

**WHERE IS GENERATION Z HEADED?
WHAT DO THEY WANT, WHAT DO THEY GET, AND HOW ARE
GENERATION Z EMPLOYEES COPING IN TIMES OF CRISES
IN THE POLISH LABOUR MARKET?**

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Purpose: This article attempts to answer questions about what employees of the younger generations, especially Generation Z, are looking for in today's labour market, what they get from their employers, what challenges they face, and what expectations the today's reality has generated among representatives of this generation. The presented article presents selected results of research conducted among representatives of Generation Z in Poland.

Design/methodology/approach: The empirical research was conducted by means of a diagnostic survey using a questionnaire technique (27 questions). Statistical analyses were performed including - descriptive statistical analysis, attendance analysis, χ^2 association test, and Fisher's exact test.

Findings: The results presented in this article indicate problems related to psychophysical aspects affecting the functioning of Generation Z employees - depression, anxiety, poor well-being. The conducted research also indicates problems related to the sense of meaning at work, determining the preferred career path of Generation Z, as well as the importance of trust and relationships in the professional dimension.

Research limitations/implications: Limited research sample.

Originality/value: The article is addressed to scientists and business practitioners who research or employ representatives of Generation Z. The collected data show problematic areas of functioning: lack of sense of purpose, psychological problems, problems with defining professional goals.

Keywords: generation Z, labour market, crisis, sense of meaning, career.

Category of the paper: Empirical research.

Introduction

The 21st century has become a time of new, multidimensional crises - financial, economic, social, environmental, political, cultural (Rutkowska-Podołowska, 2016,). The crises experienced by modern societies should be analysed from the perspective of many different

perspectives as indicated by E. Mączyńska considering "the crisis of debt, the crisis of the economy of excess, unsustainable agricultural systems, food waste, the crisis of labour markets, the progressive crisis of social trust, democracy" (Mączyńska, 2021). The scale, breadth, multifacetedness, complexity and consequences especially in the long term of ubiquitous crises are so wide that it requires analysis with many different variables and levels. Crises specifically experience people by affecting their behaviour, emotions, attitudes and expectations. The adopted ways of coping in conditions of high and rapid change and uncertainty largely determine how a person's psychological well-being, needs and expectations will be shaped and, consequently, how he will function in the social and professional space.

The analysis of the current state of knowledge, research and reports on the functioning of Generation Z in the modern labour market made it possible to identify significant research gaps. Based on a review of the literature and available research, a cognitive gap was identified, which results from the profound changes taking place in society and on labour markets in connection with ongoing multidimensional crises, which may particularly affect young people whose identity and relationships with the environment are still developing. The changes that the labour market is constantly undergoing, as well as the way young people function in the professional and social space, prompt the systematization of dispersed knowledge in this area, therefore undertaking research in this area seems justified. There is also a noticeable deficit in studies that would provide in-depth knowledge about key areas that significantly determine the way in which employees of young generations function in the social and psychological dimension on the labour market. In turn, the identified application gap refers to building awareness among managers employing Generation Z employees of the importance of the needs of contemporary young generation employees and the relationship between the expectations they present and organizational behaviours. These aspects are difficult to identify and clearly assess during recruitment processes. There are no recommendations for business practice that would indicate which aspects are particularly worth paying attention to when planning the employment of Generation Z employees.

In the presented work, the research goal was an attempt to answer the question of what employees of young generations, especially Generation Z, are looking for in today's labour market, what they receive from their current employers and what challenges they face. What expectations did the new reality generate (post-pandemic, but also related to the economic crisis in Poland, war in Ukraine, etc.) among representatives of this generation.

Generation Z - a definitional framework

The literature on the subject does not explicitly provide a timeframe for belonging to Generation Z. For the purposes of the research presented in this paper, Generation Z was assumed to be those born between 1995 and 2010 (cf. Messiah, 2021; Zalesna, 2018; Francis, Hoefel, 2018; Lev, 2021; Moscrip, 2019). This is the youngest generation feeding the modern labour market (Ciekanowski et al., 2019). Despite the many positive features that characterise this generation (excellent knowledge of technology, flexibility, mobility, openness to the world), however, one can also see negative areas that significantly affect how representatives of this generation function in various areas of life including, among others - in the professional environment. Among the problem areas are claiming and high expectations of life, work, relationships, low levels of loyalty to employers, low attachment to organisations, impaired verbal communication skills, strong focus on one's own goals (cf. Żarczyńska-Dobiesz et al., 2014; Kukla et al., 2019; Muster, 2020).

Generation Z presents a strong awareness of global political and economic issues. The global crises, as A. Paczka points out, have shaped Generation Z, which is characterised by realism. The author sees some differences in the perception of the modern world and attitude to reality between the Millennial generation and Generation Z - Millennials are more optimistic while Generation Z are people who see reality in a pessimistic view pointing to instability and unpredictability when it comes to shaping their own future (Paczka, 2020).

There is no doubt that today's reality will force employers to take a new look at representatives of Generation Z not only through the prism of their values and capabilities, but also expectations and specific psychophysical predispositions.

Faces of modern crises

The concept of crisis should be considered from the perspective of different perspectives. One of them is the social context, since people are the "creators" and "beneficiaries" of the effects that are associated with the crisis. What is important here is the scale of the crisis, which will refer to different individuals and social groups, classes, strata, geographic regions, but also the relativistic nature of crises is not insignificant, which means a great variety in how people or whole social groups perceive, understand and define the crisis.

In this context, the key question seems to be what conditions influence specific actions taken by people that will, in effect, harm their own interests? One of the key factors will be the economic factor, described by measures of social inequality and disparities in living standards, poverty, wealth, the technology gap between people, classes, countries and geographic regions

(Bodziany, 2015). In economic-business terms, a crisis is understood as "a recession, depression, slump, turmoil or economic chaos that defines an economic phenomenon in the national economy caused by internal and external factors" (Wague, 2009). In addition to the economic, financial, business crisis strictly related to the functioning of the economy and its various areas, there are also crises of a completely different nature although not unrelated to what is happening in the social and economic space. When analysing the specifics of crises, one should also take into account their social, psychological framing, which will largely determine how people (in this case, employees) will cope and the way they will function. How will the behaviour and attitudes of different groups of workers in the labour market evolve? What will they bring to the organisation and how will they shape it? What kind of challenges will this pose for the organisation?

The complexity of human nature, the way man exists in the social environment, the changes that reality creates, and the changes at the level of human-environment relations will largely determine how man will name crises, what he will identify them with, how he will deal with them, and in what form we will see the other man.

Due to the specifics, several types of crises are distinguished - including developmental crises associated with the permanent development of a person, situational crises; chronic crises associated with the mistaken belief that the crisis situation has been overcome, which is contradicted by the facts, which affects the limitation of the life space of the person subjected to the crisis; existential crises associated with the question of the meaning of life, its purpose and its own identity or, finally, a crisis of confidence (Krawczyński, 2010). Particularly noteworthy is the latter, which is increasingly common among today's workers, especially young ones, as also shown by the research presented in this paper.

As A. Brzezińska and J. Ciecuch point out, the demographic and economic changes that have taken place in Poland, Europe, as well as the world in recent years have significantly affected the processes of adolescence and identity formation especially in relation to earlier generations. The authors point out that growing up in the modern reality, in addition to many opportunities, also has its negative side. Adults by young people are seen as competitors in the labour market, sometimes as lost and marginalised, excluded as the youngest workers or those who are just making their debut in professional roles. Deficiencies such as emotional support, institutional support in the process of identity formation, building a life project, attempting to test one's own independence, independence - all of this affects the experience of anxiety, uncertainty, and consequently hinders the proper formation of one's own identity, making key decisions for functioning in the world, and ultimately a sense of helplessness (Brzezińska et al., 2016). According to A. Józefczyk, it is virtually impossible to analyse the functioning of young generations without taking into account the current socio-cultural context. The era of postmodernity, which we identify with the permanent changeability of the environment, the scarcity of authorities, traditions, the high volatility of the labour market, makes the developmental tasks set for this stage of life even more challenging. On the one hand, the author

points to development opportunities that are the result of increasing globalisation, mobility, flexibility of the labour market, but on the other hand, as a central problem she signals the so-called "opportunity trap" - the multiplicity of available development paths in the professional and family areas, with the lack of legibility of social norms and the inability to base one's own decisions on the experience of past generations. As a result, this causes internal conflicts and widespread unfulfillment (Józefczyk, 2021).

Labour market in times of crises - selected aspects

At the heart of today's economic crises is the belief that the economy as a whole is functioning properly. It is an expression of confidence in the clear system of institutions that make it up (Rohleder, 2017). Different from a recession - a crisis is a phenomenon that generates qualitative effects that permanently change the rules of a given economy. The effects it has are elemental, fundamental, but also, because of its qualitative nature, irreversible. They influence how the new reality is shaped - as the conditions of the market are changed (Komorowski, 2013). Thus, a crisis implies a change that is difficult to clearly predict, difficult to assess, difficult to prepare for, and can manifest itself in many different areas seemingly unrelated to each other.

The labour market in the European Union and, consequently, Poland, has undergone strong changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Employment in Union countries has not reached pre-pandemic Covid-19 levels at this point. Shortages in the labour market are noted, especially in those sectors where activity is growing the most (IT sector, truck transport, courier deliveries and logistics in the broadest sense). Particularly high unemployment exceeding the EU average was recorded in Greece and Spain. The lowest levels of unemployment were recorded in the Czech Republic, Poland and Germany (Gorynia, et al., 2022). It is important to be aware that the situation in the labour market at the macro and micro level is determined by the interaction of many diverse factors related to the processes of civilisation development. The key characteristics that differentiate the unemployed and at the same time determine their position in the market include gender, age, education, and duration of unemployment. The urban/rural location is also not insignificant, which will determine the nature of unemployment - in cities, unemployment is less persistent and the labour market is far more flexible (Dylkiewicz, 2014). The situation in today's labour market is also presented by data compiled by the Polish Economic Institute, which indicates what impact the war in Ukraine, which broke out in 2022 and is described as one of the biggest crises in modern Europe projecting on many areas of the functioning of the EU community countries, has on the activities of Polish companies. The vast majority of companies declare that war has a significant impact on key areas of business operations (company operating costs, business risks, raising prices of products or services

offered by companies, disruption of supply chains). PIE's research indicates that about $\frac{3}{4}$ of Polish companies have felt the impact of the war on demand for their products, the number of new orders and the value of sales. The war also affected the labour market situation in Poland. Some of the workers from Ukraine have returned to their country which has created a gap in the area of transportation, warehouse, construction. On the other hand, a large number of women have entered the Polish labour market, filling up the trade, manufacturing or service sectors. Nevertheless, this does not close the quantitative and structural gap in the labour market (Dębkowska, et al., 2023).

The labour market is constantly transforming as a result of economic, financial, social, mental, cultural changes. These changes affect all market participants - both employers and employees. In an era of multiple crises of varying nature, aging populations, a heavy focus on automation, robotisation, and a broad digital transformation involving entire societies, the question arises of who will create labour markets and how? Who are they and what will they bring to the labour market from the people shaped by modern reality? How the challenges they face today will affect their expectations, needs, attitudes and behaviour.

Research methods

The aim of the research was to determine how the today's economic reality and related multidimensional crises affect Generation Z's expectations and attitudes toward employers. In what direction are the processes of adaptation to a turbulent, unpredictable environment among representatives of Generation Z heading, and what might this mean for employers. How are Generation Z employees coping with the today's reality professionally and socially?

This paper formulates the following research problems, which are framed as questions:

1. What are Generation Z workers looking for in the labour market and what are they getting from their employers in this era of ongoing multidimensional crises?
2. What professional and social challenges does Generation Z face in an era of ongoing multidimensional crises?
3. What expectations of their own careers, jobs, development and employers does Generation Z display in an era of multidimensional crises?

Characteristics of the study sample

The selection of the research sample was purposeful, and the data obtained were intended to indicate trends occurring in the researched area. The key criterion for inclusion in the sample was age - Generation Z. For the purposes of this study, it was assumed that they must be persons whose years of birth fall between 1995 and 2005 and therefore have already reached the age of majority and either have already had their first professional experience or their age indicates that they have the opportunity to take up professional work. A total of 302 people were examined, of which 223 met the sample selection criteria and were included in the analyses. Women constituted 67.7% (n = 151) and men 32.3% (n = 72). The sample is not representative and the results cannot be generalized to the entire Z population. The results should refer only to the surveyed people who belong to Generation Z.

Respondents from the following voivodeships took part in the survey: Podlaskie (n = 151; 67.7%), Masovian (n = 55; 24.7%), Warmian-Masurian (n = 10; 4.5%), Lublin (n = 4; 1.8%), Lesser Poland (n = 2; 0.9%), Silesian (n = 1; 0.4%). Respondents declared the following education levels: high school (n = 127; 57.0%), bachelor's degree (n = 51; 22.9%), engineer's degree (n = 19; 8.5%), master's degree (n = 12; 5.4%), vocational (n = 11; 4.9%). The length of service of the surveyed respondents was as follows: less than 1 year (n = 102; 45.7%), 3-5 years (n = 49; 22.0%), 1-2 years (n = 48; 21.5%), more than 5 years (n = 24; 10.8%).

Methods and tools used in the study

The research material was collected in April-June 2023. The tool used to collect data was an author's survey questionnaire, which contained a total of 27 questions and was addressed to students and graduates of Polish universities. Data was collected directly through [survio.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com), to which a link provided to students and graduates (social networks, Career Offices of universities in Poland).

Also used was the snowball method, which refers to the accumulation process, where each person found indicates other people. Adopting this method allows the researcher to collect data on members of the population under study who can be traced and ask these individuals to provide information to find other members of this population who are known to those under study (Jabłońska et al., 2013).

Results

Expectations of Generation Z employees in the era of multidimensional crises – selected aspects

The survey indicates that representatives of Generation Z in Poland strongly perceive the ongoing economic, economic and social crisis (n = 202; 90.6%). The crisis is not perceived or knows nothing about it - 'Don't know' (n = 13; 5.8%) and 'No' (n = 8; 3.6%) respondents, respectively. Participants in the present study were asked to indicate what they identify the current crisis in Poland with - among the most frequently selected responses were: 'High inflation, increase in prices of products and services' (n = 213; 95.5%), 'Psychological problems among people including anxiety, depression' (n = 92; 41.3%), 'Stagnation in the labour market few job offers, no possibility to change jobs quickly, decrease in employment' (n = 88; 39.5%), 'Decline in income' (n = 61; 27.4%), 'Social isolation' (n = 34; 15.2%), 'Decline in economic growth' (n = 31; 13.9%), 'Decline in investment' (n = 26; 11.7%), 'Decrease in consumption' (n = 25; 11.2%), 'High unemployment' (n = 24; 10.8%), 'Social inactivity' (n = 23; 10.3%), 'Decrease in investment in companies' (n = 22; 9.9%), 'Increase in budget deficit' (n = 21; 9.4%), 'Decrease in GDP' (n = 16; 7.2%), 'Increase in trade deficit' (n = 3; 1.3%), 'Increase in fiscal deficit' (n = 2; 0.9%) and 'Downward trend in state fiscal revenues' (n = 2; 0.9%).

The survey indicates that representatives of generation Z, in times of economic crisis, expect from the employer, above all, stable contracts guaranteeing long-term employment (n = 106; 47.5%), focus on wages and support in the process of obtaining a raise' (n = 95; 42.6%), high flexibility when it comes to the place and conditions of work (n = 76; 34.1), regular information about what's going on in the company (n = 52; 23.3%), attention to work-life balance (n = 50; 22.4%), salary supplements bonuses, rewards (n = 48; 21.5%), additional benefits that will support professional development (n = 42; 18.8%), attention to the quality of relationships at the team/manager level (n = 27; 12.1%), and a great understanding of the employee's mental condition (n = 26; 11.7%).

According to the respondents surveyed, this high salary provides a sense of security and stability. This response was indicated by n = 151; 67.7% of respondents. Among other important aspects, respondents mentioned - a permanent contract with a long-term perspective of cooperation (n = 145; 65%), a good atmosphere and the feeling that they can count on a team/manager (n = 135; 60.5%), ' self-employment - own business' (n = 32; 14.3%). On the other hand, a job in a large reputable, recognisable corporation (n = 17; 7.6%) or a job abroad (n = 15; 6.7%) was rated relatively low. In contrast, the lowest rated was support from the state budget including benefits (n = 11; 4.9%).

The survey indicates that Generation Z employees would derive the most satisfaction from a job that provides a sense of meaning (n = 117; 52.5%). This is the highest rated answer.

Self-employment was indicated by 26.9% of people (n = 60), while working for a large reputable and recognisable corporation would be chosen by 16.1% (n = 36) of respondents. In terms of preferred contracts, the employment contract (n = 198; 88.8%) is by far the most dominant, with other forms of cooperation indicated by 'contract of mandate' (n = 14; 6.3%), 'B2B contract' (n = 8; 3.6%) and 'contract for work' (n = 3; 1.3%) respondents, respectively. Among the surveyed group, hybrid (remote+ desktop) work is strongly preferred n = 136; 61%. Full-time stationary work was indicated by 30% (n = 67) and 20.9% of respondents prefer to work exclusively in a remote model.

Representatives of Generation Z, in an era of ongoing crises, judge the attractiveness of an employer by the salary offered by the organisation. More than half of the respondents, i.e., 58.3% (n = 130), answered this way. Employer attractiveness is also influenced by 'Stability of employment - the contract the employer offers' (n = 109; 48.9%), 'Career development opportunities - training, courses, promotions' (n = 81; 36.3%), 'Relationships that prevail in the company' (n = 70; 31.4%), 'Employer reputation and recognition' (n = 50; 22.4%), 'Kindness at work' (n = 34; 15.2%), 'Non-wage benefits' (n = 29; 13%), 'Trust in the company' (n = 25; 11.2%), 'Scope of tasks an employee receives' (n = 25; 11.2%), 'Opinions in the market' (n = 19; 8.5%), 'Employer brand' (n = 8; 3.6%).

In examining the expectations of representatives of this youngest working generation, respondents were asked to indicate what makes them want to work for a particular company. One of the key aspects identified by respondents is trust. This was the answer given by 44.8% of respondents (n=100) and is the highest scoring answer. Other important aspects indicated by respondents were 'Space for learning and development' (n = 71; 31.8%), 'Independence in carrying out assigned tasks' (n = 57; 25.6%), 'Great understanding towards my person and my needs' (n = 54; 24.2%), 'Space to implement my own ideas' (n = 49; 22%), 'Openness to conversation and discussion' (n = 48; 21.5%), 'Friendly relationships' (n = 48; 21.5%), 'Being entrusted with responsibility for tasks' (n = 44; 19.7%), 'Kindness from the manager/team' (n = 33; 14.8%), 'Acceptance of my person' (n = 29; 13%), 'Sense of community' (n = 21; 9.4%), 'Inspiration for work that I receive at my place of employment' (n = 12; 5.4%).

An analysis of the relationship of nominal variables was also carried out (breakdown by gender variable). Table 1 shows the results of the attendance analysis with a breakdown by the gender variable.

Table 1.

Percentage distribution of responses - breakdown by variable: 'Gender'

	N	Gender	
		Female N = 151	Male N = 72
In your opinion, does your employer currently support your career development in your current workplace	223		
Employer does not support my development		72 (47.7%)	32 (44.4%)
Employer supports my development		79 (52.3%)	40 (55.6%)

Cont. table 1.

How does the current social economic situation affect your sense of security in the context of work	223		
I feel great stability when it comes to employment		35 (23.2%)	22 (30.6%)
I feel a lot of instability and uncertainty when it comes to employment		45 (29.8%)	16 (22.2%)
I can't find/change my job, I feel very unstable and insecure		23 (15.2%)	11 (15.3%)
The labour market situation is incomprehensible and unpredictable to me		48 (31.8%)	23 (31.9%)
What job would bring you the most satisfaction	223		
Other		0 (0.0%)	3 (4.2%)
Temporary work to meet my needs at a minimum		5 (3.3%)	2 (2.8%)
Work in a large reputable and recognised corporation		26 (17.2%)	10 (13.9%)
Work that gives me a sense of purpose		84 (55.6%)	33 (45.8%)
Own business		36 (23.8%)	24 (33.3%)
Do you feel secure about maintaining employment at your current job	223		
No		73 (48.3%)	25 (34.7%)
Yes		78 (51.7%)	47 (65.3%)
What form of cooperation would guarantee your security today in terms of work	223		
b2B contract		3 (2.0%)	5 (6.9%)
contract for specific work		0 (0.0%)	3 (4.2%)
employment contract		139 (92.1%)	59 (81.9%)
contract of mandate		9 (6.0%)	5 (6.9%)
In what model do you want to implement the work	223		
Working 100% remotely		12 (7.9%)	8 (11.1%)
Hybrid remote+ desktop work		93 (61.6%)	43 (59.7%)
100% stationary work		46 (30.5%)	21 (29.2%)

Source: own elaboration.

The analysis of the dependence of nominal variables was preceded by a check of the assumption of using the χ^2 association test regarding sufficiently large expectation counts (all expectation values > 1 ; 80% of expectation values > 5). If this assumption was not met, Fisher's exact test was used for analysis.

χ^2 association test result

χ^2 association test result (the relationship between the variable 'Gender' and the other variables), is shown in the table 2.

Table 2.

χ^2 association test result - the relationship between the variable: 'Gender', and the other variables

	n	χ^2	df	p	Cramer's V	95% CI	
						Lower	Upper
In your opinion, does your employer currently support your career development in your current workplace	223	0.1	1	0.757	0.00	0.00	0.14
How does the current social economic situation affect your sense of security in the context of work	223	2.1	3	0.560	0.00	0.00	0.16
Do you feel secure about maintaining employment at your current job	223	3.1	1	0.076	0.11	0.00	0.25
In what model do you want to implement the work	223	0.6	2	0.741	0.00	0.00	0.12

Source: own elaboration.

χ^2 association test result does not indicate the presence of a significant relationship between the variable: 'Gender', and the other variables. Table 3 presents the result of Fisher's exact test (the relationship between the gender variable and the other variables).

Table 3.

The result of Fisher's exact test - the relationship between the variable: 'Gender', and the other variables

	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>	Cramer's V	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
What job would bring you the most satisfaction	223	0.066	0.15	0.00	0.28
What form of cooperation would guarantee your security today in terms of work	223	0.020*	0.18	0.00	0.31

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Source: own elaboration.

The result of Fisher's exact test indicates that there is a significant relationship between the variable: 'Gender', and the variable: 'What form of cooperation would guarantee you security today when it comes to your job', $p = 0.020$; but the strength of the observed effect was found to be small (Cramer's V = 0.18, 95% CI [0; 0.31]). The data is shown in Figure 1.

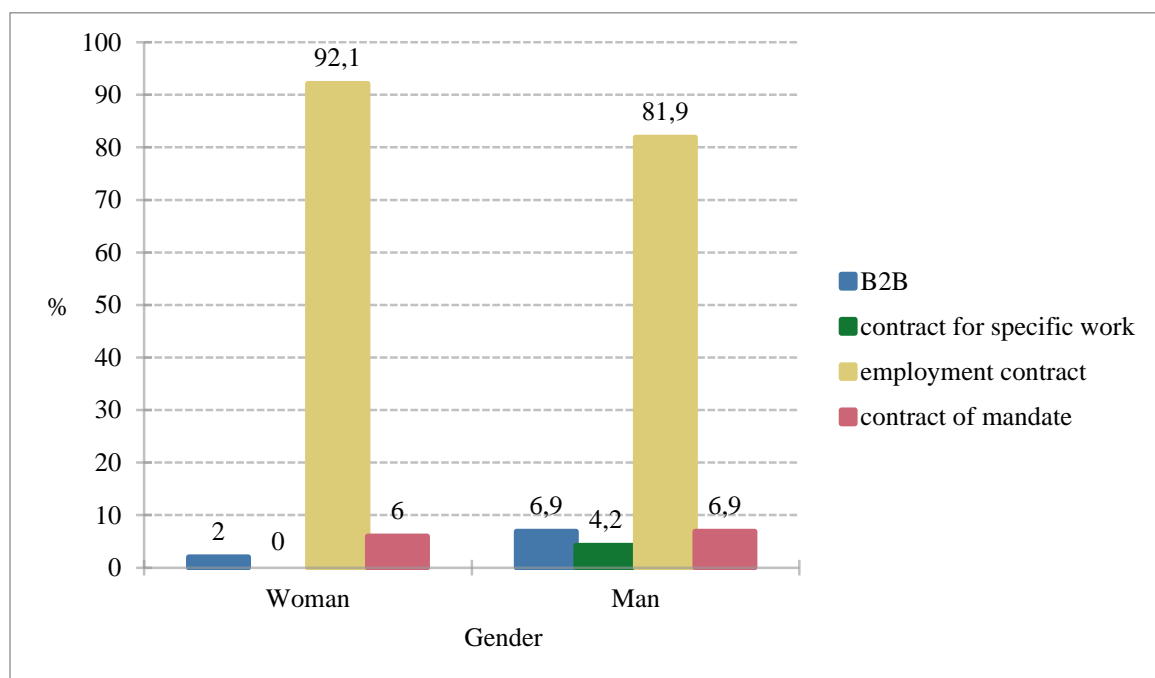


Figure 1. The relationship between the variable: 'What form of cooperation would guarantee your security today, as far as work is concerned,' and the variable: 'Gender' (n = 223).

Source: own elaboration.

Challenges of a professional and social nature – the perspective of Generation Z

Generation Z representatives indicate that the biggest challenges of a professional nature are for them: 'finding your own career path - a job that matches your expectations and skills' (n = 109; 48.9%), 'finding any job' (n = 87; 39%), 'getting a higher salary' (n = 61; 27.4%), 'professional development' (n = 53; 23.8%), 'finding meaning in the work you do' (n = 42;

18.8%), 'keeping the job' (n = 37; 16.6%), 'changing jobs' (n = 37; 16.6%), 'trusting the employer' (n = 29; 13%), 'getting a permanent employment contract' (n = 24; 10.8%), 'building relationships within the team' (n = 15; 6.7%), 'building relationships with the manager' (n = 3; 1.3%) and 'Other' (n = 3; 1.3%). Meanwhile, in the social context, the biggest challenges include: 'Own psycho-physical state - poor well-being, depression, anxiety' (n = 121; 54.3%), 'Relationship with team' (n = 96; 43%), 'Quality of personal relationships' (n = 75; 33.6%), 'Quality of professional relationships' (n = 58; 26%), 'Relationship with manager' (n = 39; 17.5%) and 'Other' (n = 4; 1.8%).

According to respondents, the current economic and social situation is incomprehensible and unpredictable to them (n = 71; 31.8%). Other respondents indicated that they feel a lot of instability and uncertainty when it comes to employment (n = 61; 27.4%) and cannot find/change jobs, feeling a lot of uncertainty and instability (n = 34; 15.2%). Among those surveyed, 25.6% (n = 57) reported a high degree of stability in the area of employment, but they were in the minority when it came to positive perceptions of a sense of security in the context of professional work.

Discussions

Employees of Generation Z, i.e., the youngest generation currently working in Poland, are an important group in the Polish labour market. This generation already active in the labour market in the near future will determine how the labour market will be shaped, what expectations employers will have to reckon with, what offers and working conditions they will have to consider in order to feed their own organisations with new capital of knowledge and skills. The selected research results presented in this paper reveal a number of troubling aspects. First and foremost, among these is the challenge of the social functioning of young workers. More than half of the respondents surveyed indicated that the biggest challenge today is their own mental and physical state, poor well-being, depression, anxiety. This raises the question of what people enter the organisation with, and how much emphasis on maintaining work-life balance, but also a sense of security, stability, understanding and kindness to others will organisations need to place in order to take advantage of the resources available to this generation. Important questions in relation to professional work also arise in the context of feelings of job satisfaction. The vast majority of those surveyed indicate that what brings job satisfaction is, first and foremost, a sense of meaningfulness. This contributes to considerations in the context of work planning and task formulation for younger generation employees. After all, it is difficult to expect commitment, loyalty or, ultimately, a long-term relationship between an employee and an organisation if the work does not inspire a sense of purpose in young employees. A sense of meaning can be expected to largely influence how organisational behaviour will be shaped in a much broader context.

One important aspect that is also worth paying attention to in terms of the expectations and needs of the younger generations is the preference for the environment itself and the workplace. Large, recognisable corporations are no longer the dream of young workers. Much more important is a sense of purpose or the ability to work on your own terms (e.g., your own business). Generation Z also pays a lot of attention to the aspect of trust in the context of work and professional relationships. This is one of the most important factors that are particularly important in working with an employer and determine whether an employee wants to work for a particular company. The results of the research presented in this paper, although not without limitations, are a good contribution to the search for answers to the question of how to create today's workplaces and working conditions so that they are not only effective and profitable for employers, but also satisfying for employees of the generation that is increasingly operating in the Polish labour market.

Permanent changes not only in the labour market, but also in the entire environment where people function, force the need for adaptation to new conditions among both employees and employers. The management methods adopted, the creation of the work environment, largely determine what kind of employees the organisation will attract and retain in the long term and at what level the achievement of business goals will be possible.

The research carried out is not free from limitations. Among the most important, it is worth mentioning the too small research sample, which may not fully reflect the attitudes, expectations and behaviours presented by representatives of Generation Z, therefore, when planning in-depth research in this area, it is definitely worth making efforts to collect a larger research sample. Similarly, when it comes to diversifying the sample according to the region of residence/employment, which could give a broader look at the expectations and preferences of representatives of this generation, taking into account the aspect of the region they come from and/or where they live/work. The research presented in this paper concerns representatives of Generation Z living, studying and/or working in Poland. It is certainly worth analysing the preferences, expectations, attitudes, difficulties and challenges that affect young employees, also from outside Poland, because Generation Z is the generation that will significantly influence the shape of labour markets not only in Poland, but also throughout European Union and beyond – all over the world.

Due to the size of the research group, you should be aware that the results obtained cannot be generalized to the entire population. The presented results may be a reason to undertake further, in-depth, much larger-scale research, but currently they should be interpreted with caution.

When thinking about further directions of research in this area, it is certainly worth considering the relationships that result from the adopted attitudes and expectations in the context of work, professional development, and career building of young generation employees, taking into account variables such as gender or lifestyle, which significantly influence may determine what activities they particularly prefer, in what professions and areas they have

a chance to gain fulfillment and satisfaction, and at the same time to what extent it is related to their value system. The context of the organization is also important, and when thinking about employing young employees, they should pay attention to what a person enters the organization with and how the adopted attitudes, expectations, but also emotional states, fears and anxieties may influence the development of organizational behaviours.

The obtained research results may also provide guidance for business practitioners and employers looking for answers on how to create contemporary jobs in organizations and which aspects are worth focusing on when thinking about employing Generation Z employees. The limiting factor for the conducted research was the small research group, therefore, when undertaking subsequent research, it is worth considering expanding the group, for example, to representatives of Generation Z also in regions of Poland other than those included in this study.

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