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Attitudes of Generation 2000+ Towards Gender Equality Compared to Generations X, Y, Z

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Teresa Kupczyk[1], Kamila Urbańska[2], Paulina Ucieklak-Jeż[3], Magdalena Sobas[4]

Abstract:

Purpose: *The aim of the study was to identify, analyse and diagnose the attitudes of Generation 2000+ towards gender equality in comparison with Generations X, Y and Z.*
Design/Methodology/Approach: *In order to verify the theses put forward and answer the research questions, the methods of literature analysis and criticism, diagnostic survey and statistical methods were used. Quantitative and qualitative research was conducted based on a questionnaire survey of 3,675 people, including 1,674 people from the 2000+ generation, i.e. people born between 2000 and 2003. The study took place between 2021 and 2024. Mann-Whitney U tests, Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient were used for data analysis.*
Findings: *The attitudes of Generation 2000+ towards gender equality were determined in comparison with generations X, Y and Z. It turned out that the youngest (Generation 2000+) attach significantly less importance to gender equality than older generations (X, Y, Z). The more importance respondents attach to gender equality, the more motivated and committed they are to work.*
Practical implication: *The research results can support managers responsible for human resource management, particularly in the area of inclusive diversity and equality management in organizations.*
Originality/value: *The results indicate that the younger the generation, the less importance they attach to gender equality.*

Keywords: *Attitudes, values, generation, gender equality, inequality, stereotypes.*

[1]*Associate Prof., Institute of Management and Quality Sciences, Humanitas University, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0003-0361-2128, e-mail: teresa.kupczyk@humanitas.edu.pl;*
[2]*PhD, Wrocław University of Technology, Department of Management Systems and Organisational Development, Poland, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2820-3275, e-mail: kamila.urbanska@pwr.edu.pl;*
[3]*Associate Professor, Uniwersytet Jana Długosza w Częstochowie, Poland, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4106-6984, e-mail: p.ucieklak-jez@ujd.edu.pl;*
[4]*PhD, Institute of Legal Sciences, Humanitas University, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-4084-1205, e-mail: magdalena.sobas@humanitas.edu.pl;*

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1. Introduction

It is widely recognised that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but also an essential foundation for peaceful, sustainable and balanced economic growth worldwide. Unfortunately, as statistics show, women continue to experience inequality and are one of the largest sources of untapped labour force (Global Gender Gap Report, 2025).

Although they make up more than 50% of the world's population, they contribute only 37% of global GDP and represent only 39% of the global labour force (OECD, 2018). The number of economically active women worldwide is 655 million lower than that of men, even though women account for over 50% of global higher education graduates (McKinsey & Company, 2017). Their number is significantly lower in STEM disciplines (science, mathematics, statistics, engineering, ICT), as their share in higher education in these fields is lower, e.g. in engineering it is 24% and in ICT-related fields 19% (Education at a Glance, 2017).

This situation has negative consequences for economies. It has been proven that gender inequalities have a negative impact on economic development and the labour market (Gornick, England, and Shafer, 2012; Klasen and Lamanna, 2009; Daly, 2007; Knowles, Lorgelly, and Owen, 2002; Steinmetz, 2012; Sparreboom, 2014). It has been calculated that improving gender equality in the European Union by 2050 could lead to an increase in GDP (EU) per capita of 6.1 to 9.6%, representing 1.95 to 3.15 trillion euros (EIGE, 2017a).

Gender equality is the fifth of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030 (The United Nations 2016). Unfortunately, current global statistics indicate that this goal is not being properly implemented and poses significant challenges in many countries. The SDG Index and Dashboard provides an annual assessment of progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 5 in 193 UN Member States and indicates that in 2025, the ratio of women to men in the labour force is 78%, the number of seats held by women in national parliaments is 31.3%, and the gender pay gap (% of men's median pay) will be 10.9 (Sachs, Lafortune, Fuller, and Iablonovski, 2025).

There is currently a visible slowdown in the pace of hiring women into leadership positions, particularly in high-tech industries. Across all industries, nearly half (46%) of entry-level leadership positions are held by women, but this percentage drops by almost half to one-quarter (25%) at the C-suite level. Then, when we look at C-suite roles in STEM industries in isolation, the figure drops again by half to one in eight (12%) (World Economic Forum, 2023).

The 2025 Global Gender Gap Index found the global gender gap closed by 68.8% across 148 economies, with progress uneven and full parity estimated to take 123 years. It turns out that no economy has yet achieved full gender parity]. Iceland (92.6%) continues to lead the Global Gender Gap Index, holding the top position for 16 consecutive years, and remains the only economy to have closed more than 90% of its gender gap since 2022 (Global Gender Gap Report, 2025). In Poland, the situation regarding gender equality is also unsatisfactory.

The gender inequality score in 2025 in the Global Gender Gap 2025 edition for Poland was 0.750 (equality means 1), and political empowerment was only 0.311. The greatest gender inequalities occur in management and decision-making, as only 25% of women worldwide hold managerial positions (McKinsey & Company 2017, p. 12). Women in the largest listed companies in the positions of chairpersons of the management board, members of the management board and employee representatives account for 25.3% in the European Union and 20.1% in Poland (EIGE, 2017b).

In the G20 group, women account for 17% of company boards and 12% of executive committees (McKinsey & Company 2017, p. 25). Cultural factors certainly influence this situation (Chauraya and Tintswalo, 2014; Dambrin and Lambert, 2012). Unfortunately, existing gender inequalities are overlooked and/or ignored by part of society. This applies to a significantly greater extent to men than to women (Brannon, 2000; Dilli *et al.,* 2015; Kiaušienė *et al.,* 2011; Kupczyk, 2016).

What is worrying is that this also applies to upper secondary school students in Poland (Kupczyk, 2016). There are studies confirming that education of young people on gender equality is not properly prepared, and its effects have not brought satisfactory results (Kalayci and Hayirsever, 2014; Kupczyk, 2016).

However, it should be emphasised that the situation in terms of gender equality has been improving over the years, but the pace of these changes should be considered unsatisfactory. Unfortunately, gender inequality has been one of the most persistent forms of inequality in all societies throughout human history, and gender division has been one of the deepest and most resistant forms of inequality in the world (Epstein, 2007).

This is certainly due to gender stereotypes, which, as it turns out, are surprisingly persistent and largely independent of country or continent (Williams, Best, 1990; Haines, Deaux, and Lofaro, 2016; Dilli, Rijpma, and Carmichael 2015).

Therefore, drawing attention to the value of gender equality, especially for the younger generation just entering the labour market, is crucial for the sustainable development of economies and societies.

Therefore, the aim of the study was to identify, analyse and diagnose the attitudes of Generation 2000+ towards gender values in comparison with generations X, Y and Z. The study also sought to identify the relationship between these attitudes and motivation and commitment to work.

The research was conducted to find answers to the research questions, which took the form of the following questions:

Q1. What attitudes does Generation 2000+ display towards gender equality?
Q2. Are there significant differences between generations in terms of attitudes towards gender equality?
Q3. Is there a statistically significant relationship between the attitudes of Generation 2000+ towards gender equality and their motivation and commitment to work?

We have formulated the following theses:

T1. Different generations have significantly different attitudes towards gender equality.
T2. The younger generation (2000+) attaches significantly less importance to gender equality than older generations (X, Y, Z).
T3. There is a statistically significant relationship between attitudes towards gender equality and motivation and commitment to work.

2. European and National Legal Regulations Relating to Gender Equality in Employment

Considering the issues discussed in this study, it is also worth considering whether European and national legislation contains sufficient regulations to ensure gender equality in employment. European Union (EU) law provides for a number of regulations aimed at guaranteeing gender equality, particularly in the field of employment and working conditions.

Originally, these rules, related to combating gender discrimination in the labour market, were intended to support the development of the common market in EU law, but they are now recognised as a tool for protecting fundamental rights (Domańska, 2012).

It is therefore worth noting, among other things, Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) (OJ 2004 No. 90, item 864/2), according to which Member States are obliged to guarantee the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for the same work or work of equal value, or Article 23 of the

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (OJ EU C 202/389) guaranteeing equality between women and men not only explicitly in relation to employment, work and pay, but in all areas of life.

In turn, the European Pillar of Social Rights of 2017 (2017/C 428/09) (OJ EU C of 13 December, 2017) sets out 20 key principles and rights that are essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and social welfare systems (including gender equality and the right to equal pay). The following are also significant in the context of European law:

- Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council expressing the principle of equality in employment, including Directive 2006/54/EC (OJ EU L 2006.204.23) regulating the principles of equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment, vocational training, professional advancement and working conditions;
- Directive 2010/41/EU (OJ EU L 2010.180.1) ensuring equal treatment for self-employed persons, including social protection measures for pregnant women and mothers;
- Directive 2019/1158 (OJ EU L 2019.188.79), introducing provisions on work-life balance for parents and carers, ensuring, among other things, paternity and parental leave.

It is also worth noting the Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025 (2020/C 440/16), which aims to promote gender equality, eliminate pay inequalities and increase women's participation in the labour market. Gender equality in employment is also guaranteed in Polish law. The source of equality at work is primarily the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Articles 32 and 33) (Journal of Laws of 1999, No. 78, item 483).

Under a special regulation with respect to the Constitution, namely the Act of 26 June 1974 Labour Code (hereinafter: LC) (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 1465), the legislator also introduced mechanisms to counteract inequalities, such as the principle of equal treatment of employees (Article 112 of the LC) and the prohibition of discrimination (Article 113 of the LC).

Furthermore, since 2002 (Journal of Laws No. 128, item 1405), the Polish Labour Code has contained provisions that specify the regulation of the employer's obligation to treat employees of both sexes equally (Article 183a LC et seq.). As can be seen from the above analysis, both European Union regulations and Polish legislation contain mechanisms aimed at protecting against discrimination and unequal treatment on the grounds of gender.

So the law exists, but is it being applied? The above analysis of statistics on gender equality, both globally and in Poland, and the lack of desirable changes in this regard

over the years raises many doubts and does not allow for a positive answer to this question.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The survey was conducted in Poland among 3,675 people. The respondents belonged to different generations, including X, Y, Z and 2000+. The highest percentage in the surveyed population was represented by respondents belonging to the youngest generation (2000+), accounting for 46%. Generation X accounted for 9%, Generation Y for 21%, and Generation Z for 24%.

The difference between the sizes of the individual generations proved to be statistically significant: $\chi 2(2; N = 3675) = 1008{,}67; p < 0{,}001$. Due to the fact that the aim of the study was to determine the differences in attitudes between Generation 2000+ and the older generations X, Y, and Z, their results were grouped into one set.

The division into two categories: generations X, Y, Z vs. generation 2000+ also allowed, to some extent, for the proportions between the groups to be equalised. The first group (Generations X, Y, Z) accounted for 54.45% (N = 2001), while the second (Generation 2000+) accounted for 45.55% (N = 1647).

The difference in the size of these groups also proved to be statistically significant: $\chi 2(1; N = 3675) = 29{,}10; p < 0{,}001$.

Among the respondents, 54% were still in education. Pupils accounted for 30% and students for 24%. Among those not in education, those with basic education accounted for 5%, secondary education for 27% and higher education for 14%. A strong correlation was identified between generational affiliation and education: $\chi 2(4; N = 3669) = 1771{,}32; p < 0{,}001; V = 0{,}69$.

The 2000+ generation clearly predominates among students, while respondents from older generations predominate in other education categories.

Men clearly predominated in the surveyed population (85%), while women accounted for 15%. The percentage of women is higher in older generations (X, Y, Z) than in Generation 2000+: $\chi 2(N = 3675; 1) = 222{,}23; p = 0{,}001$; Phi = 0,25.

The correlation between gender and generational affiliation is weak. The structure of the respondents in terms of place of residence was as follows. 44% of respondents lived in medium-sized towns (20,000–100,000 inhabitants), 22% in rural areas, 21% in large cities (over 200,000), and 14% in small towns (under 20,000). Among those in employment, 83% were non-managerial staff and 17% were managerial staff.

3.2 Measures/Variables Definitions

The importance attributed to gender equality by the respondents was measured using a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 meant completely irrelevant, 2 irrelevant, 3 rather irrelevant, 4 no opinion, 5 not very important, 6 important, and 7 very important. The level of motivation and commitment to work was measured by self-assessment on a scale of 1-7, where 1 meant completely unmotivated/uncommitted, 2 meant unmotivated/uncommitted, 3 meant somewhat unmotivated/uncommitted, 4 – no opinion, 5 – somewhat motivated/engaged, 6 – motivated/engaged, 7 – completely motivated/engaged.

The research conducted established terminology for the concepts of equality, attitude and generation. Equality in the formal sense, i.e. equal treatment, e.g., of persons of different sexes, is one of the guiding principles not only of the European Union (EU) but also of other international organisations and institutions, and is linked to the economic and social dimensions of human rights.

Equal treatment was understood literally in the research – as equal treatment of women and men, as well as the absence of gender-based differentiation in all aspects of social and economic life. Furthermore, it was assumed that the concept of formal equality places strong emphasis on their identical treatment (Smolin, 2012, p. 44).

The research assumed that an attitude is always an attitude towards a certain value, whereby a value was defined as "any fact with empirical content, accessible to members of a specific social group, and a meaning according to which it is or may be the object of action" (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918-1920, p. 21).

It was also assumed that a generation comprises age groups that differ in their attitudes, views, recognised values, aspirations, way of life, etc. (PWN, 1995, vol. 4, p. 948). Of course, it was recognised that belonging to a generation is determined not only by the year of birth, but also by a community of experiences shaped by a specific society" (Golnau, Kalinowski, and Litwin 2010, p. 231).

If we assume that a generation is a distinct group of people whose common denominator is a similar time of birth, we can distinguish Generations X, Y, and Z (Lyons, Schweitzer, and Eddy 2015; Ruth, Bolton, Parasuraman *et al.,* 2013; Lingen, van 2012). In the conducted research, it was decided to also distinguish a new, youngest generational group of people born between 2000 and 2003, and it was named Generation 2000+.

It has also been accepted that Generation X refers to people born between 1970 and 1979; Generation Y between 1980 and 1989; and Generation Z between 1990 and 1999. Of course, it should be noted that such divisions are controversial. The differences concern both the names and the birth dates of the representatives of each generation.

It should also be remembered that beliefs about generations are sometimes stereotypical, i.e. unfair and unjustified generalisations in which judgements about the essential characteristics of a particular individual are made solely on the basis of their belonging to a specific generation (Costanza and Finkelstein, 2015). However, the desire to conduct research required the above assumptions, including simplifications.

3.3 Data Analysis

In order to verify the hypotheses and answer the research questions, the methods of literature analysis and criticism, diagnostic survey and statistical methods were used. An original questionnaire, prepared on the basis of preliminary research, was used for the study.

The research was quantitative and qualitative. For all scales, the reliability coefficients (α-Cronbach) took acceptable values, allowing the scales to be considered reliable. It was assumed that a significant test probability means a level of $p<0.05$, and a highly significant level means $p<0.01$. PQStat version 1.6.4.122 software was used for data analysis.

4. Results

Respondents were asked to rate the importance they attach to gender equality on a scale of 1-7, where 1 = completely unimportant, 2 = unimportant, 3 = rather unimportant, 4 = no opinion, 5 = not very important, 6 = important, 7 = very important. The results are presented in Table 1.

The result seems quite surprising (4.95), as the respondents rated the importance of gender equality as not very important. An analysis of the responses of people from different generations shows that Generation Z rated gender equality the highest, and Generation 2000+ the lowest.

Table 1. *Importance assigned by respondents to gender equality, on a scale of 1-7, where 1 - completely irrelevant, 2 - irrelevant, 3 - rather irrelevant, 4 - no opinion, 5 - not very important, 6 - important, 7 - very important, taking into account the generation criterion (N=3675).*

	Overall		Generation X		Generation Y		Generation Z		Generation 2000+	
Values	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Gender equality	4,95	5,00	5,15	6,00	5,10	5	5,22	6	4,74	5

Source: *Own research results.*

In order to determine whether there are significant relationships between the importance attached to gender equality and motivation and commitment to work,

Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was calculated. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Significant relationships between the importance attached to gender equality and motivation, as well as commitment to work among respondents. Variables were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (N=3151).*

	rho Spearmana	Motivated	Committed
Gender equality	Correlation coefficient	0,234**	0,263**
	Significance (two-tailed)	2,25929E-40	5,54577E-51

Source: *Own research results.*

Positive correlations were identified between the importance attached to gender equality and the motivation and commitment to work of the respondents. Although the strength of these correlations is low, they proved to be statistically significant. This indicates that gender equality is not the only factor shaping the motivation and commitment of the respondents, but its role is noticeable and should not be underestimated.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

The results of the study allowed us to draw the following conclusions. The respondents attach relatively little importance to gender equality. The 2000+ generation shows attitudes that attach less importance to gender equality than older generations, which may have a negative impact on gender equality in the future. People who attach greater importance to gender equality show higher levels of motivation and commitment to work.

Giving greater importance to gender equality is therefore a factor in increasing motivation and commitment to work. This means that attention to gender equality in organisations can be one of the factors supporting positive employee attitudes and thus benefit the organisation.

It is therefore worthwhile to develop and promote equality policies as part of building a positive organisational culture. It is to be hoped that the benefits of gender equality will be recognised in organisations and that the potential of women will be utilised.

It is therefore necessary to expand education on gender equality, particularly with regard to Generation 2000+, to disseminate good practices, models and benefits, and to eliminate stereotypes. Literature reviews have shown that the importance attached to gender equality by Generation 2000+, not only in Poland, is an unrecognised phenomenon. It is therefore necessary to continue theoretical and empirical exploration in this area, which would allow for monitoring the situation, taking corrective action, rationalizing research methodology and organizing views.

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