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Article

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Article

Sensitive Men and Hardy Women: How Do Millennials, Xennials and Gen X Manage to Work from Home?

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Abstract: Despite the huge number of studies on telework in 2020, the influence of socio-demographic characteristics of workers on their attitudes towards telework continues to raise questions. Researchers agree on some aspects, such as younger individuals being better at absorbing new technologies. However, given that not only those who wanted to but also those who were obliged to switched to teleworking, it appears that younger people may not be as effective at working remotely as previously thought. The relevance of our study is based on the contradictory findings of research conducted during the pandemic. With this article, we contribute to the accumulation of knowledge about the change that takes place in telework. The paper aims to examine the relationship between socio-demographic indicators and the evaluation of telework. Our study confirms that the gender and age of employees are important factors in an employee's attitude to telecommuting. Mostly, the attitudes vary in terms of gender. At least in the case of Lithuania where the research was conducted, Millennial men, unlike other generations and significantly more than Millennial women, see personal career development problems working remotely. Meanwhile, older generations do not declare greater dissatisfaction working remotely, although they do not express much favour for this approach. The results of the study indicate that in the circumstances created by the pandemic, organizations should update their human resource management strategies to achieve employee work efficiency and maintain employee motivation. The practical implication of our study in terms of open innovation is that in the future, the development of virtual working relationships will need to focus not on the technological training of older workers but on the specific provision of feedback to younger workers. In this regard, our insights may be useful for leaders in human resource management and open innovation teams.

Keywords: telecommuting; work from home; Millennials; Xennials; Gen X; work cohort; gender differences; open innovation; COVID-19; Lithuania



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1. Introduction

With the global COVID-19 pandemic, governments have set out to control the spread of the disease through solutions that reduce the number of people in contact with each other. To avoid downtime, organizations made it possible for employees to work from home. In this way, an unprecedented number of workers around the world have switched to telecommuting.

Research on telework before the pandemic had shown that a possibility to work remotely was more positively perceived by employees and had more advantages over a regular office job [1]. In addition, research has shown that younger-age workers are more supportive of smart communication technologies [2,3]. However, the relocation of work has raised concerns about the productivity of those who have not previously worked remotely [4,5]. The interest in telecommuting increased in the context of the challenges of COVID-19. Moreover, the scope of scientific research on telecommuting increased during

the pandemic. To illustrate, Google Scholar provided nearly 1750 papers on various issues of telecommuting within 2019 and as many as 2730 scholar papers until December 2020.

Examining recent studies on telework, life quality issues, e.g., [6–8], and work efficiency, e.g., [9–11], can be highlighted between major challenges. Here, it is worth noting that different terms are common for telecommuting, such as telework, remote work and the like. The choice of a term does not matter as long as it does not change the content of the phenomenon that can be described as “an arrangement between employee and employer wherein the employee works outside of the traditional work environment, such as in working from home” [12]. We use the terms telecommuting, telework and remote work interchangeably in our paper referring to telecommuting (from home) at a time of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Regarding life quality, researchers disagree on the influence of age and gender when teleworking. Studies in different countries give different results. For example, Guangying et al. [13] based on a study in Canada note that the prevalence of telework makes it difficult for women to keep their jobs, although another study reveals that the most difficult telework conditions are for young men [14]. In contrast, Brynjolfsson et al. [15] found that in the USA men were more likely to continue commuting to work while women were more satisfied with the option of working from home. What is more, younger workers preferred telecommuting more often than older ones in general. Other studies in Canada and France have shown that gender differences existed in attitudes to working from home depending on whether respondents had children [16,17]. Presenting research results from Italy, Del Boca et al. [18] underlined the deterioration of women’s quality of life, given the need to balance work and home responsibilities, especially in families with children. Nevertheless, Nagel’s [11] research showed no significant effect of age and gender on telework-related level of satisfaction. Moreover, Bhumica [19] states that the emotional effects of telework on both genders were similar. Thus, although women of childbearing age should theoretically be most dissatisfied with teleworking, there is insufficient evidence in this regard.

It seems that age should be given consideration in reference to telework, however. Previous studies in human resources management highlighted younger generations’ ability to adapt better to working in a technology-filled environment [20,21]. Some current studies also indicate a person’s age as a key factor for excellence in telecommuting [15]. Even in this respect the current situation is ambiguous as there is evidence to the contrary. Stanojević and Radanov [22] discovered that, although the younger generation is well versed in technology-based communication, it is more difficult for them to complete tasks on their own compared to working face-to-face. In other words, the ability to communicate remotely does not in itself create higher productivity.

The relevance of our study is supported by the observation that results of investigations on how working from home has affected different generations and genders are contradictory. Scientists still have no evidence-based answer on how employees’ experience is affected by telework. Such knowledge is important for employers and managers who care about work efficiency, and employee motivation and well-being overall.

The current pandemic with global telecommuting makes it easier than ever to gather evidence on how telework is perceived by different genders. Thus, our research aims to contribute to the accumulation of knowledge about the phenomenon of telework in the context of generations and genders.

In the article, we present a study conducted in Lithuania. After interviewing 436 respondents, we describe the differences in employees’ attitudes towards telework.

Lithuania, according to statistics, is one of the European countries with the smallest number of employees who worked remotely before the pandemic (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20200424-1>, accessed on 13 January 2021). For this reason, the global transition to telework in the country can be seen as a large-scale social innovation. In this respect, investigations of the range of telework in Lithuania

and similar countries where the practice of telework has not been widespread so far are promising in terms of originality of insights.

2. Premise of Differences in Attitudes towards Telework: Generation, Gender and Education

Employee distribution across different age groups makes it possible to predict the approach to work and thus save time in planning the measures for employee motivation, facilitate the task of choosing rewards and leadership strategy [23–28]. Organizations should therefore take generational differences and eventual different attitudes to work of their staff into consideration.

Generations consist of different birth cohorts who share the same and unique understanding due to their shared experience in a similar socio-historical context that they were born and lived in [23]. According to Van Rossem [24], different motivators are assessed differently depending on birth cohorts or cultural generations. For instance, Baby Boomers (born 1943–1963) perceive social contacts as a key source of work motivation, whereas Generation X (hereafter Gen X, born 1964–1976) highly values training and autonomy. The next big generation—Millennials (born 1983–2003) value career development possibilities and training [25]. Lastly, Xennials (born 1977–1982) is a micro generation between Gen X and Millennials. According to studies, Xennials have characteristics of both Gen X and Millennials [26].

The differences between bordering cohorts are not very noticeable. For instance, Baby Boomers and Gen X have more similar attitudes to work [27–29]. Both Baby Boomers and Gen X value the social atmosphere and display a strong relationship with their job commitment and willingness to quit [25,29]. Consequently, Baby Boomers prefer and feel more comfortable in face-to-face communication instead of computer-mediated communication when compared to Millennials who could be viewed through a lens of high technology use—they were the first ones to enter the information age in its peak [30,31]. Therefore, it can be presumed that Baby Boomers and to some extent Gen X view remote work or telework as an unproductive work environment [21].

Older cohorts have stronger orientation towards hard work; long and strict working hours have a direct connection to their career success [21,32]. Millennials who currently make up one half of the workforce, on the other hand, are looking for variety in the job content, they have lower need for social approval and particularly value their personal time, flexibility and work–life balance; hard work does not correlate with professional success of Millennials [21,24,25,32,33]. Flexibility and work–life balance first became acknowledged between Gen X as the most desirable work benefits, and it gradually became an everyday reality for the Millennials [34]. Millennials prefer working from home over traditional ways of working; they are able to quickly embrace new ideas and methods; however, high self-esteem, technology overuse and hedonistic values are the negatives that could lead to lack of empathy for others and inability to deal with criticism [21,34].

Job entitlement, material and intrinsic work rewards have different value for different generations. Results of a longitudinal study in North America conducted by Krahn and Galambos [35] indicate that extrinsic work rewards value is increasing between Millennials when compared to Gen X. Similar results were found by Lub et al. [25]. However, they indicate that extrinsic work rewards are more of a hygiene factor than a predictor of commitment for the youth. Millennials were also more likely to expect reward regardless of performance; they had a stronger sense of job entitlement [35]. In general, Millennials may have a “work to live” mindset, while Gen X may have more of a “live to work” lifestyle [36]. However, as pointed out by Krahn and Galambos [35], most differences between work values of Gen X and Millennials are relatively small.

Specific leadership behaviours and attributes are more valued within certain generations than others. Applying different management practices to different generations could lead to higher performance of employees [21,37]. Big-picture orientation is more valued by older generations, whilst Millennials highly value day-to-day focus instead, as well as such leadership attributes as inclusiveness, optimism, dedication, and frequent

feedback [21,34,37]. Due to the historical reasons, Baby Boomers dislike authoritarian management styles; they seek respect and status, while Gen X also challenges authorities, but, more specifically, Xennials seek to work with mentoring and coaching leaders [27]. It is a characteristic situation when the older generations cannot easily become the authority to the Millennials. Burke [38] found that, in companies, conflicts between the younger generation and older colleagues, as well as disagreements between younger employees and older managers, are common. Different approaches to work ethic and life values are the reasons for this.

As can be seen, most of the authors state that clear generational differences allow reasonable social categorization in terms of employees representing different age groups. Meanwhile, the most recent authors have doubts on whether the categorization of workers by generations is reliable in all cases. Cort and Zacher [39] argue that in terms of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on working people of different ages, their study did not confirm the appropriateness of applying the concept of “generation”; therefore, seeking clarification of how the current pandemic will affect workers’ careers, the concept of generations should be avoided and alternative theoretical frameworks for the phenomenon should be considered to better capture age-related patterns. Nevertheless, while the new categorization awaits its future, we have raised the following research question based on results of review of the literature:

RQ1: Are there differences between the generations when comparing employees’ attitudes to telework?

Regarding the telework effect on gender, the results from various studies are ambiguous. Researchers note that the situation of young women is the most difficult in the entire teleworker population and is also difficult than that of men of a similar age [19,40–44], while some other studies provide different evidence [15]. Overall, within the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, gender issues [45,46] and gender driven work–life balance [47] have become particularly acute. More empirically-based studies are required to understand if the attitudes toward telework are also determined by gender itself, not only by circumstances and environment such as children and societal culture.

In turn, we assume that the generational aspect may be an important factor to consider when explaining the differences in telework evaluation between men and women. It is possible that men and women of younger generations may have more different attitudes towards telework. Logically, given their age, younger generations may experience more challenges because of their young children growing and intensive career development which creates a base from which emerge different work attitudes between men and women. In this regard, we raised the next research question:

RQ2: Are there gender driven differences in employees’ attitudes towards telework?

Finally, education is found to be an important determinant of telework efficiency in the scientific literature. For instance, the study of Elldér [48] conducted in Sweden before the pandemic has demonstrated that higher education greatly increased the likelihood of being eligible for telework. The study has also showed that higher education creates more opportunities to telework. With their research, Vilhelmson and Thulin [49] have also revealed that better educated employees are increasingly more engaged in telework. Similarly, López-Igual, and Rodríguez-Modroño [50] analysed the pre-pandemic telework situation in the European Union and found a positive relation between telework and high levels of education, indicating that higher education significantly increased the probability of teleworking. Hence, we presumed that higher educated employees are better prepared and more motivated for telework; therefore, we put forward the following research question:

RQ3: Do employees’ attitudes towards telework depend on their education?

Furthermore, we decided to expand our study by analysing the effect of education in terms of different generations. We were wondering whether there are differences in telework evaluation among Baby Boomers, Gen X, Xennials, and Millennials with different levels of education.

Finally, to realize the research questions discussed previously, we formed a research scheme of our study (Figure 1).

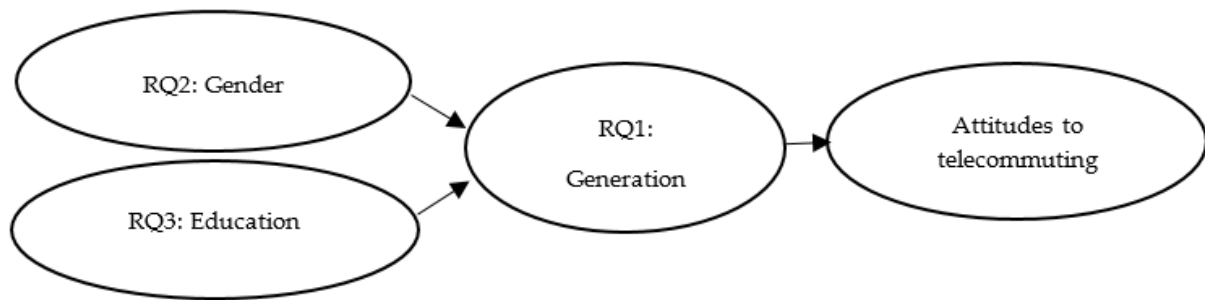


Figure 1. Scheme of the research.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Participants and Procedure

The participants of this study were Lithuanian remote workers. Data were collected via web-based survey which took approximately 15 min on average to complete. In the survey, the participants reported the advantages and disadvantages of telecommuting, as well as required qualities for remote work. Participation was voluntary as the survey reached the target audience through social media channels. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Data collection took place from 30 March to 15 April 2020. The data collected were stored in data files and later downloaded into SPSS statistical software for analysis.

In total 436 respondents participated in this study. The sample of respondents was based on simple random sampling. A total of 67.4% of the participants were women and 32.6% men. There were 4 generations: 3% Baby Boomers, 17% Gen X, 16% Xennials, and 64% Millennials. In terms of education, about 21.6 % of the respondents were secondary school graduates, 38.3% had a bachelor’s degree, 34.2% had a master’s degree, and 6 % had a PhD degree. Most of the participants worked in the field of services and intellectual outputs, 7.6% worked in the sector of production and trade, 23.6% of the participants worked in the field of management and administration, and 11.7% in the sector of health, education, and social services (Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Variable		N	%
Gender	Female	294	67.4
	Male	142	32.6
Generation	Baby Boomers (1943–1963)	13	3
	Gen X (1964–1976)	74	17
	Xennials (1977–1982)	70	16
	Millennials (1983–2003)	249	64
Education	Secondary school	94	21.6
	Bachelor’s degree	167	38.3
	Master’s degree	149	34.2
	Doctor degree	26	6
Field of activity	Services and intellectual outputs	198	45.4
	Production and trade	33	7.6
	Management and administration	103	23.6
	Health, education and social services	51	11.7
	Other	51	11.7
Total		436	100

Source: the authors’ calculation.

3.2. Instruments

The research questionnaire was based on the theoretical analysis of teleworking. The questionnaire consisted of 3 scales: advantages and disadvantages of teleworking within the period of the pandemic, and an individual's needed qualities for telecommuting.

The teleworking advantages scale consisted of 9 items (e.g., "Possibility to choose worktime", "Time saved on commuting"). It aimed to research the respondents' attitude to benefits of telecommuting. All items were positively worded and rated using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Not important at all) to 5 (Absolutely essential). Higher scores indicated a greater importance of the factors. The reliability coefficient Cronbach α of the scale was 0.791.

Teleworking disadvantages scale consisted of 29 items (e.g., "Lack of face-to-face interaction with the manager", "Lack of team spirit, the feeling of "we""). The scale aimed to measure the factors negatively affecting efficiency of teleworking. All items were negatively worded and rated using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Not important at all) to 5 (Absolutely essential). Higher scores represented a higher level of negative evaluation of the factors negatively affecting telework efficiency. The reliability coefficient Cronbach α of the scale was 0.946.

The needed qualities for teleworking were measured with 7-items scale (e.g., "Strong personal responsibility for one's work", "Ability to engage and maintain commitment to the organization"). All items were positively worded and rated using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Not important at all) to 5 (Absolutely essential). Higher scores represented a higher importance of required quality for telework. The reliability coefficient Cronbach α of the scale was 0.798.

Participants were also asked to provide socio-demographic information: their age, gender, education, and a field of activity. Furthermore, there were questions about their telecommuting experience.

3.3. Methods of Data Analysis

To examine the differences in the evaluation of teleworking advantages, disadvantages and required qualities between the genders of different generations, we used the Mann–Whitney U test. This test is used to compare differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is either ordinal or continuous, but not normally distributed. To examine the differences of teleworking evaluation among generations with different teleworking experience, we used the Kruskal–Wallis test together with the Bonferroni correction. The Kruskal–Wallis test is the non-parametric equivalent to one-way ANOVA. We performed a Dunn–Bonferroni post hoc analysis to see which pairs of groups differ significantly. The same method was applied checking for the differences among groups of education and field of activity of different generations. The Bonferroni correction is a multiple-comparison correction used when several dependent or independent statistical tests are being performed simultaneously.

4. Results

To begin with, we examined how the evaluation of teleworking differs among generations with different teleworking experience. Firstly, we examined the differences among generations which had telecommuting experience only during quarantine (Table 2). It appeared that Millennials value more the possibility to choose workplace when telecommuting in comparison with Xennials. Furthermore, GenX give more importance to the lack of inspirational work atmosphere and challenges related to self-organization as well as the following of a work routine, as compared with Xennials. Interestingly, in comparison with Xennials, Millennials reported decreased co-worker's responsibility for joint results when telecommuting. The test results also showed that Millennials value the ability to work independently more when compared to Baby Boomers. Moreover, Millennials and Xennials gives more value to good time management skills in comparison with Baby Boomers.

Table 2. The evaluation of teleworking among generations which were telecommuting only during the quarantine.

Construct	Generation	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Possibility to choose workplace	Baby Boomers	3	31.00	10,148	0.017
	Gen X	18	63.36		
	Xennials	14	42.11		
	Millennials	94	69.81		
Lack of inspirational work atmosphere	Baby Boomers	3	60.33	9145	0.027
	Gen X	18	87.17		
	Xennials	14	50.75		
	Millennials	94	63.03		
Challenges related to self-organization and following of work routine	Baby Boomers	3	99.67	10,144	0.017
	Gen X	18	85.61		
	Xennials	14	58.07		
	Millennials	94	60.98		
Decreased co-workers' responsibility for joint results	Baby Boomers	3	93.33	13,291	0.004
	Gen X	18	67.00		
	Xennials	14	33.18		
	Millennials	94	68.45		
Ability to work independently	Baby Boomers	3	12.17	12,419	0.006
	Gen X	18	51.78		
	Xennials	14	65.86		
	Millennials	94	69.09		
Good time management skills	Baby Boomers	3	18.83	11,129	0.011
	Gen X	18	49.78		
	Xennials	14	76.07		
	Millennials	94	67.74		

Source: the authors' calculation.

We also found significant differences in the evaluation of teleworking among generations which were telecommuting for several weeks. Firstly, the test results revealed that Baby Boomers and Gen X feel more of a lack of face-to-face interaction with colleagues, constrains on the possibilities to build mutual trust and a lack of team spirit when compared to Millennials. Furthermore, we found that GenX feel more blurred boundaries between work and personal life; they feel that others finish their tasks and enjoy life at home while they continue working all the time, and experience more self-motivation-related challenges in comparison with Millennials. What is more, GenX feels more concerned that important information when telecommuting could be missed when compared to Xennials. Finally, we also found that Millennials give more importance to the ability to engage and maintain commitment to the organization when teleworking as compared to Baby Boomers and GenX (Table 3).

Table 3. The evaluation of teleworking among generations which were telecommuting for several weeks.

Construct	Generation	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Lack of face-to-face interaction with colleagues	Baby Boomers	5	103.90	8585	0.035
	Gen X	25	85.14		
	Xennials	27	70.59		
	Millennials	84	64.96		
Constraints on the possibilities to build mutual trust	Baby Boomers	5	104.00	8912	0.030
	Gen X	25	84.02		
	Xennials	27	73.78		
	Millennials	84	64.27		

Table 3. *Cont.*

Construct	Generation	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Lack of team spirit, the “we” feeling	Baby Boomers	5	105.50	10,003	0.019
	Gen X	25	87.32		
	Xennials	27	67.22		
	Millennials	84	65.30		
Blurred boundaries between work and personal life	Baby Boomers	5	95.6	20,918	0.000
	Gen X	25	99.02		
	Xennials	27	74.06		
	Millennials	84	60.21		
Being under the impression that other people finish their tasks and enjoy life at home while I continue working all the time	Baby Boomers	5	94.40	13,869	0.003
	Gen X	25	93.86		
	Xennials	27	72.11		
	Millennials	84	62.45		
Feeling concerned that important information evades me, that I miss something	Baby Boomers	5	80.50	8672	0.034
	Gen X	25	90.12		
	Xennials	27	59.72		
	Millennials	84	68.37		
Self-motivation-related challenges	Baby Boomers	5	92.70	9213	0.027
	Gen X	25	89.52		
	Xennials	27	70.09		
	Millennials	84	64.49		
Ability to engage and maintain commitment to the organization	Baby Boomers	5	106.80	9077	0.028
	Gen X	25	82.40		
	Xennials	27	70.83		
	Millennials	84	65.53		

Source: the authors’ calculation.

A Dunn–Bonferroni post hoc method following a significant Kruskal–Wallis test was also performed to explore the differences among generations with teleworking experience of less than 1 year and those with 1–3 years’ experience. However, the test results were not significant ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the evaluation of teleworking among different generations did not differ among participants with less than 1 year and 1–3 years of teleworking experience. Furthermore, we examined the differences among the generations with more than 3 years of telecommuting experience. It appeared that Baby Boomers were working longer overtime due to the manager’s inability to estimate workload when compared to Millennials. We also found that Xennials feel more doubts about the manager’s evaluation and career restrictions due to limited possibilities to demonstrate exceptional skills or extraordinary work results in comparison with Millennials. Furthermore, Baby Boomers feel more difficulties when identifying the start and the end of several simultaneously implemented tasks when compared to Millennials (Table 4).

Table 4. The evaluation of teleworking among generations which have more than 3 years of telecommuting experience.

Construct	Generation	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Working overtime due to the manager’s inability to estimate workload	Baby Boomers	4	43.25	8402	0.038
	Gen X	17	24.71		
	Xennials	12	33.75		
	Millennials	21	23.19		
Doubts regarding evaluation: will the managers notice and adequately appreciate my results	Baby Boomers	4	38.38	11,268	0.010
	Gen X	17	25.47		
	Xennials	12	37.58		
	Millennials	21	21.31		

Table 4. *Cont.*

Construct	Generation	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Career restrictions due to limited possibilities to demonstrate exceptional skills or extraordinary work results	Baby Boomers	4	35.25	8461	0.037
	Gen X	17	27.03		
	Xennials	12	36.38		
	Millennials	21	21.33		
Difficulties in identifying start and end of several simultaneously implemented tasks	Baby Boomers	4	45.75	8861	0.031
	Gen X	17	29.71		
	Xennials	12	27.38		
	Millennials	21	22.31		

Source: the authors' calculation.

Next, we aimed to examine whether the evaluation of teleworking differs between the genders of different generations. As can be seen in Table 5, we found that Baby Boomer women emphasize the ability to engage and maintain commitment to the organization when telecommuting when compared to Baby Boomer men.

Table 5. The evaluation of teleworking between Baby Boomers men and women.

Ability to engage and maintain commitment to the organization	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Mann–Whitney U	p
	Male	4	3.50		
Female	9	8.56	4000	0.022	

Source: the authors' calculation.

The test also revealed (Table 6) that Gen X women value the possibility to better keep up with the selected wellness program more than Gen X men when working remotely.

Table 6. The evaluation of teleworking between Gen X men and women.

Possibility to better keep up with the selected wellness program	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Mann–Whitney U	p
	Male	22	21.73		
Female	52	41.63	357,000	0.008	

Source: the authors' calculation.

What is more, Xennial men feel more difficulties in identifying the start and the end of several simultaneously implemented tasks than Xennial women. Moreover, Xennial women give more importance to good time management skills and strong personal responsibility for one's work when teleworking than Xennial men (Table 7).

Table 7. The evaluation of teleworking between Xennial men and women.

Construct	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Mann–Whitney U	p
Difficulties in identifying start and end of several simultaneously implemented tasks	Male	16	45.50	272,000	0.022
	Female	54	32.54		
Good time management skills	Male	16	24.91	262,500	0.005
	Female	54	38.64		
Strong personal responsibility for one's work	Male	16	28.38	318,000	0.049
	Female	54	37.61		

Source: the authors' calculation.

The test results revealed that there are many differences in teleworking evaluation between Millennial men and women. Firstly, in terms of teleworking benefits, Millennial women tend to value the possibility to choose their workplace and the possibility to balance work and personal life more than Millennial men. Regarding the negative aspects of teleworking, Millennial men tend to emphasize the disadvantages of telecommuting more than Millennial women. Millennial men feel, compared to women, the lack of mutual

trust between employees and their managers more, the lack of team spirit and the lack of feedback. What is more, Millennial men feel more distractions by other household members, increased challenges related to self-organization and following of the work routine when teleworking in comparison with women. Furthermore, men experience more doubts regarding the manager’s evaluation, career restrictions due to limited possibilities to demonstrate exceptional skills or extraordinary work results, and exaggerated expectations of the manager/employer, without taking into consideration the actual workload compared to women. Moreover, men tend to emphasize these teleworking disadvantages: information overloads, concerns that they could miss important information, tensions due to the distribution of attention between work tasks and intense communication, difficulties in identifying the start and end of several simultaneously implemented tasks and self-motivation-related challenges. In terms of required skills for teleworking, women tend to give more importance to the ability to work independently and maintain commitment to the organization than men. Finally, Millennial women give more importance to good time management and communication skills, as well as personal leadership (Table 8).

Table 8. The evaluation of teleworking between Millennial men and women.

Construct	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Mann–Whitney U	p
Possibility to choose workplace	Male	100	127.09	7,659,000	0.035
	Female	179	147.21		
Possibility to balance work and personal life	Male	100	126.67	7,617,000	0.028
	Female	179	147.45		
Lack of mutual trust between employees and their managers	Male	100	154.07	7,543,000	0.023
	Female	179	132.14		
Lack of team spirit, the “we” feeling	Male	100	157.29	7,221,000	0.006
	Female	179	130.34		
Exaggerated expectations of the manager/employer, without taking into consideration the actual workload	Male	100	152.50	7,700,500	0.048
	Female	179	133.02		
Lack of feedback	Male	100	155.69	7,381,500	0.013
	Female	179	131.24		
Distractions when teleworking by other household members	Male	100	153.71	7,579,500	0.030
	Female	179	132.34		
Lack of inspirational work atmosphere	Male	100	156.23	7,327,500	0.009
	Female	179	130.94		
Challenges related to self-organization and following of work routine	Male	100	158.44	7,106,000	0.003
	Female	179	129.70		
Feeling concerned that important information evades me, that I miss something	Male	100	157.01	7,249,500	0.007
	Female	179	130.50		
Doubts regarding evaluation: will the managers notice and adequately appreciate my results	Male	100	160.45	6,905,000	0.001
	Female	179	128.58		
Career restrictions due to limited possibilities to demonstrate exceptional skills or extraordinary work results	Male	100	159.50	7,000,000	0.002
	Female	179	129.11		
Information overloads	Male	100	156.12	7,338,500	0.011
	Female	179	131.00		
Tensions due to the distribution of attention between work tasks and intense communication	Male	100	157.67	7,183,500	0.005
	Female	179	130.13		
Difficulties in identifying start and end of several simultaneously implemented tasks	Male	100	152.99	7,651,500	0.039
	Female	179	132.75		
Self-motivation-related challenges	Male	100	155.87	7,363,000	0.011
	Female	179	131.13		
Ability to work independently	Male	100	127.53	7,703,000	0.019
	Female	179	146.97		
Good time management skills	Male	100	120.42	699,150	0.001
	Female	179	150.94		

Table 8. *Cont.*

Construct	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Mann–Whitney U	p
Personal leadership	Male	100	127.64	7,714,000	0.043
	Female	179	146.91		
Good communication skills	Male	100	119.40	688,950	0.001
	Female	179	151.51		
Ability to engage and maintain commitment to the organization	Male	100	125.67	7,517,000	0.015
	Female	179	148.01		

Source: the authors’ calculation.

Furthermore, we examined the evaluation of teleworking among the groups of education in different generations. In each generation, there were some specific differences; however, after analysing all the results of the survey, we noticed a general trend: the higher the level of education of a person, the more favourably one values the possibility to work from a remote workplace and understands the qualities required for telework better (Table 9).

Table 9. The evaluation of teleworking among the different groups of education.

Construct	Education	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Gen X					
Doubts regarding evaluation: will the managers notice and adequately appreciate my results	Secondary school	14	34.14	8035	0.45
	Bachelor’s degree	22	36.52		
	Master’s degree	28	44.82		
	Doctor degree	10	23.85		
Decreased co-workers’ responsibility for the joint results	Secondary school	14	40.46	7998	0.046
	Bachelor’s degree	22	41.02		
	Master’s degree	28	39.46		
	Doctor degree	10	20.10		
Extended on-line meetings	Secondary school	14	38.39	8996	0.030
	Bachelor’s degree	22	41.98		
	Master’s degree	28	40.04		
	Doctor degree	10	19.30		
Xennials					
Good time management skills	Secondary school	7	21.36	8794	0.032
	Bachelor’s degree	19	32.45		
	Master’s degree	39	37.86		
	Doctor degree	5	48.50		
Millennials					
Complicated access to work related information	Secondary school	69	115.92	9515	0.023
	Bachelor’s degree	124	146.92		
	Master’s degree	76	152.43		
	Doctor degree	10	125.95		
Ability to work independently	Secondary school	69	104.84	26,220	0.000
	Bachelor’s degree	124	154.19		
	Master’s degree	76	147.99		
	Doctor degree	10	146.00		
Good time management skills	Secondary school	69	110.67	16,605	0.001
	Bachelor’s degree	124	154.44		
	Master’s degree	76	141.89		
	Doctor degree	10	149.00		

Table 9. *Cont.*

Construct	Education	N	Mean Rank	χ^2	p
Personal leadership	Secondary school	69	116.04	12,546	0.006
	Bachelor’s degree	124	147.96		
	Master’s degree	76	153.31		
	Doctor degree	10	105.40		
Digital literacy	Secondary school	69	106.65	20,453	0.000
	Bachelor’s degree	124	152.36		
	Master’s degree	76	153.51		
	Doctor degree	10	114.10		
Ability to engage and maintain commitment to the organization	Secondary school	69	117.33	8752	0.033
	Bachelor’s degree	124	148.80		
	Master’s degree	76	145.49		
	Doctor degree	10	145.60		
Strong personal responsibility for one’s work	Secondary school	69	106.99	23,418	0.000
	Bachelor’s degree	124	147.26		
	Master’s degree	76	153.23		
	Doctor degree	10	177.15		

Source: the authors’ calculation.

According to our study, employees with higher education are also more satisfied with the feedback from the manager and the opportunity to make independent decisions about performance in comparison with less educated individuals. In addition, better educated individuals value personal leadership, have higher commitment to the organization, and more often feel strong personal responsibility for personal work.

5. Discussion: Socio-Demographic Characteristics, Telework, and Open Innovation

5.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Employees Attitudes on Telework

The study brought out that it is common for all generations to perceive their personal work as an exceptional contribution to organizational performance, as well as to emphasize external factors in their work and life situation. These factors vary from generation to generation. Baby Boomers highlighted the disproportionate increase in workloads while working remotely. In their view, managers did not take responsibility for the unbalanced workload of employees. Gen X also claimed that their workload has increased, and work has significantly interfered with personal life. However, while Gen X did not hold executives specifically responsible for their workload, this generation also found reproaches in terms of management: when working from home, Gen X reported a lack of information, recognition, and communication.

Xennials mostly felt committed to the job, but underestimated their executives, and highlighted the deteriorating career opportunities as a result. The Millennials, meanwhile, turned their attention to co-workers. Being the most satisfied of all generations with telecommuting and their ability to do their jobs, Millennials missed the contribution of co-workers to the results of joint work. In other words, the study revealed that attitudes towards personal relationships with managers and co-workers change depending on the generation. The older generation attached more importance to managers and the organization management characteristics, while the younger generation perceived the organization as a combination of co-workers. However, this generation, like others, tend to look outside for the causes of the work challenges they faced. Thus, according to our study, the approach to telecommuting varies between generations but has similarities within each one.

Analysing telework from a gender perspective, we found that the attitudes of men and women in all the generations, except for Millennials, differ with only rare aspects. What is common for all generations, is that women placed more emphasis on personal

responsibility and teleworking skills than men. Moreover, women were more likely to value telework because of the possibility to balance work and personal needs better.

However, significant gender differences emerged within the Millennial generation. When working from home, Millennial men lacked inspiring team spirit, feedback, and recognition from their managers. In addition, Millennial men felt more distracted by the household than women, they faced more challenges in maintaining self-organization and work routine and found it difficult to find sources for self-motivation.

Millennial men were more likely to complain about an overabundance of job information and highlight the difficulties in doing the job due to the requirement to communicate with the team in the virtual environment and focus on their work simultaneously. Millennial men seemed to ignore the importance of abilities and skills required for telecommuting. Millennial women emphasized work engagement, effective time management and the ability to work individually. Women also emphasized self-leadership and commitment to work as important factors. Overall, Millennial women appreciated the opportunity to choose telecommuting and combine work and personal environments more than men.

Discussing the contribution to studies of telework, as well as generational and gender issues, the limitations of our research need to be considered. The researched sample was relatively small, and the study population was quite homogeneous. The most significant limitation was extremely low number of Baby Boomers in the sample; thus, we can only give assumptions about this generation without solid conclusions. For the other generations in our case, the sample is appropriate for sound insights because the research was conducted in a small country with little intercultural diversity. However, in high-population countries with specific societal relationships and high intercultural diversity, the picture of generations in the context of telecommuting may be different.

5.2. Links between Employees' Attitudes to Telework and Organizations' Potential to Develop Open Innovations

The findings of our study are meaningful in terms of open innovations. The shift of workers to working from home has led to a significant outcome: many professionals in the labour market have developed new work and communication skills at an enormous pace and scale, thus increasing their professional competitiveness locally, nationally, and some even globally.

New self-organization and interaction skills at work (e.g., communication, collaboration, the ability to deliver results online, etc.) and personal life (e.g., the ability to purchase and consume products and services on digital platforms) acquired by individuals during the pandemic have matured the global market for great change. This change is a leap towards higher quality virtual collaboration and better conditions for open innovation. After the pandemic, organizations can be expected to be much less constrained by a limited choice of partners. Engaging in open innovation will be easier than in the pre-pandemic period, when implementing open innovation and co-working in cyberspace was a challenge for many individuals and organizations that required additional time and human resources.

In terms of open innovation in the post-pandemic period, emphasis is placed on knowledge of current human resource management issues. As noted by Zubielqui, Fryges and Jones, "innovativeness does not translate into improved firm performance in firms that attach low importance to modern HRM practices" [51]. Either way, all innovation is born by people and for people, so human resource management and open innovation have strong links [52].

Our study reveals that telecommuting and the ability to communicate and collaborate online is not a privilege for young people—employees of the Baby Boomers and Gen X generations are generally positive about the ability to combine independent work and work in a virtual team. Moreover, as said earlier, the Millennial generation, more specifically—Millennial men, have more doubts and negative attitudes towards telework than their older counterparts and even women of the same Millennial generation. The instrumental implication of our study in terms of open innovation is that the development of virtual

working relationships in the future will need to focus not on the technological training of older workers but on the specific provision of feedback to younger workers. Millennials' complicated relationship with the real world is confirmed by other studies as well. For instance, a study by Saura, Debasa and Reyes-Menendez [53] found that Millennials function more successfully in the virtual world than in the real world: they manage well in an imaginary world and look beautiful to themselves (demonstrating their body, healthy living habits, and positivity in digital social platforms), but in the real world, they often experience loneliness, depression, relationship problems, addiction to IT use, etc. It might seem that the findings of our study and the study of Saura, Debasa and Reyes-Menendez [53] contradict each other. However, this is not the case—our study, in the context of the aforementioned one, only proves that it is not possible to equate the ability to use technology for personal purposes with the ability to collaborate and create the result of work.

The results of our research can also be applied conceptually when implementing open innovations, i.e., moving to adjacent areas such as digital marketing, digitalization of services, personalization of products, etc. Knowledge of population attitudes, preferences and behaviour is a key for open innovation in marketing [54]. Our research provides a lot about individuals' attitudes, self-awareness, preferred lifestyle, and work style. Our study enables innovation developers to refresh their understanding of the similarities and differences between the attitudes of individuals of different generations and genders and consider our studies' highlights when developing open innovations, such as digital marketing strategies.

We would like to pay special attention to gender differences. In the case of our study, we did not find that attitudes towards telework were similar between genders in the Millennial generation. What is more, this contradicts various research that argues that productivity and innovation initiatives in organizations are more prevalent among men than women [55]. Our study provides evidence that changes in traditional working conditions, i.e., when employees are working from home, the situation reverses—men start to worry about their productivity and achievements. This aspect should be considered by leaders in human resource management and open innovation teams.

6. Conclusions

The study revealed that employees' attitude towards telecommuting are age-related: regardless of their earlier work experience in telecommuting, younger generations found more positive points of telework compared to older-age ones. Notwithstanding, our study disclosed the need for change in the traditional understanding of generations in some respect.

Though our research revealed that traditional division of employees into generations in principle still works—employees' attitude towards teleworking significantly varied by gender within a cohort. Critical differences were particularly significant between the Millennials. According to the study, Millennial men found more negative aspects of telecommuting than Millennial women. Mostly, Millennial men were concerned about whether their job achievements and personal outstanding competences will be noticed and properly valued by authorities of their organization.

The research results in the Millennial sample can lead to a hypothetical assumption about the reasons for inequality in the career and pay gap between men and women. As can be seen from Millennial men's complaints about work from home, they mostly apprehended that managers would overlook their personal work and contribution. In theory, there is no basis for such anxiety if measurable indicators are used to assess employees' personal achievements. Consequently, men's anxiety might mean that when working in the office, men profit from behavioural strategies that allow them to show their contributions and accomplishments as more significant than they actually are while women were calm about the same aspects. Even though these assumptions require a scientific validation, the observation of Stanojević and Radanov [22] that the technologically savvy young genera-

tion may be given biased credit for their contribution to telework has place. We suggest organizations to put more focus on measuring work results and managing job rewards more reasonably.

Speaking on the issue of gender, the study disclosed that women are more satisfied with telecommuting in general and this does not depend on the generation. Based on this evidence, we go along with Cort and Zacher [39] that application of management recommendations to group employees by age cohorts is outdated after the global shift to working from home.

Finally, the important factor for telecommuting for all generations and both genders is education. Our study results suggest that better educated employees can be more motivated and more efficient than less educated employees; therefore, the education of teleworkers deserves priority.

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