

Intergenerational Preferences in Using Forms of Workforce Flexibility

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Abstract

Research background: The increasing demand for flexible work arrangements has led to a shift in workforce expectations across generations. As labour markets evolve, understanding intergenerational differences in preferences regarding work flexibility becomes essential for effective human resource management. This topic is especially relevant for designing inclusive work environments that address the diverse needs of Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y, and Z.

Purpose of the article: The aim of this article is to present intergenerational preferences for various forms of workforce flexibility in Slovakia in the context of the possible optimization of human resource management tools.

Methods: The research is based on a quantitative survey conducted with 542 economically active respondents. The questionnaire was adapted from the validated Flexible Work Options Questionnaire (FWOQ) and distributed online. Data were analysed using methods such as Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, ANOVA, correlation analysis, and contingency tables at a 0.05 significance level.

Findings & Value added: The findings reveal statistically significant generational differences in preferences for flexible work arrangements. Younger generations (Y and Z) show a higher inclination toward remote work, hybrid models, and flexible hours, while older generations (X and Baby Boomers) tend to prefer traditional structures. Despite these differences, some forms of flexibility, such as part-time work or flexible scheduling, are appreciated across all age groups. The study also identifies key factors influencing flexibility preferences, including family responsibilities, career stage, and perceived digital readiness. The results offer valuable insights for employers seeking to tailor HR strategies to a multigenerational workforce and foster more adaptive and inclusive workplaces.

Keywords: generational differences; workforce flexibility; flexible work arrangements; multigenerational workforce; employment preferences

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1. Introduction

The growing demand for flexible work arrangements has significantly transformed the labour market, creating new opportunities as well as challenges for employers and employees. Traditional employment structures are increasingly being replaced by diverse forms of flexibility, including task-related, time-related, and contractual flexibility, which allow employees to better balance their work and private lives (Kordosova, 2023). At the same time, flexibility is not perceived uniformly across the workforce. For some, it represents an opportunity to adapt to rapid market and technological changes, while for others it is associated with excessive demands that may negatively affect their work-life balance. This raises an important question of how generational differences shape the perception and use of workforce flexibility.

As noted by Smith and Garriety (2020), generational differences in work values significantly influence preferences for flexible employment. Baby Boomers and Generation X often prioritise stability and predictability in their jobs, whereas Generations Y and Z are more open to hybrid and remote models that provide greater independence. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of flexible forms of work, exposing both their benefits and challenges (Bhat et al., 2023; Hertwig, 2022). Research has shown that the pandemic not only intensified workload and pressure for many employees but also transformed perceptions of flexibility, as irregular working hours, role ambiguity and remote collaboration became widespread (Ayar et al., 2022; Geldart, 2022; Enli-Tuncay et al., 2020). At the same time, empirical evidence suggested that productivity in remote settings could increase, with telecommuters reporting higher efficiency during lockdowns. These changes reshaped how different generations approached flexible work – older cohorts often viewing it as a disruption to established routines, while younger employees associated it with autonomy and opportunities for better work-life balance. Studies confirm that generational differences influence not only the acceptance of flexible working models but also employees' expectations regarding career development, digital technologies, and the balance between professional and personal life (Cogin, 2012; Chan and Lee, 2023; Bulinska-Stangrecka and Bagienska, 2021).

Despite increasing attention to the topic, there remains a research gap in understanding how intergenerational preferences for flexibility manifest within the Slovak labour market and how these preferences differ across forms of flexibility, such as job enrichment, job rotation, remote work, flexible hours, or temporary contracts. Previous research in Europe has mainly emphasised macro-level statistical trends (Devic et al., 2024), but less attention has been paid to the micro-level analysis of attitudes and barriers to flexibility within specific countries.

The focus of this study is placed on identifying differences between Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y, and Z across three main dimensions of flexibility—tasks, time, and employment contracts—and examining the factors that influence these differences, such as family responsibilities, digital skills, or career ambitions. The study contributes to the literature by providing an empirical analysis based on a representative sample of 542 respondents, offering new insights into how different age groups perceive the benefits and challenges of flexible work.

The article is structured as follows: the theoretical section outlines the current state of knowledge on workforce flexibility and generational differences, the methodological section describes the research design and sample, while the result section presents the main findings of hypothesis testing. The conclusion summarises the results and provides recommendations for employers on how to design flexible work arrangements that meet the needs of a multigenerational workforce.

2. Literature review

Human resource management (HRM) represents a set of strategic and operational practices aimed at effectively attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining employees within an organization.

In recent years, HRM has been increasingly influenced by demographic changes, technological progress, and the growing generational diversity of the workforce. Each generation - from Baby Boomers to Generation Z - brings distinct values, work attitudes, and expectations that shape how HR tools and policies should be designed and implemented. According to White et al. (2018), the aging of the workforce requires the adaptation of workplaces to become more age-friendly, supporting engagement, health, and retention of older employees. The authors highlight that managers must create inclusive environments that respect generational differences in physical capacity, technological readiness, and social interaction. Similarly, Buasuwan (2023) emphasizes that managing a multigenerational workforce requires a strategic HRM approach where leaders understand the value frameworks of different cohorts and align leadership, reward, and communication styles with these differences.

Empirical evidence suggests that integrating knowledge of generational preferences into HRM practices enhances organizational effectiveness, employee satisfaction, and commitment. Burton et al. (2019), in their systematic review of multigenerational teams, confirmed that understanding generational differences improves team collaboration, adaptability, and performance. Tewari et al. (2025) further show that flexible work arrangements - such as hybrid work, part-time contracts, and flexible scheduling - have become essential HRM tools to address the diverse expectations of employees across generations. Their bibliometric study indicates that implementing such flexibility requires both technological infrastructure and a culture of organizational learning and adaptation. Additionally, Choudhary and Pandita (2024) demonstrate that designing workspaces with elements of nature, known as biophilic design, significantly enhances Generation Z's mental well-being, concentration, and job satisfaction. These findings reinforce the need for HR managers to incorporate well-being and flexibility into workplace strategies as essential drivers of productivity and retention.

In summary, modern HRM should be grounded in the integration of intergenerational research and practical management strategies. Understanding and implementing generational preferences in relation to flexibility, technology use, and work values enables organizations to develop differentiated approaches to employee motivation, development, and retention—ultimately contributing to competitiveness and long-term sustainability (White et al., 2018; Buasuwan, 2023; Burton et al., 2019; Tewari et al., 2025; Choudhary and Pandita, 2024).

The concept of workforce flexibility has become a central topic in labour market research, reflecting the growing importance of adapting work conditions to the needs of both employers and employees. Flexibility can take various forms, including task-related, time-related, and contractual arrangements, all of which affect employee satisfaction, motivation, and overall productivity (Kordosova, 2023). Despite its benefits, the application of flexible work models is not without challenges, particularly when analysed through the lens of intergenerational differences.

Generational theory suggests that values and work attitudes differ significantly among cohorts such as Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y, and Z, shaped by their historical and socio-economic contexts (Macky et al., 2008). Research has shown that Baby Boomers tend to value job security and stability, while Generation X emphasizes autonomy and work-life balance. Younger generations, particularly Y and Z, are characterised by a stronger orientation towards digitalisation, hybrid work, and flexible scheduling (Cogin, 2012; Chan and Lee, 2023). Previous studies also show that increased workload, irregular schedules, and role ambiguity – especially visible during the COVID-19 pandemic – can undermine the positive effects of flexibility (Ayar et al., 2022; Geldart, 2022; Enli-Tuncay et al., 2020). At the same time, research points to the importance of social relations and trust in shaping how employees perceive flexible arrangements, suggesting that supportive environments can mitigate negative outcomes (Bulinska-Stangrecka and Bagienska, 2021).

Studies point to a generational divide in work ethics and expectations that is reflected in employees' attitudes towards flexibility. Younger employees tend to prioritise work-life balance, flexibility, and opportunities for professional growth and development, while older cohorts give

greater importance to job security, stability, and employment benefits. These contrasting values influence how different groups approach their daily tasks, perceive organisational support, and form expectations towards employers in relation to working conditions. Such findings illustrate that workforce flexibility is shaped not only by institutional settings, but also by generational attitudes rooted in socio-economic experiences and career priorities (Cajander and Reiman, 2023).

At the same time, scholars caution that flexible work may have ambivalent outcomes. While it often improves work–life balance, it can also blur the boundaries between professional and private life, contributing to stress and burnout. Younger employees value the autonomy that flexibility offers, yet they also experience greater pressure linked to constant availability and digital connectivity. Older employees, on the other hand, continue to emphasise predictable schedules and job security, which they see as essential for stability. These dynamics highlight that flexibility must be assessed in connection with generational expectations and the psychosocial context in which employees operate (Mkandatsama et al., 2025).

In line with these findings, Gricnik et al. (2024) emphasise that Generation Z is entering the labour market with pronounced expectations for autonomy, technological support, and flexible work conditions. The authors also point out that human resource managers face the challenge of aligning these demands with the needs of older generations, who may value stability, security, and personal contact more strongly. This highlights the necessity of balancing digital tools that enable flexibility with practices that ensure inclusivity across different age cohorts. Similarly, studies on Generation Y underline that this cohort values flexibility, meaningful work, good relationships with supervisors, regular feedback, and career development opportunities, which organisations can leverage to enhance productivity and satisfaction (Van Eck and Burger, 2020).

A key issue often highlighted in the literature is the role of digital skills and technological readiness in shaping flexibility preferences. Younger cohorts display greater confidence in remote work and digital communication tools, while older generations may perceive such forms of flexibility as barriers due to limited technological competencies (Bhat et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of flexible work arrangements, highlighting generational disparities in adapting to remote and hybrid models (Hertwig, 2022). Luissa et al. (2024) demonstrate that a strong digital mindset – supported by organisational backing and a culture of continuous learning – significantly strengthens Generation Z's intention to remain with their employers. This finding suggests that digital adaptability is not only a technological advantage but also a crucial form of flexibility shaping long-term workforce stability among younger cohorts. At the same time, scholars caution that flexibility is never unlimited or free of constraints. Research shows that autonomy can be divided into strategic and operational dimensions, where strategic autonomy allows individuals to define their broader professional goals, while operational autonomy – the day-to-day freedom in how tasks are carried out – is often restricted by external factors such as client requirements, contractual obligations, and the conditions of specific projects. These findings highlight that flexibility is always shaped by contextual boundaries, and that the degree of autonomy employees experience depends not only on their preferences but also on institutional and market structures. Such insights are important when analysing intergenerational preferences, as they indicate that flexibility cannot be treated as a uniform concept but must be understood as a negotiated space between individual expectations and organisational realities (Tremblay and Genin, 2010).

Another important dimension in the literature concerns the relationship between flexibility and employee well-being. Flexible work options are frequently associated with improved work–life balance, yet they can also blur the boundaries between professional and personal life, leading to stress and burnout (Allen et al., 2013). This dual nature is particularly evident in younger generations, who value autonomy but also report higher levels of pressure linked to availability and constant connectivity (Chan and Lee, 2023).

Studies conducted in the European context point to the role of institutional and cultural factors in shaping flexibility practices. Research shows that while Scandinavian countries have long

traditions of flexible working arrangements, Central and Eastern Europe lags behind in both regulation and acceptance (Devic et al., 2024). Within Slovakia, studies remain relatively scarce, with most focusing on general trends rather than detailed generational differences. This research gap underscores the need for micro-level analysis of attitudes towards specific forms of flexibility.

In summary, the literature identifies three main themes: first, the diversity of generational values and expectations that shape attitudes towards flexible work; second, the impact of technological readiness and digitalisation on the adoption of flexibility; and third, the broader institutional and cultural context influencing these practices. While flexibility is often framed as a universal solution for improving work–life balance and productivity, its actual acceptance and effectiveness vary significantly across generations. This highlights the importance of examining flexibility not only as an organisational tool but also as a generationally sensitive aspect of human resource management.

3. Methodology

The aim of this article is to present intergenerational preferences for various forms of workforce flexibility in Slovakia in the context of the possible optimization of human resource management tools.

Generational differences in preferences for workforce flexibility represent an essential factor influencing how employees perceive modern forms of work organisation. To explore these differences, the study formulated and tested a set of hypotheses focused on specific aspects of flexibility, covering task-related and time-related dimensions.

The research analysed whether statistically significant differences exist in flexibility preferences between Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y, and Z in Slovakia. The survey was based on the Flexible Work Options Questionnaire (FWOQ), adapted for the Slovak labour market, and distributed online. Respondents evaluated their attitudes on a five-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). A total of 542 valid responses were obtained, covering all economically active generational cohorts.

The questionnaire was distributed online via the Survio platform between December 2024 and February 2025, using a convenience sampling method (selection of respondents who had access to the questionnaire and were willing to participate). Participation in the survey was limited to employees working under an employment relationship, excluding self-employed persons. The data collection was anonymous, allowing participants to express their views freely. The composition of the sample was balanced in terms of gender, with 63.47% women and 36.53% men. Regarding education, 39.30% of respondents had completed secondary education with graduation, 29.52% held a university degree (second level), 17.53% had a bachelor's degree, 8.67% had secondary education without graduation, 3.69% held a doctoral degree, and 1.29% reported primary education.

The study examined the following hypotheses:

H1: There are differences in the preference for job enrichment among generations.

H2: There are statistically significant differences in the preference for job rotation among generations.

H3: There are differences in the preference for job enlargement among generations.

H4: There is a difference in the overall attitude toward the flexibility of work tasks between generations.

H5: There is a difference between generations in the preference for flexible working hours.

To test these hypotheses, a combination of quantitative statistical methods was applied. The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models with dummy variables were used to identify differences between generations. ANOVA (analysis of variance) was employed to test the statistical significance of mean differences in preferences across cohorts. For categorical variables, contingency tables with the chi-square test were used to determine whether observed differences between generations were statistically significant.

All statistical tests were conducted at a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Results were evaluated with robust standard errors where heteroscedasticity was detected. The hypotheses were confirmed when the p-value indicated statistical significance, thus providing evidence of intergenerational differences in flexibility preferences.

4. Results

The research is based on a quantitative survey conducted with 542 economically active respondents in Slovakia. The following tables present the results of empirical research and the evaluation of scientific hypotheses.

Hypothesis H1 focused on whether there are differences in the preference for job enrichment among generations, with the aim of determining if younger cohorts prefer this form of flexibility more than older ones.

Table 1: Respondents' answers to the question related to H1 (proportion in percentages)

Response	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Strongly do not prefer	17	16	14	10
Rather do not prefer	42	15	12	11
Neither prefer nor do not prefer	17	22	26	16
Rather prefer	25	34	34	44
Strongly prefer	0	13	14	19

Source: own elaboration

The regression analysis confirmed a statistically significant effect of generation on preferences for job enrichment ($\beta = 0.213$; $p = 0.0029$). The positive coefficient indicates that the preference increases with younger age groups. The model as a whole was statistically significant ($F(1,540) = 8.95$; $p = 0.0029$), although the explained variance was relatively low ($R^2 = 0.016$). This suggests that generational affiliation accounts for only a small share of the variability, yet the effect remains significant.

To verify the robustness of results, an additional OLS regression with dummy variables was performed, using Baby Boomers as the reference category. The results confirmed significant differences: Generation Z showed the strongest preference for job enrichment ($\beta = 1.027$; $p = 0.0073$), followed by Generation Y ($\beta = 0.742$; $p = 0.0442$). Generation X also reported higher values than Baby Boomers, but the difference was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.629$; $p = 0.0896$). The overall model was statistically significant ($F(3,538) = 3.57$; $p = 0.0141$), with $R^2 = 0.0195$, again pointing to a weak but significant effect. Diagnostic checks confirmed the assumption of homoscedasticity ($p = 0.591$), while the normality of residuals was not met. However, this limitation is common in Likert - type data and does not undermine the reliability of the findings given the large sample size ($n = 542$).

In summary, Hypothesis H1 was confirmed. The results indicate that younger generations, especially Generation Z, show significantly stronger preferences for job enrichment than older generations, particularly Baby Boomers. These findings highlight the importance of considering generational expectations when designing enrichment-based flexibility in the workplace.

Table 2: Respondents' answers to the question related to H2 (proportion in percentages)

Response	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Strongly do not prefer	17	16	14	10
Rather do not prefer	42	15	12	11
Neither prefer nor do not prefer	17	22	26	16
Rather prefer	25	34	34	44
Strongly prefer	0	13	14	19

Source: own elaboration

To test this hypothesis, an OLS regression with dummy variables was applied. The dependent variable was the degree of preference for job rotation, while Baby Boomers (Generation 1) served as the reference category. The results showed that the coefficients for Generation Y ($p = 0.0206$) and Generation Z ($p = 0.0003$) were statistically significant, indicating that their preferences differ from those of Baby Boomers. The coefficient for Generation X did not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.1154$). The overall model was statistically significant (F-test $p < 0.001$), with $R^2 = 0.0543$, meaning that approximately 5.4% of the variance in preferences was explained. Although the explanatory power is modest, such results are common in social sciences when studying individual attitudes. The White test indicated potential heteroscedasticity ($p = 0.0315$), suggesting that robust standard errors should be considered.

Based on these results, Hypothesis H2 was confirmed.

Table 3: Average preference for job rotation by generation (ANOVA results)

Generation	Mean preference (1-5 Likert scale)
Baby Boomers	1.75
Generation X	2.32
Generation Y	2.59
Generation Z	3.10

Source: own elaboration

To complement the regression model, an ANOVA test was conducted to assess whether mean values of job rotation preferences differ between generations. The analysis confirmed significant differences ($F(3,538) = 10.3052$; $p < 0.001$). The average values of preference were as follows: Baby Boomers 1.75; Generation X 2.32; Generation Y 2.59; and Generation Z 3.10. These results demonstrate a clear upward trend, with younger generations showing stronger preferences for job rotation compared to older cohorts. This further supports the acceptance of Hypothesis H2.

Hypothesis H3 examined whether generational differences exist in the preference for job enlargement.

Table 4: Respondents' answers to the question related to H3 (proportion in percentages)

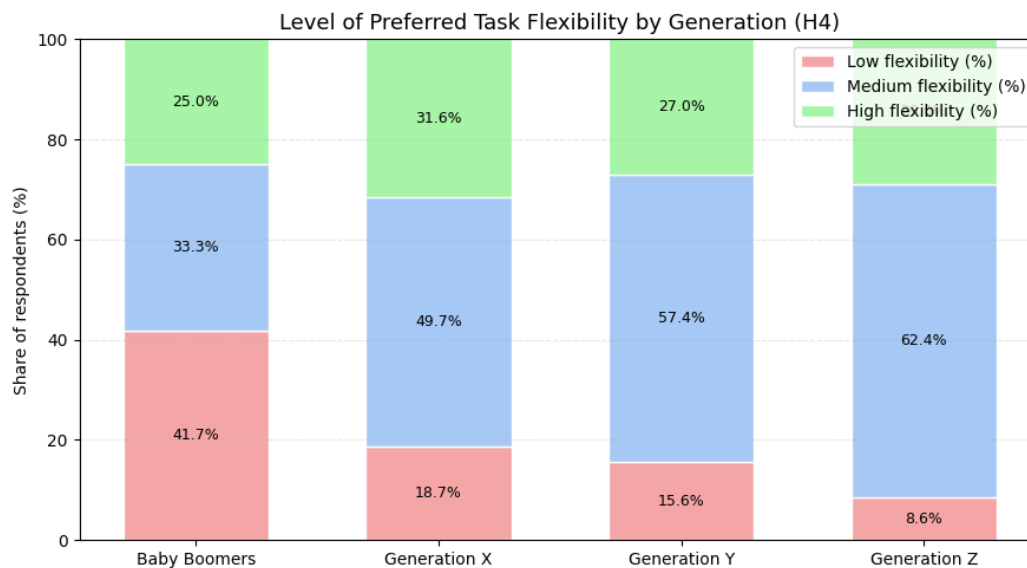
Response	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Strongly do not prefer	50	32	28	9
Rather do not prefer	25	27	19	19
Neither prefer nor do not prefer	25	24	26	34
Rather prefer	0	10	19	29
Strongly prefer	0	7	7	9

Source: own elaboration

To test this, an OLS regression with dummy variables was applied, with Baby Boomers (Generation 1) serving as the reference group and the degree of preference for job enlargement as the dependent variable. The results showed no statistically significant differences between generations, as the p-values for all dummy variables were well above the significance threshold (Generation X: $p = 0.814$; Generation Y: $p = 0.419$; Generation Z: $p = 0.299$). The overall model was not significant (F-test: $p = 0.149$), with a very low explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.0098$). The White test confirmed the assumption of homoscedasticity ($p = 0.795$). Based on these findings, Hypothesis H3 was rejected, since no meaningful generational differences in job enlargement preferences were identified.

Hypothesis H4 examined whether generational differences exist in the overall attitude toward job flexibility. To test this, a new variable Flexscore was created, which was subsequently divided into three categories according to quartiles: low flexibility (≤ 6), medium flexibility (7–10) and high flexibility (> 10).

Figure 1. Respondents' answers to the question related to H5 (proportion in percentages)



Source: own elaboration

A contingency table was constructed to display the distribution of respondents across generations. The results showed that Baby Boomers had the highest share in the low flexibility category (41.7%), while Generations Y and Z were more represented in the medium and high flexibility groups (57.4% and 62.4% in medium flexibility; 27.0% and 29.0% in high flexibility, respectively). The Chi-square test confirmed statistically significant differences between generations ($\chi^2 = 24.47$; $p = 0.0004$), indicating that generational affiliation is associated with varying attitudes toward job flexibility.

Based on these findings, Hypothesis H4 was confirmed.

In Hypothesis H5, we tested whether there are generational differences in the preference for flexible working hours. To examine this, we used an OLS regression model, where the dependent variable was the respondents' level of agreement with flexible working hours. Generations were included in the model as dummy variables, with Generation 1 (Baby Boomers) serving as the reference category.

Table 5: Respondents' answers to the question related to H5 (proportion in percentages)

Response	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Strongly do not prefer	33	30	30	23
Rather do not prefer	17	21	22	29
Neither prefer nor do not prefer	25	25	23	19
Rather prefer	17	20	20	24
Strongly prefer	8	4	6	5

Source: own elaboration

The results show that none of the generational variables were statistically significant – all p-values were well above common significance levels (e.g., for Generation Z: $p = 0.6708$). The overall model is not statistically significant (F-test p-value = 0.052), although it narrowly exceeded the 5% threshold. The coefficient of determination (R^2) reached a value of 0.014, which means that generation explains only about 1.4% of the variability in the preference for flexible working hours. The heteroskedasticity test (White's test) did not confirm the presence of heteroskedasticity ($p = 0.38$), so the assumptions of the OLS model are met.

Based on the regression analysis, there are no notable differences between generations in the preference for flexible working hours. Although the model as a whole is not statistically significant and generational differences were not confirmed, the results suggest that this type of work arrangement is perceived positively across all age groups. Flexible working hours can thus be seen

as a generally attractive benefit that appeals to both younger and older generations. It is possible that its universal popularity contributed to the lack of significant generational differences in the data.

Hypothesis H5 was not confirmed.

5. Discussion

The results of our research provide important empirical evidence that statistically significant differences exist between generations in preferences for certain forms of workforce flexibility. The most pronounced differences were identified in job enrichment and job rotation, where younger cohorts (particularly Generation Z and Y) demonstrated stronger preferences than older cohorts. These findings are consistent with previous studies such as Cagin (2012) and Cajander and Reiman (2023), which highlight that younger employees place more emphasis on development, task variety, and career growth opportunities, while older cohorts prioritise stability, security, and predictability. These results are also in line with the findings of Gnanlet et al. (2021), who emphasised that workforce flexibility has a direct impact on performance and quality outcomes, but its benefits depend on contextual factors such as workload and organisational support. This suggests that flexibility, while beneficial, must be balanced with appropriate resources to avoid negative effects on employee well-being or work quality. The differences observed between generations in this study therefore point to the need for a balanced approach to flexibility that takes into account both employees' preferences and the conditions under which flexibility is implemented.

In contrast, job enlargement did not reveal statistically significant generational differences, suggesting that this form of flexibility is not perceived as particularly attractive by either younger or older employees. Another notable finding is that flexible working hours are perceived positively across all generations, indicating their universal appeal and confirming Mkandatsama's (2025) conclusion that time-related flexibility is a broadly accepted benefit, regardless of age.

Another important factor influencing flexibility preferences is digital readiness. Younger generations are more open to remote and hybrid work arrangements but also more exposed to risks associated with constant availability and digital overload, which may lead to stress and burnout (Allen et al., 2013; Chan and Lee, 2023). Older generations, on the other hand, sometimes perceive digital flexibility as a barrier due to lower technological competence, which corresponds with findings of Bhat et al. (2023). As Flinchbaugh et al. (2018) argue, developing socio-technical flexibility – the ability to adapt and share knowledge across generations through digital tools – is essential for leveraging generational diversity and ensuring effective collaboration in technology-driven workplaces.

The confirmed differences in job enrichment and rotation also suggest that younger employees value not only flexibility in how work is organised but also opportunities for professional growth embedded in these arrangements. The preference for enrichment indicates a motivation for skill variety and autonomy, while the support for rotation reflects openness to learning and adaptability. These findings align with the notion that Generations Y and Z tend to connect flexibility with self-development and employability, rather than merely with convenience or time management.

The absence of significant generational differences in job enlargement, on the other hand, highlights that not all forms of flexibility are perceived positively. Enlargement may be viewed as an increase in workload rather than an opportunity for development, particularly when it is not accompanied by adequate support or recognition. This implies that employers should distinguish between developmental and workload-related flexibility when designing HR practices to ensure that employees perceive such arrangements as beneficial rather than burdensome.

The results related to flexible working hours demonstrate a rare area of intergenerational consensus. Regardless of age, respondents expressed a generally positive attitude toward

temporal flexibility, which may reflect the increasing normalisation of flexible scheduling in Slovak organisations. The lack of significant differences suggests that flexibility in working time has become an established standard rather than a selective benefit for specific cohorts. This insight is valuable for HR managers, as it confirms that time-related flexibility can serve as a unifying element in workforce policies, supporting employee satisfaction across age groups. Moreover, as Apascaritei et al. (2024) highlight, HR flexibility contributes to higher performance only when it is strategically aligned with organisational goals and differentiated according to employee roles, underscoring that not all types of flexibility deliver the same value to the firm.

Overall, our results confirm that flexibility cannot be considered a one-size-fits-all solution. Its effectiveness and acceptance are shaped by generational values, career stages, and socio-economic contexts. From a practical perspective, employers should design flexibility strategies that are differentiated by age groups, offering younger employees variety, development, and autonomy, while providing older employees with stability, predictability, and clear structures.

For Human Resource Management, our findings imply a shift from one-size-fits-all policies to evidence-based, cohort-sensitive bundles of practices (job design, scheduling, learning and development, and rewards). In practice, HR should offer “menus of flexibility” aligned with career stage - pairing variety, autonomy and rapid development for younger cohorts with stability, predictable schedules and clear role structures for older cohorts - while adding targeted digital upskilling for older workers and guardrails against over-connectivity for younger workers. As Gnanlet et al. (2021) point out, the successful implementation of workforce flexibility requires balancing autonomy with adequate organisational support and workload management. Without such alignment, flexibility can fail to deliver its intended benefits, potentially reducing both performance and perceived quality of outcomes. These findings reinforce the importance of context-sensitive HR strategies that integrate flexibility with employee well-being and organisational sustainability.

6. Conclusions

This paper examined intergenerational preferences in using various forms of workforce flexibility within the Slovak labour market, focusing on task-related, time-related, and contractual dimensions. The research aimed to verify the extent to which preferences differ between Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z, and to identify the main factors shaping these attitudes.

The results suggest that preferences for flexibility are not uniform but shaped by generational values, career stage, and digital readiness. Younger employees tend to appreciate autonomy, variability of tasks, and developmental opportunities, but are also more vulnerable to risks associated with constant digital connectivity and blurred work-life boundaries. Older generations, on the other hand, continue to prioritise stability, job security, and predictability. These findings emphasise the need for differentiated HR strategies that balance autonomy and flexibility with stability and structure, ensuring inclusivity across age groups. In line with Gnanlet et al. (2021) and Apascaritei et al. (2024), this balance should be strategically managed to ensure that flexibility enhances both performance and employee well-being rather than increasing workload or stress. Moreover, as Flinchbaugh et al. (2018) highlight, the development of socio-technical flexibility – the ability of employees to adapt and collaborate through digital tools across generations – is becoming an essential prerequisite for sustainable workforce management.

Barriers of the study include its reliance on self-reported survey data, which may be subject to response bias, and the focus on Slovakia, which limits cross-country generalisability.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that workforce flexibility should not be perceived as a universal solution but rather as a multi-dimensional concept that requires adaptation to the needs of different generational cohorts. Task and time flexibility appear to be the most relevant and widely accepted forms, while developmental flexibility, such as job enrichment and rotation, is

particularly attractive for younger employees who associate it with career growth and learning opportunities. Employers should therefore design flexibility strategies that reflect both professional aspirations and life-cycle stages of employees while maintaining a clear alignment with organisational goals and adequate structural support for all age groups.

Future research should not only extend to other Central and Eastern European countries but also compare national contexts to identify structural or cultural factors influencing flexibility preferences. It would also be beneficial to conduct future studies on a larger and more diverse sample to improve the representativeness and robustness of the findings. Moreover, data collection should preferably be carried out by a professional research agency rather than exclusively through online platforms, to ensure higher data quality and minimize sampling bias. Additionally, investigating causal links between flexible work practices and outcomes such as job satisfaction, performance, and employee retention would strengthen the practical applicability of these findings for HR management.

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Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing or preparation of this manuscript.

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