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*Organisational Learning: L&D Impact on
Early Stage Employee Retention in Consulting
Firms*

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Abstract

The focus of this study is to **explore the relationship between learning and development practices and early-stage employee retention** within Capgemini's Nordic department and, more in general, within the consulting business. Qualitative and partly quantitative research methods were employed, starting from a theoretical review of existing knowledge on the matter, to a survey and interviews. Data were collected based on a non-random sample of over four hundred participants from the company's employees and another non-random sample of ten early-stage employees participating in the one-on-one interviews. Hence, this paper will aim to **explore** the relation between L&D and early-stage employee retention and the reasons behind it which will be the topic of discussion throughout the following Chapters. Moreover, all reflections will originate from a specific context (e.g. Capgemini's resources and learning conditions), whilst considering the limitations of this study and suggesting a few points for further research. Lastly, as a result of the efforts made towards providing a relevant answer to the paper's Research Questions, we could argue that there is a positive relation between L&D practices and early-stage employee retention, in that employee training and development is indicated as one of the main reasons for employees to stay in the organisation, given the significance of ensuring employees participation based on their needs and aspirations. Factors such as motivation, career alignment, organisational support and human relations, significantly contribute to L&D's positive influence on employee retention.

The following Chapters will discuss and illustrate the topic.

Keywords: learning organisation, employees, employee retention, engagement, L&D.

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Table of Contents

1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.1.1 L&D in Organisations	1
1.1.2 L&D in Consulting Firms	3
1.1.3 Case Study	4
1.1.4 L&D and Retention	4
1.2 Aim and Objectives	5
1.3 Research Purpose	6
1.4 Delimitations	6
1.5 Outline of the Thesis	7
2 Literature/Theoretical Review	9
2.1 The need for learning in organisations	9
2.1.1 L&D and employees	10
2.2 L&D and employee retention	11
2.2.1 L&D's relations to employee retention	11
2.2.2 Employee Development	12
2.3 Chapter Summary	14
2.3.1 Importance of L&D	14
2.3.2 L&D on employee decision making	14
2.3.3 L&D and employee commitment strategies	14
3 Methodology	15
3.1 Research Approach	15
3.2 Research Design	15
3.3 Data Collection Method	16
3.3.1 Survey on Employees	16
	4

3.3.2 Current Employees Interviews	17
3.4 Data Analysis	17
3.5 Validity and Reliability	18
3.5.1 Validity	18
3.5.2 Reliability	18
3.6 Limitations	19
4. Analysis and Discussion	21
4.1 Survey	21
4.1.1 Employees Survey: Analysis and Discussion	22
4.1.2 Employees Survey: Conclusion	27
4.2 Interviews	28
4.2.1 Interviews: Analysis and Discussion	29
4.3 Chapter Summary	35
5. Conclusions	36
5.1 Research Aim and Objectives	36
5.2 Practical and Managerial Implications	37
5.3 Suggestions for Future Research	38
5.4 Chapter Summary	39
References	41
Appendix A	47
Appendix B	48

List of Tables

Table 1. Employee's view on L&D relation to their retention in the company	31
Table 2. L&D ranking on reasons for employee retention	32
Table 3. Motivation to L&D compared to L&D importance in employee retention	34

List of Figures

Figure 1. Employees' duration within the company	22
Figure 2. Employees' motivation to L&D within the company	23
Figure 3. Company's climate in regards to employees' L&D	25
Figure 4. L&D's impact among reasons to stay in the company for early-stage employees	26
Figure 5. L&D's impact on employees' improvements and career progression	27

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Employee retention refers to the various policies and practices that are implemented to ensure employees stay in an organisation for a longer time. Every organisation invests time and money in new employees to make them learn, grow and professionally train them for their new role, when onboarding. Therefore, it is considered a loss for an organisation when its employees leave their job, once they have been invested in and fully trained (Sandhya & Pradeep Kumar, 2011).

While generally a certain amount of employee turnover might be expected (attrition rate), depending on different factors (e.g. employees on leave, better job offering, etc), among which “poor” hiring decisions and “bad” management (Verlinden, 2022), Learning and Development (L&D) might play a role in securing employee retention, that is employees staying in the company, instead.

Employee retention might be considered important, not just to reduce the turnover costs or the costs incurred by a company to recruit and train, but also to form and retain talented individuals who can acquire and develop skills, while improving the performance of the business as well.

As mentioned, there might be many factors impacting employee retention, however, in the following Chapters, we will focus on exploring whether there is a relation between L&D opportunities provided by organisations and early-stage employee retention.

1.1.1 L&D in Organisations

L&D is the term that stands for *learning and development*, and, according to the sources we will consider throughout the next Chapters, it is one of the most important means for organisations to create and improve the best workplace and workforce they can (Top Work Places, 2020). As one of the main responsibilities of any organisation's HR department, L&D aims to provide the knowledge and skills that employees need, by helping them grow both professionally, in their roles, and personally, whilst aligning with the company's growth. L&D

can be provided in many shapes and sizes, including, for example, online courses, face-to-face training and mentoring.

By the same token, human capital is a concept recognized by employers all over the world. According to *SHRM Foundation's Retaining Talent Guideline* (2008), global companies are shifting their focus to understanding people, rather than processes, in order to survive and advance in the inter-company competition. In fact, Human Resource Management is now supported not only by recruiting but also by focusing on internal responsibilities such as employee empowerment, employee engagement and employee growth. As a result, in many organisations, significant efforts are made to ensure the appropriate participation of employees to support company goals, however a fundamental one, according to DeadkinCo. and Deloitte (2022)'s report on significant returns on L&D investment even considered as a proper form of investment, is L&D opportunities.

On the same line, employees seem to be more careful and meticulous when making career choices and choosing the company they want to work with (Hall Weaver, 2021). As a result, incentives like salary, title, or paid leave days are no longer the main factors impacting employee retention in an organisation. On the contrary, L&D opportunities provided by the companies have started to play a more important role in attracting talents and retaining employees (Nobels & Baele, 2022). Furthermore, early-stage employees tend to see L&D opportunities as very important for their personal and career development. According to Armstrong (2009), L&D opportunities offered to the employees make the ladder more loyal to their current company and become a tremendous asset for the business.

However, there might be **internal disadvantages** linked to L&D practices and offerings when it comes to their impact on employee retention, such as providing employees with the tools to upgrade their skills and position, making them ready to take off and seek better opportunities somewhere else, for example.

On another note, the future of work is constantly being shaped by globalisation (e.g. advances in technology, demographic and political changes, shifting assets of power and new regulations), which results in that the leaders of tomorrow will have to be sharp, quick to face challenges and fast to learn. In said scenario, a vital characteristic for a thriving business aiming to survive and sustain the market's competition is its own ability to be agile, innovate and learn (Åkerblom, 2016). Therefore, according to a Forbes publication (2020), companies are realising the benefits of becoming a learning organisation and considering it a critical element of their business model.

As mentioned above, the concept of *learning organisation* flourished in the 1990s, stimulated by Petr M. Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* and countless other publications, workshops, and websites. The result was a compelling vision of an organisation made up of employees skilled

at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge. These people could help their firms cultivate tolerance, foster open discussion, and think holistically and systemically. Such learning organisations would be able to adapt to the unpredictable more quickly than their competitors could (Garvin et al., 2008).

Additionally, L&D has proven to generate many positive effects on a business, such as creating a positive workplace culture, maintaining employee and company alignment, increased engagement and motivation, improved quality of work and performance, and a stronger brand reputation (Personio, 2022). Arguably, one of the most important effects might be providing longer employee retention because it is often more cost-effective to train existing employees than to hire new ones. (van Dam, 2018).

Although most literature provides quite extensive coverage of the advantages of training and the positive impact L&D practices have on employee retention, proving that there is a relation between the two, the **reasons behind such connection appear incomplete and to be further investigated**. This research will aim to explore the relationship between L&D opportunities and early-stage employee retention.

Moreover, due to its nature, the consulting industry significantly depends on knowledge and up-to-dateness. Said industry is made up of a wide range of consultants, which increases the need for training programmes. Since consulting firms rely on their know-how and deep experience in specific areas, it would be impossible to transfer all this information without a focus on good L&D opportunities (*The Importance of Learning & Development in the Consulting Industry*, n.d.). Even though studies show a relation between L&D opportunities and employee retention, said relationship between L&D opportunities and employee retention in **consulting firms** is very **seldom explored**. In this sense, our research **will be useful to fill the knowledge gap** in exploring L&D and its relation to employee retention, particularly within the consulting industry.

Thus **we aim to explore the relationship between L&D and early-stage employee retention**; in careful consideration of all aspects that might influence our study, to provide some insights as accurate as possible, into a real-life issue, especially crucial to consulting business.

1.1.2 L&D in Consulting Firms

Having previously touched upon the importance for organisations to develop into learning entities, this is especially relevant within the consulting business, as knowledge is one of the most important assets to have, secure and nurture. Moreso, effective consulting depends on in-depth situational knowledge, to be applied to particular cases and projects.

(Bourgoin & Harvey, 2018) Therefore, finding ways to organise, transfer and retain such information within one organisation could be the key success factor to ensure the growth and existence of the company.

Furthermore, organisations are turning inwards to focus on how the knowledge flow can be maintained and improved, among which, an important role is played by the L&D department.

1.1.3 Case Study

Given the **existing urgency within the consulting business to find ways to convey knowledge and ensure organisational learning**, we have decided to conduct part of the following research as a **Case Study**, together with Capgemini. Our interest in the company sparks from it being an IT consultancy company, seeing the increasing importance of the IT sector, especially post-pandemic, and its global character, as it is established in nearly fifty-five countries worldwide, thus the keen need to innovate and ensure the best practises for its employees, overlooked by the L&D department.

In addition, Capgemini provides us with an optimal scenario, as it is a company which, according to the internal sources we had access to, invests significantly in L&D opportunities for its employees. As it is stated on their website, “Capgemini offers rewarding careers with development opportunities that will empower you to grow – both personally and professionally – and to excel at the business or technology domains that you are passionate about.” (*Learning & Development*, n.d.). Therefore, it is important for this research to work with such an organisation, to **investigate the relation between L&D opportunities and employee retention, focusing on early-stage employees, in a context where L&D opportunities** are highly invested in and which have a positive attitude and appreciative atmosphere for L&D.

1.1.4 L&D and Retention

When it comes to L&D and employee retention, it could be argued that one of the risks to be mitigated might be hiring a new employee and allocating a certain time and budget for their L&D. This, in turn, might potentially result in them leaving said company once they obtain a better job, thanks to the new skills they have just acquired, and could be an input for further research, but will not be considered as our focus moving forward.

As a result of such a scenario, companies may feel uneasy about investing too much in the personnel’s L&D, not valuing it enough as a great long-term investment. However, a relevant offering of L&D opportunities might prove to existing employees that the company has made

a conscious investment in them, promoting a sense of mutual respect and loyalty (Hall Weaver, 2021). In this context, as a result of the company investing in its employees' L&D, an increase in the productivity is likely to be witnessed; the company grows along with promoting the personal development of the employees themselves, and, accordingly, their sense of **satisfaction** (CrossKnowledge, 2022), which might potentially influence positively their duration in the company, hence employee retention.

In light of today's events (e.g. macroeconomic shifts, IT progress, post-pandemic work crisis, etc.), employees seem to be more conscious of the investments made by their employers, being drawn more towards workplaces whose management appear to be willing to invest in their development, where they can feel more appreciated (*The Transformation of L&D*, 2022). As a result, L&D might be considered as a contributing factor in attracting and retaining employees, influencing their career choices and affirming employers' trust in their individuals.

Finally, continuous learning contributes to making employees more satisfied and less likely to be entertained by the thought of leaving their company (*The Transformation of L&D*, 2022). In addition, while employees accessing a strong L&D program improve and build on their skills more and more every day, they might become very strong assets for the company, all while increasing their productivity as well (*Learning and Development*, 2005). **In this context, the L&D opportunities offered by the companies might be considered as a very important investment for a business.**

1.2 Aim and Objectives

This research is silhouetted in line with the **objective of exploring the relationship between the L&D opportunities and early-stage employee retention**, within the consulting industry.

The study will move from a specific point of view of a research within one of the leading IT consulting firms, namely Capgemini, to a broader view which considers the business area in which the company operates, in order to make the findings valuable within the field.

1.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between L&D practices and early stage employee retention, in consulting firms; given that there is a positive relation that links the two parties, but it is not fully explored, we aim to investigate the underlying reasons

behind such positive impact of L&D on employee retention. Exploring the relation will be important not only for consulting companies but also the other ones to realise and understand the importance of L&D opportunities and their impact on employee retention therefore the findings of the research can be beneficial for companies to develop these opportunities within the organisation not only to develop retention but also invest in their employees' improvement and development. Such aspiration stems from the lack of available knowledge on the relation between L&D and employee retention, specific to the consulting industry, where transferring and retaining knowledge (e.g. employees' knowledge), is at the core of the business.

In sum, the Research Questions this study aims to offer an answer to, are as follows:

- 1. Why is L&D important for (early stage) employee retention?**
- 2. How important is L&D for (early stage) employee retention?**

With the ambition to answer these questions, the objectives of this paper include: (1) identifying whether there is a positive relation between L&D and employee retention in Capgemini, namely to investigate L&D impact on early-stage employee attrition; (2) exploring early-stage employee motivation to learn and grow (e.g. within Capgemini) and the reasons why L&D opportunities might have a positive influence on early-stage retention; (3) exploring the degree of importance L&D opportunities have on early-stage employee retention and finally (4) suggesting some input for further research to investigate ways in which L&D's impact on employee retention might be secured positively.

Given this paper's Research Purpose and Research Questions, we have read up on non-research articles, therefore the rest of the study is built upon a collection of theories we have found relevant to our research within the Best Available Knowledge, tested on the survey and interviews from the Case Study and further investigated.

1.4 Delimitations

The first part of the following study is carried out starting from a sample of current and offboarding employees working within the IT consulting company, Capgemini. The population of the study consists of a **simple random sampling** of over 460 employees, who participated in a survey directed towards over 3000 Capgemini employees, within the Swedish landscape, with no differentiation as to levels and positions within said organisation. As a result of the study being carried out in one particular company within a specific business area, we were aware that the findings might be contextually dependent on it, as well as it may,

to some extent, be influenced by the participants' subjective outlooks and biases on the topic of interest.

The reasoning behind the choices stated above, are, firstly, ensuring that we would have enough data collected from a random and non-random pool within Capgemini Sweden offices so that a higher accuracy in regards to the conclusions that could be relevant for the study could be drawn, decreasing the chances for the outcome to be significantly influenced by one's particular experiences. Secondly, the choice for the study to have a relatively narrow focus, namely early-stage retention and Capgemini's workforce across the Swedish territory only, served the purpose to enhance accuracy, as opposed to the other tens of dozens of countries the company operates in, as well as the employee duration in the organisation.

Subsequently, the second part of the research focuses on a more narrow segment of the above-mentioned population, namely the company's current early-stage employees. Whilst the target will still consist of a non-random selection, the focus will be directed towards a lower range of duration in the company, namely newer employees (0-1 year), in order to explore and test their views on L&D, with the aim of exploring the relation between L&D and employee retention and investigate the reasons and their impact on this relation.

In the hope that the findings of this research will be relevant for the business area outside of this particular organisation and apply to the consulting field, in the following Chapters we will offer a close examination of L&D's impact on early-stage employee retention and what might influence it.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

The following study will offer an analysis aimed to explore the relation between L&D practices and early-stage employee retention in a particular company, within the consulting business.

In doing so, the *First Chapter* will present an overview of the **reasoning** behind said study, the **need for new knowledge** on the research matter, its **aim and purpose** and an overview of the way forward.

The *Second Chapter* will provide a **critical review** of the Best Available Knowledge and of relevant research and non-research theories that will serve as a foundation for our analysis, to identify and discuss the paper's topic.

The methodology of the study and the way **data** will be collected and handled will be discussed throughout the *Third Chapter*.

In conclusion, in the *Fourth Chapter*, the **analysis of the findings** as well as the **discussion** on them will be carried out, to, lastly, discuss the **conclusions** and the way they **relate** to this paper's Research Questions in the *Fifth* and final *Chapter*.

2 Literature/Theoretical Review

The following section aims to present a literature review, including non-research, of the foundations this project is built on, covering the need for businesses to become learning organisations, to the practices of the Learning and Development department aiming to ensure and maintain a learning mindset throughout. All followed by possible correlations and casualties between the former and early-stage employee retention, to finally test our own findings on the matter.

2.1 The need for learning in organisations

“With tougher competition, technology advances, and shifting customer preferences, it’s more crucial than ever that companies become *learning organisations*. In [such an] organisation, employees continually create, acquire, and transfer knowledge - helping their company adapt to the unpredictable faster than rivals can.” (Garvin et al., 2008).

Organisational learning has been addressed at least since 1965 starting by Cangelosi & Dill, and it still is one of the topics of interest within organisational trends. As a result, organisations are focusing on having employees learn more, implementing budgets and practices offered by specific departments such as Talent, Learning and Development, etc.. (Crossan et al., 1999).

As different as the needs can be for one organisation to become a learning entity, Crossan, Lane and White identify the underlying common thread to be *strategic renewal* (Crossan et al., 1999). According to the authors, “organisational learning can be conceived of as a principal means of achieving the strategic renewal of an enterprise” (Crossan et al., 1999). On the same line, like other types of organisational and structural changes, renewal might entail that a company explores new ways of learning, all while ensuring the continuity of its current ways and legacy (March, 1991). What this means, in turn, is a balance of the existing tension between exploitation and exploration, for, as March states, “maintaining an appropriate balance between exploration and exploitation is a primary factor in system survival and prosperity [...]. Both exploration and exploitation are essential for organisations, but they compete for scarce resources [which, in turn, creates a tension between the two]” (March, 1991).

This appears to be particularly interesting when it comes to investigating how the learning process impacts both individuals and organisations, insofar as “institutionalised learning affects individuals and groups”(Crossan et al., 1999). Hence, **the importance of exploring L&D practices and how they could contribute to the value of a company, by focusing on educating and developing the individuals that make up said organisation.**

2.1.1 L&D and employees

Emerson’s *Social Exchange Theory* (Emerson, 1976) explores the psychological process of evaluating and decision-making, based on the costs and benefits analysis, in a specific context. In other words, a person’s assessment of social relationships is based on the evaluation of the efforts to be invested in a relationship, compared to the benefits one would obtain from it.

Translated in terms of L&D, Emerson’s theory entails the employee’s evaluation of a specific opportunity, provided by the L&D department, and the practical advantages said employee can gain from it (e.g. a relevant certification, a boost in career development, new job opportunities, a higher salary, etc.); Thus, what leads to the employee’s decision as to whether it is beneficial to invest in the offered activity, or not.

What this may result in, is the impact that L&D’s opportunities might have on the employees’ choices when evaluating a certain career path or deciding to work in a specific organisation; ultimately influencing employee retention, as well.

Along the same line, exploring the concept of **motivation**, Maslow (1970) discussed that, there are two further higher needs when it comes to it. *Aesthetic needs* are the needs for appreciation and search for beauty, balance and form; and *cognitive needs* are the needs for knowledge and understanding, curiosity, exploration, meaning and predictability. (McLeod, 2022).

“These cognitive needs are the necessities relevant to employee training activities and employee motivation. As a consequence, it is inferred that it is not easy for employers to plan what employees need to focus on, in order to motivate the employees as of their requirements, and therefore to implement a system of employee benefits that truly motivates and encourages the employees to perform to the best of their ability, knowledge and develop their efficiency.” (Sandhya & Pradeep Kumar, 2011).

2.2 L&D and employee retention

One of Human Resources key focuses is that of retaining and developing employees, so as to gain a substantial competitive advantage. (van Vulpen, n.d.) In order to do so, according to a research on the “Effects of Retention Factors on Organisational Commitment” (2006), it has become imperative for organisations to shift their methods from employee control strategies to a more attentive approach leaning towards **employee commitment and satisfaction**, also employing different methods for employee L&D (Andreas et al., 2006).

When it comes to L&D and employee retention, according to LinkedIn’s 2022 Workplace Learning Report, on the transformation of L&D (*The Transformation of L&D*, n.d.), the ladder has undergone major changes throughout the past few years, in order to adjust to and satisfy the shift in organisation’s priorities and ways of working, focusing on new ways to offer employee development tied to employees’ needs and demands (e.g. career paths, internal mobility, sense of care, employee well-being, diversity, inclusion, etc.). Thus, L&D has become important in building and achieving the strategy and goals of a business and retaining its employees (*The Transformation of L&D*, n.d.).

One of the factors considered as impactful on employee retention is **internal mobility**. According to the Workplace Learning Report (2022), “companies that excel at **internal mobility retain employees** for an average of 5.4 years, nearly **twice as long** as companies that struggle with it, where the average retention span is 2.9 years” (*The Transformation of L&D*, n.d.).

Moreover, investigating L&D and employee retention, the Workplace Learning Report (*The Transformation of L&D*, 2022) shows how the top three motivations for employees to learn are all connected to their **career aspirations** (e.g. L&D opportunities matching career frameworks, gaining and updating skills, getting closer to reaching career goals, etc..).

2.2.1 L&D’s relations to employee retention

Among other areas of an organisation, employee retention might be one of the core indicators to be looked at, while investigating ways in which a business might enhance its performance and competitiveness in the market. According to Harvard Business Review (2017), dissatisfied employees mean higher turnover, which, in turn, might increase the business’ loss of capital (e.g. having to hunt for new personnel, that is recruitment costs, training them, and so on), up to 200% of an employee’s annual salary, depending on the role

(Gilsdorf, et al. 2017). Altogether resulting in higher absenteeism, more accidents, lower business profitability, worse [client] service, and a lower share price (Gilsdorf, et al., 2017).

According to Storey (2016), Human Resource Management (HRM), is the term employed to identify the ways in which people are being managed in their workplace. However, he differentiates between two different usages of the term Human Resource Management (HRM), he discloses how the second form of said term designates a specific approach to employment management as well (Storey, 2016). Some characteristics of the HRM approach include seeking a competitive advantage, employing a 'strategic' approach, and adopting ways to reinforce both the personnel and the organisation, including techniques to 'win the hearts and minds of the employees' (Storey, 2016).

The idea that employers should retain and develop their human resources in order to obtain competitive advantage is thought to be among the core beliefs of human resources literature (DeYoung, 2000; Storey, 1992). As previously mentioned in this paper, employers' approach to employee retention has changed over the years, moving from methods of control to focusing more prevalently on commitment strategies.

Furthermore, commitment strategies can have an influence on employee behaviours as they operate on a psychological level. As a result, the focus should be directed toward developing employees who can thus be committed to the organisation's core values and ambitions and be trustworthy, at the same time, to ensure consistency and retention (Döckel et al., 2006). The core assumption here is that said new high-performance and high-commitment strategies focus on developing and retaining employees, empowering them and making employee care at the centre of L&D and management practices, so as to correspondingly enhance organisational performance (Tsui et al., 1995).

2.2.2 Employee Development

As it is pointed out in this paper, the current times have been characterised by macroeconomic shifts and increased uncertainty. As a result, there is a very high demand for highly qualified workers, who are able to adapt to and sustain this fast-paced change and the challenges that come with it. However, the difficulty employers are encountering is that of retaining such a workforce, and keeping individuals on board (Allen, 2008).

In order to drive the most value out of a business, organisations might consider relying on managers understanding their team's needs and providing them with enough valuable learning opportunities in order to promote and sustain employee growth and development within the organisation, which in turn are drivers of a company's value and quality of their services (Rogers, 2020).

Subsequently, the most common strategies organisations decide to operate by entail, as M. Rogers (2020) points out, “promises of cushy perks and pay [that are used] to compete for top talent” acquisition and retention (Rogers, 2020). Moreso, the *Work Institute’s Retention Report* (2018) showed how one-third of the cost of employee turnover, 600 billion in 2018 and 680 billion estimated by 2020, was due to management issues, namely unsupportive leadership and lack of development opportunities thereof (*2018 Retention Report - Truth & Trends in Turnover*, 2018). Moreover, efforts toward “cracking the code” on how L&D practices might influence, improve and secure employee retention, might affect positively the budget of an organisation by cutting costs related to the recruitment of new employees to be trained and positioned within the company, thus focusing on the retention of knowledge, which is especially crucial in the consulting business.

Furthermore, a research carried out by FSG in collaboration with Hart Research Associates, sampling over 1,200 entry-level workers between the age range of 17 to 24, spread out across a dozen of companies from a variety of industries, identifies five key insights concerning how to improve employee retention and engagement. Among all, the findings highlight the importance of offering professional development opportunities (Gilsdorf, et al. 2017), hence, L&D’s importance in relation to employee retention.

The research indicates that retention among early-stage employees in a workplace for over a year is more than twice as likely to increase if they foresee the possibility of a career path starting from the position they are at (career alignment). As a solution, employers can offer relevant personal and professional L&D opportunities to develop within the company (Gilsdorf, et al. 2017). Thus, highly focusing on the company’s L&D to improve employee retention.

Moreso, this entails practices and training provided by the L&D department to reinforce the employers' educational support, removing cost and knowledge barriers between organisations and employees, who, in turn, are more likely to be retained for a much longer period of time (Gilsdorf, et al. 2017).

2.3 Chapter Summary

2.3.1 Importance of L&D

As explored throughout the present Chapter, L&D is seen to be having a positive impact on employee retention. The focus of organisations on employees’ L&D, in order to

provide a space and means for the ladder to gain, retain and transfer knowledge seems to be increasing significantly. It stems from the need of businesses to create and maintain a competitive edge through their skilled workers, ensuring ways to secure their commitment and loyalty, in times of macroeconomic shifts, thanks to L&D practices.

2.3.2 L&D on employee decision making

On this matter, we explored the relation between L&D and employee retention, starting from employees' decision-making when it comes to career choices. According to Emerson's *Social Exchange Theory* (1976), employees might evaluate a specific offering based on the efforts they would have to invest in it and the reward gained. Hence, the importance the right L&D practices can have on retaining employees in a certain organisation.

2.3.3 L&D and employee commitment strategies

Maslow (1970) discussed the concept of **motivation**, in terms of *cognitive needs* as the necessities relevant to employee training activities and employee motivation.

Exploring the ways in which L&D practices can actually be employed as a tool to positively impact employee retention, organisations are looking to restructure their approach to L&D with more consideration of **employee commitment and satisfaction**. Factors like **internal mobility** and L&D offerings aligning with employees' **career aspirations**, do have a positive impact on their retention in an organisation.

Moreover, employee commitment strategies focus on high performance and high commitment, developing and retaining employees, empowering them and making them feel at the centre of L&D and management practices, so as to correspondingly increase organisational performance (Tsui et al., 1995).

While some other factors impacting positively employee retention are believed to be organisational/internal support, variety of L&D opportunities matching career alignment, and internal mobility.

3 Methodology

Research methodology is the philosophical framework for a research (White, 2003). Research is not just the process of gathering information but also answering unanswered questions or creating something which does not currently exist. Research can be also seen as a process of expanding the boundaries of ignorance in many ways. Therefore, the discovery and the creation of knowledge lies at the heart of research, as a ‘systematic quest for undiscovered knowledge’ (Goddard & Melville, 2003).

The present Chapter moves towards investigating the Research Questions, namely, “**why is L&D important for (early stage) employee retention?**” (RQ1) and “**how important is L&D for employee retention?**” (RQ2), to provide an overview and to evaluate theories and evidence collected on the subject.

3.1 Research Approach

The research approach adopted throughout this study consists of a methodical strategy for disclosure built on empirical evidence. Both the research approach and its design are structured as a representation of procedures specifically envisioned to provide an answer to the paper’s Research Questions, in the most suitable way.

3.2 Research Design

This paper’s research design revolves around a Case Study, so as to collect accurate information on a specific organisation within the consulting business, namely Capgemini (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

The area of focus is the company’s L&D Nordics department and the reasoning behind the adoption of such a research strategy is that of obtaining a clear picture of a real-life problem, with access to internal data from a real company with the need to deepen the attention and find answers to our Research Questions.

In line with said strategy, we will employ multiple methods of data collection (i.e. anonymous surveys on a simple random sampling selection and non-random sampling of current employees interviews), in order to best carry out an empirical investigation of the relation between L&D and employee retention, within a real-life context (Yin, 2009).

As a result of the different methods of data collection, the study will provide both **qualitative and quantitative data** for analysis and interpretation.

The study will entail a theoretical review and framework as well as the above-mentioned data collection methods, in order to investigate the relation and the impact that L&D has on employee retention.

3.3 Data Collection Method

In order to fulfil this research's aim and purpose, an anonymous survey and 10 interviews were used as the methods for collecting data.

3.3.1 Survey on Employees

So as to obtain the first insights about employees' motivation and their outlook on learning and growing within Capgemini, to **explore** the relationship between L&D opportunities and early-stage employee retention, a 13-question qualitative (with the exception of some quantitative questions) survey has been conducted, among Capgemini Sweden employees. An *employee* has been defined as either "an individual who just joined the company, someone who has been working in the company more than 2 years or one who is currently under resignation period". Whilst an *early-stage employee* has been defined as "an individual who has been working at Capgemini for 0-1 year."

The survey has been conducted in Microsoft Survey Forms and sent out to the employees' corporate email addresses. It has been carried out in the form of feedback asked by the Nordics HR department to employees, so as to increase the trustworthiness of the respondents' answers. As a result, we hoped to maximise employees' honesty, in regards to their opinions and thoughts. In total, 466 participants participated in the survey, which was sent out to over 3000 employees who make up the total amount of Capgemini's Nordic division, making up around 15.5% in terms of response rate.

Nevertheless, we were able to investigate that, the respondents could be indicative of most of the general population (Capgemini's Nordic division), both in terms of gender division

(59.3% male, 51.7% female), role and department within the company and level of education, with the exception of their duration within the company, mostly early stage 0-1 year (50%) and 2-5 years (25%). All questions can be found in Appendix A.

3.3.2 Current Employees Interviews

Additionally, in order to further explore the relation between L&D opportunities in Capgemini and early-stage employee retention, shining some lights on the insights gained from the previous survey, and gathering more direct and extensive data from early-stage employees working in the organisation, 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted on 10 early-stage employees from Capgemini.

The 10 interviewees were chosen as a non-random sample from the company's Nordics offices, resulting in a more narrowed segment than the previously conducted survey. Such a choice was limited to considering only employees with a lower duration in the company, so as to target the correct data relevant to our research purpose, namely early-stage retention.

An early-stage employee has been identified as someone who has been working in Capgemini for 0-1 year. Interviews were conducted in the offices' meeting rooms, where we provided the interviewees with fika and coffee and each meeting lasted approximately 30 minutes. The answers were recorded by note-taking and 8 interviews were also recorded by mobile phone, previous the participants' consent, whilst 1 interviewee preferred not to be recorded. All questions can be found in Appendix B.

3.4 Data Analysis

In regards to data interpretation, the survey will be analysed drawing and elaborating data from Excel and Microsoft Forms, whilst in regards to the semi-structured interviews with early-stage employees, the approach used will mainly consist of content and textual analysis; in order to explore and discuss the relationship between L&D opportunities in Capgemini and early stage employee retention. The semi-structured interviews with early-stage employees have been transcribed, and thematic analyses have also been adopted.

These techniques were considered to be most relevant for the research's trustworthiness, in order to gather extensive data by having an overview of the employees' perception of L&D (e.g. through open and follow up questions) and to answer this paper's Research Questions. In the effort to make the study more accurate and less subjective, as well.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

Reliability and validity are among the techniques used to provide a basic framework for evaluating the quality of business research, for example (Eriksson et al. 2016). Reliability concerns the consistency of the research's findings (Eriksson et al. 2016). It is related to the extent to which data collection and analysis methods can generate similar results regardless of who conducts the research (Saunders et al., 2009). Besides, validity refers to the extent to which the research's results provide accurate descriptions and explanations of what has been intended to measure (Eriksson et al. 2016, 305).

3.5.1 Validity

Validity is necessary to ensure the credibility of the research and there are two kinds of validity: internal and external. Internal validity concerns whether there is a causal relationship between the findings and each variable and external validity concerns the generalizability of the results.

The following factors will be taken into consideration, in order to ensure validity:

Internal validity: The issues discussed will be based on previous research that could show a good match between the researchers' observations and their theoretical ideas.

External validity: The research purpose will be extensively studied starting from previous research prior to data collection, however, external validity will not be a focus of interest for the present study.

3.5.2 Reliability

There are four main threats to reliability that needed to be considered in order to improve the validity of the research: (1) subject or participant error: different results obtained at different times of the interview, (2) subject or participant bias: interviewees do not expose their own thoughts but others' such as their managers, (3) observer error: there are many researchers conducting the same research but in different ways, (4) observer bias: the researcher uses previous knowledge or beliefs to interpret the data (Saunders et al. 2009).

In order to face and prevent these threats, the plan followed as below:

- 1) **Subject or participant error:** In order to create a suitable environment for the interviews, the participants chose the appropriate time for the interview and the meeting room in Capgemini offices. Interviews always take a maximum of half an hour in order to avoid the tiredness of the interviewees. Also, fika and coffee are served during the interview.
- 2) **Subject or participant bias:** With the purpose to obtain the true perceptions of the participants regarding the issue, the confirmation of the confidentiality of the interviewees' information is always given before the interviews start. It is promised to all participants that their identity and responses will not be shared with Capgemini. Moreover, the fact that there is no right or wrong answer in this interview will be stated at least once to the interviewees to create a comfortable atmosphere.
- 3) **Observer error:** This research was conducted in Sweden, but since the language of the interviewees was English, the vocabulary used in the study and the clearness of the questions were taken into account to avoid misunderstandings. Thus, the participants were able to understand the questions accurately and give appropriate answers. All interviews followed the same prepared questionnaire and some other questions were asked depending on each situation.
- 4) **Observer bias:** The researchers' roles were simply to ask questions and validate them. The researchers' sentiment remained constant throughout the interview, not affecting any individual's personal opinion however; **observers might be biased** while asking them questions and observers' body language might also be affecting employees' selection of words and honesty.

3.6 Limitations

Throughout this research, the following limitations have been observed:

Sample size: Although the study aims to explore the impact that L&D might or might not have on employee retention within consulting firms, this research has been conducted within Capgemini Sweden. Therefore, considered a Case Study. Both the survey's respondents and interviewees are employees who work within Capgemini Nordics, however, the size of the two samples varies quite significantly and does not make up the whole of the population working within the Nordics department. Therefore, the sample size has been determined as a limitation.

Time: This research has been completed in as little as ten weeks. For this reason, the focus of the study, namely early-stage employees and the interview sampling sizes, have been narrowed down and kept small, in order to ensure more accuracy, and adapt as best to time constraints.

Timing of Study: This study has been completed in the process of worldwide normalisation, after the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people have supported themselves with personal developments, online courses and training during their time at home and have started to pay more attention to L&D. In this context, the data obtained on the importance given to L&D, as a result of this research, overlap with the data before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, this research has taken into account **industry-specific circumstances**, in that they might have affected the generalisation of the finding results in every industry except for consulting.

Lastly, the interview questions created by the interviewers might have been influenced by both the interviewers' and the interviewees' biases or body language, thus, enduring a chance of affecting the participants' responses.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The following Chapter will provide the reader with an overview and analysis of the data gathered from an anonymous survey carried out within Capgemini Sweden offices and 10 interviews conducted in the company's offices.

The data shown in the following paragraphs are extrapolated from both the survey and the interviews. 466 employees participated in the former, whose aim was to see and explore the relation between L&D and (early stage) employee retention, through understanding employees' motivations and thoughts about L&D opportunities in general and within the organisation.

Whilst the 10 interviews were carried out in the company's offices, focusing on a non-random sample of relatively new onboarded employees (3-12 months of duration in the company), in order to narrow down the focus of the research more specifically on early-stage retention.

All questions are specifically envisioned to gain insights for the sake of this paper's purpose, the interviews' are grouped into different parts, so as to take into consideration all relevant aspects we have discussed so far (e.g. given the contextual nature of the qualitative study, considering all cognitive biases and subjective factors that might impact the outcome of the research).

4.1 Survey

The employee survey has been designed and conducted with the purpose of **exploring** the employees' outlook on L&D, **testing** that there is a positive relation between L&D opportunities and their reasons to stay in Capgemini and **exploring** more about it.

The Survey questions have been discussed with Capgemini Nordics' L&D Department. After these discussions, a 13-question survey has been created by us to conduct within Capgemini Sweden offices, exploring the impact of L&D current practices on the 466 employees who have participated in it; all survey questions are reported at the bottom of this paper (see Appendix A).

In accordance with the purpose, the survey questions have been designed to be clear and to the point. We aimed to prevent making assumptions and to obtain distinct and coherent data from it. The findings from early-stage employees (0-1 year) who participated in the survey were filtered and examined using a Microsoft Excel file which included the survey results from the employees. Furthermore, during the analysis part, in line with this paper's purpose (early-stage retention), the focus has been narrowed down to early-stage employees' inputs. The survey aimed to see if there is a relation between L&D, discover some factors that affect that relationship and find out some of the reasons why there is a relation. Thus, we asked these questions (see Appendix A) in the survey to be relevant for this research, minimising assumptions, for we were able to directly reach the answers of our target audience and obtain clear data.

4.1.1 Employees Survey: Analysis and Discussion

To have a better understanding of the employees' profile in Capgemini, we decided to segment employees who participated in the survey based on their duration in the company, as the first step. As a result of the first question (see Q1, Appendix A), it was seen that out of 466 employees who participated in the survey, **50.4%** were **early-stage employees** who worked in the company for 0-1 years (235). The chart below illustrates the data.

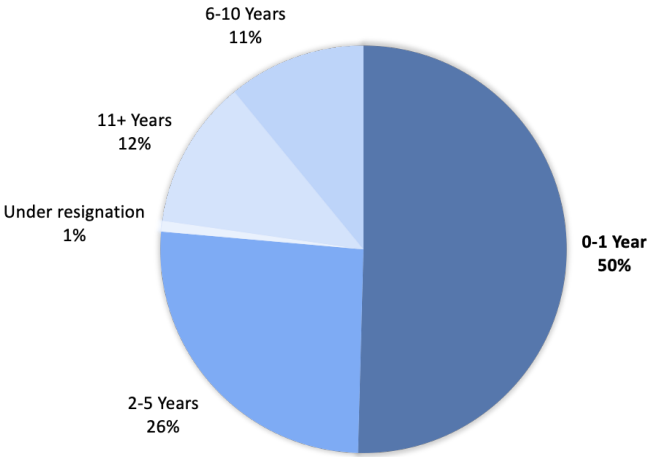


Figure 1. Employees' duration within the company

The large number of employees participating in the survey made the research more generalizable. At the same time, slightly more than half of the employees participating in the survey were early-stage employees, which reinforced the validity of the results obtained. After having assessed the segmentation of the employees, moving forward in this research, the focus has been put on early-stage employees.

After employee segmentation based on their duration in the company, the next step for us has been to explore the motivation of early-stage employees to learn and grow within Capgemini, in line with Maslow’s *Hierarchy of Needs* (see Chapter 2; Maslow, 1943) exploring employees’ motivation. “Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs” where **motivation** is described as a factor that helps an individual satisfy his basic needs (Maslow, 1943). Hence, Q2 (see Appendix A) aimed to explore to what extent this need of employees is satisfied by Capgemini.

To explore early-stage employees' motivation to learn and grow within Capgemini, employees have been asked to rate their motivation from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest). Survey results showed that early-stage employees’ motivation **average** is **4.62** out of 5. Moreover, **93.6%** of the participants (220 out of 235 early-stage employees) are rated **4 or 5** which was considered to be **highly motivated** to learn and grow within Capgemini. This shows that the cognitive need mentioned by Maslow is already fulfilled in early-stage employees by Capgemini.

On the other hand, 15 early-stage employees, who rated 1,2 and 3, show that they are not motivated to learn and grow at least within the organisation. Even though this number is very small compared to the rest, it shows that there is still room for improvement on the behalf of Capgemini to further investigate to understand the reasons why these early-stage employees are lacking the motivation to learn and grow within the organisation. Working on finding ways and implementations to increase motivation can also be considered crucial since this is a need that has to be fulfilled before providing L&D opportunities.

“How motivated are you to learn and develop within Capgemini?”

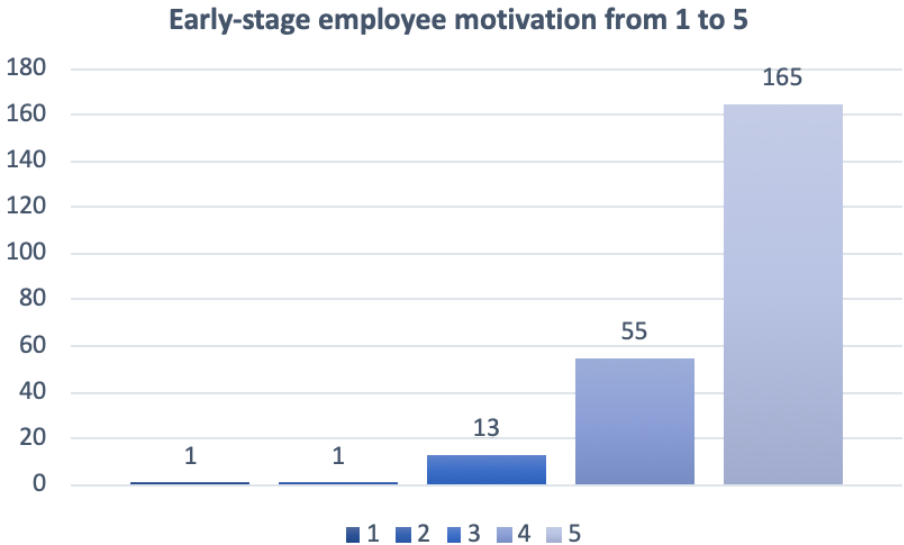


Figure 2. Employees’ motivation to L&D within the company

After testing the early-stage employee motivation, we wanted to see if Capgemini is providing its employees with an appreciative learning climate since it is explored in the *Second Chapter* that employees who experience an **appreciative learning climate** in their organisation can be more inclined to keep on working in it (Govaerts, N., et al., 2011). To be more specific, results from previous research conducted by (Abrams et al., 2008) show that the appreciative approach which is operationalised through a supportive learning and working climate, positively influences employee retention (Govaerts, et. al, 2011).

In light of these findings, to discover early-stage employees' feelings about whether Capgemini is providing such a climate, Q3 (see Appendix A) has asked early-stage employees. To answer this question, early-stage employees rated their feelings about the adequate and supportive climate in regards to L&D from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest).

In total, 167 out of 235 early-stage employees voted 4 or 5 for Capgemini's climate in terms of being adequate and supportive in regards to L&D opportunities. 4.17 average value in 5 indicated that Capgemini is providing them with a supportive climate when it comes to L&D opportunities.

These findings (see figure 4) show that 71% of the early-stage employees think Capgemini has an adequate **learning climate** that might impact L&D's influence on employee retention, which, as part of the organisation's environment and internal support (see Chapter 4.2), **can influence** the employees' choice as to whether to stay in their organisation or not, namely **employee retention**.

“Does Capgemini provide you with an adequate and supportive climate in regards to L&D opportunities?”

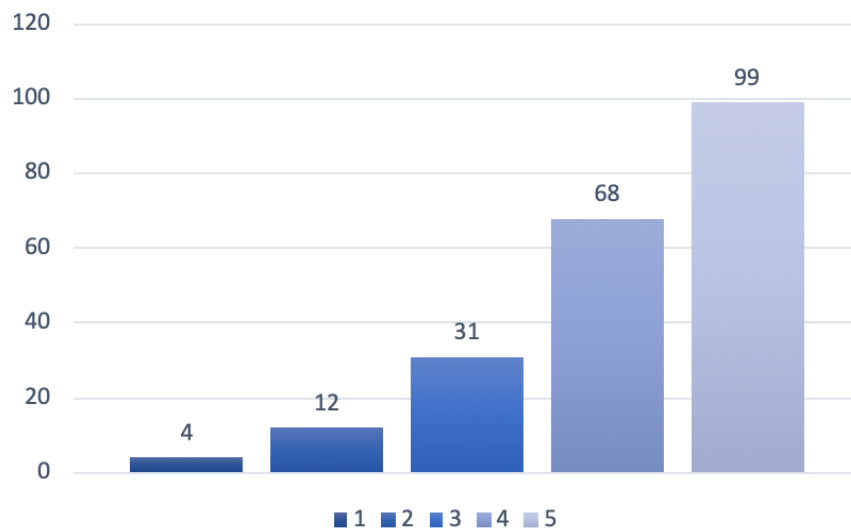


Figure 3. *Company’s climate in regards to employees’ L&D*

This is a positive sign for the company since its current environment and culture towards employees’ L&D makes it a place where learning is appreciated and valued. Detailed information where this data is further explored will be mentioned in the interview part (see 4.2 Interviews).

After exploring early-stage employee motivation to learn and grow within Capgemini and its climate in regards to employees’ L&D, in order to test whether there is a relation between L&D opportunities and early-stage employee retention, employees were asked if L&D opportunities are a reason for them to continue working at Capgemini (see Q4, Appendix A).

Survey results showed that L&D opportunities within the company do constitute a **reason** for over **61%** (144 out of 235) of early-stage employees to continue working at Capgemini, while L&D opportunities are not considered as a reason for the rest (91 out of 235 early-stage employees) to continue working in the company. This result proved that there is a relation between L&D opportunities and early-stage employee retention.

Furthermore, to understand early-stage employees’ thoughts about L&D opportunities and the relation to their reasons to stay in the company, 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with early-stage employees working in the company, in order to gather more detailed information (see Interviews 4.2.1) while the chart below illustrates the data from the results.

“Does the reason you are working in Capgemini have any relation with the L&D opportunities offered within the company?”

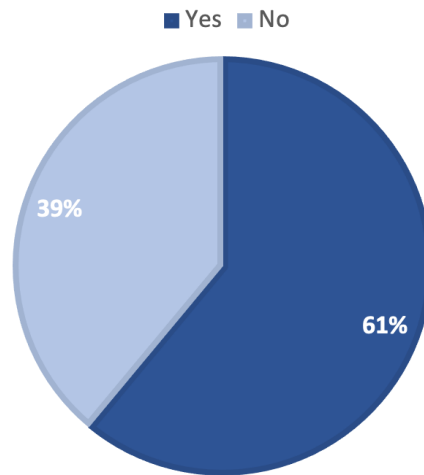


Figure 4. *L&D’s impact among reasons to stay in the company for early-stage employees*

After being shown that there is a relation between L&D opportunities and early-stage retention and this relationship needs to be explored in line with research questions.

According to Emerson’s (Emerson, 1976) Social Exchange Theory (see Chapter 2), relevant certifications and a boost in career development can be considered as a reason for early-stage employees’ decision to stay in an organisation. To test this theory and explore whether early-stage employees think various L&D opportunities’ in Capgemini have improved and developed their capabilities and career progression within the organisation, Q5 (see Appendix A) has been asked. Participants were asked to rate this question from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest).

“Do you think various L&D opportunities in Capgemini have improved and developed your capabilities and career progression within the organisation?”

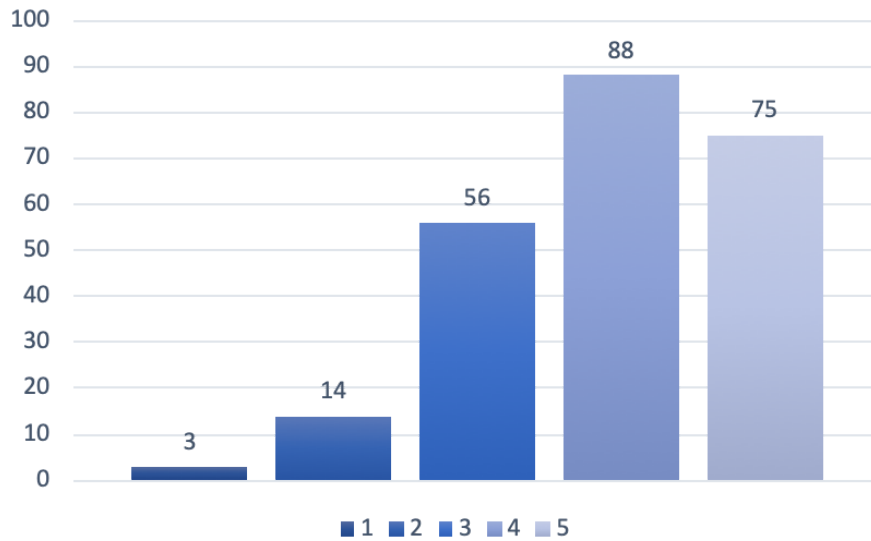


Figure 5. L&D’s impact on employees’ improvements and career progression

As per the graph above, 163 early-stage employees out of 235, rated 4 or 5 for this question which was considered to be the highest level to agree with the statement. With 69.3% and 3.9 average values, survey results show that early-stage employees think L&D opportunities in Capgemini have improved and developed their capabilities and career progression. Therefore, just like Emerson’s claim in his Social Exchange Theory, the fact that L&D opportunities improve and develop capabilities and career progression can be a reason for early-stage employees in Capgemini to stay in the company. This assumption has further been explored during the interviews, findings can be found in the interview analysis (see 4.2 Interviews).

4.1.2 Employees Survey: Conclusion

It is seen from the survey analysis that more than half of the employees who participated in the survey are early-stage employees which were also our focus to further explore the relation between L&D and retention. It has been discovered that with 93.6% and 4.62 average values, early-stage employees are **highly motivated** to learn and grow within Capgemini. With 71% and 4.17 points on average, early-stage employees think Capgemini is **providing them with an adequate and supportive climate** in regards to L&D opportunities. Moreover, L&D opportunities provided by Capgemini **have a positive relation** of the early-stage employees to stay in the company with 61% and with 69.3% and 3.9 average

value, early-stage employees think that L&D opportunities **improve and develop capabilities and career progression**.

The Chapter's insights provide arguments to state that there is a relation between L&D opportunities and employee retention, as well as identify some aspects influencing it (e.g. employee motivation, appreciative climate, career progression). Now, in order to further explore the findings, shining some light on why L&D opportunities have an influence on early-stage employees' retention (RQ1) and how strong of an impact they have on employee retention (RQ2), some additional interviews have been designed and analysed in the next section (See 4.2 Interviews).

4.2 Interviews

In addition to the anonymous survey, we decided to conduct 10 semi-structured interviews on a non-random sampling of 10 early-stage employees working in the company, in order to investigate further the relation between L&D practices and early-stage employee retention, diving deeper into some of the insights provided by the survey (e.g. employee motivation, L&D's impact on early-stage employee retention, etc..), and collecting more extensive data relevant to explore this paper's Research Questions.

As mentioned above, the interview questions (see Appendix B) explored different aspects which, taking into account the literature review (see Chapter 2), might influence the relation between L&D and employee retention. For this purpose, we conducted the interviews starting by: (1) getting acquainted with the interviewees and asking for work-related information, to depict a picture of their **professional background**; (2) gaining **insights** into the respondents' outlook on **Learning and Development** and the importance of training opportunities in general; (3) diving deeper into the **company's L&D opportunities** and their thoughts on it; to subsequently (4) further **investigate the relation between L&D and employee retention** (e.g. why is L&D important to employee retention, how strong is such a relation between the two, etc..), through direct and indirect questions, also asking the participants to provide us with quantitative answers (1-5 scale) on some aspects we considered relevant to such a relation, based on previous findings (see Chapter 2.3).

Thus, the questions focused on the different factors to explore the reasons that influence the relation between L&D and early-stage employee retention (RQ1) and how strong that is (RQ2), such as (a) early-stage employees' **outlook** on L&D; (b) **human relationships** (e.g. organisational support, the company's culture and leadership style, loyalty); and the (c) **employees' willingness to stay**, learn and develop in general and/or within the organisation,

considering subjective factors such as **(d) career alignment and progression** and **(e) motivation** (see Chapter 2.3).

Finally, said interviews are conducted in a **semi-structured format**, entailing quite **open questions** and additional follow-up ones depending on the conversation and what is believed to be of interest to the study, in order to gather as much information relevant to this study as possible.

4.2.1 Interviews: Analysis and Discussion

The Case Study focuses on a company whose L&D department, according to internal sources (e.g. L&D managers we talked to), is heavily invested. This means that the following research is carried out in a precise environment, where L&D has access to a high budget, paying close attention to having a broad variety of offerings, relevant to the frameworks of their departments, which might not always be the case, in other organisations.

a. Early-stage employees' outlook on L&D

All of the interviewees have participated in at least one of the opportunities (e.g. training, access to L&D platforms, certifications, etc..) offered by the department (n=10, Q4) and all of them consider L&D opportunities within the company to be extremely important in the workplace. Moreover, they generally believe that **L&D opportunities are crucial** for both the employees, to enhance their **competitiveness in the market**, and for the business, to improve its employees' **competencies and skills**.

*“As a consultant, I want to have access and gain top knowledge, which in turn, is expected by my clients. Therefore, to be able to do my job the best way possible, I have to learn and to always upgrade my skills through L&D. In this regard, I can say that L&D is the **most important reason** why I am in Capgemini.”* (interviewee 1)

*“[...] Well, I think it's important to be able to **develop your skills** also for your current or future career path within the company. For example, if you find something you like, when you work with a client or a project, and you really enjoy that, **then you have the possibility to pursue that path through the opportunities offered by the L&D**. So there is some sort of concrete possibility to actually learn about these different things in the company. I think that for me, at least, having access to L&D opportunities **I can use as a tool to reach my goals** and aspirations is a very good thing.”* (interviewee 2)

*“L&D opportunities are **important in general**, I take advantage of them to gain experience, to be well-rounded, and personally developed as well.”* (interviewee 5)

*“[...] You are provided with many tools to practise and develop both personally and professionally, so you feel like **the company supports your development** and growth. The **value** of the L&D is that it offers you a good base to work on, towards your goals. In general, it’s great to learn more and develop, as it helps you be confident in what you’re doing.”* (interviewee 9)

b. Human relationships, Internal support and Loyalty

After gathering some of the participants' thoughts and opinions on L&D in general, we started off by exploring whether **human relationships and the culture of the company (e.g. internal support)** might influence the employees' perception of L&D. What we could highlight from the interviews is that the majority of the respondents do consider **support** as a **primary factor** to motivate them into accessing the L&D opportunities provided. Moreover, being offered opportunities and supported in their personal and professional L&D, makes employees more motivated to learn while increasing their **loyalty** to the company as well. Hence, its influence on employee **retention**.

*“[...] To me, it feels really important that the L&D opportunities are **supported** by our managers. The atmosphere and people around you provide you with a space to express your identity, unlike other companies. So it’s amazing that they offer a development plan and career opportunities while you can still be who you are and be included.”* (interviewee 10)

“[...] I was close to getting another job but then the Head of Cyber Security Transformation specialised in training new employers, came to set up a plan and structured the L&D framework for the team, so I stayed.” (interviewee 4).

*“I believe L&D opportunities are definitely important, of course. If [the company] offers you an opportunity to develop, you feel like a **real asset, you feel welcome and as though they care about you** and want you to have access to any career prospect. It feels really nice.”* (interviewee 3)

“[...] As long as it feels good to work here and I am provided with the tools to learn and grow, which I can use to improve and develop my skills, I don’t look for other companies.” (interviewee 5)

As a result of the interviewees' statements, we can argue that in aspects such as 1. upgrading employees' skills, 2. providing both personal and professional development for growth, 3. and as a means to display organisational support as a concrete follow up of the company culture, L&D appears to positively impact employee retention, thus partly answering this paper's first Research Question (RQ1).

c. Willingness to stay

Additionally, to further investigate the extent to which L&D influences early-stage employee retention, interviewees were asked to rate the importance they allocated to L&D opportunities within the company, and the direct **impact the ladder have on their willingness to stay** in the workplace (Q6, Q11). Among the other main factors impacting their decision to stay in the company, the respondents considered aspects such as the **work environment** and their **relationship** with their coworkers, besides the access to L&D opportunities. The table below illustrates such data, **1** indicating the lowest impact they believe L&D has on retaining them in the company, whilst **5** indicating the highest.

	“On a scale from 1-5, how high would you rate the importance of L&D to stay in the company?” (Q11)
Interviewee 1	5
Interviewee 2	4
Interviewee 3	5
Interviewee 4	4
Interviewee 5	4
Interviewee 6	4
Interviewee 7	4
Interviewee 8	5
Interviewee 9	3
Interviewee 10	5
Average	4.3

Table 1. Employee’s view on L&D relation to their retention in the company

As illustrated above, all of the respondents **mentioned L&D opportunities as a reason** for them to stay in the company. Moreso, from the table we can see how the average importance allocated to L&D in retaining employees is **4.3** out of 5, which gives us reasons to believe that the impact of L&D on early-stage employee retention is actually significantly strong, in line with partly providing and answer to the second Research Question (RQ2).

However when asked to **numerically rank the L&D opportunities**, among the **reasons** for the interviewees to stay in the organisation (Q13), only a few of them (n=2) rated it as the **highest reason** (see table 2). Meaning that, according to them, **L&D opportunities do play a major role in employee retention** in the company, which, however, still remains to be considered among others.

By the same token, when directly asked whether or not L&D opportunities were **the only** reason why the interviewees are staying/would stay in the company (Q14), only **one** of the respondents (n=1) answered affirmatively.

The following table illustrates the ranking of the L&D opportunities when considering the reasons for the interviewees to stay in the company. On a scale from **1 (lowest)** to **5 (highest)**.

	“If you were to rank your <u>reasons to stay</u> in the company, on a scale from 1-5, from lower to higher, what would the <u>rank order of L&D</u> be among them?” (Q13)	“Is L&D the <u>only</u> reason you are staying/would stay in the company?” (Q14)
Interviewee 1	5	yes
Interviewee 2	3	no
Interviewee 3	5	no
Interviewee 4	3	no
Interviewee 5	4	no
Interviewee 6	3	no
Interviewee 7	1	no
Interviewee 8	4	no
Interviewee 9	3	no
Interviewee 10	4	no
Average	3.5	no

Table 2. L&D ranking on reasons for employee retention

As a result, we can argue that L&D opportunities seem to significantly influence the participants' retention in the company, with an average ranking of **3.5** out of 5 among the employees' reasons to stay in the company (RQ2).

d. Career alignment

Furthermore, another factor which, according to the respondents, seems to be impacting their intention to stay in the company, is the **alignment** of L&D opportunities with the employees' priorities and **career progression** goals, given that the company provides great **internal mobility** (see Chapter 2), from what is gathered hereby:

“Thanks to the L&D opportunities I have access to a great portfolio within any topic, and with the correct mentor, I could even change track if I wanted to. I hate to be bored, so if I wanted to do a complete career shift I could, without even changing the place of work.” (interviewee 1)

“ [...] It is kind of important to develop your skills for your career path as well if you find something that you really enjoy and find the possibility to pursue the path.” (interviewee 2)

“ [...] Now I have my whole career in front of me, and I can build it as I want and I can stay.” (interviewee 3)

“ [...] I feel valued as part of the climbing vision where my manager actually cares about what I want to do and they give you the means to do that. One of the charms is that through these opportunities I can't change stream and direction and just tell my manager and figure out a way to learn other things.” (interviewee 5)

Arguably, from what reported above from the interviews, **L&D impact on employee retention seems to be additionally linked with the career aspirations** and goals of the employees as well (RQ1), at least, at this stage of retention. Moreover, the possibility to shift career paths within the same company, seems to be one of the drivers for the interviewees to stay in the organisation, in line with **internal mobility** viewed as a potential factor linking L&D and employee retention (see Chapter 2.2), even more so since L&D and variety of opportunities from it and from the company itself open the doors to the employees to work in any branch they want, e.g.:

“As long as I am provided with L&D in line with my career aspirations, there is no reason for me to leave” (interviewee 10).

e. Motivation

In addition, another aspect we dived into is the **connection** between **employee motivation and employee retention**, investigating the impact L&D opportunities have on it, so as to answer our Research Questions. The following cross-examination shows the employees' motivation level to learn and develop, compared to the importance that L&D opportunities have among the reasons for the same employees to stay in the company. The graph illustrates the answers and correlation, on a scale from **1 (lowest impact)** to **5 (highest impact)**.

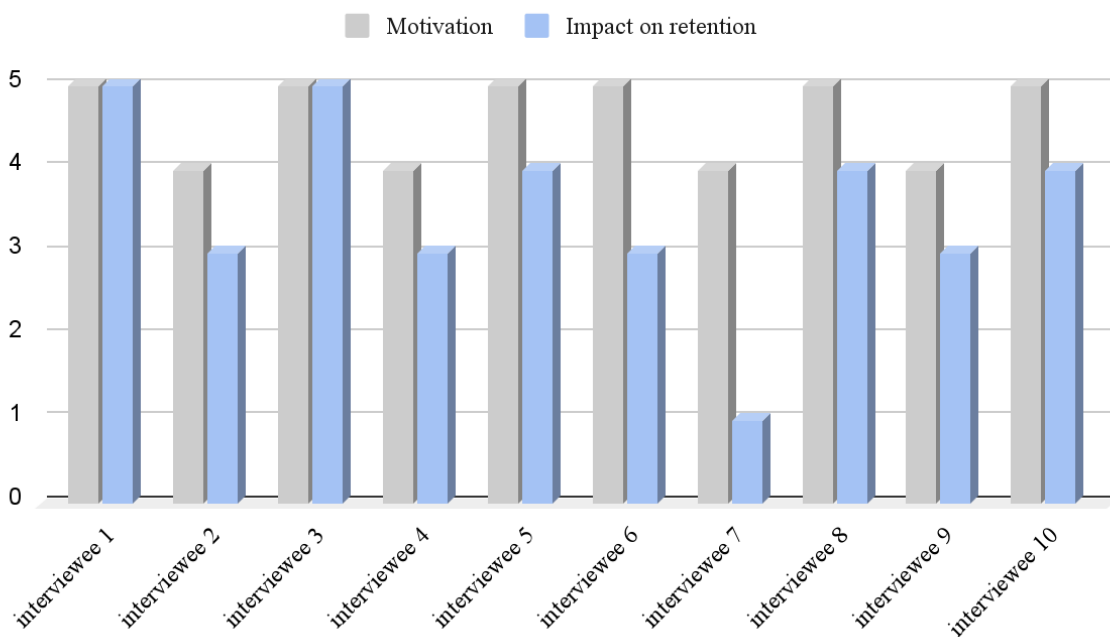


Table 3. Motivation to L&D compared to L&D importance in employee retention

As a result of the data presented above, we could argue that the interviewees who indicated a **higher motivation** to learn and grow, also **consider** the opportunities offered by the **L&D to have a higher significance in their choice to stay within the company**.

4.3 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, according to the analysis presented above, we can argue that early-stage employees within the company appear to be **motivated** to learn and grow (93.6% of the survey's participants stated a high motivation to L&D), also given that Capgemini provides them with a supportive learning climate, where learning and development are supported, appreciated, and valued (see figure 4). Following the interview results, it became clearer that said **supportive learning climate** is one of the reasons why early-stage employees have shown **high motivation** to learn and grow within the organisation, hence its importance regarding L&D relationship to their retention in the company (RQ2). Moreover, early-stage employees feel more **valued and appreciated** thanks to the opportunities provided by L&D, which in turn, contributes to creating loyalty and commitment among early-stage employees (see 4.2.1).

Altogether, the data collected from both the survey and the interviews, aligned with the theory (see Chapter 2), in identifying L&D among the reasons that can influence employee retention, in that L&D opportunities appear to be influencing the employees' choice to stay in the company willingly.

Furthermore, from the data, especially from the interviews, we can argue that factors like **human relationships, organisational support, employee motivation, and career alignment and progression** are some of the main reasons behind L&D's relationship to employee retention, offering a response to Research Questions 1.

Additionally, career alignment contributes to the existence of the said relationship. in line with their aspirations and goals, as they believe the L&D provides them with the right tools to upgrade themselves in that regard.

All things considered, although the data indicate the **existence of a relation between L&D opportunities and early-stage retention**, they don't clearly suggest the extent to which said opportunities impact their relation to employee retention. On the contrary, the participants have indicated **L&D among the main reasons for them to stay** in their workplace, however, **none** but one have stated that L&D is the **only** reason for their retention in the organisation (see table 2).

5. Conclusions

5.1 Research Aim and Objectives

This research aimed to **explore why and how L&D impacts positively early-stage employee retention**, specifically limited to the consulting industry, particularly in this Case Study context (e.g. within Capgemini Nordics).

As a result, the objective of this paper entails **exploring** the different L&D **factors** that might contribute to establishing and positively affecting said relationship, between L&D opportunities and early-stage employee retention, with attention to the reasons that might be behind it (e.g. employee motivation, career alignment, internal mobility, etc..).

Breaking down the aim, the first step was to (1) identify whether there is a positive relation between L&D and employee retention in Capgemini which has been discussed in Chapter 4, namely to investigate L&D impact on early-stage employee attrition. The second step was to (2) explore early-stage employee motivation to learn and grow (e.g. within Capgemini) and the reasons why L&D opportunities might have a positive influence on early-stage retention (see Chapter 4). The third step was to (3) explore the degree of importance L&D opportunities have on early-stage employee retention. The fourth and the last step was (4) to suggest some input for further research to investigate ways in which L&D's impact on employee retention might be secured positively.

Based on both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the survey result and the 10 interviews conducted within Capgemini Sweden offices, this research shows that **there is a relation between L&D opportunities and early-stage retention** in Capgemini. The results indicate that **L&D opportunities** provided by the company **play a role in early-stage employees' decision to stay in the company, hence positively influencing early-stage employee retention** (RQ1).

Furthermore, from both the survey and interview results (see 4.1.1 and 4.2.1) early-stage employees appear **motivated** to learn and grow within the organisation, given that the ladder is providing them with an **adequate and supportive environment** in regard to L&D. Thus, the **importance that an organisational/internal support**, as well as **human relationships** (see 4.2.1) have **on employee retention**.

Moreover, L&D opportunities appear to be important when it comes to employee retention in that early-stage employees feel like L&D offerings are a means for them to improve and develop their capabilities, in line with their **career progression** and aspirations (RQ1). Moreso, from the interviewees' statements, it emerges that L&D components like professional and personal development (e.g. upgrading skills, acquiring new knowledge, etc..) are among the reasons why L&D is important to early-stage employee retention, answering Research Question 1.

Additionally, in the interviews, all of the respondents **mentioned L&D opportunities as a reason** for them to stay in the company. Some examples may be found in the importance interviewees allocated to L&D opportunities as a factor for them to be retained in the organisation (see table 1 and 2, 4.2.1), ranking them on average **4.3** and **3.5** out of 5. Thus, indicating that the impact that L&D opportunities have on early-stage employee retention is significantly strong, providing insights into Research Question 2 (RQ2).

In sum, data show that factors connected to L&D, such as **human relationships, organisational support, employee motivation, and career alignment and progression** are some of the reasons behind the positive relation L&D has with early-stage employee retention. In other words, such aspects make early-stage employees feel more valued, appreciated and important, thus increasing their loyalty and commitment to the company, therefore increasing employee retention.

5.2 Practical and Managerial Implications

Thus far, the present research has provided a basis to claim that there is a positive relation between L&D opportunities and early-stage employee retention.

The study shows that human relationships, organisational support, employee motivation, and career alignment and progression are playing an important role in making early-stage employees feel more valued, appreciated and loyal to the company. In this context, consulting companies (e.g. Capgemini) shall consider reinforcing their focus on the importance of L&D opportunities when it comes to employee retention. Therefore, in the effort of improving and securing the employee retention of an organisation, these factors should be taken into account.

Moreover, it is suggested to management boards to focus on creating an **adequate and supportive climate for learning and development**, implementing strategies concerning (1) the motivation of employees (employee commitment strategies, see Chapter 2) to learn and develop, (2) their level of **satisfaction** as of the opportunities provided matching their **career**

frames and aspirations, (3) human relationships and the **company's environment** when it comes to L&D opportunities for employees, and so on.

Based on the findings of the research (see Chapter 4), some implementations that will be useful to managerial practices have been put forward. The need for motivation, which Maslow (2019) laid foundations for, highlights the importance of encouraging and promoting organisational learning and development and the motivation of the employees within a company. In fact, the work environment and managers' attitude towards the organisation's L&D can contribute to motivating employees. In this context, companies might want to focus on creating a climate where L&D is valued, supported and appreciated. Not only companies' but also leaders' attitudes toward L&D might also be considered important in this regard. Therefore, it is arguable that managers and leads might play an important role in promoting L&D practices influencing employee retention. As a result, giving constructive feedback and exploring strategies to foster and enhance the interest and motivation of the employees to stay in the company, thanks to L&D opportunities aligning with their personal and professional aspirations, as well.

At the same time, leadership might play a relevant role when it comes to identifying the L&D opportunities that employees need, in accordance with their specific frameworks. L&D departments might want to consider tracking managers' demands, according to their teams' needs, so as to provide tailored skill paths, valuable and relevant both for the organisation and for the employees.

Additionally, establishing direct and effective communication in the organisation (e.g. team leaders with team members), might also result in a valuable aspect worth investing in.

In sum, by providing **necessary and relevant training opportunities**, together with **creating and fostering an inclusive and supportive organisational climate and culture**, in regards to learning and development, **employees might be more likely to want to stay more in the company**, thus securing employee retention. This will result in being highly beneficial both in terms of time efficiency and performance maximisation of both the company and their human capital.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Given the limitations of this study (see Chapter 3.6), the hereby research and its findings are to be considered in regard to this particular Case Study; as a result, further investigation on the research question, namely to analyse the impact that L&D has on employee retention, can be explored.

In fact, some of the aspects that could be possibly investigated further might involve, (1) **considering a broader population** not limited to “early-stage” employees, to discuss whether the degree of relation between L&D practices and said employees, changes to any extent and is influenced by other factors. (2) Also when considering a broader segmentation than the one analysed in the current study (early-stage employees), exploring the **differences between various categories** (e.g. cross-examine various employees categorised by their duration in the company), possibly designing a research that might be based on sizes, for instance; in order to explore the particular factors that might impact L&D’s relation to employee retention and understand the causes of it. (3) To test whether these findings might be generalisable **and valid within the consulting industry**, this research could also be conducted within different consulting companies. (4) Moreover, this study, therefore its findings, can be considered **Sweden-specific**. The same research might be conducted in different Capgemini offices (e.g. India, France, Colombia etc), in order to discover if there is a **country or culture-specific** view for L&D opportunities in the company.

In addition, two more areas which might be linked to this research may be: (1) exploring whether the relationship between L&D opportunities and employee retention **can be further developed and be more impactful** and (2) whether L&D opportunities provided by companies are making their employees **less loyal**.

All in all, considering future implications that might add value to the present study, the scope of the research and findings might be enriched by conducting various studies such as alternative research to further explore ways to increase the motivation of employees to learn and grow within a company, linked to the impact these might have on securing employee retention within said organisation.

5.4 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, all reflections presented thus far, have been discussed and explored in the hope to investigate the research questions of this study, namely “**why is L&D important for (early stage) employee retention and how important is L&D for (early stage) employee retention?**”. The conclusions that have been reached, initially stem from a theoretical review foundation (see Chapter 2) and are further tested and based on the data gathered from the different data collection methods employed, namely a simple random sampling of 466 participants in an anonymous survey, and 10 non-random face to face interviews, both from Capgemini Nordics’ population (see Chapters 3 & 4). As a result of the empirical findings deriving from the Case Study, a set of limitations (e.g. specific context,

biases, etc..) and reliability have been taken into account while carrying out the research, handling the data and reaching the conclusions (see Chapters 1 & 4).

Finally, having (1) explored the relation between L&D's practices and the retention of a company's early-stage employees in the said organisation; (2) taken a closer look at early-stage employee retention; (3) explored the importance and the reasons behind L&D's positive impact on early-stage employee retention; and finally (4) suggested some input for further research to investigate ways in which L&D's impact on employee retention might be secured positively.

Lastly, as illustrated throughout the present study, we could argue that the need for learning and development in companies is among one of the most important needs of said organisations. In fact, as investigated, for many employees, being provided with and making use of opportunities that appear to be aligned to their goals and aspirations within their career frameworks, while enhancing personal and professional development, significantly influences their retention in a workplace.

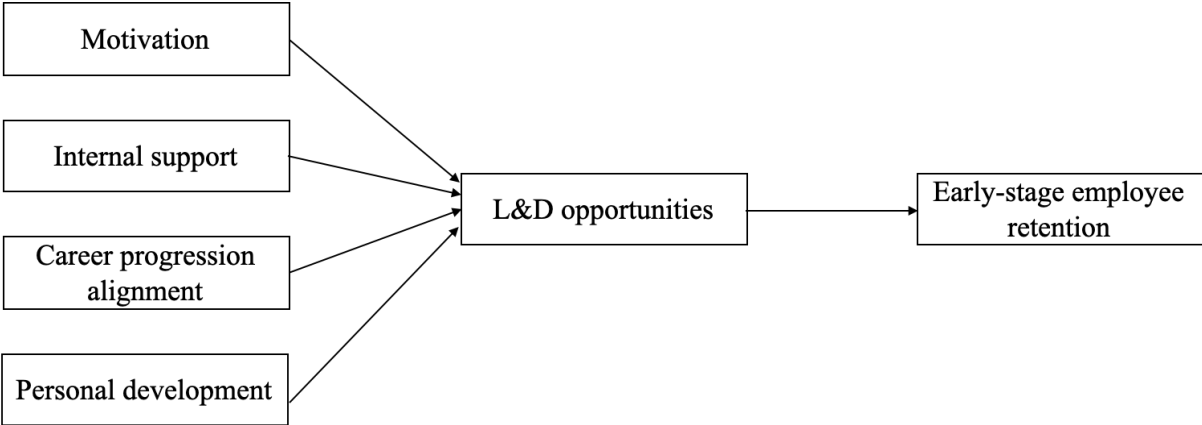


Figure 5. Model of L&D relation to early-stage employee retention

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Appendix A

Structured survey guide

The aim of the survey was:

1. To segment employees based on their duration in Capgemini and to filter the early-stage ones
2. To see early-stage employees' motivation for learning and growing with Capgemini
3. To see whether there is a relation between L&D opportunities provided by Capgemini and early-stage employees' decision to stay in the company
4. To see if Capgemini is providing a learning climate

Title: *Learning and Development Survey*

Description: Thank you for taking your time to answer this survey on L&D's impact on your working life. The survey is anonymous and will take approximately 2 minutes.

L&D: learning and development opportunities such as training, courses...

1. How long have you been working in Capgemini?
2. How motivated are you to learn and grow within your organisation?
3. Does Capgemini provide you with an adequate and supportive climate in regards to L&D opportunities?
4. Does the reason you're working in Capgemini have any relation with the L&D opportunities provided?
5. Do you think various L&D opportunities' in Capgemini have improved and developed your capabilities and career progression within the organisation?
6. How would you rate your experience with L&D?

7. What do you value the most among L&D opportunities?
8. Which certifications have you obtained?
9. Which one did you think was the most relevant course or the one you enjoyed the most?
10. According to your experience with L&D, which of the following aspects do you think can be improved?
11. Please provide feedback about improvement areas (offerings, process etc...).
12. What are the main reasons for you leaving Capgemini? (For offboarding employees)
13. To what extent did L&D opportunities in Capgemini impact your decision to leave the Company? (For offboarding employees)

Even though questions 6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13 were asked, the responses were not found relevant to the research questions and the purpose. Responses for these questions were either irrelevant or not sensible for our research to use. Therefore these questions were neither highlighted nor analysed in the survey section of this paper.

Appendix B

Semi- structured interview guide

Introduction: Interviewees' duration in the company and their general view on L&D opportunities.

1. How long have you been working in Capgemini?
2. Could you briefly tell us about your career background?
3. What is your idea of L&D?
4. Have you participated in any of the L&D opportunities offered by the company? What do you think about them? Why are they good/not good?
5. In your opinion, why is there a need for L&D and how does it impact employees in the company?

Insights related to exploring the possible relation between L&D employee retention:

Throughout the interviews, we tried to gather information relevant to this paper's aim and purpose, both direct and indirect questions on L&D's possible relation to early-stage employee retention.

Furthermore, throughout our research, several factors related to L&D's potential impact on employee retention have been mentioned (*e.g. employee motivation for L&D, organisational support, career alignment, etc.*). Thus, the following questions were asked in consideration of the findings from the theory, on the possible factors linking L&D to employee retention, (see Chapter 2), exploring the participant's views on the matter openly and through follow-up questions, when considered relevant.

Also, leading the questions' design, our interpretation of Emerson's *Social Exchange Theory* (see Chapter 2), illustrates how employees tend to evaluate a specific opportunity (L&D offerings in this case), and the practical advantages they can gain from it (e.g. career progression, personal/professional development, etc.). Herby explored:

Indirect data:

A. Motivation and support:

6. How do you see the connection between L&D opportunities and your *willingness* to stay in the company?
7. In what way does L&D make you want to stay in the company?
8. What is it about L&D that makes you want to stay in the company?

B. Career alignment:

9. How important on the list of your priorities is L&D for your career progression?
10. How important are L&D opportunities on your decision to stay or leave a company?

Direct data:

11. On a scale from 1-5, how high would you rate the importance of L&D's to stay in the company? (**1** indicating the **lowest** impact they believe L&D has on retaining them in the company, whilst **5** indicating the **highest**).
12. If the company was to take away L&D would you still stay or would you leave?
13. If you were to rank your reasons to stay in the company, on a scale from 1-5, from lower to higher, what would the rank order of L&D be among them?
14. Is L&D the reason you're staying?