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# Revealing the Leadership Characteristics of the Modern Age: Generation-Z Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

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Over time, the increasing modernization of enterprises and the coexistence of different generations in business life have changed perceptions about leadership as well as management and managerial issues. As a result, the characteristics that a successful leader should have on have also developed. The aim of this study is to determine the characteristics that a leader should have from the perspectives of Generation Z and to reveal their differences from the traditional leadership approach. For this purpose, 183 participants of Generation Z over the age of 18 were interviewed and asked to indicate the characteristics they expect in a leader. As a result of the content analysis made by coding the answers received, the leader characteristics that the participants considered important were determined. Accordingly, it has become clear that the characteristics of foresight, management ability, ability to take responsibility of mistakes, caring about privacy, awareness, fairness, being able to act like a teammate, having digital skills, being able to discover talents, emotional intelligence, and strong communication skills should exist primarily in a leader for generation Z. Considering that generation Z is gradually participating in business life, revealing the changes in leadership skills in this direction reflects the importance of the study.

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The concept of leadership, which is considered one of the oldest topics in the history of civilization; previously was discussed only from religious, political, and military perspectives (Koçel, 2010). So, in the early periods, leadership was accepted as a gift from God, and since it was thought to be innate, it was not emphasized what leadership characteristics should be (Riaz & Haider, 2010). However, as time progressed, the perspective on this concept changed,

the leader's behaviors began to be emphasized, and it was accepted that leadership could be improved too (Asree et al., 2010; Brownell, 2010; Pierce & Newstrom, 2006). Thus, leadership has been defined in different ways throughout the historical process and each definition developed has created different perspectives on what the characteristics of a good leader should be (Araslı et al., 2020; Horner, 2003; Northouse, 2016).

With the adoption of more modern perspectives on leadership, it has been defined as a concept that has situational characteristics. For example; it is stated that in emergency situations, it may be useful for the leader to display an autocratic leadership style by showing characteristics such as fair and considerable (Setiawan et al., 2021). According to contingency theory; the leadership characteristics displayed depend on the circumstances, environment, and factors. Accordingly, it is stated that there is no uniform leadership style, and the leader adopts the most appropriate leadership style according to the situation (Childs et al., 2022). Among the situational factors mentioned, factors such as the qualities of the leader, the qualifications and experiences of the group members, organizational structure, goals, and others are considered important (Deshwal & Ali, 2020; Sivaruban, 2021). It is thought that in some cases, task-oriented leadership and in other cases, relationship-oriented leadership may be more efficient and effective (Bakan & Büyükbeşe, 2010). According to this, it is emphasized that a leader must have different characteristics in different situations. In this context, in line with the principles of classical approaches as well as modern approaches, different adjectives based on different characteristics have been attributed to leaders (Özkan, 2016, p. 617). The adjectives attributed to charismatic leadership can be listed as having a vision, willingness to take risks, and sensitivity to the needs of followers (Dinibütün, 2020); to authentic leadership with traits of self-confidence, hope, optimism, and high moral character (Deshwal & Ali, 2020); to transformational leadership with the desire to learn continuously, being strategic, having the ability to communicate effectively, being a role model for the audience, emotional maturity, visionary and taking risks (Hay, 2006); to transactional leadership with prominent features such as reward-punishment system, giving importance to goals, and work-oriented behavior (Kılıç et al., 2014); to democratic leadership, with its features that empower subordinates and include them in decision-making processes (Thoha & Avandana, 2020). Finally, there are various adjectives for autocratic leadership (Solihah et al., 2021), with features such as central authority and work-oriented work behavior, where subordinates are not included in decision-making processes.

The importance and function of leadership is evident in many sectors. Due to the dynamics of the sectors, the emphasis on leadership qualities may vary. In the study conducted by Tengilimoğlu (2005) on public and private sector organizations, it is revealed that friendly, relationship-oriented, and participatory characteristics are more prominent in private sector organization leaders. In a different study conducted by Taner and Çetin (2005) on the tourism sector, the prominent leadership characteristics are; he has revealed himself as someone who can use his talents well, has high communication skills, creates a vision, gains the trust of his followers, have the ability to organize, take decisions and risks, influence and motivate employees and be a role model for them (Tozoğlu & Uçar, 2022). In the study conducted by Shariff (2015) with nurse participants in the health sector, it was observed that nurses have transformational leadership characteristics, have management skills in matters such as effective communication, planning, and organization, and exhibit proactive personality traits (Ardahan

& Konal, 2017). Considering the importance of people and human behavior in organizations, it can be said that the success of businesses is related to the success of employees and the key to this success is strong teamwork. The success of businesses depends on the success of their employees, and the key factor to this success is to create strong teamwork. This teamwork is only possible with strong team leaders. That's why, leadership is accepted as a concept that must carry certain characteristics.

When the relevant literature about leadership characteristics is examined, it is seen that the studies generally focus on the comparison of leadership approaches, leadership styles, which type of leaders are more preferred in which sector, and comparisons of the characteristics of each leadership style (Ardahan & Konal, 2017; Shariff, 2015; Taner & Çetin, 2005). On the other hand, studies focusing on specific leadership behaviors and their relationship with leadership types have also been encountered. Studies show that leadership characteristics remain the same from past to present. However, in today's developing world, as in many fields, new dynamics have emerged in business life and individuals with a more innovative mindset have begun to enter professional life (Asree et al., 2010; Wang et. al, 2014). Young people of the modern generation, who were born and raised in a technological world, have different expectations regarding business life, as in many other subjects. Their perspectives on business life also change their perspectives on teamwork and therefore on leadership.

This research was carried out to determine how the characteristics of a good leader have changed in the eyes of young people from Generation Z (Gen-Z), who are over the age of 18, which is also called the modern generation. In line with the opinions obtained in this context, in order to adapt to the changing world, opportunities have been tried to be created for leaders to improve themselves. When evaluated from this perspective, it is thought that this study will also contribute to the deficiency in the literature.

## Literature Review

### **Theoretical Background**

Leadership, which is considered one of the fundamental subjects of management science, has been a concept given importance in political, military, organizational, and social fields in almost every period throughout history. Since it is a concept that can be perceived in different ways depending on businesses, processes, and common goals; there is no ubiquitous, universally accepted definition and list of characteristics of leadership (Taşer et al., 2022). However, there are also widely accepted definitions in the literature.

While Burns (1978, p. 425) defines leadership as the process of encouraging followers to take action through various forces to achieve goals; Koçel (2010, p. 85) defines it as guiding others by determining their effectiveness in order to achieve individual and team goals.

Leadership is also accepted as the ability to support and contribute to the group members he leads in the process of achieving their tasks and to motivate them (Yukl, 2018). In the same way, leadership, which is the ability to influence the team to achieve its goals and vision, is also expressed as the process of influencing and directing the activities of others to achieve the goals of the team under certain conditions (Robbins & Judge, 2012).

Leaders are the people who are responsible for doing the right thing in a business (Drucker, 2007). However, leaders are people who recognize opportunities in order to achieve the desired results, who can adapt to innovations, who influence the motivation and competence of

employees thanks to the vision they have, and who influence them on the path to be followed (Taşer et al., 2022). In this context, leaders are personally involved in realizing the mission and vision of the enterprise, developing the values necessary to ensure long-term success, implementing appropriate behaviors, and establishing the corporate management system. While doing this, they coach the employees in their teams (Kammoun & Ben-Ayed, 2010; Mintzberg, 1998). Because having leaders who know the business and the individuals working with it well, are aware of their wishes and needs, and have the ability to influence and manage their team is very important for businesses that want to achieve their organizational goals and be successful.

The fact that leaders are individuals with different characteristics and abilities reveals differences in their management and direction styles, and these differences lead to the formation of different leadership styles. In this context, in the emergence of leadership styles and characteristics, some factors are effective such as the personal characteristics of the manager, his ability to lead, his position, and the quality of the community to lead (Yılmaz & Kantek, 2016). However, it should not be forgotten that every effective leader can manage, but not every manager may have leadership qualities.

Throughout its historical development, the concept of leadership has changed in parallel with economic, social, and technological changes, and therefore the characteristics that leaders should have also changed, and four main approaches have been developed to explain these changes. Features approach argues that in order for individuals to be described as leaders, they must have unique characteristics and these characteristics must differ from other group members. The behavioral approach argues that the leader's behaviors such as communication with his employees, ability to authorize team members, and planning ability are at the forefront rather than his personal characteristics. The contingency approach, rather than a single type of leadership style, suggests that different leadership styles and characteristics can be preferred under different conditions, considering the situational conditions of the employees. Modern approaches refer to the leadership styles that have emerged as a result of studies conducted from perspectives with different contents, especially in today's conditions where economic and technological developments are also taken into account (Uğurluoğlu & Çelik, 2009). All these approaches and definitions also support perspectives on leadership and the versatility of leadership. Every leader, whether traditional or modern, is evaluated within one of these approaches and has the characteristics of at least one of these approaches (Idowu, 2019).

To summarize the aforementioned characteristics, leaders who are responsible for the effectiveness of businesses exhibit more success-oriented, passionate, active, stubborn, and proactive characteristics (Hoy & Miskel, 2015; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). On the other hand, characteristics such as having cognitive ability and business knowledge, charisma, confidence, inspiration, showing personal interest and respect to their followers, motivating their followers, and developing new ideas and approaches are also attributed to leaders (Northouse, 2016; Smith, 2001). Abilities and characteristics such as intelligence, sense of duty, initiative, persistent, self-confidence, ability to respond to the needs of others, not running away from taking responsibility, and being able to dominate when necessary are also considered important for leaders (Northouse, 2016; Stogdill, 1948). Finally; extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness, agreeableness, social intelligence, self-monitoring, and problem-solving skills are also suggested as important characteristics seen in leaders (Zaccaro et al., 2004).

## Related Works

When studies on leadership characteristics are examined; it seems that they mostly address leadership styles individually and focus on specific leadership behaviors and their relationships with leadership types. Likewise; it is understood that the majority of studies are aimed at the effects of leadership on the success of employees, company strategies, and organizational structure. In addition, studies examining leadership characteristics together with leadership styles can also be found in the literature. For instance, a study conducted by Wang et al. (2014) revealed that creativity is important for transformational leadership style. Also, in another study conducted in the accommodation sector; it has been revealed that leaders must have different characteristics such as self-management, strategic positioning, implementation, decision-making skills, innovation, and open and effective communication (Asree et al., 2010).

Another study states that leaders can be trained to coach and inspire their followers and that innovations can be provided at the individual or organizational level (Steinmann et al., 2018). Moreover, another study found that individuals with strong leadership skills should have characteristics such as vision, should direct employees in accordance with the vision of the business, and should have the competence to make decisions by balancing many variables at the same time (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015; Kayode et al., 2014).

In their study, Uğurluoğlu and Çelik (2009) discussed leadership in terms of strategic management and revealed that strategic leaders should have characteristics such as seeing the future, creating a vision, providing flexibility, thinking strategically, and working with others. As a result of the bibliometric analysis in which they examined 25 different studies in 2015, Hotamışlı and Efe (2015) concluded; that emotional intelligence is an indispensable feature for effective and successful leadership.

In a study conducted by Ağin (2023), investigating the effects of globalization on leadership, it was found that leadership behavior becomes more successful by winning the hearts of employees and that managers can be more effective on employees by abandoning the hierarchical structures of organizations, and in order to achieve this, they should give more importance to interpersonal relations and leadership skills. In a study he conducted in the health sector, Koç (2023) discussed leadership characteristics through transformational leadership, which is one of the leadership styles, and as a result of his study; it has been revealed that leadership is innate and must be developed through education, and that transformational leadership characteristics must be adopted for the ideal corporate culture. Another study considering leadership styles conducted in the health sector, by Taşer et al. (2022), found that transactional, servant and transformational leaders have a positive effect on employees, that ethical leadership increases the perception of organizational justice, and that appropriate leadership behaviors have direct or indirect effects on employees as well as have positive effects on businesses.

In the literature review, no study was found that investigated the changes in the perception of leadership caused by the coexistence of different generations in business life. This study, prepared in this context, is considered to be a pioneering study in terms of revealing the extent of changing perceptions about leadership qualities in the modernizing world and identifying the characteristics that a leader should have from the eyes of the modern Generation Z. When evaluated from this perspective, it is predicted that this study will close this gap in the literature.



## Method

The main problem of this research, designed with an exploratory model, is what characteristics a leader should have from today's perspective. Based on this, the main purpose of this study is to reveal whether leadership characteristics have changed from the perspective of individuals belonging to the z-generation and which characteristics stand out. Another aim of the research is to see whether the perception of leadership characteristics varies according to gender.

In order to achieve these goals, the necessary data was collected by face-to-face interviews with individuals belonging to the Z-generation. However, since it would not be possible to reach all Z-generation individuals, the sample of the research was determined by the Conditional Sampling method and was limited to 183 people. The reason for limiting the sample to 183 people is that after a certain number of participants, the answers given begin to be the same and there is a possibility of data pollution that will reduce the efficiency of this study (Baltacı, 2018). In accordance with the conditional sampling rules; two basic rules have been determined: "being born after 2000" and "being over 18 years of age". Participants who did not meet these conditions were not interviewed. In this context, the ages of the participants vary between 18-23. On the other hand, since the subject of the study was based on age, gender, and work experience criteria, other demographic characteristics of the participants were not included in the study. During the data collection process, participants who met the conditions were asked two questions using a semi-structured questionnaire. The questions are shown below:

- (1) *Do you have any internship or work experience?*
- (2) *According to you, which characteristics a leader should have?*

The collected data was analyzed with the content analysis method, which brings together similar data within the framework of certain concepts coding and interpreting them in a way that the reader can understand (Kıncal, 2015, p. 191).

In the first stage of analysis; the voice recordings used during the interviews were transcribed to the computer environment and a document of approximately 37 pages was obtained. Then, in order to check whether a spelling mistake has been made; this document was checked by two different academicians who are independent of each other.

Since the issues of credibility and confirmability of results come to the fore in measuring reliability in qualitative research, unlike quantitative research, in order to increase reliability, a member control method is applied. With the member control method, all information recorded by the researcher is written down and then read to the interviewees to confirm its accuracy (Erdoğan, 2012). The accuracy of the data obtained in this research was confirmed by having it read and approved by the participants.

The information obtained was re-read within the scope of the leadership characteristics that constitute the subject of the research, and frequently repeated important expressions that were directly related to the two questions asked on the subject were determined. Words with similar meanings among these expressions were coded for analysis. Then, all these expressions and codings were analyzed and the ideas that each interview question tried to reveal were interpreted in a descriptive way.

During the interpretations, the answers given by the participants were also quoted and included in the findings in order to show their perspectives. In the writing of the findings and the quotations, in accordance with the protection of personal data and confidentiality of

information, the names of the participants were not included, instead, all participants were identified as P1, P2, P3... In the direct quotations used; in order not to disrupt the integrity and language flow of the study, daily expressions and expression disorders have been changed so as not to affect the original meanings. In long answers; only expressions indicating the answers sought by the interview question are shown, and the abbreviations are indicated with (...).

The related demographic statistics of participants are shown in Table 1. According to the analysis results, the characteristics that Gen-Z expects to be a priority in a leader are listed in Table 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. As seen in Table 1, interviews were conducted with 183 participants. 73 (39.9) of them were women and 100 (60.1) were men. Considering the participants' internship/work experience, it is seen that 139 participants (.76) have experience while 44 of them (.24) do not.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Participants*

	N	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	73	39.9
Male	110	60.1
Total	183	.100
<i>Internship/work experience of participants</i>		
Has experience	139	.76
Has no experience	44	.24
Total	183	.100

Table 2 lists the most important characteristics that a leader should have according to the participants. The characteristics that come to the fore are listed ordinally as; *farsightedness, management ability, ability to own mistakes, giving importance to confidentiality, awareness, justice, acting as a teammate, having digital skills, being able to discover talents, emotional intelligence, strong communication ability, open-mindedness, honesty, empathy and being respectful to employees*. According to the overall findings in Table 2, in addition to the existing characteristics of today's leaders such as foresight, justice, and strong communication skills, which are also attributed to more traditional leadership characteristics, it is thought that they should also have more innovative characteristics such as giving importance to privacy, being aware, being able to discover talents and having digital skills. Highlighted responses of participants are shown as follows:

*“The leader should see himself as a team with his employees and be the one who leads his team as they walk towards a common goal. The leader should not prioritize his own ego and forget the interests or feelings of his team. He/she must also be self-confident and have high social skills (P<sub>14</sub>).”*

*“First of all, a leader must respect his employees and take care of them. In order to achieve this, he should not cover up mistakes and make necessary warnings, while also appreciating good and correct work. He should also support those who want to learn, and at the same time he should respect the effort and reward it fairly (P<sub>22</sub>).”*

*“A leader must, above all, know that being successful depends on group work, not alone. At the same time, he must be able to separate his logic from his emotions and be able to empathize when necessary. However, he must also know how to think in multiple ways. On the other hand, a good leader should not forget that he exists thanks to his employees,*

*he should know that he and his employees are the whole of a team, and therefore should not be selfish (P<sub>47</sub>).”*

*“A good leader should approach his employees in a guiding and educating way. He should be open-minded to new and different ideas and should always educate himself in this context. At the same time, they should approach their employees positively and respect differences (P<sub>86</sub>).”*

*“A good leader should distribute the tasks correctly and adequately to the individuals in the team and should not give up control in order to achieve success. Besides being open-minded to innovation, he should be foresighted about the trends that may be encountered in the future and should also attach importance to flexible working hours by adopting the working patterns of the modern age. He/she should discover potential talents in his/her team and attach importance to communication. He/she should keep team motivation high by improving his/her social skills and have the mindset to produce new projects (P<sub>116</sub>).”*

**Table 2**

*The Characteristics that a Leader Should Have According to Gen-Z*

Interview Question	Code	Numbers of Answers
According to you, which characteristics a leader should have?	Farsightedness	153
	Management ability	135
	Ability to own mistakes	122
	Caring about privacy	120
	Having awareness	114
	Justice	98
	Ability to act like a teammate	89
	Having digital skills	73
	Discovering talents	70
	Emotional intelligence	64
	Strong communication ability	57
	Open-mindedness	48
	Honesty	44
	Being Empathetic	23
Being respectful to employees	19	

*Note.* Participants responded to the interview question by selecting more than one option.

Table 3 and 4 show the distribution of the answers according to the genders of participants. Table 3 lists the characteristics a leader should have according to female participants. respectively, *farsightedness, ability to own mistakes, justice, ability to act like a teammate, management ability, caring about privacy, strong communication ability, having awareness, open-mindedness, having digital skills, being respectful to employees, emotional intelligence, discovering talents, honesty and being empathetic* come to the fore.



**Table 3***The Characteristics that a Leader Should Have According to Female Participants*

Interview Question	Code	Numbers of Answers
According to you, which characteristics a leader should have?	Farsightedness	61
	Ability to own mistakes	58
	Justice	57
	Ability to act like a teammate	48
	Management ability	47
	Caring about privacy	46
	Strong communication ability	41
	Having awareness	32
	Open-mindedness	24
	Having digital skills	23
	Being respectful to employees	19
	Emotional intelligence	16
	Discovering talents	14
	Honesty	11
Being empathetic	10	

*Note.* Participants responded to the interview question by selecting more than one option.

Table 4 shows the characteristics that a leader should have according to male participants. According to male members of Gen-Z, the most important characteristics are listed as; *farsightedness, management ability, awareness, caring about privacy, ability to own mistakes, discovering talents, having digital skills, emotional intelligence, ability to act like a teammate, justice, honesty, open-mindedness, strong communication ability, empathetic and having knowledge about job.*

**Table 4***The Characteristics that a Leader Should Have According to Male Participants*

Interview Question	Code	Numbers of Answers
According to you, which characteristics a leader should have?	Farsightedness	92
	Management ability	88
	Having awareness	82
	Caring about privacy	74
	Ability to own mistakes	64
	Discovering talents	56
	Having digital skills	50
	Emotional intelligence	48
	Ability to act like a teammate	41
	Justice	41
	Honesty	33
	Open-mindedness	24
	Strong communication ability	16
	Being empathetic	13
Having knowledge about your job	11	

*Note.* Participants responded to the interview question by selecting more than one option.

When the answers given by the participants are compared in terms of gender, according to the findings in Table 3 and Table 4, although the number of answers received varies, it is seen that the features expected from the leader are generally the same, only the order in which the features come to the fore changes. As can be seen in Table 3, when the answers of female participants and male participants are compared, the feature of *being respectful to employees* is more prominent in female participants than in male participants. In this regard, it is a remarkable result that especially female employees expect to be respected and attribute this as a necessary leadership characteristic, especially considering the various difficulties they face in their working lives. According to the findings in Table 4, *being knowledgeable about the job* feature

is more prominent among male participants than female participants. The fact that *management ability* exists in the top ranks of the responses given by male participants and *having knowledge about the job* exists in the list can also be interpreted as male employees want to see not only leadership qualifications but also managerial qualifications in a leader. Some of the highlighted responses of participants can be seen as follows:

*“A successful leader must respect and protect the personal rights of the people he works with. He should not be silent in the case of any problem, instead he should seek the rights of employees and be able to produce quick solutions to problems. While being farsighted, one should also be curious about new trends (P<sub>84</sub> - Female).”*

*“A leader must have important characteristics such as empathy, experience, ability to keep up with digitalization and team spirit. In addition, he must be a go-to person and use communication effectively. (P<sub>101</sub> - Female).”*

*“Leaders should be calm in the face of events and should not decrease the motivation of their team even in a situation that they cannot get out of. They should be solution-oriented and be able to reflect these beliefs to their teams. Team members should both be afraid of their leaders and be respected and accepted by the team thanks to the equality of rights that the leader shows towards his team (P<sub>123</sub> – Male).”*

*“A strong leader must clearly convey his knowledge to his team. As a tolerant and open-minded person, he should make employees in lower positions love the work they do. Finally, he should not give up on work discipline. (P<sub>146</sub> – Male).”*

Table 5 and 6 show the distribution of the answers according to the participants' experience. Table 5 lists the characteristics that a leader should have according to participants with internship/work experience. The characteristics of *farsightedness, management ability, ability to own mistakes, having awareness, caring about privacy, justice, ability to act like a teammate, discovering talents, having digital skills, emotional intelligence, open-mindedness, honesty, strong communication ability, being empathetic and being respectful to employees* are important.

**Table 5**

*The Characteristics that a Leader Should Have According to Participants with Experience*

Interview Question	Code	Numbers of Answers
According to you, which characteristics a leader should have?	Farsightedness	116
	Management ability	102
	Ability to own mistakes	97
	Having awareness	96
	Caring about privacy	88
	Justice	78
	Ability to act like a teammate	77
	Discovering talents	53
	Having digital skills	50
	Emotional intelligence	39
	Open-mindedness	32
	Honesty	28
	Strong communication ability	22
	Being empathetic	19
Being respectful to employees	19	

*Note.* Participants responded to the interview question by selecting more than one option.

Table 6 lists the characteristics that a leader should have according to participants who do not have any experience. Table 6 shows that the most listed ones shine out respectively as; *farsightedness, strong communication ability, management ability, caring about privacy, emotional intelligence, ability to own mistakes, having digital skills, justice, having awareness, discovering talents, honesty, open-mindedness, ability to act like a teammate, ability to make strategic plans and being empathetic.*

**Table 6**

*The Characteristics that a Leader Should Have According to Participants without Experience*

Interview Question	Code	Numbers of Answers
According to you, which characteristics a leader should have?	Farsightedness	37
	Strong communication ability	35
	Management ability	33
	Caring about privacy	32
	Emotional intelligence	25
	Ability to own mistakes	25
	Having digital skills	23
	Justice	20
	Having awareness	18
	Discovering talents	17
	Honesty	16
	Open-mindedness	16
	Ability to act like a teammate	12
	Ability to make strategic plans	6
Being empathetic	4	

*Note.* Participants responded to the interview question by selecting more than one option.

When the answers given by the participants are compared in terms of having internship/work experience, although the number of answers received varies, it is seen that the features expected from the leader are generally the same, only the order in which the features come to the fore changes. According to the findings in Table 5, the feature of *being respectful* to employees comes to the fore, especially among participants with internship or work experience, compared to participants without internship or work experience. This can be interpreted as participants with internship or work experience tend to expect respect for themselves since they have the chance to observe actual business life. According to the findings in Table 6, *the ability to make strategic plans* is among the features that are considered more important for participants who do not have internship or work experience than for participants who have internship/work experience. The prominent answers can be exemplified as follows:

*“...A leader must be especially aware of his job and be able to direct his team correctly. He/she should be in communication with his/her team and should not display an attitude distant from the work (P<sub>87</sub> – with experience).”*

*“A successful leader should not be afraid to go ahead. He should not lose respect for his employees and should know the difference between sincerity and indifference. He should use the reward system well and avoid nepotism and favoritism towards relatives. Must follow up the work by making proper planning (P<sub>94</sub> – with experience).”*

*“A good leader should be able to remain calm and make decisions easily under stress. Must be able to easily talk and get along with teammates. should not forget their*

*responsibilities. He should distribute tasks fairly, and for this purpose, he should know and observe all his employees well (P<sub>120</sub> – without experience).”*

*“A good leader should establish strong communication with his team and get feedback from them. Must be able to establish the reward and appreciation mechanism properly. A leader should distribute the workload to his employees in a fair ratio. Must have self-confidence and responsibility and be able to find solutions to problems. He/she should focus on managing his team rather than trying to complete paperwork, should not reduce his employees' work motivation with unnecessary pressures, and should not forget that real success cannot be achieved without a team (P<sub>127</sub> – with experience).”*

*“A leader should be kind and fair to his employees. At the same time, he should not lose his authority. He should be able to adapt to modern trends with his innovative thinking. He should attach importance to the confidentiality of his employees and should not create problems that may arise from differences (P<sub>136</sub> – without experience).”*

*“A leader should be optimistic, that is, he should increase the motivation of his team or the place he is in. Must be open to different ideas. At the same time, he should be lively, which means, his speech or movements should not be boring (P<sub>137</sub> – without experience).”*

## **Discussion**

In one of the various definitions of leadership, it is claimed that leadership draws direction by developing a vision for the future (Robbins & Judge, 2012, p. 376). As can be understood from this definition, among the characteristics expected from a leader, it can be expected that the leader will be farsighted, have foresight about the future of business life, and can create a vision for the organization accordingly. According to the results of the research, farsightedness is the most prominent feature in all categories examined. In this regard, it can be thought that members of Gen-Z are willing to see this characteristic, which is listed in the definition of leadership in business life.

In our changing era, with the reasons the dynamics of business life are changing and new generations will take more part in business life, it is suggested that there will be leaders who can make a difference, have entrepreneurial orientation, have digital skills, and create a strong communication network and collaborations in future businesses (Toduk, 2014 as cited in Avcı, 2020, p. 5386-5387). It is considered very important for Gen-Z to be friends with their managers, to have their opinions taken into account, and to receive feedback on the work done (Akdemir & İnal, 2022, p. 640). As cited in Şahbaz (2019, p. 42), from the results of research conducted by Millennial Branding and Randstad US in 2014, it is stated that Gen-Z has expectations from a leader regarding honesty, having a vision, having high communication skills, having their own ideas listened to by the leader and being more independent. Similarly, as quoted by Düzgün (2022, p. 415), individuals of Gen-Z prefer to work for an honest leader. According to the results of the study conducted by Aydoğan (2021), it is concluded that Gen-Z members mostly prefer the visionary leadership style and the coach-type leadership style. In the same study, it is emphasized that the visionary leadership style should include empathy regarding emotional intelligence, and the coach leadership style should require competencies

such as emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-awareness. According to the findings of the study conducted by Palalar Alkan (2020, p. 134), it is seen that concepts such as emotional intelligence, honesty, fairness, and respect are included among various expressions regarding the leadership characteristics of Gen-Z leaders, and the definition of an effective leader.

Considering the results of all these studies mentioned above, the characteristics of strong communication ability, emotional intelligence, digital skills, justice, awareness, honesty, acting like a teammate, and having empathy resulted in this research at the forefront and are parallelly supporting the result of the aforementioned studies. Especially Gen-Z members' statuses such as being very intertwined with technology, being aware of social and environmental events, being able to express their thoughts clearly, and attaching importance to flexibility in business life are parallel to these results.

Even though the concepts of manager and leader are sometimes used interchangeably in daily life, these two concepts contain quite different features. The manager performs the management function and management, covers human behavior and functions that do not directly affect people. It is stated that leadership is related to people and their behavior and has the ability to influence them (Alkın & Ünsar, 2007, p. 77). According to the findings of this study, Gen-Z members stated that a leader should also have management talent. At this point, it is a striking detail that the participants do not have managerial expectations from a leader, but only accurate management ability.

According to the results of this research, Gen-Z members also emphasized characteristics such as attaching importance to confidentiality, being able to take responsibility for mistakes, and discovering talents that should exist in leaders. Considering factors such as taking precautions to protect personal data and the secrecy of private life, especially in recent times, it seems normal that individuals of this generation attach great importance to this factor in business life. Findings show that Gen-Z members also have expectations about a leader's ability to own up to mistakes. Regarding the trait theory, in some studies about the characteristics of the leader, various characteristics such as responsibility, dominance, initiative, and self-confidence have been found (Northouse, 2001, p. 18., as cited in Alga, 2016, p. 22). Hence, when considering the trait theory, it would not be wrong to say that the individuals of Gen-Z have expectations of taking responsibility from a leader and that they have expectations about making decisions and being able to bear the mistakes that may occur as a leader. This may also contribute to followers' trust in their leaders. According to another result of this research, Gen-Z members also have expectations from a leader about discovering talents. Especially when evaluated in terms of inspirational motivation, which is one of transformational leadership characteristics, leaders are expected to discover the talents and interests of their followers take this into account, and evaluate in terms of the needs of the organization (Özmen, 2021, p. 13). So, it would not be wrong to say that Gen-Z members also have similar views on revealing the talents of employees and realizing their potential.

## Conclusion

It can be said that the results of this study offer various implications for both the literature and working life and leaders. The relationship between the leader and the member is very important in working life. It will be useful for organizations and leaders to pay attention to various features in order to motivate and employ Generation Z employees, especially those who have just started

to take part in working life. In this study, the characteristics that Generation Z expects from their leaders are included.

When the research results are evaluated in general, it can be said that individuals of Gen-Z have expectations for more traditional leadership characteristics, as well as expectations for more innovative characteristics of their own generation such as giving importance to privacy, being aware, being able to discover talents, and having digital skills. Considering that Gen-Z is slowly joining business life and that they will work more connected with their agemates in business life in the future, revealing the changes in leadership skills in this direction reflects the importance of this study. In future studies, it may be suggested to investigate the expectations of Gen-Z regarding different leadership styles as a more detailed version of this study. Additionally, considering the importance of harmony in business life, it may be recommended to conduct studies to reveal leaders' expectations from Gen-Z.

## Declarations

This research has been presented as summarized paper with the title of “Examination of Leadership Characteristics from Perspective of Generation Z” at 7th International Congress of Eurasian Social Sciences – ICOESS 2023, on 27-30 April 2023, Bodrum, Muğla- Turkey

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