

INTERPERSONAL TRUST IN PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG GENERATION Z: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Purpose: The purpose of this article was to find correlations in the evaluation of factors affecting trust in co-workers and friends and colleagues. The opinions of Generation Z representatives were analyzed (using respondents from Poland, Spain and Turkey as examples).

Design/methodology/approach: The analyses presented here are part of a broader study on the trust Generation Z places in entities from different spheres of life. The article focuses on perceptions of trust in co-workers and friends/colleagues. The survey was conducted using CAWI and PAPI methods with a sample of 656 respondents.

Findings: Aspects with the greatest and least influence on trust in both co-workers and friends/colleagues were identified, and statistically significant differences in perceptions of these aspects by nationality were analyzed, as well as the correlation between respondents' ratings of each trust factor.

Research limitations/implications: The research sample, lack of representativeness of the sample.

Practical implications: The article indicates whether trust-building behavior in the private sphere can be transferred to the professional sphere.

Originality/value: The article points out differences in the perception of trust constructs among young Poles, Spaniards and Turks.

Keywords: trust, aspects of trust, generation Z, co-workers, friends

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

For a number of years, we have been operating in the world of BANI (Casiso, 2020). A world that is complex, unsettled, non-linear and incomprehensible. The BANI model has supplanted the descriptive VUCA model, which has described the world since the 1990s as fragile, anxious, non-linear and incomprehensible (Piątkowska, 2021; Kucharczyk-Capiga, 2022). However, regardless of how we perceive the reality around us, its complexity remains a fact (Musiol, 2022; Piątkowska, 2021; Krzemiński, 2021).

Trust makes it possible to cope with the complexity of the surrounding world (Luhmann, 1979). Accordingly, the interest in it can be attributed, among other things, to the growing uncertainty associated with dynamic changes in the environment and their unpredictable nature (Królik, 2015). On the other hand, the increasing virtualization of life has contributed to the weakening of relationships and the decline of trust in teams (Lu et al., 2017; Romeike et al., 2016) in both planes of life – professional and private; in addition, despite the ever-increasing popularity of work-life balance (Tomaszuk et al., 2023), these two planes continue to intersect.

Hence, the purpose of the article is to find correlations in ratings of factors affecting trust in co-workers and friends/colleagues. The study included Generation Z, which has the highest level of distrust among all generations present in the labor market. This is a group that struggles to establish personal relationships (Gajda, 2017), but at the same time is socially oriented (Wiktorowicz et al., 2016) and declares the need to establish relationships in the real world (Dentsu Aegis Network, 2019). The following research questions were formulated:

RQ 1: Which factors are most and which are least likely to influence Generation Z representatives' trust in friends/colleagues?

RQ 2: Depending on nationality, are there statistically significant differences in the evaluations of Generation Z representatives regarding perceptions of the importance of individual factors of trust in friends/colleagues?

RQ 3: Is there a correlation between Generation Z representatives' ratings of individual factors of trust in co-workers and colleagues/friends?

Basic statistical measures and non-parametric statistics were used to obtain responses to RQ. Calculations were made using the Statistica package. The structure of the article includes several sections. The theoretical section presents a literature review on aspects of trust. The next section contains a description of the research methodology used. Then the results of the author's research were presented and analyzed. The final section of the article presents a summary and discusses conclusions and research limitations.

2. Literature review

Trust is a construct of interest in many disciplines (Adler, 2001; Gilbert 2010; Smarżewska, 2018; Fulmer et al., 2012; Lewicki et al., 2006; Tomaszuk, 2024a). According to psychologists, it is a personal trait (Rotter, 1967), according to sociologists it is a social structure (Lewis et al., 1985), according to economists it is a mechanism of rational choice (Williamson, 1993). In the context of management, it is the belief that a person acts favourably toward a relying party by behaving or reacting in a predictable and mutually appropriate manner (Paliszkiewicz, 2013). A review of the definitions of the concept (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy 2000; McKnight, Chervany 2001; Mayer et al., 1995; Blomqvist, 1997; Friman et al., 2002; Koźmiński, 2004;

Bugdol, 2010; Paliszkiewicz, 2013; Kharouf, Lund, 2019; Nienaber et al., 2015; Searle et al., 2018; Büssing, 2002; Tschannen-Moray, Hoy, 2000) made it possible to define the concept of interpersonal trust as the trustee's belief that the recipient of the trust will not let him down, will not take conscious actions that could harm or hurt him (Wasiluk, Tomaszuk, 2020).

Interpersonal trust is an extremely complex and dynamic phenomenon (Guinot et al., 2013; McCauley, Kuhnert, 1992), especially since, depending on the chosen role, different mechanisms of it are activated (Kilduff, Tsai, 2005). Interpersonal trust-building is an interactive process in which parties learn or unlearn how to build and maintain trustworthiness under certain conditions (Six, Sorge, 2008). Regardless of the conditions, common features of trust include the belief that the other party will act benevolently; taking the risk that the other party may not meet expectations of benevolent behavior; and interdependence (Bews, Martins, 2002; Hay, 2002; Lämsä, Pučėtaite, 2006; Schoorman et al., 2007). Numerous studies indicate that trust facilitates both social functioning and individual actions with positive results (Colquitt et al., 2007; Dirks, Ferrin, 2001).

Trust, often conceptualized as a multidimensional construct (van der Berg, Martins, 2013; Spadaro et al., 2020), isolates beliefs and the resulting intentions or behaviors. Beliefs relate to perceptions of the trustworthiness of others, while intentions reflect acceptance of vulnerability and actions taken to obtain possible benefits (Clark, Payne, 1997; Das, Teng, 2004; McKnight et al., 1998; Yu et al., 2014).

Most commonly, five basic dimensions of trust are identified (Tschannen-Moran, 2004): honesty (telling the truth, keeping promises, accepting responsibility); benevolence (showing goodwill, being supportive, guarding confidential information); openness (engaging in open communication, sharing important information and making decisions); dependability (consistency, responsibility, fulfilling obligations, keeping commitments) and competence (abilities, qualifications, skills).

Despite the relevance of each dimension, their relative value may vary with respect to the subjects of interpersonal relationships (Yavas, Çelik, 2010). In contrast, the most common sources of trust are considered to be (Grudzewski et al., 2007; Mayer et al., 1995):

- knowledge derived from the repetition of previous interactions between the parties,
- calculation estimated as the advantage of benefits over possible costs,
- values held by norms belief in the honesty and goodwill of the partner,
- the skills, competencies and qualities of the partners that allow them to exert influence,
- benevolence and willingness to do right by the trustee despite the clear motivation to act for profit.

Despite the fact that interpersonal trust involves a relationship between two entities and can vary depending on the reference point (Colquitt et al., 2007), the literature does not abound with studies comparing how the same trust constructs are perceived in relation to different entities (embedded in different spheres of life).

3. Methodology

The multidimensionality of the construct determines the use of diverse measurement scales (Żądło, 2014). The construction of the research tool was based on the Mishra and Mishra (1994) measurement scale, which was adapted to the purpose of the study. The implemented scale is included in Table 1.

Table 1.
The measurement scale used

S	Statement
S1	I trust that my co-worker/friend should be completely honest with me
S2	I trust that my co-worker/friend should prioritize the interests of the university over his own
S3	I trust that my co-worker/friend should keep the promises he/she makes
S4	I trust that my co-worker/friend should be a competent person in his/her work
S5	I trust that my co-worker/friend should always express true feelings on important issues
S6	I trust that my co-worker/friend should look after my well-being
S7	I trust that my co-worker/friend should have a significant share in the success achieved by a university
S8	I trust that I should be able to rely on my co-worker/friend
S9	I trust that my co-worker/friend should undertake actions that are consequence of previous declarations
S10	I trust that my co-worker/friend should share important information with me
S11	I trust that my co-worker/friend should care about the future of the university
S12	I trust that my co-worker/friend should help to solve important problems at the university
S13	I trust that my co-worker/friend should have consistent expectations towards me
S14	I trust that my co-worker/friend should be able to make personal sacrifices for the university
S15	I trust that my co-worker/friend should be willing to acknowledge their own mistakes
S16	I trust that my co-worker/friend should help the university in crisis situations

Source: compiled from (Mishra, Mishra 1994).

Respondents were asked to indicate their position on each statement (separately for each subject), on a five-point Likert scale.

The reliability of the scale was checked using Cronbach's α coefficient. The calculated statistics (0.84 for the measurement scale used to measure trust in co-workers and 0.81 of friends/acquaintances) indicate sufficient and high consistency, respectively, of the items included.

The analyses presented here represent a narrower slice of the research conducted (the total sample consisted of 1185 respondents from 21 countries), the purpose of which was to identify differences in evaluations of factors influencing trust in selected entities in the opinion of Generation Z.

The article focuses on the responses of respondents who are representatives of the three most numerous nationalities – Spaniards, Poles and Turks. The characteristics of the respondents (N=656) are included in Table 2. The respondents were people born after 1995, and have experience in the labor market. The survey was conducted in late 2021 and early 2022 with a combined technique, using CAWI and PAPI methods via a snowball method. The methods

used made it possible to achieve a high level of standardization and minimize the interviewer's influence on the respondents' opinions, and provided a sense of complete anonymity, which contributed to increasing the quality of the data collected (Malhotra, 2010).

Table 2.
Characteristics of respondents

Country of origin of respondents	Number (%) of respondents
Spain	342 (52.1%)
Poland	230 (35.1%)
Turkey	84 (12.8%)
TOTAL	656 (100%)

Source: compiled on the basis of the conducted survey.

4. Analysis of research results

The article focuses on discussing the results of the study on trust in friends/ colleagues. As the results on trust in co-workers have been more extensively described through the prism of comparative analysis with components of trust in supervisor (Tomaszuk, Wasiluk, 2023), in this article they are presented only for comparative analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to present the results, the significance of statistical differences was verified using the Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 3).

Analysis of the data allows us to identify the aspects that are most and least likely to affect trust in friends and colleagues. Overall, the highest interest, due to the arithmetic mean, can be observed in the opinions of Poles. They considered sincerity, keeping promises and reliability to be the most important, in turn. Sincerity and reliability were also found to be of greatest importance to Turks. The third most important component of trust for this nationality is assistance in emergency situations. Analysis of the survey results also allows us to conclude that Spaniards value completely different components in the aspect of trust in friends/ colleagues, and these are: concern for well-being, expression of true feelings (sincerity) and participation in successes. For the most important aspects of trust, the coefficient of variation remained at low (Poles and partly Turks) or average (Spaniards and partly Turks) values.

Representatives of all analyzed nationalities were more in agreement when it came to opinions on the three aspects of least importance in forming trust in friends and acquaintances. In Poles and Turks, there was full agreement – representatives of both nationalities considered putting the common interest before their own, having specific expectations with regard to friends and colleagues, and the ability to make personal sacrifices to be the least important components. Putting the common interest before one's own also turned out to be the least important component for Spaniards, as did honesty (the most important in the opinion of Poles

Cont. Table 3.

*	Objective of trust	Total		Spaniards		Poles		Turks		H	P
		x	V	x	V	x	V	x	V		
S7	Trust in co-workers	3.85	25.67	3.73	25.68	4.04	20.61	3.82	35.68	17.86	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences exist between Poles and Spaniards									
	Trust in friends and colleagues	3.89	26.42	3.93	25.17	3.93	24.72	3.61	35.23	3.34	0.19
		Statistically significant differences do not occur									
S8	Trust in co-workers	3.89	25.61	3.66	26.36	4.30	18.71	3.71	33.06	65.61	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences occur between Poles and Spaniards									
	Trust in friends and colleagues	4.17	23.57	3.88	25.00	4.72	13.58	3.85	30.07	132.3	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences occur between Poles and Spaniards, Poles and Turks									
S9	Trust in co-workers	4.03	23.71	3.81	26.31	4.35	16.80	4.02	26.16	41.15	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences occur between Poles and Spaniards, Poles and Turks									
	Trust in friends and colleagues	4.05	23.51	3.87	23.43	4.40	18.10	3.82	32.03	53.36	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences occur between Poles and Spaniards, Poles and Turks									
S10	Trust in co-workers	3.94	27.91	3.71	28.87	4.27	22.18	3.95	34.22	43.70	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences exist between Poles and Spaniards									
	Trust in friends and colleagues	4.14	23.26	3.89	24.95	4.51	16.93	4.18	26.31	68.67	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences occur between Poles and Spaniards, Poles and Turks									
S11	Trust in co-workers	3.78	25.60	3.66	26.65	3.86	24.30	4.04	23.54	15.29	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences occur between Poles and Spaniards, Spaniards and Turks									
	Trust in friends and colleagues	3.88	27.10	3.81	28.06	4.03	23.78	3.79	31.51	5.68	0.059
		Statistically significant differences do not occur									
S12	Trust in co-workers	3.84	24.67	3.83	25.10	3.85	23.58	3.88	26.05	0.29	0.86
		Statistically significant differences do not occur									
	Trust in friends and colleagues	4.02	25.23	3.80	28.88	4.34	17.86	4.02	24.99	35.43	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences exist between Poles and Spaniards									
S13	Trust in co-workers	3.52	32.18	3.72	28.83	3.23	34.41	3.51	36.04	28.89	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences exist between Poles and Spaniards									
	Trust in friends and colleagues	3.59	30.64	3.74	28.04	3.42	32.93	3.44	33.57	12.24	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences exist between Poles and Spaniards									
S14	Trust in co-workers	3.09	39.74	3.38	34.59	2.62	42.18	3.19	43.65	54.96	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences occur between Poles and Spaniards, Poles and Turks									
	Trust in friends and colleagues	3.52	30.84	3.74	24.91	3.24	35.54	3.35	37.84	25.75	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences exist between Poles and Spaniards									
S15	Trust in co-workers	4.10	22.43	3.76	25.04	4.51	15.04	4.32	20.05	103.0	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences occur between Poles and Spaniards, Spaniards and Turks									
	Trust in friends and colleagues	4.09	24.82	3.71	26.20	4.68	13.71	4.00	31.05	147.5	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences exist between Poles and Spaniards, Spaniards and Turks, Poles and Turks									
S16	Trust in co-workers	3.70	27.58	3.63	28.54	3.73	25.87	3.93	27.60	8.16	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences occur between Poles and Spaniards, Spaniards and Turks									
	Trust in friends and colleagues	4.13	23.20	3.91	25.95	4.38	18.12	4.30	21.61	35.29	<0.05
		Statistically significant differences occur between Poles and Spaniards, Spaniards and Turks									

Note: * - Statement.

Source: compiled on the basis of conducted survey.

Spearman's rank correlation analysis conducted for ratings of statements of the trust in co-workers and friends/ colleagues measurement scale (Table 4) indicates that the existing correlations are positive.

Table 4.

Spearman's rank correlation for ratings of statements of the trust in co-workers and friends/ colleagues measurement scale by nationality of respondents

Statement	total		Spanish		Poles		Turks	
	P	rS	P	rS	p	rS	p	rS
S1	<0,05	0,40	<0,05	0,25	<0,05	0,33	<0,05	0,67
S2	<0,05	0,38	<0,05	0,12	<0,05	0,47	<0,05	0,53
S3	<0,05	0,47	<0,05	0,32	<0,05	0,40	<0,05	0,28
S4	<0,05	0,35	<0,05	0,34	<0,05	0,37	<0,05	0,32
S5	<0,05	0,31	<0,05	0,15	<0,05	0,38	<0,05	0,53
S6	<0,05	0,20	>0,05	0,08	<0,05	0,34	<0,05	0,34
S7	<0,05	0,25	<0,05	0,20	<0,05	0,21	<0,05	0,51
S8	<0,05	0,40	<0,05	0,19	<0,05	0,31	<0,05	0,62
S9	<0,05	0,34	<0,05	0,15	<0,05	0,50	<0,05	0,40
S10	<0,05	0,35	<0,05	0,16	<0,05	0,44	<0,05	0,45
S11	<0,05	0,24	<0,05	0,21	<0,05	0,21	<0,05	0,46
S12	<0,05	0,10	>0,05	0,00	<0,05	0,20	<0,05	0,27
S13	<0,05	0,30	<0,05	0,19	<0,05	0,37	<0,05	0,45
S14	<0,05	0,39	<0,05	0,25	<0,05	0,41	<0,05	0,53
S15	<0,05	0,45	<0,05	0,22	<0,05	0,49	<0,05	0,52
S16	<0,05	0,25	<0,05	0,17	<0,05	0,26	<0,05	0,38

Source: compiled on the basis of conducted survey.

Correlations are present for all statements when comparing the opinions of Poles and Turks, and for most statements (excluding S6 and S12) of Spanish respondents. However, an analysis of the rS values shows that in the case of Spanish respondents, the correlations are overwhelmingly low, only in the case of S3 and S4 a medium level of correlation can be observed. For Polish respondents, most of the correlations have a medium level (except for S7, S11, S12 and S16, where a low level of correlation was observed). The highest level of correlation was observed for Turkish respondents – only for S3 and S12 a low level of correlation was observed; analysis of the remaining statements indicates an average (S4, S6, S9, S10, S11) and high (S1, S2, S5, S7, S8, S14, S15) level of correlation. In practice, this means that an increase in ratings of statements related to trust in colleagues/friends goes hand in hand with an increase in ratings of statements related to trust in co-workers to the highest degree for Turkish respondents, followed by Polish and Spanish respondents.

5. Summary

The entry of Generation Z into the labor market implies many challenges related to its functioning in the organizational structures of companies and organizations. This requires, among other things, an understanding of the trust components that are most relevant to this generation. The article attempts to check whether trust behavior in private life can be transferred to the canvass of professional life. In light of the analysis, the conclusion emerged that aspects of trust relevant to Generation Z are differentiated more by the nationality of the trustee than by the subject of trust. A comparative analysis of trust aspects for respondents in relation to superiors and academics teachers led to the same conclusion (Tomaszuk, 2024b). These findings confirm previous studies that point to cultural specificity in the formation of professional and social relationships. Sunardi and Putri (2020) emphasized that trust in professional relationships plays a key role in achieving job satisfaction, especially when it is based on reliability and support. Moreover, Ng's (2020) research showed that trust between co-workers moderates behaviours such as knowledge sharing, which can be an important element in cross-cultural relationships.

The analyses conducted indicated that the biggest differences are between Poles and Spaniards, which may be due to different traditions of collectivism and individualism. Ömüriş et al. (2020) noted that cooperativeness fosters trust, while competitiveness may weaken it, which may explain the differing results in the perception of trust aspects in different national groups. Interestingly, Poles and Turks showed full agreement on the least important aspects of trust, such as putting the common interest before one's own. These results may reflect universal tendencies in professional relationships that place more emphasis on individual benefit.

The analysis indicates that the highest level of correlation between trust ratings in professional and social relationships is found among Turks, suggesting their greater consistency in perceptions of these two types of relationships. Similar conclusions were drawn by Kipkosgei et al. (2020), indicating that coworker trust plays a key role in increasing cooperation and knowledge sharing. In turn, Srivastava and Mohale's (2022) research highlights that trust in co-workers is an important mediator between authentic leadership and job satisfaction, suggesting that organizations should emphasize building quality relationships in the workplace.

However, the study's limitations stem from the possibility that specific socio-cultural contexts may influence the results, which requires further comparative research. Undoubtedly, limitations also include the lack of representativeness of the sample. Nevertheless, the study can provide a starting point for further consideration, especially since horizontal trust as an object of analysis is often overlooked in the literature in favor of vertical trust (Hao et al., 2022).

Trust is a multidimensional phenomenon that varies according to nationality, cultural context and interpersonal relations. The results of the study provide valuable insights for professional relationship management practices and underscore the importance of specific approaches in building trust in workplaces.

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