



Gender Differences in Communication Styles. A Systematic Review Using the PRISMA Protocol

Różnice płci w stylach komunikacji. Przegląd systematyczny z zastosowaniem protokołu PRISMA

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE: The primary objective of this paper is to examine the current differences and similarities in communication styles between women and men, specifically focusing on the communication characteristics of Generation Z.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS: The study explores how gender and generational differences manifest in communication styles. To address this aim, a systematic literature review was conducted using the PRISMA protocol. The review included peer-reviewed, open-access articles from 2013 onwards, sourced from Web of Science and Scopus, resulting in 25 relevant studies after applying strict inclusion criteria.

THE PROCESS OF ARGUMENTATION: The argumentation process within this paper is built upon a thorough analysis of existing literature regarding gender differences in communication.

RESEARCH RESULTS: The analysis of the identified studies reveals persistent differences in communication styles between women and men. Women's communication tends to be more emotionally expressive and relationship-oriented, while men's communication is typically more direct, specific, and focused on asserting power and status. However, the studies examined mostly focused on interpersonal communication rather than professional contexts, with limited attention to Generation Z.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPLICABLE VALUE OF RESEARCH: The review highlights a significant research gap regarding gendered communication in professional settings and the communication styles of Generation Z. Further studies are recommended

to explore these areas, particularly in light of Generation Z's increasing presence in the workforce and evolving communication patterns.

→ **KEYWORDS:** **COMMUNICATION, GENDER DIFFERENCES, PRISMA, WOMEN'S LANGUAGE, MEN'S LANGUAGE**

STRESZCZENIE

CEL NAUKOWY: Głównym celem niniejszego opracowania jest wskazanie aktualnych różnic i podobieństw w stylach komunikacji kobiet i mężczyzn, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem cech komunikacyjnych pokolenia Z.

PROBLEM I METODY BADAWCZE: Artykuł podejmuje problematykę wpływu różnic płciowych i pokoleniowych na styl komunikacji. Aby odnieść się do tej kwestii, przeprowadzono systematyczny przegląd literatury z wykorzystaniem protokołu PRISMA. Przegląd obejmował recenzowane artykuły *open-access* opublikowane od 2013 roku, pochodzące z baz Web of Science i Scopus, a po zastosowaniu kryteriów włączenia w przeglądzie uwzględniono 25 artykułów.

PROCES WYWODU: Proces argumentacji w tym artykule oparty jest na szczegółowej analizie istniejącej literatury dotyczącej różnic płciowych w komunikacji.

WYNIKI ANALIZY NAUKOWEJ: Analiza zidentyfikowanych badań ujawnia utrzymujące się różnice w stylach komunikacji między kobietami a mężczyznami. Komunikacja kobiet jest bardziej emocjonalna i ukierunkowana na budowanie relacji, podczas gdy komunikacja mężczyzn jest bardziej bezpośrednia, konkretna i skoncentrowana na asertywności w kwestii władzy i statusu. Niemniej jednak badania, które zostały przeanalizowane, koncentrowały się głównie na komunikacji interpersonalnej, a nie na kontekstach zawodowych, z ograniczoną uwagą poświęconą pokoleniu Z.

WNIOSKI, REKOMENDACJE I APLIKACYJNE ZNACZENIE WPŁYWU BADAŃ: Przegląd literatury wskazuje na istotną lukę badawczą dotyczącą komunikacji ze względu na płeć w kontekstach zawodowych oraz stylów komunikacji pokolenia Z. Zaleca się przeprowadzenie dalszych badań w tych obszarach, zwłaszcza w świetle rosnącej obecności pokolenia Z na rynku pracy oraz ewoluujących wzorców komunikacyjnych.

→ **SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** **KOMUNIKACJA, RÓŻNICE PŁCI, PRISMA, JĘZYK KOBIET, JĘZYK MĘŻCZYZN**

Introduction

Effective communication is crucial for successful social interactions in both personal and professional contexts. Communication style refers to the distinct patterns of verbal, paralinguistic, and nonverbal behaviors that individuals use to convey and interpret messages. This dynamic process involves not only the transmission of information but also the reception and processing of feedback. By recognizing and understanding the

unique characteristics of different communication styles, individuals can enhance their ability to engage in more efficient and meaningful exchanges. Such understanding promotes smoother interactions, reduces misunderstandings, and fosters clearer communication. The aim of this paper is to examine the influence of gender and generations on communication styles, with a particular focus on the communication differences between women and men, the impact of these differences within organizational settings, and the communication characteristics of Generation Z.

The Influence of Gender and Generation on Communication Styles – State of the Art

Female and Male Communication Style

Gender differences in communication styles have been widely recognized in the literature, with women and men exhibiting distinct tendencies in their ways of expressing themselves. Women are generally more focused on relationships, seeking to create and maintain closeness, while men are typically more task-oriented, instrumental, and focused on gathering information or asserting social status and power. A key aspect of these differences lies in how self-identity is communicated. For men, self-worth is often linked to achieving results, while for women, it is defined by emotions and the quality of interpersonal relationships (Gray, 1992). Female communication tends to be more indirect, emotional, and detailed, whereas male communication is usually more direct, concise, and goal-oriented (Mulac et al., 2001). Table 1 presents the detailed characteristics of male and female communication styles.

Table 1. Female and male communication styles'

Female communication style	Male communication style
Speak to build and maintain contact with others.	Speak to present yourself and your ideas.
Share your feelings and listen to others' confessions.	Talking about oneself can harm you.
Speak to create symmetrical relationships with others.	Speak to gain power and establish your status.
Comparing experiences is meant to show understanding and compassion.	Comparing experiences can be a strategy for competition.
Helping others involves showing understanding and compassion.	Helping others involves doing something useful.
Maintain conversation by asking questions.	Everyone acts on their own and is responsible for themselves.
Show interest to encourage others to present their ideas.	Be assertive so others perceive you as decisive and trustworthy.
Conversation is a form of connection between people, where all elements matter.	Conversation is a linear sequence aimed at transmitting information and achieving a goal. Anything that does not serve this goal is seen as an obstacle.

Source: Zuber, 1999, p. 39.

Research in gender linguistics gained significance in the 1970s in both Europe and the United States (Kloch, 2000). According to the literature, differences between the language of women and men are evident and are shaped by both biological and socio-cultural factors. Certain linguistic variations have been attributed to inherent biological differences, with researchers referring to these distinctions as “biological styles” or “biolects” (Skubalanka, 1976; Wilkoń, 1987). However, alongside these biological influences, social and cultural factors also play a critical role. Gender-specific socialization processes, including societal expectations placed on girls and boys and the roles designated for women and men, contribute to shaping distinct linguistic patterns. Thus, the linguistic differences between genders can be understood as a complex interplay of biological and socio-cultural foundations (Opperman & Weber, 2000; Zuber, 1999). However, there is research in the literature confirming that some differences in the communication styles of women and men are the result of factors other than gender. According to table 1, in general men are more specific in their communication style. However, there is research indicating that, depending on the situational context, women may be more specific. According to research conducted by Joshi et al. (2021) talking to a recipient who is psychologically closer to a woman makes a woman communicate more specifically than a man.

Communication Style of Generation Z

When examining generational differences in communication, the following section of the article focuses on Generation Z, defined as those born from 1995 onwards (Messyas, 2021). Studies on previous generations often revealed communication style differences between genders. However, an intriguing area of research involves this newest generation, for which there is still limited evidence on gender-based differences in communication styles.

A defining feature of Generation Z's communication style is their preference for brief messages. Gen Z tends to opt for texting over phone calls, as they find talking uncomfortable and prefer to avoid wasting time (Janssen & Carradini, 2021). Additionally, this generation values communication that is open and transparent (Suryanarayana Reddy, 2024). Their communication style is characterized by concise, clear, and multimedia-rich language. Crucially, the language should be chosen in a way that allows the message to be quickly and easily understood (Stawicka, 2023).

In the workplace context Generation Z tends to demonstrate a more consistent, fast-paced, and responsive communication style, emphasizing one-on-one interactions more than earlier generations. Furthermore, studies emphasize that Generation Z values being heard by their supervisors and seeks recognition for their viewpoints. This reflects a broader shift in organizational dynamics, where the focus is less on generational differences and more on acknowledging the value of individual contributions and perspectives (Rathi & Kumar, 2023).

Research Methodology

In the context of the ongoing analysis, two primary research questions were formulated:
Q1: What communication differences between women and men are indicated by current studies?

Q2: How do contemporary studies address communication styles specifically among Generation Z?

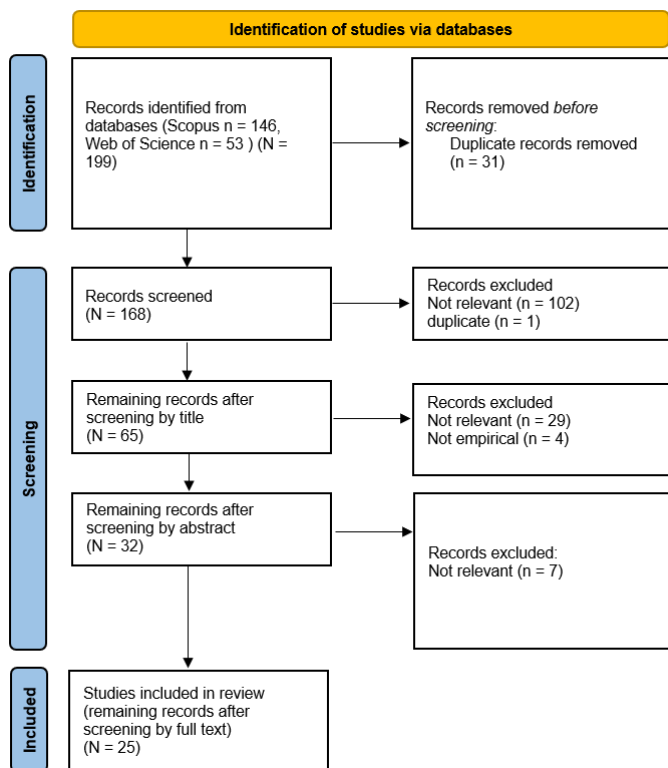
To address these research questions, a systematic review was undertaken, adhering to the guidelines set forth by the PRISMA protocol, which ensures a rigorous and transparent approach to literature synthesis and analysis (Moher et al., 2015). This methodology facilitates a comprehensive examination of relevant studies, while minimizing potential biases and increasing the reliability of the conclusions drawn. The search syntax used was: gender AND "communication styles." Searches were conducted in two databases: Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus. The databases were selected based on references to other authors' articles relevant to this field (Morejón-Llamas et al., 2024; Salgado et al., 2024). Search was limited to papers in English and Polish. Only open-access studies were included. The study covered articles published between January 2013 and September 2024. Articles from 2013 onwards were considered to focus on the latest research, specifically addressing Generation Z, whose first members reached adulthood that year (Messyas, 2021).

The review applied the following inclusion criteria:

- peer-reviewed articles,
- studies examining the relationship between gender and communication styles,
- primary research papers.

Studies were excluded if they were not open access, published before 2013, written in languages other than English or Polish, not based on primary research, or unrelated to gender differences in communication styles. To ensure methodological rigor and minimize selection bias, the screening of titles, abstracts, and full texts was independently performed by two researchers. The review was limited to open-access articles published in English and Polish, which may have excluded relevant studies in other languages or behind paywalls. Additionally, focusing only on primary research and searching only two databases (Web of Science and Scopus) might have restricted the scope and comprehensiveness of the findings. Figure 1 presents the PRISMA flow chart, illustrating the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Initially, 199 potential articles on the relationship between gender and communication styles were identified. After an initial screening, 31 duplicate articles were removed. The remaining articles were screened by title to assess compliance with the inclusion criteria, leading to the exclusion of 101 records that did not focus on gender differences in communication styles. Additionally, one article was a duplicate. Following a review of abstracts, 33 more articles were deemed irrelevant to the study. Finally, 25 papers were included in the review, with 7 records excluded after full-text screening due to their lack of relevance to the research topics.

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram



Source: Own study based on Page et al., 2021.

Results

Synthesis of the Results

All articles included in the review were published in English. The first part synthetically collected publications qualified for the review, and then assessed whether there were similarities and differences in communication between women and men in a given article and whether they concerned the organizational outline. The results of this analysis are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Similarities and Differences in Men's and Women's Communication: A Synthesis

No	Article	Similarities	Differences	Gen Z
1	Gutiérrez-Santiuste & Ritacco-Real, 2024	+	+	+
2	Spahn et al., 2022	+	+	–
3	Koçak & Vergiveren, 2019	–	+	+
4	Fereydooni et al., 2022	+	+	–
5	Sabater, 2017	+	+	N/A
6	Rabab'ah & Belgrimet, 2020	–	+	N/A
7	Santoso et al., 2021	+	+	No information
8	Schlamp et al., 2021	+	–	+
9	Löffler-Stastka et al., 2016	–	+	–
10	Barnett et al., 2020	–	+	–
11	Mayuga & Petrosyan, 2022	–	+	N/A
12	Roter et al., 2014	+	+	–
13	DeJesus et al., 2021	+	+	N/A
14	Dash et al., 2021	–	+	–
15	Kapadia-Kundu et al., 2022	–	+	–
16	Graf et al., 2017	–	+	–
17	Maximova & Lukyanova, 2020	–	+	N/A
18	Johnson et al., 2014	–	+	–
19	Angelakis et al., 2024	–	+	N/A
20	Lim et al., 2015	–	+	–
21	Scull et al., 2022	–	+	–
22	Mazzi et al., 2014	–	+	–
23	Iosub et al., 2014	–	+	N/A
24	Balt et al., 2021	–	+	+
25	Öztunc & Yildirim, 2021	–	+	–

Source: own research.

According to the data presented in Table 2, the majority of studies analyzed in the publications (24) identified differences in the women and men communication styles. In contrast, only 8 publications highlighted similarities. The synthesis of findings also considered whether the respondents assessed for communication differences were representatives of Generation Z. In three publications (numbers 1, 8, and 24), the research specifically involved representatives of Generation Z. In the remaining studies, respondents of various ages were included, encompassing multiple generations. In several studies (e.g. numbers 5, 6, 11), it was not possible to determine the respondents' ages, as the research primarily focused on analyzing the content of posts or emails.

Similarities in communication between men and women

Similarities in communication styles between women and men were identified in 7 out of 25 publications included in the review (numbers: 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12, and 13). These similarities primarily pertain to general categories of communication. Women and men exhibit comparable levels of behavioral, affective, and cognitive communication. Additionally, they demonstrated similar tendencies in the use of general formulations. Furthermore, communication styles were found to be similar during psychological sessions.

Differences in communication between men and women

Based on the analysis, several differences in the women and men communication styles were identified. The main goal of women's communication is to build relationships (e.g. number 23). Conversation is based on topics such as: family, culture, fashion or appearance (e.g. number 17). Women's communication is also characterized by a greater frequency of gossip (e.g. number 3), greater talkativeness and a tendency to perceive themselves as funny, sociable, positive and emotionally expressive people. Their statements are emotionally charged (e.g. number 10, 23). They rarely use non-verbal expressions of aggression, which, when present, take the form of passive aggression. Men's conversations focus on political, economic or management topics (e.g. number 17). They avoid discussing personal topics. Their statements are not as emotionally charged as women's. Men's communication style is characterized by clarity, directness and dominance (e.g. number 25). Men are usually specific, self-confident and assertive in expressing opinions, often using language to demonstrate power. Verbal expressions of aggression, such as insults, are more common among men, and such aggression is clear and open. Some publications also indicate that women have better communication skills compared to men, distinguishing themselves in both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication (e.g. numbers 16, 22).

Generation Z

The respondents in analyzed publications were typically representatives of various generations. The initial aim of the study was to analyze communication styles in the context of Generation Z. However, a review of the available literature revealed a limited number of studies focusing exclusively on this demographic group. Of all the studies identified, only one publication categorized respondents into three distinct generational groups: Generation Z, Millennials, and Generation X. The remaining publications did not apply a similar generational division. Some of the reviewed studies relied on content analyses of statements, emails, and posts, without specifying the ages of the individuals who authored them. In some publications (e.g. number 24), the average age of respondents suggested

that they were representatives of Generation Z. In other studies (numbers e.g. 14, 15), the lower age limit of respondents was frequently 18, indicating that while these studies included participants from Generation Z, they also involved individuals from other generations. These studies, therefore, did not exclusively focus on Generation Z but rather encompassed a broader demographic. The findings indicate a significant research gap and highlight the need for in-depth analyses of communication among members of Generation Z, particularly in light of their increasing presence in the labor market.

Conclusion

The analysis confirms that gender-based differences in communication styles remain evident, women tend to communicate in a more emotionally expressive and relationship oriented manner, while men show a preference for directness and status assertion. These patterns align with long-established gendered language stereotypes. The first research question was therefore answered (Q1). However, the lack of extensive research on communication within professional contexts, especially among Generation Z limits our understanding of how these differences manifest in the workplace. Due to the limited number of publications, it was not possible to answer the second research question (Q2). This highlights the need for further studies focused on organizational communication and generational dynamics. From an educational and organizational perspective, these findings suggest the importance of integrating communication skills training into both formal education and workplace development programs. Raising awareness of gender and generational nuances in communication can foster more inclusive, effective, and adaptive environments across educational and professional settings.

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