

THE QUALITIES AND COMPETENCIES OF THE IDEAL DIRECT SUPERVISOR (MANAGER) ACCORDING TO GENERATION Z - RESEARCH RESULTS IN POLAND AND GREAT BRITAIN

DOI: 10.2478/czoto-2025-0049

Received: 06/11/2025

Accepted: 29/12/2025

Anna Korombel¹ – *orcid id: 0000-0003-0546-9708, e-mail: anna.korombel@pcz.pl*

Olga Ławińska¹ – *orcid id: 0000-0003-1960-8211, e-mail: olga.lawinska@pcz.pl*

¹Częstochowa University of Technology, ul. Armii Krajowej 19b, 42-200 Częstochowa, **Poland**

Abstract: The aim of the research was to identify, compare and evaluate Generation Z's expectations towards the qualities and competencies of their direct supervisors. The study was conducted amongst students in Poland and Great Britain in 2021 and 2023. The study employed a survey method, specifically the CAWI survey technique. Measures of descriptive statistics were used to analyze the research data. The survey made it possible to identify the qualities and competencies of direct supervisors expected by Generation Z, as well as to examine the relationship between respondents' answers and their gender. In several cases, gender significantly differentiated the analyzed variables. The results also allowed to determine differences in the expectations of Generation Z representatives in Poland and Great Britain regarding the qualities and competencies of their direct supervisors.

Keywords: Generation Z, enterprise, management, desirable features and competencies, direct supervisor

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, there are four generational groups in the workforce – Baby Boomers (people born between 1945 and 1964), Generation X (those born between 1965 and 1984), Generation Y (the so-called Millennials, born between 1980 and 1989) and Generation Z, those born at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries (IARP, PARP, 2022). Another generation that will soon join them is Generation Alpha – these are now children and teenagers, born in 2010 and subsequent years (McCrindle, 2014). Each generation has different characteristics, expectations, needs, habits and patterns of work behavior. The lowest level of commitment to work is shown by representatives of the Millennials and Generation Z (Pendell and Vander Helm, 2022), which is also the most stressed generation (Deloitte, 2022). The oldest generations have the highest level of loyalty towards their employer, in contrast to Generation Z's low level of loyalty towards their employer. While representatives of Generation X have high financial expectations and representatives of Generation Y prioritize passionate work, for representatives of Generation Z the most important things are personal development, work ethic, being part



of inclusive organizations and maintaining work-life balance (Waldman, 2021; Deloitte, 2022).

Generation Z is an important market player that will become a driver of economic growth within the next 10 years. There are several reasons for this situation: 1. Generation Z presently accounts for about 25% of the world's population (Patel and Morrison, 2019); 2. the number of Generation Z representatives employed in labor markets in Australia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States will have tripled by 2030, amounting to about 87 million; 3. Generation Z's spending power will support the spending in the six aforementioned markets by \$30 trillion in 2030 (a sixfold increase compared to 2019) making Generation Z an important and independent source of consumer spending (Oxford Economics, 2021). A representative of Generation Z is willing to stay in a given workplace for more than 5 years only provided that the employer takes measures that positively impact society and the environment as well as takes steps to create a diverse and inclusive workplace culture which takes into account the expectations and values of Generation Z (Deloitte, 2022). This information confirms the fact that direct supervisors should pay special attention to generational diversity in their teams, especially to the expectations of Generation Z, which is already present in the labor market. The aim of the research was to identify, compare and evaluate Generation Z's expectations towards the qualities and competencies of their direct supervisors in Poland and Great Britain.

Generation Z are young people who are now entering the labor market. Different birth years of representatives of Generation Z are presented in the literature. The authors have taken 1995 as the first year of birth for Generation Z representatives (Bassiouni and Hackley, 2014; Priporas et al., 2017; Hampton and Keys, 2017; Francis and Hoefel, 2018; Kamenidou et al., 2019) and 2009 as the last year. The following are considered to be main characteristics of Generation Z (EY, 2022):

- intuitive ability to operate applications, rely on data and communicate online,
- high self-confidence – both within the use of new technologies and possession of qualities valued by the employer,
- just-in-time learning ability – Generation Z wants to have and know everything immediately, and the vision of long-term career building seems overwhelming to them,
- focus on work-life balance,
- professional and private life must form a coherent, complementary whole,
- lack of concern about the risks taken,
- strong need to be in a group – both online and in a real-world environment.

Generation Z seeks professional work that will stimulate them both intellectually and socially. Professional work, according to Generation Z, should provide opportunities to (EY & JA Worldwide, 2021): generate original thoughts and ideas; interact with people from all over the world; solve complex problems; express compassion and empathy toward others; improve skills; build new technologies; create tangible products; collaborate with others.

While identifying the characteristics of a direct supervisor, the authors assumed that the direct supervisor is a person appointed by the employer who is in direct contact and relations with employees, to whom he or she also directly orders the performance of labor law activities. A direct supervisor (manager) can be the employer himself/herself (in the case of small companies), a manager (head) or any other person, etc. A person appointed as a direct supervisor, not only does not have to be a member of the management of the

organization in question, but also does not have to be a person employed by the organization (Labour Code, Article 3 §1).

Leadership, which is the subject of numerous considerations, is examined (Aguas, 2020): from a variety of perspectives (Antonakis and Day, 2018; Bass et al., 2008; Northouse, 2019; Waldman and O'Reilly, 2020; Yukl, 2013); from the perspective of ethnic and racial considerations (Chhokar et al., 2008; Hofstede, 1980; 2001; House et al., 2004; Moodian, 2009), from a socioeconomic status perspective (Brown, 2004; Manakhova and Limonova, 2018) or a gender perspective (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Hoyt and Simon, 2017; Ibarra et al., 2013). Few studies focus on the expected characteristics of direct supervisors from the perspective of different generations. For each generation, the ideal boss will be a person with different characteristics. However, managers should always focus on building lasting and trusting relationships with internal and external stakeholders of the organization (Sztangret and Kwiecień, 2025). Today, leaders are increasingly using artificial intelligence technologies. However, the leaders of tomorrow will only be those who can responsibly and ethically integrate AI with the needs of employees and the values of the organization (Ingaldi and Ulewicz, 2025). A person in charge of an age-diverse group, but also an age-homogeneous group, wanting to establish positive relations and effective cooperation with employees, should have knowledge of the expectations and preferences of representatives of a particular generation. Table 1, based on the analysis of research results presented in the literature, exhibits the qualities and competencies that Generation Z expects from their direct supervisors.

Table 1

Qualities and competencies of a direct supervisor (manager) expected by Generation Z in light of previous research

Author(s)	Qualities and competencies of an ideal direct supervisor (manager)
S. Sladek, A. Grabinger (2014)	Ability to listen carefully, communicate and collaborate.
M.J. Aguas (2020)	Sincerity, empathy, trust, communication with special emphasis on listening skills, knowledge of team members' needs, team orientation, team cooperation, caring, emotional intelligence, motivation, responsibility.
K. Gabrielova, A.A. Buchko (2021)	Optimism; communication; ability to provide support, mentoring and other development opportunities; ability to create a friendly work atmosphere based on fair competition, stability and security; ability to reduce uncertainty and risk; ability to create a variety of involvement opportunities for which rewards will be established.
J.T. Jensen (2021)	Fairness, honesty, directness, openness and trustworthiness; ability to create a workplace that operates on the principles of <i>fair play</i> ; ability to provide a high level of support by representing an engaging and authentic leadership style; communication (preferably face-to-face communication).
EY & JA Worldwide (2021)	Empathy; building trust by communicating goals, actions and progress backed by data and science; sincere commitment to sustainability and equality goals, making them central to the company's goals and strategy; offering a dynamic and engaging career path; offering innovative and collaborative ways of working, opportunities for continuous learning and development.
J. White (2022)	Honesty and integrity, willingness to get to know and take an interest in their problems and passions, individual treatment, openness to meet frequently

	and discuss the results of work, creating an atmosphere of development and demonstration, ability to support in difficult situations.
HUMANITAS University (2023)	Showing respect, individual treatment, kindness, tolerance, willingness to help, openness, partnership.
T. Elmore (2023)	Humility; ability to provide a reasonable perspective based on one's own experience; courage; adherence to moral values; developed interpersonal skills; developed emotional intelligence and related skills: self-management, self-awareness, social awareness (empathy) and relationship management skills; ability to communicate effectively, primarily listening and understanding.

Source: own elaboration

Analysis of the survey results presented here identifies the recurring, most important qualities that Generation Z expects from their direct supervisors. These include empathy, sincerity, honesty, communication with a special emphasis on listening skills, developed emotional intelligence, and partner treatment and mentoring at the same time. The indicated qualities show the importance for Generation Z of transparent social relations and community-wide values, which are part of the workplace culture – honesty, fairness, respect, tolerance, equality, open communication. In contrast, the expectations of Generation Z relating to the professional competence of employers/direct supervisors, e.g. professionalism, reliability, are of less importance to respondents. Also based on the analysis of the literature on the subject, the authors formulated the following research questions:

1. What qualities and competencies should a direct supervisor/manager possess in the opinion of Generation Z representatives?
2. Is there a correlation between the choice of expected qualities/competencies of a direct supervisor/manager and the gender of a Generation Z representative?
3. Are there differences between the qualities and competencies of direct supervisors/managers expected by representatives of Generation Z in Poland and Great Britain? If so, what are they?
4. Did the representatives of Generation Z rate the qualities of their direct supervisors/managers in the same way in the different years of the survey conducted by the authors? If not, what differences occurred?

The authors, in order to broaden their knowledge of the qualities and competencies of direct supervisors expected by Generation Z, conducted a survey amongst students in Poland and Great Britain. To this end, the authors, on the basis of an analysis of the literature on the subject, built a catalog of qualities and competencies, which was used in the conducted research.

2. METHODS

The research on identification, comparison and assessment of the features and competencies of direct supervisors, considered desirable for Generation Z is a part of a broader study conducted by the authors among students in Poland and Great Britain in 2021 and 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 and Kubiak, 2014). Regarding the birth year of

Generation Z representatives, there is no consensus in the literature. In their research, the authors adopted the most commonly accepted birth range for Generation Z in the literature, i.e. 1995–2009. 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.

Before undertaking the main research, the authors conducted pilot studies in 2018 to identify errors in the survey questionnaire and eliminate them before conducting the main research. The main research were carried out in 2021 and 2023. In the 2021 study in Poland, 157 students participated, with responses of 151 students qualified for further research (including 126 women and 25 men) were qualified for analysis. In a study conducted in Great Britain in the same year, 150 students participated and the responses of 150 people were qualified for further research (including 80 women and 70 men). In 2023 in Poland, a total of 322 students participated (166 females and 156 males), while in Great Britain, a total of 318 students participated (199 females and 119 males). 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).

2. RESULTS

The results presented here are an excerpt from research conducted by the authors in Poland and Great Britain in 2021 and 2023. One of the questions of the survey questionnaire concerned the qualities of managers that Generation Z expects: *"First, please read all of the following qualities. Then indicate the 5 most important qualities you would like your ideal boss/manager to have."* Respondents were presented with a catalog containing 35 qualities selected based on the authors' analysis of the literature. The obtained answer counts (in %) of the most expected qualities selected by respondents in Poland in each year are shown in Figures 1 and 2.



Fig. 1. Answer counts (in %) regarding the most expected qualities and competencies of a direct supervisor (manager) by respondents in Poland in 2021

Source: own study

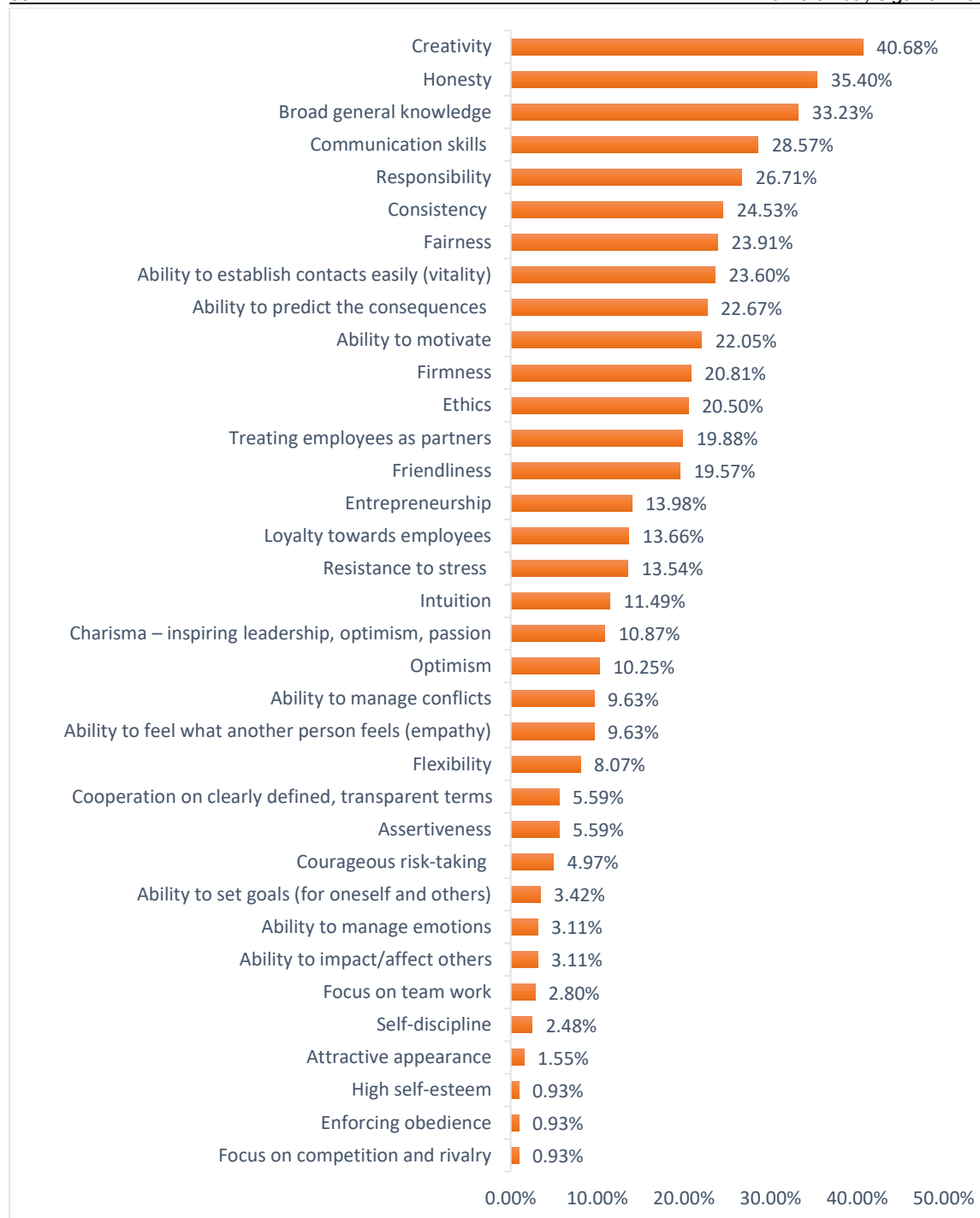


Fig. 2. Answer counts (in %) regarding the most expected qualities and competencies of a direct supervisor (manager) by respondents in Poland in 2023

Source: own study

The results of the survey of Generation Z representatives in Poland (Figures 1 and 2) showed that respondents' expectations have changed. The changes in the ratings of qualities and competencies may be due to the two-year period separating the surveys conducted by the authors and/or the increase in the number of respondents surveyed in 2023. In the survey conducted in 2021, the five qualities and competencies most desired by respondents from a direct supervisor (manager) were the *ability to motivate*, *fairness*, *communication*, *creativity* and *treating employees as partners*. By 2023, on the other

hand, they were *creativity, honesty, having broad general knowledge, communication and responsibility*. The only two that remained in the top five most expected qualities and competencies were *communication* and *creativity*. In the 2023 survey, *sincerity* came in as high as second place. Each of these qualities/competencies was indicated by 30% or more of respondents. Among the least important qualities and competencies of a direct supervisor (manager), respondents indicated in 2021: *focus on competition and rivalry, enforcing obedience, high self-esteem, attractive appearance* and *courageous risk-taking*, while in 2023, respectively: *focus on competition and rivalry, enforcing obedience, high self-esteem, attractive appearance* and *self-discipline*.

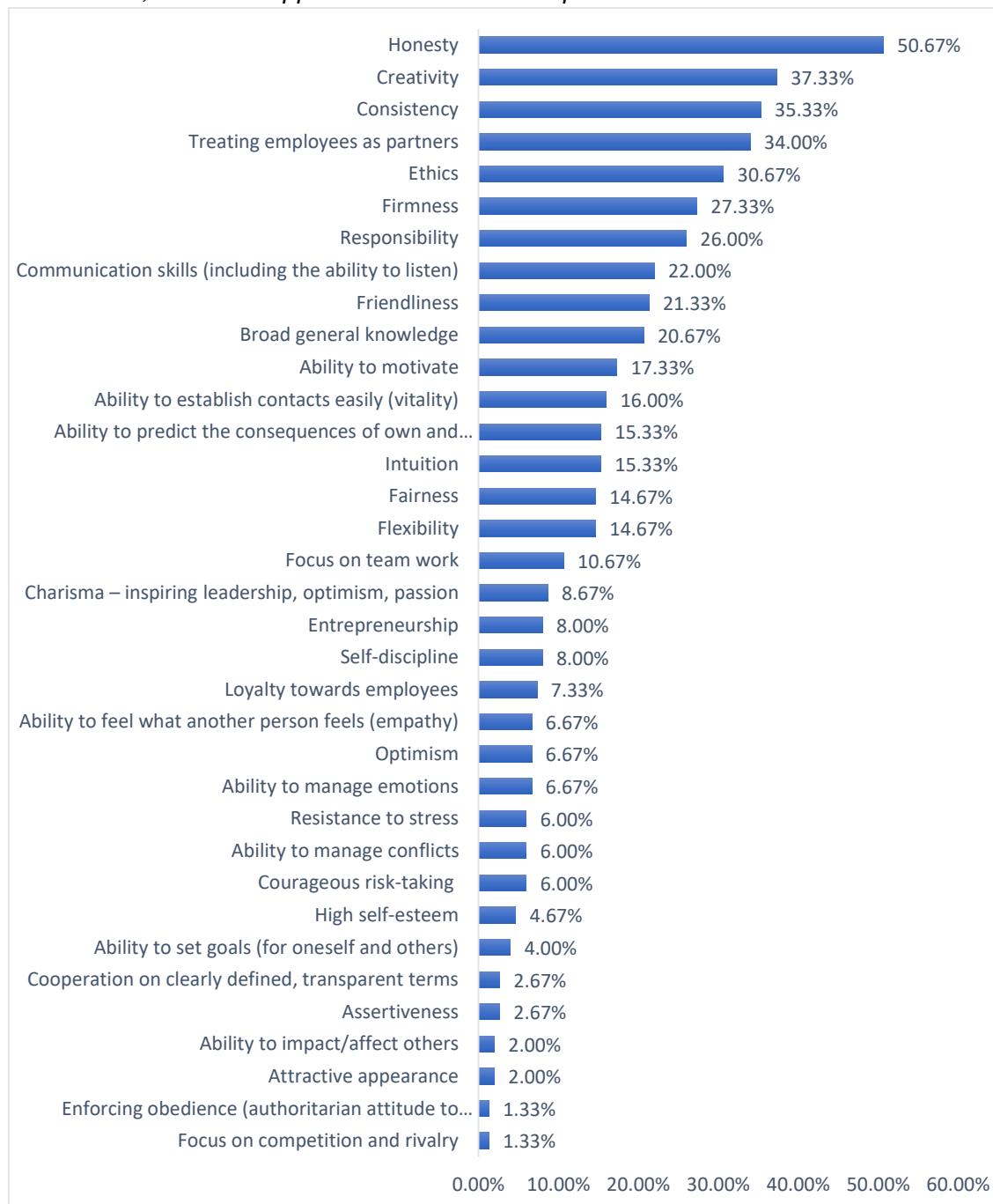


Fig. 3. Answer counts (in %) regarding the most expected qualities and competencies direct supervisors of a direct supervisor (manager) by respondents in Great Britain in 2021
Source: own study

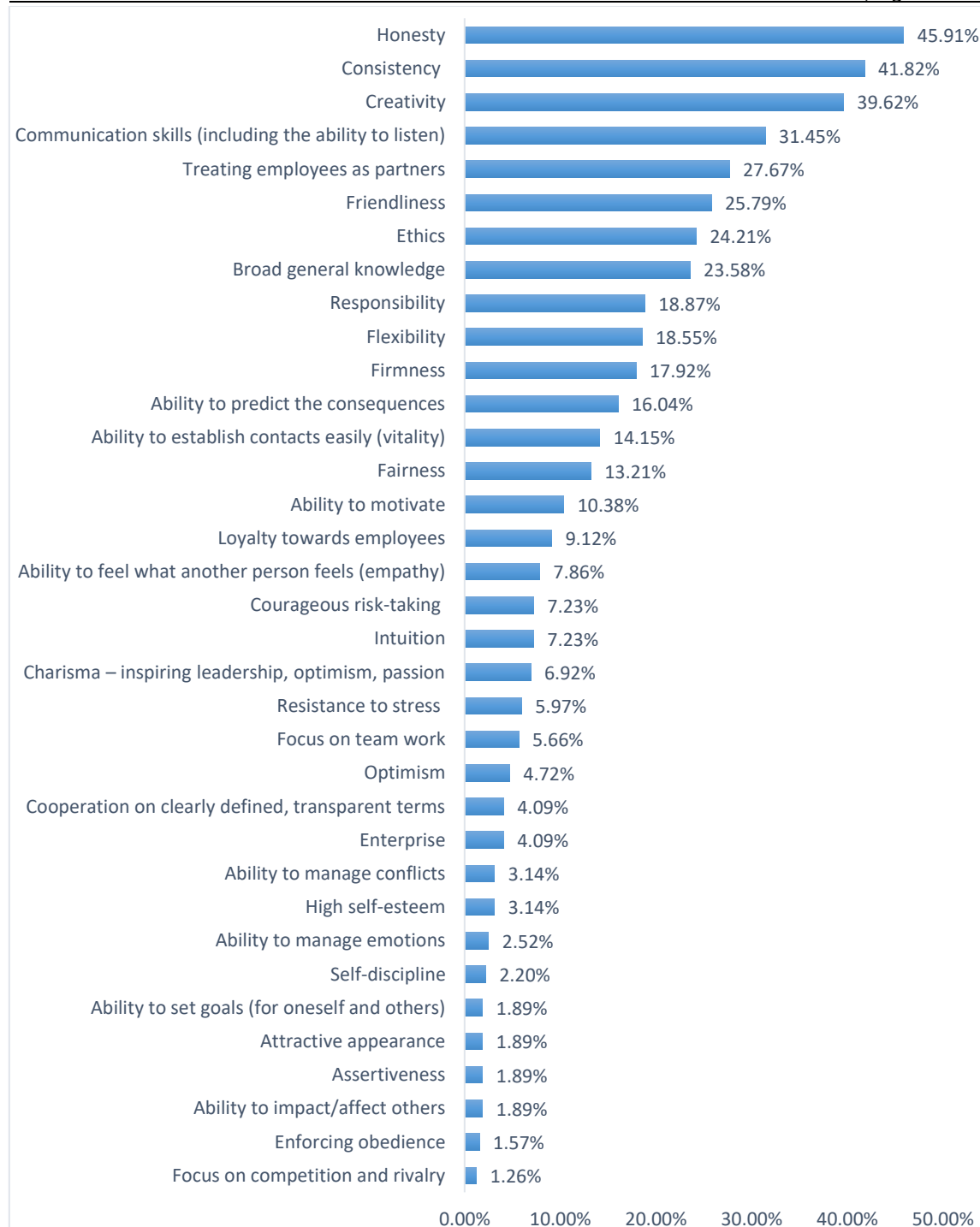


Fig. 4. Answer counts (in %) regarding the most expected qualities and competencies of a direct supervisor (manager) by respondents in Great Britain in 2023

Source: own study

Respondents rated most of the qualities and competencies studied in both surveys in very similar ways. The indicated least desirable qualities and competencies were indicated by less than 2% of respondents.

The obtained answer counts (in %) of the most expected qualities and competencies selected by respondents in Great Britain in 2021 and 2023 are shown in Figures 3 and 4, respectively.

The results of the survey conducted in Great Britain in 2021 and 2023 (Figure 3 and 4) identified one quality of a direct supervisor (manager) particularly important for representatives of Generation Z: *honesty*, which was indicated by more than 50% of respondents in 2021 and more than 45% of respondents in 2023. This was followed (more than 30% of answers) in 2021 by *creativity*, *consistency*, *treating employees as partners* and *ethics*, while in 2023 by *consistency*, *creativity*, *communication (including the ability to listen)* and *treating employees as partners*. The quality that appeared in the top five in the 2023 survey was *communication*.

In 2021, the surveyed representatives of Generation Z in Great Britain indicated the following as the least important qualities of a supervisor (manager): *focus on competition and rivalry*, *enforcing obedience*, *attractive appearance*, *ability to influence/interact with others*, *assertiveness* and *cooperation on clearly defined, transparent principles*. In contrast, the 2023 survey indicated the same qualities and competencies in a slightly altered order: *focus on competition and rivalry*, *enforcing obedience*, *ability to influence/interact with others*, *assertiveness*, and *attractive appearance*. The indicated least desirable qualities and competencies were indicated by less than 2% of respondents. A summary of the results of the authors' survey is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

The most expected and least important qualities and competencies of a direct supervisor (manager) in the opinion of Generation Z representatives – summary of survey results

Poland		Great Britain	
2021	2023	2021	2023
Qualities and competencies most in demand			
Ability to motivate Fairness Communication Creativity Treating employees as partners	Creativity Honesty Broad general knowledge Communication Responsibility	Honesty Creativity Consistency Treating employees as partners Ethics	Honesty Consistency Creativity Communication Treating employees as partners
Qualities and competencies of least importance			
Focus on competition and rivalry Enforcing obedience High self-esteem Attractive appearance Courageous risk-taking	Focus on competition and rivalry Enforcing obedience High self-esteem Attractive appearance Self-discipline	Focus on competition and rivalry Enforcing obedience Attractive appearance Ability to impact/affect others Assertiveness Cooperation on clearly defined, transparent terms	Focus on competition and rivalry Enforcing obedience Ability to impact/affect others Assertiveness Attractive design

Source: own study

In summary, it is possible to identify the qualities of a supervisor (manager) most desired by respondents in both Poland and Great Britain. These include *creativity*, *communication* and *treating employees as partners*. As for the qualities and competencies least desired, the assessment of respondents representing both countries is very similar (Table 2).

The next step in analyzing the data was to verify whether there was a relationship between the variables: the choice of desirable qualities that a boss/manager might have (variable

X) and the gender of the respondent (variable Y). For this purpose, a significance test for structure indicators (comparison of two structure indicators) was used. It was assumed that in the group of women the fraction rate of this quality is p_1 , and in the group of men - p_2 . The null hypothesis was verified:

$$H_0 : p_1 = p_2$$

towards the alternative hypothesis:

$$H_1 : p_1 > p_2$$

Due to the form of the alternative hypothesis adopted, a one-sided critical area was considered. The analysis involved responses to multiple-answer questions, indicators were calculated for the total and for men and women, and then it was verified using a test for the structure index whether gender significantly differentiates these indicators. Details of the selection of desirable qualities that a boss/manager may have by respondents in Poland and Great Britain in 2021 as well as the result of the significance test for the structure indicators by respondent's gender are provided in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3

Selection of the desirable features and competencies of the direct supervisor (manager) for the respondents in Poland in 2021 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	
Consistency	35	23.18	28	22.22	7	28.00	0.2658
Ability to predict the consequences of own and other people's actions	17	11.26	11	8.73	6	24.00	0.0137
Creativity	46	30.46	38	30.16	8	32.00	0.4276
Firmness	16	10.60	12	9.52	4	16.00	0.1681
Broad general knowledge	39	25.83	31	24.60	8	32.00	0.2200
Ability to establish contacts easily (vitality)	43	28.48	37	29.37	6	24.00	0.2934
Intuition	11	7.28	9	7.14	2	8.00	0.4399
Treating employees as partners	45	29.80	39	30.95	6	24.00	0.2438
Ethics	23	15.23	22	17.46	1	4.00	0.0436
Honesty	38	25.17	30	23.81	8	32.00	0.3551
Communication skills (including the ability to listen)	48	31.79	40	31.75	8	32.00	0.4902
Courageous risk-taking	4	2.65	1	0.79	3	12.00	0.0007
Enterprise	22	14.57	17	13.49	5	20.00	0.1997
Responsibility	34	22.52	29	23.02	5	20.00	0.3706
Flexibility	14	9.27	11	8.73	3	12.00	0.3033
Resistance to stress	19	12.58	16	12.70	3	12.00	0.4616
Friendliness	25	16.56	22	17.46	3	12.00	0.2511
Enforcing obedience (authoritarian attitude to employees)	1	0.66	1	0.79	0	0	0.3278
Ability to feel what another person feels (empathy)	19	12.58	15	11.90	4	16.00	0.2861
Ability to motivate	50	33.11	46	36.51	4	16.00	0.0233
Ability to impact/affect others	5	3.31	2	1.59	3	12.00	0.0039

Optimism	14	9.27	12	9.52	2	8.00	0.4054
High self-esteem	1	0.66	1	0.79	0	0	0.3278
Assertiveness	5	3.31	3	2.38	2	8.00	0.0757
Attractive appearance	1	0.66	1	0.79	0	0	0.3278
Charisma – inspiring leadership, optimism, passion	24	15.89	18	14.29	6	24.00	0.1126
Self-discipline	6	3.97	6	4.76	0	0	0.1328
Ability to manage conflicts	13	8.61	12	9.52	1	4.00	0.1843
Ability to manage emotions	7	4.64	5	3.97	2	8.00	0.1907
Loyalty towards employees	39	25.83	37	29.37	2	8.00	0.0129
Ability to set goals (for oneself and others)	13	8.61	11	8.73	2	8.00	0.4527
Fairness	49	32.45	43	34.13	6	24.00	0.1615
Focus on team work	5	3.31	3	2.38	2	8.00	0.0757
Focus on competition and rivalry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5000
Cooperation on clearly defined, transparent terms	24	15.89	21	16.67	3	12.00	0.2798

Source: own study

The analysis of data collected in Poland in 2021 (Table 3) gave rise to the conclusion that gender significantly differentiated the analyzed percentages in six cases. It can be seen that the surveyed women in Poland chose the following qualities significantly more often than men: *ethics*, *ability to motivate* and *loyalty to employees*. In contrast, male respondents were significantly more likely than female respondents to indicate: *ability to anticipate the consequences of one's own and others' actions*, *ability to impact/affect others*, and *courageous risk-taking*.

Analysis of data collected in Great Britain in 2021 (Table 4) makes it possible to conclude that gender significantly differentiated the analyzed percentages in five cases. It can be noted that women in this research group significantly more often than men selected the following qualities: *treating employees as partners and communication*. On the other hand, male respondents significantly more often than female respondents indicated: *ability to anticipate the consequences of one's own and others' actions*, *decisiveness* and *courageous risk-taking*. Comparing the calculated structure indicators (Tables 3 and 4), it should be emphasized that in both Poland and Great Britain, surveyed men significantly more often than surveyed women of Generation Z indicated the two qualities: *ability to anticipate the consequences of one's own and others' actions* and *courageous risk-taking*.

Table 4

Selection of the desirable features and competencies of the direct supervisor (manager) for the respondents in Great Britain in 2021 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	
Consistency	53	35.33	24	30.00	29	41.43	0.0720
Ability to predict the consequences of own and other people's actions	23	15.33	5	6.25	18	25.71	0.0005
Creativity	56	37.33	27	33.75	29	41.43	0.1660

Firmness	41	27.33	15	18.75	26	37,14	0.0058
Broad general knowledge	31	20.67	15	18.75	16	22,86	0.2676
Ability to establish contacts easily (vitality)	24	16.00	11	13.75	13	18,57	0.2028
Intuition	23	15.33	11	13.75	12	17,14	0.2827
Treating employees as partners	51	34.00	34	42.50	17	24,29	0.0094
Ethics	46	30.67	26	32.50	20	28,57	0.3013
Honesty	76	50.67	42	52.50	34	48,57	0.3155
Communication skills (including the ability to listen)	33	22.00	22	27.50	11	15,71	0.0410
Courageous risk-taking	9	6.00	2	2.50	7	10,00	0.0268
Enterprise	12	8.00	6	7.50	6	8,57	0.3897
Responsibility	39	26.00	20	25.00	19	27,14	0.3828
Flexibility	22	14.67	13	16.25	9	12,86	0.2791
Resistance to stress	9	6.00	5	6.25	4	5,71	0.4447
Friendliness	32	21.33	20	25.00	12	17,14	0.1205
Enforcing obedience (authoritarian attitude to employees)	2	1.33	1	1.25	1	1,43	0.4618
Ability to feel what another person feels (empathy)	10	6.67	6	7.50	4	5,71	0.3305
Ability to motivate	26	17.33	17	21.25	9	12,86	0.0878
Ability to impact/affect others	3	2.00	2	2.50	1	1,43	0.3203
Optimism	10	6.67	5	6.25	5	7,14	0.4137
High self-esteem	7	4.67	3	3.75	4	5,71	0.2851
Assertiveness	4	2.67	3	3.75	1	1,43	0.1895
Attractive appearance	3	2.00	2	2.50	1	1,43	0.3203
Charisma – inspiring leadership, optimism, passion	13	8.67	6	7.50	7	10,00	0.2936
Self-discipline	12	8.00	7	8.75	5	7,14	0.3584
Ability to manage conflicts	9	6.00	7	8.75	2	2,86	0.0649
Ability to manage emotions	10	6.67	7	8.75	3	4,29	0.1373
Loyalty towards employees	11	7.33	8	10.00	3	4,29	0.0904
Ability to set goals (for oneself and others)	6	4.00	3	3.75	3	4,29	0.4332
Fairness	22	14.67	15	18.75	7	10,00	0.0654
Focus on team work	16	10.67	8	10.00	8	11,43	0.3886
Focus on competition and rivalry	2	1.33	0	0	2	2,86	0.0639
Cooperation on clearly defined, transparent terms	4	2.67	2	2.50	2	2,86	0.4457

Source: own study

Detailed data on the selection of expected qualities and competencies of a direct supervisor/manager by respondents in Poland and Great Britain in 2023, as well as the result of the significance test for structure indicators by respondent gender, are provided in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5

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
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 the data collected in Poland in 2023 (Table 5) gave grounds to conclude that gender significantly differentiated the analyzed percentages in four cases. It can be noted that female respondents in Poland significantly more often than male respondents chose: *treating employees as partners*. On the other hand, male respondents significantly more often than female respondents indicated the following qualities/competencies: *charisma (inspiring leadership, optimism, passion)*, *focus on competition and rivalry*, and *enterprise*.

Table 6

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
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 the data collected in Great Britain in 2023 (Table 6) makes it possible to conclude that gender significantly differentiated the analyzed percentages in five cases. It can be noted that women in this research group significantly more often than men selected the following qualities/competencies: *communication (including the ability to listen)*, *ability to feel what another person feels (empathy)* and *high self-esteem*. In turn, male respondents in this research group significantly more often than female respondents indicated the following qualities/competencies: *ability to anticipate the consequences of one's own and others' actions*, and *decisiveness*. A summary of the results obtained is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Influence of respondent's gender on their choice of expected qualities and competencies of their immediate supervisor – summary of survey results

Poland		Great Britain	
2021	2023	2021	2023
Relationship between indicated ratings and gender of respondent			
Females			
Women were significantly more likely than men to choose: <i>ethics, ability to motivate, loyalty to employees.</i>	Women were significantly more likely than men to choose: <i>treating employees as partners.</i>	Women were significantly more likely than men to choose: <i>treating employees as partners and communication.</i>	Women were significantly more likely than men to select: <i>communication (including the ability to listen), ability to feel what another person feels (empathy), and high self-esteem.</i>
Males			
Men were significantly more likely than women to indicate: <i>ability to anticipate the consequences of one's own and others' actions, ability to impact/affect others, and courageous risk-taking.</i>	Men were significantly more likely than women to indicate: <i>charisma (inspiring leadership, optimism, passion), focus on competition and rivalry, and enterprise</i>	Men were significantly more likely than women to indicate: <i>ability to anticipate the consequences of one's own and others' actions, decisiveness, and courageous risk-taking.</i>	Men were significantly more likely than women to indicate: <i>ability to anticipate the consequences of one's own and others' actions, and firmness.</i>

Source: own study

In conclusion, it can be noted that women representing Generation Z, both from Poland and Great Britain, attach more importance to, among other things, *treating employees as partners* than men, while men attach more importance to, among other things, *ability to anticipate the consequences of one's own and others' actions*.

3. CONCLUSION

The results of the survey clearly indicate that representatives of Generation Z, both in Poland and Great Britain, most value and at the same time expect their direct supervisors to be sincere, creative, communicative and consistent. They want their bosses to have extensive general knowledge. They expect them to know how to interact with ease, and to be able to establish partnerships with their employees. Ethics and loyalty of the boss to employees are also important to Generation Z. Representatives of Generation Z, both in Poland and the United Kingdom, do not want to work with a boss who will create an atmosphere of competition and rivalry in the workplace, and will enforce obedience. For this generation, the boss's appearance and self-esteem are of little importance. Nor do they expect their immediate boss to be able to influence others. The presented results of the authors' 2021 and 2023 surveys are consistent with those of other researchers (Sladek and Grabinger, 2014; Aguas, 2020; Gabrielova and Buchko, 2021; Jensen, 2021; EY & JA Worldwide, 2021; White, 2022; HUMANITAS University, 2023; Elmore, 2023).

The results of the conducted research clearly indicate that the gender of the representative of Generation Z significantly differentiates the analyzed percentages. This means that other qualities and competencies of the direct boss are valued most highly by women, and others by men. A direct supervisor, wishing to build positive relations with Polish women in the team, should, in particular, have a partnership relation with them. Above that, he/she should have the ability to communicate, motivate, and act ethically and loyally towards them. In the case of cooperation with women from Great Britain, also important will be the partnership attitude of the boss to the employees, and in addition, the communication, empathy and high self-esteem of the boss. Polish and British men value in immediate bosses, more than women, the ability to anticipate the consequences of one's own and others' actions, as well as courageous risk-taking. In addition, a direct supervisor who wants to work effectively with Generation Z men from Poland should have the ability to influence others and focus on competition and rivalry. Above that, he/she should be charismatic and enterprise. When working with Generation Z men from Great Britain, the immediate boss should be firm in the actions he/she takes.

Knowledge of the most expected qualities and competencies of direct supervisors by Generation Z, as well as the qualities and competencies that are least important, is addressed to a direct supervisor who work or intend to work with representatives of Generation Z. This is because this knowledge will allow direct supervisors, who are often also team leaders, to create work rules that foster effective cooperation. Specific rules of cooperation accepted by Generation Z, as well as the qualities and competencies of immediate bosses will allow to build positive relations and contribute to retaining a Generation Z employee in the organization for more than 5 years. The obtained knowledge indicates that the nationality and gender of the respondents is a significant factor differentiating the preferences and values in the workplace of Generation Z, which confirms the importance of generational diversity and diversity management.

The results presented here complement and deepen the knowledge of Generation Z's expectations of the qualities and competencies of direct supervisors, along with the

differentiation by gender of the respondent. They also indicate the influence of the nationality of Generation Z respondents on the prioritization of their expectations towards the workplace.

The use of surveys is associated with limitations, which include the possibility of superficial knowledge of the phenomena under study, or respondents giving false answers. On the other hand, the relatively small number of respondents does not allow the obtained survey results to be treated as representative. Future research should be conducted on a larger sample, and quantitative research should be supplemented with qualitative research. Undertaking research in other countries would make it possible to compare the qualities/competencies of direct supervisors (managers) expected by members of Generation Z representing different nationalities, and to determine whether and which of them are present regardless of latitude.

REFERENCES

- Aguas, M.J., 2020. *Millennial and Generation Z's Perspectives on Leadership Effectiveness*, Emerging Leadership Journeys, 13(1). Available at: <https://www.regent.edu/journal/emerging-leadership-journeys/gen-z-generation-z-leadership/> (10.10.2025).
- Antonakis, J., Day, D.V., 2018. *The nature of leadership (3rd ed.)*, Sage Publications Inc., Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, Melbourne.
- Bass, B.M., Bass, R., 2008. *The Bass handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications (4th ed.)*, Free Press, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney.
- Bassiouni, D., Hackley, C., 2014. *Generation Z Children's Adaptation to Digital Consumer Culture: A Critical Literature Review*, Journal of Customer Behaviour, 13/2, 113-133, DOI: 10.1362/147539214X14024779483591.
- Brown, K.M., 2004. *Leadership for social justice and equity: Weaving a transformative framework and pedagogy*, Education Administration Quarterly, 40(1), 77-108.
- Chhokar, J.S., Brodbeck, F.C., House, R.J., 2008. *Culture and Leadership Across the World: The GLOBE Book of In-Depth Studies of 25 Societies*, Taylor & Francis Group, LLC., United States of America.
- Deloitte, 2022. *Striving for balance, advocating for change. The Deloitte Global 2022 Gen Z & Millennial Survey*. Available at: <https://www.deloitte.com/global/en/issues/work/genzmillennialsurvey-2022.html> (30.09.2025).
- Eagly, A., Carli, L.L., 2007. *Women and the Labyrinth of leadership*. Harvard Business Review. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2007/09/women-and-the-labyrinth-of-leadership> (10.10.2025).
- Elmore, T., 2023. *What Generation Z Wants in a Leader*. Available at: <https://www.timelmore.com/articles/what-generation-z-wants-in-a-leader> (29.09.2025).
- EY & JA Worldwide, 2021. *Gen Z is poised to reframe the future, but are business and education ready?* Available at: <https://www.ey.com/content/dam/ey-unified-site/ey-com/en-gl/about-us/corporate-responsibility/documents/ey-gen-z-is-poised-to-reframe-the-future.pdf> (02.10.2025).
- EY, 2022. *Co to jest Pokolenie Z? Charakterystyka nowej generacji pracowników i konsumentów*. Available at: https://www.ey.com/pl_pl/workforce/pokolenie-z-co-to-jest (10.10.2025).
- Francis, T., Hoefel, F., 2018. *'True Gen': Generation Z and its implications for companies. The influence of Gen Z – the first generation of true digital natives – is expanding (Report)* s São Paulo: McKinsey & Company. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/true-gen-generation-z-and-its-implications-for-companies> (10.10.2025).
- Gabrielova, K., Buchko, A.A., 2021. *Here comes Generation Z: Millennials as managers*, Business Horizons, 64, 489-499, DOI: 10.1016/j.bushor.2021.02.013.
- Gregor, B., Kubiak, T., 2014. *Ocena działań prowadzonych przez firmy w mediach społecznościowych w świetle wyników badań ich użytkowników*, Marketing Instytucji Naukowych i Badawczych, 4(14), 3-27, DOI: 10.14611/minib.14.04.2014.03.

- Gummerus, J., Liljander, V., Weman, E., Pihlström, P., 2012. *Customer engagement in a Facebook brand community*, Management Research Review, 35(9), 857-877, DOI: 10.1108/01409171211256578.
- Hampton, D., Keys, Y., 2017. *Generation Z students: Will they change our nursing classrooms?* Journal of Nursing Education and Practice, 7(4), 111-115, DOI: 10.5430/jnep.v7n4p111.
- Hofstede, G., 1980. *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*, Sage Publications Inc., Newbury Park, London, New Delhi.
- Hofstede, G., 2001. *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*, 2nd ed., Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA.
- House, R.J., Hanges, P.J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P.W., Gupta, V., 2004. *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*, Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, California.
- Hoyt, Crystal L., 2017. Social Psychological Approaches to Women and Leadership Theory, in: Madsen S.R. (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Gender and Leadership*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing, 85-99. Available at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/jepson-faculty-publications/248/> (10.10.2025).
- Humanitas, 2023. *Pokolenie Z na rynku pracy. Postawy, priorytety, oczekiwana. Raport z badań (Report)*. Sosnowiec: Wyższa Szkoła Humanitas. Available at: https://archiwum.humanitas.edu.pl/resources/upload/zetki%20wyniki%20bada%C5%84_RAPORT.pdf (22.09.2025).
- IARP (Instytut Analiz Rynku Pracy), PARP (Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, 2022. *Prognostowane zmiany na rynku pracy. Przegląd scenariuszy. Raport tematyczny*, Warszawa.
- Ibarra, H., Ely, R.J., Kolb, D.M., 2013. Women Rising: The unseen barriers. *Harvard Business Review*. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2013/09/women-rising-the-unseen-barriers> (30.09.2025).
- Ingaldi, M., Ulewicz, R., 2025. *The role of AI in digital leadership – new competencies of leaders*. Polish Journal of Management Studies, 31 (2), 106-122, DOI: 10.17512/pjms.2025.31.2.07.
- Jensen, J.T., 2021. *Generation Z and Their Managers: Experiences and Expectations of Interactions in Contemporary Workplaces* (Master's thesis), Canterbury, New Zealand: University of Canterbury, Department of Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurship.
- Kamenidou, I.C., Mamalis, S.A., Pavlidis, S., Bara, E.-Z.G., 2019. *Segmenting the Generation Z cohort university students based on sustainable food consumption behavior: A preliminary study*, Sustainability, 11(3), 837, 1-22, DOI:10.3390/su11030837.
- Labour Code (1974). Journal of Laws 1974 No. 24 item 141. Act of 26 June 1974.
- Manakhova, I., Limonova, E., 2018. Socioeconomic Leadership of the Individual in the Information Economy: Nanolevel of Research, in: Strielkowski W., Chigisheva O. (eds.), *Leadership for the Future Sustainable Development of Business and Education*, Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics, Springer, 551-558.
- McCrindle, M., 2014. *The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the global generations*, Sydney, Australia: McCrindle Research Pty Ltd.
- Moodian, M.A., 2009. *Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence: Exploring the cross-cultural dynamics within organizations*, Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, California.
- Nachar, N., 2008. *The Mann-Whitney U: A test for assessing whether two independent samples come from the same distribution*, Tutorials in Quantitative Methods for Psychology, 4(1), 13-20, DOI: 10.20982/tqmp.04.1.p013.
- Northouse, P.G., 2019. *Leadership: Theory and practice (8th ed.)*, Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, California.
- Oxford Economics, 2021. *Gen Z's role in shaping the digital economy*. Available at: <https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/gen-z-role-in-shaping-the-digital-economy/> (02.10.2025).
- Patel, H., Morrison, E., 2019. *Generation Z: Step aside Millennials, Barclays Research Highlights: Sustainable & Thematic Investing*. Available at: https://www.ib.barclays/content/dam/Barclays/microsites/ibpublic/documents/our-insights/gen-z/Leaflet%20Generation_Z.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0e8BmrWF7hSOMYa24y3t2RLOOXc5avEwBO8D3i89UtRP91CYsM8xTxlo (30.09.2025).

- Pendell, R., Vander Helm S., 2022. *Generation Disconnected: Data on Gen Z in the Workplace*, GALLUP. Available at: <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/404693/generation-disconnected-data-gen-workplace.aspx> (10.10.2025).
- Priporas, C-V., Stylos, N., Fotiadis, A.K., 2017. *Generation Z consumers' expectations of interactions in smart retailing: A future agenda*, Computers in Human Behavior, 77, 374-381, DOI: 10.1016/j.chb.2017.01.058.
- Sladek, S., Grabinger, A., 2014. *Gen Z. The first generation of the 21st Century has arrived! XYZ University*. Available at: <https://www.xyzuniversity.com/research> (30.09.2025).
- Sztangret, I., Kwiecień, K., 2025. *How can a circular economy impact entrepreneurship? Insights from a systematic review*, Research Reviews of Czestochowa University of Technology. Management, 58, 52-64, DOI: 10.17512/znpcz.2025.2.05.
- Waldman, E., 2021. *How to Manage a Multi-Generational Team*, Age And Generational Issues, Harvard Business Review. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2021/08/how-to-manage-a-multi-generational-team> (02.10.2025).
- Waldman, D.A., O'Reilly, C.A., 2020. *Leadership for organizations*, Sage Publications Inc., Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, Melbourne.
- White, J., 2022. *5 Things Managers Of Generation Z Employees Should Be Doing*. Available at: <https://lead.amequity.com/insights/article/podcast-5-things-managers-of-generation-z-employees-should-be-doing> (10.10.2025).
- Yates, F., 1934. *Contingency tables involving small numbers and the Chi-Square Test*, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, 1(2), 217-235, DOI:10.2307/2983604.
- Yukl, G.A., 2013. *Leading in Organizations (8th ed.)*, Pearson, Boston, MA.