

EXPECTATIONS OF GENERATION Z REPRESENTATIVES TOWARDS THE FEATURES AND COMPETENCIES OF THEIR DIRECT SUPERVISORS (MANAGERS) – RESULTS OF OWN STUDY

Anna KOROMBEL^{1*}, Olga ŁAWIŃSKA²

¹ Czestochowa University of Technology; anna.korombel@pcz.pl, ORCID: 0000-0003-0546-9708

² Czestochowa University of Technology; olga.lawinska@pcz.pl, ORCID: 0000-0003-1960-8211

* Correspondence author

Purpose: The goal of the study was identification of the features and competencies of direct supervisors, considered desirable for Generation Z.

Design/methodology/approach: The study was conducted among students in Poland and Great Britain in 2023. The study used survey method, in particular the CATI survey technique. To analyze the study data descriptive statistics measures were used.

Findings: The conducted research allowed to identify the features and competencies of direct superiors, desirable for Generation Z. The researchers examined also correlations between the respondents' answers, their gender, and place of residence. In several cases, gender and place of residence significantly differentiated the analyzed variables. The results also allowed to indicate the differences in the expected features and competencies of direct superiors, desired by Generation Z in Poland and in Great Britain.

Research limitations/implications: The use of surveys is associated with limitations, which include: the possibility of a superficial knowledge of the studied phenomena or being given false answers by the respondents. Relatively small number of respondents does not allow the obtained study results to be acknowledged as representative. Future research should be conducted on a larger sample, and quantitative research should be complemented by qualitative research. Undertaking research in other countries would make it possible to compare the features/competencies of direct supervisors desirable for representatives of Generation Z representing different nationalities, and to determine whether and which of them are mentioned regardless of geographical latitude.

Practical implications: Identification of the features and competencies of direct supervisors, desirable for Generation Z will allow team leaders – after taking them into account – to build positive relations with representatives of this generation, which will translate into effective cooperation and employee retention in the organization. The obtained knowledge indicates that the nationality of respondents is an important factor differentiating preferences and values in the Generation Z workplace, which confirms the importance of diversity management. This knowledge is very useful in international teams including representatives of Generation Z.

Originality/value: The paper is addressed to direct supervisors who work or intend to work with representatives of Generation Z. The presented results complement and deepen the knowledge about the features and competencies of direct supervisors, that are desirable for Generation Z, along with the gender and place of residence of the respondent. They also indicate

the influence of the nationality of respondents from Generation Z on the prioritization of their expectations towards the workplace.

Keywords: Generation Z, enterprise, manager, relation, desirable features and competencies of a manager.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

Currently, representatives of the Z Generation are entering the labor market. In Poland in 2024 one fourth of the employees will be persons born after 1997 (Marszycki, 2022). The digital competencies of the most technologically advanced generation will be increasingly in demand in an increasingly digital labor market (Oxford Economics, 2021). Until now, it was the older generations who passed on their knowledge and experience to the younger generations. We are currently dealing with an opposite situation on the labor market – for the first time it is the youngest generation, who is an authority and has knowledge that other generations do not have. Such unnatural situation on the labor market in the future will change the typical corporate hierarchy (Stillman, Stillman, 2017). And how does Generation Z with its digital leverage on the labor market evaluate its current jobs? A big part of Gen Z is dissatisfied with current job - four out of ten Gen Z representatives would like to quit within two years, and circa a third would do so even without having other job offer. Two out of five Gen Z representatives would turn down a job offer if it didn't align with their expectations and values. A Generation Z representative is willing to stay in a given workplace for more than 5 years only if the employer takes actions that have a positive impact on society and the environment, as well as when he takes actions to create a diverse and inclusive culture in the workplace, which takes into account the expectations and values of Generation Z (Deloitte, 2022). Why are so many representatives of Generation Z thinking about changing jobs? What are the main priorities they take into account choosing their workplace? When choosing a workplace, Generation Z representatives pay attention to respecting their values, supervisors' decision-making process taking their opinion into account, or a positive organizational culture. Almost one-third of Generation Z representatives indicate that decisions in the organizations they work for are made top-down without taking into account the opinions of employees, and assess this situation very negatively (Deloitte, 2022).

Employers and direct supervisors, wanting to attract and retain the talents of Generation Z in their companies, should be able to cooperate with them, implement changes in the workplace and adapt to the expectations of this generation. This means that direct supervisors, who want to effectively and efficiently manage Generation Z representatives, should learn about the expectations of representatives of this group towards their colleagues and the work

environment. The relationship between the Generation Z representatives and their direct supervisor will determine the success of cooperation and the achieved results - if an employee feels that the supervisor respects and appreciates him/her, and his/her opinion is important, he/she feels more connected to the company and is more loyal to it. Knowing what Generation Z expects from the workplace, it is worth pointing out what features and competencies will enable the direct supervisor to build positive relations with Generation Z employees. The aim of the paper is to identify the features and competencies of their direct supervisors (managers) desirable for Generation Z.

In recent years, research on Generation Z, and in particular, their values in the workplace, has become more and more popular. However, comparative analyzes of Generation Z living in different countries are still limited. The study conducted by the authors extends the knowledge also in terms of determining the impact of the nationality of the Generation Z respondents on the prioritization of their expectations towards the workplace.

2. Who are Gen Zers?

Who is a Generation Z representative? The literature on the subject indicates various years of birth of Generation Z representatives. The authors adopted 1995 as the first year of birth of Generation Z representatives (Bassiouni, Hackley, 2014, Priporas, Stylos, Fotiadis, 2017; Hampton, Keys, 2017; Francis, Hoefel, 2018; Kamenidou et al., 2019) and 2009 as the final year (2010 marks the birth of the first persons belonging to the next generation, known as Generation Alpha) (McCrindle, 2014). Generation Z representatives differ from representatives of other generations in many ways. These differences and, at the same time, the features of Generation Z representatives are well reflected in the 7 factors shaping this generation (McCrindle, 2014):

- demographic changes – Generation Z representatives start their professional careers in times of massive aging of societies, which means that they will live longer, work longer and have higher retirement benefits. Single-person households will become the fastest-growing type of household,
- the times they live in – Generation Z is the most materially equipped, technology-saturated, globally connected, formally educated generation of all previous generations,
- digitization – Generation Z grew up in a digital world, using new technologies from an early age. This is why this generation is called digital integrators, who from an early age has seamlessly integrated technology into almost all areas of life,
- globalization – no other generation was as global as Generation Z. Modern technology allowed music, movies, fashion, trends, communication and even memes to have global nature,

- visualization – in times of information overload, more and more companies are moving away from using words in messages in favor of colors and images, which are very well received by Generation Z,
- reformed education – for Generation Z students education is no longer related to the stage of life they are at, but is a reality that accompanies them throughout their lives,
- social aspects – comparing to other generations, Generation Z has the largest number of friends and acquaintances. The opinions of friends greatly shape the Generation Z assessment and opinions.

Generation Z representatives, unlike previous generations, are not afraid of globalization, automation and changing work standards, seeing them as an opportunity to obtain flexible work and the opportunity to participate in projects of great importance. They feel technologically proficient and show a high degree of self-sufficiency (EY & JA Worldwide, 2021). The level of functional digital competencies of Generation Z in the sphere of work and professional development, which are a multi-factor construct, is determined by gender, age and level of study (Kowalczyk, 2022). They are willing to engage in cooperation and problem solving. Thinking about achieving their professional goals, Generation Z representatives want to build relationships with people from other environments through participation of government and business representatives in the education system. They expect practical opportunities to learn through experience, and they perceive the knowledge and skills of business representatives as allowing them to better prepare for work (EY & JA Worldwide, 2021).

3. Features of the direct supervisor – review of the literature

Defining the direct supervisor in an organization is not conclusive. A person appointed as a direct supervisor is often wrongly identified with an employer or a person employed in a given organization. When looking for an answer to the question of who the immediate supervisor is, we should follow the provisions of the Labor Code, according to which the employer is "an organizational unit, even if it does not have legal personality, as well as a natural person if they employ employees", and "for the employer being an organizational unit, actions in matters relating to labor law are performed by a person or body managing this unit or another person designated for that purpose" (Labor Code, Art. 3, 3¹ §1). This provision indicates that a person appointed as a direct supervisor not only does not have to be a member of the management of a given organization, but also does not have to be a person employed in it. The authors assumed that a direct supervisor is a person appointed by the employer who remains in direct contact and relations with employees, and who also directly delegates them tasks in the field of labor law. The direct supervisor can be the employer himself (in case of small businesses), the manager or any other person, etc.

What are Generation Z representatives like at work? What do they expect from their direct supervisors (managers)? Generation Z representatives make decisions very quickly and do not fear risk. From the employer they expect high salary, effective non-financial motivators, and opportunities for personal development, skillful use of their potential and good atmosphere. At the same time, they want to be respected in the workplace (Wiktorowicz et al., 2016). Generation Z wants to work in places where it can shape the organizational culture of the company, as well as openly discuss various topics with their supervisors (Deloitte, 2022). They expect that the supervisor/manager will not only share their value system, show understanding of their life priorities, but also support them in their non-professional activities: social, civic and charitable. They are open to changes and highly mobile. Contrary to many stereotypical opinions, Generation Z representatives are not closed to building social relationships, and they even declare the need to create and develop such relationships in the workplace, as well as the need to base these relationships on the principles of ethics, mutual openness, respect and understanding. The matters most important for Generation Z are: 1. Respect for themselves, relationships, environment; 2. Work based on values; 3. Building relationships on various levels – private and professional; 4. Work-life balance; 5. Openness to diversity; 6. Assertiveness; 7. Clearly formulated expectations towards employees and candidates; 8. Creativity; 9. Care for the environment; 10. Developing passion (Humanitas, 2023). Supervisors who want to attract and retain representatives of Generation Z in the company should: be empathetic; build trust by communicating goals, actions and progress backed by data and science; be genuinely committed to the sustainable development and equality goals, making them crucial to the company's goals and strategy; offer dynamic and engaging career paths, as well as innovative and collaborative forms of work, as well as opportunities for continuous learning and development (EY & JA Worldwide, 2021).

Generation Z representatives have their own, different from representatives of other generations, expectations regarding the characteristics and behavior of their direct supervisors/managers. First of all, they want their direct supervisor to have the ability to listen carefully, communicate and cooperate (Sladek, Grabinger, 2014). They want him/her to be honest and righteous, to learn and be interested in their problems and passions, treat them individually, meet them often and discuss the effects of their work, give them the opportunity to develop and prove themselves, support them in difficult situations (White, 2022). Generation Z representatives expect a positive, communicative leader who will provide ambitious team members with support, mentoring and other development opportunities. They expect the direct supervisor to provide a friendly working atmosphere based on fair competition, stability and security, to reduce uncertainty and risk, and to offer employees a variety of opportunities to engage, and establish rewards for such engagement. The desired form of communication is primarily communication via computer (Gabriellova, Buchko, 2021), which allows using social media for business contacts (Karasek, Hysa, 2020). Generation Z representatives expect their supervisor to support them in developing interpersonal skills that will help them build social

interactions. They are open for participation in any events integrating colleagues. To sum up, the quality of the relationship between the supervisor and Generation Z representative, as well as the attitude and quality of the work performed, is influenced by the ability to listen, understand, share one's own experiences, stories, and consequently joint setting of development goals (Gabrielova, Buchko, 2021).

The results of the study conducted by A. Rybowska indicate that employees expect from their supervisors honesty, dynamics, positive thinking, assertiveness, strong personality, openness and fairness. The least important features turned out to be charisma and self-criticism. The assessment of men who had lower expectations towards managers than women, differed from the assessment of women – men considered loyalty to employees as the most important feature, while dynamism was not important to them. The highest rated interpersonal skills included the ability to work with a team of people, the ability to inspire social trust and establish contacts (Rybowska, 2016). According to the results of study conducted by J. Gajda, in the opinion of the Generation Z representatives a perfect supervisor should: treat his subordinates fairly and as partners, support their development, keep his/ her word, mitigate conflicts, not favor any of his/her subordinates, help in difficult situations, be open to their needs, respect the time of their subordinates, provide support in developing skills relevant to the labor market during work (Gajda, 2017). The results of the research conducted by J.T. Jensen are consistent with the research results presented above. Generation Z representatives expect their supervisors to create a *fair-play* workplace, providing them with a high level of support and representing an engaging and authentic leadership style. The immediate supervisor should be fair, honest, direct, open and trustworthy. The expected way of communication – whenever possible – is face-to-face communication (Jensen, 2021).

Based on the results of a study conducted, among others, by the employees of the Humanitas University, it is possible to indicate the features and behavior of the employer/direct supervisor most valued by Generation Z. These include: showing respect, individual treatment, kindness, tolerance, readiness to help, openness, partner treatment. The indicated features show how important social relations are for Generation Z. The desired features and behaviors related to the professional competencies of employers/direct supervisors, e.g. professionalism, reliability, are of lesser importance to the respondents. General social values, which are part of the organizational culture of the workplace, are of great importance to the representatives of Generation Z. Justice, respect, tolerance, equality, fairness, and freedom are important (Humanitas, 2023).

Based on the analysis of the literature on the subject, the authors built a catalog of features and competencies, which was used in the conducted study aimed at identifying the features and competencies of their immediate supervisor (manager) desired by Generation Z. Also based on the analysis of the literature on the subject, the authors formulated the following research questions:

1. In the opinion of Generation Z representatives – what features and competencies should a direct supervisor have?
2. Is there a correlation between the choice of desired features/competencies of a direct supervisor/manager and the gender of a Generation Z representative?
3. Is there a correlation between the choice of desired features/competencies of a direct supervisor/manager and the place of residence of a Generation Z representative?
4. Is there any difference between the desired features/competencies of a direct supervisor/manager of Generation Z representatives in Poland and Great Britain? If yes, what is it?

4. Methods

The research on Gen Zers' attitudes towards brands on social media is a part of a broader study conducted by the authors among students in Poland and Great Britain in 2023. The research employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, utilizing survey research as an indirect measurement method. It employed survey as the research technique and survey questionnaire as the research tool. The selection of variables used in the study was based on a critical analysis of relevant literature (Gummerus et al., 2012; Gregor, Kubiak, 2014). Regarding the birth year of Generation Z representatives, there is no consensus in the literature. The most frequently cited date is the year 1995, which the authors of the paper adopted as the cutoff year for their study.

The authors also assumed that the independent variable in their study is the specific group of respondents being tested, rather than the entire population of Generation Z. Due to the challenge of definitively determining the age range of Generation Z, it becomes problematic to treat this variable as independent. However, the authors found that utilizing Generation Z as a heuristic is valuable, as generational profiling is now prevalent in popular media and popular culture, providing a descriptive framework.

Prior to commencing the main research, the authors conducted a pilot study in 2018, enabling them to identify and rectify any errors in the survey questionnaire before proceeding with the main study. For the first time, comparative studies of representatives of Generation Z in Poland and Great Britain were conducted by the authors between 2020 and 2021 (Korombel, Ławińska, 2023). In 2023, 322 students (166 women and 156 men) in Poland and 318 students (199 women and 119 men) in Great Britain were surveyed. The research employed the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing) technique. In Poland, an online survey questionnaire was administered through the Webankieta.pl platform, while data collection in Great Britain was outsourced to an external institution specializing in survey administration. It is important to note that the sampling method used in both studies was non-probabilistic. While utilizing

non-probabilistic sampling, the authors employed statistical inference as an opportunity to identify relationships within the studied groups, as descriptive statistics alone would not allow for such analysis.

Based on the research results, the authors calculated the number and frequency of respondents' responses to each question in the survey. The authors are aware that the sampling technique employed does not allow for the estimation of errors that may arise when generalizing the observed patterns in the sample to the entire population. To identify potential relationships within the studied groups, the authors utilized statistical inference, for which they adopted a certain level of significance, as descriptive statistics alone cannot provide such analysis. Statistical inference was conducted with a predetermined significance level set at $\alpha = 0.05$, and a p-value was calculated for each test. The authors compared the p-value with the level of statistical significance to determine whether there was sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis (H_0) in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H_1) ($p < \alpha$), or not ($p \geq \alpha$). All analyses were performed using Statistica software, version 13.

The authors acknowledge that survey research has certain limitations, such as providing only a surface-level understanding of the phenomena under study and the possibility of respondents providing inaccurate answers. One potential criticism of the presented research results is that the study was conducted on a small group of participants. While small sample sizes can raise methodological concerns, such as limitations in generalization, they can still provide valuable insights when proper statistical tests are applied for inference (Yates, 1934; Nachar, 2008).

5. Results

The presented results are part of the study conducted by the authors in Poland and Great Britain at the beginning of 2023. One of the questions in the survey concerned the features of managers, desired by Generation Z. Respondents were asked the following question: *Please, read all the following features first. Then indicate the 5 most important qualities that you would like your ideal boss/manager to have.* A catalog containing 35 features selected on the basis of literature analysis was presented. The obtained response frequencies (in %) of the most and least desired features selected by respondents in Poland are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

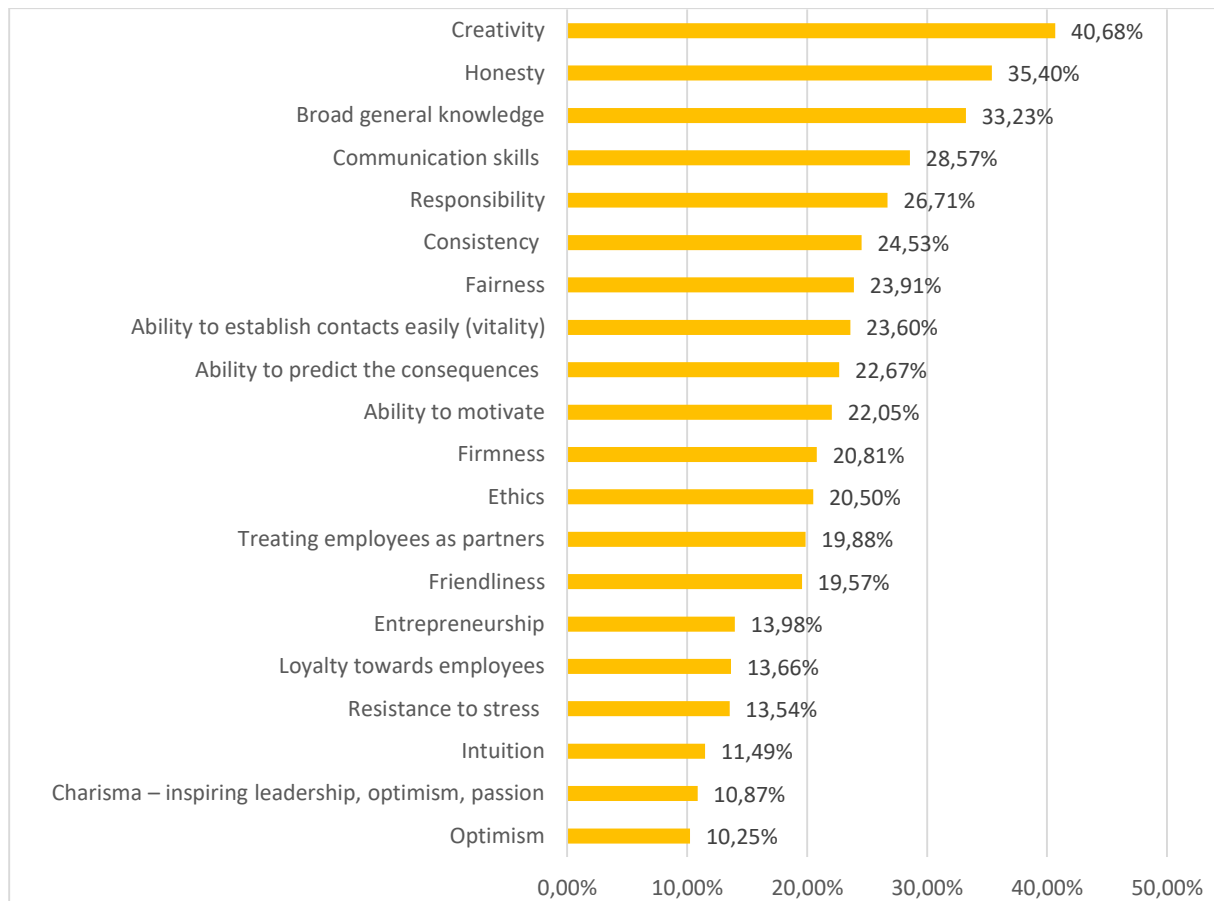


Figure 1. Response frequencies (in %) on the features of a direct supervisor (manager) most desirable for the respondents in Poland in 2023.

Source: own study.

The results of the survey conducted among the Generation Z representatives in Poland (Figure 1) allowed to identify the three features and competencies of the direct supervisor (manager) most desirable by the respondents: *creativity, honesty and broad general knowledge*. Each of these features/competencies was indicated by 30% or more of the respondents.

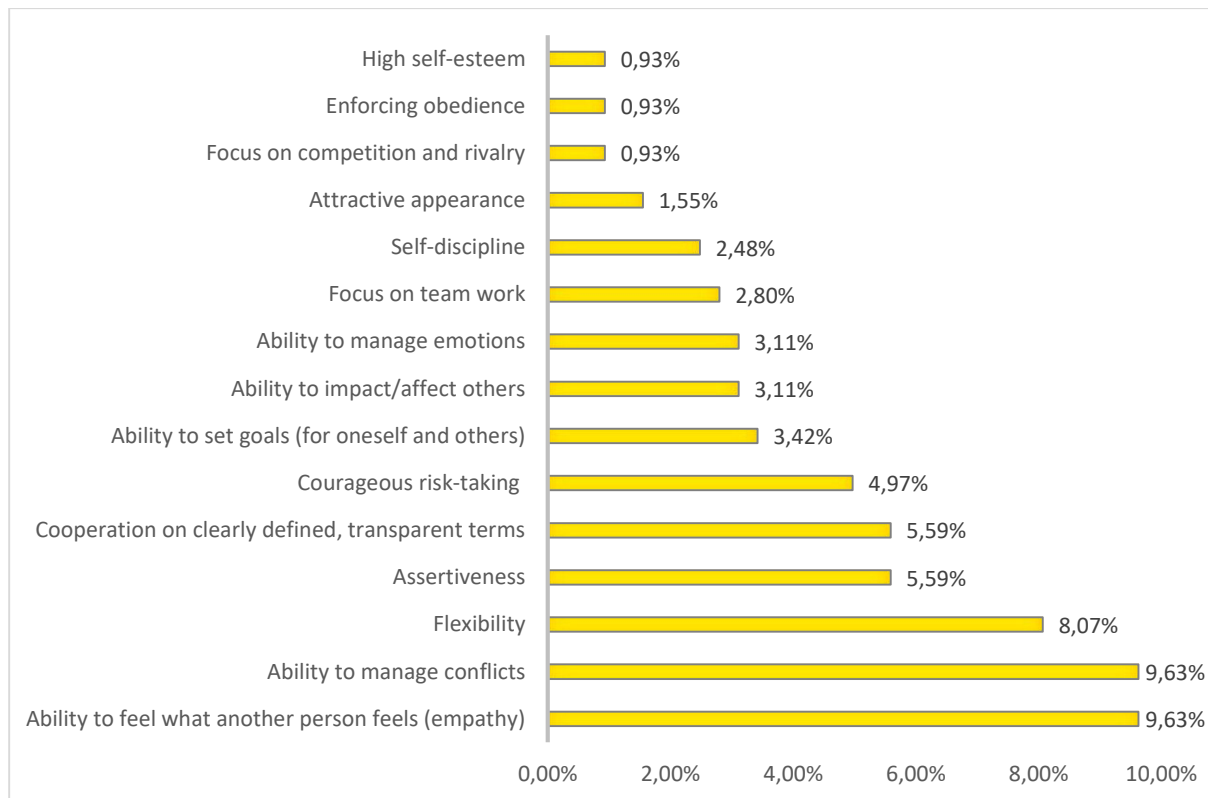


Figure 2. Response frequencies (in %) on the features and competencies of a direct supervisor (manager) least desirable for the respondents in Poland in 2023.

Source: own study.

At the same time, the surveyed Generation Z representatives in Poland in 2023 (Figure 2) indicated the following as the least important features and competencies of the direct supervisor (manager): *high self-esteem, forcing obedience, focus on rivalry and competition, and attractive appearance*. All these features/competencies were indicated by less than 2% of the respondents.

Next Figures (3 and 4) show obtained response frequencies (in %) of the most and least desired features selected by respondents in Great Britain.

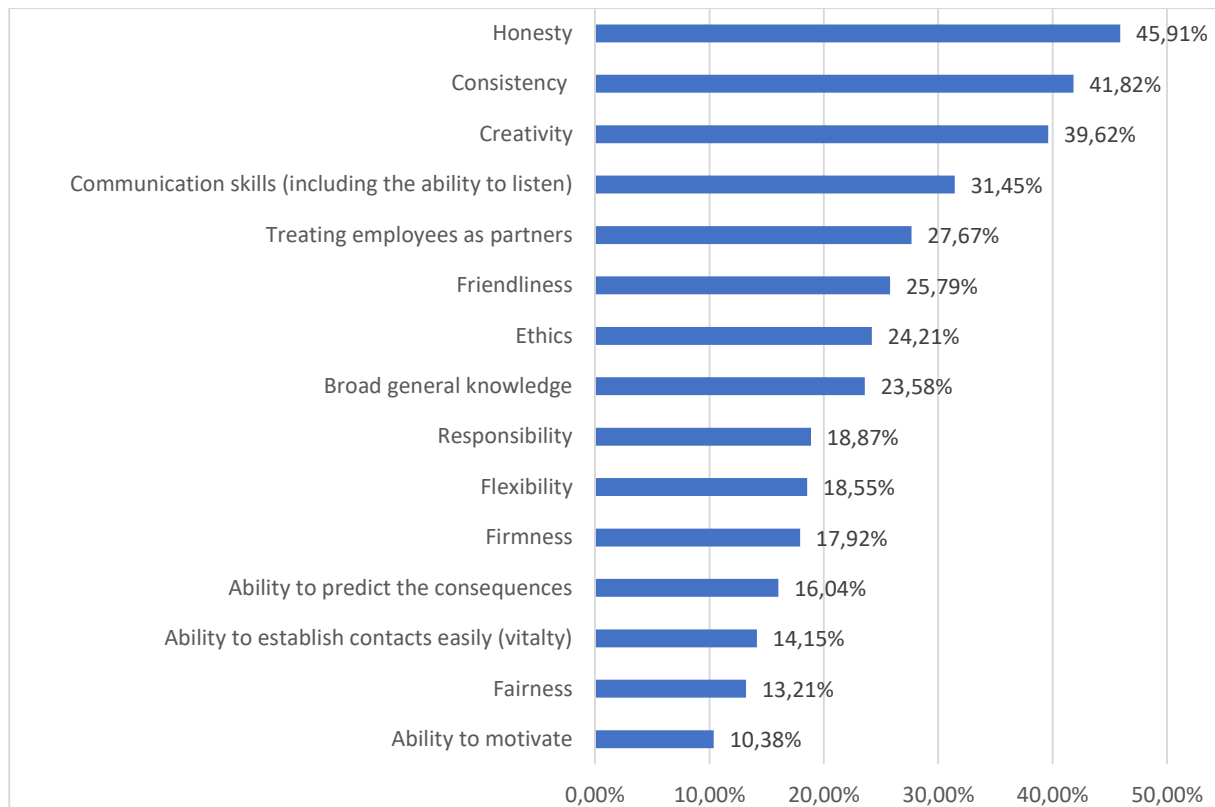


Figure 3. Response frequencies (in %) on the features and competencies of a direct supervisor (manager) most desirable for the respondents in Great Britain in 2023.

Source: own study.

The results of a study conducted in Great Britain in 2023 (Figure 3) revealed one feature of a direct supervisor (manager) particularly important for representatives of Generation Z: *honesty*, which was indicated by over 45% of respondents. Next, the following were indicated (over 30% of answers): *consistency*, *creativity*, and *communication skills (including the ability to listen)*.

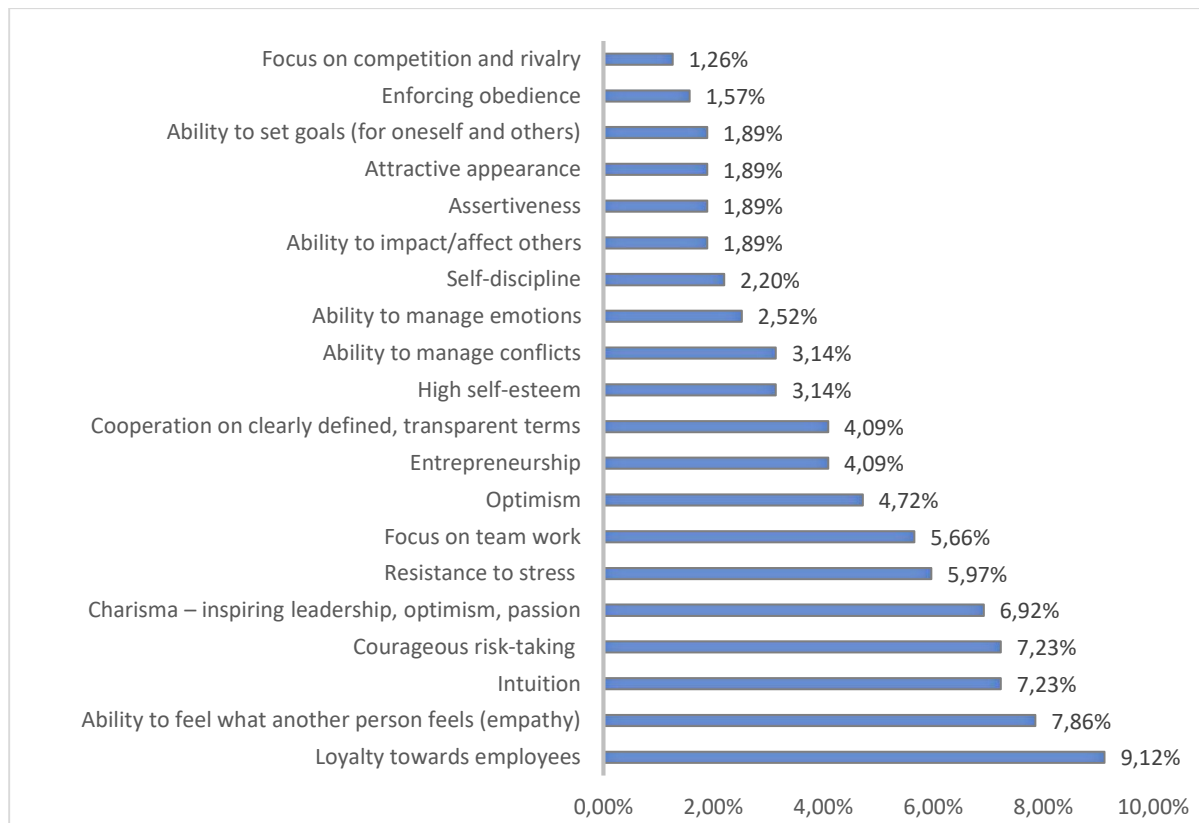


Figure 4. Response frequencies (in %) on the features and competencies of a direct supervisor (manager) least desirable for the respondents in Great Britain in 2023.

Source: own study.

The surveyed Generation Z representatives in Great Britain (Figure 4) indicated the following as the least important features and competencies of a direct supervisor (manager): *focus on rivalry and competition, enforcing obedience, the ability to set goals (for oneself and others), attractive appearance, assertiveness, and the ability to impact/affect others*. All mentioned features/competencies were indicated by less than 2% of the respondents.

To sum up, it is possible to indicate the features and competencies of the direct supervisor (manager) most desirable for the respondents both in Poland and in Great Britain: *creativity, honesty, and communication skills (including the ability to listen)*. The surveyed Generation Z representatives in both countries indicated the following as the least desirable: *enforcing obedience, focus on rivalry and competition, and attractive appearance*.

The next stage of data analysis was to verify whether there was a correlation between the variables: the choice of expected features and competencies of the direct supervisor/manager (variable X) and the gender of the respondent (variable Y). For this purpose, a significance test for structure indicators was used (comparison of two structure indicators). It was assumed that in the group of women the fraction indicator of this feature is p_1 , and in the group of men – p_2 . The null hypothesis was verified:

$$H_0: p_1 = p_2$$

to the alternative hypothesis:

$$H_1: p_1 > p_2$$

Due to the adopted form of the alternative hypothesis, the one-sided critical area was considered. The analysis concerned the answers to multiple-response questions, the indicators were calculated for the general population as well as for women and men, and then it was verified using the test for the structure indicator whether gender significantly differentiates these indicators. Detailed data on the selection of features and competencies of a direct supervisor/manager desirable for the respondents in Poland and Great Britain in 2023 and the result of the significance test for structure indicators by gender of the respondent are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1.

Selection of the desirable features and competencies of the direct supervisor (manager) for the respondents in Poland in 2023 and the result of the significance test for structure indicators by gender

Characteristics and Competencies	In total		Females		Males		p
	Number	Percentage of cases	Number	Percentage of cases	Number	Percentage of cases	
Ability to establish contacts easily (vitality)	76	23.60%	44	26.51%	32	20.51%	0.1026
Ability to feel what another person feels (empathy)	31	9.63%	18	10.84%	13	8.33%	0.2227
Ability to impact/affect others	10	3.11%	4	2.41%	6	3.85%	0.2284
Ability to manage conflicts	31	9.63%	18	10.84%	13	8.33%	0.2227
Ability to manage emotions	10	3.11%	5	3.01%	5	3.21%	0.4588
Ability to motivate	71	22.05%	40	24.10%	31	19.87%	0.1801
Ability to predict the consequences of own and other people's actions	73	22.67%	37	22.29%	36	23.08%	0.4328
Ability to set goals (for oneself and others)	11	3.42%	8	4.82%	3	1.92%	0.0761
Assertiveness	18	5.59%	9	5.42%	9	5.77%	0.4457
Attractive appearance	5	1.55%	3	1.81%	2	1.28%	0.3300
Broad general knowledge	107	33.23%	56	33.73%	51	32.69%	0.4215
Charisma – inspiring leadership, optimism, passion	35	10.87%	13	7.83%	22	14.10%	0.0354
Communication skills (including the ability to listen)	92	28.57%	51	30.72%	41	26.28%	0.1890
Consistency	79	24.53%	32	19.28%	47	30.13%	0.0119
Cooperation on clearly defined, transparent terms	18	5.59%	10	6.02%	8	5.13%	0.3641
Courageous risk-taking	16	4.97%	6	3.61%	10	6.41%	0.1239
Creativity	131	40.68%	69	41.57%	62	39.74%	0.3692
Enforcing obedience (authoritarian attitude to employees)	3	0.93%	1	0.60%	2	1.28%	0.2626
Entrepreneurship	45	13.98%	17	10.24%	28	17.95%	0.0231
Ethics	66	20.50%	32	19.28%	34	21.79%	0.2886
Fairness	77	23.91%	38	22.89%	39	25.00%	0.3287
Firmness	67	20.81%	31	18.67%	36	23.08%	0.1650
Flexibility	26	8.07%	15	9.04%	11	7.05%	0.2562
Focus on competition and rivalry	3	0.93%	0	0	3	1.92%	0.0364
Focus on team work	9	2.80%	5	3.01%	4	2.56%	0.4032
Friendliness	63	19.57%	33	19.88%	30	19.23%	0.4416
High self-esteem	3	0.93%	1	0.60%	2	1.28%	0.2626
Honesty	114	35.40%	56	33.73%	58	37.18%	0.2588
Intuition	37	11.49%	18	10.84%	19	12.18%	0.3531

Cont. table 1.

Loyalty towards employees	44	13.66%	26	15.66%	18	11.54%	0.1410
Optimism	33	10.25%	17	10.24%	16	10.26%	0.4976
Resistance to stress	43	13.54%	21	12.65%	22	14.10%	0.3511
Responsibility	86	26.71%	48	28.92%	38	24.36%	0.1777
Self-discipline	8	2.48%	3	1.81%	5	3.21%	0.2101
Treating employees as partners	64	19.88%	45	27.11%	19	12.18%	0.0004

Source: own study.

The analysis of data collected in Poland (Table 1) gave grounds for stating that gender significantly differentiated the analyzed percentage indicators in four cases. It can be noticed that the surveyed women in Poland significantly more often than men chose: *treating employees as partners*. The surveyed men significantly more often than women indicated the following features/competencies: *charisma (inspiring leadership, optimism, passion), focus on competition and rivalry, and entrepreneurship*.

Table 2.

Selection of the desirable features and competencies of the direct supervisor (manager) for the respondents in Great Britain in 2023 and the result of the significance test for structure indicators by gender

Characteristics and Competencies	In total		Females		Males		p
	Number	Percentage of cases	Number	Percentage of cases	Number	Percentage of cases	
Ability to establish contacts easily (vitality)	45	14.15%	27	13.57%	18	15.13%	0.3497
Ability to feel what another person feels (empathy)	25	7.86%	23	11.56%	2	1.68%	0.0008
Ability to impact/affect others	6	1.89%	2	1.01%	4	3.36%	0.0682
Ability to manage conflicts	10	3.14%	7	3.52%	3	2.52%	0.3105
Ability to manage emotions	8	2.52%	5	2.51%	3	2.52%	0.4978
Ability to motivate	33	10.38%	21	10.55%	12	10.08%	0.4471
Ability to predict the consequences of own and other people's actions	51	16.04%	24	12.06%	27	22.69%	0.0062
Ability to set goals (for oneself and others)	6	1.89%	5	2.51%	1	0.84%	0.1446
Assertiveness	6	1.89%	4	2.01%	2	1.68%	0.4171
Attractive appearance	6	1.89%	5	2.51%	1	0.84%	0.1446
Broad general knowledge	75	23.58%	46	23.12%	29	24.37%	0.3997
Charisma – inspiring leadership, optimism, passion	22	6.92%	14	7.04%	8	6.72%	0.4567
Communication skills (including the ability to listen)	100	31.45%	70	35.18%	30	25.21%	0.0319
Consistency	133	41.82%	78	39.20%	55	46.22%	0.1097
Cooperation on clearly defined, transparent terms	13	4.09%	10	5.03%	3	2.52%	0.1371
Courageous risk-taking	23	7.23%	15	7.54%	8	6.72%	0.3924
Creativity	126	39.62%	72	36.18%	54	45.38%	0.0523
Enforcing obedience (authoritarian attitude to employees)	5	1.57%	3	1.51%	2	1.68%	0.4531
Enterprise	13	4.09%	9	4.52%	4	3.36%	0.3065
Ethics	77	24.21%	51	25.63%	26	21.85%	0.2232
Fairness	42	13.21%	25	12.56%	17	14.29%	0.3296
Firmness	57	17.92%	28	14.07%	29	24.37%	0.0102
Flexibility	59	18.55%	42	21.11%	17	14.29%	0.0650

Cont. table 2.

Focus on competition and rivalry	4	1.26%	1	0.50%	3	2.52%	0.0588
Focus on team work	18	5.66%	11	5.53%	7	5.88%	0.4480
Friendliness	82	25.79%	55	27.64%	27	22.69%	0.1644
High self-esteem	10	3.14%	9	4.52%	1	0.84%	0.0344
Honesty	146	45.91%	92	46.23%	54	45.38%	0.4415
Intuition	23	7.23%	15	7.54%	8	6.72%	0.3924
Loyalty towards employees	29	9.12%	19	9.55%	10	8.40%	0.3652
Optimism	15	4.72%	11	5.53%	4	3.36%	0.1886
Resistance to stress	19	5.97%	13	6.53%	6	5.04%	0.2937
Responsibility	60	18.87%	36	18.09%	24	20.17%	0.3232
Self-discipline	7	2.20%	3	1.51%	4	3.36%	0.1383
Treating employees as partners	88	27.67%	61	30.65%	27	22.69%	0.0623

Source: own study.

The analysis of data collected in Great Britain (Table 2) gave grounds for stating that gender significantly differentiated the analyzed percentage indicators in five cases. It can be noticed that women in this research group significantly more often than men chose the following features/competencies: *communication skills (including the ability to listen)*, *ability to feel what another person feels (empathy)* and *high self-esteem*. In turn, the surveyed men in this research group significantly more often than women indicated the following features/competencies: *ability to predict the consequences of own and other people's actions*, and *firmness*. Comparing the calculated structure indicators (Tables 1 and 2), it should be emphasized that there are no similar results in both surveyed countries.

The next step was an attempt to verify the hypothesis about the independence of two qualitative features: the choice of the desired feature/competencies of the direct supervisor (manager) and the respondent's place of residence. For this purpose, Pearson's Chi-square test was used, which enabled the analysis of the collected data (included in Tables 3 and 4) and providing proof of the correlation between these two variables. Pearson's Chi-square test was a comparison of observed frequencies with expected frequencies assuming the null hypothesis (no correlation between the two variables). The null hypothesis was verified:

H_0 : features X i Y are independent

to the alternative hypothesis:

H_1 : features X i Y are depended.

The collected data on the selection of the desired features and competencies of the direct supervisor (manager) according to the respondent's place of residence in 2023 and the results of the Pearson Chi-square test and its significance level are presented in Tables 3 (data for Poland) and 4 (data for Great Britain).

Table 3.

Selection of the desirable features and competencies of the direct supervisor (manager) by the respondent's place of residence in Poland in 2023 and the results of the Pearson Chi-square test and the level of its significance

Characteristics and Competencies	Place of residence (% against number of responses = 322)					Row in total	Pearson's Chi ²	p
	Village	City up to 100 000 residents	City up to 100 000 residents	City up to 250 000 residents	City over 250 000 residents			
Ability to establish contacts easily (vitality)	12.73%	3.42%	1.24%	4.35%	1.86%	23.60%	3.4926	0.4790
Ability to feel what another person feels (empathy)	5.28%	0.93%	0.31%	2.48%	0.62%	9.63%	1.8317	0.7667
Ability to impact/affect others	1.86%	0	0.31%	0.93%	0	3.11%	2.9554	0.5653
Ability to manage conflicts	5.28%	1.24%	0.93%	1.86%	0.31%	9.63%	2.7557	0.5995
Ability to manage emotions	1.86%	0.31%	0.31%	0.31%	0.31%	3.11%	1.0030	0.9094
Ability to motivate	12.11%	1.86%	2.17%	4.35%	1.55%	22.05%	3.5668	0.4678
Ability to predict the consequences of own and other people's actions	11.18%	3.73%	0.31%	5.28%	2.17%	22.67%	7.5880	0.1079
Ability to set goals (for oneself and others)	1.55%	0.31%	0.62%	0.31%	0.62%	3.42%	3.5260	0.4739
Assertiveness	1.55%	0.93%	0.31%	1.24%	1.55%	5.59%	7.3056	0.1206
Attractive appearance	0.31%	0.31%	0	0.31%	0.62%	1.55%	5.4679	0.2426
Broad general knowledge	18.32%	2.80%	1.86%	7.14%	3.11%	33.23%	2.3814	0.6660
Charisma – inspiring leadership, optimism, passion	5.59%	1.55%	0	2.48%	1.24%	10.87%	3.2550	0.5161
Communication skills (including the ability to listen)	14.60%	1.86%	2.48%	7.45%	2.17%	28.57%	5.4470	0.2444
Consistency	9.32%	3.42%	2.80%	5.28%	3.73%	24.53%	8.8422	0.0652
Cooperation on clearly defined, transparent terms	3.73%	1.24%	0.31%	0.31%	0	5.59%	7.9342	0.0940
Courageous risk-taking	2.48%	0.31%	0.62%	0.62%	0.93%	4.97%	2.5770	0.6309
Creativity	18.01%	4.04%	4.66%	8.70%	5.28%	40.68%	9.0641	0.0595
Enforcing obedience (authoritarian attitude to employees)	0.62%	0	0	0	0.31%	0.93%	2.6731	0.6139
Enterprise	7.14%	0.62%	1.24%	3.73%	1.24%	13.98%	3.1044	0.5405
Ethics	8.07%	3.42%	0.62%	4.66%	3.73%	20.50%	10.2624	0.0362
Fairness	13.35%	2.17%	0.93%	5.90%	1.55%	23.91%	4.6608	0.3240
Firmness	10.25%	1.55%	1.86%	4.35%	2.80%	20.81%	1.7309	0.7851
Flexibility	3.73%	0.62%	0.31%	2.17%	1.24%	8.07%	1.5186	0.8233
Focus on competition and rivalry	0.62%	0.31%	0	0	0	0.93%	2.8501	0.5832
Focus on team work	0.93%	0.62%	0.31%	0.62%	0.31%	2.80%	1.9580	0.7435
Friendliness	12.11%	1.86%	1.24%	3.42%	0.93%	19.57%	5.7878	0.2156
High self-esteem	0.31%	0	0	0.31%	0.31%	0.93%	2.2244	0.6946
Honesty	16.46%	3.42%	2.17%	8.07%	5.28%	35.40%	3.0518	0.5492
Intuition	5.59%	0.62%	0.62%	1.86%	2.80%	11.49%	8.1814	0.0852
Loyalty towards employees	7.76%	0.62%	0.93%	2.48%	1.86%	13.66%	2.7450	0.6014
Optimism	5.59%	1.24%	0.93%	1.86%	0.62%	10.25%	1.5543	0.8170
Resistance to stress	6.83%	1.86%	0.93%	2.17%	1.55%	13.35%	1.1795	0.8815
Responsibility	12.73%	2.17%	1.86%	6.83%	3.11%	26.71%	1.7464	0.7823
Self-discipline	0.62%	1.24%	0	0.31%	0.31%	2.48%	13.9902	0.0073
Treating employees as partners	9.94%	2.17%	0.93%	4.97%	1.86%	19.88%	1.2569	0.8687

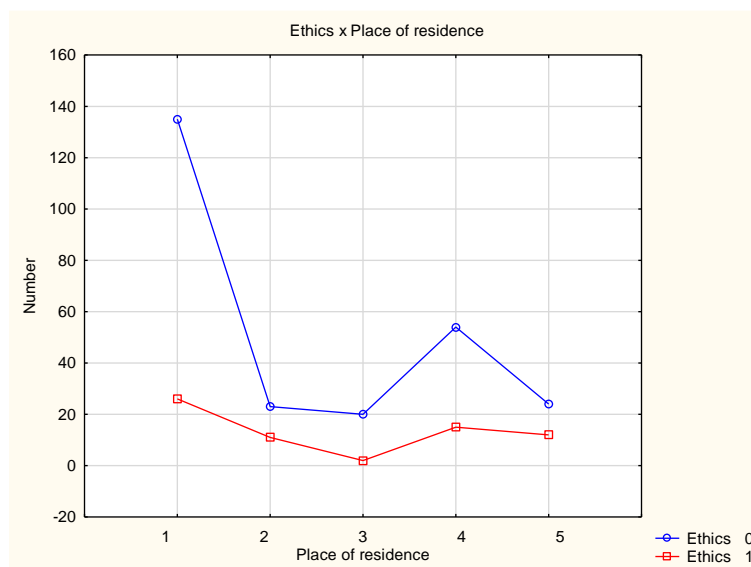
Source: own study.

In case of the study carried out in Poland in relation to two features/competencies:

1. ethics,
2. self-discipline

the results of Pearson's Chi-square test, at the assumed significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), indicate the rejection of the verified null hypothesis. This means that there is a statistically significant correlation between the choice of the above-mentioned two features/competencies and the respondent's place of residence. The above-mentioned features/competencies were chosen mainly by respondents-inhabitants of rural areas in Poland, which is illustrated in Figures 5 and 6. However, this result should be treated with caution due to the small number of responses.

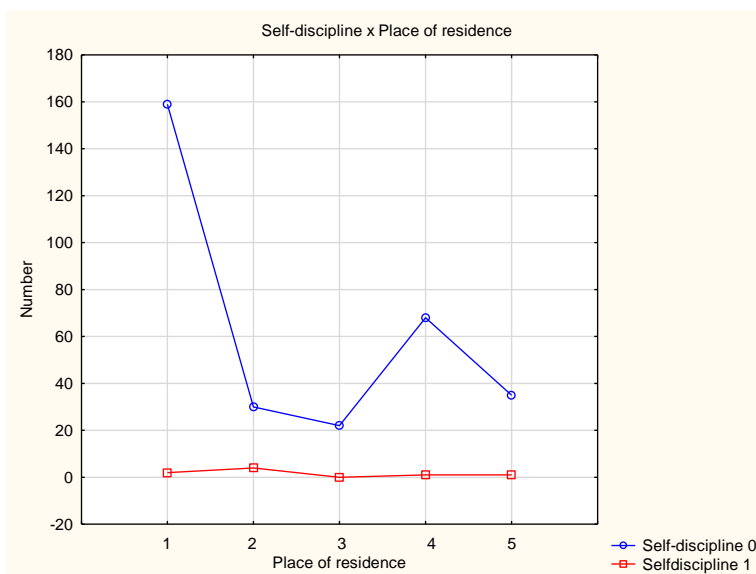
In case of the other examined features/competencies, the results of the Pearson Chi-square test, at the adopted significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), indicate no grounds for rejecting the verified null hypothesis, and thus no connection between the choice of a specific feature/competencies and the respondent's place of residence in Poland.



where: 1. Village; 2. City up to 50 000 residents; 3. City up to 100 000 residents; 4. City up to 250 000 residents; 5. City over 250 000 residents.

Figure 5. Number of answers regarding the selection of features/competencies: Ethics and the respondent's place of residence in Poland in 2023.

Source: own study.



where: 1. Village; 2. City up to 50 000 residents; 3. City up to 100 000 residents; 4. City up to 250 000 residents; 5. City over 250 000 residents.

Figure 6. Number of answers regarding the selection of features/competencies: Self-discipline and the respondent's place of residence in Poland in 2023.

Source: own study.

Table 4.

Selection of the desirable features and competencies of the direct supervisor (manager) by the respondent's place of residence in Great Britain in 2023 and the results of the Pearson Chi-square test and the level of its significance

Characteristics and Competencies	Place of residence (% against number of responses = 322)						Pearson's Chi ²	P
	Village	City up to 100 000 residents	City up to 100 000 residents	City up to 250 000 residents	City over 250 000 residents	Row in total		
Ability to establish contacts easily (vitality)	3.77%	4.72%	5.66%	1.89%	7.55%	14.15%	4.1255	0.3893
Ability to feel what another person feels (empathy)	0.94%	0.94%	2.52%	0.31%	3.14%	7.86%	7.1984	0.1258
Ability to impact/affect others	0.63%	0	0.63%	0	0.63%	1.89%	3.1570	0.5319
Ability to manage conflicts	0.94%	0.63%	0.31%	0.31%	0.94%	3.14%	0.6555	0.9567
Ability to manage emotions	0	0	1.26%	0	1.26%	2.52%	10.3348	0.0352
Ability to motivate	2.52%	2.20%	0.63%	1.26%	3.77%	10.38%	3.1232	0.5374
Ability to predict the consequences of own and other people's actions	2.83%	3.14%	2.83%	1.89%	5.35%	16.04%	0.5907	0.9641
Ability to set goals (for oneself and others)	0.63%	0	0.31%	0.63%	0.31%	1.89%	4.7250	0.3167
Assertiveness	0.63%	0	0.31%	0.63%	0.31%	1.89%	4.7250	0.3167
Attractive appearance	0	0.94%	0.63%	0.31%	0	1.89%	7.6697	0.1045
Broad general knowledge	3.77%	4.72%	5.66%	1.89%	7.55%	23.58%	5.2345	0.2641
Charisma – inspiring leadership, optimism, passion	1.26%	0	1.57%	0.63%	3.46%	6.92%	7.5337	0.1102
Communication skills (including the ability to listen)	6.60%	5.66%	5.03%	3.77%	10.38%	31.45%	0.3409	0.9870
Consistency	10.38%	8.81%	7.55%	4.09%	11.01%	41.82%	4.3931	0.3554

Cont. table 4.

Cooperation on clearly defined, transparent terms	1.26%	0.31%	0.63%	0.94%	0.94%	4.09%	3.5122	0.4760
Courageous risk-taking	1.26%	0.94%	1.57%	0.94%	2.52%	7.23%	1.1129	0.8922
Creativity	5.97%	9.12%	5.35%	4.72%	14.47%	39.62%	9.5828	0.0481
Enforcing obedience (authoritarian attitude to employees)	0	0.31%	0.63%	0.31%	0.31%	1.57%	3.2876	0.5109
Enterprise	0.63%	1.57%	0.31%	0.31%	1.26%	4.09%	3.9725	0.4097
Ethics	5.35%	2.52%	3.46%	3.77%	9.12%	24.21%	7.1401	0.1287
Fairness	1.57%	2.83%	0.94%	0.31%	7.55%	13.21%	18.1995	0.0011
Firmness	5.03%	3.14%	2.20%	1.57%	5.97%	17.92%	2.6104	0.6250
Flexibility	5.35%	3.14%	3.46%	2.52%	4.09%	18.55%	4.4958	0.3431
Focus on competition and rivalry	0	0.63%	0.31%	0	0.31%	1.26%	3.6957	0.4488
Focus on team work	1.26%	0.94%	1.26%	0.94%	1.26%	5.66%	1.4497	0.8355
Friendliness	5.66%	5.03%	3.46%	3.46%	8.18%	25.79%	1.4680	0.8323
High self-esteem	0.94%	0	0.63%	0	1.57%	3.14%	4.5167	0.3406
Honesty	9.75%	7.86%	8.49%	5.03%	14.78%	45.91%	0.7042	0.9508
Intuition	0.94%	0.94%	1.26%	0.94%	3.14%	7.23%	2.4293	0.6574
Loyalty towards employees	2.20%	1.26%	1.57%	0.63%	3.46%	9.12%	1.3507	0.8527
Optimism	1.26%	0.63%	0.31%	0.31%	2.20%	4.72%	2.7672	0.5975
Resistance to stress	1.89%	1.57%	0.31%	0.31%	1.89%	5.97%	3.8052	0.4330
Responsibility	4.09%	3.14%	3.14%	2.20%	6.29%	18.87%	0.2331	0.9937
Self-discipline	0	0	0	0.94%	1.26%	2.20%	12.1456	0.0163
Treating employees as partners	4.72%	5.66%	5.35%	2.83%	9.12%	27.67%	1.9638	0.7424

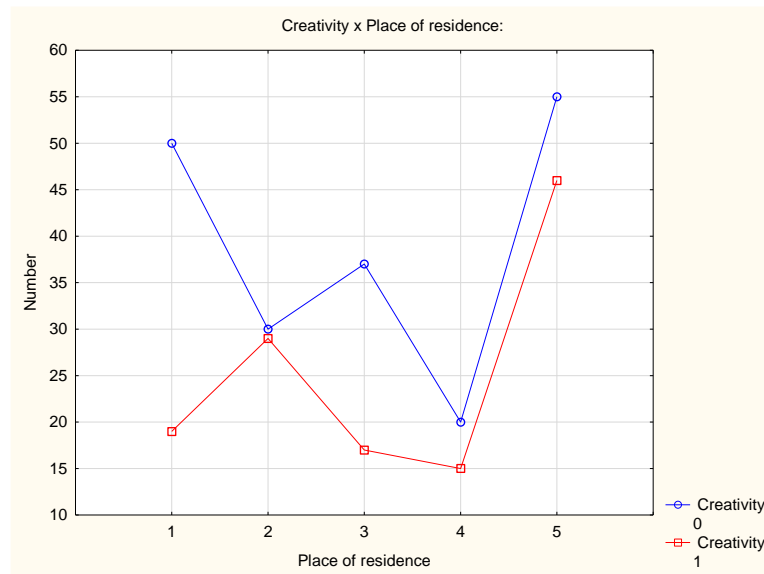
Source: own study.

In case of a study carried out in Great Britain in relation to four features/competencies:

1. creativity,
2. self-discipline,
3. ability to manage emotions,
4. fairness

the results of Pearson's Chi-square test, at the assumed significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), indicate the rejection of the verified null hypothesis. This means that there is a statistically significant correlation between the choice of the above-mentioned four features/competencies and the respondent's place of residence. The above-mentioned features/competencies were chosen mainly by respondents-inhabitants of cities in Great Britain, which is illustrated in Figures 7, 8, 9, and 10.

In case of the other examined features/competencies, the results of the Pearson Chi-square test, at the adopted significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), indicate no grounds for rejecting the verified null hypothesis, and thus no connection between the choice of a specific feature/competencies and the respondent's place of residence in Great Britain.



where: 1. Village; 2. City up to 50 000 residents; 3. City up to 100 000 residents; 4. City up to 250 000 residents; 5. City over 250 000 residents.

Figure 7. Number of answers regarding the selection of features/competencies: Creativity and the respondent's place of residence in Great Britain in 2023.

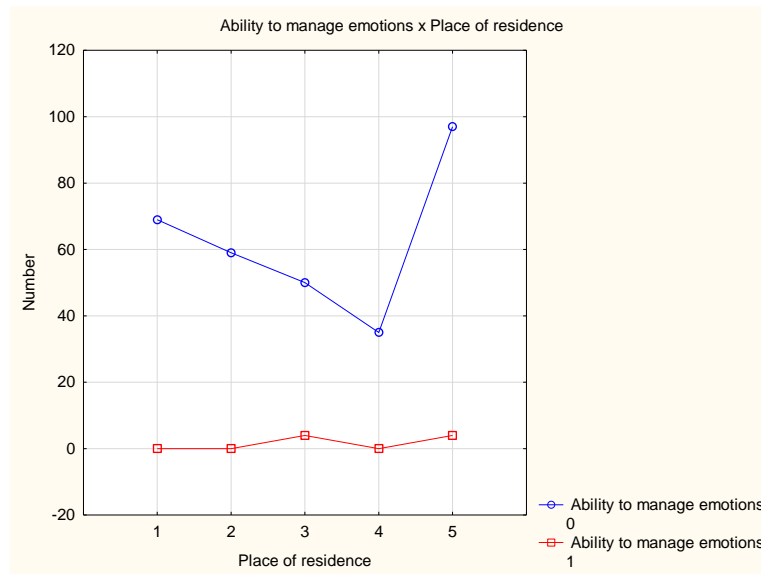
Source: own study.



where: 1. Village; 2. City up to 50 000 residents; 3. City up to 100 000 residents; 4. City up to 250 000 residents; 5. City over 250 000 residents.

Figure 8. Number of answers regarding the selection of feature: Self-discipline and the respondent's place of residence in Great Britain in 2023.

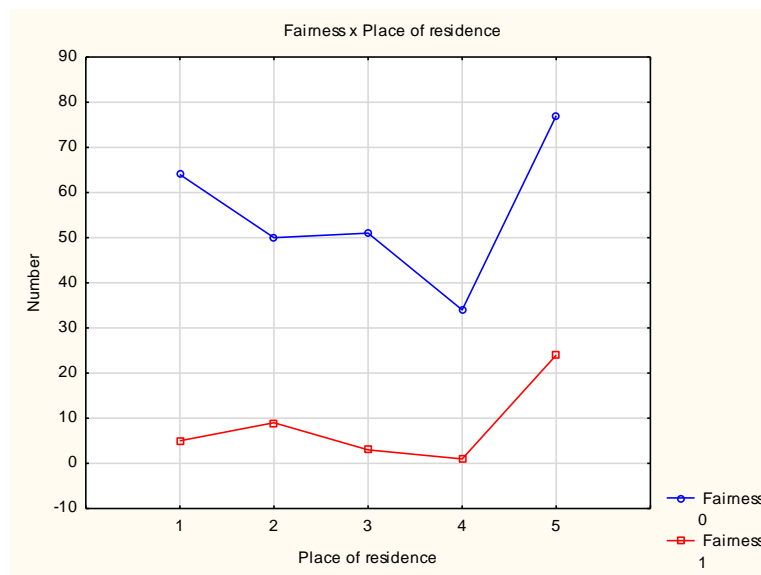
Source: own study.



where: 1. Village; 2. City up to 50 000 residents; 3. City up to 100 000 residents; 4. City up to 250 000 residents; 5. City over 250 000 residents.

Figure 9. Number of answers regarding the selection of features/competencies: Ability to manage emotions and the respondent's place of residence in Great Britain in 2023.

Source: own study.



where: 1. Village; 2. City up to 50 000 residents; 3. City up to 100 000 residents; 4. City up to 250 000 residents; 5. City over 250 000 residents.

Figure 10. Number of answers regarding the selection of features/competencies: Fairness and the respondent's place of residence in Great Britain in 2023.

Source: own study.

In conclusion, the calculated Pearson Chi-square indicators in Poland (Table 3) and the Great Britain (Table 4) differ significantly. However, this result should be treated with caution due to the small number of responses.

Discussion & conclusion

The analysis of the literature allowed to confirm that the research topic undertaken by the authors is important, and the number of studies focusing on it is systematically growing. It can also be noticed that more and more in-depth research topics are being undertaken, exploring various areas of the functioning of Generation Z representatives on the labor market. Some of the research focuses on identifying the expectations of Generation Z towards the conditions of their work. What is lacking, however, are studies dealing with the correlation between the respondent's gender or place of residence and his/ her expectations regarding the features and competencies that a direct supervisor should have. Generation Z representatives have a very precise idea what are the rules their work should be based on, as well as what qualities and competencies their direct supervisor should have. If their expectations are not met, they do not hesitate to change their workplace. Acquiring talents on the labor market and keeping them in the organization for a long time requires direct supervisors to know about the features and competencies that Generation Z expects from them. The conducted study made it possible to identify the features and competencies of direct supervisors desirable for the Generation Z. Main conclusions resulting from the analysis of the collected empirical data in relation to the research questions posed are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Summary of the study results obtained, by research questions

Research question	Answer – Poland	Answer – Great Britain
Q1. In the opinion of Generation Z representatives -what features and competencies should a direct supervisor have?	<p>Desirable features and competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – creativity, – honesty, – broad general knowledge, – communication skills, – responsibility. <p>Least desirable features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – high self-esteem, – enforcing obedience, – focus on rivalry and competition, – attractive appearance, – self-discipline. 	<p>Desirable features and competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – honesty, – consistency, – creativity, – communication skills, – treating employees as partners. <p>Least desirable features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – focus on rivalry and competition, – enforcing obedience, – ability to set goals, – attractive appearance, – assertiveness, – ability to impact/affect others.

Cont. table 5.

<p>Q2. Does the gender of the Generation Z representative affect the choice of desired features/competencies of the direct supervisor? If yes, how?</p>	<p>In four cases, gender significantly differentiated the analyzed variables. Women significantly more often than men chose: treating employees as partners.</p> <p>Men significantly more often than women chose: – charisma, – focus on rivalry and competition, – entrepreneurship.</p>	<p>In five cases gender significantly differentiated the analyzed variables.</p> <p>Women significantly more often than men chose: – communication skills, – empathy, – high self-esteem.</p> <p>Men significantly more often than women chose: – ability to predict the consequences of their own and other people's actions, – firmness.</p>
<p>Q3. Does the place of residence of the Generation Z representative affect the choice of desired features/competencies of the direct supervisor? If yes, how?</p>	<p>In two cases place of residence significantly differentiated the analyzed variables. Rural residents significantly more often chose: – ethics, – self-discipline.</p>	<p>In four cases place of residence significantly differentiated the analyzed variables. City residents significantly more often chose: – creativity, – self-discipline, – ability to manage emotions, – honesty.</p>

Source: own study.

The presented study results broaden the knowledge about the expectations of Generation Z representatives towards the features and competencies of their direct supervisors. Despite the differences in the answers of respondents representing Poland and Great Britain, similarities can also be noticed. Respondents in both surveyed countries considered *honesty*, *creativity*, and *communication skills (including the ability to listen)* to be the most desirable features and competencies of direct supervisors. As the least desirable they indicated *enforcing obedience*, *focus on rivalry and competition*, and *attractive appearance*. Men's assessment differed from women's assessment.

These results are consistent with the analyzed results of research by other authors when it comes to indicating the features and competencies of direct supervisors, desirable for Generation Z (Sladek, Grabinger, 2014; Gabrielova, Buchko, 2021; Rybowska, 2016; Gajda, 2017; Jensen, 2021; Humanitas, 2023). On the other hand, the research results presented in the paper complement the research conducted so far by identifying the correlation between the desirable features and competencies of direct supervisors, and the gender and place of residence of Generation Z representatives, as well as in Great Britain. The choice of desirable features/competencies of the direct supervisor was influenced by the gender of the Generation Z representative residing both in Poland and in the Great Britain. In Poland, women significantly more often than men chose *treating employees as partners*, however men significantly more often than women indicated *charisma*, *focus on rivalry and competition*, and *entrepreneurship*. In Great Britain women in this research group significantly more often than men chose *communication skills (including the ability to listen)*, *ability to feel what another person feels (empathy)* and *high self-esteem*, in turn, men more often than women

indicated *ability to predict the consequences of own and other people's actions*, as well as *firmness*. The place of residence of the Generation Z representative also affects the choice of desirable features/competencies of the direct supervisor. In Poland, rural residents significantly more often chose *ethics* and *self-discipline*; however in Great Britain city residents significantly more often chose *creativity*, *self-discipline*, *ability to manage emotions*, and *honesty*. The results of the study on the correlation between the respondents' answers and their gender, conducted by the authors, are inconsistent with the results of A. Rybowska's study (Rybowska, 2016), but they complement this study by indicating the correlation between the respondent's place of residence and his/her assessment of the features and competencies of his direct supervisor.

Presented results also indicate the differences in the features and competencies of direct superiors, desirable for Generation Z representatives in Poland and in Great Britain. It can therefore be concluded that the nationality of respondents is an important factor differentiating preferences and values in the workplace of Generation Z. These results underline the importance of managing diversity in enterprises and even the need to understand differences in the value of a multinational workforce. This may be a valuable clue for entrepreneurs, that a uniform approach to managing nationally diverse human resources, e.g. in international corporations where Generation Z often works, is ineffective.

Generation Z representatives have different expectations related to their work than representatives of previous generations. Without knowing and understanding the needs and style of their work, organizations will have difficulty not only in acquiring the talents of this group, but also in retaining them. The relationship between the direct supervisor (manager) and the generation Z representatives will largely determine the success of cooperation.

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