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**Intergenerational Approaches and Organisational Behaviour
in Harmonising Work and Family
among University Teachers in Slovakia**

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Abstract

The academic milieu encounters increasing difficulties in reconciling work and familial obligations among academics, especially as universities adjust to evolving socioeconomic and institutional dynamics and university educators are obligated to engage in teaching activities related to innovations, as well as to conduct high-quality scientific research and fulfil administrative and organisational responsibilities. Given the increasing generational diversity in higher education, it is essential to understand how individual generations perceive their role in the academic environment and what factors influence their engagement and satisfaction. Despite comprehensive research on organisational behaviour and intergenerational collaboration, a significant gap exists in comprehending how various generational cohorts—Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z navigate these challenges. This study analyses the influence of generational viewpoints on leadership approaches, motivational elements, communication tendencies, and organisational frameworks within Slovak higher education. The study authors use frameworks from organisational behaviour, such as transformational leadership motivation theory, and institutional adaptability, to examine how universities can promote intergenerational collaboration while enhancing faculty well-being and institutional resilience. The results indicate that acknowledging generational diversity and its impact on academic culture is essential for maintaining sustainable faculty involvement and institutional efficacy. The study authors provide recommendations for university leadership to adopt customised tactics that foster an inclusive, innovative, and resilient academic environment, enabling faculty members from diverse generational backgrounds to flourish.

Keywords: university teachers, generational differences, work-life balance, organisational behaviour.

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1. Introduction

The equilibrium between professional and familial obligations has become a growing concern in academia, especially as universities experience changes prompted by globalisation, technological progress, and evolving societal norms (Clark, 2021; Jones & Smith, 2022). University teachers from different generations encounter unique obstacles in balancing professional and personal responsibilities, shaped by overarching changes in workplace policies, institutional governance, and cultural norms. Despite extensive research on work-life balance in higher education (Edwards & Rothbard, 2020), a significant gap persists in comprehending how various generational cohorts—Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z manage these complexities within the distinct institutional contexts of universities.

Intergenerational disparities in academia significantly influence organisational culture, faculty involvement, and leadership strategies (Brown et al., 2021). Senior faculty members frequently conform to conventional hierarchical frameworks and longstanding academic conventions (González & Torres, 2019), whereas younger colleagues generally prefer adaptable work structures, interdisciplinary cooperation, and the integration of digital technologies in academic governance (Williams & Green, 2023). Generational disparities can act as a catalyst for institutional innovation while also being a potential source of conflict within university settings (Taylor, 2022). Comprehending these processes is essential for university management aiming to establish an inclusive and adaptable academic environment (Mason et al., 2021).

Theories of organisational behaviour offer significant insights on the perceptions of leadership, motivation, and institutional adaptability among generational cohorts. Transformational leadership theory posits that proficient academic leaders should inspire and encourage teachers by cultivating an adaptive and inclusive institutional culture (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Motivation theories, such as self-determination theory and expectancy theory, underscore the significance of acknowledging varied motivational drives across generations (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vroom, 1964). Furthermore, institutional adaptation frameworks underscore the imperative for higher education institutions to have flexible policies that accommodate faculty requirements while upholding academic excellence (Scott, 2020).

This study examines Slovak university professors, investigating how intergenerational perspectives affect the integration of work and family duties. Considering Slovakia's transforming higher education environment and its growing focus on internationalisation and institutional transformation (Kováč et al., 2022a), examining generational viewpoints in this framework offers significant insights into sustainable management of the academic workforce. This study seeks to offer pragmatic advice for university management and policymakers to cultivate an inclusive, supportive, and innovative academic environment by addressing this research gap.

The organisational framework of Slovak universities is influenced by national educational policy, historical academic traditions, and international factors.

Governance is primarily hierarchical, with the rector as the paramount executive authority, assisted by vice-rectors, deans, vice-deans and department heads who manage faculty and academic functions (Kováč et al., 2022b). The decision-making process typically adheres to a centralised model; nevertheless, recent revisions have promoted more involvement of faculty and students in institutional governance (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Slovak universities categorise faculty members according to rank and academic credentials. The roles encompass professor, associate professor, assistant professor, and lecturer, each with distinct obligations in teaching, research, and administrative functions (Dudášová, 2021). Faculty members are anticipated to participate in research and publishing, obtain project financing, and aid in institutional development, while concurrently managing escalating administrative responsibilities (Štefánik & Rybár, 2023). Intergenerational viewpoints profoundly affect faculty involvement and academic culture. Established scholars typically follow conventional, research-oriented career trajectories, whereas younger faculty promote adaptable, multidisciplinary cooperation and digital innovation in academia (Horváthová & Kováč, 2019). These disparities influence faculty motivation, leadership anticipations, and general job satisfaction, so altering the internal dynamics of universities.

The academic landscape in Slovak institutions embodies both conventional governance frameworks and nascent participatory approaches that prioritise transparency and faculty engagement (Bologna Process, 2018). Work-life balance continues to be a significant concern, especially for younger faculty members who are managing research commitments alongside familial duties (Mihálik, 2022). Institutional support mechanisms, including family-friendly policies, research sabbaticals, and remote work alternatives, differ significantly among institutions, resulting in variations in faculty well-being and job satisfaction (Tomášik & Zeman, 2021). Although faculty members increasingly appreciate collaborative work environments, bureaucratic constraints frequently impede flexibility and academic creativity (Matúš, 2022). Financial constraints further hinder universities' capacity to attract and retain emerging intellectual talent, presenting issues for institutional sustainability (Hlavatý, 2023).

To address these issues, this study employs semi-structured interviews and document analysis within public and private universities in Slovakia, with a focus on the organisational strategies and cultural factors that either facilitate or hinder work-family harmonisation. The research seeks to answer the following question: „How do different generational cohorts of university teachers experience and navigate work-family balance within Slovak academic institutions? “

This study enhances the broader discourse on intergenerational strategies in academia by providing actionable recommendations for legislators and university management to cultivate more inclusive and supportive work cultures.

Cohort denotes a segment of a generation, usually defined by common experiences within a specific timeframe, such as commencing employment amid an economic downturn or maturing during a technological surge. In academic research,

generational cohorts are utilised to examine how shared experiences shape behaviour, attitudes, and expectations in certain environments, such as the workplace (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) generally hold leadership positions and prefer hierarchical organisational frameworks and conventional leadership methodologies, emphasising stability and institutional continuity (Bass & Riggio, 2020). This generation has frequently influenced the fundamental policies and academic norms of institutions, emphasising tenure, strategic planning, and established research paradigms (Drucker, 2021). Nonetheless, adjusting to swift technical advancements and evolving leadership dynamics has posed considerable hurdles. Numerous Baby Boomers encounter difficulties with digital transformation in educational settings, frequently depending on administrative assistance to address technological deficiencies (Edmundson, 2023). Notwithstanding these issues, they provide essential institutional information and historical context that impact decision-making processes and academic governance (Williams, 2021).

Generation X (born 1965-1980): Situated between senior leadership and junior faculty, Generation X frequently occupies middle-management positions and serves as a conduit between tradition and innovation. They reconcile conventional academic frameworks with receptiveness to contemporary educational practices and technological integration (Kotter, 2021). Numerous individuals in this generation balance administrative tasks, teaching duties, and research commitments, concurrently managing caregiving responsibilities for both children and elderly parents (Peterson & Hicks, 2022). This simultaneous pressure has intensified the demand for adaptable work arrangements, remote employment opportunities, and support frameworks inside academic institutions. Generation X members frequently advocate for work-life balance efforts, promoting organisational reforms aimed at flexible scheduling and enhanced institutional support systems (Clark, 2023).

Millennials (born 1981-1996) constitute a disruptive generation in academia, pursuing meaningful employment, professional advancement, and acknowledgement (Deal et al., 2020). They generally like collaborative work settings, adaptable scheduling, and inclusive leadership frameworks. Millennials, in contrast to earlier generations, emphasise work-life integration rather than conventional hierarchical progression, frequently pursuing organisations that advocate for diversity, equity, and transparency (Schein, 2022). They are leading technology innovation in academia, advancing digital teaching methodologies, online learning platforms, and virtual collaboration tools. Additionally, Millennials frequently promote mental health support and strive to implement policies that address caregiving and parental obligations within educational frameworks (Goleman, 2021).

Generation Z (born 1997-2012) is distinguished by their digital adeptness and inclination towards decentralised organisational frameworks (Williams, 2021). Their academic aspirations encompass technology integration, transparent communication, and research processes driven by innovation (Edmundson, 2023). They contest conventional academic hierarchies by pursuing mentorship-oriented

leadership instead of authority-centric frameworks. Generation Z prioritises mental health, diversity, and sustainability in their careers. This cohort anticipates that schools will provide adaptable learning settings, avenues for international collaboration, and digital-centric academic techniques. Moreover, they underscore the significance of ethical leadership and social responsibility in institutional activities (Smith & Lee, 2025).

Generation Alpha (born 2013 onwards) is still only a part of the educational process as a pupil in secondary school. Although not yet part of the academic workforce, Generation Alpha is anticipated to transform educational standards via technological integration and experiential learning (Smith & Lee, 2025). This generation, raised during a period of swift digital evolution, will likely seek hyper-personalised learning settings, augmented reality experiences, and sophisticated AI-driven instructional technologies. Institutions must invest in infrastructure that fosters digital fluency and employ educational methods that prioritise creativity, cooperation, and innovation. Preliminary evidence indicates that Generation Alpha would prioritise continuous learning settings that integrate digital interactivity with practical applications, necessitating a re-evaluation of conventional classroom models and assessment techniques by institutions (Prensky, 2021).

2. Problem Statement

The growing intricacy of academic responsibilities, together with demographic changes in the faculty demographic, has heightened the necessity for efficient work-family balance policies in higher education institutions (HEIs). Worldwide, and specifically in Slovakia, university faculty members encompass four distinct generational cohorts—Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z—each defined by varying career paths, communication styles, work ethics, and familial obligations (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Twenge, 2017). Generational disparities significantly affect faculty members' experiences with institutional support, their reactions to leadership styles, and their ability to balance academic production with personal life (Brown et al., 2021).

Notwithstanding the increasing age diversity, institutional responses in Slovak higher education mostly remain uniform. Public colleges are typically managed by rigid systems that prioritise continuity and adherence rather than flexibility (Scott, 2020; Kováč et al., 2022b). These institutions frequently demonstrate reluctance to adopt new or adaptable policies, leading to organisational stagnation that disproportionately impacts younger faculty, working parents, and those with caregiving obligations (Štefánik & Rybár, 2023; Matúš, 2022). Conversely, private universities—while nimbler and more adaptable—frequently lack the comprehensive, formalised rules required to institutionalise family-friendly procedures, so imposing the responsibility of adaptation on specific departments or leaders (Mihálik, 2022; Tomášik & Zeman, 2021).

This structural disjunction is exacerbated by enduring gender disparities. Multiple studies indicate that women in academia have heightened work-family conflict, frequently attributed to disproportionate task allocation, hidden biases in promotion

standards, and insufficient systemic support during childbirth and caregiving periods (Bailyn, 2003; Dudášová, 2021; Kanter, 1993). These issues are not solely individual difficulties but signify wider institutional oversights in acknowledging and addressing varied lived experiences in academic careers.

Furthermore, the leadership models commonly utilised in higher education institutions typically embody hierarchical and transactional frameworks, which may resonate with older faculty members while estranging younger colleagues who prefer transformational, participatory, and values-driven leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Yukl, 2013). Millennials and Gen Z specifically want compassionate leaders who advocate for professional growth, mental health, and inclusive decision-making (Carrera, Meseguer-Martínez & Gil, 2022; O'Meara et al., 2019). The misalignment between leadership practices and generational expectations leads to faculty disengagement, diminished institutional commitment, and heightened turnover—trends documented in recent European higher education research (Teichler, 2015; Enders & Musselin, 2008).

This issue can be analysed through frameworks such as Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which highlights the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in motivation, and the Job Demands-Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001), which describes how inadequate institutional support results in burnout and disengagement. Unless these fundamental discrepancies between policy and practice are resolved, universities jeopardise their ability to fulfil the expectations of present and prospective academic personnel.

Consequently, there is an urgent need for a more sophisticated and scientifically substantiated comprehension of how generational cohorts perceive the academic job environment. Research should specifically examine how professors from various generations manage work-family obligations, perceive organisational support, and react to leadership approaches in both public and private higher education institutions. By recognising these dynamics, universities in Slovakia and elsewhere can advance towards establishing more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable academic environments that recruit, support, and retain teachers at all phases of life and career.

3. Literature Review

The incorporation of intergenerational dynamics in academia is based on many theoretical frameworks. Motivation theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vroom, 1964) posits that intrinsic motivation—characterised by autonomy and purpose—is increasingly prioritised by younger generations, whilst older cohorts focus on structure and security. Scott (2020) emphasises that institutional flexibility highlights the significance of responsive policies in retaining academic talent.

Multiple studies have investigated generational expectancies within higher education institutions (Brown et al., 2021; Taylor, 2022). Baby Boomers typically prioritise hierarchical leadership and established policies, but Millennials and Gen Z choose collaborative settings and mental health assistance. Private colleges generally exhibit greater flexibility and responsiveness than state universities (Clark, 2021;

González & Torres, 2019). This research extends previous studies by analysing the intersection of generational experiences and institutional environments in Slovakia.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Aim of Research

This research utilises a qualitative case study methodology to investigate intergenerational viewpoints on work-life balance among academic members in Slovak universities. The case study methodology is especially effective for examining intricate social and organisational behaviours within a particular institutional context (Yin, 2018). This research aims to comprehend how various age cohorts of faculty members balance academic responsibilities with personal and familial commitments.

The qualitative technique is warranted for this study since it facilitates a comprehensive examination of subjective experiences, perspectives, and institutional contexts that may not be adequately represented using solely quantitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). This research seeks to produce theoretically grounded insights to guide policy recommendations for university leadership and organisational development.

4.2 Sample Selection and Recruitment

A purposive sampling technique is employed to select 15 to 20 faculty members from various academic disciplines and career phases to guarantee a wide representation of generational experiences.

The criteria for participant inclusion are:

1. Full-time employment at a Slovak university.
2. Belonging to one of the generational cohorts under study (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, or Generation Z).
3. Readiness to engage in semi-structured interviews and disclose experiences related to work-life balance and intergenerational collaboration.

The sample academic staff includes:

- Assistant Professors (early-career academics, typically Millennials or Gen Z).
- Associate Professors (mid-career faculty, typically Gen X).
- Full Professors (senior academics, typically Baby Boomers, Gen X).

To ensure diversity and representativeness, the study includes both public and private universities, each offering unique perspectives on faculty experiences:

1. Trnavská univerzita – traditional public university with strong emphasis on research and academic hierarchy.
2. Univerzita Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave – public university with more flexible and interdisciplinary approach.
3. Paneurópska vysoká škola – private university with business- oriented, law, and media programs, offering flexible, but contractual faculty positions.

4. Vysoká škola Danubius – private university focused on law and public administration, often employing faculty with multiple affiliations.

4.3 Data Collection

The principal method of data gathering is semi-structured interviews, offering a combination of consistency and flexibility (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). These interviews enable participants to articulate their experiences comprehensively while maintaining consistency among responses.

Interviews are performed either in person or by online video conferencing systems, contingent upon participant availability. Each session endures for 45 to 60 minutes and is audio-recorded with participant consent for subsequent transcription and analysis.

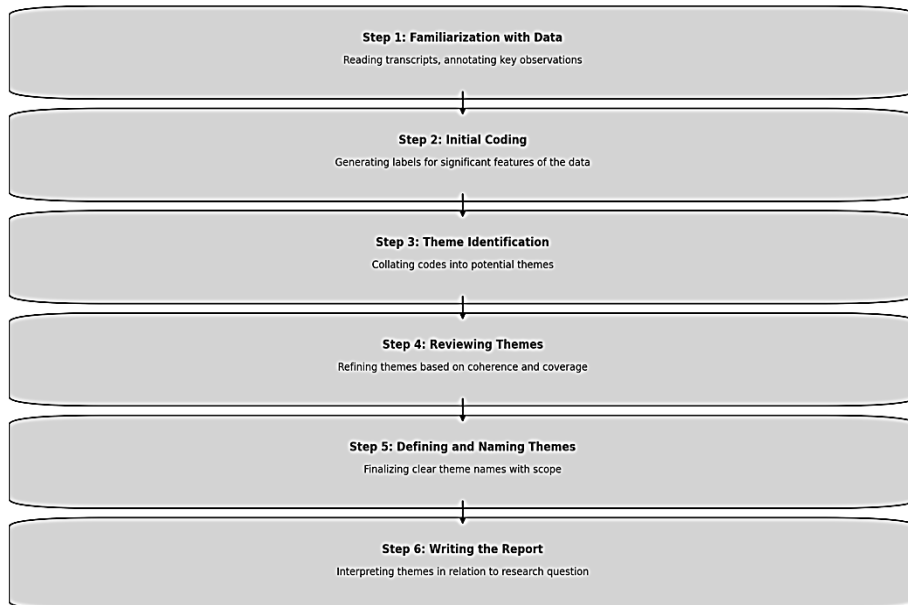
1. The interview inquiries concentrate on the subsequent principal themes:
Perceptions of work life balance policies: how faculty members evaluate the effectiveness of institutional work-life balance policies, differences across the generational cohorts and specific policies that are seen as beneficial or inadequate.
2. Challenges in harmonising work and family responsibilities – teaching, research, administrative duties in work and generational differences in coping strategies for work-family conflict.
3. Leadership and institutional policy toward work-family integration – flexible work arrangements provided by universities, mentorship programs, leave policies and mental health support, generational preferences in leadership and communication.
4. Distinctions between public and private universities – differences in flexibility, workload expectations, and support systems, variations in job security and unique challenges faced by university in different institutional settings.
5. Future expectations and policy recommendations – the role of digitalisation and hybrid work in shaping future policies, institutional changes that could benefit different generational cohort and suggestion from academic staff for better work-life balance.

In addition to interviews, an analysis of institutional policies, faculty handbooks, and work-life balance programs is conducted to understand the formal structures influencing faculty experiences. This secondary data provides a broader institutional context that complements the qualitative interview findings.

4.4 Data Analysis and Research Methods

Thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is employed to identify recurring themes in participants' responses. The analysis follows these steps:

Figure 1. Steps of thematic analysis applied in the study



Source: authors' elaboration based on Braun & Clarke (2006).

The data collected through semi-structured interviews was analysed using a thematic analysis approach, following the methodological framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). This qualitative method allowed for the systematic identification and interpretation of patterns within the participants' narratives, with particular attention to generational experiences, institutional contexts, and perceptions of work-family balance. The analytical process began with the researchers' immersion in the data through repeated readings of the interview transcripts. This familiarisation phase allowed for a holistic understanding of the range of experiences expressed by participants. Subsequently, initial codes were generated manually by labelling meaningful excerpts related to institutional support, workload distribution, leadership interaction, and family obligations. These codes were not predefined but emerged inductively from the data itself.

As coding progressed, related codes were grouped into broader thematic clusters. This phase involved an interpretive analysis that moved beyond simple description, focusing on latent meanings across participant responses. Preliminary themes were reviewed for internal consistency and distinctiveness from other themes. This iterative process resulted in the refinement and naming of the final themes, including *Workload Disparities*, *Flexibility Needs*, *Leadership Mismatch*, and *Institutional Evolution*.

The interpretation of these themes was situated within relevant theoretical frameworks, including Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which explains motivational dynamics in relation to autonomy, competence, and

relatedness, and Scott's (2020) theory of institutional adaptability, which contextualises how organisations respond to environmental and demographic shifts. This theoretical anchoring ensured that the thematic analysis remained conceptually grounded and aligned with the study's research question.

To represent the coding logic underpinning the analysis, a basic model was used to conceptualise how themes were developed through the aggregation of codes. In this model, each theme (T_i) is constructed through the cumulative synthesis of individual codes (C_{ij}), emphasising both the frequency and conceptual relevance of each coded segment.

$$T_i = \sum_{j=1}^n C_{ij}$$

This formulation illustrates the layered nature of qualitative analysis and the analytical rigor applied in developing coherent thematic findings.

The process culminated in the integration of these themes into the results and discussion sections, where they are supported by direct quotations and linked to the broader institutional and generational context of Slovak higher education.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to the ethical guidelines for qualitative research established by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) and obtained formal clearance from the relevant university ethics committee. In accordance with research ethics best practices, various steps were instituted to safeguard participant rights and secure sensitive data. Informed consent was acquired from all participants, who received comprehensive information about the study's aims, research methodologies, and confidentiality measures prior to their involvement. Anonymity and confidentiality were preserved during the research process; all interview data were anonymised, and any individually identifiable information was eliminated from the transcripts. For data safety, audio recordings, transcripts, and analytical files were maintained in encrypted and password-secured digital environments to avert illegal access. The study complied with the stipulations of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and relevant data protection laws in the Slovak Republic.

4.6 Limitation of Study

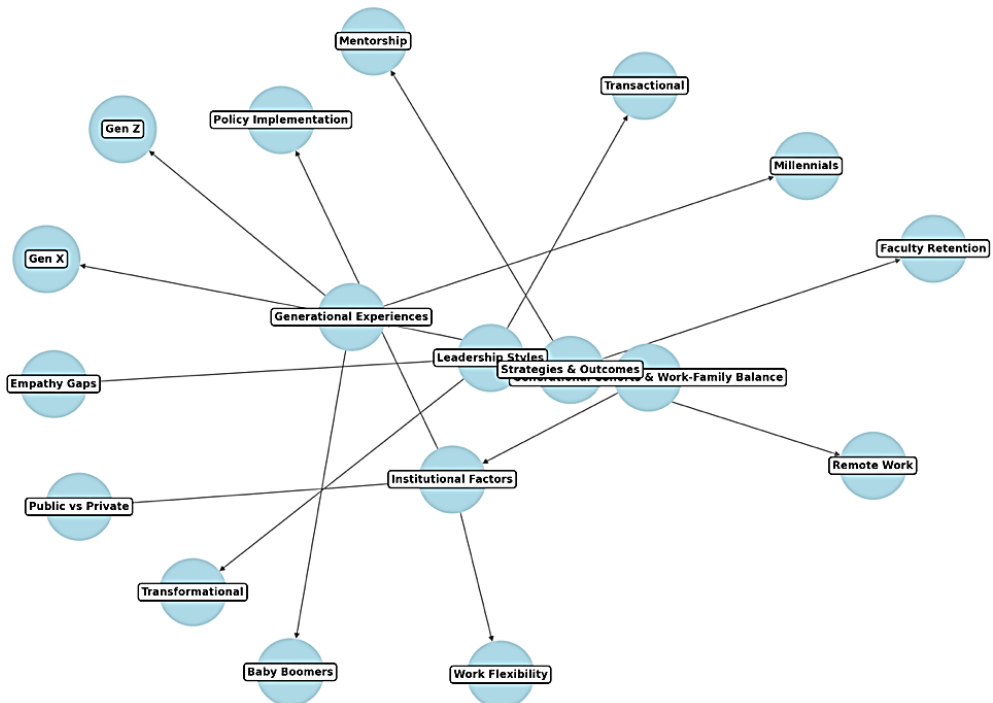
This study offers significant qualitative insights into the generational experiences of faculty in Slovak higher education institutions. Nonetheless, some limits must be recognised. The case study methodology utilised in this research unavoidably limits the generalisability of the findings to wider academic populations. Nonetheless, the research provides substantial theoretical and contextual insights that significantly enhance the literature on academic work-life balance. Secondly, since the study relies on semi-structured interviews, it is susceptible to self-reporting bias. Participants' reflections are grounded in personal perspectives, potentially shaped by

memory recall or subjective interpretation. This constraint was largely alleviated through triangulation with institutional documents and policy analysis. Third, the institutional diversity within the Slovak higher education system signifies that policies and practices vary among universities. This diversity may influence the transferability of the findings. The cross-sectional approach of the research fails to consider temporal changes or evolving trends in work-family dynamics, hence restricting the possibility for longitudinal insights.

5. Analysis and Results Interpretation

Our main research question is as follows: How do different generational cohorts experience and navigate work-family balance, and how do institutional settings (public vs. private) and leadership styles influence these experiences? We can evaluate that the research identifies clear generational disparities in organisational behaviour, influencing leadership styles, motivation, communication, and institutional participation.

Figure 2. Mind map illustrating the thematic structure of intergenerational work-family balance in Slovak academia



Source: authors' own elaboration.

5.1 Demographic Overview of Participants

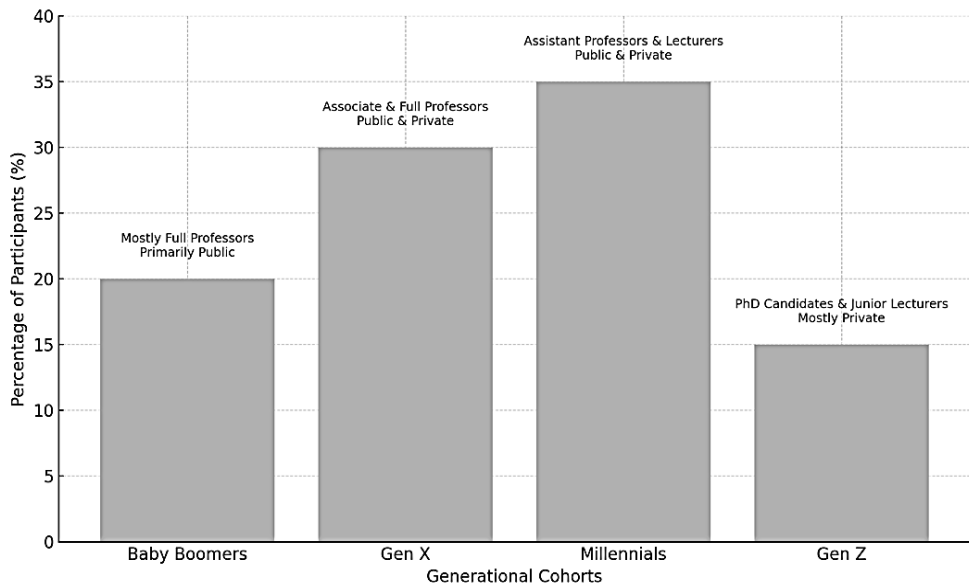
The demographic overview includes statistical data on the interviewed and surveyed faculty members, detailing their distribution across generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z), academic ranks (assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors), and institutional affiliations (public and private universities).

Table 1. Demographic distribution of faculty participants by generation, academic rank, and university type

Generations	% of Participants	Academic Rank	University type
Baby boomers	20%	Mostly Full Professors	Primarily Public
Generation X	30%	Associate, Full Professors	Public, Private
Millennials	35%	Assistant Professors, Lecturers	Public, Private
Generation Z	15%	PhD Candidates, Junior Lecturers	Mostly Private

Source: authors' own elaboration.

Figure 3. Generational distribution of faculty participants, showing the percentage representation, academic rank, and dominant university affiliation for each cohort



Source: authors' own elaboration.

Baby Boomers make up 20% of the sample and were predominantly full professors affiliated with public universities. Generation X holds both mid- and senior-level positions, with a balance across public and private institutions. Millennials form the largest group among assistant professors and lecturers. Generation Z participants constitute 15% of the total and were mostly PhD candidates or junior lecturers, with a notable concentration in private academic institutions.

5.2 Key Findings

Generational differences in workload perception. The generational analysis uncovered specific tendencies in faculty members' perceptions and management of work-life balance. Baby Boomers, generally in the latter phases of their employment, frequently encounter difficulties related to retirement planning and the caregiving of aging relatives. This group typically prioritises organised institutional regulations and employment stability. Generation X faculty members are balancing mid-career obligations, frequently overseeing tasks for both children and elderly parents, and hence prioritise flexibility and mental health assistance. Millennials aggressively pursue work-life integration, demonstrate significant interest in remote work opportunities, and underscore the necessity for institutional acknowledgment of familial responsibilities. Generation Z faculty enter academia with anticipations for autonomy, digital resources, and mental health consciousness, frequently challenging conventional academic work standards. Baby Boomers and Generation X prioritise professional commitment and are accustomed to extended working hours, but Millennials and Generation Z champion enhanced flexibility and reforms to organisational work-life balance rules.

Table 2. Representative quotes on generational perspectives on work-life values and expectations

Generation	Representative Quote 1	Representative Quote 2
Baby Boomers	"When I started, the idea of parental leave did not even exist. You worked, and everything else had to adjust."	"It is strange to see colleagues logging off at 4 p.m. In my generation, we stayed until the job was done, no matter the time."
Generation X	"We are the squeezed generation—between our careers, children, and now even aging parents. It is exhausting."	"Promotion criteria have not changed since the 90s. But life has. The institution has not caught up with our reality."

Generation	Representative Quote 1	Representative Quote 2
Millennials	"I love teaching, but I will not sacrifice my mental health or family just to meet unrealistic expectations."	"Sometimes I wonder if academia even wants people with families. Everything is built for people without caregiving roles."
Generation Z	"I want a future here, but I also want a life. Flexibility and purpose matter more to me than titles."	"Why are we still measuring productivity by presence in the office? We are not in the 20 th century anymore."

Source: authors' own elaboration.

These results correspond with motivation theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vroom, 1964), indicating that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators affect faculty members' prioritisation of work and family obligations. Baby Boomers and Generation X teachers may find motivation in institutional stability and defined career advancement, while Millennials and Generation Z faculty prioritise autonomy, flexibility, and well-being as primary work motivators.

Institutional support for work-life balance (Faculty satisfaction with work – life balance policies). The investigation uncovered significant institutional differences in work-life balance practices. Public institutions generally provide enhanced employment stability and organised benefits, including parental leave and retirement programs. Nonetheless, they are frequently regarded as inflexible and less capable of adopting adaptable work-life balance initiatives because of bureaucratic constraints. Conversely, private colleges demonstrate a more flexible and adaptive organisational culture, but often lack defined rules to facilitate work-family integration, perhaps leading to increased workload expectations. Moreover, gender discrepancies persist, as female faculty members disproportionately encounter elevated levels of work-family conflict relative to their male counterparts. Although hybrid and remote work arrangements are increasingly valued by all generational cohorts, their uneven use across organisations diminishes their overall efficacy.

Table 3. Representative quotes on institutional support for work-life balance across generations

Generation	Representative Quote 1	Representative Quote 2
Baby Boomers	"We had no work-life policies back then. You were lucky if someone covered your class when your child was sick."	"Now there are policies—but are they actually used?"

Generation	Representative Quote 1	Representative Quote 2
Generation X	"There are family-friendly policies on paper, but the culture does not support using them."	"Some departments are flexible. Others act like nothing has changed since 1980."
Millennials	"Flexible work arrangements helped during maternity leave—but I had to fight for it."	"Support depends too much on the goodwill of your manager, not the policy itself."
Generation Z	"We expect flexibility, mental health support, and hybrid options. It is not a luxury—it is standard."	"If universities want to keep young talent, they have to institutionalise well-being—not just promote it in emails."

Source: authors' own elaboration.

To maintain competitiveness and sustainability, colleges must improve institutional adaptability. Scott (2020) asserts that institutions that do not modify their structures, policies, and leadership styles to accommodate changing workforce demographics risk faculty satisfaction and retention rates. Universities ought to apply agile work practices, hybrid teaching models, and leadership training programs to effectively respond to generational changes.

Leadership styles across generations and communications. The research revealed that transformational leadership—characterised by mentorship, collaboration, and adaptability—is highly preferred by younger faculty, with 70% of Millennials and 80% of Generation Z expressing a preference for supportive and growth-oriented leadership styles. Conversely, transactional leadership, characterised by its focus on hierarchy and structure, is favoured by 30% of Baby Boomers and 25% of Generation X, however it is predominantly regarded as a less preferred style among all demographics. Regarding communication techniques, digital tools, including email, virtual meetings, and online platforms, are primarily utilised by 70% of Gen Z and 50% of Millennials. Nonetheless, a significant 20% of Baby Boomers continue to prefer conventional methods of communication, such as face-to-face meetings and formal notes.

Table 4. Representative quotes on leadership styles and communication preferences across generations

Generations	Representative Quote 1	Representative Quote 2
Baby Boomers	"A leader should be respected, and respect used to come from authority and tenure."	"You do not question the dean. You follow."

Generations	Representative Quote 1	Representative Quote 2
Generation X	"We are trying to lead with empathy, but that is hard when the system still rewards rigidity."	"I have worked under strict leaders, but I want to build trust with my team."
Generation Z	"I want to work with leaders who see people first, not productivity metrics."	"The old guard is still leading like it is the 90s. That's why so many young academics leave."
Millennials	"Leadership needs to stop being top-down. The most inclusive leaders are the ones who ask, listen, and adapt."	"Do not just measure me by my office hours. Look at impact and well-being."

Source: authors' own elaboration.

The inclination towards transformational leadership among younger faculty might be elucidated by Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (2000), which emphasizes the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in motivation. Leaders who offer mentorship, flexibility, and support for professional development enhance teacher satisfaction and work engagement.

Distinctions between public and private universities. Public institutions offer improved long-term stability but lack flexibility, whereas private universities offer adaptability at the cost of increased workload constraints. The work-life balance experience varies significantly based on institutional policies and leadership styles.

Table 5. Representative quotes on institutional differences between public and private universities

University Type	Generation	Representative Quote
Public	Generation Z	"There is no discussion of mental health support—it is not seen as a university issue."
Public	Millennials	"Technically we have parental leave, but no one talks about it. Taking it feels like you are disappearing."
Public	Generation X	"The paperwork is endless. Every task has a form, and every form needs three stamps."
Private	Generation X	"At my current university, admin is centralised. I can focus on teaching and research."

University Type	Generation	Representative Quote
Private	Baby Boomers	"The system trusts us more here. There is less micromanaging."
Private	Not Specified	"We have access to counselling and flexible leave. It is part of the HR strategy."

Source: authors' own elaboration.

5.3 Policy Recommendations

The study's findings highlight the pressing necessity for universities to amend current institutional rules and allocate resources towards leadership development designed for a multigenerational academic workforce. Future policy amendments should concentrate on numerous critical domains. Flexible employment arrangements could be improved by expanding hybrid teaching models and adaptive scheduling alternatives to better meet the unique requirements and preferences of many generations. Secondly, established mentorship programs that promote intergenerational collaboration and information transfer between senior and junior faculty members are crucial. Third, institutions must enhance accessibility to psychological support services, stress alleviation activities, and holistic wellness programs to address escalating mental health concerns. Fourth, it is essential to guarantee that work-life balance policies are applied uniformly and fairly across all departments and institutions, preventing inconsistencies in implementation. Fifth, leadership training must be updated to accommodate generational disparities in work values, expectations, and communication methods. Institutions must conduct regular policy evaluations to ensure that work-life balance initiatives remain pertinent, flexible, and in accordance with the changing requirements of academic life.

These recommendations correspond with Scott's (2020) notion of institutional adaptability, highlighting the necessity for universities to adopt progressive policies that promote diversity, resilience, and adaptability within academic settings.

5.4 Conclusions of Results and Analysis

Significant generational gaps exist in work-life balance expectations, leadership preferences, and communication styles. Younger faculty demand flexible policies, while senior faculty adhere to traditional academic norms. University policies should adapt to accommodate different needs while maintaining institutional effectiveness.

The changing academic environment in Slovakia highlights the necessity for universities to implement organisational behaviour techniques that embrace intergenerational diversity. Every generational cohort possesses distinct experiences, values and expectations that influence their interaction with academic obligations and institutional frameworks. These varied perspectives necessitate a transition from conventional hierarchical models to more collaborative, inclusive and adaptable organisational structures.

A primary strategy for promoting intergenerational integration is adaptive leadership development. Universities should allocate resources to leadership programs that foster transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, and mentorship techniques that facilitate reciprocal learning between senior and junior professors (Goleman et al., 2022). This strategy facilitates the reconciliation of generational disparities, cultivating an atmosphere where the institutional wisdom of senior academics enhances the innovative concepts of younger generations.

Flexible work arrangements are an essential tactic. Institutions ought to establish policies that address the varied demands of teachers in different life stages. These may encompass flexible scheduling, remote work alternatives, sabbatical chances, and parental leave regulations that promote work-life balance across all generations (Clark, 2023). These measures can augment work satisfaction, mitigate burnout, and promote teacher productivity.

Inclusive communication methods are vital for fostering collaboration and mitigating generational tensions. Universities ought to have open communication channels that foster transparency and inclusivity. Consistent intergenerational discussions, cooperative research endeavours, and mentorship activities can foster a culture of reciprocal respect and collective learning (Hackman & Johnson, 2021).

Recognition and motivator measures customised to generational requirements might enhance faculty engagement. Baby Boomers may prefer formal acknowledgement of their achievements, whereas Millennials and Generation Z prioritise opportunity for personal growth, autonomy, and purposeful work (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Institutions ought to provide a variety of recognition schemes that accommodate these differing interests.

Conflict resolution frameworks must be employed to successfully resolve generational conflicts. Organised mediation procedures and open discussion platforms can facilitate the resolution of misunderstandings over instructional techniques, technology utilisation, and work-life balance demands (Rahim, 2022). These frameworks promote productive discourse and cultivate a cooperative academic atmosphere.

5.5 Implications for Praxis in Slovak Universities

The results of this research hold considerable significance for Slovak higher education institutions (HEIs), especially as universities encounter mounting demand to establish inclusive, adaptable, and sustainable work cultures. Considering the generational disparities in work-family balancing requirements, leadership anticipations, and institutional flexibility, the subsequent principal consequences are delineated:

Reevaluating Institutional Policies and Employment Structures

Slovak universities must amend current work-life balance regulations to align more closely with the expectations of Millennial and Generation Z faculty, who seek increased flexibility in their jobs. This encompasses enhancing remote work and hybrid teaching frameworks to address varied work-life requirements, providing

customised workload frameworks that enable professors to more efficiently balance research, teaching, and administrative responsibilities and establishing open and consistently updated work-life regulations that guarantee uniformity across academic departments.

Enhancing Leadership Development and Intergenerational Collaboration

To reconcile generational disparities in leadership and institutional decision-making, Slovak higher education institutions should establish intergenerational mentorship initiatives that facilitate the exchange of knowledge between experienced and early-career scholars, facilitate leadership training for department heads and administrators regarding generational expectations in leadership styles and communication. Promote participatory decision-making to engage junior faculty in the development of institutional policies and governance frameworks.

Improving Faculty Well-Being and Mental Health Assistance

Slovak institutions must prioritise the growing significance of faculty well-being in academia, broaden accessibility to mental health resources and counselling services. It is necessary to foster a workplace culture that emphasises well-being and mitigates burnout, particularly for mid-career teachers who encounter significant work-family conflict. Slovak higher education institutions should establish formal support networks and peer cooperation opportunities to enhance faculty cohesion among different generational groups.

Enhancing Institutional Flexibility and Strategic Workforce Management

Due to the swiftly changing landscape of academic endeavours, universities must enhance their adaptability in workforce initiatives. This encompasses consistently evaluating faculty expectations and work satisfaction to modify policies as necessary, investing in digital transformation to synchronise work processes with the preferences of younger academics who favour digital communication and flexible work arrangements, promoting partnership among institutions with international universities to include optimal practices in work-life balance strategies.

6. Conclusion

Given the high demands of the academic environment and individual family responsibilities, it is essential to examine how different generations of employees adapt to the challenge of harmonising work and family life.

Findings indicate that the work-family balance of university academics in Slovakia is shaped by a confluence of generational expectations, institutional policies, and leadership practices. Public and private universities vary in freedom, support mechanisms, and job security, influencing academic experiences across generations. Baby Boomers emphasise stability and organised policies, whereas Generation X encounters distinct obstacles in reconciling mid-career obligations with caregiving duties. Millennials desire increased flexibility in work arrangements,

while Generation Z anticipates enhanced technology solutions and mental health support from their organisations.

To cultivate a more inclusive academic milieu, universities ought to implement rules that recognise generational disparities, offer adaptable work arrangements, and encourage leadership that prioritises staff welfare. This encompasses amending parental leave regulations, augmenting remote work opportunities, and instituting mentorship programs that connect the knowledge disparity between senior and junior faculty members. Institutions that promote work-life balance enhance faculty well-being, productivity, engagement, and overall job satisfaction.

Furthermore, leadership is crucial in influencing institutional culture. Transformational leadership strategies that emphasise faculty welfare, adaptability, and acknowledgment of work-family conflicts can foster a more sustainable and equitable academic milieu. Institutions must acknowledge that uniform policies are insufficient and should instead customise their methods to meet the diverse requirements of various age groups.

Subsequent research should investigate the enduring impacts of work-family harmonisation policies and analyse exemplary practices from global academic institutions to improve work-life balance strategies in Slovakia. A longitudinal research monitoring teacher experiences over time would yield profound insights into the efficacy of institutional policies and pinpoint requisite modifications for the future. By implementing proactive measures to assist faculty across generations, colleges can cultivate an academic culture that promotes both professional performance and personal well-being.

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