

DIFFERENCES IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT OF THE BABY BOOMERS AND THE GENERATIONS X, Y, Z

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Purpose: This paper attempts to answer the following questions: does the level of organisational commitment of employees' generations differ significantly as well as which generation has the highest and which the lowest level of organisational commitment? Its purpose is to identify the differences in the level of commitment between generations of employees and to recognise generations that are characterized by its lowest and highest level.

Methodology: The paper presents the results of a survey conducted among students and their family members representing diverse generations of employees. The sample consisted of 396 respondents of Baby Boomers and Generations X, Y, Z. The differences in the level of organizational commitment and its components between these generations were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics, ANOVA analysis and nonparametric tests.

Findings: The levels of commitment differed significantly between the examined generations of employees. Generation Z was characterised by the lowest level, while Baby Boomers by the highest level of commitment. The findings also suggested that generation Y was more similar to generation Z than to generation X regarding organisational commitment.

Research limitations/implications: In future research, it would be particularly important to find out what activities are carried out to increase employee commitment in relation to the different generations of employees in organisations and whether they are in line with employees' needs and expectations. The purposive sampling method means that the results of the study are not representative and cannot be generalised, so a random sampling method should be used in the future.

Practical implications: By providing insight into generational differences in organisational commitment, the study can contribute to the formulation of effective age-related policies adapted to the specific characteristics of employees' generations in organisations.

Value: This study has provided empirical evidence on differences in the level of organisational commitment and its components between generations that were absent for four generations of employees.

Keywords: organizational commitment, Human Resource Management, generations of employees.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

For contemporary managers it is a difficult challenge to match human resource management methods with the needs of diverse generations of employees who today meet in organisations. Indeed, employees' approach to work, their requirements, and expectations depends on a number of socio-cultural and economic factors that determine the conditions of their growing up, education, and upbringing. Simultaneously, the situation of employees in the internal (organisational) and external labour market evolves. Gradually, the labour market becomes a market for the employee (Górniak et al., 2022). In the era of the knowledge-based economy, when human capital is gaining key importance, employers look for committed and creative employees who want to actively contribute to organisational achievements, as their commitment is one of the key factors influencing the success or failure of organisations (Wolniak, Grebski, 2018; Sungu, Weng, Xu, 2019). Moreover, changes in employees' careers have resulted in the temporary and flexible relationships between employees and the organisations what influences their loyalty and commitment into organizations. Contrary to common views, this issue does not only concern young employees, but also mature ones who over the years have become more mobile and are no longer as reluctant to change a job. These trends are strengthened by demographic changes. Today in many organisations generations of the Baby Boomers and the Generations X, Y, Z work together. On the one hand, the ageing of the population means that retaining older, experienced, and competent employees within an organisation becomes a necessity. On the other hand, it becomes all the more important to attract and retain young employees in the organisation, possibly by establishing their close ties with the organisation. In the face of growing labour shortages, the implementation of a policy of age diversity and the enhancement of organisational commitment of diverse generations of employees should become an inherent element of contemporary HRM. The rapid development of knowledge and technology accompanied by socioeconomic transformation in the last three decades means that today organizations have to cope with a strong diversification of age groups and considerable generational differences, manifested in the attitudes and behaviours. In this situation, recognising distinctive characteristics of generations and adjusting HRM policy to their specificity becomes an important condition for its success.

Despite a great deal of interest in both organisational commitment and distinctive features of different employees' generations, empirical studies on differences in organisational commitment between generations are still rare. Therefore, this paper attempts to answer the following questions: does the level of organisational commitment of particular employees' generations differ significantly as well as which generation has the highest and which the lowest level of organisational commitment? These aims will be reached by presenting a short literature review and the results of empirical study on organisational commitment of four generations of employees.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

2.1. Baby Boomers and Generations X, Y, Z of employees: their distinctive characteristics

Despite the fact that the notion “generation” is often understood just as a group “of people of more or less the same age” (Szymczak, 1979, p. 772), within the social science this term is interpreted more broadly. According to Wiktorowicz and Warwas (2016) a generation constitutes individuals who belong to the same culture group of similar age, attitudes, motivations, expectations, approach to life and values resulting from their shared historic and social situation. Consequently, generations of employees educated in different historical and sociocultural circumstances differ in their way of thinking, value system, expectations, and approach to work. Dynamic changes in the environment, especially the development of information technologies and the emergence of the digital economy, make the differences between them more apparent. There are four basic generations of employees currently active in the labour market, i.e. the generation of Baby Boomers, Generations X and Y, as well as Generation Z, which is just entering the labour market. These generations are distinguished primarily by age, although the periods falling within each generation are defined differently by researchers, because also their other characteristics are used as criteria of generational affiliation. The literature points to a number of specific characteristics of these generations.

The oldest generation still active in the labour market are the Baby Boomers, who are generally assumed to be born between 1965/70 and 1946 (e.g., Rosa, 2013; Muster, 2020). However, many of them have already retired. This generation matured during the period of significant socio-political changes, thus they adhere to such basic values as freedom and equal human rights, participation in collective actions, knowledge and education, prosperity, and responsibility (Rogozińska-Pawelczyk et al., 2019). They believe that a job success is a result of hard work and effort and it is measured by a position and salary. Due to their professional experience and approach to work, today they often become role models for others. In Poland, this generation of employees first worked at the time of socialism, then participated in the system transformation and they treat work as a duty (Rogozińska-Pawelczyk et al., 2019). They highly appreciate the value of work, its stability and job security. Their relationship with the organisation is mostly strong and long-term. They are loyal to their employer. They want to contribute to the success of their organization (Hysa, 2016). They prefer a traditional career model, which is determined by a sequence of promotions in the same organisation. They accept organizational hierarchy, procedures and job discipline (Becton et al., 2014). They prefer cooperation to competition and they are fulfilled in teamwork.

Generation X employees were born between 1965/71 and 1980. Their careers began during the period of the Polish economic transition, hence they highly value stability and job security in the organisation. Similarly to the Baby Boomers they also prefer a traditional model of career

and they change a job only when it is necessary. However, they are interested in innovations and new challenges. These employees are loyal to an employer, but their commitment is mainly based on continuance and normative commitment. They are characterized by high work ethics. Because they are not very self-confident in their value for the organisation, they willingly engage in various developmental activities and participate in trainings to increase their job competencies and value in the internal and external labour market. Generation X employees are conscientious, hard-working, and independent. They do not like hierarchy but accept the authority of supervisors. They need acceptance, support of their co-workers and a sense of belonging, therefore they also enjoy teamwork. This generation of employees is strongly motivated by position and status. They strive for promotions and career development, what often leads to their professional burnout and workaholism, being relatively common phenomena in this group of employees. Consequently, this generation has also started to look for a work-life balance more strongly than the previous one (i.e. Baby Boomers) but mostly at the end of their career.

Generation Y employees (also called Millennials) born between 1981 and 2000 are characterised by a greater distance to work and career than Generation Y. At work, these employees expect flexibility, autonomy, and a work-life balance. Generation Y is often described as demanding and overestimating their capabilities (Smolbik-Jęczmień, 2013). They are less loyal to an employer than Generation X. They do not feel strongly attached to an employer. They are characterised by a high degree of professional mobility, since they easily adapt to changes. Their career paths are often non-linear and diverse. They are aware of their value on the labour market; hence they prefer new career models such as a borderless career. They are good at new technologies, which they willingly use in both their professional and private life. They are continuously learning and this is their way of life and career development. They expect a well-paid job, fast promotion, openness in the work environment, opportunities for professional development, and for expression of their creativity (Smolbik-Jęczmień, 2013). They are concerned with a high standard of life thus well-paid work is their basis of livelihood. Their life attitude is characterised by a combination of apparent contradictions. On the one hand, the foundations of their intrinsic world are personal and affiliative values, while on the other, work is regarded as a condition for life success and as a source of personal satisfaction as well as a sense of fulfilment (Smolbik-Jęczmień, 2013).

The youngest Generation Z are employees born after 1999 at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries (Rogozinska-Pawelczyk et al., 2019). These are individuals who are just entering the labour market. They are also often referred to in the literature as Generation C, which is derived from the words 'connected', 'communicating', 'computerised', 'community-orientated', since their lives are focused on technology and social networks (Kukla, Nowacka, 2019). This generation is often attributed negative traits such as laziness, demandingness, and individualism. These characteristics may make work with Generation Z difficult. They are the first generation to have grown up during a digital revolution, with widespread access

to the Internet and digital technology since childhood (Vengrouskie, Scarlata, Baker, 2023). These circumstances had a great influence on their life and work attitudes and behaviors, expectations, values, and abilities. They are therefore proficient in information technology, in practice often applying it intuitively what is highly valued by many employers. They are able to function simultaneously in the virtual world and the real world, what can also lead to blurred boundaries between their professional and private life (Rogozinska-Pawelczyk et al., 2019). They value freedom, independence, and empowerment, thus they prefer flexible work hours and forms of employment. They are ambitious and focused on achieving goals. Employees of this generation expect challenging and interesting work, as well as quick promotions because they want everything 'right now' without a great effort (Kukla, Nowacka, 2019). However, the opportunities for development and self-fulfillment, both professionally and privately have a great importance to them. They are characterised by high social awareness. They prefer new career models, as they are professionally mobile, willing to change not only an employer but even a profession, hence it is difficult to build their loyalty and attachment to an organisation.

The apparent differences between the generations of employees presented, resulting from the different socio-economic conditions in which they grew up and developed, mean that their expectations of organisations are diverse. To enhance their organisational commitment their work environment should be adjusted to their specific characteristics. This generational diversity in organisations makes its management an important area of contemporary HRM.

2.2. Organizational commitment: the framework of the concept

As one of the key factors influencing employee performance, organizational commitment has been the subject of intense interest among management researchers for many decades. A study on organizational commitment began in the early 1960s. Its pioneer was Becker (1960), who first tried to provide its comprehensive conceptual framework. According to his approach organizational commitment of employees is based on their individual investments, which they make to remain in the organization and which they would lose if they leave it (Cohen, 2007). He also distinguished two kinds of commitment: calculative and attitudinal. His work was continued by Buchanan (1974) who defined organizational commitment as the emotional attachment of an employee to organizational goals and values as well as his role regarding these goals and values, thereby emphasizing significance of its emotional element.

In the later stage of the studies on organizational commitment Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) also emphasized this emotional aspect of organizational commitment claiming that organizational commitment is the power of an employee's ties and his or her identification with the organization. However, they mainly referred to the social exchange theory as a framework of this construct. Later, the concept of organisational commitment evolved and it has come to be understood as a specific psychological state or mindset that characterizes the employee's relationship with an organization (Houfak Khoufak, Nouri, 2023). Since the 1980s a multidimensional approach to organizational commitment has become popular. Adopting this

perspective, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) differentiated two dimensions of commitment, i.e. an instrumental exchange and psychological attachment. In their opinion, the exchange process results only in a superficial attachment of an employee to the organization but the deeper attachment arises from the employee's psychological attachment.

During this period Meyer and Allen (1984) began their study of this phenomenon. They defined organisational commitment as an employee's positive feelings of identification with the organisation and attachment to it. In their later study in the 1990s they proposed their three-component model and they developed its measurement instrument (Meyer, Allen, 1991). Despite many discussions, their concept is still one of the most popular and accepted approaches to organisational commitment. Consequently, their works were continued in numerous studies which analysed the essence of distinguished components of organizational commitment, as well as its various predictors and outcomes (e.g., Steijn, Leisink, 2006; Fu, Bolander, Jones, 2009; Cesinger et al., 2023).

The problem of organisational commitment also has awakened attention of Polish researchers for a long time. According to Spik and Klincewicz (2008), organisational commitment is employee's attachment to the organization and his/her identification with it. Juchnowicz (2010) following the approach proposed by Mowday et al. (1979) defined organisational commitment more broadly, claiming that it is an employee's identification with an organisation, its aims and values, a wish to be its member, and willingness to make an effort for the organization. Whereas Pec and Lewicka (2022) encapsulated organizational commitment as the employee's attachment and their dedication to the organisation. Similarly, organisational commitment is presented by Stefańska and Grabowski (2023), according to whom it is an employee's sense of bonding with the organisation. They also point to its relationship with job satisfaction. Dziopak-Strachm (2018) claimed that organisational commitment is not only identification with the organisation manifested in responsibility for its actions, but also a willingness to make autonomous decisions for the success of the organisation. In turn Kopertyńska and Kmiotek (2014) pointed out that organizational commitment represents a positive, work-related state of employee well-being and fulfilment that leads to behaviour that brings benefits to the organisation. To sum up, generally organisational commitment can be understood as the psychological links between an employee and an organisation that encourages him/her to remain an organizational member (Strange Noesgaard, Jørgensen, 2023).

One of the best known and most widely used models of organizational commitment is the one proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990). It has been also successfully validated in previous empirical research conducted in Poland (Bańka, Bazińska, Wołowska, 2002). This model encompasses three distinctive components of organizational commitment (Allen, Meyer, 1990, pp. 2-3):

- affective commitment which concerns employee's emotional and attitudinal attachment to the organization, which results in the desire to be its part,
- continuance commitment which is based on calculation reflecting subjective costs perceived by an employee related with leaving the organization,
- normative commitment showing the loyalty of an employee towards the organization based on his/her sense of obligation to stay in the organization.

It has been empirically proven that organisational commitment leads to a number of positive outcomes for both the employees and the organisations they work for. It is positively related to employee's performance, job satisfaction and career success (Sager, Johnston, 1989; Riketta, 2002). In empirical research, it has been found that organizational commitment is positively linked with organizational long-term orientation, innovation engagement, innovative behaviors and organizational learning which are important factors of organizational success (Meroño-Cerdán, 2023; Jafri, 2010; Rose et al., 2009).

Organizational commitment depends on many organizational factors, e.g. in empirical studies it was found that organizational culture, coworkers and perceived organizational support, organizational learning, HRM practices, procedural justice are its predictors (Khan, 2022; Soeling, Aulia, Indriati, 2021; Mon, Akkadechanunt, Chitpakdee, 2022; Meyer, Smith, 2000). Also job content and its characteristics significantly affect organizational commitment of employees. In the study carried out in a software solutions development firm in Denmark it was discovered that relational and cognitive job crafting encourage affective, normative, and continuous commitment of knowledge workers (Strange Noesgaard, Jørgensen, 2023). Moreover, numerous individual factors influence employees' commitment, e.g. employee competencies, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, sense of meaningful work, and sense of influence on organizational performance (Riyanto et al., 2023; Słocińska, 2014; Adamska-Chudzińska, 2016). Many researchers indicated a particular impact on demographic features such as age, job experience, gender, and educational level on employees' commitment (e.g. Cohen, 2007; Meyer, Smith, 2000; Meyer, Allen, 1984). In previous empirical research conducted among hospital and library employees Allen and Meyer (1993) found that affective and normative commitment increased with employee age, continuance commitment increased with organizational and positional tenure. Changes in values, expectations and work attitudes between Baby Boomers and Generations X, Y, Z also suggest that employees of these generations may differ significantly in the level of their organisational commitment. Moreover, specific characteristics of Generation Z such as a preference for flexible forms of employment, high job mobility and a desire for independence, make it reasonable to suppose that employees of this generation may be characterised by low level of organisational commitment. Otherwise, the oldest Baby Boomers are reluctant to change jobs because they value stability and job security in the same organisation, what can lead to strong relationships with the organisation and a high level of organisational commitment. Therefore, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H1: There will be significant differences between generations of employees in the level of their organizational commitment.
- H2: Employees of Generation Z will report the lowest level of their organizational commitment.
- H3: Employees of Generation 'Baby Boomers' will report the highest level of their organizational commitment.

3. Empirical study

3.1. Research method

To test the posted hypotheses, the survey was carried out from April to July 2023. Purposive sampling method was applied. To pick up generational differences the sample encompassed students (full and part-time working) of majors related with extensive use of information technology as representing generation Z and their family members constituting generations Y, X, and Baby Boomers. It was conducted among students of such majors as Digital Economy, Journalism and Social Communication, Urban Economy and Real Estate, Computer Science and Econometrics at the University of Economics in Katowice and Promotional and Crisis Communication at the University of Silesia in Katowice.

The final sample consisted of 396 respondents including 57.6% women (228 people) and 42.4% men (168 people). The structure of the sample with respect to the level of education of the respondents can be presented as follows: 28.8% of the participants had Master's degrees, 3.5% engineering degrees, 16.2% bachelor's degrees, 41.2% of the participants had secondary education (general or technical), 9.3% had vocational education and 1% of the participants had primary education. Their average age was 41.58 years (median 44.5 years) and the average seniority was 17.98 years (median 20 years). The great majority of respondents held executive positions (84.1%), and 15.9% held managerial positions. They were employed in organizations of such branches as 13.2% manufacturing, 11.9% wholesale and retail trade, 8.3% education, 7.1% public administration, 5.8% arts, entertainment and recreation, 5.3% healthcare, 5.1% accommodation and food service activities, 4.3% transport and storage, 4.3% information technology activities, 3.8% mining and quarrying, 3.8% legal and accounting activity, 3.0% financial and insurance activities, 2.3% construction, 2.0% administrative and support service activities, 1.5% telecommunication, 1.5% professional, scientific and technical activities, 1.3% publishing, and 15.5% of respondents were employed in other sectors. 47.2% of the respondents were employed in small organizations (1-49 employees), 19.9% in medium organizations (50-249 employees), and 32.9% were employed in big organizations (above 249 employees). The average period of existence of these organisations was 29.11 years.

Organizational commitment was measured with the Polish version of the Allen and Meyer's scale (1990) known as the Three-Component Organisational Commitment Questionnaire, which was validated by Bańka, Bazińska and Wołowska (2002). It consisted of eighteen items scored on a 7-grade Likert's scale (from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree) which refer to a different component of organisational commitment, i.e. affective, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Cronbach α for a subscale of affective commitment was 0.87, for continuance commitment it was 0.89, and for normative commitment 0.89, and Cronbach α for the whole scale of organizational commitment was 0.93, what indicated high reliability of the scale used.

Key demographic information about the respondents and organizations employing them was also applied, i.e. gender (coded: 1 – male, 2 – female), educational attainment (coded: 1 – primary education 2 – basic vocational education, 3 – secondary education (general or technical), 4 – engineering degree, 5 – bachelor's degree, 6 – Master's degree, age (a number of years), position (1 – executive position, 2 – managerial position), seniority (a number of years), branches where they were employed (letters), size (1– less than 10 employees, 2 – 10-49 employees, 3 – 50-249 employees, 4 – 250-499 employees, etc.), and period of existence of organizations (a number of years). This information was obtained with single items. Data was processed by means of SPSS 29.0.

In the first step, four generations of employees were distinguished, i.e., Generation Z (up to 23 years,), who were 22.5% of the sample, Generation Y (24 to 42 years), who were 24.7%, Generation X (43 to 55 years), who were 37.6% and the oldest Baby Boomers (56 years and over), who were 15.2% of the sample. In order to test the proposed hypotheses descriptive statistics, ANOVA analysis, nonparametric tests were conducted.

3.1. Results of the study

The results obtained indicate that respondents generally rated their overall organisational commitment as average. Its mean rating was 3.73 points on the 7-point scale (median 3.61) (Table 1). The component of affective commitment was the highest rated by employees, i.e. mean score was 4.22 points (median 4.33). It was noticeably higher rated than the other two components of organizational commitment, i.e. continuance and normative commitment, which both received the mean rating of 3.49 points (median 3.33). Ratings of all components were also characterized by significant diversity (standard deviation overrun 1.4 point) (Table 1).

Table 1.
Descriptive statistics of organizational commitment

Variables	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Range	Minim.	Max.
Affective commitment	4.22	4.33	1.41	6	1	7
Continuance commitment	3.49	3.33	1.50	6	1	7
Normative commitment	3.49	3.33	1.44	6	1	7
Organizational commitment (overall)	3.73	3.61	1.23	6	1	7

Source: own developed.

Next, the level of organisational commitment and its components of each generation were analysed (Table 2). Baby Boomers were characterized by the highest mean score of the overall organisational commitment (mean: 4.47 points). They also rated other components of organisational commitment the highest. In contrast, representatives of generation Z rated their organisational commitment (mean: 3.15 points) and its components the lowest (Table 2). The greatest differences between generations in the rating of the components examined was found for the continuance commitment.

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics of the level of organizational commitment for Generations examined

Variables	Generation Z	Generation Y	Generation X	Baby Boomers
Organizational commitment (overall)	3.15	3.40	4.01	4.47
Affective commitment	3.79	4.06	4.42	4.64
Continuance commitment	2.54	2.99	3.95	4.57
Normative commitment	3.12	3.15	3.66	4.19

Source: own developed.

To check whether these differences are statistically significant one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied. But first normality of the distribution of overall organizational commitment was checked with the use of Kolmogorov-Smirnov with Lilliefors' amendment test (at $p = 0.05$). Next Levene's test of homogeneity of variance was applied. Because variance was homogenous ANOVA analysis was carried out in order to check whether the differences in the levels of organizational commitment were significant. Results of ANOVA analysis revealed significant differences of the average organizational commitment levels between the generations examined (Table 3).

Table 3.
Results of ANOVA analysis: organizational commitment overall

Organizational commitment	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	84.616	3	28.205	21.585	0.000
Within Groups	512.223	392	1.307		
Total	596.838	395			

Source: own developed.

Subsequently, to determine which generations differ significantly from each other regarding the level of organizational commitment, post hoc multiple comparison analysis was conducted using Scheffe's test. Significant differences between Generation Z and the Baby Boomers, Generation Z and Generation X, as well as between Generation Y and Generation X, Generation Y and Baby Boomers were found (at the significance level of 0.05). These results allowed to confirm the first formulated hypothesis (H1) (Table 4).

Table 4.

The results of comparisons between the generations examined: organizational commitment (Scheffe's test)

(I) gen	(J) gen	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Generation Z	Generation Y	-0.25	0.17	0.52	-0.72	0.22
	Generation X	<u>-0.86*</u>	0.15	0.00	-1.29	-0.43
	Baby Boomers	<u>-1.32*</u>	0.19	0.00	-1.85	-0.78
Generation Y	Generation Z	0.253	0.17	0.52	-0.22	0.73
	Generation X	<u>-0.60*</u>	0.15	0.00	-1.02	-0.19
	Baby Boomers	<u>-1.06*</u>	0.19	0.00	-1.59	-0.54
Generation X	Generation Z	<u>0.86*</u>	0.15	0.00	0.43	1.29
	Generation Y	<u>0.60*</u>	0.15	0.00	0.19	1.02
	Baby Boomers	-0.46	0.17	0.08	-0.95	0.03
Baby Boomers	Generation Z	<u>1.32*</u>	0.19	0.00	0.78	1.85
	Generation Y	<u>1.06*</u>	0.19	0.00	0.54	1.59
	Generation X	0.46	0.17	0.08	-0.03	0.95

Note. *The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: own developed.

In the next step to get a deeper insight, differences between the level of components of commitment were also analysed. Firstly affective commitment was examined. Because the analysis showed that the distribution is not normal, in order to determine whether the differences occurring in the average level of affective commitment in the studied groups were statistically significant, the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test was applied. It showed that, at the 0.05 level of significance, belonging to a particular generation was a factor that significantly differentiated the level of affective commitment (Table 5).

Table 5.

The significance of differences between the average levels of affective commitment in the generations examined: results of the Kruskal-Wallis test

Null hypothesis	Test	Test statistic	Significance	Decision
Distribution of affective commitment is the same across generations of employees	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	17.916	<0.001	Reject the null hypothesis

Note. The significance level is 0.05; Asymptotic significances are displayed.

Source: own developed.

Then, a post-hoc test for nonparametric comparison to analyse the significance of differences in the level of affective commitment between particular generations was carried out (Table 6). The results suggest that there were statistically significant differences in the level of affective commitment between Generation Z and Generation X and between Generation Z and Baby Boomers (Table 6).

Table 6.

The results of post-hoc nonparametric comparisons between the generations examined: affective commitment (pairwise comparison)

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
Generation Z - Generation Y	-22.757	16.749	-1.359	0.174	1.000
Generation Z - Generation X	-49.535	15.324	-3.233	0.001	0.007
Generation Z - Baby Boomers	-71.337	19.107	-3.734	<0.001	0.001
Generation Y - Generation X	-26.778	14.877	-1.800	0.072	0.431
Generation Y - Baby Boomers	-48.580	18.750	-2.591	0.010	0.057
Generation X - Baby Boomers	-21.802	17.489	-1.247	0.213	1.000

Note. Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and the Sample 2 distributions are the same. Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is 0.05.

Source: own developed.

Since the distribution was not normal in relation to continuance and normative commitment, the Kruskal-Wallis tests were used too. An analysis of the significance of the differences in the mean levels of continuance commitment between generations was conducted, which showed that belonging to a particular generation significantly differentiated the level of continuance commitment of employees (Table 7).

Table 7.

The significance of differences between the average levels of continuance commitment in the generations examined: results of the Kruskal-Wallis test

Null hypothesis	Test	Test statistic	Significance	Decision
Distribution of continuance commitment is the same across generations of employees	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	90.647	<0.001	Reject the null hypothesis

Note. The significance level is 0.05; Asymptotic significances are displayed.

Source: own developed.

The results of the post hoc analysis obtained indicated that statistically significant differences exist between the generations surveyed (Table 8). Pairwise comparison showed that there were significant differences in the levels of continuance commitment between Generation Z and Generation X, between Generation Z and Baby Boomers, as well as between Generation Y and Generation X, and between Generation Y and Baby Boomers.

Table 8.

The results of post-hoc comparisons between the generations examined: continuance commitment (pairwise comparison)

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
Generation Z - Generation Y	-36.600	16.749	-2.185	0.029	0.173
Generation Z - Generation X	<u>-111.128</u>	<u>15.324</u>	<u>-7.252</u>	<u><0.001</u>	<u>0.000</u>
Generation Z - Baby Boomers	<u>-151.058</u>	<u>19.108</u>	<u>-7.906</u>	<u><0.001</u>	<u>0.000</u>
Generation Y - Generation X	<u>-74.527</u>	<u>14.877</u>	<u>-5.009</u>	<u><0.001</u>	<u>0.000</u>
Generation Y - Baby Boomers	<u>-114.458</u>	<u>18.751</u>	<u>-6.104</u>	<u><0.001</u>	<u>0.000</u>
Generation X - Baby Boomers	-39.931	17.490	-2.283	0.022	0.135

Note. Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and the Sample 2 distributions are the same. Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is 0.05.

Source: own developed.

Also with respect to normative commitment, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed that differences between particular generations were statistically significant, hence a post-hoc nonparametric analysis was also conducted (Table 9).

Table 9.

The significance of differences between the average levels of normative commitment in the generations examined: results of the Kruskal-Wallis test

Null hypothesis	Test	Test statistic	Significance	Decision
Distribution of normative commitment is the same across generations of employees	Independent samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	25.831	<0.001	Reject the null hypothesis

Note. The significance level is 0.05; Asymptotic significances are displayed.

Source: own developed.

Post-hoc nonparametric comparison revealed that similarly to continuance commitment there were also significant differences in the levels of normative commitment between Generation Z and Generation X, Generation Z and Baby Boomers, as well as between Generation Y and Generation X, and between Generation Y and Baby Boomers (Table 10).

Table 10.

The results of post-hoc comparisons between the generations examined: normative commitment

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
Generation Z - Generation Y	-1.125	16.747	-0.067	0.946	1.000
Generation Z - Generation X	<u>-43.469</u>	<u>15.322</u>	<u>-2.837</u>	<u>0.005</u>	<u>0.027</u>
Generation Z - Baby Boomers	<u>-79.947</u>	<u>19.105</u>	<u>-4.185</u>	<u><0.001</u>	<u>0.000</u>
Generation Y - Generation X	<u>-42.344</u>	<u>14.875</u>	<u>-2.847</u>	<u>0.004</u>	<u>0.027</u>
Generation Y - Baby Boomers	<u>-78.822</u>	<u>18.748</u>	<u>-4.204</u>	<u><0.001</u>	<u>0.000</u>
Generation X - Baby Boomers	-36.479	17.487	-2.086	0.037	0.222

Note. Each row tests the null hypothesis that the Sample 1 and the Sample 2 distributions are the same. Asymptotic significances (2-sided tests) are displayed. The significance level is 0.05.

Source: own developed.

The conducted analyses proved that the lowest level of organizational commitment and its components characterized the Generation Z and the highest level of organizational commitment and its components characterized Baby Boomers. Because the presented analyses showed that these differences were statistically significant, hence there are no reasons to reject the second and third hypotheses (H2 and H3).

4. Discussion and conclusions

The results of the study revealed that there were no reasons to reject the posted hypotheses. Generally, the level of overall organisational commitment of the employees surveyed was rather average but differed significantly between the examined generations (H1). Generation Z was characterised by the lowest level of organisational commitment, while Baby Boomers were characterized by its highest level (H2 and H3). These findings are in line with a previous study indicating that employees' commitment is related to their age and seniority (Allen, Meyer, 1993). Furthermore, organizational commitment concerns the ties and loyalty of employees to the organization which develops over time, hence it is logical that younger employees of Generations Z and Y are less committed than the older generations X and Baby Boomers. In addition, changes in employees' career patterns and the conditions of the psychological contract between the employee and the organisation, which concerns especially younger generations, mean that young employees feel a weak bond with the organisation, do not feel internal obligation to stay with the organisation and are more likely to change jobs easily to one that better suits their preferences and needs. This statement is supported by the findings that differences between Generation Z and older Generations X and Baby Boomers were particularly considerable in their normative and continuance commitment. Regarding affective commitment despite significant differences in its levels, it should be noticed that it was the highest rated component of organisational commitment and its level was the most equal. These results suggest that regardless of the generation many of the examined employees stay in their organisations because they feel emotionally connected to them.

Obviously, the differences in work attitudes and behaviours between the generations increase as the 'age gap' between them grows. However, an interesting finding is that in case of ratings of overall organisational commitment, there were less differences between Generations Y and Z than between Generations Y and X. Similarly with respect to continuance and normative commitment significant differences were found between Generation Y and X but not between Generations Z and Y. These findings suggest that regarding organisational commitment Generation Y seems to be more similar to Generation Z than to Generation X.

Limitations of this study and directions for future studies should also be mentioned. First and foremost, it would be important to identify what employee commitment building activities are being undertaken for different generations of employees in organisations and whether they are aligned with their needs and expectations. Furthermore, an important question arises to what extent these activities are linked to employee career planning and development and whether they include generations of older employees, often overlooked in the Polish organisations. Therefore, on the one hand, further research should pay particular attention to organisational practices for later life work and active aging policy directed at Generation X and Baby Boomers. On the other hand, the reasons for the low level of organisational commitment of the youngest generations of employees should also be examined in depth.

Moreover, it should be noted that the purposive sampling method makes it impossible to generalise results, hence in future a random sampling method should be used. To capture the differences between the younger and older generations, the respondents representing the youngest generation were students in fields related to the use of the latest communication technologies. As a result, the differences between them and older generations may be more pronounced than for other members of Generation Z. In turn, because family members were also surveyed as representatives of older generations, their work attitudes may be influenced by socialisation processes in the family, what also limits representatives of the results obtained.

To sum up, the new challenges associated with the ageing of society, longer work life, labour market shortages lead to increasing age diversity in organisations, where today four generations of employees, i.e. Generations X, Y, Z, and Baby Boomers meet. These generations grew up in different socio-economic environments which shaped their specific competencies, weaknesses and strengths, values, work attitudes and behaviours. This diversity with the appropriate HRM policy can create many new opportunities for the organisation rather than threats. However, this requires the use of HRM methods and tools adapted to the needs of different generations of employees. In the face of these changes, organisations should encourage partnership and collaboration between different generations of employees and enhance their commitment regardless of age, allowing their mutual learning and the utilization of their specific strengths (Gajdzik, 2016). Given the rapid growth of knowledge and the fast obsolescence of employee competencies, it is particularly important to provide opportunities for professional development, which for many employees, especially Generation Z, is an important factor in increasing their organizational commitment. This area is closely linked to career planning, which in turn often does not encompass older generations of employees in organizations. As a result, many of them fear the premature end of their careers, while at the same time wishing to remain in the labour market for as long as possible and be useful for organizations.

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