

## Gender differences in work values. A study in the Colombian labor force

### *Diferencias de género en los valores laborales. Un estudio en la fuerza de trabajo colombiana*

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**Abstract:** changes in business dynamics require closer attention to the interests and motivations of the human talent to captivate and retain individuals to meet their personal expectations and organizational goals. This study aims to examine whether gender presents an orientation towards extrinsic, intrinsic, social, and prestige work values of individuals in the workplace. Quantitative cross-sectional research was conducted, and the data was collected through a questionnaire. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin factor analysis and sample adequacy analysis were used to analyze the correlations between variables and evaluate the fit of the data, as well as the hypothesis test that provides the difference of means for comparison. The study involved 535 individuals, who were classified into 331 women and 204 men located in Colombia. The results showed that there is a greater orientation of women towards extrinsic work values, aspects such as salary and job security are essential when looking for a job or staying for a long time in an organization, with no differences between men and women to intrinsic, social and prestige values.

**Keywords:** work values, gender, human talent, workers, human resource management.

**Resumen:** los cambios en las dinámicas empresariales requieren atender con mayor detalle los intereses y motivaciones del talento humano con el fin de cautivar, retener y fidelizar a los individuos para que cumplan sus expectativas personales y objetivos de la organización. El propósito de este estudio es examinar si el género presenta una orientación hacia los valores laborales extrínsecos, intrínsecos, sociales y de prestigio de los individuos en su lugar de trabajo. Se realiza una investigación cuantitativa de corte transeccional, la recolección de información se llevó a cabo a través de un cuestionario. Se aplica el análisis factorial y adecuación muestral de Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin para analizar las correlaciones entre variables y evaluar el ajuste de los datos, así como la prueba de hipótesis que proporciona la diferencia de medias para realizar comparaciones. En el estudio participaron 535 individuos clasificados en 331 mujeres y 204 hombres ubicados en Colombia. Los resultados mostraron que existe una mayor orientación de las mujeres hacia los valores laborales extrínsecos, aspectos como el salario y seguridad laboral son esenciales a la hora de buscar un empleo o permanecer durante mucho tiempo en una organización, con nulas diferencias entre hombres y mujeres frente a los valores intrínsecos, sociales y de prestigio.

**palabras claves:** valores laborales, género, talento humano, trabajadores, gestión de recursos humanos.

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## Introduction

There are several challenges to be faced by managers in the area of human talent. Diversity driven by demographic changes, the entry and exit of talent in organizations as a result of globalization have promoted the analysis of the expectations and interests of people about employment and suggest promoting the participation of relationships with employees as a strategy to attract and retain the best assets (Cachón-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2022).

In order to deepen the knowledge of the workforce, research in human resources management has been oriented towards the study of labor values, which represent the priorities of the individuals to be achieved through their work (Dahiya and Raghuvanshi, 2023) or are defined as the internal rules of the collaborator that serve to evaluate factors (Li *et al.*, 2022; Ren *et al.*, 2020) offered by the employer such as organizational support, job compensations, flexibility and autonomy in the activities to be performed (Drewery *et al.*, 2023).

Some studies indicate that knowing the preferences that an individual has to select a company or decide to remain linked, facilitates adjusting policies and practices of human management (Mohammadi *et al.*, 2023), as well as managing labor diversity in terms of generation and inclusion (Bosch and Hernández, 2020; Chillakuri, 2020), controlling rotation, in addition to favoring motivation and leadership (Ramírez *et al.*, 2022).

In addition to the above, several authors have decided to include the gender variable in the analysis of labor values based on the alleged existence of discrepancies in the labor field between men and women that could guide their behaviors and impact on the results of their position and, therefore, of the company (Cemalcilar *et al.*, 2019; Trzebiatowski and Triana, 2020). Studies have validated this position, highlighting that there are differences, where women express greater favoritism for social and intrinsic values such as labor flexibility and pleasant work environments. Meanwhile, men are oriented towards values related to power, higher wage expectations and jobs with greater autonomy and/or prestige (Krahn and Galambo 2014; Silva and Carvalho, 2021).

Other research indicates that job preferences between men and women are statistically weak to assume that they are different when it comes to adopting roles in companies and working as a team (Gilbert *et al.*, 2010). Proof of this is the study conducted by Bacher *et al.* (2022) where they identified little effort to support gender differences with respect to extrinsic values, but they found greater differences in intrinsic values when people reached an older age or reported not having a partner. These assumptions open the door to analyze whether or not there is a gender orientation towards work values, fundamentally when changes in preferences and expectations occur in individuals that lead to it being more difficult for organizations to propose successful recruitment and retention strategies (Waterwall *et al.*, 2023).

In Latin America there are few studies that examine labor values and in general, the behaviors of employees in the framework of human resources management. In a bibliometric analysis carried out by Pedraja-Rejas *et al.* (2022), the authors pointed out that the Ibero-American production on human resources management issues in prestigious journals was still marginal, being a challenge for those who wanted to expand management knowledge in this area. In addition to the above, the literature review carried out for this research reflected that some studies on gender in this context were related to employment and digital divide (Galperin and Arcidiacono, 2021), family business (Vazquez *et al.*, 2024), female leadership (Baselga-Pascual and Vahamaa, 2021) and entrepreneurship ecosystems (Villegas-Mateos, 2022), indicating that there is a knowledge gap where this research is considered novel.

Hence, this research aims to investigate whether gender has an orientation towards labor values taking individuals of working age from Colombia, considered one of the most populous Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America (Zwerg-Villegas *et al.*, 2022) with a heterogeneous labor market that presents levels of inequality in terms of income and gender (García *et al.*, 2023; Fajardo *et al.* 2018).

The implementation of this research falls into two purposes, from the theoretical point of view this study seeks to contribute to a field of scientific

literature unexplored in Latin America that encourages other scholars to address human resources management issues in relation to the differences that may exist in the behaviors of men and women in the work environment. Secondly, the contribution is made in order to favor business practice due to the “war for talent” that is being presented between organizations that seek to work with the best (Stiglbaue *et al.*, 2022). The findings presented in this article constitute guiding elements for human management managers to redesign their personnel policies aligned with the work values of their employees, taking gender as a differentiator. In addition, facilitate the construction of an advantage based on a favorable business image that meets both the expectations of the organization in terms of performance and as a means for employees to achieve their personal goals.

The structure of this article begins with the theoretical foundation that contributes to the development of the study and the hypothesis approach. Subsequently, the methodology used is explained, which includes the participants, the instrument and the applied statistical analysis technique. Finally, the results discussed with other authors that guide the conclusions are offered, as well as the limitations and future lines of research.

## Theoretical foundation

### Labor Values

Understanding the behaviors of employees in companies is a key practice that facilitates identifying work values. Prioritizing people’s expectations of their work environment and what they perceive as valuable in creating a desirable work experience (Drewery *et al.*, 2023) can be an input to design human resource strategies, as well as an important predictor of outcomes such as engagement (Dahiya and Raghuvanshi, 2023) and labor turnover (Li *et al.*, 2022).

The first contributions in this topic relate to work values with aspects of work that motivate the human being, where the individual with his/her attitudes and opinions evaluates the work environment (Pennings, 1970) and, in addition, has beliefs about employment (Elizur, 1984) that

are linked to the rewards expected for the performance (Dose, 1997). Subsequently, other contributions to the concept highlight that there are preferences based on generalized opinions that relate to attributes and results that the worker wants from his/her employment (Dajani, 2018) and that do not correspond to a specific profession but are part of a culture and basic human values (Bacher *et al.*, 2022).

Common classifications of labor values include intrinsic values defined as the intangible rewards that are generated when performing a job, such as the opportunity for growth or the possibility of carrying out an interesting activity (Cemalcilar *et al.*, 2019); and extrinsic values, which are classified as external rewards associated with performance such as comfort and money (Godlewska-Werner *et al.*, 2020; Twenge, 2010). Other categories have been added to this classification such as prestige values related to labor aspects that grant power and contribute to obtaining the respect of employees through positions of authority and influence (Ng *et al.*, 2018); and, the corresponding social or affective values with interpersonal relationships, social roles within the company and contribution from a position to society (Rani and Samuel, 2016).

On the other hand, professional development theory highlights that labor values rooted in adolescence reflect general human values and tend to remain stable in adulthood, although they can vary according to the cultural, social and economic context (Cemalcilar *et al.*, 2019; Silva and Carvalho, 2021). This understanding suggests that professional decisions are influenced by the search for work roles that resonate with these ingrained values, prioritizing those that align with individual preferences and meet both work and personal expectations (Baranik *et al.*, 2022; Choi, 2017). This theoretical framework, supported by diverse research, offers a valuable perspective to understand how people navigate and make decisions on their professional trajectories in the contemporary world.

## Gender and its relationship to labor values

Gender research has been the subject of increasing study in the area of human resources. Some authors have examined this variable in order to provide further explanations on how work values affect the preferences and expectations of employees towards their work environment (Godlewska-Werner *et al.*, 2020).

The interest in conducting research taking gender as a variable of analysis is based on some studies that suggest that the roles assumed by both men and women are built from socialization processes that occur during the childhood of an individual (Sharabi, 2014), experiencing life differently, which means a variation in their behaviors and behaviors (Huang *et al.*, 2021). This could also be due to the incorporation of stereotyped qualities that originate when the individual selects situations, roles or occupations that allow him to show the characteristics associated with the gender he/she represents (Netchaeva *et al.*, 2022).

These arguments are supported in social theory, which points out that individuals develop different beliefs associated with gender that allow them to form a personality as a result of social pressure and in order to fulfill specific functions within society (Masuda *et al.*, 2023). This means that the roles played by both men and women could influence the expectations or meanings they create in relation to what their employment should be or the rewards that could be obtained from it (Maseda *et al.*, 2023).

Some studies have revealed the presence of differences in work values based on gender. Konrad *et al.* (2000) pioneered a meta-analysis in which they examined 242 samples that showed that men and boys had preferences for values such as promotion, power and autonomy, while women and girls preferred to develop interpersonal relationships, help others and have a positive work environment. Something similar was found by Warr (2008), who identified that men attached more importance to responsibility and opportunities for promotion, achievement and initiative, and women were inclined to have pleasant com-

panions, the opportunity to meet people and a work schedule that suited their needs.

Meanwhile, Sharabi (2014) conducted a study in Israel showing that, unlike men, women are oriented towards values such as flexibility in schedules and the adjustment between work and skills. It also found that, in relation to aspects related to remuneration and job security, women had the same preference as men.

In more recent research, Waterwall *et al.* (2023) sought to test the orientation of women towards intrinsic values and of men towards extrinsic values. The results showed, unlike the authors, that women gave more importance to both types of values in the work than men. In the same year, Lasseben and Hofmann (2023) concluded that there are differences in the work values of men and women, i.e., they found that women were more inclined towards intrinsic values than men. Meanwhile, they could not confirm that the male gender had greater preference in extrinsic values. These findings are similar to those examined by Godlewska-Werner *et al.* (2020), who noted that, compared to men, women prefer social relationships and support to safety and showed no differences in extrinsic values associated with comfort and money.

As observed, the results obtained reveal that there are gender differences in the labor values presented by individuals. This could be the result of the presence of social structures that orient men and women towards certain values that symbolize aspirations, expectations and life experiences (Maseda *et al.*, 2023); as well as changes that have suffered gender roles where occupations would no longer be related to traditional stereotypes marked by society (Netchaeva *et al.*, 2022). Based on the assumption that there is a gender orientation towards labor values, the following hypotheses are proposed:

$H_0$ : gender does not have an orientation towards labor values (extrinsic, intrinsic, social, prestige).

$H_1$ : Gender has an orientation towards labor values (extrinsic, intrinsic, social, prestige).

## Methodology

### Participants

The total number of participants for this research was 535 individuals of working age from Colombia. People were classified according to their age, the ranges used were as follows: 176 born

between 1965-1979; 186 born between 1980-1994 and 174 born between 1995-2012. The total number of men was 204 and of women 331. Regarding the educational level, the sample comprised 135 bachelors, 62 technicians and technologists, 94 professionals and 244 postgraduate students, currently, 400 people have jobs and 135 do not work (see table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Demographic characteristics of individuals*

Demographic characteristics	Number (%)
Year range based on birth	
1965-1979	175 (33 %)
1980-1994	186 (35 %)
1995-2004	174 (32 %)
Currently working	
Yes	400 (75 %)
No	135 (25 %)
Educational Level	
Bachelor	135 (25 %)
Technician and technologist	62 (12 %)
Professional	94 (18 %)
Graduate	244 (45 %)
Gender	
Female	331 (62 %)
Male	204 (38 %)

### Measures

Gender was coded for this research with female = 1 and male = 0. On the other hand, labor values were measured through the Lyons scale (2003) which is composed of 4 dimensions related to intrinsic values 8 items (eg. Work on tasks and projects that challenge your skills), extrinsic values 9 items (e.g. having access to the information you need to do your job), social values 4 items (e.g. working in a lively and fun environment) and prestige values 4 items (e.g. doing work that makes a significant impact on the organization). Response options were given from the Likert scale from 5 (absolutely essential) to 1 (unimportant). The reliability of the instrument, calculated by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, was 0.89. In this case, reliability is considered to be good, which allows us to conclude that the instrument's items adequately measure the construct they represent and present a high correlation with each other.

### Procedure

Factor analysis (FA) aims to detect if there are unobserved (latent) variables that explain why the variables are correlated with each other and can be grouped in a data reduction process, i.e., if a set of visible variables has a strong correlation between them, but at the same time the correlation with another set of variables is low, it is clear to reason that each set may explain an implicit factor causing that characteristic behavior. The FA consists of four stages: estimating an ideal matrix to enunciate the joint variability of all variables, calculating the optimal number of factors, rotating the solution to provide a simpler understanding and estimating the scores of individuals in the new dimensions (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy is used as a criterion to assess how well the data are suitable for FA. In addition, Chi-square quality indices, the comparative adjustment index (CFI) with an adjustment criterion, the non-nor-

malized adjustment index (NNFI) with an adjustment criterion, the standardized residual mean square root (SRMR.) with an adjustment criterion, and the square root of the approximation error mean (RMSEA) with an adjustment criterion are used. The hypothesis test for the difference of means is also used in order to compare groups, specifically gender with each of the labor values (extrinsic, intrinsic, social, prestige).

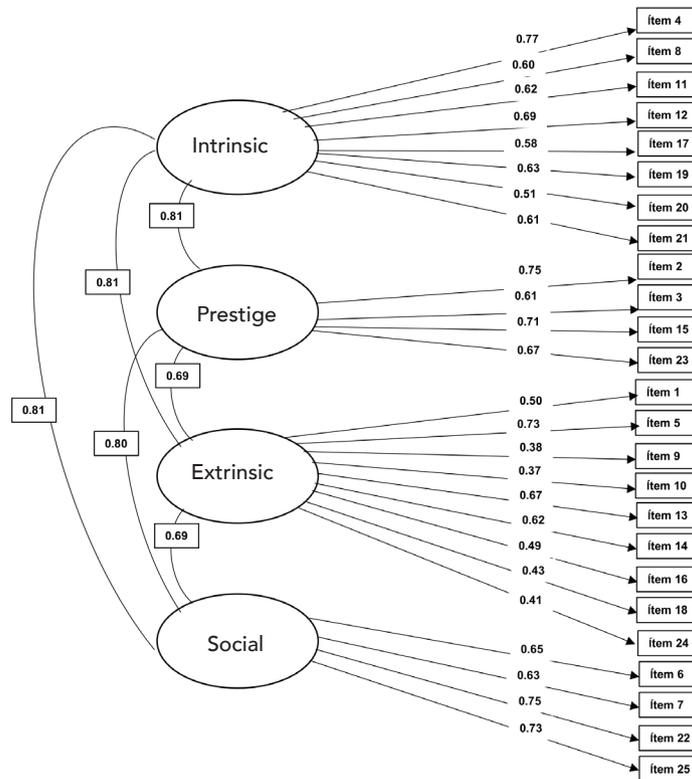
## Results

The value of KMO was estimated before the factorial analysis, and its overall measure was 0.91. The KMO measure was also evaluated in each item, which allowed to verify that all can be used in the ACF because they presented a value greater than 0.77. In addition, the Bartlett sphericity test gives a p-value < 0.001. These results indicate that the database used is appropriate for the AFC. For factor analysis, the 25 survey items were introduced. The results indicate that four factors have an eigenvalue greater than 1 and these explain 46.7% of the total variance (see table 2).

**Table 2**  
*Labor values own values for AFC*

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Eigenvalue	4,918	2,575	2,233	1,950
Variance Proportion	0,197	0,103	0,089	0,078
Cumulative variance	0,197	0,300	0,389	0,467

**Figure 1**  
*Factor loads confirming factors for labor values*



La figura 1 presenta inicialmente que los valores laborales intrínsecos, prestigio, extrínsecos y sociales presentan altas correlaciones entre ellos. También se observa que todos los ítems que conforman los valores laborales de prestigio y valores laborales sociales tienen cargas factoriales altas. Figure 1 initially shows that intrinsic labor values, prestige, extrinsic and social values present high correlations between them. It is also observed that all the items that make up the prestige labor values and social labor values have high factor loads. As for the factor loads of most items of the other labor values are also good. The Chi-squa-

re value ( $\chi^2=825.42$ ,  $n=535$ ,  $p\text{-valor}=0,0000$ ) was determined to be significant.

The goodness-of-fit measures are shown in Table 3, with a mean square approximation error (RMSEA) value of 0.099 and residual square mean root (SRMR.) value of 0.096, representing an acceptable range for good fit. The comparative adjustment index (CFI) is equal to 0.934 and the non-normalized adjustment index (NNFI) is equal to 0.927, the adjustment being found to be adequate. Overall, it can be concluded that the adjustment is good for the four factors represented by intrinsic labor values, prestige, extrinsic and social

**Table 3**  
*Factor analysis adjustment measures*

Index	Value found
RMSEA	0,099
IFC	0,934
NNFI	0,927
SRMR	0,096

The test of hypothesis of difference between means at a level of significance of 5%, highlights that there is a difference between the orientation of the value of extrinsic work between men and women, noting that the female gender is the one who has a greater disposition in their working life towards obtaining benefits that meet their needs as a person, receive timely and constructive

feedback on their performance, have job security, have a schedule that is compatible with their personal life, work in an environment that favors the balance between their interests and those of the organization, have access to information to perform their work, receive recognition for a job well done and work under the supervision of someone considered and who offers support.

**Table 4**  
*Proof of the difference in means between labor values and gender of the worker*

Labor Values	Test Statistic	p-value
Extrinsic	2,19870	0,02846
Intrinsic	1,59610	0,11130
Social	0,85495	0,39310
Prestige	1,10000	0,27200

Note. Significance level is 0.05.

Regarding intrinsic, social and prestige labor values, it was found that there is no difference between men and women. Therefore, there is no orientation towards these three work values and gender, which allows us to conclude that carrying out activities that challenge their skills,

working in a lively and fun environment, and performing tasks with a significant impact on the organization is important for both women and men. In sum, these findings offered by the data analysis allowed to reject the null hypothesis proposed for this research, which means that the

alternative hypothesis that proves that the female gender has an orientation towards extrinsic labor values is accepted.

## Discussion of results

The results of this study suggest that there is a gender orientation towards work values. This makes sense from the social theory, which mentions that men and women adopt different values that are subject to the roles they play in society and the socialization experiences to which they have been subjected during their development (Eagly *et al.*, 2020). In other words, this could indicate that both men and women have different interests towards their workplace that vary according to the situations, cultures and roles that are created to respond to the socioeconomic demands of the context where they grow professionally (Eagly and Wood, 2012; Ng *et al.*, 2022).

The findings allowed to determine that there is an orientation of the female gender towards extrinsic labor values. An interesting contribution of this research is that women were the ones who presented the most orientation by aspects that are related to obtaining a high salary and benefits that meet their personal needs based on job security, performance, balance in their life, access to information, among others. This result is considered novel because it differs from previous research where men valued extrinsic characteristics more due to their competitive personality, greater propensity to risk, in addition to granting more value to money and power (Karriker *et al.*, 2021; Krahn and Galambo 2014; Masuda *et al.*, 2023). Whereas, in a traditional way, women have been more oriented towards intrinsic values due to the lack of opportunities to ascend or occupy positions with authority (Baranik *et al.*, 2022), seeking to eliminate the barriers that hinder their advancement in the company through alternatives of growth and progress (Maseda *et al.*, 2023).

Likewise, when analyzing the reason for this variation in the results compared to the findings presented by other authors, it could be considered that women have modified the way of conceiving work since they have had to face different milestones in their personal and work lives, as

well as witness a movement that proclaims greater equality in the occupations derived from the transformation in employment and education (Eagly *et al.*, 2020). Another aspect could be the force being taken by initiatives to reduce the gender pay gap in order to eradicate the glass ceiling and give way to a gender-equal employment position (Cárdenas-Angarita *et al.*, 2020; Huang *et al.*, 2021).

On the other hand, the findings of this study did not allow to verify the orientation of gender towards intrinsic, social and prestige labor values. These results are probably due to the fact that gender roles have changed, i.e., occupations no longer bear a relationship with male or female stereotypes due to the flexibility that has emerged in individuals to adapt to more diverse work environments (Eagly and Wood, 2012).

This could suggest that both genders value equally organizational environments where they can grow, have freedom to distribute their time and develop their skills (Bacher *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, although women have been singled out as more likely to value good teamwork and social networking (Lassleben and Hofmann, 2023), men may also be orienting their values toward organizations that offer a fun work environment where they can put their skills into practice. With respect to prestige values, men are related with a greater propensity for the search for status and promotion in the hierarchy of the organization (Ng *et al.*, 2022), however, the role of women over time has varied to give them access to occupations with cognitive demands and work prestige (Netchaeva *et al.*, 2022). This could be a consequence of increased opportunities in the labor market, as well as changes in values and attitudes that accompany new roles played in society.

These results suggest that there is in some cases a gender orientation towards work values, as well as changes that have characterized men and women for years, especially in intrinsic and extrinsic values. However, these findings should be interpreted with caution since individuals develop an orientation towards certain values from cultural experiences, economic conditions, technological advances, among other variables that

may affect their preferences towards the work environment.

## Conclusions

The labor values have been examined from the academic and business field with the intention of comprehending in depth the behaviors and preferences of the workers towards an organization. From this perspective, this research delves into the orientation that gender can present towards work values in a specific work context. The results obtained are a contribution to Latin American literature that aims to encourage research on human resources issues, but also strengthen the progress offered in the academic world by other authors so far. Although it is considered incipient the publication of new knowledge from this region, there are efforts to contribute to the contextualization of concepts and theories that can strengthen the business.

On the other hand, finding the orientation of the female gender towards extrinsic labor values and not checking differences in the orientation towards intrinsic, social and prestige values, offers a guide on how gender roles have changed in Latin American countries. This means that efforts to equalize working conditions between men and women are possibly impacting values and attitudes towards jobs and organizations, leaving behind traditional stereotypes.

In this way, the results of this study allow us to provide several conclusions. It is considered that the contribution in the academy can be oriented towards the method used to carry out the research. In other words, both the instrument and the statistical technique implemented proved to be reliable in determining whether or not there was a gender orientation towards labor values. This implies that other authors can rely on this work to carry out their studies and to carry out future comparisons that allow to outline the preferences of workers in the Latin American context. On the other hand, the business sector will be able to take these results as input to adjust or design personnel policies that align with the expectations and interests of employees, taking gender as a variable that provides distinction about the

different types of benefits to be implemented. However, it is suggested to take this information with caution because the findings could be influenced by elements from the environment where the study participants have developed. In this case, it is recommended to examine the labor values in each organization and adjust human management practices according to what has been obtained.

As for the limitations presented by this research despite the rigor with which it was carried out, it is necessary to mention the following. First, the sample collected from participants was collected only in Colombia, reason for which it would be interesting to expand the scope to other countries in Latin America in order to carry out comparisons that contribute to the distinctions made by gender in a more global context. This would widen the knowledge barrier in this area and strengthen these countries' position on human resources. Secondly, the study is transactional, making it difficult to understand whether work values change as people grow or reach important levels in their professional development. In this sense, it is suggested to carry out longitudinal research that provides data on the stage of life or career of workers, in order to achieve a greater adjustment between what the individual wants from the personal level and what the organization expects of him.

Finally, it is suggested to address future research that is complementary to the issue of labor values. In the first instance, examine whether there are differences that can be attributed to the generation to which the individual belongs and that would continue to contribute to the explanation of why men and women present or develop different values towards their work environment. Likewise, analyze whether these values can have an impact on the performance of the organization, as well as examine them with behavioral variables such as commitment and satisfaction. These scopes would allow to expand the knowledge about the behaviors and behaviors of workers in companies and their relationship with organizational results.

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