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CORRELATES OF DISAPPOINTMENT IN A RELATIONSHIP OF GENERATIONS X, Y, Z: BEHAVIOURAL INHIBITION/ ACTIVATION SYSTEM AND SENSE OF COHERENCE

Abstract

Aim: The issue of mutual references, relationships and their quality is the centre of studies dealing with marriage and family. Fertility decline, increased number of divorces, increased expectations related to interpersonal relationships and at the same time a decline in the ability to establish and maintain such have been observed over the years by experts in various disciplines. Numerous attempts are made to define aspects of a successful relationship as one of the criteria for a fulfilling life. This study aims to explore the correlates of disappointment in a relationship among people from different generations (X, Y and Z).

Method: 595 people participated in the research, including 102 born between 1960 and 1975; 273 born between 1976 and 1996 and 220 born between 1997 and 2012. The correlates of relationship disappointment included temperamental ones, measured by the IPIP BIS/BAS questionnaire, and those related to life orientation, measured with the SOC-29 scale. The Good Marriage Questionnaire (KDM-2) was used to measure the quality of the relationship and assess the variable analysed.

Results: In terms of the analysed variables, people from generations X Y and Z differ. Generation Z has the lowest tendency to work on and care for the relationship, the least close bond between partners and the lowest belief in mutual love, as well as the highest anxiety and the lowest sense of coherence.

Conclusions: Disappointment with the relationship of members of the youngest generation is not related to their temperamental traits. The sense of coherence acts as a factor that protects relationships in each generation.

Keywords: *disappointment, relationship satisfaction, sense of coherence, Bis/bas, generation X, generation Y, generation Z*

Introduction

Searching for close relations and building relationships is one of the significant areas of psychosocial activity in early adulthood. Striving for intimacy in a relationship is assumed by psychologists to be the main task of this period (Brzezińska 2002). According to Erikson's (1997) approach, implementation of this task involves developing the readiness to engage and handle this engagement, even if it requires significant effort. Avoiding interpersonal intimacy is the result of uncertainty about one's own identity and fear of losing one's ego in contacts with other people, and, among others, may result in the sense of

deep isolation, withdrawal and maintaining stereotypical and formal relation-ships (Adamczyk, Pilarska 2012, p. 51).

The political and cultural changes plus globalization processes taking place in Poland and worldwide in recent decades have significantly influenced the structure of societies. The earlier perception of marriage, with the central functions being procreation, economic, upbringing and care-related functions, seems to be disappearing. A relationship is no longer just an environment for giving birth to and upbringing the children. The previously secondary mental needs of spouses are becoming more important. As a consequence of these changes, a relationship that takes into account partners' expectations and is based on exclusivity and intimacy is now gaining significant value. In addition to marriage, a form of relationship that is becoming more popular is cohabitation, which partners treat as a value in itself, not only as a stage preceding marriage (Błendowska 2014, Calek 2021, Slany 2002, Slany 2003, Szukalski, 2013, Szyszka 2020).

The dynamics of changes in the approach to marriage is visible in the changes of generations referred to as generations X, Y, Z. Currently, four generations are distinguished in the relevant literature: the silent generation – born between 1922 and 1944, the so-called builders of modern Europe, baby boomers – born between 1945 and 1964, the so-called generation of the baby boom and eco-nomic boom, generation X – born between 1965 and 1975/80, growing up in the period of the 1970's economic crisis, generation Y (so-called Millennials) born after 1980, brought up in the time of globalisation and common access to the Internet (Smolbik-Jęczmień 2013). Generation X is a generation uncertain about the future, afraid of loneliness, and at the same time the best educated generation in history (Appelbaum, Serena, & Shapiro, 2005). This generation prefers direct relationships and marriage as a formalized relationship oriented to high durability (Gruchała, 2014). Generation Y, Millennials, express the principle *I work to live*. The major values they follow are optimism, idealiz-ation, diversity, ambitions, creativity, initiative, innovation, education and training. They put their private successful life before their professional success (Dewanti & Indrajit, 2008). Young people born after 1990 are referred to not only as *Z*, but also as generation *C* (from the words connected, communicat-ing, content-centric, computerized, community-oriented, always clicking).

For this generation, professional and private life is supposed to constitute a whole in which they want to be themselves and follow the same values (Wasylewicz 2016, Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomątowska, 2014; Anisiewicz, 2023, 508).

The observed decrease in the number of marriages with a simultaneous increase in the number of divorces, later age at which people get married, an increase in the number of consensual unions and childless relationships by choice, is associated with the above-mentioned generational changes (Nurhayati, Faturochman, & Helmi, 2019; Walęcka-Matyja, Banach, 2022). These changes are described as typical of societies undergoing the process of modernisation and post-modernisation. After an initial period of domination of pre-materialistic values (traditional, community-related) and materialistic values focused on satisfying basic material needs and capital accumulation, a transition takes place to post-materialistic values that go beyond material aspirations and are related to self-fulfilment, quality of life and life satisfaction (Inglehart, 2000, Twenge 2019). The spreading processes of individualization blur traditional values and allow for building one's own life according to one's own expectations. New lifestyles attract attention by emphasizing independence and the need to make choices by individuals who decide about their lives, discovering themselves also in terms of sexuality and intimacy. Intimacy is transformed from a set of social obligations and conventions into a form of a new democratic arrangement that bonds a couple. Marriage has become more unstable these days as expectations towards it have increased, but also because it has become easier to leave a failing relationship. As the emphasis on the durability of marriage has loosened, expectations about its quality have increased. The shift in the meaning of marriage from an institution to a form of meeting one's needs in connection with broader demographic, social and economic changes has unleashed the development of alternatives to marriage. The modern, changing world allows us to move away from previously established norms and values in the sphere of close relationships (Kwak, 2014, p. 9).

Researchers use numerous terms to describe the relationship between spouses, including: marital satisfaction (Janicka, Niebrzydowski, 1994), marital success, or marital quality (Rostowski, 1987). The focus on the subjective and personal aspects of a relationship has directed researchers' interests

towards satisfaction with a relationship. Plopa has distinguished four basic dimensions that determine overall marital satisfaction:

1. intimacy – defines a high degree of satisfaction with being in a close relationship with the spouse. It is demonstrated by the need to build mutual relationships that are characterized by openness, trust, closeness and honesty. Partners are highly motivated to work on the marriage and its quality, and care for mutual happiness. The spouses have a close bond and are convinced of their true love;

2. self-fulfilment – characterized by a high level of satisfaction with the marriage, which enables partners to fulfil themselves, follow their own hierarchy of values and life goals. By taking on marital and family roles, each partner is satisfied with their identity. Marriage is a condition for a successful and happy life;

3. similarity – characterized by a high degree of compatibility between partners in achieving important goals related to marriage and family. The spouses have similar views on topics connected with e.g. relationship development, spending free time, organising family life, defining limits in a relationship, cultivating family traditions, or methods of raising children;

4. disappointment – refers to the feeling of failure in life that results from getting married. Performing a marital role limits a person's independence and autonomy. They avoid resolving conflicts, distance themselves from their spouse and often think about ending the relationship. The sense of responsibility for the marriage is clearly decreasing (Plopa 2008, 69–70).

There is a broad stream of research dealing with the search for correlates of relationship satisfaction, including marital relationship (Błońska 2016, Braun-Gałkowska 1992, Chybicka 2008, Dakowicz 2021, Krok 2015, Senko 2018, Walęcka-Matyja, Szkudlarek, 2019). A broad stream of research links satisfaction in relationships with a mature personality (Lelonek-Kuleta 2012, Palus 2010, Orłowski 2018, Ryś, Steuden 2020, Sztajerwald, 2019, Tykarski 2018). Among important dimensions correlating with marital satisfaction researchers mention sexual satisfaction (Brudek 2017, Komoowska-Pudło 2014, Nomejko, Dolińska-Zygmunt, Zdrojewicz 2012, Plopa 2017), coherence

(Gulczyńska, Jankowiak 2007, Jankowiak, Waszyńska 2011, Weryszko 2020) or temperamental traits (Braum-Gałkowska 1978, Kurowska Nikel 2023, Żak-Łykus, Nawrat 2013, Rawicka, Rzepa 2017). The analysed dimensions also include values (Liberska, Matuszewska 2021, Zaleski, 1981), attachment styles (Czyżowska, Gurba 2016, Juroszek, Haberla, Kubeczko 2012, Malina 2011; Malina, Sywalska-Barancewicz 2017), religious attitude (Braun-Gałkowska 1979, Brudek, Steuden 2015, Opalach 2003) or well-being (Błońska 2016, Krok 2010, Niśkiewicz 2016, Senko 2018).

Material and methods

In order to explore the correlates of relationship quality (with particular emphasis on disappointment in a relationship) in groups of people from generations X, Y and Z, research were carried out on adults living in a marriage or consensual union. The structure of the research groups is presented in Table 1. Altogether, the research group comprised 595 people. The criterion for inclusion in the groups of generations X, Y and Z was the year of birth (Appelbaum et al., 2005; Dewanti & Indrajit, 2008): generation X: individuals born between 1960 and 1975, generation Y: individuals born between 1976 and 1996 and generation Z : individuals born between 1997 and 2012.

Table 1. *Distribution of genders*

		Age group						Total		Pearson's chi-squared test	p
		1960-1975	%	1976-1996	%	1997-2012	%	Total	%		
Gender	Male	52	51%	133	48.7%	77	35%	262	44%	11.713	0.03
	Female	50	49%	140	51.3%	143	65%	333	56%		
Total		102		273		220		595			

The gender proportion in individual age groups was not uniform, groups of women and men in particular generations differed significantly in gender proportion ($\chi2 = 11.713$; $p < 0.05$). In the case of generations X and Y, the values concerning percentage of genders are comparable, while the group of people born in 1997-2012 is mostly represented by women.

Table 2. *Place of residence of the research groups from generations X, Y, Z*

		Age group			Total	Pearson's chi-squared test	Significance
		1960-1975	1976-1996	1997-2012			
Rural area	N	31	72	43	146		
	%	30.4%	26.4%	19.5%	24.5%		
Towns up to 20,000 inhabitants	N	20	25	19	64		
	%	19.6%	9.2%	8.6%	10.8%		
Urban areas from 20,001 to 50,000 inhabitants	N	15	37	21	73		
	%	14.7%	13.6%	9.5%	12.3%		
Urban areas from 50,001 to 100,000 inhabitants	N	8	25	14	47	40.62	<.001
	%	7.8%	9.2%	6.4%	7.9%		
Urban areas from 100,001 to 200,000 inhabitants	N	4	12	8	24		
	%	3.9%	4.4%	3.6%	4.0%		
Urban areas from 200,001 to 500,000 inhabitants	N	17	61	89	167		
	%	16.7%	22.3%	40.5%	28.1%		
Urban areas over 500,000 inhabitants	N	7	41	26	74		
	%	6.9%	15.0%	11.8%	12.4%		
Total	N	102	273	220	595		
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

Generations X and Y have the most representatives among people living in rural areas (30.4%, 26.4%). Generation Z have the most representatives among people living in large cities (40.5%).

Table 3. *Education of the research groups from generations X, Y, Z*

Education							Pearson's chi-squared test	Significance
		Age group				Total		
		1960-1975	1976-1996	1997-2012				
Elementary	N	1	0	1		2		
	%	1.0%	0.0%	0.5%		0.3%		
Lower secondary	N	0	2	4		6		
	%	0.0%	0.7%	1.8%		1.0%		
Basic vocational (also agricultural and farming training school - SPR)	N	9	16	1		26		
	%	8.8%	5.9%	0.5%		4.4%		
General secondary	N	3	41	100		144		
	%	2.9%	15.0%	45.5%		24.2%		
Vocational secondary	N	34	40	27		101	152.502	<.001
	%	33.3%	14.7%	12.3%		17.0%		
Post-secondary	N	12	23	37		72		
	%	11.8%	8.4%	16.8%		12.1%		
University (bachelor's/engineer's degree (also WSE), master's degree/ medical or equivalent	N	37	140	46		223		
	%	36.3%	51.3%	20.9%		37.5%		
University, with an academic degree of at least a doctor	N	6	9	2		17		
	%	5.9%	3.3%	0.9%		2.9%		
Other	N	0	2	2		4		
	%	0.0%	0.7%	0.9%		0.7%		
Total	N	102	273	220		595		
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%		

More than half of the generation Y group demonstrate university education. Similarly, respondents with university education are most represented among those born in 1960-1975 (36.3%). Generation Z are mostly people

with secondary education (the year of birth should be taken into account). The group is heterogeneous in terms of education.

Table 4. *Marital status of the research groups from generations X, Y, Z*

Marital status						Pearson's chi-squared test	Significance
		Age group			Total		
		1960-1975	1976-1996	1997-2012			
First marriage	N	73	147	7	227		
	%	71.6%	53.8%	3.2%	38.2%		
First consensual union	N	14	45	90	149		
	%	13.7%	16.5%	40.9%	25.0%		
Not in a relationship	N	1	4	7	12		
	%	1.0%	1.5%	3.2%	2.0%	232.943	<.001
Another consensual union	N	5	61	112	178		
	%	4.9%	22.3%	50.9%	29.9%		
Another marriage	N	9	12	0	21		
	%	8.8%	4.4%	0.0%	3.5%		
Data incomplete	N	0	4	4	8		
Total	%	0.0%	1.5%	1.8%	1.3%		
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

The vast majority of people from Generation X are in their first marriage, while in Generation Z it is mainly the first (40.9%) or another (50.9%) consensual union. In the case of Generation Y, half of the group are in their first marriage (53.8%), first consensual union (16.5%) or another consensual union (22.3%). The research group is not homogeneous in terms of marital status, the distribution of people in cohabiting and marital relationships differs between the generations of people in a statistically significant way.

MEASURES

The measures used a sociodemographic data questionnaire, the Good Marriage Questionnaire (KDM-2), the IPIP-BIS/BAS scale and the Orientation to Life Questionnaire (SOC-29).

The Good Marriage Questionnaire (KDM-2) was developed by Mieczysław Plopa and Jan Rostowski (Plopa, 2005). The tool measures the overall level

of satisfaction in a relationship, as well as its four dimensions: Intimacy, Self-fulfilment, Similarity and Disappointment. The questionnaire consists of 32 statements, assessed on a 5-level scale from *I completely agree* to *I completely disagree*. In these studies, the Disappointment dimension is a variable analysed and explained.

IPIP-BIS/BAS scale (English *International Personality Item Pool*) is a tool created by Lewis R. Goldberg (Goldberg et al., 2006), with its Polish adaptation by Włodzimierz Strus, Jan Cieciuch and Tomasz Rowiński. It consists of 36 items and 4 scales: Anxiety, Fun-seeking, Drive and Reward Responsiveness, and is a world-wide popular tool for measuring temperamental traits (related to the behavioural inhibition and activation system). SOC-29 questionnaire was used to measure the sense of coherence. The tool was developed by A. Antonovsky and consists of 29 statements and three sub-scales: sense of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. A respondent gives their answers using a 7-point Likert scale, where *1* means that a given attitude occurs always and 7 means that it never occurs. The SOC scale is the reliable and pertinent method.

Intergroup comparisons for three groups were performed using one-way ANOVA (Bonferroni post hoc test). For the purpose of describing individual groups, the correlation in pairs procedure was used using a measure of linear associations (Pearson's correlation coefficient) (Brzeziński, 1984, pp. 146-157; Ferguson, Takane 1997).

Results

To achieve the stated aim, intergroup comparisons were initially carried out for individual aspects of the groups functioning, which in this article were adopted as correlates of disappointment in a relationship. Comparisons of the results obtained by research gropus on scales measuring the quality of relationships indicate the existence of statistically significant differences between generations X, Y and Z. The research groups differed with reference to intimacy and self-fulfilment. The intensity of disappointment in a relationship does not differentiate the research groups.

Table 5. *Comparison of relationship quality and its components in groups of generations X, Y and Z*

One-way ANOVA						
		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Significance
Disappointment	Between groups	36.761	2	18.381	0.319	0.727
	Within groups	33212.278	576	57.660		
	Total	33249.040	578			
Overall raw result	Between groups	254.629	2	127.314	0.340	0.712
	Within groups	215786.698	576	374.630		
	Total	216041.326	578			
Intimacy	Between groups	354.590	2	177.295	5.384	**0.005**
	Within groups	19000.119	577	32.929		
	Total	19354.709	579			
Self-fulfilment	Between groups	786.091	2	393.045	15.051	**0.000**
	Within groups	15067.666	577	26.114		
	Total	15853.757	579			
Similarity	Between groups	28.750	2	14.375	0.642	0.526
	Within groups	12914.235	577	22.382		
	Total	12942.984	579			

With regard to intimacy, understood as satisfaction from being in a close relationship with a partner, the need to build open, close relationships, the multiple comparison test indicates that generation Y achieves significantly lower results (compared to each of the remaining groups). In the case of self-fulfilment, differences can be seen between each group. The youngest generation has the highest satisfaction with a relationship where one is able to fulfil themselves, generation Y has a significantly lower sense of self-fulfilment, and generation X has the lowest sense of self-fulfilment. When comparing the temperamental variables of individual groups, significant differences are observed with regard to anxiety and drive. People from generation Z (M=3.46) feel the highest anxiety, both in comparison to generation X (M=3.01) and Y (M=3.09).

Older generations (X and Y) do not differ between each other in a statistically significant way.

Table 6. *Comparing BIS/BAS and its components in the groups of generations X, Y, Z*

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Significance
		One-way ANOVA				
Anxiety	Between groups	20.537	2	10.269	15.918	**0.000**
	Within groups	363.834	564	0.645		
	Total	384.371	566			
Fun-seeking	Between groups	114.844	2	57.422	0.802	0.449
	Within groups	40374.333	564	71.586		
	Total	40489.177	566			
Drive	Between groups	6.172	2	3.086	7.402	**0.001**
	Within groups	235.139	564	0.417		
	Total	241.311	566			
Reward responsiveness	Between groups	1.791	2	0.895	2.330	0.098
	Within groups	216.789	564	0.384		
	Total	218.579	566			

Another variable that differentiates the research groups is drive. It is understood here as the pace of a person's mental and motor processes. The highest drive characterizes people from generation Z (M=3.09), generations X (M=2.82) and Y (M=2.90) do not differ in this dimension of activation.

Comparisons of orientation to life (SOC) and its components indicate the existence of significant differences in the general sense of coherence as well as its cognitive and behavioural components. The sense of comprehensibility and controllability differentiates people from different generations.

Table 7. *Comparing SOC and its components in the groups of generations X, Y, Z*

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Significance
	One-way ANOVA					
Sense of comprehensibility	Between groups	4651.344	2	2325.672	26.914	**0.000**
	Within groups	47957.853	555	86.411		
	Total	52609.197	557			
Sense of controllability	Between groups	1713.608	2	856.804	10.318	**0.000**
	Within groups	46084.944	555	83.036		
	Total	47798.552	557			
Sense of meaningfulness	Between groups	337.820	2	168.910	2.317	0.099
	Within groups	40452.877	555	72.888		
	Total	40790.697	557			
Overall raw result	Between groups	16324.019	2	8162.010	15.283	**0.000**
	Within groups	296404.033	555	534.061		
	Total	312728.052	557			

The results of post hoc tests indicate that the highest sense of comprehensibility, the ability to notice information received, understanding the situation and predicting its future course characterises people from generation X (M = 49.03), with generation Z demonstrating the lowest result in this respect (M = 41.07). In the case of controllability, also known as manageability, people from generation Z have a significantly lower sense of it (M=44.52), while older generations (X and Y) do not differ from each other. In the cognitive-instrumental context, an individual's belief in having sufficient resources that enable them to cope with the requirements they face is higher in people from generations X and Y. Moreover, there are no significant differences between these groups.

In the next stage, the links between one of the dimensions of relationship satisfaction and the sense of coherence and temperamental variables were analysed. Disappointment in a relationship in the group of people born between

1960 and 1975 correlates with their level of anxiety. Higher anxiety is linked to higher disappointment. There is a relationship between disappointment and drive. A faster pace of motor and mental processes is associated with lower disappointment in a relationship. In both cases, the relationship is significant but weak (r=0.271; r=-243). In the group of people from generation Y there is an inversely proportional, moderate relationship between disappointment and anxiety (r=-0.401) and a weak relationship between disappointment and fun-seeking (r=-0.197) and reward responsiveness (r=-0.184). Higher anxiety co-exists with lower disappointment, higher fun-seeking co-exists with lower disappointment, and higher responsiveness to reinforcement co-exists with lower disappointment. In turn, in the youngest group (generation Z), disappointment in the relationship understood as a limited sense of independence and autonomy in the relationship, withdrawal or avoiding the partner and not taking responsibility for the relationship does not depend on the temperamental traits of the respondents.

Sense of coherence is important for disappointment in the relationship in every generation. Also, each time the relationship is inversely proportional, indicating that the higher sense of coherence and its components the lower disappointment in the relationship. Among people from generation X the cognitive component of the sense of coherence correlates very poorly with disappointment (r=-0.225), the behavioural and emotional component correlates moderately (r=-0.417; r=-418). The general sense of coherence is moderately and negatively related to the feeling of disappointment in the relationship. In the group of generation Y, correlations with the sense of coherence and its components are inversely proportional and negative. In the youngest group (generation Z), the correlations between the sense of coherence and disappointment are significant, however very low.

Table 8. *Correlations of disappointment in IPIP and SOC in groups from generations X, Y and Z*

			Disappointment		
			Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
IPIP_BISBAS	Anxiety	Pearson correlation	**0.271****	**-0.401****	0.131
		2-tailed significance	**0.007**	**0.000**	0.061
		N	98	262	206
	Fun-seeking	Pearson correlation	-0.122	**-0.197****	0.048
		2-tailed significance	0.232	**0.001**	0.491
		N	98	262	206
	Drive	Pearson correlation	**-0.243***	-0.032	-0.048
		2-tailed significance	**0.016**	0.607	0.496
		N	**98**	262	206
	Reward responsiveness	Pearson correlation	-0.094	**-0.184****	-0.088
		2-tailed significance	0.356	**0.003**	0.210
		N	98	**262**	206
SOC-29	Sense of comprehensibility	Pearson correlation	**-0.225***	**-0.361****	**-0.163***
		2-tailed significance	**0.027**	**0.000**	**0.019**
		N	**97**	256	205
	Sense of controllability	Pearson correlation	**-0.417****	**-0.430****	**-0.137***
		2-tailed significance	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.050**
		N	97	256	205
	Sense of meaningfulness	Pearson correlation	**-0.418****	**-0.371****	**-0.271****
		2-tailed significance	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.000**
		N	97	256	205
	Overall result	Pearson correlation	**-0.401****	**-0.452****	**-0.223****
		2-tailed significance	**0.000**	**0.000**	**0.001**
		N	**97**	**256**	**205**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Conclusions

The main aim of the studies undertaken was to explore the correlates of disappointment in a relationship among people from three generations – X, Y, Z. The obtained results confirm the appropriateness of selection of the analysed correlates: temperamental, measured by the IPIP BIS/BAS questionnaire, and those related to life orientation, measured by the SOC-29 scale. The quality of a relationship was examined using the Good Marriage Questionnaire (KDM-2). The obtained results allow us to formulate the following conclusions:

1. Comparisons of the results obtained on scales measuring the quality of relationships indicate the existence of statistically significant differences between generations X, Y and Z.
2. The research groups differed in terms of intimacy and self-fulfilment, but did not differ in terms of disappointment in the relationship.
3. Sense of coherence is important for disappointment in the relationship in every generation.
4. Generation Z obtained significantly lower results compared to each of the remaining groups with regard to intimacy.
5. Generation Z has the highest satisfaction with a relationship where one is able to fulfil themselves.
6. Generation Z are characterised by the highest anxiety and drive, as well as a lower sense of controllability (manageability).
7. The highest sense of comprehensibility, the ability to notice information received, understanding the situation and predicting its future course characterises people from generation X, with generation Z demonstrating the lowest result in this respect.
8. The highest belief in having sufficient resources that enable one to cope with the requirements they face characterises from generation X.
9. In the group of people from generation Y there is an inversely proportional, moderate relationship between disappointment and anxiety, and a weak relationship between disappointment plus fun-seeking and reward responsiveness.

The obtained relationships seem even more interesting because they show that satisfaction in marriage/relationship is not a simple, one-dimensional experience, but a complex one within which both positive elements, such as intimacy or self-fulfilment, and negative ones, such as disappointment, can be distinguished.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The obtained research show that generations X, Y and Z differ in terms of assessing the quality of a relationship and its individual dimensions. Differences in perceiving relationships are also confirmed in those conducted so far. In the research described in this paper, differences are visible primarily in the sphere of intimacy and self-fulfilment, they do not differ in the sphere of disappointment in the relationship. In each of the generations, the level of disappointment is similar, but may have different origin. The youngest generation has the highest satisfaction in a relationship where one is able to fulfil themselves. The sense of self-fulfilment in a relationship is less important in generation Y and even lesser in generation X. This might indicate that in each subsequent generation the desire and belief in the possibility of developing in a relationship increases. The openness to different models and lifestyles increasing with each generation is probably important for the direction of this change. Such assumptions were also confirmed in the studies of AKSAKAL (2023), or Çelik, Bingül, & Kaya (2020). When comparing the temperamental variables from individual groups, significant differences can be noticed with regard to anxiety and drive. People from generation Z feel the highest anxiety and drive, both in comparison to generation X and Y. Older generations do not differ from each other in this respect. Higher drive in the youngest generation is visible both in terms of the pace of a given person's mental and motor processes (cf. McGuiness, 2017). Increased activity brings more experiences, impressions and sensations. Apart from the positive consequences of such functioning, anxiety may appear when in contact with something new that changes too quickly to get used to it, fully familiarise with and understand.

Comparisons of orientation to life (SOC) and its components indicate the existence of significant differences in the general sense of coherence as well as its cognitive and behavioural components. The sense of comprehensibility and controllability differentiates from different generations. The highest sense of comprehensibility, the ability to notice information received, understanding the situation and predicting its future course characterises people from generation X, with generation Z demonstrating the lowest result in this respect. In the case of controllability, also known as manageability, people from generation Z have a significantly lower sense of it, while older generations (X and Y) do not differ from each other. In the cognitive-instrumental context, an individual's belief in having sufficient resources that enable them to cope with the requirements they face is higher in people from generations X and Y. The importance of SOC for generation Z is also confirmed by other studies (Davis, Shrout, Evans, & Weigel, 2021; Moksnes, Espnes, & Haugan, 2014). Sense of coherence is important for disappointment in the relationship in every generation. Also, each time the relationship is inversely proportional, indicating that the higher sense of coherence and its components the lower disappointment in the relationship. The importance of the sense of coherence in the context of relationships is confirmed by other studies (Lanz & Tagliabue, 2007).

Practical implications, limitations and future research directions

The results of studies and conclusions drawn are important for psychological practice. They should be included in the process of upbringing, self-development, preparation for marriage, psychological support and therapy. Knowledge about the role of the sense of coherence in the level of disappointment in a relationship may provide motivation to direct actions in the processes mentioned above. Developing manageability, the sense of meaningfulness, as well as participating in and learning how to cope with and understand various life situations, promotes development of interpersonal competences and increases the chance of feeling satisfied with being in a relationship. Generation Z is the one that is more different from older generations than these generations are between each other.

It is worth emphasizing, on the one hand, the importance of the knowledge, experience and competences of people being in a long-term marriage, but on the other hand, taking into account current changes in all dimensions of human functioning and their consequences. The contemporary diversity of models of living in a relationship and the expectations associated with it creates and promotes self-fulfilment, but at the same time does not allow us to benefit from the numerous experiences of older generations. It often causes dilemmas and difficulties in making decisions in rapidly changing conditions.

The research also has its limitations. The diversity of groups, as well as sociodemographic variables deviating from the normal distribution (differences in the distribution of genders, education, place of residence, marital status) may be important for the results obtained. Moreover, the statistics used are rather among basic than advanced models, e.g. predictive ones. Deepening the research, designing a model of the relationship between the studied variables and dividing married people from those in consensual unions may be a promising direction for planning further research in this field.

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