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Cultural conditions of managing employees
of different ages in an economic organization

Summary of the dissertation

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Date of submission:

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Poznań 2023

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Justification for the dissertation topic

The ongoing demographic phenomena mean that there are more and more people in the post-working age on the labor market, who are not successively replaced by younger generations (Central Statistical Office, 2023; Beazley, Ball i Vernon, 2017, p. 226; Wziątek-Staśko, 2015). At the same time, progressing technological changes in most areas of human life have accelerated the succession of individual generations. People belonging to different generations, separated by a few years, may have a completely different lifestyle or worldview, which defines their attitude to the performance of employee duties or the way of communication. In the workplace, however, they are forced to cooperate with people from other generations, which is a challenge for themselves, as well as for management and human resources departments (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós i Juhász, 2016, p. 94; Calhoun i Strasser, 2005, p. 469; Pritchard i Whiting, 2014, p. 1620). Diversity of the management of employees of different ages strengthens the motivation and level of employee involvement and allows the team to integrate and better adapt to the needs of the organization itself and its clients. It leads to the optimal use of available human capital, which is one of the best possible solutions to the current demographic situation on the labor market (Woszczyk and Gawron, 2014).

The level of advancement of managing employees of different ages in the organization depends on various conditions (Aaltio, Salminen i Koponen, 2014, p. 172; Hertel, Van der Heijden, de Lange i Deller, 2013, p. 859; Liwiński i Sztanderska, 2010, p. 4; Lyons, Wessel, Tai i Ryan, 2014, p. 1010), e.g. on the size of the organization, the sector in which it operates, the legal regulations, the external environment, its financial results or the strategy, mission and vision of the company. It seems, however, that the most important role in determining personnel management practices is played by cultural factors – both organizational and national (resulting from the culture of the country from which the organization originates and the country in which it operates), as well as the resulting management style, values and promoted attitudes (Lyons, Wessel, Tai i Ryan, 2014, p. 1011).

Despite the growing importance of both generational and cultural differences in organizations, the links between them are not sufficiently recognized, especially in Poland. This creates a significant cognitive gap in the field of management sciences, which contributed to the choice of the topic of the dissertation, which is an attempt to reduce it. Therefore, it was decided to examine the cultural determinants of managing age diversity. The results of

the research may be a starting point for proposing specific solutions for managing employees of different ages for enterprises with different cultural characteristics.

Research problems, purposes and scope of the dissertation

This paper formulates the main problem and detailed research questions. The main problem is as follows: What are the connections between cultural factors and the level of advancement of managing employees of different ages in the organization? In turn, detailed research questions are presented below:

1. What are the connections between the type of organizational culture of the company (according to the typology of Cameron and Quinn) and the level of advancement of managing employees of different ages in the organization?
2. What are the connections between the individual dimensions of national culture according to G. Hofstede and the level of advancement of managing employees of different ages in the organization?
3. What are the connections between the type of organizational culture (according to the typology of Cameron and Quinn) and attitudes and behaviors towards employees of different ages in the organization?
4. What are the connections between individual dimensions of national culture according to G. Hofstede and attitudes and behaviors towards employees of different ages in the organization?

The answers to the above questions will be obtained as a result of the research procedure. Research problems make the hypotheses too general, not specific, which would be difficult to verify using tests indicating correlation between variables or its absence. Qualitative research will be carried out for the dissertation (case study method). Due to the small sample size, it would also be difficult to generalize the obtained results. Therefore, the formulation of hypotheses was completely abandoned, as it would be groundless (Niemczyk, 2016, pp. 108-112).

The subject of the dissertation is the cultural determinants of managing employees of different ages in an organization. Its main purpose is to recognize, diagnose and assess the links between the type of organizational culture (according to the typology of Cameron and Quinn) and the dimensions of culture (according to Hofstede) and the level of generational

diversity management in an economic organization. In order to achieve the main objective, it is necessary to implement specific objectives of the following nature:

a) epistemological:

C1: systematizing and redefining the terms "multigenerational management", "managing generational diversity", "managing age-diverse employees" and "age management",

C2: recognition of the relationship between the type of organizational culture and the management of employees of different ages,

C3: recognition of the relationship between national culture (dimensions of national culture according to Hofstede) and the management of employees of different ages in the company,

b) cognitive-explanatory:

C4: identification and assessment of cultural determinants of managing employees of different ages,

C5: determination of the level of management and degrees of advancement in managing employees of different ages,

c) practical:

C6: identification and suggestion of good practices for managing age-diverse employees in organizations with different cultural backgrounds.

The scope of the dissertation follows from the above assumptions:

- material scope: the concept of managing the age-diverse workforce and the cultural conditions for the use of generational diversity management in the company,
- subjective scope: economic organizations with different types of organizational culture and different origins in terms of national culture,
- spatial scope: organizations with their headquarters (central or representative offices) in Poland,
- time range: in the theoretical layer, it concerns the period from the appearance in the literature of considerations on age management, organizational culture and cultural differences in human resource management, taking into account in particular scientific studies from the last decade; literature studies were conducted in 2016-2021; in the empirical layer, it covered the years 2019-2021.

Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of four chapters. The first of them concerns the generations currently present on the labor market. It contains an overview of the characteristics assigned to them. It also includes theoretical considerations on terminology related to this topic. The second chapter is a description of the management of employees of different ages. It contains a description of the benefits of such solutions and the role of personnel systems in managing generational diversity. The third chapter focuses on the issue of culture. It contains information on organizational culture, its determinants, models and typologies, as well as detailed data on cultural dimensions and its connections with organizational culture. The last chapter is a description of the conducted research, the aim of which was to identify the cultural determinants of managing employees of different ages in economic organizations. The dissertation ends with proposals of activities in the field of generational diversity management in enterprises with different types of organizational culture and different cultural origins. The bibliography contains 323 items, including over 120 in English.

Research methods

In pursuit of cognitive-theoretical purposes, the method of critical literature analysis was used to systematize and redefine the concepts of "multigenerational management" and "age management" (which are part of diversity management in the organization), as well as to determine the differences between these concepts (C1), and also to identification of factors from the thematic area of organizational culture (C2) and national culture (C3) as determinants of the level of management of age-diverse personnel in the enterprise.

In pursuit of cognitive, explanatory and application purposes, research synthesis and logical analysis were used, as well as the method of inductive reasoning in order to determine good age management practices in culturally different organizations (C5), as well as to draw conclusions from the conducted research (C6). However, in order to compare the ways of managing employees of different ages in organizations with a different organizational culture, as well as with a different national culture background (C4 and C5), a comparative analysis will be used.

The most popular methods of collecting data in the process of diagnosing organizational culture are a survey, observation, interviews and document analysis (Gadomska-Lila, 2011, p.

18). Each of them has its advantages and disadvantages. It was therefore decided to use them all in order to maximize the benefits and at the same time balance the possible weaknesses of individual techniques. In the first stage of the research, the method of diagnostic survey (including questionnaire and structured interview techniques), the method of observation and the method of document analysis were used.

Observation is one of the methods of direct knowledge. It is purposeful and intentional (Stachak, 2013, 119). It becomes particularly useful when studying human behavior (Mruk, 2012, p. 112). During the study, open, non-participant observation was used. Thanks to this method, the work of multi-generational teams in the surveyed organizations was familiarized with.

Source analysis is one of the indirect documentation methods. The documents used in economic research may include statutes, regulations, operating plans, statistical or accounting documents (Stachak, 2013, p. 125 and 129). As part of the research, e.g. work and remuneration regulations applicable in enterprises, documents regulating incentive systems, corporate websites, organizational structure diagrams, documents defining the strategy, mission and vision of the enterprise and other HR documents provided by organizations.

Survey methods are used to learn about the non-public processes taking place in people's minds and regulating their behavior, such as: information possessed, ideas, beliefs, expectations or values (Stachak, 2013, p. 130). However, it should be remembered that the answers obtained in this way are declarative and should be considered as such ones.

The research consisted of two stages, which were preceded by pilot testing of research tools. The stages of the research are presented in the figure below.

Literature analysis		Purpose: review and systematization of concepts related to the subject scope of the dissertation and determination of the research gap
Preliminary pilot studies Objective: selection of organizations for research, testing of research tools		
Survey (Camer and Quinn questionnaire and a survey evaluating the level of management of employees of different age groups)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a questionnaire was sent to 453 organisations • 354 completed questionnaires were received in response • at this stage, 5 organizations were selected to participate in further research
Main research Objective: confirmation of the type of organizational culture and recognition of activities in the field of managing employees of different ages		
Stage I		
Multiple case study method	Document analysis	conducted by means of a created questionnaire based on documents provided by the surveyed organizations
	Observation	observation of multigenerational teams which taking place in the surveyed organizations
	CAWI surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • surveys addressed to employees of the surveyed organizations - of various ages, employed in various departments at various levels of management • in one organization paper surveys were conducted, in other enterprises in electronic form (CAWI)
	Interviews	direct IDI interviews with managers of various departments, at various management levels - several from each of the five organizations participating in the research
Stage II Objective: supplementing qualitative research, identifying activities in the field of managing employees of different ages in organizations with different cultural origins and a different type of organizational culture		
CAWI surveys		the survey questionnaire was completed by 362 people working in Polish, German, Scandinavian, Asian and American companies

Figure 1. Research stages

Source: own study

In the first stage, multiple case studies were used. So it was qualitative research. The case study method consists in an in-depth study of phenomena and processes and their real environment. The selection of cases results from the desire to present them clearly or to juxtapose them on the basis of opposites (Czakov, 2016, p. 208-209). It is often used in management sciences, especially when during the research only certain symptoms of the studied phenomenon are perceptible or the research is limited and descriptive. This method

has quite a wide application. It allows for the interpretation of the existing reality, construction and testing of theories. It is also an idiographic examination. The multiple case study method also allows for comparison of the studied cases. This method is sometimes accused of a lack of representativeness, however, properly selected cases make it possible for individual observations to be a starting point for developing a new theory and to indicate the understanding of the theory in real conditions, a case study may even better than extensive statistical research provide arguments to describe the subjects phenomena (Banaszczyk, 2012, pp. 126-129)

The second stage complemented the qualitative research and was conducted for comparative purposes. However, its results should not be generalized due to the small research sample.

Findings of research

In the course of the literature research conducted for the dissertation, it was found that several levels of age diversity management in the enterprise can be distinguished. They are shown in Figure 2.

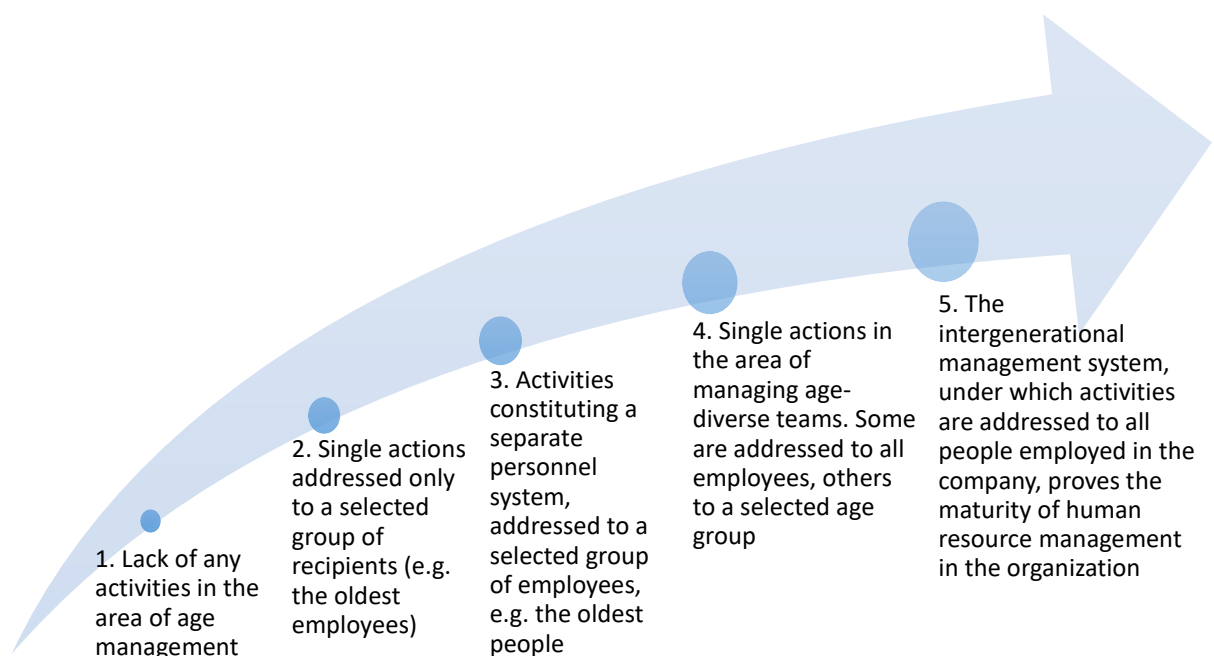


Figure 2. Levels of generational diversity management

Source: own study.

The functioning of a separate system for managing employees of different ages proves the maturity of human capital management in an enterprise, and the higher the level of generational diversity management in the organization, the better, more mature human resources management in general.

In the organizational culture of the clan type, there is the highest level of managing employees of different ages, and it is in this enterprise that coherent activities in this field can be recognized. All proposed solutions are addressed to people of all age groups. There is no age discrimination in the organization, which the employer actively prevents. Employees positively assess activities in this area, and cooperation with people of different ages is not a problem for them. They feel supported by the organization in ensuring good quality intergenerational cooperation.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that in other types of organizational culture there is the same – fourth – level of managing employees of different ages, i.e. there are single actions in this area, which are addressed to all employees. This proves that the clan-type culture is the most used for the emergence of such solutions, but in other types of cultures the probability that generational diversity management will take place is similar.

In the majority of the surveyed enterprises, no activities in the field of generational diversity management take place. The largest percentage of enterprises with single activities or a generational diversity management system addressed to all employees (and thus the highest levels of managing employees of different ages) occurs in the culture of the adhocracy type.

The largest percentage of enterprises with a generational diversity management system addressed to all employees is found among organizations of German and Polish origin. However, taking into account the sum of the answers relating to the two highest levels, i.e. the fourth and fifth, it turns out that the most advanced activities in the area of generational diversity management are found in Scandinavian and German organizations. However, it should be emphasized that in the case of Scandinavian and Korean organizations, due to the small number of respondents, it is difficult to generalize the results.

Based on the obtained results, however, it can be presumed that the dimensions of national culture that may determine the advanced level of managing employees of different ages are primarily low power distance and individualism. According to research conducted by Hofstede, both are at a similar level both in Germany and in the Scandinavian countries.

The results of this stage of the research also showed that only in the fifty surveyed organizations there are diversified activities in the field of personnel policy, addressed to different age groups of employees. Only in 3.3% of enterprises they constitute a separate intergenerational management system. In 43% of these organizations there is an adhocracy-type culture, in the remaining ones - clan or market (28.5% each). It's quite surprising. It would seem that multi-generational management activities as the highest level of managing age diversity in an organization will more often take place mainly in a clan culture assuming teamwork, cooperation, a friendly working atmosphere and partnership, i.e. values and practices consistent with the idea of multi-generational management. It should also be noted that no organization with a culture of the hierarchical type uses a system for managing employees of different ages, both addressed to a selected age group and to all employees. The research results indicate quite clearly that the type of organizational culture is one of the factors determining the level of generational diversity management in the company.

In organizations where there is a separate system for managing employees of different ages and it is addressed to both the oldest employees and those newly hired, it covers most areas of human resources management. In the field of recruitment, job advertisements are first of all properly constructed. They are created with a specific age group of recipients in mind. Attention is paid to the language used and the place of placing the advertisement. One of the adhocracy-type organizations even indicated that it strives to rejuvenate its staff by creating patronage classes, participating in job fairs at universities and organizing internship programs for students. In this way, he wants to attract young employees. It often happens that new recruits are introduced by the team leader. In one of the surveyed organizations (type of culture: market, German organization) for the first months, new employees are also in the so-called "protection period" during which they are not assessed and cannot be dismissed.

In one of the adhocracy organizations, employees are offered different benefits, depending on the generational group to which they belong. On the other hand, in one of the companies, characterized by a market-type culture, the employee's age is mentioned as one of the criteria for promotion. Only the oldest employees can become a team leader. A person in this position can count on a number of benefits – receives an additional salary for the performance of the whole team.

In another surveyed organization, a detailed employee appraisal (in the form of a 360 ° assessment) takes place once a year, however, employees have the opportunity to obtain more frequent feedback from their direct supervisor (even once a month), if they report such a need. It is noticeable that this opportunity is mainly used by employees from the Y and Z generations, which confirms the need for more frequent feedback among the youngest age groups. Therefore, it seems that this is a good practice that can also be recommended to other enterprises.

In another organization with a market-type culture, there are different assessment criteria for younger and older people, even though they occupy the same positions, which is not well received by employees. It seems highly unjust, harmful and discriminatory, even though it may be dictated by good intentions. This may be another proof that the market-type culture is not conducive to the proper management of generational diversity.

The most common single practices of managing generational diversity in enterprises where there is no separate system for managing employees of different age groups include activities in the field of employee recruitment (proper construction of job advertisements adapted to the age of the desired candidates, diversification of sources of acquiring employees), mentoring, activities for health protection, promotion of lifelong learning and programs addressed to employees of retirement age. It is worth noting, however, that in the vast majority of the surveyed enterprises, no activities in the field of age management are undertaken, which seems unfavorable in the current demographic situation, in which the phenomenon of aging population is becoming more and more visible.

The results of the conducted research allow to conclude that the clan is the most advantageous type of organizational culture for creating and functioning in the company of an advanced level of managing employees of different ages in the form of a developed, coherent generational diversity management system, where activities are addressed to all employees. This should not be surprising, however. The essence of intergenerational management is in line with the principles applicable to this type of organizational culture. The clan-type culture assumes the cooperation of different generations of employees, mutual support, acceptance, close non-professional relations, lack of discrimination and stereotypes. In this way, it fosters advanced practices in the area of intergenerational management. It also seems that due to the fact that the culture of adhocracy allows for the introduction of innovative applications, proposing new ideas, without negative evaluation and negation of

employee initiatives, as well as leaving employees a lot of freedom to act, it will also be conducive to the introduction of activities in the field of generational diversity management (in the surveyed enterprise, the "diveristy inclusion" strategy was introduced, but it has been operating for too short a time to develop all possible activities in this area, although it intends to introduce them successively). Certainly, in cultures such as the market or hierarchy, it will be more difficult to implement generational diversity management. This can be seen, for example, in the Aquanet enterprise. Most activities in the area of managing employees of different ages are bottom-up initiatives, not imposed by strict procedures in this organization. It is worth recalling that in everyday interpersonal contacts in this organization one can see strong manifestations of a clan-type culture. However, wherever there is a hierarchical culture in Aquanet, intergenerational management is difficult. It is similar in an adhocracy type of organization, where there are more multigenerational management practices than in a market-type organization. What's more, managers working in an adhocracy organization are more positive about introducing such practices in an enterprise than the managers surveyed in a market-type organization. This is also confirmed by the results obtained in the second, supplementary stage of the research. If there were practices in the field of age management in market-type organizations, it seems that they were not effective. On the contrary, one could get the impression that they even lead to discrimination of employees and are not well received by them.

It might also seem that the presence of the highest level of management of employees of different ages will be determined by a low level of power distance, collectivism, femininity, a low level of uncertainty avoidance and restrictiveness, and a long-term orientation. All these dimensions allow for better personnel management in general, while at the same time leaving employees a large dose of independence (apart from collectivism, which in turn assumes mutual care of employees and effective cooperation, and thus also fits into the assumptions of intergenerational management) and enabling highly developed cooperation of people in different age.

It is worth noting, however, that in other types of organizational culture there is a fourth level of managing employees of different ages. There are activities in the field of generational diversity management, which do not constitute a separate system, but belong to other personnel systems. They are addressed to all employees. Thus, the clan-type culture is the most used for the emergence of this type of solutions. However, it can be assumed that in

other types of cultures, the probability that generational diversity management will take place is similar.

The results of the conducted research showed that developed management systems for employees of different ages are present primarily in Scandinavian and German organizations. Common features of these national cultures are low power distance and, perhaps surprisingly, individualism. It is worth remembering, however, that individualism guarantees the employee's sense of independence and leaves them the freedom to act in various initiatives, which is perfectly in line with the concept of intergenerational management. On the other hand, in organizations where there is a low power distance, it is assumed that all individuals in the organization are equal, and any injustice and unequal distribution of power are not accepted. Supervisors and employees are interdependent. The organizational hierarchy is not unduly important. Respect is shown to all employees, regardless of status. A consultative, democratic leadership style is also dominant. Hence, it is undoubtedly conducive to intergenerational management practices.

Recommendations and directions for further work

The practical purpose of the dissertation is to propose solutions for managing generational diversity that can be implemented in organizations with different cultural origins and different types of organizational culture.

It should be emphasized here that regardless of the cultural factors that differentiate companies, it will be appropriate to apply such practices that will not in any way lead to discrimination of individual groups of employees. This would be contrary to the idea of multigenerational management.

Therefore, the only fully appropriate solution seems to be the implementation of actions that will not divide employees. Therefore, they should be broad enough to meet the needs of all employees, regardless of their age, seniority or other differentiating features, which the employer should not notice at all. It is worth remembering that all descriptions of characteristics typical of the generations present on the labor market always assume a great simplification and are basically based on stereotypes, which also contradicts the assumptions of generational diversity management. This system must be as egalitarian, integrating and inclusive as possible.

With regard to the recruitment and selection of employees, it will be the creation of advertisements in a different style, including content, language and graphics tailored to the expectations of individual generations. They should be placed in various places to use many channels to reach candidates – both the younger and older ones, also remembering to avoid stereotypes (for example, older candidates do not necessarily browse the press, and younger candidates the Internet - nowadays it is also the other way around).

The course of the onboarding process for new hires should depend on their needs. Therefore, a person dealing with tasks in this area must be aware of individual differences and have not only highly developed communication skills, but also be able to observe and listen to their charges.

The incentive system should enable employees to choose benefits from a wide range offered by the employer. It should include a variety of tangible and intangible rewards, tailored to the needs of all employees. It is worth inviting the crew to create this list. Her suggestions in this regard should be taken into account by the employer. However, they cannot be imposed top-down on individual generations. Each employee should be able to choose the benefit that suits them best.

It is necessary to enable employees to take advantage of a wide range of tests and other activities in the area of prevention and health care. They should also be tailored to the needs of people of different ages, but not imposed on a specific generational group. The employee must be able to choose the medical package on their own.

It is worth introducing a mentoring program in the organization. An even better solution will be intermentoring, which assumes two-way learning. However, participation in it should be voluntary for each employee - both the mentor and the mentee. Both should also be properly motivated and rewarded for the time spent on participating in this type of program.

The forms of professional development should also be sufficiently developed to meet the expectations of employees. They will probably differ among employees of different ages, primarily in terms of the methods of conveying content, but also their subject matter. However, this should not be assumed in advance, but first examine the training needs of all employees.

In order to encourage older generations to work, it is worth offering them a number of activities aimed at supporting those employees who will want to leave the organization and retire in the coming years. They should not only share their knowledge (introducing

a succession program and the already mentioned monitoring will be appropriate here), but also be able to take advantage of flexible forms of employment, gradually reducing the working time, changing the position to a less burdensome one, etc. All these activities should, of course, be consulted with worker. No one can be forced to do them. It is the employee himself, without any pressure, who should decide whether he will use this type of solutions. Of course, similar opportunities should also be available to younger employees, who will certainly be happy to take advantage of them, even when they become parents. However, employees should not be categorized, stigmatized or even assumed in advance that any action is targeted at a specific group of employees.

The employer must also counteract any signs of discrimination. It will therefore be appropriate to conduct regular training for management at all levels so that they are able to detect and recognize the various signs of discrimination and prevent it. The company should also have clear procedures for dealing with such negative phenomena.

It is also worth taking action for intergenerational cooperation. It is obvious that in a team consisting of employees of different ages, generational conflicts may arise. The employer should be able to identify their causes and know how to mitigate them and, where possible, prevent them. Therefore, training in the field of open communication or cooperation is necessary.

By introducing such solutions, you can be sure that the generational diversity management system will be effective and will contribute to an increase in the level of motivation among employees. What's more, it will suit any organization, any type of its organizational culture or origin. Of course, in a hierarchical culture it will probably be more structured, in an adhocracy the solutions will focus on developing innovations together, and in a market culture - on the profits from this solution. Regardless of the focus, their goal should be primarily the well-being of employees and the desire to meet their individual expectations.

It would also be necessary to conduct further quantitative research on a larger research sample. However, finding an organization for research was not easy. Their scale (a combination of a survey, interviews, observations and analysis of documents) meant that the managers of enterprises who were asked to participate in the research did not agree to it. Perhaps they were also afraid of showing their organizations in a negative light. In order to generalize the results obtained in the second stage of the research, it would be necessary to conduct them on a larger sample. Such research could be used to more precisely determine

the relationship between individual dimensions of national culture and the level of management of employees of different ages. They would also allow hypotheses to be formulated and tested, which would give a more complete picture of the cultural determinants of generational diversity management. It is therefore worth continuing the qualitative research conducted so far, this time in a quantitative form.

The created research tools, which are attached to this dissertation, can be used for further research in the area of managing employees of different ages in the enterprise, both by their author and other researchers. This opens the field for further research.

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