
Expectations of Young People Towards Their Future Work and Career After the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic Outbreak in Poland

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Abstract:

Purpose: The main objective of the study is to identify the expectations of young people towards their future jobs and their career development after the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic outbreak in Poland.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The main study method was the survey method. The subjects were individuals born after 1990 (representatives of Generation Y) in full-time and part-time graduate and undergraduate programmes of the biggest private and state universities of technology and humanities in the Lublin region. The study was anonymous and encompassed a sample of 140 students. The surveys were conducted in the third quarter of 2020, after the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic outbreak.

Findings: The respondents would like their future, post-pandemic jobs to be interesting and consistent with their interests and competencies. A job must entail a decent salary that will allow them to live a prosperous life and pursue their hobbies. Good workplace atmosphere and a possibility of work-life balance are more important than promotions and classic career. Many students see opening their own business and self-employment to those ends.

Practical Implications: The study results seem to be particularly important in the context of choosing an optimum method for managing young, qualified employees, such as (most likely) the future university graduates who are about to enter the new, reshaped labour market. Defining their expectations towards future jobs will allow employers to make sustainable, optimum and effective use of the potential of this unique generation.

Originality/Value: The study was conducted right after the outbreak of the SARS-Cov-2 pandemic, which significantly remodelled the modern economy and labour market in Poland, and thus had a significant impact on the way young people perceive their future work.

Keywords: Generation Y, expectations, work and career development, employment relationship, labour market, SARS-CoV-2

JEL codes: J13, J23, J24.

Paper Type: Research article.

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1. Introduction

The outbreak of the *SARS-CoV-2* pandemic changed every aspect of our lives in a very short time (Flaga-Gieruszynska, 2020; Witczynska, 2020; Grima *et al.*, 2020; Khan *et al.*, 2020). It has had a huge impact on the entire world economy (Honko *et al.*, 2020), and thus also on the labour markets (Kozicki and Gornikiewicz, 2020). These specific conditions certainly influenced young people's visions of the future and their expectations. Due the continuously growing competition in both the Polish and international labour markets, the ability to attract and retain talented employees may give organisations a lasting competitive advantage.

However, the characteristics of prospective employees, their expectations and aspirations keep changing in time. The employees currently entering the labour market were born after 1990 they are representatives of Generation Y, known as ‘Millennials’ (Gabriellova and Buchko, 2021). Those young people substantially differ from their older colleagues, ranging from their approach to work and career to their expectations towards their jobs and employers. The generation is confident, aware of its value, independent and goal oriented. Millennials grew up in the world of the Internet and they often know more about the digital world and new technologies than their teachers and parents. This is quite a challenge for managers and the managerial staff, who must be able to make the best possible use of the potential of every member of their team and, importantly, elicit high performance from those often quite different people. To achieve this, they require a better insight into and understanding of Generation Y – the people who will be the main labour force on the labour market in a few years.

The issue of managing a multi-generational workplace is broadly analysed in the relevant literature (Barron *et al.*, 2007; Cennamo and Gardner, 2008; Gursoy, Maier and Chi, 2008; Shaw and Fairhurst, 2008; Sakdiyakorn, Golubovskaya and Solnet, 2021) but the study results usually include specific narrow groups of respondents. Moreover, the studies conducted so far do not cover the period after the outbreak of the *SARS-CoV-2* pandemic, which in a short time made a radical remodelling of world labour markets. This renders it questionable whether all the theses formulated in such sources may be successfully applied to the current developing, digital, remote labour market.

To verify this, the authors of this work conducted a survey among students of the biggest private and state universities in the Lublin region to define their expectations towards their future work and career development. The surveys seem to be particularly important in the context of choosing an optimum sustainable method for managing qualified employees, such as (most likely) the future university graduates who are about to enter the new labour market. Defining the expectations of Polish university students towards their future jobs and determining how far they coincide with international pre pandemic trends will allow employers to create a sustainable, optimum

and effective management system. The results of this study may also serve as guidance for the teaching staff of the universities to help them properly prepare students to successfully enter the digital labour market and succeed professionally.

The main objective of the study is to identify the expectations of young people towards their future jobs and career development after the *SARS-CoV-2* pandemic outbreak.

2. Literature Review

In the light of changes currently taking place on the labor market, employers are forced to manage the organization with particular emphasis on the generational diversity of employees (Gursoy, Maier, and Chi, 2008). Currently, there are many companies employing three, and sometimes even four generations of employees. Therefore, it is necessary for employers to know the specific characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of employees from individual generations (McCracken, Currie, and Harrison, 2016; Urbaniak, 2019). In the literature, we cannot find a lot of definitions describing *youth* as a social category. Also, in sociological analyzes it is difficult to clearly define *youth*. Scientists usually referred the category of *youth* to people who had not yet achieved independence in life. In the past, the culmination of this phase of life was associated with such specific events and life situations as starting a job, getting married, starting a family or an independent household. Adulthood was recognizable after achieving full life stabilization, which was usually possible at around the age of 20. Due to the numerous difficulties in determining when life stabilization begins, researchers usually arbitrarily set the age limits for this category. Most often, in the literature people under 34 are considered young.

Based on the analyzed literature, the following generations of employees can be distinguished (Priporas, Stylos, and Fotiadis, 2017; Sakdiyakorn, Golubovskaya, and Solnet, 2021):

- “Silent generation” - born in 1922-1944,
- “Baby Boomers” - born in 1945-1964,
- “Generation X” - born in 1965-1980,
- “Generation Y” (the so-called millennials) - born in 1980-1994,
- “Generation Z” - born after 1994, also called generation „C” from the words: connected, communicating, content-centric, computerized, community-oriented, always clicking or iGeneration, Gen Tech, Gen Wii, Net Gen, Digital Natives, Gen Next, Post Gen (Priporas, Stylos, and Fotiadis, 2017; Sakdiyakorn, Golubovskaya, and Solnet, 2021).

The literature describing the Y generation ascribes to it greater flexibility and openness to change, readiness to learn and reluctance to long-term commitments than in previous generations, linking these features with adaptation to the ever-changing environment and with the previously cited experiences indicating the impermanence of social institutions. Another group of features frequently appearing in the descriptions

concerns the needs related to the ethical dimension of one's own actions (Martin, 2005; Terjesen, Vinnicombe, and Freeman, 2007). Representatives of the Y generation are ascribed a high need to perceive the meaning of their work and high sensitivity to the social and environmental consequences of their own decisions.

The third group of features is related to the appreciation of the balance between work and other spheres of life, as well as the values that the representatives of Generation Y attach to relationships with family and loved ones, and the pursuit of their own passions (Broadbridge, Maxwell, and Ogden, 2007; Maloni, Hiatt, and Campbell, 2019). The last two of these characteristics clearly distinguish the described group from the representatives of the X generation, who appear in the literature as career-oriented, competitive individualists, corresponding to the stereotype of a participant in the "corporate rat race" (Shaul, 2007).

This does not mean, however, that the representatives of Generation Y are ready to resign from achievements and associated awards; on the contrary - they seem less patient waiting to be awarded, expecting their contributions to be accepted and appreciated. Despite high expectations regarding remuneration and recognition of achievements, it can be stated that the representatives of Generation Y pay more attention to the conditions and process of achieving achievement and are less willing to sacrifice other spheres of life for work (Winter and Jackson, 2016; Mos *et al.*, 2018).

In the literature Gen Y people are characterized by eight key values: choice, customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, speed, entertainment, and innovation. Efficient multi-tasking helps them be successful (Cheng, 1999; Yeaton, 2008; Stanimir, 2015).

It is worth to mention that the youngest "Millennials", who, according to some researchers, create the new "Z" generation, despite their unquestionable similarity, have many features that distinguish them from the "Y" generation (Zvereva and Chvorova, 2020). For example, the "Z" generation, unlike their predecessors, does not know the world without a computer, telephone, Internet, electronic gadgets, etc.

They can function in parallel in the real and virtual world and smoothly transition from one to the other (in their opinion, both worlds complement each other). Access to applications, all kinds of data, communication with others from any place and at any time is not a problem for them (Santy *et al.*, 2020; Zvereva and Chvorova, 2020). Most representatives of the "Z" generation cannot imagine their life without new technologies, the Internet to which they are connected 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They often stress that they are addicted to it. Moreover, many researchers point out that young people, while living online, impair their verbal communication skills and establishing interpersonal contacts in the real world (Ajmain, 2020; Vasyura and Iogolevich, 2020).

3. Research Methodology

The literature review process was initiated by identifying questions related to the topic of the study. Relevant databases, such as ScienceDirect, Mendeley, Google Scholar, MDPI and Research Gate were utilized for the research. The Polish and English language literature strictly corresponding to the research topic was selected and analysed.

The main study method used to achieve the objective of the paper was the survey method (combined CAVI and PAPI techniques). The subjects were individuals born after 1990 (representatives of Generation Y) in full-time and part-time graduate and undergraduate programmes of the biggest private and state universities of technology and humanities in the Lublin region, such as Lublin University of Technology, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, University of Life Sciences in Lublin and University College of Enterprise and Administration in Lublin. The study was anonymous and encompassed a sample of 140 students. The surveys were conducted in the third quarter of 2020, after the *SARS-CoV-2* pandemic outbreak in Poland.

The data gathered in the research were analysed using descriptive statistics. The substantive part of the questionnaire contained 23 questions (13 single-answer questions, 10 multiple-answer questions and 1 open question). The structure of the substantive part of the survey assumed identifying six groups of variables and the resulting factors to describe the present students and graduates of Lublin universities entering the labour market. Those groups are value system and self-esteem, attitude to work, working conditions, salary and motivation, management and performance evaluation, future job, and career.

4. Study Results

The respondents were aged 18 to 27 (the average age of the respondents was 21.5 years). Most of the respondents (75%) were men. The study population included Polish (65%) and Ukrainian (35%) students. As far as the study major is concerned, over 60% of the respondents were studying technical programmes. As regards the preferred mode of study, 70% of the respondents were full-time students). At the time of the study, more than a half of the respondents (55%) declared to be employed – 90% of part-time students and over 35% of full-time students.

Most of the respondents (55%) had job experience, more than 38% of them stating to have worked longer than one year. Students in part-time programmes had much longer work experience – more than 76% of them declared to have more than one year of job experience. In the group of full-time students, over 20% of respondents had only done temporary jobs and over 40% had never had a job.

4.1 Value System and Self-Esteem

It is common knowledge that an individual's lifestyle and interaction with the surroundings is determined mainly by their character and value system. Therefore, addressing the main study problem required first precisely defining the personal profile of the member of the study population. For this purpose, the students were asked at the beginning of the survey which values they appreciated in life the most and how they perceived themselves.

In their opinion, family was the most important value in life. The answer was given by 94.3% of the respondents – 95.2% of men and 91.4% of women. The second most important value was work, which gained a total of 55.7% responses from the respondents. Third in the hierarchy of values was love (54.3% responses), which was followed by money (49.3% of responses) and happiness (45% of responses). The values chosen by the respondents the least were: safety (5% of responses), fidelity and devotion, and honour (11.4% of responses each), empathy and understanding (12.1% of responses) and faith (13.6% of responses).

The above classification differs slightly if the respondents are divided by sex. Both male and female respondents put family first (95.2% of men and 91.4% of women) and this is the only shared rank. The next ranks reveal significant differences in the opinions of female and male respondents. The second most important value for female students was happiness (62.9% of responses), work coming second (60% of responses). The fourth value that women appreciated in life the most was money (54.3% of responses), while love came fifth (51.4% of responses). In contrast, male respondents considered love as the second most important value (55.2% of responses), which is less than one percentage point ahead of the third value – work (54.3%). Money was fourth (47.6% of responses), and happiness was fifth (39% of responses). The values chosen by women the least were (in increasing order): friendship, faith (both 0% of responses), empathy and understanding (2.8% of responses), safety (5.7% of responses), fidelity and devotion (14.3% of responses) and honour (17.1% of responses). The values chosen by men the least were: safety (4.8% of responses), honour (9.5% of responses), fidelity and devotion (10.5% of responses), empathy and understanding (15.2% of responses) and faith (18.1% of responses).

In general, the participating students described themselves primarily as family-loving (79.3% of responses), ambitious and persistent (76.4% of responses), honest (68.6% of responses), intelligent (65.7% of responses) and respectful (55.7%). The characteristics specified by the respondents the least to describe their personality were decent (3.6% of responses), critical (6.4% of responses), religious (10.7%), thinking about their country (11.4% of responses) and thrifty (15% of responses). If we divide the respondents by sex, we can notice certain differences in the way female and male students see themselves.

According to the surveys, women perceived themselves primarily as ambitious and persistent (91.4%, of responses), family-loving (88.6% of responses), honest (82.9% of responses), intelligent (65.7% of responses) modest and respectful (40% of responses each). The opinion of the male respondents about themselves was not far from the general results. They presented themselves as family-loving (76.2% of responses), ambitious and persistent (71.4% of responses), intelligent (65.7% of responses), honest (63.8% of responses) and respectful (61% of responses). When it comes to the characteristics listed by the respondents the least, they are almost the same for women and men (unlike men, women do not list *go-getting*, *resourceful* at all).

4.2 Attitude to Work

It is incredibly important in the context of solving the main study problem of this paper to define the attitude of those young people to work. To do this, the research works needed to consider several factors. They were the role of work in the lives of the respondents, the rank of work in their hierarchy of values (Table 1), work-life balance (Table 2) and the attitude of young people to occupational mobility.

The findings show that almost half of the respondents work to be able to finance and pursue their hobbies (47.1% of responses). For more than 40% of respondents, work is a source of satisfaction and motivates them to further growth. As far as the sex of the respondents is concerned, there are certain similarities in the way they perceive the role of work in their lives. For over a half of the female respondents, work is a source of satisfaction and motivates them to further growth (57.2% of responses), while most of the male respondents' state that work is just a source of money to finance and pursue their hobbies.

Table 1. Rank of work in the hierarchy of respondents' values (1 most accurate answer)

Description		Gender		Overall
		Woman	Man	
Work is more important to me than family, friends or entertainment	Number	0	1	1
	%	0	1	0,7
Family, friends, and entertainment are more important to me than work	Number	34	98	132
	%	97,1	93,3	94,3
Hard to say	Number	1	6	7
	%	2,9	5,7	5

Source: Own creation.

Table 2. Work-life balance (1 most accurate answer)

Description		Gender		Overall
		Woman	Man	
Being able to maintain a work-life balance is important when choosing an employer	Number	35	91	126
	%	100	86,7	90
Being able to maintain a work-life balance is not important when choosing an employer	Number	0	14	14
	%	0	13,3	10

Source: Own creation.

As regards the rank of work in the hierarchy of values, a large majority of the respondents' value family life, contacts with friends and entertainment above work (94.3% of responses). Most of the respondents (90% of responses) consider a possibility of achieving work-life balance as an incredibly important factor in choosing an employer. Female and male respondents share the same view on both above issues.

The attitude of the students to occupational mobility is also noteworthy. More than a half of respondents (52.1%) are ready to go abroad for good to change their job for a better one. Out of the remaining group, 37.2% of respondents are undecided and only 10.7% claim to be definitively unwilling to go abroad for good to change their job for a better one. It must be noted that 71.4% women and only 45.7% men claim to be willing to go abroad for good to change their job for a better one. Men dominate in the group of undecided respondents (40% of responses). Less than one third of women (28.6% of responses) are undecided and there are no responses rejecting the possibility of going abroad.

4.3 Working Conditions

The next analyzed group of factors was designed to define the most optimum conditions for a current student to start a job. Those factors are workplace, work system (Table 3) and type (method) of work.

The most preferred workplace is a medium-sized enterprise (53.6% of responses). The workplace with the second the greatest number of responses is a micro- or small enterprise (22.1% of responses). Curiously enough, medium-sized enterprise was more often listed as a desired workplace by men (62.8%) while women preferred employment at micro- or small enterprises (31.4% of responses).

Table 3. Preferred form of working time organization (1 most accurate answer)

Description		Gender		Overall
		Woman	Man	
An eight-hour working day and not a minute longer	Number	8	10	18
	%	22,8	9,5	12,9
Non-standard working time - I appreciate flexibility and the ability to adjust working hours to private life	Number	14	48	62
	%	40	45,7	44,3
Task-based work system - if I manage to complete tasks earlier, I want to be able to leave work and not sit for 8 hours	Number	10	45	55
	%	28,6	42,9	39,2
Work at home	Number	3	2	5
	%	8,6	1,9	3,6

Source: Own creation.

As for the preferred work type (method), most of the respondents would like to run their own business in the future (52.8% of responses). Ranked second was teamwork which entails contacts with other people (20% of responses). Study results also show

that the respondents (whether women or men) are completely uninterested in working in managerial positions and in scientific research (0% of responses for both). Analysis of the above data accounting for sex of the respondents reveals certain discrepancies. Both women and men consider running their own business as the most preferable option (54.3% and 52.4% of responses, respectively) but a relatively large percentage of women also specified subordinate work (37.1%) as the preferred work type (method), which was highly unpopular with men (just 4.8% of responses).

4.4 Remuneration and Motivation

It is very important in the context of solving the main study problem of this paper to determine which remuneration and motivation system is the most desired by students. Achieving this required considering several factors during the study, such as: the preferred remuneration system (Table 4), financial expectations, non-salary benefits and work motivation factors.

Analyses of the most desired remuneration system clearly shows that young people currently prefer work that offers fair, regular, monthly income. They are not satisfied with work where money is satisfactory but not necessarily regular. A vast majority of the respondents (66.8%) specified salary supplemented with a bonus-based intensive system as the most desired remuneration system. Categorization of the above data by sex of the respondents yields results like the average population-wide results.

Table 4. Preferred remuneration system (1 most accurate answer)

Description		Gender		Overall
		Woman	Man	
Hour salary	Number	1	15	16
	%	2,9	14,3	11,4
Piece pay	Number	3	9	12
	%	8,7	8,6	8,6
Basic salary + incentive bonus system	Number	26	67	93
	%	77,1	63,8	66,4
Commission fee	Number	0	0	0
	%	0	0	0
Basic salary + wide range of social benefits	Number	5	14	21
	%	14,3	13,3	15

Source:
creation.

Own

Analyses of the most desired remuneration system clearly shows that young people currently prefer work that offers fair, regular, monthly income. They are not satisfied with work where money is satisfactory but not necessarily regular. A vast majority of the respondents (66.8%) specified salary supplemented with a bonus-based intensive system as the most desired remuneration system. Categorization of the above data by sex of the respondents yields results like the average population-wide results.

As far as expectations towards the level of pay are concerned, a vast majority of respondents (86.5%) would like to make more than EUR 700, with 47.9% of the respondents choosing the brackets above EUR 1000. Slightly higher expectations as to remuneration are expressed by male students – 52.4% of them would like to make more than EUR 1000, while pay within the EUR 700-1000 range is satisfactory for 39% of respondents. For female respondents, pay within the EUR 700-1000 range is satisfactory for 37.1%, while 34.4% would like to make more than EUR 1000.

The most valued extra benefits offered by employers are company car for private use (51.4% of responses), extra medical care (47.1% of responses) and co-financing of leisure (41.4%). We can say that all the non-salary benefits listed in the survey were met with substantial interest of the students, as evidenced by the fact that the lowest-ranked co-financing of sports and leisure received 22.9% of responses. The distribution of results categorized by sex of the respondents is interesting here as it differs considerably from the average results for the whole population. A vast majority of female respondents (71.4% of responses) chose co-financing of leisure, followed by company car for private use (60% of responses), with extra medical care coming third. Things are different for male respondents, who valued company car for private use and extra medical care the most (48.6% of responses each), ranking additional insurance second (47.6% of responses) and upskilling and financing of training third (38% of responses).

As to the top work motivation factors, for a vast majority of the respondents, high performance-based pay went together with growth and promotion prospects (76.4% of responses each). The next spots in the ranking are occupied by the superior's feedback in the performance review (23.6% of responses) and by rewards and praises (16.4% of responses), with personalized benefit packages for talents as the option that appeals to the respondents the least (only 6.4% of responses). The survey results are similar when it comes to classification of respondents by sex.

4.5 Management and Performance Evaluation

The next stage of the study was to define the work management method that was the most suitable for the students and to define the most effective way of evaluating performance. To complete that study task, we decided to analyze the expectations students had towards their future boss and identify the characteristics that are appreciated the most. The paper further defines the performance evaluation forms and frequency most preferred by the students.

According to the survey, the respondents expect the following from their boss: open and honest communication (72.9% of responses), fair and objective performance evaluation (53.6%, of responses) and provision of good working tools (47.1% of re-

sponses). It also important for a boss to clearly set tasks and communicate expectations (42.5%), led by example, be respect worthy and trustworthy (34.3%) and aid and support in task execution (32.1%). Regular and quick feedback is less expected from a boss (17.1%). As far as performance evaluation form and frequency is concerned, most of the students (both women and men) prefer dialogue-based evaluation of competencies (66.4% of responses), and praises expressed face-to-face and in front of colleagues (37.9% of responses). E-mails with praise sent with copy to others were the least popular with the respondents (15.7% of responses). According to the respondents (both women and men), performance should be evaluated at least once a month (32.9% of responses).

4.6 Characteristics of a “Dream” Job

The next stage bringing us closer to solving the main study problem of this paper was to define the most desired characteristics of the future job of a student. Comprehensive understanding of the issue requires a multifaceted approach; therefore, the study work was not limited to identifying the factors characterizing (according to students) a good job, but it also involved establishing the approach of the respondents to the issue of changes and to occupational mobility, and explored the factors underlying the employee’s attachment to the workplace.

The students chose primarily high salary as the most desired characteristic of their future job – the response was chosen by 90% of the study population. Other matters valued by the respondents were: good workplace atmosphere (72% of responses), growth and self-realization possibilities (58.1% of responses), flexitime (48.6% of responses) and promotion prospects (27.9% of responses). According to the respondents, the following factors contributed to a positive image of a future job the least: recognition from the superiors (2.9% of responses), lack of boredom and monotony (3.6% of responses), a competent and understanding boss and a challenging job (7.9% of responses each).

From the perspective of a study of the expectations of students towards work and the employer, the attitude of those young people to the issue of changes is important. It is hard to clearly determine their attitude to those issues because the respondents’ opinions on this topic were divided. If we break the study problem down to component parts, it turns out that over a half of the respondents (59.2%) were afraid of frequent job changes and almost just as many (52.9%) expect stability, peace of mind and job security.

On the other hand, almost a half (40.8%) of the respondents were ready to change their jobs often and almost as many (47.1%) expected changes, interesting and exciting events, and risk in their future job. If we divide the respondents by sex, we can notice that more than half of the female respondents (54.3%) were afraid of frequent job changes and almost just as many (51.4%) expected changes, interesting and exciting events, and risk in their future job.

According to the students, the factors that determine an employee's attachment to a workplace the most are: high salary (59.3% of responses), good workplace atmosphere (52.1% of responses) and stability, peace of mind and job security (40% of responses). Curiously enough, only 1.4% of the respondents, who are natural representatives of the "Web generation", listed access to social media as a factor important in building loyalty to the workplace.

4.7 Career Development

The concluding element of the study work was to define what career development model was the most desired by a student. We approached this study task by first determining the factors that currently contributed to finding a good job and the most important assets of the respondents which might prompt quick development of their careers. Next, we defined a set of characteristics describing a model career path of a student and established the student's vision of his or her future job and career development (Table 5).

According to almost a half of the respondents, practical skills were the decisive contributing factor to finding a good job (47.9% of responses). Next, the respondents listed job experience (26.4% of responses), and connections, "contacts" (11.4% of responses), with higher education coming last (8.6% of responses). The structure of responses changes slightly if we take the sex of the respondents into account. Respondents of both sexes (60% of women and 43.8% of men) considered practical skills as the top contributing factor to finding a good job. Differences arose as to the second factor, which was higher education (20% of responses) according to women. Men declared that the most important contributing factor to finding a good job was job experience (30.4% of responses), putting higher education last (4.8% of responses).

Table 5. *Desired characteristics of career development (3 most accurate answers)*

Description		Gender		Overall
		Woman	Man	
Vertical promotion	Number	2	24	26
	%	5,7	22,9	18,6
Safety and stabilization of employment	Number	22	48	70
	%	62,9	45,7	50
Work-life balance	Number	13	39	52
	%	37,1	37,1	37,1
New challenges	Number	0	18	18
	%	0	17,2	12,9
High material position	Number	25	52	77
	%	71,4	49,5	55
Acquiring new experiences	Number	13	35	48
	%	37,1	33,3	34,3

A sense of accomplishment	Number	6	27	33
	%	17,1	25,7	23,6
Job satisfaction	Number	9	39	48
	%	25,7	37,1	34,3
Continuous improvement of competences	Number	12	21	33
	%	34,3	20	23,6
Level promotion	Number	3	12	15
	%	8,7	11,5	10,6

Source: Own creation.

To establish what career development model is the most desired by a student, we should also consider the respondents' opinions about themselves. Asked to list their main assets which they expected to help them in quick career development, the students usually listed: efficient task performance, provided that the tasks were consistent with their interests and values (80.7% of responses), the desire to travel and meet new people (60.7% of responses) and teamworking skills (42.9 of responses). Paradoxically, only 7.1% of the respondents claimed to prefer electronic communications to direct communications, which – considering the omnipresence of the Internet and mobile phones in every aspect of life of contemporary young people – seems to be quite startling. If we divide the respondents by sex, women listed the following as their assets, the desire to travel and meet new people (77.1% of responses), efficient task performance, provided that the tasks were consistent with their interests and values (68.6% of responses) and openness to changes and quick pace of life (60%). Men usually listed the following as their main assets: efficient task performance, provided that the tasks were consistent with their interests and values (84.8% of responses), the desire to travel and meet new people (55.2% of responses) and teamworking skills (46.6% of responses).

According to the students, the most desired characteristics describing career development were good financial status (55% of responses), job security and stability (50% of responses) and the possibility of work-life balance (37.1% of responses).

5. Discussion of Study Results

To ensure maximally transparent presentation of results, the whole content was divided into six categories directly arising from the specific objectives adopted at the beginning of the study work.

The value system of the respondents did not considerably differ from the hierarchy of values of young people from Generation Y as presented in the pre pandemic research papers. According to the students, the most important values in life were family, work, and love. Other things they considered as important were money, happiness, and integrity, honesty, and truthfulness. In contrast, the values listed in literature as the main “pillars” of the inner world of a statistical “Y” are on the one hand personal and affiliation values, such as family life, happiness, love, and friendship,

and on the other hand a well-paid job, treated as a prerequisite for a prosperous, pleasant, and interesting life and as a source of personal satisfaction (Yeaton, 2008; Stanimir, 2015; Mos *et al.*, 2018).

The respondents described themselves primarily as family-loving, ambitious and persistent, honest, intelligent, and respectful. This image contradicts the image of a young man currently entering the labor market as presented by the media and even by some scientific periodicals. They present those people as convinced of their own uniqueness, highly confident, egocentric and demanding. Another quality often associated with Generation Y is impatience, which is not confirmed in the present study either. In contrast, full consistency with the trends presented in the pre-pandemic literature can be observed in the aspect of the respondents' attitude to traditional values, such as religion and nation, with which the students, just like their Polish and international peers, feel no connection.

Students work mainly to make money to finance and pursue their hobbies. It is an additional bonus if the work can be a source of satisfaction and motivate them to continue to grow. A vast majority of the students' value family life, contacts with friends and entertainment above work. They consider a possibility of achieving work-life balance as an incredibly important factor in choosing an employer. Just like most Generation Y representatives, the students do not express much attachment to the workplace, which is why more than a half of them declare to be ready to go abroad for good to change their job for a better one. It can be easily noticed that the students' attitude to work presented above is 100% consistent with the pre-pandemic trends observed in both the Polish and international literature on the subject.

In the light of our research, Generation Y representatives, unlike their parents, "work to live". Work occupies quite an important place in the lives of those young people because it is a means to a prosperous life and to pursuit of their interests and hobbies. It must be noted that work is not a primary goal in the lives of Generation Y representatives, who value successful personal lives, family, friendships, hobbies, entertainment, pleasures, and free time over professional success. Hence the importance of work-life balance in their lives.

The desire of Generation Y to preserve work-life balance is also reflected in the expectations of the students towards the working conditions. Their most preferred workplace is a medium enterprise. They are almost completely uninterested in working for a corporation or a government agency/institution, which is mainly due to the low salaries and inflexible work management in those places. As an important reason of young people's disinterest in working for large enterprises and concerns, we can list the fear of becoming "sucked in by the corporations", which will limit their freedom and growth prospects, and deprive them of job satisfaction and of the opportunity to be themselves. They prefer flextime at work to remain flexible and to be able to adapt the working hours to their private lives. They can attain this by being

self-employed and running their own business, which is why this has been specified by the students as the most preferable work type (method).

The respondents prefer a job that guarantees fair, regular monthly income. They are not satisfied with work where money is satisfactory but not necessarily regular. The students prefer remuneration that consists of a guaranteed basic salary supplemented with a diverse bonus-based incentive system. Such a remuneration system motivates employees and allows the employer to individually approach the achievements of every employee. In their future jobs, the students expect a minimum salary of EUR 700, preferably above EUR 1000. The most valued extra benefits offered by employers are company car for private use, extra medical care, and co-financing of leisure. The top work motivation factors for the students are high performance-based pay and promotion prospects.

Expectations of the students as regards management and performance evaluation are also consistent with the pre-pandemic preferences of Generation Y. Young people do not accept a traditional model of a superior who gives orders, monitors their execution, and follows the principle of subordination. So, what the respondents expect the most from their future boss is: open and honest communication, fair and objective performance evaluation, and provision of good working tools. Due to their high self-esteem, sense of uniqueness, and need for recognition and appreciation, Generation Y employees generally poorly cope with direct criticism, which is why their performance should be evaluated through coaching, where their superior would list, in a casual conversation, the strengths and weaknesses of their performance and give guidance on how to remedy the shortcomings.

It must be borne in mind that young people are the Web Generation, used to immediate feedback, which is why superiors should assign them short-term tasks to evaluate performance immediately after their completion and give feedback along with all the rewards due, both financial and non-financial ones. Those theses are confirmed in this study, where the respondents indicated dialogue-based evaluation of competencies and praises expressed face-to-face and in front of colleagues as the preferred evaluation method. The respondents stated that performance should be evaluated at least once a month.

As Don Tapscott rightfully noted in his *Grown-Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World?* one of the most fundamental characteristics describing Generation Y is “personalization”, i.e., adapting the surroundings (including the working conditions) to their own needs. This trait highly contributes to the image of the “dream” job of the Ys, which is a projection of their needs, priorities, value system and lifestyle. Following this line of thinking, a job of a young man from Generation Y should be characterized by high salary, friendly atmosphere, and flexible working time, it should offer growth and self-realization possibilities and guarantee peace of mind and job stability. The study results presented in the paper fully confirm this thesis. According to the respondents, the most desired characteristic of a future

job is high salary, but they also value a good workplace atmosphere, growth and self-realization possibilities and flextime. In their opinion, a job should offer not only a good salary, but also a feeling of stability, peace of mind and job security.

The respondents believed that practical skills were the primary contributing factor to finding a good job. Quick career development was expected to be prompted by such characteristics as efficient task performance, openness, and occupational mobility, as well as teamworking skills. Quick learning and use of modern technologies are substantial assets of young people. The participating students associated their career development with achieving a high financial status, job security and stability and a possibility of work-life balance. They also considered it important to draw satisfaction from their job, gain new experience, continuously improve their competencies, and find fulfilment. This career development model is fully consistent with pre-pandemic trends characterizing a Generation Y employee.

The study results presented above make it possible to conclude that a Polish young man currently entering the labor market is fully aware that a traditional career model based on developing and pursuing the same profession in the same workplace until retirement is a thing of the past. The respondents understand that career is nowadays determined by the trend of lifelong learning and growth, and professional success requires continuously developing one's skills and gaining new ones, as needed by the labor market.

To sum up, Polish students would like their future jobs to be interesting and consistent with their interests and competencies. A job must entail a decent salary that will allow them to live a prosperous life and pursue their hobbies. Good workplace atmosphere and a possibility of work-life balance are more important than promotions and classic career. Many students see opening their own business and self-employment to those ends.

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