

## THEMATIC MAPPING AND EVOLUTION OF RESEARCH ON GENERATIONS IN ORGANIZATIONS USING VOSVIEWER: A BIBLIOMETRIC APPROACH

Łucja WALIGÓRA

University of Economics in Katowice; lucja.waligora@uekat.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-1132-6060

**Purpose:** The aim of the study is to map and analyze the scientific literature on intergenerational differences, generational identity, and marginalization in organizational and social contexts from 1993 to 2026. The research identifies the main research streams, thematic evolution, and gaps, particularly regarding younger generations (Y, Z, Alpha) and intergenerational diversity in the workplace.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The study is based on a bibliometric and thematic analysis of 41 publications from the Scopus database (BUSI, SOCI). VOSviewer was used to visualize keyword co-occurrences, map thematic evolution, and identify research clusters.

**Findings:** Research has evolved from demographic and cohort-based approaches to analyses of identity, values, and intergenerational interactions. Dominant topics include generational differences, generational identity, and intergenerational diversity. There is growing interest in younger generations, particularly Generation Z.

**Research limitations/implications:** The analysis is limited to 41 publications and the Scopus database, which may not cover the entire global body of research. Future studies should expand the sample, consider various cultural and institutional contexts, and examine the impact of generational diversity on organizational outcomes.

**Social implications:** The study raises awareness of the risk of marginalizing employees due to generational stereotypes, supports inclusion, and promotes a responsible approach to workplace diversity.

**Originality/value:** The study combines bibliometric and thematic approaches in analyzing generational differences and marginalization, revealing the evolution of research and identifying gaps relevant to scholars in management, sociology, and work psychology.

**Keywords:** generational differences; generational identity; marginalization; intergenerational relations; multigenerational workplace.

**Category of the paper:** research paper; bibliometric analysis.

## 1. Introduction

Intergenerational differences, generational identity, and phenomena of marginalization in organizational and social contexts currently constitute a significant area of interdisciplinary research. In the scientific literature, this topic is gaining importance not only in management studies but also in sociology, psychology, and human capital research (Costanza et al., 2023; Fuchs et al., 2023; Seifert et al., 2023). Generations are not merely a simple demographic classification but complex socio-cultural constructs encompassing shared historical experiences, values, narratives, and identity (Mannheim, 1952; Ortega y Gasset, 1992; McCrindle, 2014). Understanding these phenomena is crucial in the context of managing age diversity in organizations, designing HR policies, and analyzing intergenerational relations in society.

The aim of this study is to systematically map and analyze the scientific literature on intergenerational differences, generational identity, and marginalization in organizational and social contexts from 1993 to 2026. The study primarily seeks to identify the main research streams, including dominant topics, theories, and concepts used in the literature, as well as to examine the thematic and temporal evolution of research on generations in management and sociology. An important element is also to determine the structures of connections between key concepts in the literature, such as generational differences, generational identity, and marginalization, which allows for understanding how theoretical and empirical research complement each other. Another objective is to identify research gaps and potential directions for future studies, particularly concerning younger generations (Y, Z, Alpha) and issues related to intergenerational diversity in the workplace, thereby outlining areas requiring deeper investigation in future research.

Based on the research objectives, research questions were formulated from a bibliometric and thematic perspective. Primarily, the study aims to determine which main thematic streams dominate the scientific literature on generational differences in organizations and social contexts during the analyzed period. It is also important to understand how research on generations has evolved over time and what thematic shifts can be observed. Further questions concern identifying which concepts and constructs play a central role in studies on generational differences and generational identity, as well as the relationships between theoretical and empirical research. The study also aims to identify research gaps and underexplored areas in the context of intergenerational diversity and marginalization in organizations, and to determine how geographic and institutional contexts shape the directions of research on generational differences.

## 2. Literature review - generational identity as a socio-cultural construct

An individual's development depends on the environment in which they grow up – from family relationships, through school experiences, to interactions during adolescence and career path choices. Each person participates in a diverse socio-cultural development over which they had no control, which significantly shapes the characteristic traits of particular generations. As Mark McCrindle (2014) emphasizes, generations differ not only in their birth dates but also in the context of the world in which they grew up (Folta, 2020, p. 23). José Ortega y Gasset defines a generation as a historical unit, encompassing shared sensibilities, worldviews, and behavioral patterns of individuals shaped by the same era (Ortega y Gasset, 1992). Mannheim, on the other hand, points out that generations are not merely age groups but groups of people who share a common position within a socio-historical context and a sense of collective experience (Mannheim, 1952). From a research perspective, these theories help to understand how shared historical experiences shape generational identity, as well as the risk of identity reduction and the marginalization of individuals who do not fit into stereotypical generational frameworks (Aguilar, 2015).

Generational cycle theories constitute an important area of research on generational identity and intergenerational relations, although the topic is complex, heterogeneous, and controversial, which may explain its continued presence in the scientific literature. Karl Mannheim (1952) emphasized that generations are not merely age groups but communities of people embedded in a specific socio-historical context (*location*) and possessing a conscious or unconscious sense of shared experience (*generational consciousness*). In his framework, key processes include the entry of new cultural participants, the departure of older members (*disappearance*), the transmission of cultural heritage, and the maintenance of continuity across generational transitions. From a research perspective, Mannheim's theory provides useful frameworks for analyzing how shared historical experiences shape generational identity (Pilcher, 1993). This approach also allows for the examination of risks such as reducing an individual's identity to a mere generational label or their marginalization when they do not fit stereotypical generational norms. At the same time, the theory faces limitations, primarily concerning the difficulty of operationalizing the concept of generation and accounting for significant intra-generational diversity, arising, for example, from social class or region of residence (Aguilar, 2015).

In contrast, the generational cycle theory proposed by William Strauss and Neil Howe (1991) presents human life from a cyclical perspective, where individual experiences are connected both to historical events and personal milestones. According to the authors, human life can be divided into four phases, growth, awakening, unraveling, and crisis, spanning an average of 80-100 years. The growth phase is characterized by community, tradition, and family stability; the awakening phase by individualism and rejection of established norms;

the unraveling phase by egocentrism, chaos, and fragmentation of relationships; and the crisis phase by renewed social unity, idealism, and personal sacrifice for the common good. This theory enables the analysis of employees' values, attitudes, and expectations in relation to their generational phase, which can be useful in intergenerational management and HR policy, though it carries the risk of simplifications and stereotyping. Critics point to weak empirical support, excessive determinism, and insufficient consideration of class, racial, and contextual differences (Strauss, Howe, 1991).

Despite differences in approach and scope, both theories help to understand how historical and social experiences shape generational identity and highlight challenges related to reducing individuals to generational labels or generalizations. The topic remains active and controversial in the scientific literature, as reflected in numerous theoretical discussions and empirical studies on the role of generations in social, cultural, and organizational contexts.

Generational diversity in the workplace can lead to differing interpretations of the same messages and varied expectations toward the organization. Older generations, such as Baby Boomers and Generation X, tend to place greater emphasis on loyalty to the employer, job stability, and organizational predictability. In contrast, Generations Y and Z focus on personal development, work flexibility, and opportunities for remote work. The youngest Generation Alpha, currently entering the labor market, is characterized by technological fluency, and collaboration with artificial intelligence is expected to become the norm for them (Westover, 2024).

Literature analyses indicate that generational differences can manifest in work-related values: systematic studies reveal that Generations X, Y, and Z differ in their expectations regarding the work environment, work-life balance, autonomy, and career paths (Fuchs et al., 2023). Stiglbauer et al. (2022) discuss the risk of organizational conflicts arising from differing value orientations across generations.

At the same time, the category of *generation* is increasingly seen not merely as a demographic division (year of birth) but as a complex socio-cultural construct, encompassing identity mechanisms, symbolic “us vs. them” frameworks, and generational narratives. Research shows that people may identify with generational labels, such as *Millennials* or *Generation Z*, which form part of their self-concept. However, the scope and significance of this identification vary—individuals may simultaneously hold both age-based and generational identities, with the latter differing widely in importance (Costanza et al., 2023; Rudolph et al., 2021).

Systematic literature reviews indicate that, although many studies reference generational categories, their conclusions are often ambiguous due to methodological differences and contextual factors (Fuchs et al., 2023). A critical warning is that treating generations as rigid categories can promote identity reduction and marginalization of individuals who do not fit dominant generational narratives. Seifert, Van Ness, Eddy, Buff, and D'Abate (2023)

demonstrate that work-related ethical traits differ significantly between generations, which can lead to erroneous assumptions if generations are treated as homogeneous groups.

Therefore, adopting generation as an analytical category requires a critical approach. Generational membership should be recognized as one of many dimensions of differentiation, alongside age, class, gender, or culture, rather than as a primary variable determining behavior. Only then can research on multigenerational teams and diversity management practices reduce the risk of oversimplification, individual identity reduction, and marginalization of employees who do not fit stereotypical generational frameworks. The construct of “generation” should thus be used cautiously, taking into account its complex socio-cultural character and intra-generational diversity.

Despite a growing body of research on generations, generational identity, and phenomena of marginalization in organizational and social contexts, the literature remains fragmented and inconsistent. In particular, there is a lack of systematic analyses that connect theoretical concepts of generations (Mannheim, Ortega y Gasset, Strauss & Howe) with practical implications for organizational functioning and intergenerational relationships.

The majority of studies focus on simple demographic or cohort-based classifications, treating generations as relatively homogeneous groups, which oversimplifies complex identity processes and increases the risk of stereotyping. Intra-generational diversity—arising from social class, place of residence, professional experience, or cultural background—is also largely overlooked.

Another limitation is the insufficient attention paid to younger generations (Y, Z, Alpha) and the consequences of intergenerational diversity in the workplace, including mechanisms of marginalization and exclusion of those who do not fit dominant generational narratives. Few studies examine how generational identification influences behaviors, values, and relationships within organizations, or how geographic, institutional, and sectoral contexts shape these dynamics.

Consequently, there is a need for a critical and systematic approach to literature analysis that enables researchers to:

- identify the main theoretical and empirical research streams,
- capture the evolution of studies on generations,
- pinpoint underexplored areas, particularly regarding younger generations, intergenerational diversity, and marginalization,
- and link theoretical discourse with practical implications for diversity management and HR policies.

### 3. Research methodology

The study was conducted based on a systematic bibliometric and thematic analysis of the scientific literature on intergenerational differences, generational identity, and marginalization in organizational and social contexts. The analysis aimed to map the evolution of the topic, identify the main research streams, and determine the relationships between key concepts in the scientific literature.

The data source was the Scopus database, selected for its interdisciplinary coverage and extensive inclusion of publications in management studies (BUSI) and sociology (SOCI). The search was limited to publications containing in the title, abstract, or keywords combinations of terms related to generations and generational differences: (*generation OR generational AND differences*) AND (*identity OR marginalization*) AND (*multigenerational OR intergenerational*).

Additionally, filtering was applied based on keywords such as *generational differences*, *generation X/Y/Z*, *age*, *cohort analysis* and *intergenerational relations*, and the search was limited to articles in the fields of management studies and sociology. The final sample comprised 41 publications from 1993 to 2026. The selection of this number of articles was driven by the need to ensure a representative sample while allowing for in-depth analysis. This approach enabled a detailed tracking of thematic evolution, identification of main research streams, and mapping of relationships between key concepts, while maintaining the quality of the analysis. Including a larger number of publications could have led to dispersion of focus and made it difficult to capture subtle connections and research gaps, whereas a smaller number of articles might not have been representative or captured the complexity of the field. Therefore, the choice of 41 publications represents a compromise between depth of analysis and breadth of coverage, allowing for a systematic and rigorous mapping of the literature and identification of research gaps, particularly concerning younger generations (Y, Z, Alpha), intergenerational diversity, and the influence of geographic and institutional contexts on research directions.

The study employed bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer, which enables the visualization and exploration of citation, co-citation, co-authorship, and term co-occurrence networks in the scientific literature. This allows the identification of structural relationships and dominant topics within a given research area (van Eck, Waltman, 2010; Waltman et al., 2010). Using VOSviewer, it is possible to examine how specific concepts (such as *generation*, *age diversity*, *generational identity*) are interconnected in the literature, which publications form the core of the discourse, and which research gaps, such as those between classical theory and contemporary approaches, remain underexplored. VOSviewer also supports text mining for analyzing the co-occurrence of keywords and terms in abstracts and titles, enhancing the interpretation of thematic trends (van Eck, Waltman, 2010; Waltman et al., 2010; Li, Hassan, 2023).

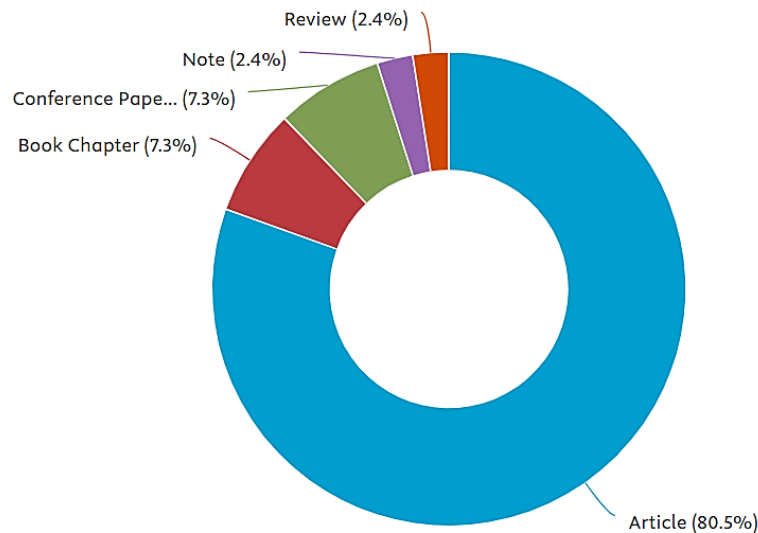
The analysis was conducted in the following steps: first, keyword identification was performed, determining the 35 most frequently occurring terms in the publication set. Next, a network of relationships was created, identifying 166 links between terms with a total strength of 595, which enabled the extraction of seven thematic clusters. The next step involved mapping thematic evolution, identifying changes over time in dominant concepts and research streams; node colors reflected the average publication year of each term, allowing visualization of temporal trends. Finally, a density analysis was carried out, which identified central research nodes and assessed the intensity of term co-occurrence within the studied area.

Publications were further classified across several dimensions. First, the document type was considered, distinguishing between research articles, book chapters, conference papers, reviews, and notes. Next, publications were classified by year, enabling observation of the research field's dynamics from 1993 to 2026. Another criterion was the thematic area, including, among others, social sciences, psychology, and medicine. Additionally, the authors' country affiliations were recorded, allowing for assessment of the geographical concentration of research, and institutional affiliations were noted, enabling the identification of leading research centers in the field.

## **4. Results of the bibliometric analysis of publications**

### **4.1. Bibliometric analysis of publications – analysis of data from the Scopus database**

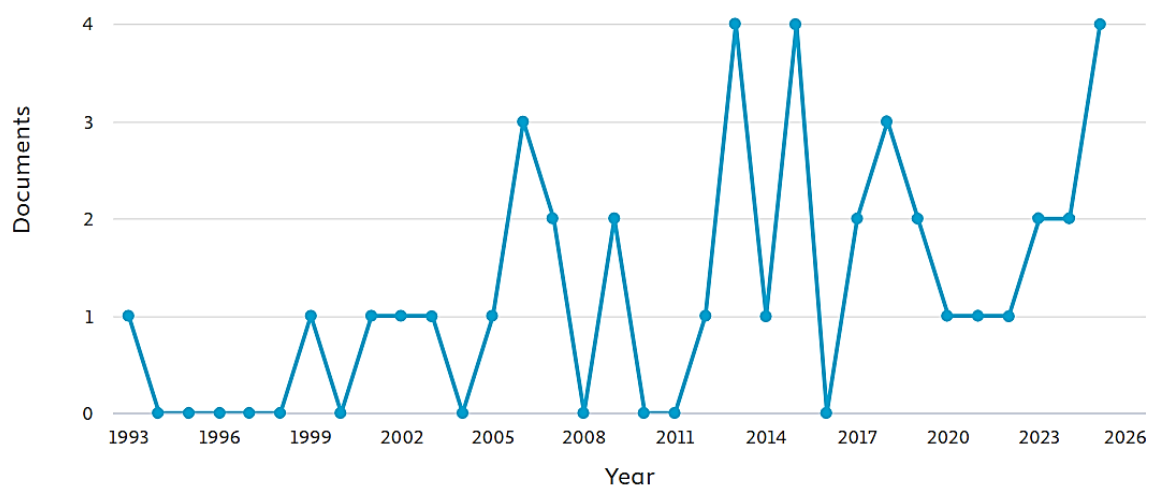
The analysis of the structure of document types forming the basis for the keyword co-occurrence analysis in the Scopus database reveals a strong dominance of research articles, which account for as much as 80.5% of the 41 publications examined. This prevalence indicates that conclusions regarding the multidimensionality of research on generations, identity, and marginalization in the contexts of management studies (BUSI) and sociology (SOC1) are largely shaped by current content published in peer-reviewed journals. The remaining documents are marginal, with equal but significantly lower shares of book chapters (7.3%) and conference papers (7.3%), suggesting some inclusion of knowledge synthesis (books) and the latest findings (conferences), while notes (2.4%) and reviews (2.4%) represent the least numerous categories, emphasizing the focus of the analysis on publications presenting primary research. Detailed data are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Document type.

Source: Scopus.

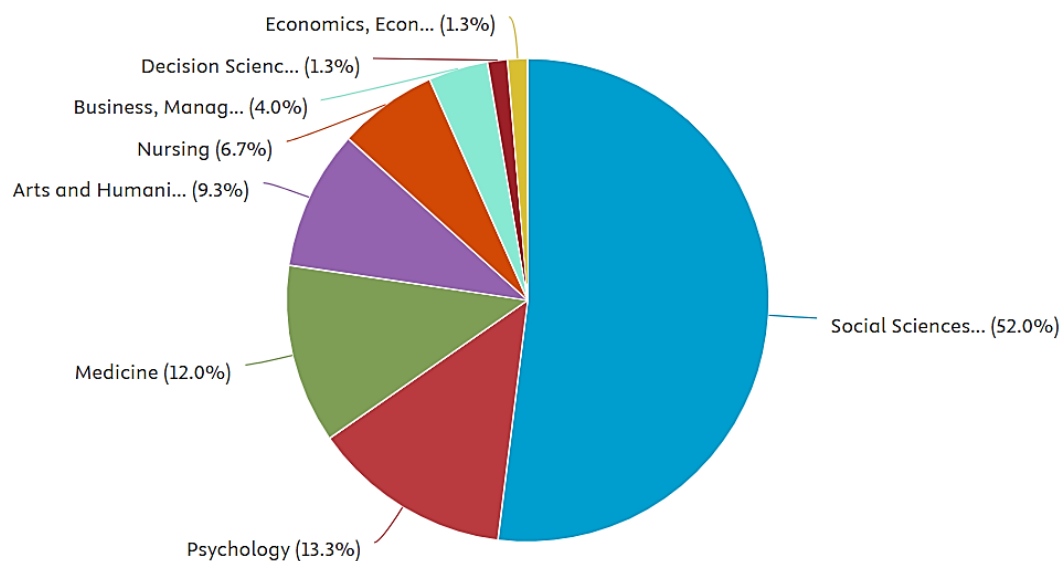
Based on the *Documents by year* chart, which shows the publication dynamics in the analyzed set of 41 documents, it is evident that the research field on intergenerational differences in management studies and sociology is characterized by considerable irregularity, with growing interest in recent years. From 1993 onwards, the number of publications remained low (0-1 per year) with numerous gaps; however, periodic peaks of activity are visible, particularly in 2006 (3 documents) and 2013 and 2015 (4 documents each). After a relative stabilization at 1-2 documents per year between 2018 and 2023, the chart shows a marked resurgence in 2024, reaching the highest activity with 4 publications. This suggests that the studied topics—identity, marginalization, and intergenerational relations—are gaining relevance and significance in the current research period. Detailed data are presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Documents by year.

Source: Scopus.

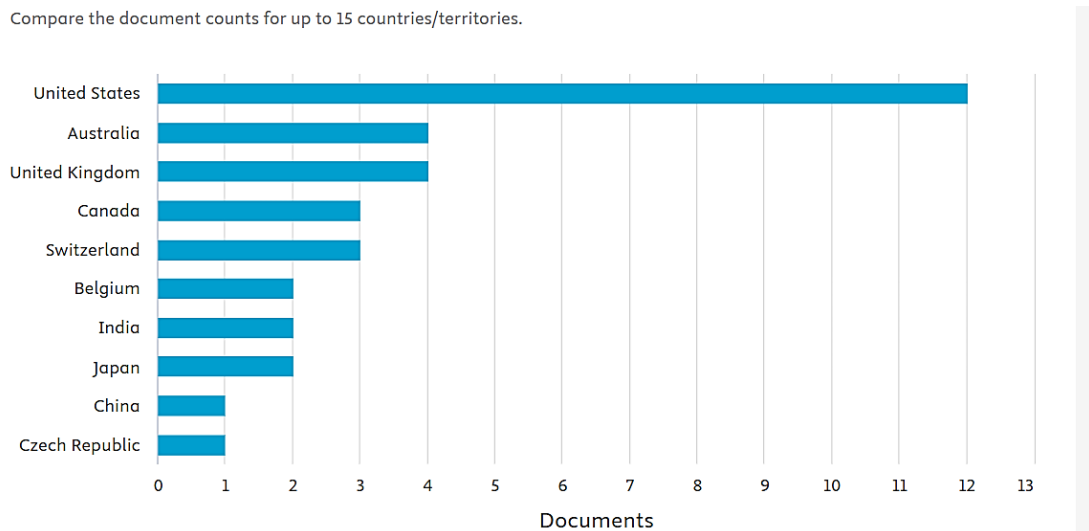
The interdisciplinary set of 41 publications forming the basis for the keyword co-occurrence analysis shows a strong grounding in Social Sciences (52.0%), with significant contributions from Psychology (13.3%) and Medicine (12.0%). This suggests that the main research focus is on the social and psychophysiological consequences of intergenerational relations, with managerial or economic aspects receiving less attention. Nevertheless, the majority of the information comes from research articles (80.5%), indicating that conclusions are based on current primary studies. Temporal analysis reveals that the research field is unstable, with noticeable publication peaks in 2013 and 2015, and a particularly marked increase in interest in 2024 (4 publications), highlighting the growing relevance and importance of generational differences in current scientific literature. Detailed data are presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Document by subject area.

Source: Scopus.

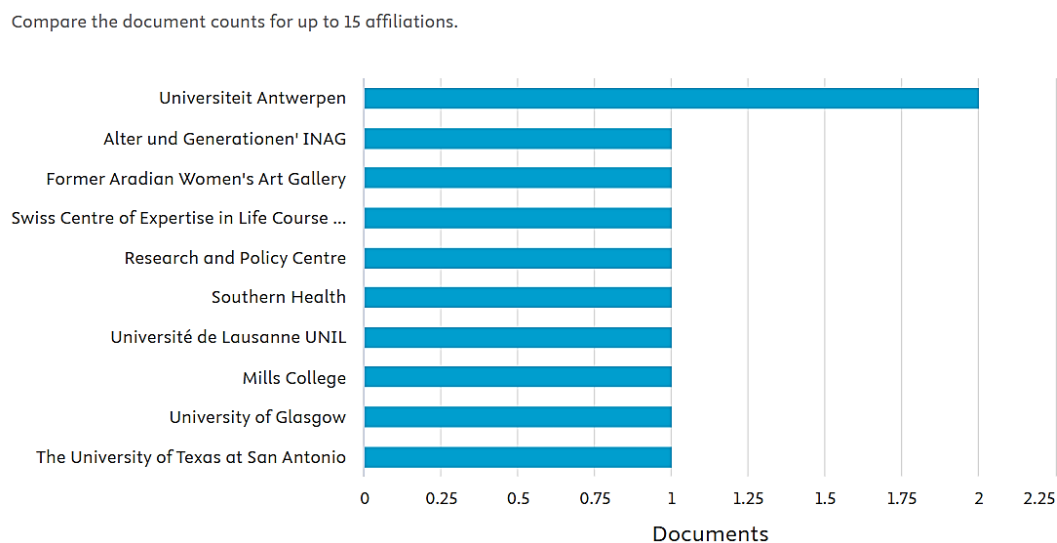
The analysis of the *Documents by country or territory* chart reveals a significant concentration of research on intergenerational issues in social sciences and management within English-speaking and Western European countries. The United States clearly dominates, accounting for 12 of the 41 publications, almost one-third of the total, highlighting its central role in shaping this research field. Next in line are Australia (4) and the United Kingdom (4), which together with the USA account for 20 publications (nearly half of the dataset) from the Anglo-Saxon cultural sphere, indicating an international but strongly localized nature of the research. Additionally, there is a notable contribution from Western European countries: Canada (3), Switzerland (3), and Belgium (2). The presence of Asian countries, such as India (2), Japan (2), and China (1), as well as a Central European country, the Czech Republic (1), although limited, suggests gradual globalization and growing interest in the topic beyond European and American contexts. Detailed data are presented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Documents by country.

Source: Scopus.

The analysis of the *Documents by affiliation* chart, which presents institutional contributions to the examined set of 41 publications, shows that the field is characterized by considerable dispersion of authors, with the exception of one clearly leading institution. The University of Antwerp (Universiteit Antwerpen) is the only institution with two publications, making it the most productive center in this sample, although its advantage is minimal. The remaining nine top affiliations, including research centers such as Alter und Generationen INAG and the Swiss Centre of Expertise in Life Course Research, as well as universities like Université de Lausanne (UNIL), University of Glasgow, and The University of Texas at San Antonio, each contributed one publication. This structure demonstrates that research on intergenerational differences, identity, and marginalization is conducted by a diverse and broad network of institutions, with no single center, apart from the slight lead of the University of Antwerp, serving as a dominant research hub. Detailed data are presented in Figure 5.



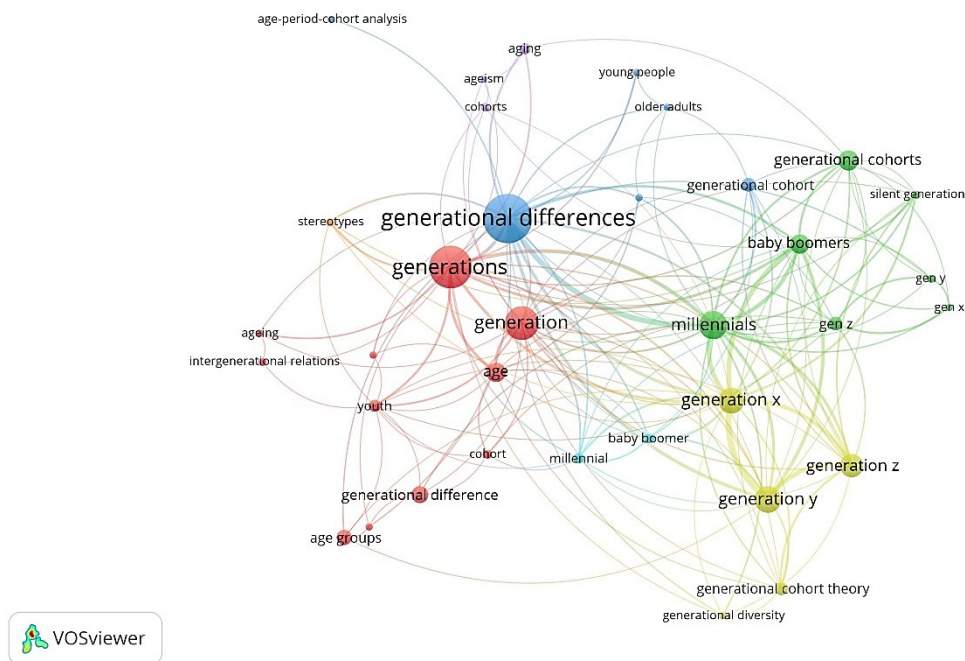
**Figure 5.** Documents by affiliation.

Source: Scopus.

In summary, the bibliometric analysis of publications from the Scopus database indicates a growing, though irregular, interest in intergenerational differences, strongly rooted in the social sciences, dominated by research articles, and geographically concentrated in Anglo-Saxon countries and Western Europe, which provides a starting point for further keyword co-occurrence network analysis using the VOSviewer tool.

#### 4.2. Bibliometric analysis of publications using VOSviewer

The first map visualizing the results of the keyword co-occurrence analysis in the Scopus database, prepared using VOSviewer, includes 41 publications in which 35 terms forming 7 clusters, 166 links, and a total link strength of 595 were identified. The data were limited to articles in the fields of management studies (BUSI) and sociology (SOCI) related to intergenerational differences, identity, marginalization, and inter- and multigenerational relations. The network structure reflects the multidimensionality of research on generations, with dominant demographic, psychological, and organizational themes. Central concepts, such as *generational differences*, *generation*, *generations*, *age*, and *generational cohorts*, serve as nodes connecting the individual thematic groups, highlighting their key role in research on intergenerational differences. Detailed data are presented in Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** Keyword Co-Occurrence Map on Intergenerational Differences in Scopus Publications (n = 41, 1993-2026).

Source: VOSviewer.

The network analysis reveals seven thematic clusters. The first cluster (red) centers on the terms *generation*, *age*, *age groups*, *cohort*, *intergenerational relations*, *stereotypes*, and *ageing*, focusing on intergenerational relationships and phenomena related to aging, age stereotypes, and ageism. The second cluster (blue) includes nodes such as *generational differences*,

*generations, age-period-cohort analysis, and cohorts*, reflecting theoretical and methodological studies that emphasize cohort analyses and the conceptualization of generational differences. This cluster serves as the intellectual core of the network, integrating the other research areas. The third cluster (green) pertains to classical studies of *generational cohorts, encompassing terms like generational cohorts, baby boomers, generation X, generation Y, generation Z, silent generation, Gen Y, and Gen Z*. These studies are primarily empirical and comparative, analyzing differences in attitudes, values, and behaviors across generations, especially in work and organizational contexts. The fourth cluster (yellow) focuses on younger generations and their diversity, including terms *generation Y, generation Z, generational cohort theory, and generational diversity*. These studies address changes in values, communication, and expectations of generations Y and Z regarding the workplace, serving as a key reference point in research on demographic diversity management. The fifth cluster (purple) relates to aging and ageism, containing terms such as *aging, ageism, older adults, and young people*, with a socio-psychological focus on attitudes toward age, inclusion, and generational marginalization. The sixth cluster (orange) revolves around *identity, intergenerational transfer, psychological aspect, and attitudes*, addressing generational identity, knowledge and value transfer between generations, and attitudes toward other age groups. It is interdisciplinary, combining sociological, psychological, and organizational perspectives. The seventh cluster (brown) includes less central terms such as *generational status and generational difference*, representing less-cited, often context-specific studies or case studies on particular generational groups.

The analysis of connections shows moderate network cohesion, reflecting thematic diversity while maintaining shared theoretical frameworks. The strongest links are observed between *generational differences, generations, generation, age, generational cohorts, millennials, generation X, generation Y, and generation Z*, indicating that research on generational differences focuses on the relationships between age, cohort membership, and attitudes and behaviors, particularly in work and organizational contexts.

The findings indicate that research on generational differences has evolved from demographic and cohort approaches toward studies on identity, values, and intergenerational interactions. Increasing attention is given to younger generations, especially Generation Z, and to intergenerational diversity in the workplace. The network reveals a gradual shift from structural analyses to research on attitudes, identity, and relational dynamics between age groups. Simultaneously, there is growing integration of perspectives, from demographic analyses to psychological and organizational approaches, confirming that the study of generational differences is complex and interdisciplinary.

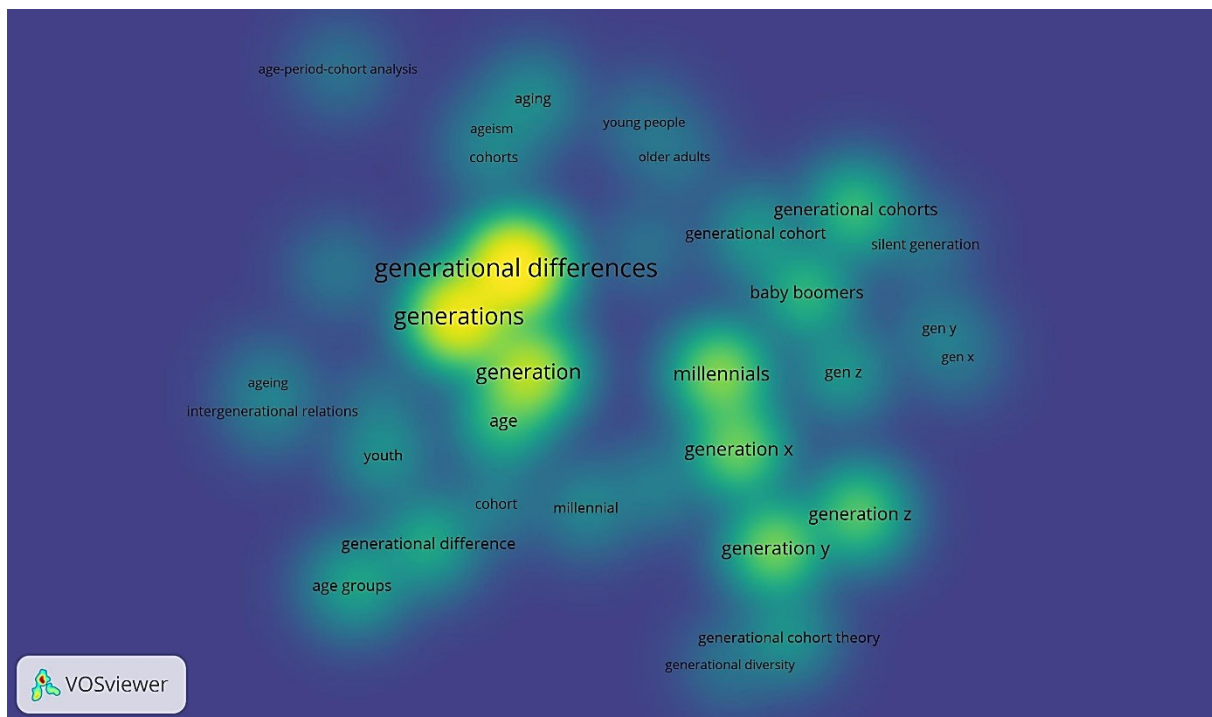
A second map, also developed in VOSviewer, illustrates the thematic evolution of research on intergenerational differences over time. Node colors correspond to the average publication year of each keyword—from purple (older publications, around 2016) to yellow (recent publications, around 2022). Detailed data are shown in Figure 7.



Overall, the map shows the evolution of research topics from demographic and cohort analyses (earlier period, dominant in literature until 2018) to studies on younger generations and intergenerational diversity (post-2019). Recent studies focus on Generation Z and its specifics in the workplace, aligning with global trends in human resource management literature.

The analysis indicates that research on intergenerational differences has undergone a significant transformation, from descriptive and comparative age analyses to applied research on managing diversity, values, and attitudes of employees across generations. Increasing emphasis is placed on organizational context, cross-generational collaboration, and the impact of generational diversity on organizational outcomes and climate. The map thus confirms that in recent years, the topic of generational differences has gained new significance, not only as a demographic issue but also as a key element of human capital management and organizational development strategies.

The third keyword co-occurrence map, developed using VOSviewer, illustrates the thematic structure of research on intergenerational differences in the analyzed publications. The color and intensity of the fields reflect the frequency of co-occurrence of specific terms—the brighter the color (yellow), the more frequent and stronger the connections between the keywords. Detailed information is presented in Figure 8.



**Figure 8.** Keyword co-occurrence map of intergenerational differences in Scopus publications (n = 41, 1993-2026).

Source: VOSviewer.

At the center of the map are three key concepts: *generational differences*, *generations* and *generation*, which form the core of research in this area. Their central position and highest intensity indicate that these terms serve as integrative nodes, connecting various research threads related to generations and their differences. Around these concepts, clusters of related terms emerge, which can be interpreted as distinct thematic subareas.

The first cluster includes terms related to age analysis and intergenerational relations, such as *age*, *ageing*, *age groups*, *intergenerational relations*, *ageism*, and *cohorts*. This area represents an earlier, more demographic and sociological approach to generational research, focusing on aging processes, age structure, and the dynamics of relationships between age groups.

The second prominent thematic cluster comprises terms referring to specific generations – *generation X*, *generation Y*, *generation Z*, *millennials*, *baby boomers*, *silent generation*, *gen X*, *gen Y*, and *gen Z*. This group reflects the development of research focused on differences in values, attitudes, and behaviors among generational cohorts, especially in the context of work and organizational settings.

The third thematic area centers on theoretical and conceptual terms, such as *generational cohort theory*, *generational diversity* and *generational cohorts*. It points to efforts to theoretically structure generational research and the increasing recognition of generational diversity as a critical dimension of diversity management in organizations.

Overall, the map allows the identification of three main research streams in the literature on intergenerational differences: (1) the demographic and relational stream, (2) the cohort-based stream, focusing on specific generations, and (3) the theoretical stream, developing concepts and models to explain generational diversity. The concentration of key terms around *generation* and *generational differences* indicates that, despite the wide scope of research, this topic remains a coherent, interdisciplinary field, integrating sociological, psychological, and managerial perspectives.

## 5. Discussion

The analysis of 41 selected articles enabled a systematic mapping and examination of the literature on intergenerational differences, generational identity, and marginalization in organizational and social contexts from 1993 to 2026. The study revealed that three main thematic streams dominate the literature: research on generational differences in the workplace, issues of generational identity, and the problem of marginalization in social and organizational contexts. Thematic and temporal evolution indicates that earlier studies primarily focused on identifying characteristic traits of specific generations, whereas recent years have seen increased interest in intergenerational collaboration, knowledge transfer, and inclusion and

diversity in the workplace. Analysis of the conceptual links in the literature shows that key roles are played by the concepts of generational differences, generational identity, and mechanisms of marginalization, with theoretical and empirical studies often complementing each other to create a coherent understanding of the relationships between age, experience, and organizational position. Identified research gaps concern primarily younger generations (Y, Z, Alpha), intergenerational diversity, and the influence of geographic and institutional contexts on research directions, highlighting the need for in-depth studies in real organizational and social settings. The findings from the literature analysis allow for the identification of potential directions for further research, including studies on inclusive generational management practices, intergenerational interactions, and the impact of institutional and cultural factors on collaboration dynamics within organizations.

The results of the literature analysis largely align with established theoretical perspectives on generations. The findings confirm that an individual's development is shaped by the socio-cultural and historical context in which they grow up, as emphasized by Mannheim (1952) and Ortega y Gasset (1992), who highlight that generations are not merely age cohorts but communities embedded in shared historical experiences that influence worldviews and behaviors. Similarly, the cyclical generational theory of Strauss and Howe (1991) provides insight into how generational phases shape values, attitudes, and expectations, particularly in organizational contexts. Empirical evidence from the analyzed studies supports these theoretical propositions, showing that generational differences manifest in workplace values and preferences, with older generations prioritizing loyalty and stability, and younger generations emphasizing flexibility, personal development, and technological fluency (Fuchs et al., 2023; Stiglbauer et al., 2022; Westover, 2024). At the same time, the analysis highlights the risks of reducing individual identities to generational labels, as this may lead to stereotyping and marginalization of those who do not conform to dominant generational narratives (Aguilar, 2015; Costanza et al., 2023; Rudolph et al., 2021; Seifert et al., 2023).

The temporal evolution of the literature further supports theoretical expectations: earlier studies focused primarily on identifying characteristic traits of specific generations, while more recent research emphasizes intergenerational collaboration, knowledge transfer, and inclusive practices in the workplace. These findings underscore the practical relevance of generational theories for human resource management and diversity policies, particularly when addressing intergenerational interactions and the challenges of integrating multiple generations in organizational settings. At the same time, the analysis identifies persistent gaps in the literature, such as the limited attention to younger generations (Y, Z, Alpha), intra-generational diversity, and the influence of geographic and institutional contexts on generational dynamics. These gaps align with theoretical limitations noted by Mannheim and Strauss and Howe, who caution against simplistic or deterministic applications of generational constructs and stress the importance of considering contextual and individual differences.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that theoretical frameworks on generations provide a valuable lens for understanding the formation of generational identity, the emergence of differences in values and behaviors, and the risks of marginalization. However, the literature remains fragmented, often treating generations as homogeneous demographic groups rather than complex socio-cultural constructs. The integration of theoretical insights with empirical findings highlights the need for a critical and nuanced approach to generational research, particularly in organizational settings, where understanding the interplay between historical context, individual experience, and institutional factors is essential for promoting effective intergenerational collaboration and inclusive practices.

## 6. Conclusions

Several theoretical implications emerge from the analysis. First, there is a clear need for further integration of multiple research perspectives, sociological, psychological, and organizational, to provide a comprehensive explanation of generational differences. Second, the increasing use of the term “generational cohort theory” indicates the development of conceptual models that help explain the behaviors, attitudes, and values characteristic of specific generations, particularly in professional contexts. Third, the observed growing interest in generational diversity in the workplace demonstrates that research on generations is increasingly aligned with broader diversity management theories. The results also confirm the evolution of the research field from descriptive approaches, focused on demographic differences, toward applied perspectives analyzing the impact of generational diversity on organizational functioning, leadership, communication, and knowledge transfer.

However, this analysis has several limitations. First, its scope was limited to publications indexed in the Scopus database, meaning that sources outside this database, such as national publications, industry reports, or non-English works, were not included. Second, the results depend on how authors select and assign keywords, which may lead to terminological inconsistencies (e.g., the interchangeable use of *millennials* and *Generation Y*). Third, bibliometric analysis identifies term co-occurrences but does not provide insight into the content or theoretical depth of studies. Fourth, the dynamic nature of the research field means that identified trends may change rapidly with the emergence of new social phenomena, such as Generation Alpha entering the labor market or the influence of artificial intelligence on generational attitudes.

Several directions for future research can be suggested. First, in-depth studies on new cohorts, especially Generation Alpha, which is beginning to enter the professional socialization phase, are necessary. Second, research should further explore mechanisms of intergenerational collaboration and knowledge transfer within organizations, with particular attention to their

impact on team innovation and efficiency. Third, it is essential to consider cultural and institutional contexts in comparative analyses to avoid excessive generalizations when defining generational traits. Fourth, the impact of technological changes, digitalization, and remote work on the behaviors and expectations of different generations should be examined. Finally, future studies should aim to integrate analyses at the individual, organizational, and societal levels to better understand how generational diversity shapes contemporary work environments and, more broadly, socio-economic dynamics.

## References

1. Aguilar, M.I. (2015). The Constitution of Somaliland: The problem of constitutional generations and clan dissolution. *Sociology Mind*, 5(4), 245-254. <https://doi.org/10.4236/sm.2015.54022>
2. Costanza, D.P., Rudolph, C.W., Zacher, H. (2023). Are generations a useful concept? *Acta Psychologica*, 241, 104059. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2023.104059>
3. Folta, M. (2020). X, Y, i Z. Teoria cykliw pokoleniowych Straussa-Howe'aw swietle wczesniejszych teorii. *Konteksty Społeczne*, 8(2(16)), 23-37.
4. Fuchs, O., Lorenz, E., Fuchs, L. (2024). Generational differences in attitudes towards work and career: A systematic literature review on the preferences of generations X, Y, and Z. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies*, 11(7), 54-71.
5. Li, P., Hassan, S.H. (2023). Mapping the literature on Generation Z purchasing behavior: A bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer. *Innovative Marketing*, 19(3), 62-73. [https://doi.org/10.21511/im.19\(3\).2023.06](https://doi.org/10.21511/im.19(3).2023.06)
6. Mannheim, K. (1952). The problem of generations. In: P. Kecskeméti (Ed.), *Essays on the sociology of knowledge* (pp. 276-322). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
7. McCrindle, M. (2014). *The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the global generations*. Australia: A McCrindle Publication.
8. Ortega y Gasset, J. (1992). *Man and crisis*. New York, NY: Norton.
9. Pilcher, J. (1993). Mannheim's sociology of generations: An undervalued legacy. *The European Educational Researcher*, 6(3), 331-350.
10. Rudolph, C.W., Rauvola, R.S., Costanza, D.P., Zacher, H. (2021). Generations and generational differences: Debunking myths in organizational science and practice and paving new paths forward. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 36(6), 945-967.
11. Seifert, C.F., Van Ness, R.K., Eddy, E.R., Buff, C., D'Abate, C.P. (2023). Generational work ethic differences: From Baby Boomers to Gen Z. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 35(4), 401-422.

12. Stiglbauer, B., Penz, M., Batinic, B. (2022). Work values across generations: Development of the New Work Values Scale (NWVS) and examination of generational differences. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1028072.
13. Strauss, W., Howe, N. (1991). *Generations: The history of America's future, 1584 to 2069*. William Morrow & Co.
14. van Eck, N.J., Waltman, L. (2010). A comparison of two techniques for bibliometric mapping: Multidimensional scaling and VOS. *Journal of Informetrics*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1003.2551>
15. Waltman, L., van Eck, N.J., Noyons, E.C.M. (2010). A unified approach to mapping and clustering of bibliometric networks. *Journal of Informetrics*, 4(4), 629-635. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joi.2010.07.002>
16. Westover, J.H. (2024). Understanding Gen Alpha: Leadership insights for the future of work. *Human Capital Leadership Review*, 12(3).