chose not to return to full-time work as pandemic restrictions began to lift and chose the freedom and flexibility that come with freelancing (Malbin, 2022). The millions of self-employed workers around the world who are entering the job market are competing for contract or project-based work and represent a great source of talent for companies.

This implies a drastic change in the labor market where the freelance industry is booming. In the United States alone, 57.3 million people worked independently in 2017, a number that by 2020 rose to 67.6 million (Walker, 2022), which represents an increase of about 18%. Freelance or part-time workers are the fastest-growing sector of the self-employed workforce (Feffer, 2022). The number of self-employed workers continues to grow, and the numbers suggest that the upward trend is likely to continue (Ozimek, n.d.).

Mass resignations do not just mean workers are looking to move from one full-time job to another. In addition to the number of people who have already switched to more autonomous work models, in the United States, 20% of workforce members are considering freelancing, and another 26% might consider it; while 73% ponder the ability to work remotely or flexibly as one of the main reasons for this change in perspective (Ozimek, n.d.).

Another factor driving the increase in independent workers is generalized inflation, which encourages more people to seek to supplement their income with temporary jobs (Feffer, 2022). With regards to the people who switched to self-employment in 2021, more than 70% did so to supplement their income (Feffer, 2022).

Additionally, 82% of self-employed workers are happier working under these schemes because the dependency and stress of the individual are reduced, there is more income potential since they can work with many companies, and there are numerous additional freedom factors (Walker, 2022). Businesses need to understand that people are longing for a change.

Organizations need to think differently when it comes to hiring practices and the best ways to move their business forward (Malbin, 2022; Feffer, 2022) in the era of free agency. Agile ways of working are the future, and 90% of companies see a competitive advantage in shifting their talent acquisition and retention model to a mix of freelance and full-time employees (Malbin, 2022). This shift in perspective is likely due, at least in part, to the mindset that remote work is the new norm and companies will need to be more flexible (Malbin, 2022) and adapt to changing environments.

2.2.6. The Rise of Entrepreneurship

Many people also chose to become their own bosses (Fox, 2022b). People are finding themselves less willing to tolerate a life that is centered on working for someone else. In this new era of work, employment (including self-employment and freelancing) needs to be able to accommodate newfound needs and demands.

As resignations hit a twenty-year record high in 2021 (Hasan, 2022) there was an increase in the creation of new companies in the United States. The surge of new businesses helps explain part of the labor shortage that has been experienced (Hasan, 2022). Data reveals an increase in the number of people who filed applications to start new businesses, which in 2021 was close to 5 million, representing an increase of 55% compared to 2019 (White, 2021). According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, through September 2021 there were 1.4 million new registered businesses, and December 2021 had the highest number of new business applications considering historical records for that same month in previous years (Hasan, 2022). These seem to indicate that many workers who are quitting are chasing entrepreneurial goals (Kirtley, 2021). The rapid increase in the number of startups can be considered a result of an entrepreneurial awakening (Hasan, 2022).

Internet searches help support this hypothesis as data from Google's 2021 Year-In-Search, indicates that, during that one-year period, people searched "how to start a business" far more than "how to get a job" (Hasan, 2022). According to Kirtley (2021), "entrepreneurship is also aspirational, which may explain why so many people want to try it". The increase in the creation of new companies suggests that the pandemic and the phenomenon of the Great Resignation have created a landscape in which entrepreneurs and startups believe they can lead the way to innovation (White, 2021).

Business creation is mainly pushed forward by entrepreneurs who are choosing to distance or fully remove themselves from the rigid standards and limiting nature of employment (Hasan, 2022). Additionally, the rise in entrepreneurship is further supported by growth in the gig economy, which has created an environment where it is feasible to turn a side hustle into full-time work (Kirtley, 2021).

With lowered barriers for entrepreneurship, aspiring entrepreneurs are now in an environment where they can find what they need to pursue new business ventures more easily. The idea of starting a business is no longer as time-consuming and complicated as it used to be, with the help of technologies that facilitate e-commerce, brand creation, marketing, and so many other areas of business (Hasan, 2022).

2.3. Changes in the World of Work

2.3.1 The Great Reimagining

The world is in a new reality that would have been hard to imagine before (Parkhouse & Lambrecht, 2022). The past few years have forced many organizations to reimagine and redefine new workforce norms and strategies. A report from PwC finds that, in the next 12 to 18 months, more than one in four executives plan to change their approach to defining the "workspace", and one in three plan to implement a blended work model, integrating full-time face-to-face, hybrid, and fully remote employees (Hansen, 2022).

The Great Resignation points to a reinvention of work with a personalized approach. "There is a shift from an employer market to an employee market" (Parkhouse & Lambrecht, 2022), and companies that do

not adapt to the changes the world is experiencing will be left behind. The next step is the Great Reimagining, a fundamental analysis of the systems and schemes of work that can help companies to prevent, cope or take advantage of future impacts (Field, 2021).

In the attempt to overcome the Great Resignation, it will be necessary to rethink, refocus, reorganize, and restart in order to reach the Great Reimagining (Deloitte, 2022). The future poses many challenges for organizations, particularly those stemming from environmental, social, governance, and sustainability factors (Parkhouse & Lambrecht, 2022). For many companies, reinventing the workplace can seem like a challenge; however, focusing on development, growth, and continuous improvement makes it possible to harness the opportunity to rethink the future (Hansen, 2022).

While the forces driving the Great Resignation may be similar across industries and sectors, the impact on people, the work they do, and how they do it will be different after the Great Reimagining (Deloitte, 2022). The next generation of jobs will not have a one-size-fits-all solution; organizations will need to keep an open mind when evaluating options and considering what is best for both employees and businesses (Hansen, 2022).

The Great Reimagining has the potential to redesign workplaces that are fairer, more compassionate, energetic, and creative (Ross, 2021), giving organizations the opportunity to become more human-centered, agile, resilient, and sustainable (Deloitte, 2022). It is about empowering people and creating a better employee experience, promoting greater job satisfaction, productivity, and better overall results (Deloitte, 2022). It requires workplaces designed for the 21st century, not the 20th century, where people want to stay because they are thriving (Ross, 2021).

2.3.2. The Great Reset

Globally, societies are seeing a Great Reset in work practices due to flexible and hybrid work, creating a new perspective on what work-life balance means. "The demands of employees have changed dramatically, and there is a greater recognition of family and care responsibilities and the need for a more balanced life" (Riley, 2021). The Great Reset will provide employees with more and better opportunities to understand what they want out of work.

In a context where the demand for talent exceeds the supply, people, and organizations are going to be looking at an employee market where "new and current employees will assume increased demands" (Vassa, 2022). Understanding these changes in the labor market will be pivotal in acquiring and retaining talent (Vassa, 2022), and companies will have to adapt to evolving circumstances.

This represents a unique chance to reshape the world of work on the way to economic recovery, paying more attention to the priorities of societies worldwide. The Great Reset, as a World Economic Forum initiative, "has a set of dimensions to build a new social contract that honors the dignity of every human being" (WEF, 2020).

Although it entails a big challenge, the Great Reset also comes with great opportunities as it gives organizations a chance to rethink and reshape their business models, structures, and even goals while pushing for innovation and creativity (Vassa, 2022). In this context, the world must act together and quickly to renew aspects of societies and economies ranging from working conditions to social contracts. All countries must participate, and all industries must be transformed. A Great Reset of capitalism is needed (Schwab, 2020).

2.3.3. The Great Reshuffle

As more information about the Great Resignation comes to light, data indicates that the world is facing a great talent reshuffle. (Meister, 2022). Societies are entering a stage where most resignations are made up of employees moving to companies that have opened their doors to the future of work rather than denying it (Fox, 2022b). To overcome the Great Resignation, leaders need to understand better how the pandemic, and other factors derived from it, have impacted the workforce (Meister, 2022).

Companies that do not offer flexible working schemes will find hiring and retaining employees more challenging, as people want jobs that fit their lives (Riley, 2021). In this new dynamic, employers must be aware of the fact that “workers are creating their own Worth It Equation, and constantly evaluating their current job and deciding to either stay with their current employer or switch employers or occupations” (Meister, 2022).

A reshuffle of employees in different sectors and also job posts is occurring as people are willing to try different things (Riley, 2021). Training and development are becoming increasingly important when making employment decisions because they contribute to professional advancement (Meister, 2022) while ensuring employees become more engaged and satisfied (Riley, 2021).

2.4. The other side of the coin

2.4.1. The Great Regret and the Boomerang Employees

Much of the narrative around the Great Resignation tends to focus on people who have left their jobs in search of other opportunities or a better work-life balance, but in retrospect, not everyone is happy with that decision (Christian, 2022). Some workers realize that even though they quit their job excited about the future, they were not necessarily in a better situation.

This situation derives from the fact that the Great Resignation has produced a record number of vacancies that must be filled; however, digitized recruitment and hybrid work environments have created difficulties for potential employees to evaluate essential aspects such as the company’s work culture during the recruitment process, creating an incomplete idea of the new workplace that later turns out to be different from what they expected.

According to a USA Today poll of 2,000 people, 20% of those who joined the Great Resignation regret leaving their jobs in the past two years, and some of these workers made this decision because of the prospect of a higher salary regardless of other factors (Business Insider, 2022). Another survey of more than 2,500 American workers indicates that 72% think their new role or company is very different from what they had been led to believe during the recruitment process (Christian, 2022).

In this sense, the most common reasons why people regret their decision to leave their previous job include a loss of work-life balance, expectations that were not met, feelings of nostalgia about the culture in their old job, and not having properly considered the pros and cons of quitting (Business Insider, 2022).

3. CONCLUSIONS

This brief article has shown some of the most relevant talent movements that describe employees trying to find better working conditions.

Even though it is possible that the phenomenon of the Great Resignation has not yet reached all countries, it will take time, but it will arrive, with certain variations due to economic conditions and also generational preferences. The consequences of the Great Resignation for companies are evident, at least in the countries where it has intensified. It remains to be seen how the phenomenon spreads, replicates, or reverses in other parts of the world and also how organizations and leaders act to attract and retain talented employees.

From existing data, what can be concluded is that where the Great Resignation has prevailed, positive effects for individuals, organizations, and economies have also been prominent. The Great Resignation has fueled increased wages and flexibility, entrepreneurship, and new ways of working, which benefit workers, freelancers, and businesses, but it has also presented an opportunity for women in particular. Employees have become empowered and can negotiate their salaries and working conditions.

This movement could provide new grounds for gender equality, giving women more power and opportunities to move forward, providing flexible working options, and closing the pay gap. This has led women who left the workforce to tend to family affairs during the pandemic to return to their previous jobs or start new ventures.

Traditionally, employers had power over employees regarding hiring, firing, working conditions, and others. This power has now been reversed, and the employee decides how, when, and where they want to work. Changes are not only related to working conditions; people want to feel valued at work and want their dignity at work respected. Companies must understand what drives these changes to develop policies and design work around employees' preferences and organizational needs in this post-pandemic new reality.

Organizations require reengineering to meet these demands, which are not new but have become increasingly pressing; otherwise, they will be doomed to the Great Resignation and its cyclical nature that has been observed when people quit their jobs in search of something better and when they believe they have found it, it turns out to be more of the same or worse. Searching for better working conditions has always been a quest of humanity, and the more employers fulfill employees' needs, the happier and more engaged they will become and the less likely they will be to leave.

Changes in the world of work will continue, adapting to additional needs and demands. In the coming years, we will likely observe new talent-driven movements as environmental conditions and employee preferences will inevitably evolve.

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The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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