

ASSESSMENT OF MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES BY GENERATION Z

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Purpose: The aim of the text is to identify managerial competencies that are most and least desired by representatives of Generation Z. Additionally, the article sought to examine whether there are significant statistical differences in the evaluations of these competencies between women and men of this generation participating in the study.

Design/methodology/approach: The following research hypotheses were set: H1: There are specific managerial competencies that are particularly desired by representatives of Generation Z; H2: There are specific managerial competencies that are especially undesirable for representatives of Generation Z; H3: There are statistically significant differences in the assessments of managerial competencies between women and men of Generation Z. To verify hypotheses H1 and H2, basic statistical measures were used: arithmetic mean (M), median (Me), and standard deviation (SD). The Mann-Whitney U test was employed to verify hypothesis H3.

Findings: All competencies that were the subject of the study are highly rated by respondents, indicating a general consensus that these competencies are crucial for managers. The highest-rated competency is the clear definition of task structure, and the ability to manage crises effectively is also highly valued by respondents. Among competencies with lower ratings are such as creating an organized list of tasks that take into account the interdependencies between them or effectively motivating employees by using both rewards and punishments to achieve desired results. However, these competencies also achieved relatively high average values, emphasizing their significance. The Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant statistical differences in evaluations between women and men, confirming that both groups have similar expectations and opinions about the importance of various managerial competencies.

Research limitations/implications: The limitations of the text include the lack of representativeness of the study, resulting in the inability to generalize the findings. Future research directions may include: determining differences in the perception of managerial competencies stemming from diverse cultural traditions, examining whether respondents' expectations differ depending on the industry or sector they are employed in, and investigating whether specific personality traits influence expectations regarding managerial competencies.

Originality/value: The results can be significant for both the academic community and practitioners. This study enriches knowledge in the area of cohort theory, and the presented findings can assist in understanding Generation Z's expectations in the work environment. Additionally, the work provides a valuable contribution to literature in the field of human resource management, analyzing it through the lens of Generation Z.

Keywords: competencies, managerial competencies, generation Z.

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary labor market, four generations of employees coexist, shaped by different social and economic events. These are the Traditionalists (born before 1945), the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 - 1964), Generation X (born between 1965-1979), Generation Y (born between 1980 and 1994), and Generation Z (born in 1995 or later) (Sidor-Rzadkowska, 2018, p. 88). It should be emphasized that researchers dealing with the issue of generational diversity use both different terminology and birth periods for individuals classified into particular groups (Jeruszka, Wolan-Nowakowska, 2020, pp. 34-35; Paszkiewicz, Wasiluk, 2022).

Generations are characterized by various value systems, professional goals, levels of engagement, and motivational preferences (Różańska-Bińczyk, 2022). Additionally, representatives of these generations differ in their understanding of development, loyalty, and dedication to the organization (Warwas, Wiktorowicz, Jawor-Joniewicz, 2018, p. 22).

The subject literature allows for the identification of several areas that constitute a particular interest for researchers of Generation Z. These include:

- Approach to Technology and Digital Media - Research focuses on the interactions of representatives of this generation with technology, social media, and the internet. Researchers strive to understand how these tools impact their social life, education, and mental health (Frąckiewicz, 2023).
- Education - Research concentrates on analyzing the ways in which Generation Z learns and prepares to enter the job market (Ruszaj, Błażejowski, 2021).
- Values, Attitudes, and Mental Health - Research in this area focuses on the values held by Generation Z, their attitudes towards social and political issues, and the mental health challenges they face. Researchers strive to understand the causes of their anxieties, stress, and other mental health issues (Michalak, Olejnik, 2023).
- Consumerism and Lifestyle - Research focuses on analyzing the shopping habits of Generation Z, their preferences towards brands and products, and their interest in sustainable development and ecology. Researchers strive to understand how their social and environmental awareness impacts their purchasing decisions and lifestyle (Sobura, 2023; Szymańska, 2022).

- Social Relationships - Research in this area concentrates on how Generation Z builds and maintains relationships with others, both in the real and digital worlds. Researchers' interest also focuses on their attitudes towards diversity, discrimination, and human rights (Marciniak, 2020).
- Job Market - Researchers' interest concentrates on the professional expectations, values in the workplace, and preferences regarding the work environment of Generation Z (Wajnbrener, Werczyńska, 2022; Jankowska, 2022; Kwiecińska et al., 2023).

This text focuses on the last of the mentioned areas. It should be noted that although generational differences in the workplace and their potential consequences have been a popular subject of discussion among organizational practitioners, researchers, and commentators for several decades (Pollak et al., 2015, p. 182), the Generation Z that is currently entering the job market presents new challenges and specific characteristics that are not yet fully recognized. It seems that further, in-depth research on this topic is necessary to effectively address the needs and expectations of this group. Authors emphasize the increasing role of manager-leaders in creating conditions for effective cooperation (Juchnowicz, 2014).

With the above in mind, the aim of the text was to identify managerial competencies that are most and least desired by representatives of Generation Z. The conducted analyses were aimed at answering the following questions:

RQ 1 – Which competencies are most desired in managers according to respondents?

RQ 2 – Which competencies are least desired in managers according to respondents?

RQ 3 – Are there statistically significant differences between the evaluations of women and men participating in the study?

The following research hypotheses were proposed:

H1: There are specific managerial competencies that are particularly desired by representatives of Generation Z.

H2: There are specific managerial competencies that are particularly undesired by representatives of Generation Z.

H3: There are statistically significant differences in the evaluations of managerial competencies between women and men from Generation Z.

The method applied in the study was primarily the analysis of secondary data – theoretical and research works, as well as quantitative research conducted by the author in 2022.

2. Review of the literature

Generation Z comprises over 32% of the global population (Miller, Lu, 2019). According to GUS data, nearly 2.5 million people aged 20-27 live in Poland. In the most optimistic assumption, they currently constitute no more than 10% of the working staff (Wasiluk,

Tomaszuk, 2022, pp. 61-62). Over time, their number and significance in the labor market will steadily increase. Projections predict that by 2028, Generation Z representatives will make up as much as 58% of the global workforce (Responsible Business Forum, 2022).

Generation Z consists of young individuals who are just starting their professional careers or have recently done so. It is said that they have more in common with their global generational cohort than with their own parents. Round-the-clock access to information, mainly due to the Internet, facilitates the dissemination of values and characteristics typical of this generation (Farrell, Phungsoonthorn, 2020). However, as M. Pawłowska (2022) notes, this is a very divided generation "in which it will be so clearly visible who "inherited from their parents": education, wealth, openness to the world, and a chance for professional success."

Although generational differences in the workplace and their potential consequences have been a popular subject of discussion among organization practitioners, researchers, and journalists for several decades (Pollak et.al., 2015, p. 182), the literature concerning Generation Z is still in the developmental phase (Dwivedula, Singh, Azaran, 2019; Chillakuri, 2020). An increasing number of studies suggest that members of Generation Z differ in some significant respects from the preceding millennials (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós, Juhász, 2016; Bergler, 2020). However, it should be noted that many research findings on the characteristics of this generation are conflicting. For instance, B. Crouch (2015) and A. Bencsik, G. Horváth-Csikós, T. Juhász (2016) argue that representatives of Generation Z are very concerned with job stability and security, while according to L. Bernier (2015), they value job fit to their skills more than job security.

Generation Z presents unique challenges for organizations and managers (Chillakuri, 2020). They do not hesitate to express their desires and expect to be recognized and appreciated (Silva Sousa, Colauto, 2021). Unlike previous generations, they are very ambitious, eager to learn new things, and are not afraid to question established norms. They often wonder why climbing the professional hierarchy has to take so long (Wiktorowicz, 2016, p. 76; Lanier, 2017). Therefore, organizations should clearly define career paths for them from the outset of cooperation (Chillakuri, 2020).

Individuals from Generation Z place much more emphasis on work-life balance than their predecessors (Berge, Berge, 2019; Vilanova, 2019; Lima-Vargas, Cervantes-Aldana, Lima-Vargas, 2022). The workplace atmosphere is a key criterion for them when choosing an employer (Generation Z in the job market..., 2019). In studies conducted by C.S. Flippin (2017), it was observed that representatives of Generation Z attach great importance to "happiness", often ranking it above values such as health, family relationships and friendship, career development, financial stability, or spiritual life.

Researchers analyzing Generation Z express concerns that they might be individualists, people primarily focused on self-development and fulfilling their own ambitions. They are sometimes referred to as the generation lacking the "gene of loyalty" towards employers (Rogozińska-Pawelczyk et al., 2019, p. 21). Other experts highlight their strong egocentric

tendencies, having difficulty understanding the value of teamwork, compromise, or sharing (Leśniak, 2022, p. 69). Representatives of this generation quickly move from one task to the next, placing more emphasis on speed than accuracy. They struggle to focus on one thing and see it through. It's challenging to capture their attention so intensely that they aren't simultaneously doing something else (Grabowoda, 2018, p. 51).

Considering that the oldest representatives of this generation are just entering the job market, it's difficult to definitively assess what kind of employees they will turn out to be and what place intra-organizational relationships or trust in superiors and colleagues will hold in their professional lives. As researchers emphasize, the new generation is shaping a new profile of the employee, consumer, and citizen (Cortés Quesada, Barceló Ugarte, Fuentes Cortina, 2022). For this reason, it is extremely important to continue research on this generation.

Despite the growing interest among researchers in the topic of Generation Z in the labor market, as reflected in numerous studies focusing on various aspects related to it (Kocot, Kwasek, 2023; Chiakuri, 2020; Silva Sousa, Colauto, 2021; Rogozińska-Pawelczyk et al., 2019; Muster, 2020), the issue of how this generation perceives leadership and managerial competencies remains an open and insufficiently explored question. There is a lack of detailed studies concentrating exclusively on this subject matter. Therefore, addressing the issue of Generation Z's perception of managerial competencies in this text can significantly contribute to bridging the existing research gap, thus underscoring the importance of this matter.

3. Research methods

The analyses presented in this text are a part of a broader study conducted among representatives of Generation Z in 2022 (from January to December). Data were collected using two methods: paper-and-pencil interviewing (PAPI) and computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI). The online survey was hosted on Google Drive. A link to the survey, along with a request for its completion, was disseminated primarily through social media. Respondents who completed the survey were asked to share it among their acquaintances. For the analyses conducted in this text, only the questionnaires filled out by individuals with an education in social sciences were used – a total of 394 people. Among this group of respondents, there were 232 women (59%) and 162 men (41%).

To determine the expected managerial competencies, a questionnaire developed by the team of A.K. Koźmiński, A.K. Baczyńska, and P. Korzyński (2018, pp. 274-275) was used. This questionnaire was employed in their previous research. Unlike the original studies, where participants described specific individuals, in this research, respondents referred to a hypothetical supervisor, indicating their desired competencies (Table 1).

Table 1.*The questionnaire used to measure managerial competencies*

Question mark	Items
Mn 1	My supervisor should set and adhere to deadlines controlling the completion of assigned tasks.
Mn 2	In team activities, my supervisor should take into account employees' suggestions.
Mn 3	My supervisor should define the necessary resources to achieve goals.
Mn 4	My supervisor should adjust plans and implement corrective actions if goals are not met.
Mn 5	My supervisor should offer help and support on their own initiative.
Mn 6	My supervisor should operate efficiently in emergency situations.
Mn 7	My supervisor should create an organized task list considering the interdependence between them.
Mn 8	My supervisor should respond to feedback regarding the team's task execution methods – they should foster cooperation and information exchange.
Mn 9	My supervisor should optimally allocate tasks to employees.
Mn 10	My supervisor should efficiently, meaning effectively and skillfully, monitor the achieved results against the planned goals.
Mn 11	My supervisor should encourage employees to take the initiative and actions.
Mn 12	My supervisor should assign responsibility for tasks, e.g., determining who has the right to make decisions and to what extent.
Mn 13	My supervisor should optimally plan the time for task execution, ensuring timely goal achievement.
Mn 14	My supervisor should skillfully motivate employees, using both rewards and punishments, to achieve the intended results.
Mn 15	My supervisor should clearly define the structure of tasks so that everyone knows what, how, and when to do.

Source: based on (Baczyńska, Koźmiński, Korzyński, 2018, pp. 274-275).

The responses obtained from the respondents were coded and subjected to statistical analysis using the Statistica 14.0 software.

The reliability of the adopted measurement scale was assessed using Cronbach's α coefficient, which was 0.91. Therefore, it can be considered to be of a very good level.

To verify hypotheses H1 and H2, basic statistical measures were used: mean (M), median (Me), and standard deviation (SD). The Mann-Whitney U test was used to verify hypothesis H3.

4. Analysis

For all respondents, the average values for all statements are high, suggesting that respondents uniformly recognize these competencies as important for managers. It's worth noting that there are no items that were rated as insignificant or of little importance. The highest-rated item is Mn 15, concerning the clear definition of the task structure ($M = 4.41$, $Me = 5$). This indicates that transparency and clarity in terms of duties and expectations are key to effective management. Statement Mn 6, pertaining to efficient action in emergency situations, received one of the highest average scores ($M = 4.37$, $Me = 5$). This shows that the ability to manage crises effectively is highly valued by respondents.

Table 2.*Basic descriptive statistics of the studied variables and the results of the Mann-Whitney U test*

Items	Total respondents			Women			Men			U Mann-Whitney Test		
	<i>M</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>
Mn 1	4,22	4,00	0,88	4,25	4,00	0,91	4,17	4,00	0,84	17333,50	1,42	0,19
Mn 2	4,23	4,00	0,86	4,26	4,00	0,84	4,18	4,00	0,88	17952,50	0,81	0,45
Mn 3	4,15	4,00	0,86	4,17	4,00	0,87	4,12	4,00	0,85	18110,00	0,66	0,54
Mn 4	4,27	4,00	0,82	4,28	4,50	0,84	4,27	4,00	0,79	18378,00	0,40	0,71
Mn 5	4,12	4,00	0,95	4,17	4,00	0,94	4,04	4,00	0,97	17340,50	1,39	0,19
Mn 6	4,37	5,00	0,78	4,34	5,00	0,79	4,40	5,00	0,77	18196,00	-0,59	0,59
Mn 7	3,94	4,00	0,94	3,91	4,00	0,93	3,98	4,00	0,96	17897,00	-0,85	0,42
Mn 8	4,21	4,00	0,87	4,20	4,00	0,89	4,23	4,00	0,84	18616,00	-0,17	0,87
Mn 9	4,18	4,00	0,86	4,15	4,00	0,86	4,22	4,00	0,86	17919,00	-0,84	0,43
Mn 10	4,27	4,00	0,81	4,27	4,00	0,79	4,28	4,00	0,84	18456,00	-0,33	0,76
Mn 11	4,15	4,00	0,87	4,20	4,00	0,82	4,08	4,00	0,93	17714,50	1,04	0,33
Mn 12	4,09	4,00	0,93	4,03	4,00	0,95	4,18	4,00	0,90	17164,50	-1,55	0,14
Mn 13	4,22	4,00	0,89	4,22	4,00	0,90	4,22	4,00	0,88	18684,00	0,10	0,92
Mn 14	4,03	4,00	1,00	3,99	4,00	1,03	4,09	4,00	0,95	17917,00	-0,83	0,43
Mn 15	4,41	5,00	0,86	4,45	5,00	0,85	4,36	5,00	0,89	17652,00	1,17	0,31

M - mean, *Me* - median, *SD* - standard deviation, *U* - Mann-Whitney U statistic, *Z* - statistic that results from the normalization of U, *p* – probability.

Source: own study.

The lowest ratings were given to the statements: "My supervisor should create an organized list of tasks taking into account the interdependencies between them" (Mn 7 – $M = 3.94$), "My supervisor should effectively motivate employees, using both rewards and penalties, to achieve intended results" (Mn 14 – $M = 4.03$), and "My supervisor should assign responsibility for tasks, specifying who decides and to what extent" (Mn 12 – $M = 4.09$). However, even these competencies with lower ratings have relatively high average values (all close to 4 on a 5-point scale), emphasizing their importance.

The standard deviation ranges from 0.78 to 1.00, indicating a relatively small dispersion of ratings around the mean. Indicators with lower values (e.g., Mn 6 – $SD = 0.78$) suggest that respondents' views on a particular item were more consistent and uniform. For these competencies, most respondents had similar expectations or opinions. An indicator equal to 1 indicates slightly greater dispersion of ratings, which may suggest differences in expectations towards managers.

In both groups (women and men), similar trends in competency assessment can be observed, with higher values for the same competencies. In some cases, such as Mn 5 ("My supervisor should provide assistance and support on their own initiative") and Mn 11 ("My supervisor should encourage employees to take initiative, actions"), women scored slightly higher average values than men (respectively 4.17 vs. 4.04 and 4.20 vs. 4.08). This may suggest that women have slightly higher expectations regarding certain competencies. Conversely, for other competencies, such as Mn 6 ("My supervisor should act efficiently in emergency situations") and Mn 9 ("My supervisor should optimally allocate tasks to employees"), men scored slightly higher average values than women (respectively 4.40 vs. 4.34 and 4.22 vs. 4.15), indicating a different tendency.

In the female group, the highest average rating was achieved by competency Mn 15 - "My supervisor should clearly define the task structure so that everyone knows what, how, and when they should do" ($M=4.45$), while among men the highest average was for item Mn 6 - "My supervisor should act efficiently in emergency situations" ($M = 4.40$). For certain competencies, such as Mn 14 ("My supervisor should skillfully motivate employees, using both rewards and punishments, thereby achieving the intended results"), women had a slightly higher standard deviation than men, indicating a greater dispersion of answers among women. Although in many cases the standard deviation values are similar for both genders, there are some differences. Women have a slightly higher standard deviation (Mn 5 "My supervisor should provide assistance and support on their own initiative" – $M = 0.94$, Mn 14 "My supervisor should skillfully motivate employees, using both rewards and punishments, thereby achieving the intended results" – $M = 1.03$) compared to men (Mn 5 – $M = 0.97$, Mn 14 – $M = 0.95$), suggesting a greater dispersion of ratings among women in these areas.

Considering the above analyses, it should be concluded that hypothesis H1 and H2 have been positively verified.

The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to check if the observed differences in the assessments of women and men are statistically significant. The results indicate no significant differences between the compared groups. All p-values are higher than 0.05. Z-values are generally low and close to zero, further indicating a lack of significant differences between the assessments of the studied women and men. U values are consistent for all items, confirming that there are no significant differences between the samples. It should therefore be assumed that hypothesis H3 has been negatively verified.

5. Discussion

All competencies subjected to the study received high ratings from the respondents, which indicates a common belief in their significance for the role of a manager. The competency "clear definition of task structure" (Mn 15) enjoys the highest average rating, emphasizing the importance of transparency and clarity in defining duties and expectations as key elements of effective management. Meanwhile, the "ability to manage crises effectively" (Mn 6) also gained recognition among the respondents, highlighting its essential role in a manager's work. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that hypothesis H1 has been positively verified.

Lower positions in the ranking include competencies such as "creating an organized list of tasks, taking into account the interdependencies between them" (Mn 7) and "effective motivation of employees, using both rewards and punishments to achieve intended results" (Mn 14). Nevertheless, these competencies also received relatively high average ratings, once again underlining their significance in the context of management. The standard deviation of

the results ranges from 0.78 to 1.00, indicating relatively low variability of ratings around the mean value. This, in turn, suggests that the responses provided by the respondents were characterized by considerable consistency and unanimity. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that hypothesis H2 has been negatively verified.

The analysis of responses from women and men showed that both groups have similar trends in competency assessment. The observed differences are small and pertain to specific competencies, such as Mn 5 and Mn 11 for women, and Mn 6 and Mn 9 for men. Women had a slightly greater dispersion of ratings for some competencies, indicating greater differences in their expectations and opinions. The Mann-Whitney U test did not reveal any statistically significant differences in the ratings of women and men, confirming that both groups have similar expectations and opinions about the importance of different managerial competencies. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that hypothesis H3 has been negatively verified.

The results obtained in the analyses conducted in this text are consistent with the observations of other researchers, including the studies of J. Fratričova and Z. Kirchmayer (2018). These authors in their studies on the motivation of Generation Z noted that the main barriers to motivation are the monotonous nature of work, an overload of duties, and a lack of a sense of purpose in tasks performed. On the other hand, the key motivating factors turned out to be the opportunity for career development and continuous learning. In the research presented in this text, respondents rated the competence "My supervisor should effectively motivate employees, using both rewards and punishments, to achieve the intended results" the lowest. This observed approach points to the need for a new management style that more reflects the values and priorities of Generation Z. Guided by these observations, it can be postulated that traditional methods of motivation, such as simple reward and punishment systems, may no longer be as effective as they once were. Instead, Generation Z, raised in a technologically advanced and rapidly changing environment, is looking for a deeper meaning in work, as well as opportunities for self-realization and improvement. Management should therefore consider how to better adapt their management methods to the needs of this young generation. It seems that the key to effective motivation is to create a work environment that offers challenges, the possibility of continuous development, and a sense of belonging and purpose. Only then can we expect full commitment and loyalty from Generation Z employees.

The high expectations of respondents regarding the abilities of supervisors to act effectively in crisis situations prove that as a conscious generation, they are sensitive to various threats - both physical and digital. They therefore expect that managers will be capable of protecting both themselves and the entire organization. Additionally, research suggests that Generation Z places great importance on their own development (Iorgulescu, 2016), and crisis situations can be a source of valuable experiences for them.

T. Wiedmer (2015) emphasizes that Generation Z values autonomy in work. They do not want to be dependent on colleagues or team members, so representatives of this generation prefer to have a full understanding of their scope of duties. According to H. Bresman and

V. Rao (2018), members of Generation Z expect a positive attitude and clearly defined goals from their superiors. This might explain why one of the most sought-after competencies is: "The supervisor should clearly define the task structure, so everyone knows what, how, and when they have to perform their duties". Moreover, Generation Z deeply cares about a balance between professional and personal life. G. Morahan's (2019) research shows that more than 60% of respondents value this balance more than career development prospects. Gen Z employees do not want to waste time on unnecessary activities or poorly organized tasks (Chillakuri, 2020). Understanding the task structure and clear objectives has profound significance for Generation Z. For this group, raised in a world of instant information and constant access to knowledge, ambiguities in duties can lead to frustration. Clear guidelines from superiors help them manage their time and resources better, resulting in higher productivity and job satisfaction. Additionally, for a generation accustomed to using digital tools for project and task management, clarity in responsibilities is key to effective teamwork. With clearly defined tasks, Gen Z members can focus on what truly matters, instead of wasting time guessing what is expected of them. As a result, such clarity allows them to achieve better results and derive greater satisfaction from their work.

Taking into account the above considerations, directions for further research can be identified, which may pertain to the following areas. It would be worth considering any potential differences in the perception of managerial competencies that might arise from various cultural traditions. It would be significant to check whether respondents' expectations differ depending on the industry or sector in which they are employed. Such a study would have the potential to provide valuable data on specific competencies desired in different sectors of the job market. It would also be worth considering examining whether specific personality traits influence expectations regarding managerial competencies. This would help understand how different personality types evaluate and respond to different management styles.

6. Summary

The study focused on the assessment of managerial competencies by Generation Z respondents. The average ratings for all competencies were high, indicating that the respondents consider these skills crucial for effective management. The highest-rated competency was the manager's ability to clearly define the task structure, highlighting the importance of transparency and clarity in communication. The ability to manage effectively in crisis situations was also highly rated, demonstrating the significance of this skill in the eyes of the respondents. Some competencies, such as task planning considering interdependencies, effective employee motivation, and assigning responsibility, received slightly lower ratings, although still relatively

high. No statistically significant differences were found between the ratings of women and men, indicating consistency in the perception of managerial competencies regardless of gender.

In conclusion, it is worth noting some limitations of the text, such as the lack of representativeness of the study, which prevents generalization of the results. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the obtained results may have significant implications for both the academic community and practitioners. The conducted research enriches the existing understanding of cohort theories, offering valuable insights into the expectations of Generation Z in the workplace. Additionally, this work contributes to the literature in the field of human resource management, providing a unique perspective of analysis focused on Generation Z.

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