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# INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG POLISH EMPLOYEES: THE ROLE OF GENDER AND GENERATION

Dorota KUREK

War Studies University; d.kurek@akademia.mil.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-2346-6108

**Purpose:** The primary objective of this research was to identify the relationship between the quality of interpersonal relationships and the job satisfaction among Polish employees, considering demographic variables such as gender and generational affiliation.
**Design/methodology/approach**: The study **involved** a sample of 384 working Poles and was conducted using the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) technique. The sample was diversified by gender and generation.
**Findings:** The research confirmed a significant positive correlation between the quality of interpersonal relationships and the level of job satisfaction, with a stronger association observed in relationships with supervisors than with colleagues. Gender did not significantly differentiate satisfaction levels or relationship quality assessments; however, Generations Z and Y were found to perceive the fairness of managerial evaluations differently.
**Research limitations/implications**: The study was conducted on a sample of Poles, which constitutes a significant limitation regarding the generalization of findings to other cultural contexts where work value hierarchies and interpersonal communication models may differ. Future research should adopt a comparative approach to verify the extent to which the identified relationships between gender, generation, satisfaction, and interpersonal relations are universal or conditioned by the local socio-economic context.
**Originality/value:** This study contributes to the field by demonstrating that supervisor relationships have a more profound impact on job satisfaction than peer relationships, highlighting key priorities in workplace dynamics.
**Keywords:** interpersonal relationships, job satisfaction, gender, generational affiliation.
**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

## 1. Introduction

Professional activity constitutes a fundamental domain of human existence, serving not only as a primary source of economic security but also as a critical platform for self-actualization and the development of self-esteem. However, it also involves physical and psychological burdens; factors such as stress, ambiguous promotion criteria, or job instability (Leszkowski-

Baczyński, 2007) can diminish the quality of professional life and levels of satisfaction (Dhamija et al., 2019). While the literature emphasizes the multidimensionality of job satisfaction, the social nature of human activity means that pivotal significance is attributed to interpersonal relationships.

The quality of bonds with supervisors and colleagues forms the foundation of organizational culture (Jakimiuk, 2015), influencing employee well-being and retention (Kozioł, Wojtowicz, 2016). Given the demographic diversity of the contemporary labor market, the assessment of these relationships may be influenced by gender-related social capital and the distinct value systems of different generations. Understanding how gender and generational affiliation modify the perception of professional experiences is essential for creating an effective work environment. This article presents the results of empirical research aimed at identifying the relationship between the quality of interpersonal relationships and the job satisfaction of Poles within the context of the demographic variables.

## 2. Job satisfaction – essence and determinants

Job satisfaction represents a pivotal construct in organizational psychology, sharing equal significance with the study of leadership and motivational processes. Initially explored within the field of occupational psychology, it evolved into a focal point of organizational psychology as greater emphasis was placed on the broader context of work. As Bańka (2000) notes, occupational psychology focuses on professional activity, whereas organizational psychology directs its attention toward teamwork and, consequently, the social foundations of organizational functioning.

In the literature, the term 'job satisfaction' is defined in various ways and is often used interchangeably with 'contentment.' Schulz and Schulz (2002) describe satisfaction as a set of positive and negative attitudes toward professional duties, while Vroom (1964) emphasizes the employee's affective orientation toward their position. Central to this concept is the subjectivity resulting from the fulfillment of needs (Pocztowski, 2003) and the evaluation of professional experiences that generate a specific emotional state (Colquitt et al., 2019; George, Jones, 2008). This conceptualization aligns with Gruszczyńska-Malec and Rutkowska (2005), who emphasize that satisfaction stems from information about work within the company, as well as knowledge and evaluation of the organization itself. They link satisfaction to both personal and peer experiences, presenting it as a positive attitude that manifests in specific actions and behaviors.

In the literature, job satisfaction is considered across two dimensions: need deprivation and workplace attitudes. Linking satisfaction to needs, it should be noted that satisfaction arises when an employee's needs are met, which in turn translates into workplace attitudes, such as

loyalty to the employer (Lotko et al., 2025). Satisfied employees tend to demonstrate proactive work behaviors, higher productivity, and increased organizational commitment (Robbins et al., 2024). They are also more productive than their dissatisfied counterparts (Rikeetta, 2008). Notably, research confirms a correlation between person-job fit in terms of competencies and job satisfaction (Springer, 2018). The level of satisfaction depends on various determinants; understanding these allows for the intentional shaping of organizational well-being, enhancing the employer's market attractiveness (Kumar, 2024).

Referring to a key theory in the field, factors of satisfaction - according to Herzberg's two-factor theory - can be divided into motivators (achievement, responsibility, recognition, advancement, growth) and hygiene factors (salary, working conditions, workplace atmosphere, interpersonal relationships, and organizational policy) (Herzberg et al., 1959). This framework has been applied in studies by Lo et al. (2016), Sanjeev and Surya (2016), Matei and Abrudan (2016), Alrawahi et al. (2020), and Lee et al. (2023). In Polish literature, the classification of satisfaction factors has been presented by Sarapata and Doktór, Bielawska, and Siekańska, among others. Sarapata and Doktór (1963) highlighted the importance of ten factors, including trust in management, trust in one's work group, fair and just pay, and opportunities for development. Bielawska (1971) focused on eight factors, emphasizing professional development and the quality of managerial evaluation. In turn, Siekańska (2005) observes that while autonomy is crucial for highly gifted individuals, interpersonal relationships constitute one of the most vital pillars of satisfaction for the broader workforce. This diversity of approaches underscores the complexity of the issue while highlighting the fundamental importance of social bonds.

The issue of job satisfaction remains a subject of intense interest for both researchers (Oktaviani, Sopiah, 2022; Dinda, 2024) and practitioners. Annual studies provide valuable sources of information regarding factors that shape satisfaction as well as those losing significance over time. Scientific findings closely align with national studies in Poland; for instance, recent reports indicate that Poles prioritize the leader's role in building satisfaction through open communication (National Job Satisfaction Survey, 2023). In 2024, the importance of interpersonal relationships was further confirmed by the 8th edition of the 'Happiness at Work of Poles' study. The study reported a significant decline in respondents' subjective happiness, with the mean score dropping from 6.8 in 2023 to 5.8 the following year, with relatively higher satisfaction rates declared by men. In the hierarchy of factors shaping well-being, alongside salary and a sense of meaning in work, a key role was played by a friendly atmosphere (74.5%), the quality of the relationship with the supervisor (70.6%), and the ability to rely on colleagues (67.5%). Importantly in the context of these considerations, relational aspects were more frequently emphasized by women and ranked fourth and fifth overall among the strongest motivators encouraging employees to recommend their workplace (Happiness at Work of Poles, 2024).

Job satisfaction, viewed as an attitude, depends on factors that fluctuate according to demographic characteristics. Research indicates that gender and generational affiliation play key roles. Regarding gender, Schill-Owens et al. (2025) demonstrated that across all studied generations, men declared higher levels of job satisfaction than women. The significance of this division is also indicated by research by da Silva et al. (2022). Regarding generational differences, studies by Young et al. (2013) and Wilson et al. (2008) found that representatives of the Baby Boomer generation are the most satisfied, while individuals from Generations X and Y exhibited lower, though similar, levels of satisfaction. These analyses are complemented by the latest work of Pakuła (2025), which focused on the specific determinants of satisfaction among the youngest group of employees - Generation Z.

Both scientific research and labor market reports confirm that interpersonal relationship quality remains a pivotal determinant of job satisfaction. However, the impact of these relationships must be analyzed through the lens of demographic moderators, specifically gender and generational affiliation.

## 3. Interpersonal relationships in the workplace: theoretical aspects

The issue of workplace relationships has been addressed by numerous researchers (Jes Bella, 2023), with E. Mayo indisputably regarded as the pioneer of this field. The Hawthorne studies demonstrated that treating employees as subjects and considering both formal and informal relationships fundamentally changes their attitude toward work (Szaban, 2007). Consequently, professional activity inherently necessitates building interpersonal connections, the quality of which is manifested through communication styles and emotional expression. Relationships can be of a personal nature, which fosters a supportive climate, or impersonal, based on formal principles of ethics, courtesy, and refraining from individualized interactions (Adler et al., 2011).

The quality of interpersonal relationships should be linked to social support in the workplace, which, according to Kawula, is defined as a type of "social interaction undertaken by one or two parties in a problem situation, involving the exchange of emotional or instrumental information" (1996, p. 7). As a result, it is related both to how others act toward the employee and what feelings and self-perception the employee presents. As Tardy (1985) emphasizes, support can take four primary forms: emotional (acceptance, care), appraisal (demonstrating the person's value), instrumental (material and financial assistance), and informational (advice). Such support, provided by supervisors, subordinates, or colleagues, mitigates stress and prevents group alienation. It is particularly crucial for new employees, as it accelerates socialization and fosters a sense of belonging, thereby enhancing well-being and engagement. Employees who receive support from supervisors (Wnuk, 2019) and

colleagues experience a sense of belonging and have greater confidence in receiving help during crises, which positively affects well-being and translates into mutual understanding that facilitates contact. This prevents isolation and often leads to friendships, thereby contributing to work engagement and a higher level of job satisfaction.

Key determinants of job satisfaction include effective leadership and management practices, which, as Singh (2025) underscores, exert a significant and positive influence on employee attitudes. According to Putri and Fathiyah (2025), a high standard of leader-member relations, supported by effective interpersonal communication, directly enhances job satisfaction.

In literature, particular attention is paid to specific leadership styles. Sainaro et al. (2025) and Gregoriou et al. (2025) confirm a robust link between transformational leadership and employee satisfaction, with the latter research team highlighting the equally important role of transactional leadership. Furthermore, Jim'ale et al. (2026) emphasize the importance of servant leadership, arguing that management based on trust and emotional support not only increases satisfaction but also strengthens organizational stability and effectiveness. From a process perspective, positive relationships with management are the result of how an employee is treated, fair evaluation, and support in development and crisis situations. Such behaviors establish managerial authority and shape the overall work climate. However, aligning with the perspective of Poljašević et al. (2021), employee well-being depends not only on hierarchical structures but on the entirety of human interactions. Peer relationships, mutual support, and efficient communication create an atmosphere that is intrinsically linked to emotional well-being and ultimate job satisfaction.

## 3. Research methodology

The objective of the research was to identify the relationship between interpersonal relations and job satisfaction, considering the role of gender and generational affiliation as potential variables differentiating the assessment. The primary research problem was formulated as follows: What is the relationship between workplace interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction, and to what extent do gender and generational affiliation differentiate satisfaction levels and the perceived quality of these relationships? To address this, the following hypotheses were tested: H1: There is a positive relationship between the quality of interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction. H2: Gender and generational affiliation significantly differentiate the level of job satisfaction and the assessment of interpersonal relationship quality in the workplace

The study was conducted using the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) technique. The research sample (N = 384) was structured based on gender and generational affiliation. According to the adopted division, respondents aged 18 to 30 were classified as Generation Z,

those aged 31-45 as Generation Y, and individuals aged 46 and older were considered representatives of Generation X. The study targeted professionally active Poles of working age, which, according to the Statistics Poland (GUS) methodology, encompasses men aged 18-64 and women aged 18-59 (Table 1).

**Table 1.**
*Research sample structure (N = 384)*

| Generation | Men | Women | Total | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Generation Z | 60 | 52 | 112 | 29,17 |
| GenerationY | 77 | 69 | 146 | 38,02 |
| Generation X | 69 | 57 | 126 | 32,81 |
| Total | 206 | 178 | N = 384 | 100 |

Source: own research results.

In conclusion, the research sample size ensures the representativeness of the results for the general population at a 95% confidence level (with a margin of error of 5%). The selection of respondents was conducted using purposive-quota sampling, accounting for key demographic variables essential to the research objectives.

## 4. Research results

Conducting research on the relationship between satisfaction and interpersonal relations at work involved the need both to identify the level of job satisfaction among the respondents and to evaluate individual variables related to interpersonal relationships.

The study results reveal the following satisfaction structure: 64.84% of participants reported being satisfied with their jobs, 26.83% expressed neutral or uncertain views, and 8.33% reported a lack of satisfaction. Regarding interpersonal relationships, both supervisor and peer dynamics were verified. The analysis of supervisor relationships examined both their overall quality and the underlying formative variables. Overall, 72.66% of respondents rated their relationship with their supervisor positively. Specifically, participants indicated that their supervisors treat them with respect (66.14%), provide fair evaluations (62.5%), and recommend valuable training opportunities (42.97%). Regarding peer-to-peer dynamics, 74.22% of respondents rated these relationships positively, while only 5.73% reported a negative assessment of their interactions with colleagues (Table 2).

**Table 2.**
*Interpersonal relations in the workplace – research results (%)*

| Statements | Strongly agree | Agree | Hard to say | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My supervisor treats me with respect as an employee | 28,12 | 38,02 | 25,00 | 4,95 | 3,91 |
| My supervisor evaluates my performance fairly | 25,52 | 36,98 | 26,04 | 7,55 | 3,91 |
| My supervisor refers me to valuable training sessions | 17,71 | 25,26 | 26,04 | 16,15 | 14,84 |
| My relationship with my supervisor is positive | 30,73 | 41,93 | 20,83 | 5,73 | 0,78 |
| My relationships with my colleagues are positive | 35,16 | 39,06 | 20,05 | 4,17 | 1,56 |

Source: own research results.

To verify the strength and direction of the relationship between the quality of interpersonal relationships and the level of job satisfaction, a correlation analysis was conducted using Spearman's rho coefficient, the detailed results of which are presented in Table 3. Statistical analyses confirmed significant positive correlations across all analyzed variables ($p < 0.001$). The strongest correlation (rho = 0.73) was observed between the subjective sense of being respected by the supervisor and the perception of their evaluations as fair, suggesting a close link between management ethics and the objectivity of HR processes. Furthermore, it was confirmed (rho = 0.70) that positive relationships with the supervisor are closely linked to the perception of fair evaluation. A high coefficient value (rho = 0.60) was also identified in the relationship between respect from the supervisor and overall job satisfaction. A comparative analysis showed that vertical relationships with the immediate supervisor (rho = 0.56) exhibit a stronger association with job satisfaction than horizontal (peer) relationships occurring between colleagues (rho = 0.47). This hierarchy of relational determinants underscores the pivotal role of management in shaping employee well-being, which aligns with market trends reported in 'Happiness at Work of Poles' and corroborates the findings of Simanjuntak and Ginting (2025).

**Table 3.**
*Relationships between variables (rho)*

| Statements | No. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My supervisor treats me with respect as an employee | 1 | | | | | |
| My supervisor evaluates my performance fairly | 2 | 0,73 | | | | |
| My supervisor refers me to valuable training sessions | 3 | 0,49 | 0,54 | | | |
| My relationship with my supervisor is positive | 4 | 0,66 | 0,71 | 0,44 | | |
| My relationships with my colleagues are positive | 5 | 0,50 | 0,56 | 0,39 | 0,71 | |
| I feel satisfied with my job | 6 | 0,60 | 0,56 | 0,47 | 0,56 | 0,47 |

Note: $p < 0,001$.

Source: own research results.

In the subsequent stages of the study, the distribution of respondents' answers was verified within groups distinguished by gender and generational affiliation. The research revealed no significant differences in respondents' opinions regarding job satisfaction or other interpersonal relationship variables based on the criterion of gender ($p > 0.05$). The second variable analyzed was generational affiliation. The analysis identified one statistically

significant relationship in this area; specifically, the Kruskal-Wallis test results ($p = 0.04$, $H = 6.41$) indicate that representatives of Generation Y (mean rank 202.09) more frequently declare fairness in evaluations by supervisors compared to respondents from Generation Z (mean rank 171.16). No statistically significant relationships were found for the remaining variables. This confirms that younger employees tend to perceive their supervisors' evaluations as unfair compared to their older colleagues. This discrepancy may stem from differences in professional experience, varying levels of self-awareness, or potentially divergent value systems regarding workplace authority.

## 5. Conclusions

Job satisfaction, viewed as a multifaceted construct central to an employee's organizational functioning, encompasses both its determinants and the outcomes of professional fulfillment. In prioritizing the former, this study focused on workplace interpersonal relationships and their association with satisfaction. The research confirmed a positive correlation between these variables, thereby providing empirical support for H1. This finding underscores the critical importance of fostering a supportive organizational culture that encompasses both supervisor and peer-to-peer dynamics. As social beings, individuals inherently require respect and support, both of which are intrinsically linked to the cultivation of trust. Respondents reporting high job satisfaction consistently noted receiving developmental support from their supervisors, alongside being treated with respect and evaluated fairly.

Regarding the verification of H2, no significant differences were found in the responses of Polish employees concerning job satisfaction or interpersonal relationships when analyzed by gender. However, generational affiliation emerged as a cognitively significant factor. The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that representatives of Generation Y are significantly more likely to perceive supervisor evaluations as fair compared to those from Generation Z. Consequently, H2 was only partially supported.

In conclusion, interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction are critical determinants of an employee's quality of professional life. The finding of a stronger correlation between supervisor relationships and job satisfaction, compared to peer relationships, suggests that workplace dynamics should be analyzed through this specific categorical lens. It remains indisputable, however, that both factors are essential in fostering work conditions conducive to happiness and the overall development of employee well-being.

Despite the representative nature of the sample, this study has certain limitations. First, the data were collected via the CAWI technique, which, while efficient, may exclude individuals with lower digital literacy or limited internet access. Second, the study relies on self-reported measures, which are susceptible to social desirability bias, particularly regarding

the evaluation of hierarchical relationships. Third, although the sample (N = 384) is representative of working Poles, the purposive-quota sampling method may not fully capture the nuances of specific industries or sectors (e.g., public vs. private), which could differentially influence the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction.

Future research should expand upon these findings by incorporating longitudinal designs to observe how the link between interpersonal dynamics and job satisfaction evolves over time, particularly across different career stages. Additionally, qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, could provide deeper insights into why Generation Z perceives managerial evaluations as less fair than Generation Y. Finally, investigating mediating variables, such as organizational culture or remote work frequency, would be valuable in further differentiating the impact of vertical and horizontal relationships on employee well-being in the modern labor market.

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