



Romantic relationships across generations: a psychological perspective on generations X, Y, and Z¹

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Abstract: *Introduction:* Sternberg's (1988) theory of love identifies passion, intimacy, and commitment as central components of romantic relationship quality. However, contemporary research highlights additional psychological factors influencing relationship satisfaction, such as empathy, openness, sexual satisfaction, communication, financial stability, health, career development, and overall quality of life. The present study aimed to examine generational differences in psychological determinants of romantic relationship quality among individuals from Generations X, Y, and Z. *Method:* The study was self-report, quantitative and longitudinal. Four standardized instruments with strong psychometric properties were used: the Affective Communication Index (Floyd & Morman, 1998), the Forgiveness Scale (Toussaint et al., 2001), the Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire (Nomejko & Dolińska-Zygmunt, 2011), and the Interpersonal Commitment Questionnaire (Stanley & Markman, 1992), along with a demographic survey. *Results:* Generation X respondents demonstrated higher quality affective communication, a capacity for forgiveness, and interpersonal commitment. Generation Z respondents, in turn, reported statistically significantly higher sexual satisfaction than Generation X and Y respondents. *Conclusions:* These findings offer practical implications for couple therapy, particularly in tailoring interventions to the emotional and communicative needs of different age groups. The observed intergenerational differences underscore the importance of flexible, age-sensitive therapeutic approaches aimed at enhancing relationship quality.

Keywords: affective communication, forgiveness, generations, interpersonal commitment, romantic relationships.

1. Introduction

A romantic relationship is understood as a mutual, voluntary relationship based on closeness and intimacy (Clark & Grote, 2013). Psychologists agree that a satisfying romantic relationship is associated with the fulfilment of many important psychological needs, which include the need for closeness, passion, and support (Śmieja, 2018). One of the fundamental aspects of how individuals forming such a romantic relationship evaluate it is their well-being, strongly related to its quality, assessed by researchers for both formal and informal relationships (Adamczyk, 2017). Nowadays, it seems desirable to define romantic relationships on a scale from highly disintegrated to those characterized by the highest quality of partnership, without labelling them as successful

or unsuccessful (Brudek, Jasik & Steuden, 2018). According to the assumptions of the systemic theory (Plopa, 2005), a romantic relationship constitutes a whole, constantly interacting and expressed in the intensification of specific factors, without excluding periodic difficulties and conflicts. This is its dynamics (Brudek et al., 2018), which is also taken into account in the theory of love (Sternberg, 1988). In the related literature, the concept of a *qualitative romantic relationship* is defined in a non-uniform manner due to the large number of determinants. It is assumed to denote a subjective assessment of the relationship on many dimensions (Ryś, 2004). The psychological variables most frequently mentioned in this context include: openness, empathy,

¹ Article in Polish language: https://stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/fer/65pl_wale.pdf

sexual satisfaction (Janicka & Niebrzydowski, 1994), love, interpersonal bond, intimacy, similarity, motives for choosing a marriage partner, as well as partners' satisfaction with the relationship and relationship stability (Rostowski, 1987), satisfaction with the shared achievement of goals, full participation of spouses in social life, partners' financial situation, professional work, and general standard of living (Chmielewska, 2019). It is emphasized that relationship satisfaction is understood as the degree of satisfaction with various aspects of its functioning (Ryś, 2004). Sternberg's (1988) three-factor concept presents an interesting perspective on the components of love, which plays a key role in a romantic relationship. The author distinguished three components of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment (Sternberg, 1988). In this study, the ones included in the model encompassing factors determining the quality of a romantic relationship were those grounded in the theory of love. These are: commitment (Janicka & Szymczak, 2017; Rostowski, 1987; Wojciszke, 2003), affective communication (Wałęcka-Matyja & Szkudlarek, 2019), a capacity for forgiveness (Charzyńska & Heszen, 2013; Ryś, Greszta & Grabarczyk, 2019), and sexual satisfaction (Nomejko & Dolińska-Zygmunt, 2014). Their understanding and significance for shaping the quality of a romantic relationship are discussed below.

1.1. Some conditions of a romantic relationship

Commitment is one of the three components of love (Sternberg, 1988) that contribute to maintaining a romantic relationship. It is subject to conscious control by both partners. Its varying intensity may indicate the strength of commitment, the desire to remain in the relationship that sustains the romantic relationship, or may refer to a sense of obligation to remain in the relationship or decide on its dissolution. *Interpersonal commitment* can be considered on three dimensions. The first dimension is personal commitment, understood as experiencing positive feelings towards the partner and the relationship created with him/her. The second dimension is moral commitment, which defines values and personal beliefs regarding the seriousness of the relationship. The final dimension is structural commitment, which

refers to the constraints associated with ending the relationship. The costs that a person may incur as a result of leaving a relationship include primarily emotional, material, and social costs that limit the individual's ability to end the relationship (Janicka & Szymczak, 2017).

Communication in romantic relationships serves the purpose of communicating, sharing experiences and feelings, expressing needs, and expressing feelings. This occurs through two main channels: verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal communication, which encompasses gestures, facial expressions, physical contact, and body posture, as well as eye contact and tone of voice, often reinforces or weakens the verbal message (Wałęcka-Matyja & Szkudlarek, 2019). Proper communication between romantic partners reflects the high quality of a romantic relationship, contributes to resolving existing conflicts (Ryś et al., 2019), and reduces the risk of romantic relationship disintegration (Modzelewski, 2017). Related to communication and also crucial to experiencing satisfaction in a romantic relationship, intimacy, as distinguished by Sternberg (1988), is only to a certain extent subject to the partners' awareness. It is defined as positive feelings and actions (e.g., mutual understanding, exchange of intimate information, mutual sharing of experiences) leading to greater attachment and closeness between partners. Most behaviours that constitute intimacy evoke positive emotions related to the ability to communicate, provide support, and share understanding (Wojciszke, 2003). Considering the component of intimacy in romantic relationships, three types of communication between partners can be distinguished: supportive, committed, and depreciating (Wałęcka-Matyja & Szkudlarek, 2019). An interesting type of communication distinguished by Floyd is *affective* (emotional) *communication*. It is understood as intentional behaviour aimed at expressing feelings of closeness, care, and affection for another person. Partners in a romantic relationship feel the need to be loved and appreciated, and affective communication allows them to express and satisfy these needs, both verbally and non-verbally. It also contributes to feelings of happiness and increases self-esteem (Floyd et al., 2022). It can be divided into individual categories of affective behaviour, including verbal and non-verbal

communication, as well as expressions of support (Walecka-Matyja & Krawczyk, 2023). It has been observed that high-quality communication between partners promotes greater sexual satisfaction and increases satisfaction with the romantic relationship (Nomejko, Dolińska-Zygmunt, & Mucha, 2017). Individuals entering into a romantic relationship, through effective communication and resolving existing difficulties, have the opportunity to experience a high-quality relationship, which facilitates conflict resolution (Ryś, 2004). The role of conflict in a romantic relationship is crucial because, in extreme cases, it can lead to its disintegration. The explanation for the occurrence of conflicts in communication is based on the assumptions of Bateson's double bind theory (1956; 1996). In situations of conflicting messages, focused on neutral verbal messages, combined with facial expressions and behaviours that send contradictory signals, the partner may experience confusion, helplessness, and tension. A person receiving a double bind message is placed in a paradoxical situation that prevents them from responding adequately (Nodar, 2022). When you are wronged by the partner, the ability to forgive is an important factor that stabilizes the relationship (Dacka, Kulik & Nowak, 2023; Ryś, 2004). In this study, a capacity for forgiveness is understood as the ability to forgive oneself, forgive others, but also as a sense of being forgiven by God (Charzyńska & Heszen, 2013).

The three components of love identified by Sternberg (1986), apart from commitment and intimacy, also include passion, which is almost entirely unconscious to the partners in a romantic relationship. Partners are motivated to connect with each other by seeking physical closeness, touch, arousal, and sexual contact. However, as the relationship progresses, passion tends to decline significantly, which may result, among other things, from a realistic view of the partner. It is assumed that sexuality has a similar developmental dynamics within a relationship. It concerns the establishment of interpersonal relationships, as well as physical and mental processes related to sexuality. It plays an important role at various stages of human life and is related to the concept of sexual health (Kucharski & Rzepa, 2017). Psychologists agree that it can be considered a predictor of the

bond and quality of relationships between partners (Żak-Łykus & Nawrat, 2013). In this study, sexual satisfaction is understood as overall satisfaction with sexual contact with a partner, taking into account aspects such as pleasure from sexual intercourse, thinking about it, and any negative thoughts related to it (Nomejko & Dolińska-Zygmunt, 2014).

To summarize the discussion so far on romantic relationship satisfaction, it should be emphasized that it is composed of many factors and is linked to the quality of the relationship and the actions taken by romantic partners. Psychologists believe that such behaviours include: proper communication, emotional responses, as well as cognitive and motor activity. In turn, undertaking such actions will be determined by the individual's functioning style, personality type, and character traits (Rawicka & Rzepa, 2017).

1.2. Generationality and the image of a romantic relationship

Terms such as *generationality* or *generation* can be used interchangeably. They refer to the totality of people living at the same time and of a similar age. Generations are shaped by key experiences related to situations occurring in their reality, i.e., generation-forming events, which include economic crises, war, political transformations, and even Poland's accession to the EU (September, 2005). Each subsequent generation differs from the previous one, although they still retain some behavioural patterns passed down through socialization. This study analyses the perception of romantic relationships by individuals from Generations X, Y, and Z.

Generation X refers to individuals born in the second half of the 20th century, between 1961 and 1985. When considering the general concept of a romantic relationship from a Generation X perspective, it is worth considering the results of research conducted in this area. It was found that most Generation X women believe that a romantic relationship is characterized by a similar level of commitment, caring for one's partner, and verbal and non-verbal expressions of love. The image of a relationship is also illustrated by an emotional bond with the partner, who shares both positive and challenging emotions.

In the opinion of Generation X women, a romantic relationship is shaped by mutual, interpersonal, positive feelings between partners and is based on sexual exclusivity. Gen X men share the view that a romantic relationship is based on demonstrating a similar level of commitment, caring for their partner, and expressing love verbally and non-verbally. Interestingly, they also understand it as a relationship that brings them joy (Celik, Bingul & Kaya, 2020).

Generation Y was born primarily in the 1980s and 1990s. It is estimated that these individuals were born between 1980 and 2000 (Dewanti & Indrajit, 2018). Due to growing up amidst rapidly evolving technology, they are also referred to as the Digital Nation (Wasylewicz, 2016). Generation Y women and men have similar perspectives on romantic relationships, suggesting they understand them in terms of the emotional bond with a partner, the commitment and effort involved in continuing the relationship, and the verbal and non-verbal expressions of love. They also tend to understand relationships as exclusive in terms of sexuality. Differences between Generation Y and Generation X respondents include the perspective of a romantic relationship as fulfilling one's own needs, alleviating feelings of loneliness, as well as taking into account the very process of flirting and falling in love, which allows partners to get to know each other better. This partially confirms the view that Generation Y prefers to wait to get married and get to know the person with whom they will form a close relationship better. This is because in this type of situation, it is possible to break up the relationship more easily if the partner does not sufficiently meet expectations than in the case of a formal relationship (Celik et al., 2020).

Generation Z is made up of people born at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, between 2000 and 2012. It is also known as Generation C (*connected, computerized, communicating, and change*) (Radut, 2021). Comparing Generation Z's perspective on romantic relationships with that of Generations X and Y, a significant similarity in views is observed. Both women and men perceive romantic relationships through the prism of emotional bonding, mutual positive feelings, and

shared experiences with a partner. A romantic relationship is also understood as caring for a partner, commitment, and effort put into continuing the relationship, and expressing love to a partner verbally and non-verbally. Generation Z women also tend to understand relationships as sharing shared love and feeling loved, as well as expressing sexual interest and building the intimacy one experiences exclusively with a partner, to a greater extent than men. Among men, however, there is also the concept of building a romantic relationship as a way to meet mutual needs and a relationship aimed at alleviating the feeling of loneliness (Celik et al., 2020).

In summary, each generation exhibits both similarities and differences in their perception of the world and patterns of functioning in the environment compared to their predecessors. Generational diversity is a result of the actions of previous generations and is the result of the ongoing process of developing new, most often adaptive, patterns of functioning in a changing environment. In the area of romantic relationships, their dynamics can be considered from both a dyadic and a generational perspective, bearing in mind that they are conditioned by numerous factors. This interesting scientific perspective inspired us to examine whether, and if so, how, romantic relationships change over time. The study attempted to determine whether there is differentiation in the dimensions that determine the quality of a romantic relationship across Generations X, Y, and Z. The research question is as follows:

- Is there differentiation, and to what extent, across Generation X, Y, and Z groups in romantic relationships, in affective communication, capacity for forgiveness, interpersonal commitment, and sexual satisfaction?

Based on the related literature, the following research hypotheses were formulated.

- Hypothesis 1. People from Generations X and Y are characterized by higher skills in affective communication than people from Generation Z.
- Hypothesis 2. Generation X and Y individuals are more forgiving than Generation Z ones.

- Hypothesis 3. Generation X individuals demonstrate higher interpersonal commitment than Generation Y and Z individuals.
- Hypothesis 4. People from Generations X and Y report lower sexual satisfaction than the ones from Generation Z.

2. Materials and method

2.1. Study participants

The study involved 174 participants, including 88 women (50.6%) and 86 men (49.4%). The participants ranged in age from 18 to 63 years. Three comparative groups were identified based on their generational background. The Generation X group consisted of 60 people (34.5%) aged 45 to 63. The second group, representing Generation Y, included 63 people (36.2%) aged 24 to 44. The third group consisted of 51 people (29.3%) aged 18 to 23, representing Generation Z (Radut, 2021). The characteristics of the study group are presented in Table 1.

2.2. Procedure

The self-report, quantitative and longitudinal study was conducted in 2025 using the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) technique on the Microsoft Forms platform². While online research has many advantages, it also has limitations. These include the researcher's limited control over external factors that arise during the study. To mitigate response bias, control questions were used to gauge participant attention. Participants received a link to Microsoft Forms, which contained four questionnaires, a socio-demographic survey, and an informed consent form. The study was anonymous and voluntary. Participants were informed of the possibility of withdrawing at any stage, and participation in the study was not compensated. Purposeful selection of participants was employed, using the snowball sampling method. The following inclusion criteria

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the study group (N = 174)

Demographic variables	n	%
Place of residence		
City over 500,000 inhabitants	68	39.1
City 100,000–500,000 inhabitants	47	27
City up to 100,000 inhabitants	49	28.2
Rural area	10	5.7
Having children		
Yes	98	56.3
No	76	43.7
Type of relationship		
Cohabitation	93	53.4
Marriage	81	46.6
Length of relationship		
2-5 years	60	34.5
6-10 years	56	32.2
11 years or more	58	33.3

were adopted: informed consent to participate in the psychological study, age between 18 and 63 years, and being in a heterosexual romantic relationship lasting more than two years. This period of a relationship is considered a critical juncture, after which a relationship is formalized or disintegrates (Wieteska, 2017). Exclusion criteria were as follows: failure to provide informed consent to participate in the psychological study, age under 18 or over 63 years, not having a romantic partner, being in a homosexual romantic relationship, and duration of the romantic relationship less than 2 years. Data obtained from the study were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29 under license from the University of Lodz.

2.3. Materials

The study utilized four questionnaires with good psychometric properties: Floyd & Morman's (1998) Affective Communication Index, Toussaint et al.'s (2001) Forgiveness Scale, Nomejko & Dolińska-Zygmunt's (2014) Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire, Stanley & Markman's (1992) Interpersonal Com-

² The study was conducted by Julia Martynek, a participant of a master's seminar in psychology.

mitment Questionnaire, and a socio-demographic survey. The survey provided data on gender, age, place of residence, whether the participants had children, the degree of formality of their relationships, and their duration.

The Affective Communication Index by Floyd and Morman (1998), adapted by Wałęcka-Matyja (2020), consists of 15 items and measures the intensity of affective communication in adults. The instrument assesses the overall score and two dimensions: support and non-verbal communication, and verbal communication. Respondents provide responses on a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 means *Never* and 7 means *Always*. The Affective Communication Index is a reliable and valid instrument (Cronbach's alpha is 0.95 for the overall instrument, 0.89 for the verbal communication dimension, and 0.93 for the support and non-verbal communication dimension) (Wałęcka-Matyja, 2020). In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient values for the individual subscales were: support and non-verbal communication $\alpha = 0.86$, verbal communication $\alpha = 0.88$, and for the entire instrument $\alpha = 0.90$.

The Forgiveness Scale by L. Toussaint et al. (2001), adapted in Polish by Charzyńska and Heszen (2013), assesses the intensity of forgiveness capacity across three dimensions: self-forgiveness,

forgiveness of others, and a sense of forgiveness from God. It consists of nine items, and participants respond to them on a 5-point Likert scale (1 – *Strongly disagree*, 5 – *Strongly agree*). The reliability of the instrument for the overall forgiveness index is 0.75, for the self-forgiveness scale 0.65, for the forgiveness of others scale 0.75, and for the sense of forgiveness from God scale 0.91. The tool is considered sufficiently reliable for conducting psychological research (Charzyńska & Heszen, 2013). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient values for the individual subscales were: self-forgiveness $\alpha = 0.80$, forgiveness of others $\alpha = 0.82$, and sense of forgiveness from God $\alpha = 0.98$.

The Interpersonal Commitment Questionnaire by Stanley and Markman (1992), adapted in Polish by Janicka and Szymczak (2017), consists of 19 items and measures three dimensions of commitment: concern for one's partner's well-being, relationship importance, and bond with one's partner. Participants respond on a 7-point scale, where 1 indicates *Strongly disagree* and 7 indicates *Strongly agree*. This method has satisfactory validity and reliability for the individual subscales: bond with one's partner (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88), relationship importance (Cronbach's alpha = 0.70), and concern for one's partner's well-being (Cronbach's

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the studied psychological variables (N = 174)

	Variable	M	Me	SD	Sk.	Kurt.	Min.	Max.
Affective Communication Index	support and non-verbal communication	63.64	63	6.45	0.046	-0.816	47	77
	verbal communication	16.16	16	4.03	0.363	0.291	6	28
	overall score of affective communication	79.81	79	9.64	0.187	-0.795	59	105
Forgiveness Scale	forgiving oneself	9.86	4	12.87	1.74	1.51	1	45
	forgiving others	14.46	4	14.86	0.788	-1.06	1.60	48
	overall score of forgiveness	2.98	2.77	0.94	0.2	-0.956	1	4.93
Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire	overall score	30.85	30	5.43	0.042	-0.439	14	40
Interpersonal Commitment Questionnaire	bond with partner	57.51	58	9.50	-0.103	-0.765	36	77
	relationship importance	25.97	25	4.85	-0.116	-0.838	14	35
	concern for partner's well-being	12.13	12	3.75	0.102	-0.274	3	21

M – mean; Me – median; SD – standard deviation; Min – minimum; Max – maximum; K – kurtosis; Sk – skewness

Table 3. Intensity of affective communication in the study groups of people from generations X, Y and Z

Variable	X (n = 60)		Y (n = 63)		Z (n = 51)		F	df	p	η²
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
support and non-verbal communication	67.06	5.72	62.31	6.10	61.25	6.09	15.49	171	<0.001*	0.15
verbal communication	17.35	2.30	15.88	4.11	15.11	5.12	4.63	171	0.011*	0.05
general index of affective communication	84.41	7.31	78.20	9.32	76.37	10.5	12.40	171	<0.001*	0.12

*p < 0.05

alpha = 0.75) (Janicka & Szymczak, 2017). In this study, the values of Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the individual subscales were: bond with partner $\alpha = 0.92$, importance of the relationship $\alpha = 0.88$, concern for the partner’s well-being $\alpha = 0.90$.

The *Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire* by Nomejko and Dolińska-Zygmunt (2014) measures sexual satisfaction in two areas: sexual attractiveness and sexual activity. The tool consists of 10 items, and respondents respond to them on a four-point Likert scale, where 1 means *Not at all true* and 4 means *Definitely true*. The Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire is a valid and reliable tool (Cronbach’s alpha is 0.89) (Nomejko & Dolińska-Zygmunt, 2014). In the present study, its Cronbach’s alpha was $\alpha = 0.92$.

3. Results

The statistical analysis assumed normal distribution, citing the central limit theorem, which states that the distribution of variables is close to normal when the sample size is over 30 (Szymczak, 2018). The assumed significance level was $\alpha < 0.05$. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the psychological variables included in the study.

3.1. Affective communication in the compared groups of study participants

In the first step of the analysis, it was checked whether there were any differences in the scope of affective communication in the groups of people from generations X, Y, and Z. The obtained results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 4. Post-hoc test results for differences in affective communication in the study groups of people from generations X, Y and Z

Variable	Generation group (I)	Generation group (J)	Difference of means (I-J)	p	95% confidence interval	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
support and non-verbal communication	X	Y	4.74	<0.001*	2.21	7.27
		Z	5.81	<0.001*	3.12	8.49
	Y	X	-4.74	<0.001*	-7.27	-2.21
		Z	1.06	0.626	-1.66	3.79
	Z	X	-5.81	<0.001*	-8.49	-3.12
		Y	-1.06	0.626	-3.79	1.66
verbal communication	X	Y	1.46	0.043*	0.03	2.88
		Z	2.23	0.015*	0.37	4.09
	Y	X	-1.46	0.043*	-2.88	-0.03
		Z	0.77	0.659	-1.33	2.87
	Z	X	-2.23	0.015*	-4.09	-0.37
		Y	-0.77	0.659	-2.87	1.33
general index of affective communication	X	Y	6.21	<0.001*	2.63	9.78
		Z	8.04	<0.001*	3.87	12.20
	Y	X	-6.21	<0.001*	-9.78	-2.63
		Z	1.83	0.594	-2.64	6.30
	Z	X	-8.04	<0.001*	-12.20	-3.87
		Y	-1.83	0.594	-6.30	2.64

*p < 0,05

The results in Table 3 indicate statistically significant differences in affective communication between the compared groups. The highest means for the overall affective communication index, the support and non-verbal communication dimension, and the

Table 5. Intensity of forgiveness capacity in the groups of surveyed people from generations X, Y and Z

Variable	X (n = 60)		Y (n = 63)		Z (n = 51)		F	df	p	η ²
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
forgiving oneself	11.91	14.50	7.31	10.12	10.60	13.59	2.10	171	0.125	0.02
forgiving others	16.28	15.70	13.67	14.72	13.30	14.06	0.69	171	0.503	0.008
general index of forgiveness	3.63	0.82	2.77	0.87	2.49	0.69	30.41	171	<0.001*	0.26

*p < 0,05

Table 6. Post-hoc test results for differences in forgiveness capacity in the study groups of people from generations X, Y and Z

Variable	Generation group (I)	Generation group (J)	Difference of means (I-J)	p	95% confidence interval	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
general index of forgiveness	X	Y	0.85	<0.001*	0.48	1.21
		Z	1.13	<0.001*	0.79	1.48
	Y	X	-0.85	<0.001*	-1.21	-0.48
		Z	0.28	0.12	-0.06	0.63
	Z	X	-1.13	<0.001*	-1.48	-0.79
		Y	-0.28	0.12	-0.63	0.06

*p < 0,05

verbal communication dimension were observed in the Generation X group, while lower means were observed in the Generation Y and Generation Z groups. To determine which means differ significantly, the Games-Howell test was used, taking into account the heterogeneity of variances. The results are presented in Table 4.

Considering the results presented in Table 4, it was found that the mean scores for all dimensions of affective communication differed statistically significantly between the compared groups. Generation X respondents achieved higher mean scores on the general index of affective communication than respondents from Generations Y and Z. For this variable, no statistically significant differences were observed between participants from Generations Y and Z. The mean scores for the support and non-verbal communication dimensions were significantly

higher for Generations X than for Generations Y and Z. No statistically significant differences were observed between Generation Y and Generation Z for this variable. Generation X participants achieved higher mean scores on the verbal communication dimension than the ones from Generations Y and Z. For this variable, no statistically significant differences were observed between participants from Generations Y and Z.

3.2. Forgiveness capacity in the compared groups of study participants

In the second step of the analysis, it was determined whether there were differences in forgiveness capacity among groups of people from generations X, Y, and Z. The obtained results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

The results of the analyses presented in Table 5 suggest that statistically significant differences in the dimensions of forgiveness capacity were revealed in the overall forgiveness score variable. The highest mean scores were recorded in the Generation X group (M = 3.63; SD = 0.82), slightly lower in the Generation Y group (M = 2.77; SD = 0.87) and in the Generation Z group (M = 2.49; SD = 0.69). For this variable, η² = 0.26, indicating a very strong effect between the overall forgiveness score variable and the age groups. The results obtained for the forgiving others and forgiving oneself variables did not reveal statistically significant differences between the compared groups of Generations X, Y, and Z. To determine statistically significant differences between the compared groups in the mean scores on the overall forgiveness score variable, the Games-Howell test was conducted, taking into account the heterogeneity of variance. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 7. Intensity of interpersonal commitment in the study groups of people from generations X, Y and Z

Variable	X (n = 60)		Y (n = 63)		Z (n = 51)		F	df	p	η ²
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
bond with partner	62.05	7.01	56.19	9.30	53.80	10.30	12.87	171	<0.001*	0.13
relationship importance	28.36	3.39	25.07	4.77	24.27	5.36	13.09	171	<0.001*	0.13
concern for partner's well-being	12.13	3.75	12.04	3.97	10.96	4.33	5.32	171	0.006*	0.05

*p < 0,05

Table 8. Post-hoc test results for differences in interpersonal commitment in the study groups of people from generations X, Y and Z

Variable	Generation group (I)	Generation group (J)	Difference of means (I-J)	p	95% confidence interval	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
bond with partner	X	Y	5.85	<0.001*	2.34	9.37
		Z	8.24	<0.001*	4.18	12.31
	Y	X	-5.85	<0.001*	-9.37	-2.34
		Z	2.38	0.408	-2.03	6.81
	Z	X	-8.24	<0.001*	-12.31	-4.18
		Y	-2.38	0.408	-6.81	2.03
relationship importance	X	Y	3.28	<0.001*	1.51	5.05
		Z	4.09	<0.001*	2.01	6.16
	Y	X	-3.28	<0.001*	-5.05	-1.51
		Z	0.80	0.681	-1.48	3.09
	Z	X	-4.09	<0.001*	-6.16	-2.01
		Y	-0.80	0.681	-3.09	1.48
concern for partner's well-being	X	Y	1.18	0.121	-0.23	2.60
		Z	2.27	0.004*	0.62	3.92
	Y	X	-1.18	0.121	-2.60	0.23
		Z	1.08	0.354	-0.78	2.95
	Z	X	-2.27	0.004*	-3.92	-0.62
		Y	-1.08	0.354	-2.95	0.78

*p < 0,05

The obtained results (Table 6) suggest that the mean scores for the overall forgiveness score differ significantly between the compared groups. Generation X respondents achieved higher mean scores for the overall affective communication score than Generation Y and Generation Z ones. For this var-

iable, no statistically significant differences were observed between the mean scores of Generation Y and Generation Z participants.

3.3. Interpersonal commitment in the compared groups of study participants

In the next step of the analysis, an attempt was made to check whether there were differences in interpersonal commitment in groups of people from generations X, Y, and Z. The obtained results are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

Considering the results presented in Table 7, it was found that mean scores for all dimensions of interpersonal commitment differed statistically significantly between the compared groups. Generation X respondents achieved higher mean scores for dimensions such as bond with partner, relationship importance, and concern for partner's well-being than Generations Y and Z. To determine which groups differed significantly in mean scores for interpersonal commitment, the Games-Howell test was used, taking into account the heterogeneity of variance. The results are presented in Table 8.

The obtained results (Table 8) suggest that the mean scores for interpersonal commitment differ significantly between the compared groups. Generation X individuals achieved higher mean scores on variables such as bond with the partner and relationship importance than participants from Generation Y and Z. For these variables, no statistically significant differences were found between the mean scores of Generation Y respondents and the ones from Generation Z. Statistically significant differences were also found between Generation X and Generation Z in the variable of concern for the partner's well-being,

Table 9. Intensity of sexual satisfaction in the study groups of people from generations X, Y and Z

Variable	Z (n = 51)		Y (n = 63)		X (n = 60)		F	df	p	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
sexual satisfaction	33,49	5,20	31,06	5,18	28,38	4,81	14,10	171	<0,001*	0,14

*p < 0,05

Table 10. Post-hoc test results for differences in sexual satisfaction in the study groups of people from generations X, Y and Z

Variable	Generation group (I)	Generation group (J)	Difference of means (I-J)	p	95% confidence interval	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
sexual satisfaction	X	Y	-2.68	0.011*	-4.84	-0.52
		Z	-5.10	<0.001*	-7.38	-2.82
	Y	X	2.68	0.011*	0.52	4.84
		Z	-2.42	0.032*	-4.68	-0.17
	Z	X	5.10	<0.001*	2.82	7.38
		Y	2.42	0.032*	0.17	4.68

*p < 0,05

with Generation X participants achieving higher mean scores than Generation Z ones. For this variable, no significant differences were found between Generation X and Generation Y respondents or between Generation Y and Generation Z ones.

3.4. Sexual satisfaction in compared groups of study participants

In the last step of the analyses, an attempt was made to identify whether there were differences in sexual satisfaction among groups of people from generations X, Y, and Z. The obtained results are presented in Tables 9 and 10.

The highest mean overall sexual satisfaction score was observed in the Generation Z group compared to the results achieved by the ones from Generations Y and X. For the overall sexual satisfaction score, $\eta^2 = 0.14$, indicating a strong effect between the sexual satisfaction variable and age groups. To determine

which groups differed significantly in terms of mean scores on the sexual satisfaction variable, a Tukey HSD test was conducted, taking into account the homogeneity of variance. The results are presented in Table 10.

Considering the obtained results (Table 10), it was assumed that the mean scores for the sexual satisfaction variable differed significantly between the compared groups. Generation Z respondents achieved higher mean scores than Generation X and Y ones. At the same time, Generation Y respondents obtained higher mean scores than Generation X ones

4. Discussion of results

The obtained results of the psychological study allow us to give a positive answer to the formulated research question as well as refer to the research hypotheses. This is because differentiation was found in affective communication, forgiveness capacity, interpersonal commitment and sexual satisfaction in the groups of people from generations X, Y, Z.

Considering the psychological variables included in the study, we first of all referred to the variable of affective communication. It was found that respondents from generation X obtained significantly higher mean scores in both support and non-verbal communication and verbal communication than the ones from generations Y and Z. There were no statistically significant differences in affective communication between generations Y and Z. Interpreting the obtained result, it is believed that it has a connection with greater life experience and the ability of expressing emotions. Psychologists indicate that, on the whole people, who are older are more effective in processing non-verbal material (recognizing and processing emotions) than younger ones (Szczygiel

& Jasielska, 2008). It has been noticed that with age the level of support and positive communication with the partner grows while the level of jealousy and negative interactions decreases in both women and men. People who are younger tend to focus on the protection of their own autonomy and achieving their own goals in a relationship. Older people who are in a long-lasting relationship will over years develop the abilities of positive communication, solving conflicts and heading for a mutually agreed goal. Family commitments are of greater and greater importance for them (Kaleta & Mróz, 2018; Jolin, Lafontaine, Lussier & Brassard, 2023).

While analysing forgiveness capacity in people of generations X, Y, Z, it was found that the highest mean scores in this respect had been obtained by the respondents from generation X. There were no statistically significant differences between people from generations Y and Z as far as the aspect of general forgiveness was concerned. It was noticed that the age of the respondents did not cause any significant difference in case of forgiving oneself and others. Due to the uneven number of responses, we did not include the mean scores of the respondents for the variable of a sense of forgiveness from God. Interpreting the obtained results, it was assumed that forgiveness capacity is developed with age, as people gain experience. Young men most frequently demonstrate revenge behaviours, characterized by a willingness to take revenge on the person who has harmed them. In the middle-age period the prevailing type of behaviours is avoidance, and in old age – kindness for the harmer. Women tend to demonstrate kind behaviours regardless of age. Over years a person not only gains experience but also grows emotionally, which allows them to react to harming situations in a more adaptive way than young people (Ghaemmaghani, Allemand & Martin, 2011). Explanation for the results obtained in the study can also be looked for in the theory of social learning by Bandura (1977). Over the lifespan a person not only gains and develops their abilities but also observes and interprets other people's behaviours. Pointing to the obtained results, with age people learn how to react to specific situations and achieve the desired goal. Moreover, studies

show that young people perceive forgiveness as an interpersonal process and elderly people as an intrapersonal one, which could also explain different approaches of people of different ages to reaching agreement in a romantic relationship (Zahorcova, Drstakova & Masarykova, 2023). Psychologists assume that forgiveness capacity is also determined by other factors, which include satisfaction with life and general well-being. People at a younger age characterized by a poorer capacity for forgiveness may not feel satisfaction with life in a degree comparable with older people (Kaleta & Mróz, 2018).

Another psychological variable analysed in this study was sexual satisfaction. It was discovered that people from generations X and Y felt lower sexual satisfaction than people from generation Z. At the same time, people from generation Y obtained higher mean scores in this respect than people from generation X. The results obtained in the author's study indicate that both women and men of older age assess satisfaction with their sexual contacts with their partner lower than younger people whereby men usually assess their sexual satisfaction higher than women (Kucharski & Rzepa, 2017). Psychologists assume that with age satisfaction with intimate contacts tends to decrease. However, it is not connected with age itself, but it can also result from other factors, such as: self-esteem, communication quality, intimacy level, hormone level changes, intellectual ability and physical vitality. These factors may lead to a decrease in desire and frequency of sexual contacts with a partner (Nomejko & Dolińska-Zygmunt, 2019; Rausch & Rettenberger, 2021). Over time, a decline is observed in both one's own sexual satisfaction and the partner's sexual activity and the willingness to meet their needs. However, it has been emphasized that a positive attitude toward the ageing process and adaptation to ongoing changes can increase satisfaction with intimate contact (Skoblow, Drewelies, & Proulx, 2023). Younger people demonstrate a more generally positive attitude toward sexuality, which translates into higher self-rated sexual satisfaction. A factor that may be important in the context of satisfaction with intimate contacts is the sense of support from one's partner. It has been shown that

support, understanding, and closeness from a loved one increase sexual satisfaction (Miguel, Humboldt, & Leal, 2024).

The final factor determining the quality of a romantic relationship examined in our study was the variable of interpersonal commitment. It turned out that Generation X respondents achieved the highest mean scores in this area, on the dimensions of bond with the partner and relationship importance, compared to people from Generations Y and Z. For these variables, there were no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of Generation Y respondents and Generation Z ones. Statistically significant differences were found between Generations X and Z for the variable of concern for the partner's well-being, with Generation X respondents achieving higher mean scores than Generation Z ones. For this variable, no significant differences were observed between Generation X and Generation Y participants and between Generation Y and Generation Z ones. The obtained results suggest that Generation X participants understand romantic relationships as shaped by tradition, commitment, and community. For them, the foundation of a romantic relationship is mutual, deep commitment, which is reflected in responsible family formation and the fulfilment of social obligations. In contrast, Generation Y and Z participants more often perceive romantic relationships as a transaction that can result in immediate personal benefits. Researchers often describe younger generations' romantic relationships as "liquid love," meaning their short-term nature and lack of deep commitment to the relationship itself (Samad, 2025). Psychologists believe that with age, people develop skills and gain experiences that support the formation and maintenance of lasting romantic bonds. They argue that young people are capable of showing their partners support to a similar degree as older people, but such behaviours are intended to

test the feasibility of building a long-term relationship with another person. Furthermore, younger individuals are more likely to express jealousy and a desire to control their partner, which can lead to more conflict-ridden relationships. It has been suggested that older people strive for a stable romantic relationship, while younger ones value their autonomy within a relationship to a greater extent. However, with age, an individual's ability to compromise and strive for a stable and satisfying relationship increases (Lantagne & Furman, 2017).

The results of the presented psychological studies suggest not only differences in the determinants of romantic relationship quality across generations X, Y, and Z, but they also provide a clarification of their scope. This knowledge is considered valuable, particularly from the perspective of family psychology. Several limitations of the conducted research include the use of self-report measures targeted at individuals in romantic relationships, online research, the inability to assess cause-and-effect relationships, and the homogeneous cultural context. However, it appears that the obtained results may facilitate a deeper understanding of the dynamics and scope of changes in affective communication, interpersonal commitment, forgiveness capacity, and sexual satisfaction in romantic relationships across generations. They can support therapists working with couples in improving satisfaction with romantic relationships, and be used by specialists and institutions to develop psycho-educational programs on relationship building, emotional expression, proper communication, and the process of forgiveness. A significant conclusion from the research is the need to adapt psychological interventions to the specific needs of different age groups, as observed intergenerational differences indicate the need for a flexible therapeutic approach that takes into account diverse emotional and communication needs.

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