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ATTITUDES TOWARD ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE WORKPLACE – A COMPARISON OF GENERATION Z AND OLDER GENERATIONS

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Purpose: The aim of the article is to examine attitudes toward artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace, with particular emphasis on representatives of Generation Z, and to compare their opinions with those of respondents from other generations.
Design/methodology/approach: A quantitative CAWI survey was conducted in the first quarter of 2025 using non-representative snowball sampling. The analysis included 535 respondents declaring Polish nationality, including 501 from Generation Z. Intergenerational differences were tested with the Mann-Whitney U test (H1-H3), and relationships between variables with Spearman's rank correlation (H4-H5).
Findings: The results indicate low use of AI at work and moderate verification of AI-generated information, with no significant generational differences. Older respondents reported slightly more frequent AI use and greater caution. In both groups, perceptions of AI's impact on the labour market were positively related to its perceived impact on one's own career. However, the relationship between perceived human replaceability by AI and its impact on career differed: it was very weak and positive in Generation Z but negative among older generations.
Research limitations/implications: Limitations include non-representative sampling, the dominance of Generation Z in the sample, and the self-reported nature of the data. Future research should use more balanced and representative samples, control for industry and job position, and consider qualitative or longitudinal approaches.
Practical implications: The results support organizational actions such as training in the critical evaluation of AI-generated content, clear rules for AI use at work, and tailored communication and development approaches for groups with different concerns and expectations.
Social implications: The uncertainty and neutrality of opinions highlight the need to strengthen AI competencies and critical thinking, and to promote responsible public narratives about the impact of automation on work and careers, particularly across generations.
Originality/value: The article offers a comparative quantitative perspective based on data from the Polish labour market, showing that generational differences in AI use may be weaker than commonly assumed, while differences in interpreting the career consequences of automation appear more pronounced.

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence, Generation Z, AI adoption in the workplace, impact of AI on career.
Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the key directions of contemporary technological transformation. From rule-based systems to generative models, AI is changing the functioning of organizations and the way work is performed, among others through automation, support for communication, and data analysis (Russell, Norvig, 2021; Tłuczek, 2023; Krup, 2023; Auffarth, 2024). Increasingly, its importance for the labour market and decision-making processes in organizations is also emphasized (Alto, 2024; Szpringer, 2024).

The growing use of AI tools raises questions about their impact on the work environment, required competencies, and employee attitudes. Particularly interesting in this context is Generation Z – the youngest generation currently active in the labour market, which grew up in conditions of widespread digitalization, influencing its competencies and expectations toward work (Pew Research Center, 2021; Pawłowska, 2022). The literature indicates that understanding this group as labour market participants is important also because they may co-shape organizational practices and directions of technological adaptation (Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu, 2022; McKinsey & Company, 2022). At the same time, in order to capture the specificity of Generation Z attitudes, it is necessary to compare them with representatives of older generations whose professional experience and approach to innovation may differ.

The aim of this paper is to examine attitudes toward artificial intelligence in the workplace, with particular emphasis on representatives of Generation Z, and to compare them with the opinions of respondents from other generations. Achieving this objective makes it possible to better understand how the youngest generation of employees adapts to the changing technological environment and whether its approach differs significantly from that of older generations. Therefore, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Representatives of Generation Z use artificial intelligence tools in their professional work more frequently than representatives of older generations.

H2: Generation Z verifies information obtained from artificial intelligence to a lesser extent than older generations.

H3: Generation Z perceives the impact of artificial intelligence on their professional career more positively than individuals from other generations.

H4: There is a statistically significant correlation between the assessment of the possibility of replacing humans with artificial intelligence and the perceived impact of AI on professional careers in both analyzed groups.

H5: Among older generations, the relationship between the perceived capabilities of AI and its impact on career has the opposite direction compared to Generation Z.

2. Review of the literature

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been developing for decades; however, its importance for organizations and the labour market has increased particularly in recent years. The concept of AI is often associated with the approach proposed by J. McCarthy, while events such as Deep Blue's victory over G. Kasparov have become symbols of the growing capabilities of intelligent systems (McCarthy, 2006; Kaplan, 2025). The current wave of widespread adoption is particularly related to generative models based on the transformer architecture and conversational tools that have increased the accessibility of AI for users and organizations (Trypuz, 2024; Caelen, M.-A., Blete, 2024). These systems generate and process content in natural language, which allows them to support informational, communicative, and analytical tasks (Auffarth, 2024).

In the workplace, AI is used, among other things, to automate routine tasks, support decision-making processes and data analysis, as well as to improve task organization and monitor selected indicators (Crawford, 2024). At the same time, discussions continue regarding the consequences of this technology for competencies and employment. Attention is drawn to the need to develop digital skills, lifelong learning, and reskilling (Alto, 2024), as well as to the necessity of establishing legal and ethical frameworks for AI implementation, including transparency, traceability, and non-discrimination (Szpringer, 2024).

The analysis of attitudes toward AI may require a generational perspective, as generations differ in their technological experiences and learning styles. Generation Z (individuals born after 1995) is often described as a generation raised in a digital environment, capable of efficiently searching for information and oriented toward problem-solving (Grabiwoda, 2018; Ragin-Skorecka, Motała, Boguszewska, 2023). The literature also points to expectations related to flexibility and development, as well as lower loyalty toward employers (Muster, 2020). The importance of partnership relations and clear career development paths is emphasized (Rogozińska-Pawełczyk, Cewińska, Lubrańska, Oleksiak, Striker, 2019), along with preferences for remote or hybrid work (Lima-Vargas, A.E., Cervantes-Aldana, F.J., Lima-Vargas, S., 2022) and the need for a more individualized approach to this group (Silva Sousa, Colauto, 2021). The importance of Generation Z is also increasing in numerical terms; according to the Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu (2022), their share in the global workforce

is expected to grow significantly, which strengthens the rationale for studying their attitudes toward AI in the workplace. Reports suggest that younger users are generally more open to AI tools and tend to use them more frequently (Pew Research Center, 2021; Deloitte, 2021), while at the same time expressing expectations regarding responsible implementation and transparency of such solutions (McKinsey & Company, 2022). This provides the background for verifying intergenerational differences in the frequency of AI use at work (H1) and in the assessment of AI's impact on career development, if the technology is perceived as a tool enhancing competencies and productivity (H3).

In addition to its benefits, the literature also highlights risks associated with the quality of AI-generated content, privacy, and transparency of decisions. J. Smith (2022) points to potential privacy violations, algorithmic discrimination, and lack of transparency, while Syrek-Kosowska and Żytkowiak-Wenzel (2025) emphasize the risk of superficial use of AI tools. In the context of work, this justifies the analysis of the tendency to critically verify information obtained from AI (H2). At the same time, the debate on automation and the "replaceability" of human labour by AI suggests a relationship between the perceived capabilities of AI and the assessment of its impact on career development (H4), while generational differences may lead to different interpretations of this relationship in Generation Z and in older generations (H5).

3. Research methods

The article presents selected results of a broader study concerning the perception and acceptance of artificial intelligence tools among young people. The study was conducted in the first quarter of 2025 using an online survey method (CAWI). The questionnaire was made available online (Google Drive), and the link was distributed via social media and further shared by respondents, which means that a non-representative sampling method based on snowball sampling was applied.

Only individuals declaring Polish nationality were included in the analysis. In total, 535 respondents were considered, including 501 representatives of Generation Z (born in 1995 or later) and 34 individuals from older generations. It should be emphasized, however, that the small number of respondents from older generations constitutes a limitation of the comparative analysis and requires caution when interpreting intergenerational differences. The sample was dominated by individuals with professional experience (406 respondents), and among Generation Z the proportion of employed individuals was higher than that of non-employed respondents. Similarly, in the group of older generations, the majority also declared having professional experience.

Statistical analyses were performed using the Statistica 13.1 software. For the variables compared between groups, basic descriptive statistics were calculated (mean, median, standard deviation). Hypotheses H1-H3 concerning intergenerational differences in the studied attitudes

were verified using the Mann-Whitney U test, and the practical significance of differences was also assessed using the effect size measure r. Relationships between variables for hypotheses H4-H5 were analysed using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (r□). Correlations were calculated separately for Generation Z and for older generations, which made it possible to assess both the existence of relationships and their direction in both groups.

4. Analysis and discussion

Table 1 presents the frequency of the use of artificial intelligence tools in professional work among respondents with professional experience (n = 406).

Table 1.
Statistical measures concerning the frequency of the use of artificial intelligence tools in professional work and the analysis of differences between generations

Respondents	Basic statistical measures			Mann–Whitney U test		
	M	*Me*	*SD*	*p*	Z	r
Total	2.56	2.00	1.35	-	-	
Generation Z	2.55	2.00	1.36	0.44	0.787338	0.039
Other generations	2.72	3.00	1.21			

M – mean, *Me* – median, *SD* - standard deviation, *p* – level of statistical significance, Z – standardized test value, r – effect size. Differences are statistically significant for $p < 0.05$.

Source: own study.

Across the entire group, the mean value was 2.56, which indicates rather occasional use of AI at work. In the intergenerational comparison, the values were slightly higher among representatives of older generations (M = 2.72; Me = 3.00) than in Generation Z (M = 2.55; Me = 2.00); however, the difference was not statistically significant (p = 0.44). The negligible effect size (0.039) confirms that the differences have minimal practical significance; therefore, hypothesis H1 regarding significant intergenerational differences in the frequency of AI use at work was not confirmed.

The obtained results indicate a relatively low level of dissemination of AI tools in everyday professional practice, regardless of respondents' age. This may result from the early stage of AI implementation in many Polish organizations, unequal access to tools, as well as employees' competence and training limitations, and differences between industries in the pace of technology adoption. The slightly higher values observed in the group of older generations, although not statistically significant, may be associated with the more frequent performance of professional roles in which AI is already used (e.g., analytical, financial, and administrative areas), while some respondents from Generation Z work in sectors and forms of employment where the need to use AI is lower.

Table 2.
Statistical measures concerning the verification of information obtained from artificial intelligence and the analysis of differences between generations

Respondents	Basic statistical measures			Mann-Whitney U test		
	M	*Me*	*SD*	p	Z	r
Total	3.42	3.00	1.07	-	-	
Generation Z	3.42	3.00	1.06	0.54	0.637458	0.028
Other generations	3.53	4.00	1.16			

M – mean, *Me* – median, *SD* - standard deviation, *p* – level of statistical significance, Z – standardized test value, r – effect size. Differences are statistically significant for $p < 0.05$.

Source: own study.

Table 2 presents the declared frequency of verifying information obtained from AI tools. In the entire sample, the mean value was 3.42, which indicates a moderate level of verification depending on the situation. In the intergenerational comparison, the results were very similar. Generation Z reached M = 3.42, while older generations reached M = 3.53; however, the difference was not statistically significant (p = 0.54), and the effect size was negligible (0.028). This means that hypothesis H2 regarding significant intergenerational differences in the verification of information obtained from AI was not confirmed.

The moderate level of declared verification may result from the fact that the need to verify information depends on the type of task and the tool used, as well as from limited awareness of the risk of errors in AI-generated content or insufficiently developed habits of critically evaluating digital content. Slightly higher values among older generations may reflect greater caution, although in this study this difference has no statistical significance.

Table 3.
Respondents' attitudes toward the impact of artificial intelligence on the labour market and their own professional careers, and the interrelationship between these attitudes

Respondents	Attitude					Mo	f□
	1	2	3	4	5		
	percentage of indications						
	Toward the impact of artificial intelligence on the labour market						
Total	6.73	22.06	37.01	25.05	9.16	3	198
Generation Z	6.79	22.36	37.33	24.95	8.58	3	187
Other generations	5.88	17.65	32.35	26.47	17.65	3	11
	Toward the impact of artificial intelligence on one's own career						
Total	5.23	20.00	38.13	26,36	10,28	3	204
Generation Z	5.19	20.36	38.72	26,75	8,98	3	194
Other generations	5.88	14.71	29.41	20,59	29,41	3/5	10

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient	p	r□	t-statistic
Generation Z	p <0.05	0.363946	8.73
Other generations	p <0.05	0.633854	4.64

1 – definitely a threat, 2 – rather a threat, 3 – difficult to say (neither an opportunity nor a threat), 4 – rather an opportunity, 5 – definitely an opportunity. Differences are statistically significant for $p < 0.05$.
Mo – mode, f□ – frequency of the mode, p – level of statistical significance, r□ – correlation coefficient.

Source: own study.

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents' attitudes toward the impact of AI on the labour market and on their own professional careers. In both questions, the most frequently selected answer was the neutral option "difficult to say" (Mo = 3), both in the assessment of the labour market (37.01%) and one's own career (38.13%), which indicates considerable uncertainty in evaluating the effects of AI. In Generation Z, the distribution of responses was similar to that of the entire sample, with a simultaneous predominance of assessments indicating "rather an opportunity" over "rather a threat" (labour market: 4-5 = 33.53%; career: 4-5 = 35.73%). In older generations, strongly positive responses regarding one's own career appeared more frequently (the answer "definitely an opportunity" – 29.41%), although the small size of this group should be taken into account.

To assess the relationship between the perception of AI at the labour market level and at the individual level, Spearman's rank correlation was calculated separately for both groups. The relationship was positive and statistically significant in Generation Z ($r_s = 0.364$; $p < 0.05$) and clearly stronger in older generations ($r_s = 0.634$; $p < 0.05$). This means that individuals who perceive AI as an opportunity for the labour market are also more likely to consider it an opportunity for their own careers, which confirms hypothesis H4. At the same time, the different strength of the relationship in the groups suggests a different pattern of intergenerational associations, which supports hypothesis H5. However, it should be emphasized that the number of respondents from older generations was small (n = 34), therefore the results for this group should be interpreted with caution.

A possible explanation for the dominance of neutral responses is the limited predictability of the effects of AI and the fact that some respondents do not have direct professional experience with AI tools, making it more difficult for them to translate the technological debate into concrete consequences for occupations and career paths. In addition, assessments may depend on the type of work and exposure to automation: individuals performing more IT-related, analytical, or administrative tasks are more likely to see practical applications of AI, which may lead to more definite evaluations. In contrast, younger respondents, especially at an earlier stage of their careers, may have less stable reference points regarding changes in the labour market and therefore more often choose an intermediate response. The stronger correlation observed in older generations may result from more established professional experience and a more coherent way of interpreting the impact of technology. If AI is perceived as an opportunity or a threat to the labour market, this perception is more often automatically transferred to the evaluation of one's own professional situation, whereas in Generation Z these assessments may be more separated and dependent on a specific context.

Table 4.
Statistical measures concerning the assessment of the possibility of replacing humans with artificial intelligence in professional tasks and the analysis of differences between generations

Respondents	Basic statistical measures			Mann-Whitney U test		
	M	*Me*	SD	p	Z	r
Total	3.50	4.00	0.95	-	-	
Generation Z	3.50	4.00	0.96	0.73	0.357642	0.016
Other generations	3.56	4.00	0.89			

M – mean, *Me* – median, *SD* - standard deviation, *p* – level of statistical significance, Z – standardized test value, r – effect size. Differences are statistically significant for $p < 0.05$.

Source: own study.

Table 4 presents the assessment of the possibility of replacing humans with AI in the performance of selected professional tasks. In the entire sample, the mean value was 3.50, which indicates that respondents tend to rate the potential of AI to take over certain duties relatively highly, particularly in routine tasks and those based on information processing. In the intergenerational comparison, the assessments were very similar (Generation Z – 3.50; other generations – 3.56) and did not differ statistically significantly ($p = 0.73$), while the effect size was negligible (0.016). Therefore, no significant intergenerational differences were confirmed in this respect.

Such a result may stem from the widespread awareness of AI applications in repetitive areas (e.g., data analysis, customer service, documentation), while at the same time recognizing the limitations of AI in tasks requiring creativity, empathy, and interpersonal competencies, which explains the absence of extremely high evaluations.

Table 5.
The relationship between the perceived impact of artificial intelligence on future career and the assessment of its applicability in professional tasks, along with the analysis of the strength and significance of this relationship (Spearman's rank correlation)

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient	p	r□	t-statistic
Generation Z	p <0.05	0.088051	1.22
Other generations	p <0.05	- 0.398313	-1.23

p – level of statistical significance, r□ – correlation coefficient. Differences are statistically significant for $p < 0.05$.

Source: own study.

Table 5 presents the relationship between the perceived impact of AI on one's future career and the assessment of its applicability in professional tasks. In Generation Z, the relationship was positive but very weak ($r□ = 0.088$; $p < 0.05$; $t = 1.22$), which indicates marginal practical significance and no clear translation of assessments of AI capabilities into predictions concerning one's own career. In older generations, a negative correlation of moderate strength was observed ($r□ = −0.398$; $p < 0.05$; $t = −1.23$), suggesting that a higher assessment of AI's potential to perform tasks may be associated with a more sceptical evaluation of its impact on one's own career. Such a pattern may result from differences in the stage and stability of career paths. Younger respondents more often treat AI as a "general" tool not yet linked to a specific

professional role, whereas some older individuals may more strongly associate automation with the risk of job changes, the need for reskilling, or a decline in job security.

The results of the study largely confirm findings from the literature but also reveal discrepancies regarding the practices and attitudes of Generation Z in the workplace. The low frequency of AI use at work suggests an early stage of adoption and uneven implementation in Polish organizations, which is consistent with observations about the experimental nature of implementation and the importance of institutional and sectoral conditions (Alto, 2024; Szpringer, 2024; Crawford, 2024).

The study did not identify statistically significant intergenerational differences in the use of AI tools at work, despite the literature describing Generation Z as "digital natives" who function more efficiently in the technological environment (Grabiwoda, 2018; Ragin-Skorecka et al., 2023). This result may be related to the fact that younger individuals more often work part-time or in positions where AI tools are not required, which limits their actual exposure to this technology.

The thesis that Generation Z is more open to innovation finds partial confirmation in more positive assessments of AI as an opportunity, especially in the context of career development. This is consistent with the conclusions of reports and observations indicating an ambivalent yet moderately optimistic attitude among young users (Deloitte, 2021; McKinsey & Company, 2022; Smith, 2022). At the same time, the study did not confirm that Generation Z verifies AI-generated information more frequently; the level of verification was moderate and showed no significant intergenerational differences, which weakens assumptions about the higher "digital vigilance" of this group despite the risks highlighted in the literature and the need for critical evaluation of content (Smith, 2022; Syrek-Kosowska, Żytkowiak-Wenzel, 2025).

Finally, assessments of the impact of AI on the labour market and on one's own career were consistent: positive correlations indicate that the perception of effects at the macro level translates into individual expectations (McKinsey & Company, 2022). Additionally, the negative relationship between the assessment of the possibility of replacing humans with AI and the evaluation of its impact on career (in older generations) may reflect concerns related to displacement in the labour market (Szpringer, 2024).

5. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to examine attitudes toward artificial intelligence in the workplace, with particular emphasis on Generation Z, and to compare them with the opinions of representatives of other generations. The results made it possible to verify the hypotheses and formulate conclusions regarding the perception and use of AI at work.

Hypothesis H1 was not confirmed. Generation Z did not use AI at work more frequently than older generations, and the differences were not statistically significant; slightly higher values observed among older groups may be associated with more frequent employment in areas where AI has already been implemented. Hypothesis H2 was also not confirmed. The level of verification of information obtained from AI was moderate and similar in both groups, suggesting that age does not significantly differentiate the level of critical reflection toward AI-generated content. Hypothesis H3 was likewise not confirmed. Despite a slight predominance of positive assessments in Generation Z, the neutral response dominated in both groups and the differences were not statistically significant.

Hypothesis H4 was confirmed. In both groups, a statistically significant relationship was observed between the assessment of AI capabilities in professional tasks and the perceived impact of AI on career, although the strength and direction of this relationship differed. Hypothesis H5 was also confirmed. In Generation Z the relationship was very weak and positive, whereas in older generations it was moderate and negative, which may indicate that older respondents more often associate the growing capabilities of AI with concerns about the consequences for their own professional position.

The obtained results show that the attitudes of Generation Z toward AI are complex and cannot be reduced to a simple pattern of "greater openness = more frequent use and greater optimism." It is therefore justified to further examine the role of factors such as professional experience, sector of employment, or the nature of performed tasks. In addition, quantitative analyses could be complemented with qualitative research that would better capture motivations, concerns, and ways of integrating AI into professional practice.

The study has several limitations. The sample was non-representative (non-random recruitment, CAWI), which limits the possibility of generalizing the results to the population of working individuals in Poland. Additionally, the group of older generations was small (n = 34), therefore intergenerational comparisons should be interpreted with considerable caution. Future research should involve more balanced sample structures, enabling a more comprehensive analysis of differences between generations. It would also be advisable to conduct similar studies on representative samples with a more balanced participation of age groups and with control of factors such as industry and level of education.

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