

## VALUES AND EXPECTATIONS OF GENERATION Z

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**Purpose:** The main aim of the study was to evaluate and compare the set of values and expectations of Generation Z in the context of their professional work. This study fills a gap regarding the work-related values and expectations of Generation Z, particularly considering the diversity of attitudes related to the represented country.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A survey method was used to achieve the objective. An online questionnaire with closed questions was used, where the range of responses was based on a literature review. The sample consisted of 120 respondents from Generation Z, who were reached via social media. The study focused on gathering the opinions and experiences of this demographic group in order to effectively answer the research questions.

**Findings:** Research has shown that Generation Z's most important values are love, family and friendship. In the workplace, they prioritise a good atmosphere and adequate remuneration. The motivating factors are bonuses, a friendly working environment and job satisfaction, while the demotivators are low pay, lack of development opportunities and a bad atmosphere at work. Generation Z shows less fear of change and more emphasis on work-life balance compared to generation Y.

**Research limitations/implications:** Limitations of the study include the small sample size and specific demographic characteristics, which limits the generalizability of the results to the entire population. Future studies should include a larger, more diverse study sample to increase the accuracy of results and quality of inference.

**Originality/value:** The article contributes to the understanding of Generation Z's work values and expectations, providing insights for employers. In the conclusions, we point to the need to balance individualism and freedom with meaningful and rewarding work in the workplace.

**Keywords:** Generation Z, values, expectations, motivation.

**Category of the paper:** research paper.

## 1. Introduction

With the entry of Generation Z into the labour market, employers are confronted with the completely new issue of adapting current incentive systems to the expectations of young people. The needs of Generation Z differ from those of previous generations (Egerová, Komárková, Kutlák, 2021; Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomałowska, 2014). From work, generation Z expects work life balance, decent wages, but also clearly defined promotion paths and a good atmosphere (Muster, 2020; Titko, Svirina, Skvarciany, Shina, 2020).

The general perception would seem to be that the topic of Generation Z in the workplace has already been thoroughly researched and many publications have been produced in this area. However, as the bibliographic analysis in the WoS and Scopus databases showed, this topic has not been exhausted at all. For the query (generation z) AND (workplace), 121 items were found in the Scopus database, while 79 were found in the WoS database. The results of the bibliometric analysis obtained show that there is a research gap, which justifies the publication of the following results. In recent publications, the authors indicate that there is still a limited amount of research on understanding the expectations of Generation Z people, especially in the transition and emerging economies (Nguyen Ngoc, Viet Dung, Rowley, Pejić Bach, 2022). The cited authors, as well as others, point out that it is worth conducting research on attitudes, values and expectations considering different countries and industries, analysing similarities and differences between generations, as there is a cognitive gap in this area all the time (Chillakuri, 2020; Duarte, Pereira, 2023; Egerová, Komárková, Kutlák, 2021).

The above considerations allowed the formulation of the research problem: what are the values and expectations of Generation Z in the context of their professional work. Based on this, the purpose of the study can be defined as the assessment and collation of a set of Generation Z values and expectations in the context of their professional work. The presented research findings are preceded by a literature review of Generation Z's values and expectations and the research methodology. This is followed by a presentation of the research results and a discussion referring to the research results presented by other authors. The article concludes by indicating future research directions and describing the limitations associated with this study.

## 2. Literature review

Generation Z, in English referred to as Gen Z, postmillennials, centennials, pivotals or zappers (Graczyk-Kucharska, Erickson, 2020), is defined variously by researchers involved in its description. It is most often defined by the year of birth, consequently, people born after 1989 are included here (Biernacki, 2014), sometimes 1995 or even 2000 is considered as the

limiting period (Ozkan, Solmaz, 2015; Titko, Svirina, Skvarciany, Shina, 2020). The analysis of the behaviour and expectations of representatives of generation Z allows us to point out many of their diverse characteristics, different from previous generations.

The main characteristic of Generation Z can be described as technology-oriented. These individuals are the first generation to have grown up in constant contact with devices that allow them to function in a virtual space. Generation Z therefore enters the labour market with an unprecedented familiarity with information technology. In fact, they cannot imagine life without a mobile phone with Internet access. They no longer use it solely to pass the time, but need it to function on a daily basis (Chillakuri, 2020; Ragin-Skorecka, Motala, Boguszezewska, 2023). For them, instant messaging is their primary tool for conversation (Ozkan, Solmaz, 2015). For representatives of generation Z, supporting themselves with solutions that function or are sourced from the web is natural (Muster, 2020). Through the very rapid technological changes that are progressing all the time, Gen Z has problems with face-to-face conversations. This has also caused problems in communicating with older generations, for whom social media is not something they take for granted (Nieżurawska-Zajęc, Kycia, Niemczynowicz, 2023). At the same time, the representatives of this group themselves point to a kind of dependence on modern technologies and the difficulty of operating on a daily basis without their support (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomątowska, 2014). Addiction to technology has also led to major problems with concentration and insomnia.

Generation Z growing up in a global and accessible world often shows even more openness, acceptance and tolerance for diversity in society (Chillakuri, 2020; Kamola, Marcinkowski, 2021). This is facilitated by the fact that, for the majority, English is not the slightest problem. At the same time, they themselves are more internally diverse and consider this diversity as something normal (Nguyen Ngoc, Viet Dung, Rowley, Pejić Bach, 2022; Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomątowska, 2014). Moreover, representatives of generation Z are also more socially oriented and interested in corporate social responsibility issues. They get involved in issues of global warming, hunger, wars, etc. (Nieżurawska-Zajęc, Kycia, Niemczynowicz, 2023).

Young people tend to show a strong sense of self-esteem and self-confidence (Biernacki, 2016). They do not need much time to decide what should be done and how it should be done. For the most part, they are not afraid of the risks that come with implementing accepted solutions (Chillakuri, 2020; Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomątowska, 2014). This may be due to the fact that they grew up in the era of computer games, in which such a mode of decision-making is necessary, and at the same time it offered the possibility to repeat the sequence of events that failed. Work is sometimes treated by them almost like a game in which, in the absence of positive results, one returns to the starting point to test the consequences of another decision (Ragin-Skorecka, Motala, Boguszezewska, 2023).

Generation Z is focused on finding a job that matches their skills and offers opportunities for personal and professional development (Chillakuri, 2020). Gen Z prefers to work on projects that are in line with their interests and may have multiple places where they develop

professionally (Gabrielova, Buchko, 2021; Niezurawska-Zajac, Kycia, Niemczynowicz, 2023). This is due to the ease of access to knowledge, which allows Generation Z to quickly acquire information using resources available online. Among young people, the phenomenon of just-in-time learning, i.e. learning and developing as needed, on call, can be observed (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomątowska, 2014, p. 413). However, young people most often do not have the ability to cascade knowledge and the ability to expand it linearly, they acquire and use only what they need at a given moment - to solve a specific problem. Consequently, it is easy for representatives of generation Z to become excellent specialists in narrowly defined fields, but it is more difficult for them to place the knowledge they possess in a broad context (Ragin-Skorecka, Motała, Boguszewska, 2023).

Young people are entrepreneurial and results-oriented, prefer autonomy at work, and want flexibility related to aspects of work such as place, time and remuneration (Chillakuri, 2020; Niezurawska-Zajac, Kycia, Niemczynowicz, 2023). Generation Z highly values work-life balance (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomątowska, 2014). The young respect their time and know their value especially on the labour market. For Gen Z, free time to pursue their passions or simply relax is a priority (Ulrych, 2012). Even in situations where they are offered additional benefits, such as paid overtime, they have no intention of taking advantage of this because they prefer to devote their time to family or friends (Mahmoud, Fuxman, Mohr, Reisel, Grigoriou, 2021).

**Table 1.**

*Summary of characteristics of each generation*

Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– intelligence,</li> <li>– education,</li> <li>– not afraid of change,</li> <li>– courage,</li> <li>– ability to work with new technologies,</li> <li>– eager to learn,</li> <li>– have no problem changing jobs if there are additional benefits involved,</li> <li>– constructive criticism is important to them,</li> <li>– are not very outgoing in their interpersonal relations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the most educated,</li> <li>– development,</li> <li>– work-life balance is very important,</li> <li>– proficient in modern technologies,</li> <li>– work is supposed to be fun,</li> <li>– have no problem with frequent job changes,</li> <li>– want help, support from their manager,</li> <li>– have no problem with globalisation,</li> <li>– do not like to be left out,</li> <li>– have their own opinion,</li> <li>– tend to use social media for communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– work-life balance is definitely most important to them,</li> <li>– individualists,</li> <li>– reliant on technology,</li> <li>– looking for stability,</li> <li>– ambitious,</li> <li>– competitive,</li> <li>– sceptical,</li> <li>– distrustful,</li> <li>– expect clear objectives,</li> <li>– prefer direct communication.</li> </ul>

Source: (Biernacki, 2016; Janusz-Lorkowska, 2019; Lašáková, Vojteková, Procházková, 2023; Mahmoud, Fuxman, Mohr, Reisel, Grigoriou, 2021; Schroth, 2019; Waško, 2016)

Referring to the generations present in the labour market today, their characteristics (Table 1) and values (Table 2) can be identified.

**Table 2.**  
*Overview of the most important values in each generation*

Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- independence,</li> <li>- flexibility,</li> <li>- work-life balance,</li> <li>- family,</li> <li>- children,</li> <li>- responsibility,</li> <li>- entrepreneurship,</li> <li>- scepticism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- quality of life,</li> <li>- curiosity about the world,</li> <li>- flexibility,</li> <li>- freedom,</li> <li>- self-confidence,</li> <li>- openness,</li> <li>- tolerance,</li> <li>- personal skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ambition,</li> <li>- entrepreneurial spirit,</li> <li>- openness,</li> <li>- diversity,</li> <li>- directness,</li> <li>- curiosity about new people,</li> <li>- collecting memories,</li> <li>- attention to the climate,</li> <li>- mobility.</li> </ul>

Source: (Gabrielova, Buchko, 2021; Kwiecińska, Grzesik, Siewierska-Chmaj, Popielska-Borys, 2023; Lazányi, Bilan, 2017; Mahmoud, Fuxman, Mohr, Reisel, Grigoriou, 2021; Schroth, 2019; Taylor, Dayaram, Coffey, Holmes, 2009; Waško, 2016).

Generation Z's values and expectations are influenced by events in their lives, such as the economic recession, high unemployment rates, rapid technological advances, the Covid-19 pandemic, high inflation or war conflicts. In addition to this, young people from Generation Z have a great problem becoming independent. They are very attached to their family and are financially dependent on their parents for a long time. A fact that also makes it difficult for them to become independent is that they have no idea about themselves. They want stability, but the economic situation definitely does not facilitate this (Gabrielova, Buchko, 2021; Lazányi, Bilan, 2017; Lukianoff, Haidt, 2019).

### 3. Methods

The main objective of the study was to assess and collate the set of values and expectations of Generation Z in the context of their professional work. To this end, the following questions were posed:

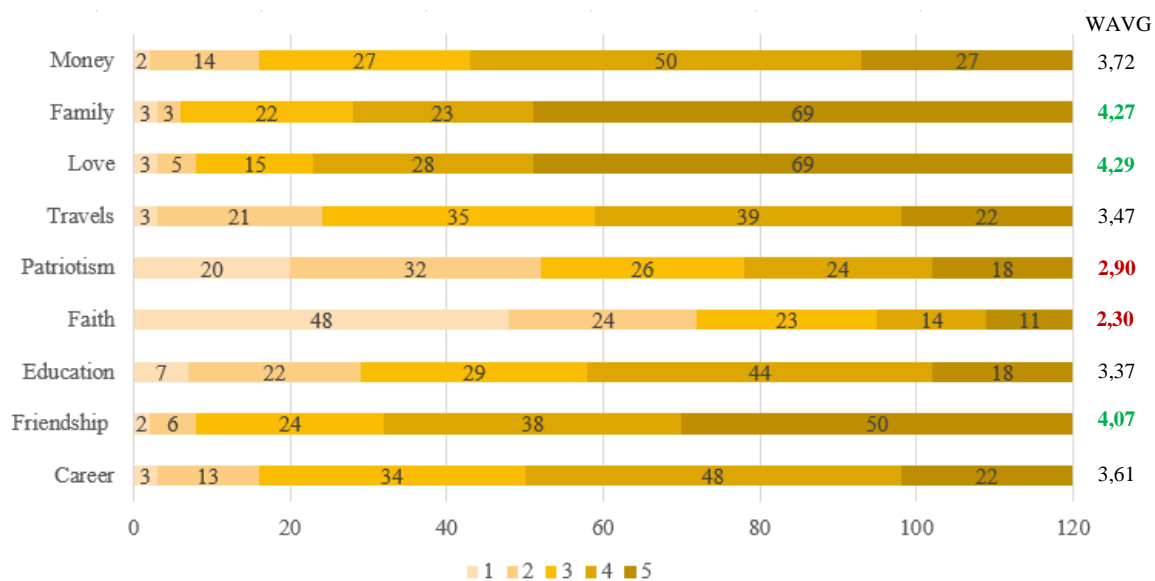
- Q1: What values do Generation Z have in life?
- Q2: What are the most important expectations in the workplace for generation Z?
- Q3: What are the most important employer characteristics for a Generation Z employee?
- Q4: What are the motivating and demotivating factors for Generation Z?
- Q5: What are Generation Z's perceived differences between themselves and Generation Y?

The stated aim of the research and the research questions allowed the choice of the research method – a survey. Survey research is of an investigative nature, allowing the research problem to be solved from the experience of the participants by capturing opinions, which is the aim of the completed study (Matejun, 2016). The research technique used is an online survey with closed questions. A list of predefined answers to the closed questions was prepared based on

the literature analysis. The selection of respondents was random and they were reached using social media. The study received 120 correctly completed questionnaires from people living in Poland who are representatives of generation Z (89% were born between 1995 and 2000, the rest were born later). The majority of respondents were women (66%). Respondents mostly indicated either a secondary education (39%) or higher education (54%). This characterisation of the population does not allow the results to be generalised to the entire generation Z, but for the indicated group it does allow conclusions to be drawn. The opinions of respondents were collected in the first quarter of 2023. All data obtained did not require anonymisation.

## 4. Results

The first part of the study (P1) concerned the values that are important in the life of Generation Z. Respondents indicated the importance of each value on a Likert scale (1 – least important to 5 – most important). The analysis of the responses received (Fig. 1) indicates that for Generation Z the most important values in life are love (weighted average 4.29), family (4.27) and friendship (4.07).

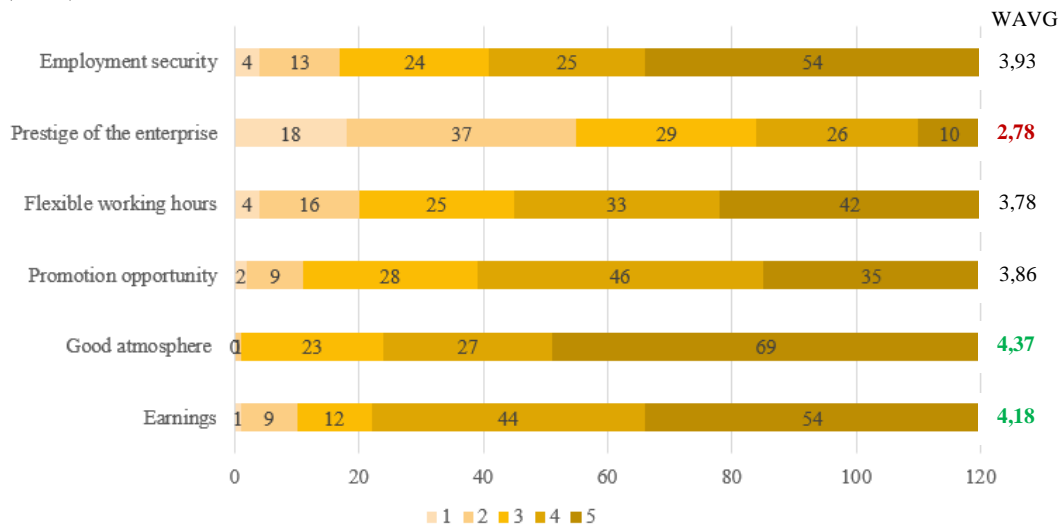


**Figure 1.** Assessment of values in life in the opinions of Generation Z.

Source: own study (n = 120).

On the other hand, the least valued values in life are patriotism (2.90), the importance of which is disappearing due to globalisation and the possibility of getting to know the whole world without major limitations, and faith (2.30), which is confirmed by numerous studies, e.g. showing the participation of young people in religious practices.

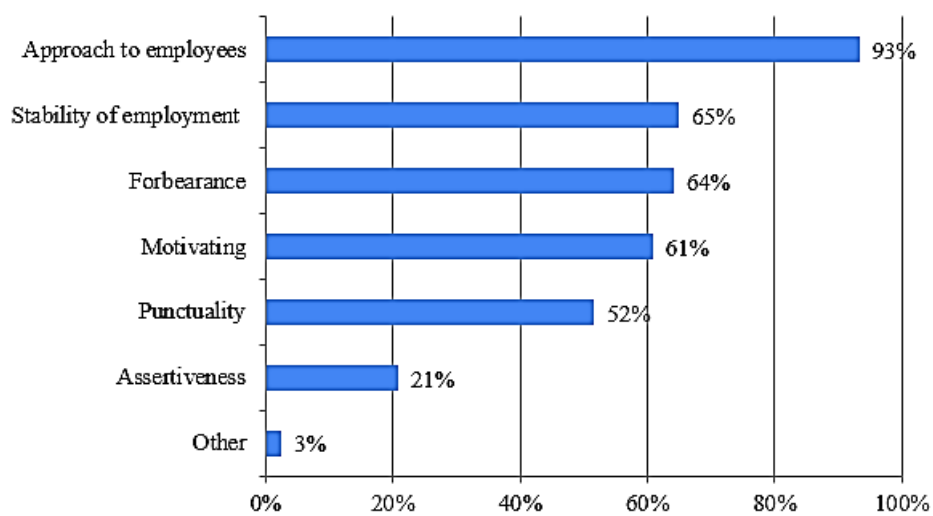
A specific value system in generation Z is also revealed in the expectations that GenZ representatives have with regard to the workplace (Figure 2), as well as the employer (Figure 3). The workplace for young people (P2) is to have, above all, a good atmosphere (mean score of 4.37), followed by earnings (4.18). The least important is the prestige of the enterprise (2.78).



**Figure 2.** Expectations in the workplace in the opinions of Generation Z.

Source: own study (n = 120).

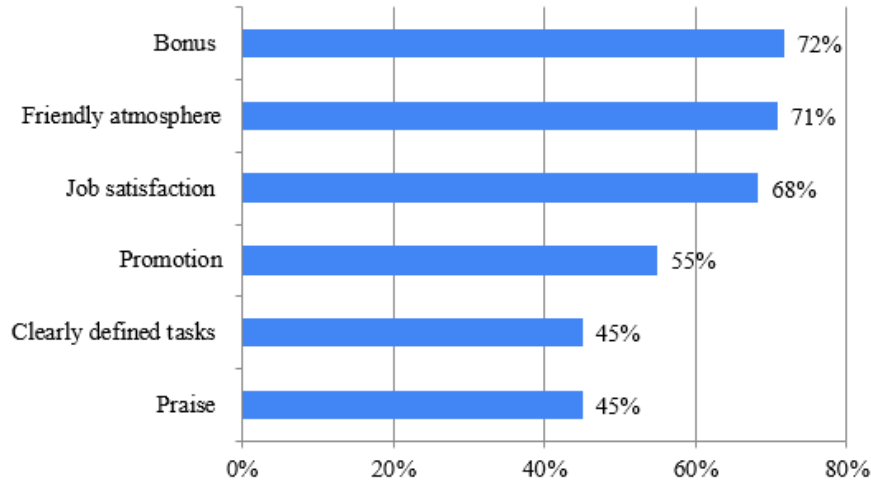
With regard to the employer (P3), representatives of generation Z expect above all the right approach to employees – as many as 93% of respondents indicated this answer – and forbearance (64%), which is related to GenZ's expectation of a good atmosphere at work, and stability of employment (65%), which refers to earnings. Interestingly, only one person indicated that the employer should set out a clear development path, offer an attractive bonus system and give the opportunity to set the schedule according to my preferences.



**Figure 3.** Employer characteristics in the opinions of Generation Z.

Source: own study (n = 120).

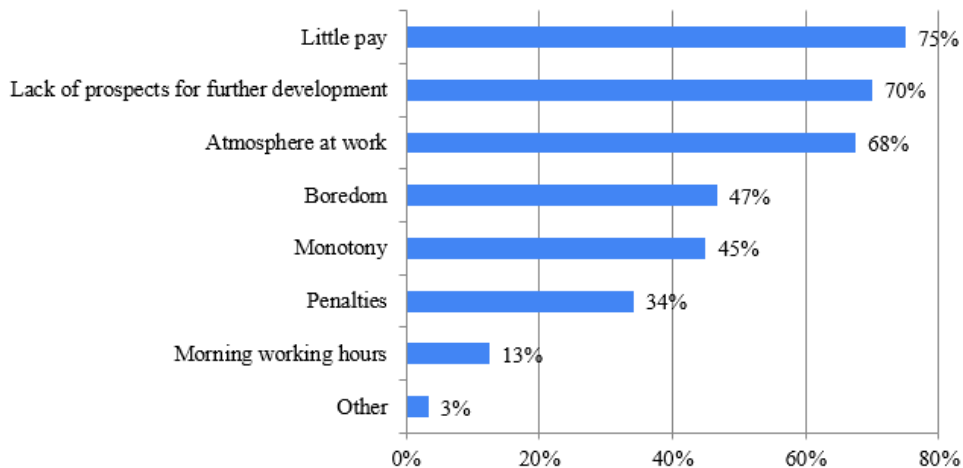
The next question asked about GenZ's motivating and demotivating factors (P4). The motivating factors for Generation Z (Figure 4) were a bonus (for 74% of respondents), a friendly atmosphere at work (71%) and job satisfaction (68%). Other responses: promotion, clearly defined tasks and praise were also frequently indicated.



**Figure 4.** Motivating factors in the opinions of Generation Z.

Source: own study (n = 120).

On the other hand, the analysis of factors demotivating to work (Figure 5) reflects much better the expectations of generation Z, which were described earlier. The biggest demotivators are low pay (75% of responses), lack of prospects for further development (70%) and the atmosphere at work (68%).



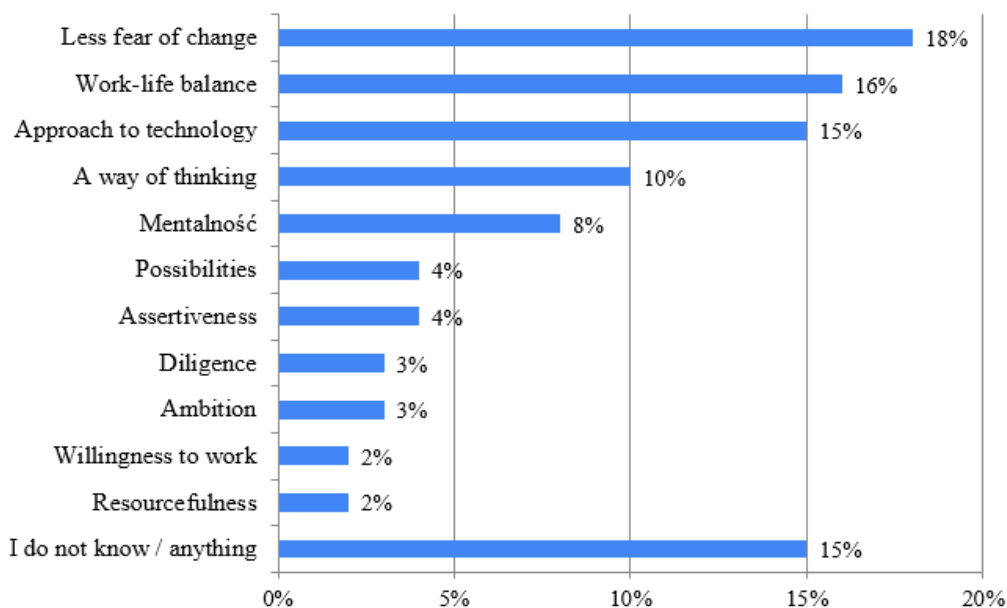
**Figure 5.** Demotivating factors in the opinions of Generation Z.

Source: own study (n = 120).



The final aspect considered was the differences between generations Z and Y (P5), to which respondents were able to provide an extended response. Selected opinions are presented below:

- *We are the generation that finds it easiest to keep up with technological innovations, and we try to develop ourselves in several directions at once, close to our passions and interests. We have more opportunities to learn, thanks to remote classes and courses. We are more used to this than the older generation.*
- *The fact that work is supposed to be for me, not me for work. I'm not interested in free overtime and staying after hours, generation Z also has no problem changing jobs frequently if things are bad.*
- *We are more aware of our value as an employee. We don't allow ourselves to be exploited and look for a workplace that is friendly to us, that does not exploit but respects employees.*
- *Technology and access to information as it was during our adolescence has created in us different views, greater tolerance and social behaviour.*



**Figure 6.** Factors differentiating Generation Z from Generation Y.

Source: own study (n = 120).

Analysing all respondents' answers, 3 main areas of difference between Generation Z and Y can be observed (Figure 6). In GenZ's view, it differs from Generation Y in that it has less fear of change (18%), cares more about work-life balance (16%) and approach for ICT technology (15%). Interestingly, as many as 15% of respondents do not indicate any differences or answered that they do not know.

## 5. Discussion

The findings presented above help to fill the gap formulated in the introduction regarding the study of Generation Z people from different countries. Our findings, as well as those presented by a number of authors, give a consistent image of Generation Z with regard to work-life balance. Young people value love, family and friendship and it is clear to them that work life balance is a key value for them and their defining characteristic (Chillakuri, 2020). Generation Z believes it is the employer's responsibility to provide flexibility with this as it increases their productivity and efficiency (Chillakuri, Mahanandia, 2018). The young are keen to take part in various social initiatives and need time to do so (Chillakuri, 2020). At the same time, Gen Z employees, like previous generations, expect stable work and decent pay for it (Duarte, Pereira, 2023; Ragin-Skorecka, Motala, Boguszezwska, 2023).

Generation Z is looking for meaningful work (meaningful work). Generation Z young people have an idealistic view that the tasks given to them should be meaningful and rewarding and that their ideas will be implemented by their managers (Schroth, 2019). This is also overlaid by the expectation of a good working atmosphere, supported by the employer's understanding. Young people also want to work together as a team (Gomes, Duarte, Marques, Cunha, 2023). When this is lacking, the young person simply leaves in search of a job offering a better balance in life and better prospects for development, and has no fear of change, which is also related to the fact of growing up in a global world (Duarte, Pereira, 2023; Pradhan, Jena, 2019).

Representatives of Generation Z take information and communication technology for granted. As a generation of 'digital natives', they want immediate, real-time feedback through quick personal contact (Duarte, Pereira, 2023; Lanier, 2017; Lazányi, Bilan, 2017) instead of periodic performance summaries. Moreover, digitalisation allows the employee to find a balance between personal and professional goals. As research shows in reality, building interpersonal relationships is needed, which allows for better performance when intense engagement in professional relationships is created (Chillakuri, 2020; Gomes, Duarte, Marques, Cunha, 2023).

Summarising the research results obtained and the above considerations regarding the challenged values and expectations of generation Z, it can be pointed out, following Gabrielova and Buchko (2021), that for generation Z:

- internal work values include achievement orientation and the desire for continuous professional development,
- external work values include the need for security related to appropriate remuneration, pragmatism and low willingness to take risky actions, and at the same time the need for constant feedback from the employer,

- social values of work are the balance between work and professional life, which is related to the independent management of one's own tasks on a competitive basis, so that one's own skills can be fully revealed; in turn, social interactions would be best implemented via digital communication channels.

Generation Z expects employers to be understanding and appropriate towards employees, as well as to provide a friendly atmosphere. Work-life balance is very important, which means that employers should strive to create a balanced working environment that combines individualism and freedom with job satisfaction, by promoting diversity, cooperation and clear communication.

## 6. Summary

The aim of the study was to assess and collate Generation Z's set of values and expectations in the context of their professional work. The main values guiding Generation Z in life are love, family and friendship (P1). On the other hand, in relation to the workplace, GenZ representatives formulate expectations in terms of a good atmosphere and wages (P2). The employer should have the right attitude towards the employee and be understanding (P3). Generation Z people are motivated to work by a bonus, a friendly atmosphere at work and job satisfaction, while they are demotivated by low pay, lack of perspectives for further development and a bad atmosphere at work (P4). The biggest differences between generation Z and Y respondents indicate for less fear of change, being more concerned about work-life balance and taking ICT for granted (P5).

When creating a workplace for generation Z, employers should aim to balance the need for individualism and freedom on the one hand, and the importance and role of rewarding work on the other. This can be done by creating a diverse and inclusive working environment, fostering competitiveness in a friendly atmosphere, promoting social interaction and emphasising the value of teamwork. It is very important to clearly formulate expectations and goals and ensure correct feedback. It is important to remember that generation Z, like previous generations, expect security at work, linked to satisfactory remuneration.

In the authors' view, it is worth undertaking in-depth research towards identifying patterns and motives for action that influence workplace attitudes and behaviour among different generations and identifying the intergenerational gap. This will enable future strategies to be developed for the effective management of employees in organisations with attention to the organisational climate and the effectiveness of the tasks carried out.

The main limitation of the survey is due to the number of responses received and the structure of the population surveyed, which does not allow the results to be generalised to the entire population. In addition, other limitations arise from the specific nature of survey research.

The most important of these are: the representativeness of the data, the low returnability of responses, the impossibility of clarifying the intention of the question, questions and answers interpreted differently by respondents and the lack of control over external factors that accompany surveys.

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