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Exploring generational differences in corporate culture perception and career orientation in the environment of family businesses

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Abstract. This study investigates how Generations X, Y, and Z perceive selected dimensions of corporate culture, focusing on open communication, innovation support, attitudes toward technology, and responses to mistakes in the workplace. The research is set within a broader context of digital transformation and investigates how generational identity influences motivation and engagement in family business settings. A quantitative design was employed using a standardized online questionnaire administered in Slovakia between September 2024 and January 2025. Data from a purposive sample of 156 respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and the Kruskal–Wallis test to examine generational differences across variables such as AI perception, ESG orientation, and organizational identification. The results did not reveal statistically significant differences between generations, although descriptive trends suggest that Generation Z shows a more favorable attitude toward AI and innovation. All generational cohorts reported similarly positive perceptions of corporate culture. The findings indicate that generational affiliation may be less relevant than

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previously assumed when implementing motivational tools and digital technologies in family businesses. This highlights the importance of designing inclusive organizational practices that transcend age-based segmentation and align with broader cultural and technological developments.

Keywords: motivation, corporate culture, generation, family businesses.

JEL Classification: M12, M14, M54

1. INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this paper is to explore modern motivational tools - such as happiness management, employee wellbeing, gender equality, inclusion, and artificial intelligence (AI) - and to examine their interrelation with corporate culture and their impact on employee motivation. The study focuses on the dynamics of engagement, performance, and motivation across generational cohorts, namely Generations X, Y, and Z. In recent decades of the 21st century, academic and professional discourse has increasingly emphasized the need to explore subjective wellbeing (Sanagustín-Fons et al., 2020; Jaškevičiūtė et al., 2024) and employee happiness within organizational settings (Foncubierta-Rodríguez et al., 2020). These concerns have gained additional momentum following the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the context of the "Great Resignation." A significant contributing factor to this phenomenon is the emergence of toxic and high-stress work environments, often unintentionally cultivated by organizations prioritizing short-term economic gains - especially in the age of AI - over employee wellbeing (Abellán-Sevilla & Ortiz-de-Urbina-Criado, 2023; Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2024). Motivation is recognized as a critical force enabling employees to act toward specific goals, directly affecting productivity, performance, and perseverance (Jha et al., 2024; Jimenez-Marin et al.,2020; Srovnalikova, 2024; Korcsmáros, 2021). Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between motivation and employee outcomes (Arshadia, 2010; Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020; Gruenbichler et al., 2021; Hitka et al., 2025; Van den Berghe et al., 2014; Vovk & Vovk, 2024).

Central to employee motivation is managerial support for autonomy and work-life balance through flexible work arrangements and inclusive decision-making practices (Pisica et al., 2024). Contemporary literature emphasizes that workplace happiness-far from being a superficial concern - plays a vital role in shaping organizational effectiveness. The compatibility between an organization's culture and its employees is crucial; any misalignment may negatively affect both performance and morale (Mariınez-Falco et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024). Emerging research on happiness-oriented leadership shows that organizations focusing solely on shareholder value often fail to foster happiness within the workplace (Rando-Cueto et al., 2023).

Conversely, applying happiness management as a cultural and strategic philosophy can significantly enhance prosperity, wellbeing, and the overall quality of human capital (Ravina-Ripoll et al., 2023). This study contributes to the academic discourse by analyzing the generational differences in the perception and effectiveness of motivational tools and corporate culture. It also investigates how AI is reshaping organizational behavior and employee experience across generations. Recent research demonstrates that AI implementation significantly impacts workplace performance, with studies showing positive correlations between AI adoption and operational efficiency across various organizational contexts (Angammana & Jayawardena, 2022). By synthesizing existing research and identifying generational nuances, the paper aims to provide actionable recommendations for managers on how to leverage corporate culture and modern tools-including AI-to improve employee motivation, foster engagement, and drive organizational success.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Corporate culture, as defined by Jurado (2015), is a system of shared values and assumptions that shape how members of an organization perceive and respond to their environment. Yagi (2023) further

emphasizes that culture emerges as a pattern of core ideas and norms developed by a group to solve problems of internal integration and external adaptation. Within this conceptual framework, organizational performance is increasingly linked to the alignment between corporate culture, leadership, and employee motivation. However, this alignment may manifest in distinct way among generational cohorts.

Generations X, Y (Millennials), and Z differ significantly in their values, expectations, and responses to workplace stimuli. While Generation X often values independence and stability, Millennials tend to prioritize purpose-driven work, flexibility, and feedback. Generation Z, as digital natives, place particular importance on inclusivity, diversity, technological advancement (Alkhalaileh et al., 2023; Confetto et al., 2023; Gursoy et al., 2013; Singh & Dangmei, 2016, Mengone, 2021; Rigó et al., 2025), green initiatives (Szczepańska-Woszczyna et al., 2024), innovation and sustainability or financial development (Ruiz Molina et al., 2025; Rumanko et al., 2021; Sedliačiková et al., 2024). These generational preferences influence how individuals relate to leadership styles, workplace motivation, and corporate culture (Ativetin & Widtayakornbundit, 2025; Moravanská et al., 2023; Šakytė-Statnickė et al., 2023).

Employee satisfaction can only be achieved when there is continuity between motivation, leadership, and a cultural environment that is broadly accepted and internalized across generations (Akob et al., 2020; Daňo et al., 2024; Grencikova et al., 2021; Michulek et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2019). Motivated employees are more autonomous, self-driven, and responsive to developmental opportunities, yet their motivational triggers may differ: while some rely more on intrinsic factors such as growth, recognition, and responsibility (Demircioglu & Chen, 2019; Kozová et al., 2024), others respond to extrinsic factors such as salary, working conditions, and organizational policies (Mishchuk et al., 2021; Mitchell et al., 2020; Zsigmond et al., 2021).

Corporate culture plays a crucial role in shaping communication patterns, leadership legitimacy, and innovation readiness within organizations (Ayad et al., 2025; Egerova et al., 2024). Cultures that promote transparency, participation, and trust tend to generate higher engagement across all generational groups, but the mechanisms and intensity of these effects vary. For instance, Generation Z is more likely to associate corporate identity with ethical governance and mental health support, while Generation X may emphasize career development and autonomy.

Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions - such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation - offer a useful framework for analyzing generational attitudes toward organizational behavior and decision-making (Chen, 2023; Lorincova et al., 2024; Betakova et al., 2021). Leadership that reflects these nuances is more likely to achieve alignment between organizational goals and generationally diverse expectations (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020).

In today's knowledge economy, corporate success depends not only on capital and strategy but also on the effective mobilization of human resources (Oliinyk et al., 2021; Stacho et al., 2022). Leadership must foster environments that encourage creativity, reduce psychological insecurity, and actively engage each generation's unique strengths and expectations (Yang & Kim, 2018; Thanh et al., 2020; Tian et al., 2019). As research shows, failing to address generational diversity may result in disengagement, stagnation, and reduced innovation potential.

This paper addresses the need to understand how generational identity shapes perceptions of corporate culture and motivation tools, including emerging elements such as artificial intelligence (AI), wellbeing strategies, inclusion, and happiness management. By integrating insights from generational theory and organizational psychology, this study seeks to inform leadership practices and cultural interventions that are tailored to the needs of a multigenerational workforce.

3. METHODOLOGY

This empirical study focused on examining generational differences in the perception of corporate culture, the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), and attitudes toward sustainable business practices. A

quantitative research design was employed to systematically collect and analyze data. Data collection was carried out in the Slovak Republic between September 2024 and January 2025, using a standardized questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The research was independently designed and conducted by the authors in cooperation with experts in human resource management and organizational psychology.

Following the identified gaps in the literature and insights from the previous review, our research focused on generational differences in the perception of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace, particularly in relation to flexibility, organisational culture, and the willingness to adopt technological innovation.

Formulation of Hypotheses: to test our assumptions, we formulated the following hypotheses:

- H1: Younger generations of employees (Y and Z) demonstrate greater flexibility in the use of AI tools than older generations (X).
- H2: Generation Z shows a more positive attitude towards the impact of artificial intelligence on work performance than Generation X.
- H3: The perception of openness in organisational culture (e.g., communication, support for innovation, learning from mistakes) differs significantly between generations.
- H4: Generation Y demonstrates the highest confidence in using AI for task delegation and supporting creative thinking.
- H5: Older generations (X) have a more conservative attitude towards technological changes in the organisation.

These hypotheses reflect insights from the literature on generational differences (Kumar et al., 2023) and allow for statistical testing within the analysed sample.

The empirical part of the study was based on a purposive sample of 156 respondents from family businesses, selected from a larger pool of 510 participants from family businesses. The sampling focused on economically active individuals aged 18 to 59, covering diverse regions and sectors of the Slovak economy. Respondents were categorized into three generational cohorts: Generation X, Millennials - Generation Y, and Generation Z. The final sample consisted of 64 respondents from Generation X, 64 Millennials, and 28 respondents from Generation Z. A non-probability purposive sampling method was applied, allowing the targeted inclusion of individuals who met specific criteria relevant to the research on generational differences and family businesses. Incomplete or inconsistent responses were removed through data cleaning procedures. Given the sampling method used, no statistical sampling error estimate was computed; however, the sample is considered sufficiently representative for the purposes of exploratory analysis. Despite the relatively small sample size (n = 156), our study is consistent with established practices in research on generational differences and organizational culture. Similar studies often work with comparable or even smaller samples - for instance, Twenge et al. (2010) analyzed generational differences in work values with subsamples of 25–40 respondents per generation, Parry & Urwin (2011) in their meta-analysis found that the majority of generational studies used samples of fewer than 200 respondents, and Costanza et al. (2012) demonstrated that effective generational comparisons are possible even with smaller samples when appropriate statistical approaches are applied. Our sample is deliberately focused on family businesses in the Slovak Republic, which represent a specific and homogeneous context where each respondent has high relevance to the examined phenomena. This targeted selection is methodologically appropriate given the exploratory character of the research. From the perspective of statistical power, our Generation X (n = 64) and Millennial (n = 64) groups significantly exceed the minimum threshold of 26 respondents per group required to detect medium effects (Cohen's $d \geq 0.5$, $\alpha = 0.05$, power = 0.80), and even the Generation Z group (n = 28) is at the threshold of statistical usability. To further strengthen the reliability of the results, we employed non-parametric tests (Kruskal–Wallis, Mann–Whitney U),

bootstrapping methods, effect size reporting, and transparent disclosure of limitations, which enhance the validity of the findings and support the usability of our sample for statistical analysis.

The questionnaire consisted exclusively of closed-ended items rated on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was thematically divided into several sections focusing on the following areas:

- the use and perception of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace,
- aspects of corporate culture,
- autonomy, organizational identification, and orientation toward ESG (environmental, social, and governance aspects).

Each variable was operationalized using a composite index, calculated from three to four items. The questionnaire items were adapted from validated psychometric tools and pretested on a pilot sample to ensure clarity and reliability. The questionnaire was distributed via email, social media platforms, and professional networks. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, with all participants receiving full information about the study's purpose and guaranteed confidentiality.

For data analysis, statistical software was used. The following methods were applied: Descriptive statistics, One-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) Kruskal–Wallis test as a non-parametric alternative, Pearson's correlation analysis.

To assess response reliability, longstring analysis was employed. This method detects whether a respondent provides the same answer repeatedly across consecutive items without apparent justification, indicating possible mechanical or inattentive behavior (Meade & Craig, 2012).

In line with the research aim, a set of hypotheses was formulated to examine generational differences in the perception of modern motivational tools, artificial intelligence (AI), and corporate culture. The hypotheses were tested using one-way ANOVA and the Kruskal–Wallis test.

Although the research findings indicate relatively uniform generational attitudes toward corporate culture, autonomy, ESG, and AI, it is important to acknowledge the limitations related to the sample composition. The study was conducted exclusively within the context of family businesses, which represent a specific cultural and organizational environment. These firms tend to exhibit stable and often conservative personnel structures, where generational transitions occur more slowly, and career progress is frequently tied to age and seniority.

As a result, it was particularly challenging to achieve balanced representation of Generation Z. Younger employees in family businesses are often in entry-level positions or still in the process of preparing to take on leadership roles, which limits their presence in relevant decision-making positions and reduces the opportunity to capture their perspectives. This may have affected the representativeness of the findings, especially in comparisons between generational groups concerning issues such as digital transformation, innovation, and AI - topics that are typically more strongly associated with the youngest cohort.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main subject of this research was a targeted sample of 156 respondents (statistical units), drawn from a broader dataset of 510 participants. The research primarily targeted individuals up to the age of 59 across all regions of Slovakia, focusing on their educational and career choices.

We compared the three generational groups (Generation X, Y, and Z) using descriptive statistics. Demographic characteristics were calculated and summarized using basic descriptive statistical measures such as mean, mode, median, standard deviation, variance, minimum, maximum, range, skewness, and kurtosis. Age was the only cardinal variable and thus suitable for full statistical description, while all other variables were nominal and reported only in terms of frequency distributions (Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics

N–SampleSize	156
MissingValues	0
Mean	40.295
Median	41,0
Mode	41.0
StandardDeviation	11.549
Variance	133.371
Range	37
Q1–FirstQuartile	31.0
Q3–ThirdQuartile	50.0
Skewness	0.109
Kurtosis	-1.209

Source: Own processing, Percentages represent the share from the total number of respondents (N = 156), unless otherwise stated.

The age distribution exhibits a slight right-skew (skewness = 0.109), indicating the presence of a few higher age values that do not significantly distort the overall shape of the distribution. The kurtosis value (-1.209) suggests a flatter than normal distribution, with fewer extreme values and wider shoulders. The variability of age is moderate, with a coefficient of variation of 28.66%, reflecting adequate heterogeneity within the age structure. The central tendency values - mean (40.3 years), median (41 years), and mode (41 years) - are closely aligned, suggesting that the age distribution is relatively symmetric and not heavily biased. The sample is demographically balanced in terms of gender, generational affiliation, and organizational type, supporting the representativeness of the data for the selected analytical categories (Figure 1).

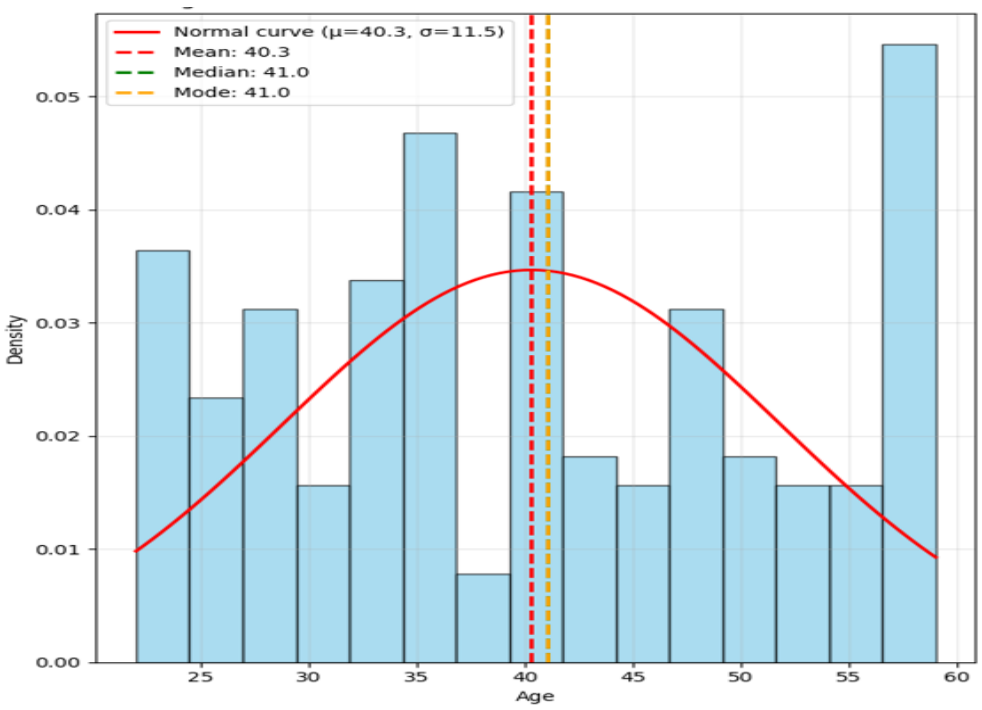

Figure 1. Age distribution

Source: Own processing, n = 156, generational breakdown: Gen X = 64, Gen Y = 64, Gen Z = 28

For this study, we conducted a quantitative analysis using an electronic survey distributed via the LimeSurvey platform from September 2024 to January 2025. Out of 510 total respondents, a subsample of

156 was selected for in-depth analysis of generational differences in perceptions of artificial intelligence in the workplace.

We applied validated psychometric scales to measure constructs such as computer self-efficacy (Weigold & Weigold, 2021), stereotypes (Beyer et al., 2005), and AI-related experiences. After rigorous data cleaning (completion time, control questions, duplicate responses), the final dataset was categorized into three generational cohorts. Based on theoretical frameworks, we developed a research model aimed at exploring generational differences in the perception of AI at work and its relationship with organizational culture. This model was adapted to assess attitudes toward AI tools and digital innovation, incorporating variables such as perceived efficiency, creativity support, and task transformation alongside elements of supportive and innovative corporate culture.

To analyze generational differences in selected variables, we employed boxplots as a visual tool to compare medians, dispersion, interquartile ranges, and the presence of outliers across generational groups (Z, Y, X). Boxplots provide a clear overview of symmetry and data variability - key indicators when identifying behavioral or perspective differences (Figure 2).

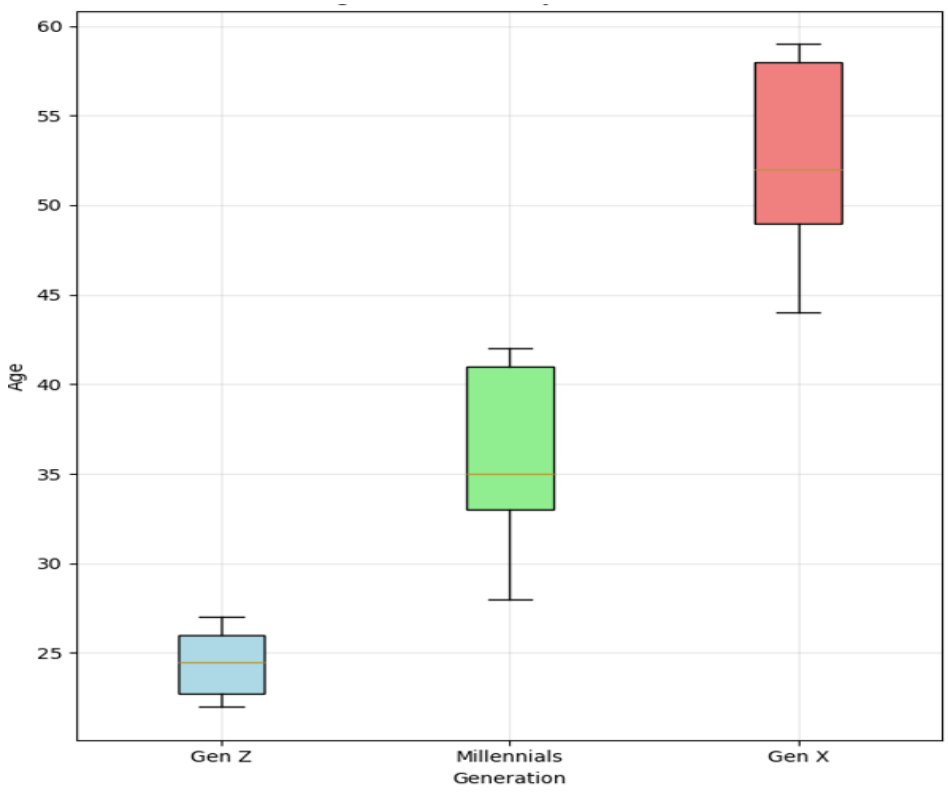

Figure 2. Age distribution by generation

Source: Own processing, Gen X = 64, Gen Y = 64, Gen Z = 28

Key items included statements on AI in the workplace:

- Item 1 AI tools are used at my workplace.
- Item 2 AI understands how AI affects my work.
- Item 3 AI makes my work more efficient.
- Item 4 AI allows me to focus on more creative tasks.

While the differences between generations were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), distinct patterns emerged that are analytically relevant. Generation Z consistently reported higher scores on items 1 through

3, suggesting a more positive view of AI and its impact on performance. Conversely, Generation X showed the lowest average ratings across all items, reflecting a more cautious or conservative stance toward technological innovation. Notably, Millennials scored highest on item 4, possibly due to greater confidence in task delegation and creative autonomy.

Methodologically, item 1 ("AI tools are used at my workplace") approached statistical significance ($p = 0.0712$), indicating a trend that warrants further investigation through expanded samples or alternative analytical methods, such as moderated regression (Table 2). These descriptive tendencies suggest that, although generational membership did not produce statistically robust effects, there may still be nuanced differences in how technology adoption is experienced and interpreted across age cohorts.

The relatively more positive attitudes of Generation Z toward AI could be linked to their digital nativity and greater exposure to emerging technologies, whereas the cautious approach of Generation X may reflect professional socialization in more traditional organizational settings. Millennials' higher evaluation of creative autonomy, on the other hand, might stem from their career stage, which often emphasizes innovation, collaboration, and flexible work arrangements. The presence of near-significant results further underscores the importance of considering effect sizes and directional patterns, not only p-values, when interpreting generational data. Future research should therefore expand sample sizes, particularly for Generation Z, and apply more sophisticated statistical techniques to explore whether these preliminary patterns represent meaningful and practically significant differences in organizational behavior.

Table 2

Mean values and standard deviations by generation

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*
Gen X_count	64	64	64	64
Gen X_mean	3.906	4	4.344	4.25
Gen X_median	4.5	5	5	5
Gen X_std	1.388	1.38	1.087	1.155
Gen X_min	1	1	1	1
Gen X_max	5	5	5	5
Gen Z_count	28	28	28	28
Gen Z_mean	4.536	4.179	4.571	4.429
Gen Z_median	5	5	5	5
Gen Z_std	0.881	1.278	0.92	0.836
Gen Z_min	2	1	2	2
Gen Z_max	5	5	5	5
Millennials_count	64	64	64	64
Millennials_mean	4.172	4.078	4.312	4.453
Millennials_median	5	5	5	5
Millennials_std	1.267	1.225	1.097	0.925
Millennials_min	1	1	1	1
Millennials_max	5	5	5	5

Source: Own processing, Gen X = 64, Gen Y = 64, Gen Z = 28

The questionnaire items on corporate culture addressed four key dimensions of a modern organizational climate conducive to adaptability, innovation, and employee engagement.

Specifically, Item 5 focused on open communication, reflecting the extent to which organizations enable transparent information flows and encourage dialogue across hierarchical levels. Item 6 captured the perception of technology as an opportunity rather than a threat, which is central to building digitally resilient organizations in times of accelerated technological change. Item 7 measured managerial support for innovation, emphasizing the role of leadership in fostering experimentation, risk-taking, and the implementation of new ideas. Finally, Item 8 assessed the degree to which employees are encouraged to learn from mistakes, an essential feature of a psychologically safe environment that promotes continuous improvement and organizational learning.

Together, these statements formed a coherent framework for assessing the openness and innovativeness of organizational culture (Figure 3). Their inclusion is consistent with contemporary organizational research, which highlights that cultures characterized by communication, technological readiness, supportive leadership, and tolerance for failure are better equipped to adapt to digital transformation and to engage employees across generational cohorts. Moreover, the integration of these dimensions into the research design ensured that the analysis of corporate culture went beyond superficial indicators and instead captured deeper structural and behavioral aspects relevant for long-term organizational sustainability.

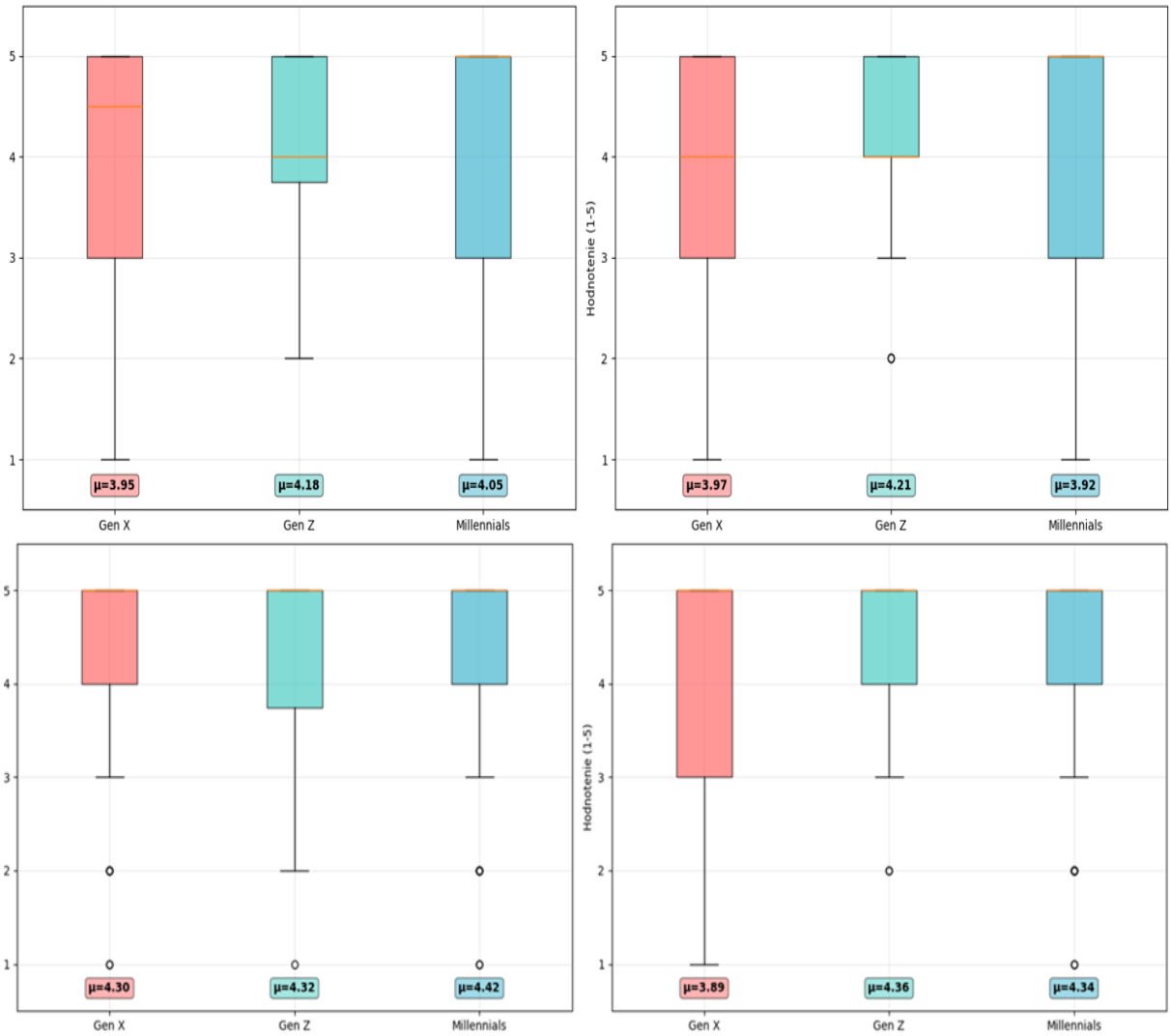

Figure 3. Corporate culture analysis by generation

Source: Own processing, Gen X = 64, Gen Y = 64, Gen Z = 28

The analysis showed no statistically significant generational differences in the perception of corporate culture (items 5–8). All three groups reported relatively high agreement levels (mean ~4.0 on a 5-point Likert scale), indicating a broadly positive attitude toward the cultural environment. These findings suggest that the sampled organizations are perceived as open, growth-oriented, and innovation-friendly by employees across age groups. The absence of significant generational differences may reflect either a stable cultural climate or successful intergenerational alignment efforts by organizations. A correlation analysis revealed the strongest relationship between items 6 and 7 ($r = 0.177$), logically supported by their shared focus on openness to change and innovation. This internal consistency validates the construct and suggests a cohesive

cultural environment promoting modern work conditions. These results point to the potential of corporate culture as a moderating factor in the implementation of technological innovation - regardless of generational composition - providing a promising direction for future research.

Given the scope of the conducted research and the number of variables analyzed, all questionnaire items were examined using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). This statistical technique enables the comparison of mean values across generational groups and the identification of any statistically significant difference in the perception of the studied phenomena. The results of the quantitative analysis indicate that no statistically significant differences were observed among the generational cohorts. All p-values exceeded the significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, suggesting a true absence of systematic variation in perception across Generations X, Y, and Z. Additionally, the low F-statistics values obtained from the ANOVA tests point to small effect sizes, further confirming that any observed differences in group means are minimal and likely without practical significance. To validate the reliability of these findings, we also applied the Kruskal-Wallis test, a non-parametric alternative to ANOVA. The results of this test aligned with those of the ANOVA, reinforcing the validity of the conclusions regarding the non-significance of generational differences.

Specifically, Generation Z did not exhibit a significantly more positive attitude toward artificial intelligence compared to the older generations. Despite descriptive trends in the data, the lack of statistical significance suggests that generational belonging, in this context, does not meaningfully differentiate how AI or aspects of corporate culture are perceived. This consistency between parametric and non-parametric methods strengthens the reliability of the findings and supports the argument that intergenerational perceptions may be more homogeneous than initially expected (Fig. 4).

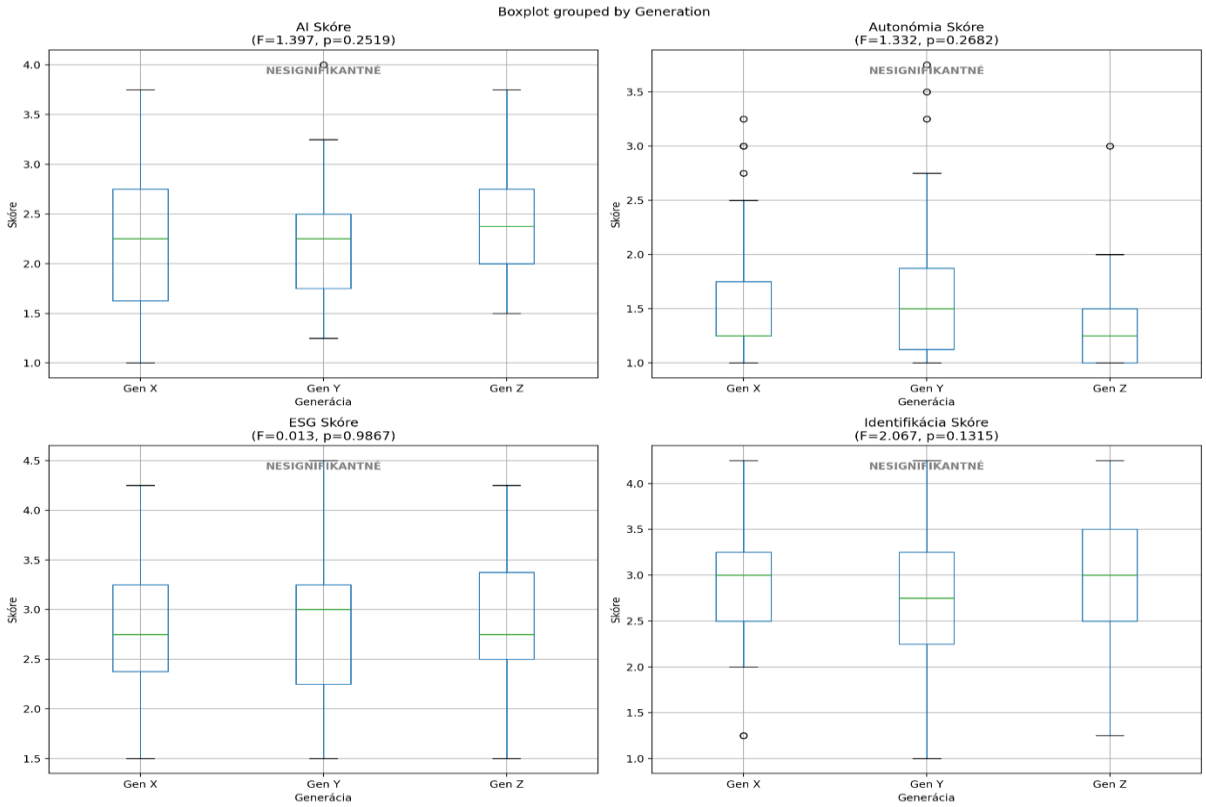

Figure 4. Boxplot grouped by Generation

Source: Own processing, Gen X = 64, Gen Y = 64, Gen Z = 28

In accordance with the proposed research model, five hypotheses (H1–H5) were formulated and empirically tested (see Table 1).

Descriptive trends indicated partial generational patterns. For example, Generations Z and Y appeared more flexible in using AI tools compared to Generation X (H1). Generation Z showed the most positive attitude towards the impact of AI on workplace performance (H2). The perception of openness and innovativeness in organisational culture (H3) seemed stronger among younger generations. Generation Y demonstrated the greatest confidence in using AI for task delegation and creative work (H4), while Generation X tended to be more conservative and cautious regarding technological changes (H5), in line with generational theory.

However, the results of both the one-way ANOVA and the Kruskal–Wallis non-parametric test consistently indicated no statistically significant differences across generational cohorts ($p > 0.05$). Thus, none of the hypotheses H1–H5 were statistically confirmed, and the null hypothesis of no difference between the generational groups was retained in each case. These findings suggest that, despite observable tendencies, generational distinctions in perceptions of AI and organisational culture were not supported by significant statistical evidence within the sample.

Although descriptive trends suggest that Generation Z respondents expressed slightly more positive attitudes toward AI adoption and innovation than their older counterparts, these tendencies did not achieve statistical significance. The consistency of results across both parametric and non-parametric analyses reinforces the robustness of the findings. Taken together, the outcomes highlight the exploratory character of the study and support the conclusion that generational affiliation, within the context of Slovak family businesses, may not constitute a decisive factor shaping perceptions of modern motivational tools, organizational culture, or technology adoption.

Despite an adequate overall sample size, no statistically significant differences were identified between the generational cohorts, as all p-values remained well above the 0.05 significance threshold. Concurrently, the low F-statistics observed in the ANOVA indicate small or negligible effect sizes, suggesting that the practical relevance of any differences is minimal. A similar pattern emerged from the Kruskal–Wallis test, reinforcing the methodological robustness of the conclusions.

These findings yield several key implications for human resource management and the implementation of new technologies:

- There appears to be no need for strongly differentiated approaches based on generational membership. The results suggest that generational identity alone does not necessitate tailored management strategies.
- Digital tools, including AI-based solutions, can be introduced uniformly across generational groups without concern for unequal acceptance. Instead of relying on generational generalizations - which often prove overly simplistic - managers should focus on individual preferences and needs.

Given that no statistically significant generational differences were found in any of the analyzed dimensions (AI, autonomy, ESG, organizational identification), the results are somewhat unexpected - especially in light of the extensive academic debate suggesting generational differences in technology perception, work values, and organizational priorities.

The fact that these anticipated distinctions were not observed in the analyzed sample raises new research questions and simultaneously points to potential limitations in sample composition. One major recommendation for future research is to expand the range of demographic variables examined, such as education level, job type, organization size, and sector (Streimikiene & Bathaei, 2025). These factors may have a greater influence on employee attitudes and behaviors than generational affiliation alone.

A comprehensive review of the literature reveals that corporate culture and its influence on management and employees have been central themes in organizational research. One of the most frequently examined areas is the impact of culture on leadership practices. Contemporary trends increasingly

emphasize that effective management requires the integration of modern motivational tools - designed not only to enhance performance but to foster a positive mindset, emotional well-being, and a sense of fulfillment. This perspective is encapsulated in the emerging philosophy of happiness management, which asserts that a happy manager leads happy employees - and together they create a happy organization that performs more effectively.

In the current age of exponential scientific and technological advancement, artificial intelligence (AI) stands out as the most rapidly evolving force. AI continues to advance with each passing minute, polarizing workplace actors into two broad groups: enthusiastic advocates who welcome technological innovation, and cautious critics who voice concerns over its long-term consequences. These divergent attitudes are particularly pronounced when viewed through the lens of generational identity.

Generational cohorts - X, Y (Millennials), and Z - exhibit varying degrees of technological affinity, psychological flexibility, and openness to innovation. While Generation Z tends to embrace AI as an intuitive extension of digital life, older generations may approach it with a more guarded perspective, shaped by analog-era work structures and different motivational drivers. This generational divergence does not imply conflict but signals the need for adaptive cultural strategies that resonate across age groups.

Previous empirical studies have demonstrated that the absence of organizational happiness often correlates with elevated stress levels, emotional exhaustion, and mental health concerns among employees. Such deficits, while psychological in nature, cascade into measurable outcomes - reduced productivity, decision fatigue, and diminished capacity for innovation. From an operational standpoint, the cumulative effect of these factors contributes to ineffective decision-making and suboptimal organizational functioning.

Notably, Ravina-Ripoll et al. (2024) argue that in such environments, employees' professional activity tends to be characterized by low productivity and a deficit of innovative work behavior. These dynamics, although influenced by various factors, may be exacerbated or mitigated depending on the generational makeup of the workforce and the cultural climate in which they operate.

In light of these insights, the integration of happiness-driven leadership and inclusive motivational systems appears not only desirable but imperative - particularly as AI and other digital tools continue to reshape the fabric of organizational life. Cultivating generationally responsive corporate cultures will thus become a strategic necessity in ensuring both human sustainability and technological adaptability. Although none of the proposed hypotheses were statistically confirmed, these results must be interpreted in light of the specific research design and sampling framework. The study was intentionally focused on family businesses, a sector that is structurally distinct from corporate and start-up environments due to its intergenerational continuity, traditional hierarchy, and more stable workforce dynamics.

One of the most critical limitations affecting hypothesis testing was the underrepresentation of Generation Z in the sample. In the context of family businesses, younger generations are typically still in the phase of professional development or succession preparation, which limits their presence in strategic or managerial roles. This demographic reality made it challenging to obtain sufficient data from Gen Z respondents whose perspectives are crucial when investigating attitudes toward innovation, autonomy, and AI.

Therefore, the lack of statistically significant differences between generational cohorts may not reflect a genuine homogeneity of attitudes, but rather a sampling constraint inherent in the nature of the target population. The low representation of Gen Z likely reduced the sensitivity of statistical tests and the ability to detect more nuanced patterns in generational perceptions.

Nevertheless, the decision to present these findings is grounded in the importance of reflecting regional realities and contributing to the understudied domain of Central and Eastern European family firms. In these economies, family businesses constitute a key pillar of economic activity, yet are often overlooked in international empirical studies. By documenting the generational dynamics within this context, the study offers a valuable starting point for further comparative research, especially with a view toward succession

planning, digital transformation, and intergenerational leadership transfer. It is important to note that the relatively narrow sample, particularly the underrepresentation of Generation Z, may have reduced the sensitivity of statistical tests to detect subtle intergenerational differences. This limitation is, however, consistent with earlier exploratory studies in organizational behavior and family business research (Gursoy et al., 2008; Srovnalikova, 2024). Despite this, the results provide valuable empirical evidence from the underexplored context of Central and Eastern European family enterprises (Naďová Krošláková et al., 2021; Naz et al., 2023; Čvirik et al., 2025), and serve as a foundation for future comparative research with larger and more balanced samples.

Future research should aim to expand the generational balance, particularly by incorporating a higher number of Gen Z respondents and comparing family-owned firms with non-family business structures. Moreover, qualitative methodologies could provide deeper insights into how generational values manifest in specific organizational settings.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between corporate culture and employee motivation in the context of generational differences, with particular attention paid to modern motivational tools such as happiness management, employee wellbeing, gender equality, inclusion, and artificial intelligence (AI). Based on a sample of 156 respondents from Generations X, Y, and Z, we investigated whether these groups differ significantly in their perception of selected motivational and cultural dimensions within organizations.

Despite widespread academic discourse suggesting substantial intergenerational differences in values, technology acceptance, and workplace expectations, the results of our analysis did not confirm statistically significant differences among the generational cohorts. Both the ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis tests yielded non-significant results across all measured variables, including attitudes toward AI, organizational autonomy, ESG orientation, and identification with corporate culture. Moreover, the low effect sizes suggest minimal practical relevance of the observed differences.

These findings have important implications. First, they suggest that generational affiliation may not be a decisive factor in determining employee attitudes toward corporate culture and technology adoption. Second, they indicate that modern motivational tools - such as AI solutions, wellbeing programs, and inclusive leadership - can be implemented uniformly across age groups, with a focus on individual needs rather than generational stereotypes.

This contributes to the broader understanding that employee motivation and engagement are more closely tied to organizational climate, managerial practices, and perceived fairness than to age-based generational belonging. The results also reinforce the importance of fostering inclusive and adaptive corporate cultures that support psychological safety, creativity, and long-term development across all employee segments.

Our study reaffirms the strategic relevance of happiness management as a leadership philosophy rooted in employee satisfaction, innovation, and corporate responsibility. As noted by Ravina-Ripoll et al. (2024) and Hafeez et al. (2024), happiness-oriented management models promote emotional sustainability and productivity by integrating human capital with ethical governance and organizational creativity. This is especially pertinent in the era of AI, where workplace transformation requires not only technical readiness but also cultural adaptability (Galvan-Vela et al., 2021).

We argue that AI is no longer merely a tool but an emerging element of organizational identity. While some employees perceive AI as a support mechanism, others view it as a virtual colleague. This duality introduces new challenges for leadership, demanding that managers design motivational and governance frameworks that align with both technological and human factors. The success of these frameworks will

increasingly depend on their ability to incorporate happiness culture, inclusive practices, and sustainable values into everyday operations.

Future research should further explore how other variables - such as education level, occupational role, industry sector, or organizational size - might influence motivational dynamics more than generational identity. Additionally, longitudinal and qualitative research designs could help uncover deeper, temporally evolving perceptions related to technology, wellbeing, and organizational loyalty.

In summary, the evolving landscape of work emphasizes that cultivating adaptive, innovative, and ethically grounded corporate cultures is essential. Organizations that can strategically integrate motivational tools with inclusive leadership and data-informed decision-making are better positioned to thrive in a globalized and digitized economy.

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