

The Impact of an Inclusive Leadership Style on Generation Z's Willingness to Share Knowledge

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Abstract: In the knowledge-based economy, inclusive leadership strengthens employees' sense of belonging and psychological safety. Generation Z brings new values and expectations regarding managerial leadership styles, influencing their willingness to share knowledge. This article aims to examine the impact of inclusive leadership on Generation Z's propensity to share knowledge, considering demographic and organizational variables as well as the level of organizational identification, which plays a key role as a factor enhancing employee engagement and willingness to share knowledge in the workplace. Spearman's rank correlation test was applied to data from 318 anonymous online surveys conducted within Polish organizations. Statistical analyses were performed using Statistica 13.3 (StatSoft). The results revealed a positive impact of inclusive leadership on knowledge sharing, with stronger effects observed among women than men. Tenure and company size influenced perceptions of leadership. Organizational identification, particularly pride and sense of influence, enhanced the propensity to exchange knowledge. The findings confirm that inclusive leadership and strong organizational identification promote knowledge sharing among Generation Z employees in Polish organizations. They also highlight the importance of considering demographic and organizational variables such as gender, tenure, and company size, which moderate these relationships. This knowledge can assist leaders in creating environments conducive to open communication and knowledge exchange, crucial for the development of knowledge-based organizations.

Keywords: Inclusive leadership, Generation Z, Knowledge sharing, Polish organizations

1. Introduction

Inclusive leadership plays a crucial role in creating an environment that encourages the free expression of opinions and sharing of ideas, fostering a space where employees feel valued and have a sense of influence over the functioning of the organization (Abdelhay, 2024). A workplace that supports open knowledge sharing can be a significant source of competitive advantage, making the development of a culture based on knowledge exchange essential for organizational success (Jinyao, 2024). For this reason, inclusive leadership should be viewed as an adaptive process in which leaders flexibly adjust their actions, balancing a focus on people and tasks according to the changing context and current needs (Nishii, Leroy, 2022). Considering that an inclusive leadership style plays a key role in the knowledge-sharing process and can influence the increase of employees' identification with the organization, from the author's perspective, it becomes essential to identify the factors that support the active participation of Generation Z employees in transmitting key knowledge necessary for the effective functioning of the organization. The engagement of Generation Z employees in sharing critical knowledge is particularly important because they represent an increasing share of the workforce, and their digital skills and fresh perspectives can significantly enrich organizational resources and support a culture of team collaboration. To achieve the research objectives, a questionnaire was developed and distributed among Generation Z representatives via social media in the second quarter of 2025. A total of 318 anonymous participants from this group took part in the study. To verify the research hypotheses, a statistical analysis using Spearman's rank correlation test was conducted to examine the relationships between selected variables. The calculations were performed using Statistica 13.3 (StatSoft) software.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Inclusive Leadership Style in the Context of Knowledge Sharing

Inclusive leadership is an approach where leaders actively engage employees, demonstrate openness to diverse opinions, show respect and appreciation for individual contributions, and create a space for the free expression of ideas (Platania et al., 2025). Additionally, this type of leadership can be defined as a set of behaviors aimed at simultaneously supporting team members' sense of belonging and emphasizing their individuality in collaboration processes and achieving shared outcomes (Abdelaziz et al., 2022). Such leadership fosters trust and psychological comfort within the team, making it easier for employees to take on challenges, collaborate, and share knowledge and suggestions, which in turn strengthens their identification with the organization (Saleem et al., 2023). When employees perceive that their contributions are genuinely appreciated by the leader, they are more likely to follow clear and compelling guidance. Such recognition can enhance the leader's effectiveness both at the individual and team levels. When a leader combines inclusiveness with clear direction-setting, team members better understand their roles and see how they can effectively engage in achieving shared goals (Yoo

et al., 2022). Clarity of expectations, a shared vision, and a sense of shared responsibility strengthen relationships within the team and foster collaboration. In such a supportive environment, employees are more open to initiatives that require engagement and information exchange. Inclusive leadership reinforces employees' belief that sharing knowledge can bring them tangible benefits, which encourages greater engagement in knowledge-sharing activities. In an environment dominated by this leadership style, employees are more willing to share their resources and experiences with colleagues to support effective team functioning and contribute to achieving common goals promoted by collaboration-focused leaders (Tuyen et al., 2025). Knowledge sharing, understood as the process of making available to others the information, skills, and experiences one possesses, includes both explicit and tacit knowledge. It can be supported by favorable environmental conditions, intrinsic motivation, and individual employee characteristics, which ultimately translates into higher team effectiveness (Asghar et al., 2023). Knowledge sharing also involves disseminating one's cognitive resources to support others in learning and developing new skills. Moreover, it goes beyond simple information exchange by enabling organization members to better identify needs and respond to them more effectively (Zhang, 2025). Knowledge most often resides within individuals who themselves decide whether to share it. Although this process cannot be forced, it can be effectively supported and encouraged through appropriate organizational and leadership actions. When a leader actively promotes the sharing of information and knowledge, while simultaneously showing respect and appreciation for diverse opinions, their attitude becomes a model for other team members. Employees, observing such behaviors, are more likely to imitate them, support open knowledge exchange, and value diverse perspectives. As a result, an organizational culture develops where knowledge sharing is a natural and encouraged part of everyday functioning (Schoonus, 2018). However, if effective motivational mechanisms are lacking within the team, it is the leader's attitude—characterized by openness, commitment, and the ability to build trust—that can partially compensate for this deficit, encouraging employees to share knowledge despite limited systemic support (Jiang, 2020).

2.2 Characteristics of Generation Z

Generation Z, as the first generation raised fully in a digital environment, has been shaped by rapid technological development and constant changes in social and informational contexts. They are deeply connected to the digital space, navigating it freely and intuitively, treating it as their natural environment (Fiza, 2025). Members of Generation Z are distinguished by their active listening skills, creativity, and strong focus on continuous development. They are accustomed to openly expressing their opinions and expect their voices to be heard and taken into account (Dorina, 2021). At the same time, members of this generation demonstrate growing social awareness, as they recognize that their decisions and actions can have a real impact on other people and on future generations' access to resources (Djafarova, 2022). Meaningful work and real opportunities for growth foster employee engagement and development. For Generation Z, a supportive work environment that aligns with their values is essential. Organizational justice, supervisor support, and effective information exchange between leaders and employees play a particularly important role in maintaining their motivation and engagement (Sono et al., 2024). Generation Z is characterized by a higher turnover rate compared to older generations, making traditional employee retention methods less effective in their case. As the youngest group currently present in the labor market, Generation Z presents a new challenge for organizations. Due to their relatively recent entry into the workforce, there is still a significant gap in both practical and academic knowledge regarding their behaviors, needs, and expectations in the workplace (Silva et al., 2022).

3. Methodology

The study examined which elements of an inclusive leadership style influence Generation Z employees' willingness to share knowledge within Polish organizations, taking into account demographic and organizational variables. Additionally, it analyzed the extent to which organizational identification supports knowledge-sharing readiness among this employee group, considering the demographic and organizational context. The study was purposive in nature and focused specifically on Generation Z, identified as a group of interest for the research objectives, with particular attention to individuals who are professionally active. A dedicated survey questionnaire was developed for the study and distributed online in the second quarter of 2025 via social media platforms. Participants completed the survey anonymously, and a total of 318 fully completed responses were collected. The characteristics of the research sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of the research sample

Profile of the study group		N	%
Gender	women	163	51.26
	men	155	48.74
	total	318	100
Work experience	< 1 year	71	22.33
	1-2 years	161	50.63
	years	62	19.5
	>5 years	24	7.55
	total	318	100
Organization size	micro	90	28.3
	small	69	21.7
	medium	74	23.27
	large	85	26.73
	total	318	100

Source: Own research

For the collected research sample, a statistical analysis using Spearman's rank correlation test was conducted to examine the relationships between selected variables. Calculations were performed using Statistica 13.3 (StatSoft).

For the purposes of this article, the following research hypotheses were formulated and tested:

H1: There is a positive rank correlation between the level of inclusive leadership and the willingness to share knowledge among Generation Z employees.

H2: There is a significant positive rank correlation between the level of organizational identification and engagement in knowledge sharing.

4. Results

To verify H1, a Spearman rank correlation analysis was conducted between factors describing the perceived level of inclusive leadership and the declared willingness to share knowledge among respondents belonging to Generation Z. The obtained results confirm the validity of this hypothesis. Data related to this research area are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Relationships between factors of inclusive leadership style influencing Generation Z's willingness to share knowledge and selected demographic-organizational variables ($p < .05$)

Demographic-organizational variables	Category	Rho	Factors of inclusive leadership style influencing knowledge sharing
Gender	women	0.223	Encouraging all employees to share knowledge by the supervisor
		0.174	Acknowledgment of the employee's contribution by the supervisor
		0.159	Creating a space by the leader for free expression of ideas
	men	0.139	Encouraging all employees to share their opinions by the supervisor
		0.133	Demonstrating respect for diverse viewpoints by the supervisor
		0.137	Appreciation of the individual employee's contribution by the supervisor

Demographic-organizational variables	Category	Rho	Factors of inclusive leadership style influencing knowledge sharing
Work experience	< 1 year	0.138	Encouraging all employees to share their opinions by the supervisor
		0.201	Appreciation of individual contribution by the supervisor
		0.148	Supervisor's respect for different points of view
	– 2 years	0.207	Appreciation of the employee's contribution by the supervisor
		0.235	Encouragement of all employees to share their opinions by the supervisor
	3– 5 years	0.142	Supervisor's encouragement of all employees to share their opinions.
		0.137	Inspiration to collaborate resulting from my leader's behaviors
	>5 years	0.139	Encouraging all employees to share their opinions by the supervisor
		0.133	Demonstrating respect for diverse points of view by the leader
		0.137	Appreciation of the employee's contribution by the supervisor
Organization size	micro	0.139	Encouraging all employees to share their opinions by the supervisor
		0.133	Demonstrating respect for diverse perspectives by the supervisor
		0.130	Appreciation of the employee's contribution by the supervisor
Organization size	small	0.201	Encouragement by the supervisor of all employees to share their opinions
		0.139	Leader's demonstration of respect for diverse viewpoints
		0.182	Perception of appreciation of one's own contribution by the supervisor
	medium	0.141	Encouraging all employees to share their opinions by the supervisor
		0.140	Demonstration of respect for diverse perspectives by the leader
		0.148	Appreciation of employee contributions by the supervisor
		0.163	Leader's inspiring behavior that fosters collaboration
	large	0.168	Encouraging all employees to share their opinions by the supervisor
		0.159	Appreciation of the employee's contribution by the supervisor

Source: Own research

The Spearman's rank correlation analysis revealed that, in both the female and male groups of Generation Z, all relationships between inclusive leadership factors and willingness to share knowledge were positive. However, correlation coefficients were higher among women, suggesting that women respond more strongly to inclusive

leader behaviors. Specifically, the highest correlation among women was observed for the belief that “the supervisor encourages all employees to share their opinions” ($\rho = 0.223$), whereas among men, this value was lower ($\rho = 0.139$).

Similar trends were noted in the case of: – appreciation of employee contribution by the supervisor

- women: $\rho = 0.174$
- men: $\rho = 0.137$ – creating space for free expression of thoughts
- women: $\rho = 0.159$ – showing respect for diverse points of view
- men: $\rho = 0.133$

The analysis of the results revealed variability in the perception of selected aspects of relationships with supervisors depending on the length of work tenure. Employees with the shortest tenure (<1 year) rated all aspects of their relationship with the leader the lowest, which may be due to limited trust and a short adaptation period. In the 1–2 years group, ratings increased, especially regarding encouragement to share opinions, which may indicate a growing sense of freedom and engagement. Employees with 3–5 years of tenure more often recognized the inspiring role of the leader, although overall ratings were lower than in the previous group, possibly due to higher expectations of supervisors. The most balanced and stable results were observed among those with the longest tenure (>5 years), which may reflect a well-established, realistic approach to the relationship with their supervisor.

Respondents from small companies most frequently felt that their supervisors encouraged sharing opinions (0.201) and appreciated their contributions (0.182), indicating the highest level of engagement from leaders. In microenterprises and public sector organizations, these values were slightly lower but comparable, suggesting moderate support from supervisors. In medium-sized companies, the aspect of inspiring leader behavior (0.163) additionally appeared, distinguishing them from other groups. Respondents in large companies also felt appreciated (0.159) and encouraged to share opinions (0.168), although these levels were somewhat lower than in small companies.

To verify hypothesis H2, concerning the rank correlation between the level of organizational identification and Generation Z’s engagement in knowledge sharing, a Spearman rank correlation analysis was conducted between these variables and selected demographic-organizational variables ($p < 0.05$). The results are presented in the table below. The findings indicate that, in most cases, there is a statistically significant correlation between the analyzed variables, confirming the validity of this research hypothesis.

Table 3: Spearman rank correlations between the level of organizational identification and Generation Z’s propensity to share knowledge, considering demographic-organizational variables ($p < 0.05$)

Demographic-organizational variables	Category	Rho	Factors enhancing employees’ organizational identification and influencing knowledge sharing
Gender	women	0.261	Sense of pride in belonging to the organization
		-0.166	Alignment of the organization’s values with my own values
		0.174	Sense of my work’s impact on the organization’s success
	men	0.141	Identification with the organization’s goals and mission
		0.115	A sense of pride in belonging to the organization
	< 1 year	0.132	A sense of pride in belonging to the organization
		-0.136	Identification with the organization’s goals and mission
		-0.134	Sense of work impact on organizational success
	1– 2 years	0.226	Sense of pride in belonging to the organization

Demographic-organizational variables	Category	Rho	Factors enhancing employees' organizational identification and influencing knowledge sharing
Work experience		-0.174	Alignment of organizational values with my personal values
	3– 5 years	0.181	Sense of work's impact on organizational success
		0.147	Alignment of organizational values with my personal values
	>5 years	0.125	Sense of work impact on organizational success
		0.172	A sense of pride in belonging to the organization
Organization size	micro	0.116	A sense of pride in belonging to the organization
	small	0.142	Sense of impact of work on organizational success
		0.127	A sense of pride in belonging to the organization
	medium	0.132	Sense of work impact on organizational success
	large	0.122	Sense of impact of work on organizational success
		0.121	A sense of pride in belonging to the organization

Source: Own research

Based on Spearman's rank correlation analyses (with a significance level of $p < 0.05$), varied relationships were observed between the level of organizational identification and Generation Z's willingness to share knowledge, taking into account respondents' gender. Among women, stronger and more diverse correlations were recorded, both positive and negative. The strongest association was found between pride in belonging and readiness to share knowledge ($r_s = 0.261$). Surprisingly, a negative correlation also appeared between personal and organizational value congruence ($r_s = -0.166$). Among men, the correlations were weaker and less varied. The strongest relationship concerned identification with the organization's goals and mission ($r_s = 0.141$), followed by a slightly weaker association with pride in belonging ($r_s = 0.115$).

The length of tenure influences how organizational identification translates into the willingness to share knowledge. New employees (<1 year), being less emotionally engaged, may not perceive a connection between their role and the organization's mission. During the first 1–2 years of employment, enthusiasm and pride in their duties increase, but at the same time, initial doubts arise regarding the congruence between personal and organizational values. The highest willingness to share knowledge is observed among those with 3–5 years of tenure, for whom values and sense of impact are most strongly linked. More than 5 years of work experience among Generation Z corresponds to a stable and mature identification with the organization, which supports knowledge sharing based on experience and a sense of loyalty.

Spearman's rank correlation results indicate variability in the strength of the relationship between the level of organizational identification and Generation Z's willingness to share knowledge depending on the size of the company. In microenterprises, the weakest correlation was observed ($\rho = 0.116$) concerning pride in belonging to the organization. This suggests that in very small organizations, identification with the company does not significantly translate into a willingness to share knowledge. In small companies, these relationships are somewhat stronger. Correlation values ($\rho = 0.142$ and 0.127) indicate that both the sense of impact on the organization's success and pride in belonging are more important for knowledge sharing than in

microenterprises. Respondents from small companies may therefore identify more with the organization and more frequently exhibit prosocial behaviors such as knowledge sharing. A similar trend is observed in medium-sized companies ($\rho = 0.132$ for sense of impact), suggesting that as the size of the organization increases, so does the importance of employee identification with the organization in the context of willingness to share knowledge. In large companies, correlations are stable and similar to those in medium-sized firms ($\rho = 0.122$ and 0.121). This indicates that both pride in belonging and the sense of impact on organizational success remain significant motivating factors for knowledge sharing, although their strength does not increase substantially with company size.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

In light of the results obtained from the current study, the discussion on the role of inclusive leadership in shaping Generation Z's willingness to share knowledge finds confirmation and extension in existing scientific findings. These results align with a broad body of research indicating that inclusive leadership plays a reinforcing role in fostering employee engagement in the knowledge-sharing process.

Tayyab Saleem and his co-authors (2023) emphasize that inclusive leadership fosters an environment where employees are more open to sharing ideas and feel a stronger connection to the organization. Our results, especially in the context of a more pronounced response from women to inclusive leader behaviors, confirm that inclusivity can act as a catalyst for prosocial behaviors – including knowledge sharing. Nguyen Thi Tuyen and others (2025) demonstrate that inclusive leadership effectively supports knowledge sharing, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises. Our observations confirm this thesis — it is precisely in small companies that the highest leader engagement and a clearer translation of these actions into willingness to share knowledge were observed. This may result from the more personal nature of relationships and greater accessibility of leaders to employees. Research by Nouran Nabil Abdelaziz and her team (2022) shows that inclusive leaders not only promote fairness and equality but also actively engage employees in decision-making processes. This translates into a greater sense of value and belonging, which increases the willingness to share knowledge. In our study, women who responded more strongly to inclusive signals may experience a similar mechanism — a feeling of being recognized and appreciated, which boosts their activity in knowledge sharing. The conclusions presented by A. Mansoor and his co-authors (2021) emphasize the importance of relational aspects of leadership – building trust, strengthening the sense of belonging, and embracing diversity. These elements were also evident in our analysis, particularly in the context of differences between organizations of various sizes, where a more personalized approach by leaders in smaller companies translated into a greater willingness to share knowledge. Complementing this perspective are the conclusions of Anna Rogozińska-Pawelczyk (2023), who points out that effective inclusive leadership enables employees to satisfy their basic needs, such as recognition, autonomy, and influence on attitudes related to knowledge sharing. This leads to employees reciprocating the organization with proactive behaviors and engagement. The differences observed in our study regarding the willingness to share knowledge, depending on the level of organizational identification, can be understood in this context—as a result of employees' psychological needs being well or poorly satisfied.

The results of my own research not only confirm but also enrich the existing knowledge about the mechanisms through which inclusive leadership fosters knowledge sharing. They highlight the need to consider variables such as gender, length of service, organizational size, and level of identification with the organization as significant moderators of the effectiveness of an inclusive management style.

Ethics statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of research in the social sciences. Participation of respondents was voluntary and anonymous. The entire research process was conducted independently by the author of the article, in compliance with applicable data protection standards.

AI declaration: The author declares that no artificial intelligence tools were used in the preparation of this article for content generation, data analysis, or text editing. The article translation was carried out by an external entity without the use of AI tools.

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