

ISMC 2017
13th International Strategic Management Conference

**MANAGEMENT OF AN INTERGENERATIONAL COOPERATION
– EFFECT OF COMPANY SIZE**

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Abstract

Business management in the face of the modern demographic trends leads to new challenges for enterprises in the field of an intergenerational cooperation. Labour force varies in age and represents different attitudes to work, value systems and expectations towards employees. This makes communication and cooperation between employees from different generations more difficult (especially from a work experience perspective). In view of the different functioning of entities with different employment levels, the Authors of the paper have attempted to examine intergenerational cooperation in the context of the size of an organisation. The main aim of this paper is to attempt to answer the question: Is the company size reflected in the approach to intergenerational cooperation? Therefore, statistical analyses were carried out to verify the research hypotheses. The statistical analysis was based on authors' own pilot study on the intergenerational cooperation in Polish enterprises. The results of this research have approximate characteristics and refer only to the examined sample size.

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Keywords: Management of an intergenerational cooperation; company size; age management; aging workforce.

1. Introduction

Management of contemporary enterprise should be taken into account the problems caused by aging of the labour force. Today, modern enterprises are places of encounter of employees representing three generations with different specificity: baby boomers, generation X and generation Y (Piktialis and Greenes 2008). We can also see the C generation - slowly enterig the labour market. The problem of the existence of multi-generational staff, including the increasing ageing of population, leads to visible

changes, especially in the areas of cooperation, communication and knowledge sharing within an organisation. Thus, it seems important to acquire knowledge on an enterprise management already at the stage of studies. One of a key assumption in current age management research and practice is that company knowledge should be secured by an intergenerational cooperation management. The management studies should give an opportunity to gain a knowledge about the newest directions in enterprises management. Student should have the skills to identify the processes taking place in all over the company. Students, should also have, the knowledge, not only from the field of new management systems, but also, based on the economy, organization, marketing, and have managerial skills. They should know how to used the obtained knowledge at work, but in an ethic a law correctly way (Tupá, 2013).

Employees, from the highest managerial staff to ordinary workers, are not familiar with or incorrectly interpret the basic principles of communication that underlie all processes taking place in an organisation. Ability to communicate, understand and listen to each other are becoming increasingly important, as there are no organisations without any communication. As stressed by Chodorek (2006), communication is necessary for effective operation of an organisation, and thus for optimal cooperation between its members.

This problem, although hardly recognised by entrepreneurs, also refers to the Polish economy and the organisations that function in it. Managers, regardless of the scale of their organisations, should perceive the potential in each generation of their employees. It is necessary to undertake a wide range of activities as part of management of teams of employees representing various generations. International research, by O'Connell and Russell (2008) among others, shows that relations between employees, also taking into account the size of organisations, are very important for their appropriate functioning.

Employee relations also involves, a level of interaction between employers and employees, or their representatives, to achieve a set of working conditions that will meet the needs of employees as well as allowing the organisation to achieve its strategic, tactical and operational objectives (Sullivan et. al., 2010).

Intergenerational cooperation and the related process of intergenerational transfer of knowledge in an enterprise depend on multiple factors, which are both dependent on and independent from an enterprises (Richter-Kazimierska, 2012). Noticing differences in this area in the functioning of micro, small, medium-sized and large entities, as widely discussed in literature of the subject, the paper makes an attempt to answer the question: Is the company size reflected in the approach to intergenerational cooperation? In order to verify the assumptions adopted, statistical analysis was conducted based on data obtained in a pilot study.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Management of the cooperation between employees and generational changes

The word "generation" has a range of definitions. Most definitions (cultural and anthropological ones) treat generation as a group of people at a similar age, shaped by certain customs, traditions, culture and history. Individual persons can recognise in their lives certain events, figures, attitudes and activities that unite them. The character of a generation is defined, according to those definitions, by shared values

and opinions. A generation defined in this way has its unique characteristics, knowledge and skills. It is this uniqueness that is the basis and essence of interactions (mutual contacts) between employees from various generations (Raszeja–Ossowska, 2016). Hence, an intergenerational cooperation is an important source of individual learning, and a vehicle for creation, transfer and retention of organisational knowledge (Babnik, and Sirca, 2014)

Due to the above-mentioned distinctiveness, intergenerational understanding and communication, including knowledge transfer, are becoming more and more difficult. It would seem that modern communication possibilities are conducive to dialogue in any form. However it turns out that the excessive amount of incoming information so to speak "drowns out" the dialogue. Therefore, cooperation between employees is becoming an important issue. A definition of the word cooperation isn't enough to understand the cooperation in an organization that is based around teams in the workplace. Part of this problem stems from the fact that the concept of cooperation is central to the presence of teamwork. In practice, team working is often defined as activities involving the sharing of information about problems and cooperative working to solve these problems (Kerrin and Oliver, 2002).

A lot of advice has been given to managers about the need for cooperation. By the same token, management is focused on the need for greater productivity. A lack of cooperation between employees and between employees and managers increasingly have negatively impacts employee productivity. It is worth mention that, people tend to feel inspired to perform at their best when there is a positive attitude in the workplace (Human Capital Report, 2008).

The workplace and its atmosphere are significant for the quality and extent of cooperation between employees. Other things that affect productivity are influenced by positivity or negativity in the workplace. For example, employees are more willing to contribute ideas and creative solutions to problems when there is a positive atmosphere and they receive credit for their input. Employees also stay with the company longer and are more interested in career development. On the other hand, if the overall attitude in the workplace is negative, employees will have tendency to win small successes for themselves at the expense of cooperating to achieve the goals of the company. They will distrust each other and the managers. The most important is that, the cooperation has a direct bearing on productivity, so proper training and rules for managers and employees with regard to employee interaction and cooperation is imperative (QuickBase, 2013)

According to Vance Robert J. (2006) if employees can have, a better knowledge of the company's policies, objectives and the reasons behind the decisions affecting them, they will be more loyal, motivated and committed in giving their maximum contribution to the organisation. To make workplace cooperation a success, it is important for both sides to understand their own roles and responsibilities. Knowledge transfer in multi-generation teams, between employees in different stages in their professional careers, means both provision of new knowledge to an employee and increase of knowledge thanks to the knowledge and experience already possessed by receivers (Richert-Kaźmierska, 2012; Price et al., 2013).

Such possibilities are created by management of diversity, which is part of the process of management of human resources in an enterprise. Factors that impact cooperation and the process of intergenerational transfer of knowledge in an enterprise can be divided into external ones, which include:

the stereotype of an elderly person in society, long-life learning, intergenerational competition, demographical and internal changes, organisational culture, management system, an employee's personality and needs, leadership and its priorities (Mannix et.al. 2004, Short and Harris, 2014). The problem of labour force ageing and implementation of age management refers to all entities regardless of their size. It should be however stressed that the level of employment in organisations has an impact on how the above-mentioned determinants are shaped.

2.2. Employment level as a differentiating feature of economic entities in a communications area

The present economic reality is composed of both global corporations and a very large number of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME sector). Similarly, small entities, often called the driving force of the economy, are the dominant group in the Polish economy. (fig. 01)

International literature of the subject stresses that enterprises from the MSME sector are not a copy of large ones. They focus on different values, have different resources and react to external stimuli in a different way. Many authors also indicate considerable heterogeneity of companies of this size. This leads to visible difficulties in adaptation of the models designed for large entities to them.

The organisational structure of micro, small and medium-sized entities is very coherent and transparent compared to that of large companies. It is informal in character, and the functions fulfilled in it are usually conventional and often change. Companies from this sector do not have such extensive financial and human resources as large companies do. Moreover, they have a different management structure and a system of remuneration. (Hausman, 2005) Large enterprises offer better prospects in terms of remuneration, promotions and opportunities of internal mobility of employees (Winter-Ebmer, 2001, Gorzeń-Mitka, 2016).

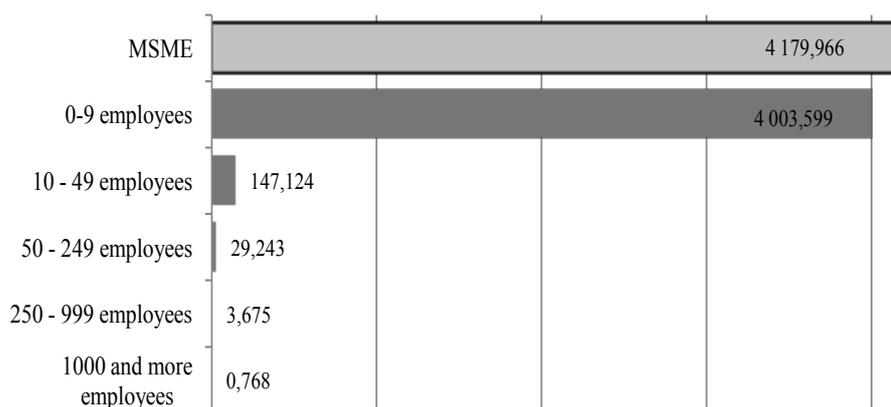


Figure 01. Structure of Polish economic entities by size classes (2015) (*own works*: GUS, <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/BDL/dane/podgrup/tablica> Access on: 10.10.2016.)

In micro, small and medium-sized companies, the dominant figure is the entrepreneur who fulfils the functions of both the manager and owner. Contacts between the owner and co-workers are close and informal (Sipa, 2015). However as stressed by Safin (2006), as a company grows and the employment increases, the structure of the organisation becomes more formalised. Weaknesses of small companies

include: lack of possibilities of realising economies of scale, more difficult entry into sales markets, reduced possibilities of using expensive technologies, weaker (compared to large companies) position against financial and government institutions, local authorities, suppliers or buyers (Pierścioneek, 2003). Undertaking actions to manage age and shape conditions conducive to intergenerational knowledge transfer is easier for large enterprises. Organisations of this size are characterised by strong formalisation of activity based on various standards and norms, with actions being performed by numerous specialised employees (Gibb, 2000).

As was already mentioned, among the factors determining the level of intergenerational cooperation of particular importance is organisational culture, which is treated by employees of small and medium-sized companies as a set of generally accepted values and rules. (Skibiński and Sipa, 2015). Due to their size and dominant role of the owner-manager, organisational culture is stronger in entities of this size (Abdullah et al., 2014) Properly shaped organisational culture enables a free flow of knowledge possessed by employees at various ages, which leads to improvement of their knowledge and competencies, contributing to increased effectiveness of attempts to implement an enterprise's objectives, strengthening its innovativeness and competitive position.

As stressed by Smolarek and Sipa (2015), these activities should however be supported "by appropriate organisational conditions which include: an enterprise's strategy, system for human resources management, pro-innovation management system and appropriate organisational structure". Smaller enterprises employ younger, less educated and less experienced people (Ouimet and Zarutskie, 2014; Lawless 2014). Larger enterprises can ensure a more stable job and offer higher salaries (Oi and Idson, 1999). When shaping the culture of their organisations, entrepreneurs have to take into account problems connected with labour force ageing, and thus with age management and discrimination that takes place in this area (Skibiński and Sipa 2015). Therefore, the authors have attempted to verify the following hypothesis: *perception of the problem of ageing of human resources in a company is significantly differs by the company size (H1), perception of intergenerational cooperation in a company is significantly differs by the company size (H2), perception of intergenerational cooperation determinants is significantly differs by the company size (H3).*

3. Research Method

This paper is a continuation of research into intergenerational cooperation in Polish enterprises. This time, the authors assessed intergenerational cooperation from the perspective of the size of an organisation. Thus, the aim point of research is identification of relationship in selected areas of intergenerational cooperation in SMEs companies from a company size perspective. Based on it we identify of differences in selected areas of intergenerational cooperation in enterprises in the Silesian and Malopolska provinces. The survey was conducted from March - April 2015 on a sample of 138 companies. We use the diagnostic survey method based on the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviews) technique. The research sample was selected using the method of purposive (non-probability) sampling. The main premise for sampling was the fact that the respondents female (47,8%, male 52,2%) are employees at different productive ages and with different work experience and knowledge about the functioning of the enterprises in which they are employed. The researchers used a questionnaire

consisting of 23 open, semi-open, and closed dichotomous questions, scales of responses (nominal, ratio, and rank scale), and demographics. Therefore, the results of presented research considered as pioneer based on interdisciplinary authors approach. The following table 01 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the study sample by company size and age.

Table 01. Characteristic of the study sample by company size and age of respondents perspectives

FEATURES		Total (%)
Company size	micro (1-9)	20,3%
	small (10-49)	15,9%
	medium (50-249)	18,8%
	large (>250)	44,9%
Age group	up to 25 years old	23.2%
	25–34 years old	33.3%
	35–39 years old	15.9%
	40–44 years old	20.3%
	45–49 years old	5.8%
	50 or older	1.4%
Total	N	138
	%	100,0%

Source: own study

Based on the aim point of research were proposed the following research hypotheses:

H₀₁ – perception of the problem of ageing of human resources in a company is significantly differs by the company size;

H₁₁ – perception of the problem of ageing of human resources in a company isn't significantly differs by the company size;

H₀₂ – perception of intergenerational cooperation in a company is significantly differs by the company size;

H₁₂ – perception of intergenerational cooperation in a company isn't significantly differs by the company size.

In this case, we proposed two complementary hypotheses:

H_{02.1}. – perception of intergenerational cooperation “older–younger” in the organization is significantly differs by the company size;

H_{02.1}. – perception of intergenerational cooperation “older–younger” in the organization isn't significantly differs by the company size;

H_{02.2}. – perception of intergenerational cooperation “younger–older” in the organization is significantly differs by the company size;

H_{12.2}. – perception of intergenerational cooperation “younger–older” in the organization isn't significantly differs by the company size;

H₀₃ – perception of intergenerational cooperation determinants is significantly differs by the company size.

H₁₃ – perception of intergenerational cooperation determinants isn't significantly differs by the company size.

In this case, we proposed five complementary hypotheses:

H_{03.1.} – perception of working atmosphere and the relationship between employees as an intergenerational cooperation determinant is significantly differs by the company size;

H_{13.1.} – perception of working atmosphere and the relationship between employees as an intergenerational cooperation determinant isn't significantly differs by the company size;

H_{03.2.} – perception of reducing the marginalization of 45+ and 50+ employees as an intergenerational cooperation determinant is significantly differs by the company size;

H_{13.2.} – perception of reducing the marginalization of 45+ and 50+ employees as an intergenerational cooperation determinant is significantly differs by the company size;

H_{03.3.} – perception of improvement of the company's reputation as an intergenerational cooperation determinant isn't significantly differs by the company size;

H_{03.3.} – perception of improvement of the company's reputation as an intergenerational cooperation determinant is significantly differs by the company size;

H_{13.4.} – perception of intergenerational cooperation as an impulse for innovative ideas isn't significantly differs by the company size;

H_{03.4.} – perception of intergenerational cooperation as an impulse for innovative ideas is significantly differs by the company size;

H_{03.5.} – perception of efficiency and productivity in a company as an intergenerational cooperation determinant is significantly differs by the company size;

H_{13.5.} – perception of efficiency and productivity in a company as an intergenerational cooperation determinant isn't significantly differs by the company size.

Analysis of the survey results has allowed for both a full and partial verification of the hypotheses. This paper examines the age behaviour by testing three main hypotheses related to the intergenerational cooperation in enterprises. All numbers and percentages are produced with IBM SPSS 19. Kendall's tau and Spearman's (rho) rank correlation coefficient test (as measures of non-parametric rank correlations) is the analysis tool for testing our hypothesis. It was assumed that a probability value at the level of $p < 0,05$ is statistically significant, whereas $p < 0,01$ is statistically highly significant.

4. Findings

In first research problem we analysis of the relationship between perception of the problem of the human ageing resource in company and company size. One of the measurement variable is nominal and second variable is ordinal. We use Pearson Chi-square test for testing hypothesis H1– perception of the problem of ageing of human resources in a company significantly differs by the company size. Results of cross table and Pearson's χ^2 test are in table 02.

Table 02. Company size vs. perception of the problem of the human ageing resources - cross table and Chi² test

Does your company notes a problem of human resources aging?		Company size				Total
		micro	small	medium	large	
yes	N	8	14	8	30	60
	%	5,8%	10,1%	5,8%	21,7%	43,5%
no	N	20	10	16	32	78
	%	14,5%	7,2%	11,6%	23,2%	56,5%
Total	N	28	24	24	62	138
	%	20,3%	17,4%	17,4%	44,9%	100,0%

Chi² (6.411); p (0.093)

Source: own study

The results in table 02 allow rejection of hypothesis H1. In light of the present study, it can be concluded that perception of the problem of aging of human resources in a company isn't significantly differs by the company size (probability value at the level of $p > 0,05$ - statistically not significant). Then, it will be testing hypothesis H2 - perception of intergenerational cooperation in a company significantly differs by the company size. Results of Kendall's tau rank correlation coefficient tests are in table 03. This results allow full approval of hypothesis H2. In light of the present study, it can be concluded that perception of intergenerational cooperation significantly differs by the company size (probability value at the level of $p < 0,05$ - statistically significant).

Table 03. Company size vs. perception of intergenerational cooperation in company (Kendall's tau rank correlation coefficient)

Factor	Kendall's tau rank correlation coefficient	
	Tau	p
	Company size	
Perception of intergenerational cooperation "older – younger" in the organization (H2.1)	0,202	0,005
Perception of intergenerational cooperation "younger - older" in the organization (H2.2.)	0,264	0.000

Source: own study

Finally, we tested hypothesis H3 - perception of intergenerational cooperation determinants significantly differs by company size. Results of cross table and Pearson's Chi² test are in table 04.

The results in table 04 allow partial approval of hypothesis H3. In light of the present study, it can be concluded that perception of intergenerational cooperation determinants significantly differs by the company size only in three determinants: working atmosphere and the relationship between employees (H3.1.), reducing the marginalization of 45+ and 50+ employees (H3.2.) and impulse to innovative ideas (H3.4) (probability value at the level of $p < 0,05$ – statistically significant).

In light of the other authors studies (Skibiński et al., 2016; Sipa et al., 2016), it can be concluded that the perception problem of ageing of human resources in a company depends on the age and gender differences.

Table 04. Company size vs. perception of intergenerational cooperation determinants - cross table and Chi² test

An intergenerational cooperation determinant			Company size				Chi ²	p		
			micro	small	medium	large				
Perception of working atmosphere and the relationship between employees (H3.1)	yes	N	22	20	10	28	13,611	0,000		
		%	15,9%	14,5%	7,2%	20,3%				
	no	N	6	4	14	34				
		%	4,3%	2,9%	10,1%	24,6%				
<i>Total</i>		N	28	24	24	62				
		%	20,3%	17,4%	17,4%	44,9%				
Perception of reducing the marginalization of 45+ and 50+ employees (H3.2.)	yes	N	26	18	20	44			4,233	0,040
		%	18,8%	13,0%	14,5%	31,9%				
	no	N	2	6	4	18				
		%	1,4%	4,3%	2,9%	13,0%				
<i>Total</i>		N	28	24	24	62				
		%	20,3%	17,4%	17,4%	44,9%				
Perception of improve the company's reputation (H 3.3.)	yes	N	26	20	24	52	0,827	0,363		
		%	18,8%	14,5%	17,4%	37,7%				
	no	N	2	4	0	10				
		%	1,4%	2,9%	0,0%	7,2%				
<i>Total</i>		N	28	24	24	62				
		%	20,3%	17,4%	17,4%	44,9%				
Perception of intergenerational cooperation as impulse to innovative ideas (H3.4)	yes	N	24	18	20	32			11,041	0,001
		%	17,4%	13,0%	14,5%	23,2%				
	no	N	4	6	4	30				
		%	2,9%	4,3%	2,9%	21,7%				
<i>Total</i>		N	28	24	24	62				
		%	20,3%	17,4%	17,4%	44,9%				
Perception of efficiency and productivity in company (H 3.5.)	yes	N	20	14	16	36	0,994	0,319		
		%	14,5%	10,1%	11,6%	26,1%				
	no	N	8	10	8	26				
		%	5,8%	7,2%	5,8%	18,8%				
<i>Total</i>		N	28	24	24	62				
		%	20,3%	17,4%	17,4%	44,9%				

Source: own study

Whether the perception of intergenerational cooperation determinants depends on the age differences only in the scope of reducing the marginalization of 45+ and 50+ employee and the relationship between employees, and efficiency and improve the company's reputation. While the perception of intergenerational cooperation determinants depends on gender differences only in working atmosphere and the relationship between employees, and efficiency and productivity in a company.

5. Conclusion and Discussions

The focal point of the research was identification of differences in selected areas of intergenerational cooperation from a company size perspective. Generational changes are a continuous

and inevitable process. The encounter on the labour market, especially within one organisation, of representatives of two or three generations may constitute an additional factor defining the scope of cooperation and knowledge transfer between employees. So, managers have to place a huge emphasis on putting in place mechanisms that are designed to effectively manage staff that is diversified in terms of generations, especially in the area of the development of age-positive policy.¹ Due to the specificity of functioning and the amount of internal resources possessed by entities with varying levels of employment, certain regularities can be noticed.

The research undertaken by the authors delivered a partial answer in this regard. In light of the present study, it can be concluded that the perception problem of the human ageing resources isn't depends on the company size, but perception of intergenerational cooperation depends on the company size. Whether the perception of intergenerational cooperation determinants depends on company size only in working atmosphere and the relationship between employees, reducing the marginalization of 45+ and 50+ employees and impulse to innovative ideas. Sum up, an effective intergenerational cooperation mechanism especially from the point of view of company size helps minimize unnecessary misunderstanding, especially in times of changes and uncertainties. While setting up or strengthening the mechanism for workplace cooperation may seem complicated, costly and time consuming, but it is worthy investment, which will bring enormous benefits to the enterprise in terms of enhanced efficiency, competitiveness and productivity.

The issue of an intergenerational cooperation both in Polish and international literature is modestly presented. This is confirmed by the number of scientific publications for example - in leading databases (WoS, SCOPUS, SPRINGER, etc.) Therefore, the result of research can be considered as pioneering, which can be a voice in the discussion of the contemporary business and management challenges in the international area.

Acknowledgments

The research project founded by the Czestochowa University of Technology, Faculty of Management (grant no. BS/PB - 603/3015/2014). The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions to improve the quality of the article.

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¹Age Positive initiative brings together research and information from employers on effectively managing an ageing workforce of all generations. Download and use this information freely in communications and in connection with supporting employers. See more: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/age-positive>

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