



PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR YOUNG ADULTS – RESEARCH REPORT

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Abstract. This article aims to present selected results of two preliminary studies on professional careers in the opinion of young adults (with particular emphasis on the perception of this category by young women) who are aged 18-35 (at the stage of early adulthood). The study used the diagnostic survey method, in which the questionnaire technique was used, and the research tools were two survey questionnaires, which were completed by 132 people in total. The results of the presented research have shown that for young people at the stage of early adulthood, a professional career is a significant category – important in the hierarchy of their values, which they understand primarily as professional development, professional self-realization, successes and professional achievements, but also its implementation is for them source of income. Young women associate it especially with the financial aspect (with their economic independence). Although at the current stage of life, the respondents most often declare that both their professional career and the role of a parent are equally important to them, they do not pursue them to the same extent (the vast majority are currently childless).

KARIERA ZAWODOWA I JEJ ZNACZENIE DLA MŁODYCH DOROSŁYCH – KOMUNIKAT Z BADAŃ

Słowa kluczowe: młody dorosły, młoda kobieta, wczesna dorosłość, kariera zawodowa, wyniki badań

Streszczenie. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest ukazanie wybranych wyników dwóch badań wstępnych dotyczących kariery zawodowej w opinii młodych dorosłych (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem postrzegania tej kategorii przez

młode kobiety), którzy znajdują się w przedziale wiekowym 18-35 lat (na etapie wczesnej dorosłości). W badaniach posłużono się metodą sondażu diagnostycznego, w obszarze której wykorzystano technikę ankiety, a narzędziami badawczym uczyniono dwa kwestionariusze ankiety, które łącznie wypełniły 132 osoby. Rezultaty przedstawionych badań ukazały, że dla młodych, znajdujących się na etapie wczesnej dorosłości, kariera zawodowa jest znaczącą kategorią – ważną w hierarchii ich wartości, którą rozumieją przede wszystkim jako rozwój zawodowy, samorealizację zawodową, sukcesy i osiągnięcia zawodowe, a jej realizacja stanowi dla nich źródło dochodów. Młode kobiety wiążą ją zwłaszcza z aspektem finansowym (z własną niezależnością ekonomiczną). Mimo iż na obecnym etapie życia badani najczęściej deklarują, że zarówno kariera zawodowa, jak i rola rodzica są dla nich równie ważne, to jednak nie realizują ich w takim samym zakresie – są bowiem przeważnie aktywni zawodowo, ale bezdzietni.

Introduction

The issue of professional career is present in discussions among representatives of various scientific disciplines, as well as in everyday conversations among diverse social entities, one of them being young adults. Young adults are individuals who, considering the developmental stages of human life, find themselves in a stage called “early adulthood”¹, which is considered the beginning of a new stage of life. It is noted that the “troubles” of adolescence have already been experienced, and young people strive to achieve psychological maturity to face the challenges of adulthood. It is a time when they can pursue their own lifestyle and determine their place in the surrounding world. Previously, they only outlined their plans and contemplated what they wanted to do with their lives, but now they can make their intentions come true. It is a period of making important decisions, establishing one’s place in society, planning, and shaping one’s own professional career (Turner, Helms, 1999).

Professional career is a multifaceted category. The multifaceted nature of the career concept has been highlighted by Douglas Hall, among others, who proposed four perspectives on it. According to the author, career can be understood as: 1) engaging in a particular profession; 2) advancing or progressing; 3) a sequence of work experiences throughout one’s life; 4) a sequence of individual’s

¹ It is difficult to specify exact time frames for the period of early adulthood, as in addition to achieving biological maturity, one should also look at the level of development and individual activity of the unit. The most commonly used divisions indicate that it begins between the ages of 18 and 22 and ends between 30 and 35. Therefore, for the purposes of this article, early adulthood is located between the ages of 18 and 35.

role-related experiences – this is the broadest concept encompassing any activity in which a person is involved (cited in: Krause, 2012). The understanding of career is closely related to the values recognized in a given society. Currently, there is a significant emphasis on individualism, personal development, and the well-being of each individual. Therefore, values such as a sense of satisfaction and self-realization are important. This perspective aligns with the contemporary understanding of professional career, which is associated with the main direction of an individual's development, determined by the conscious sense of purpose of that particular individual and the assumption they have adopted to pursue throughout their life. Career is presented as personal ownership rather than merely a characteristic of a specific occupation or organization. It has a longer time horizon than the choice of profession and job execution (Bańka, 2004, 2005, 2007; Korcz, Pietrulewicz, 2003).

Contemporary careers have a subjective nature as they belong to someone and represent an individual's possession of certain experiences (at least in a mental sense). They are not merely a sum of objective achievements, nor are they solely about the occupation itself. Increasingly, professions serve as a context in which a particular career unfolds (Bańka, 2005). As Beata Jakimiuk rightly points out, “contemporary careers, constructed independently by individuals, depend to a large extent on their activity and readiness for change” (2017, p. 86). Career and professional success are particularly important for individuals who do not view their professional work solely as instrumental (merely a source of income and a means to meet basic needs) but primarily as a form of life self-realization (as an end in itself). This is an autotelic approach – professional work becomes a source of joy, satisfaction, a path to self-fulfilment, and an activity with which one can personally identify (Krause, 2018).

Career can also be viewed from an ideological and moral perspective, meaning it can have various dimensions and signify societal models of life success that guide human actions (ideological dimension of career), which are subject to evaluation in terms of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ (moral dimension of career) (Bauman, 1960). In everyday understanding, this term often carries a pejorative connotation, as reflected in the meaning of the word “careerist” (someone who seeks career advancement without regard for moral and social principles), or a clearly positive connotation, as exemplified by the phrase “to make a brilliant career” (Krause, 2012).

Aleksy Pocztowski, through a comparison of selected career development concepts, identified three typical phases of career progression: early, middle,

and late. However, considering the period in an individual's life that encompasses the preparation for work, he expanded his proposal to include a fourth phase. Thus, according to Pocztowski, a universal model of professional career development (understood as a pattern of occupational development) consists of four stages:

- 1) Career preparation (0–25 years of age) – corresponding to the individual's life stages such as childhood and adolescence.
- 2) Early career (18–35 years of age) – coinciding with early adulthood.
- 3) Middle career (35–55 years of age) – referring to middle adulthood.
- 4) Late career (50 years of age to retirement) – this stage aligns with late adulthood (Pocztowski, 1998, 2007).

Young adults are primarily concerned with the second and partly the first stage. The career preparation stage is where education, development of interests, consideration of career options, and the creation of a personal career vision take place. In the early career stage, there is the selection and learning of a profession, job offers, entering the professional world, gaining professional experience, familiarizing oneself with the functioning of organizations, forming a specific career orientation, and achieving initial career goals. It is also during this period that individuals shape their own lifestyle and actions, take on new roles (organizational, marital, familial, social), and often experience disillusionment associated with the transition from the school environment to the work environment (Pocztowski, 1998, 2007).

Based on the aforementioned considerations, it is evident that issues related to professional career are of particular interest/relevance to young adults. They are at an age where professional work becomes highly significant. This is the stage when they initiate their careers and undertake their first paid jobs. As accurately noted by Stanisław Kaczor (citing Katarzyna Pawłowska-Salińska), “the first job holds special significance in the lives of young people. It is somewhat similar to the first love – it provides an experience that lasts a lifetime” (Kaczor, 2013, p. 49).

Fulfilling specific social roles, such as parenting, is also essential during early adulthood. Consequently, career is often examined in the context of family life and parenthood, particularly motherhood. Balancing professional work with caregiving responsibilities is a widespread phenomenon. In Poland, women are perceived as those obligated to care for children, and they bear a greater burden of these responsibilities than men. Consequently, combining professional and caregiving roles more significantly limits career development opportunities for

women than for men. Therefore, women are more interested in the issue of reconciling parenthood and professional work. However, it is important to emphasize that this applies to both genders. The presented results confirm that mainly young women participated in the research. Professional work has allowed and continues to allow women not only to achieve independence (especially in financial terms) but also to fulfil a new, alternative role in addition to the role of a mother – the role of a professionally fulfilled individual (Sikorska, 2009). Of course, women can still choose to fulfil themselves through motherhood (but it is not obligatory), yet professional work remains an important value for them, as confirmed by further research findings. Occupational activity constitutes a significant element of contemporary women's functioning, generating changes in both the labour market and the family (Szyszka, 2016), and it is an integral aspect of social life. Career and professional development opportunities are increasingly highly valued by women. However, this is an individual matter. As Ewa Krause points out, “a woman who achieves professional fulfilment is increasingly perceived by her surroundings as a full-fledged member of society who realizes herself in many spheres of life (not just as a mother, wife, or partner). Such a perception of women in Poland, although becoming increasingly common, is not the only one. A significant part of Polish society still associates being a woman with a kind of ‘addition’ to a man” (2018, p. 84). Therefore, educating society in this matter and supporting women is necessary. It is important to understand the significance they attribute to their professional careers. However, prior to that, the methodological foundations of the presented research and the characteristics of the participants were presented.

Methodological information and characteristics of the study group

The aim of the research was to explore the opinions of young adults, particularly young women, regarding their professional careers. The research problem revolved around the question: “How do young adults, especially young women, perceive their professional careers and what significance do they attribute to them?” This question indicates the exploratory and diagnostic nature of the research. Therefore, the formulation of research hypotheses was omitted (as there is not always a need for them). The research employed a diagnostic survey method, utilizing a questionnaire technique. Two survey questionnaires were used, and a total of 132 individuals completed them.

The research, conducted as part of a diploma seminar in March 2022, included individuals aged 18 to 35 from across the country. The sample selection was non-probabilistic, so it should be treated as preliminary (pilot) research, which can serve as a basis for further, more comprehensive studies and as a premise for initiating discussions on the perception of professional careers among young adults, especially young women. Below is a characterization of the surveyed population from two online surveys conducted by Klaudia Sokołowska and Oliwia Karwecka.²

In the first study, 100 respondents participated, among whom the vast majority (83%) were women. Nearly half of the respondents (46%) were between the ages of 24 and 29, and slightly fewer fell within the 18-23 age range (40%). Therefore, the majority (86%) were between the ages of 18 and 29, while only a few (14%) represented the 30-35 age group. Over half of the participants (53%) had a higher education level, and almost half (45%) had a secondary education. A small number of individuals had vocational or basic education (1% each). The majority were employed (71%) and lived in urban areas (74%). Nearly three-quarters of the respondents rated their family's material/financial situation as at least good (72%, including 11% as very good and 61% as rather good). Only a quarter of the respondents were parents, indicating that the majority (75%) were without children. Among those with children, the majority (68% of parents and 17% of the total) had one child, some (28% of parents and 7% of the total) had two children, and only one person had three children. Over half of the respondents (52%) were in partnerships, some declared being single (28%), and only a quarter were married.

The second study was conducted exclusively among 32 women aged 18-35, among whom nearly half (46.9% – 15 women) were in the 21-25 age range, and a quarter (8 women) were between 26 and 30 years old. The remaining participants were in the 18-20 (12.5% – 4 women) and 31-35 age groups (15.6% – 5 women). This age distribution is similar to the group indicated in the first study. Half of the young women had higher education, while the remaining respondents had secondary education (37.5%), vocational education (9.4%), or primary education (3.1%). The majority (56.3% – 18 women) were students. Most respondents (65.6% – 21 participants) were also employed. One respondent (3.1%

² Graduates of the pedagogy course (first level non-full-time studies) at the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz (the authors gave consent for their names to be publicized and for the presentation of their own research results).

of the total) was unemployed at the time of the survey. Additionally, among the participants, 8 respondents (25%) were identified as working and studying/learning simultaneously. The majority resided in urban areas (71.9%). Half of the respondents described their family's economic situation as good, just over a quarter (28.1%) as average, and slightly less than a fifth (18.8%) as very good. Only one respondent (3.1%) considered their family's economic situation to be poor. Only slightly over a fifth of them (21.9% – 7 respondents, including 2 with one child, 3 with two children, and 2 with three children) were mothers, indicating that the majority (78.1%) did not have this role. Regarding marital status, the majority (62.5%) were in informal relationships, while half of them declared being in formal relationships (31.3%), and only 6.2% were single. Both groups of respondents are similar in terms of the characteristics described.

The next part of the study presents selected results obtained from research conducted by K. Sokołowska and O. Karwecka as part of their bachelor's theses supervised by the author of this article. The research material was analysed in terms of:

- the understanding of the term “career” by young adults;
- associations related to professional career among the surveyed young women;
- the significance of a professional career for young adults in the context of their current hierarchy of values;
- the significance of a professional career for women aged 18–35, as perceived by the surveyed young women and its importance to them personally;
- the significance of fulfilment in a professional role (in the workplace) for the surveyed young adults and the importance of such fulfilment for the surveyed young women;
- the significance attributed to a professional career in relation to parenthood by the surveyed young adults and in relation to motherhood by the surveyed young women;
- opinions of the surveyed young women regarding the assessment of society in Poland concerning women who focus solely on their professional careers;
- self-assessment of professional achievements and the course of their professional career by young adults.

Research results

Professional career according to young adults

The researcher – K. Sokołowska, asked young adults to indicate their understanding of the term “professional career” (multiple-choice question). The responses of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Understanding of the term ‘professional career’ by young adults [N=100]

Specification	Number and % of responses
Professional development	89
Professional self-realization	80
Professional successes and achievements	80
Source of income	80
Promotion	38
Career progression	37
Rat race – “over dead bodies to the goal”	3
Achievement of professional goals at the expense of family life	3

Source: K. Sokołowska’s research (2022).

The most frequently chosen response regarding the understanding of the term “professional career” is professional development, selected by the vast majority of respondents (89%). A significant majority (around 80%) also indicated three other descriptions, such as *professional success and achievements*, *professional self-realization*, and *a source of income*. For over a third of the participants, a professional career means *promotion* (38%) or *the course of a professional journey* (37%). Only a few individuals (3% each) mentioned *the rat race – “stepping over others to achieve goals”* and *achieving career goals at the expense of family life*. One respondent added their own response, stating that it also means *providing financial security for the family*. Thus, the responses of young adults predominantly carry positive connotations related to the understanding of the term “professional career”.

In O. Karwecka’s research, she asked young women about their associations with the term “professional career.” The participants were able to select multiple

responses and/or provide their own answers. The responses of the participants are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Associations of the surveyed young women related to professional career [N=32]

Specification	Number of responses	% responses
Financial independence	29	90.6
Professional self-fulfilment and job satisfaction	25	78.1
Professional development	24	75.0
Improved financial situation	24	75.0
Professional achievements and successes	22	68.8
Career trajectory	17	53.1
Time constraint with family	12	37.5
Fatigue and stress	11	34.4
Rat race – „over dead bodies to the goal”	8	25.0
Pursuing professional goals at the expense of family life	6	18.8
Discrimination related to gender equality in the labour market	4	12.5

Source: Research conducted by O. Karwecka (2022).

To the vast majority of young women (90.6%), a professional career is associated with *financial independence*. For a significant majority, it also signifies *professional self-realization* and *job satisfaction* (78.1%), *professional development*, and *improved financial situation* (both 75%). Furthermore, the respondents largely associated a professional career with *professional achievements and success* (68.8%) as well as the *course of a professional journey* (53.1%). The obtained responses indicate that young women primarily associate a professional career with its positive aspects. Negative associations, such as *limited time with family* (37.5%), *fatigue and stress* (34.4%), *the rat race* (25%), *achieving career goals at the expense of family life* (18.8%), and *discrimination related to gender equality in the job market* (12.5%), were less frequently chosen by the surveyed participants. It is worth noting that both groups of respondents generally share a common understanding and associations related to a professional career.

The significance of a professional career and the importance of fulfilling oneself in a professional role for young adults

In the subsequent table (Table 3), the responses of young adults regarding their professional careers within the current hierarchy of their values are presented.

Table 3. Professional career in the current hierarchy of values among young adults [N=100]

Specification	Number and % of responses
Is the most important value	6
Is one of the important values	59
Is one of many values	27
Is not a significant value at all	6
Cannot determine	2

Source: Research conducted by K. Sokołowska (2022).

According to the above table, the majority (59%) consider their professional career as one of the important values in their hierarchy. A significant portion (27%) indicate that it is one among many values for them. Only a few individuals (6% each) assert that it is the most important value for some and not significant at all for others. Two individuals find it difficult to determine their opinion on this matter.

The subsequent question posed to young women pertained to the significance of a professional career for their gender and age group. The results regarding this topic are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The significance of a professional career for women aged 18-35 according to the surveyed young women [N=32]

Specification	Number of responses	% responses
A professional career is definitely important for them	12	37.5
A professional career is rather important for them	17	53.1
A professional career is rather unimportant for them	-	-
A professional career is definitely unimportant for them	-	-
I find it difficult to determine.	3	9.4

Source: Research conducted by O. Karwecka (2022).

The vast majority (90.6%) acknowledged that a professional career is a significant category for women in their age group, with more than one-third (37.5%) considering it as definitely significant and over half (53.1%) regarding it as rather significant. None of the respondents, however, perceived a professional career as rather insignificant or completely insignificant. Three participants found it difficult to determine the significance of a professional career for their age category. The respondents were also asked about the personal significance of a professional career for them. The results in this regard are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Significance of a professional career for the surveyed young women [N=32]

Specification	Number of responses	% of responses
A professional career is definitely important to me	17	53.1
A professional career is rather important to me	14	43.8
A professional career is rather unimportant to me	1	3.1
A professional career is definitely unimportant to me	-	-
I find it difficult to determine	-	-

Source: Research conducted by O. Karwecka (2022).

For almost all respondents (except one), a professional career is significant (96.9%), with over half (53.1%) considering it as definitely significant and a substantial portion (43.8%) considering it significant. The results of the research presented in Tables 4 and 5 indicate that a professional career holds significance for the respondents themselves, as well as in their opinion, for their gender and age group. However, when it comes to their own perspective, it is more frequently perceived as definitely important.

The subsequent Table 6 contains the respondents' answers to a single-choice question: *What significance does fulfilling a professional role (in one's professional work) have for you?*

Table 6. Significance of fulfilling oneself in a professional role (in the workplace) for the surveyed young adults [N=100]

Specification	Number and % of responses
Definitely significant	43
Rather significant	49
Rather insignificant	5

Specification	Number and % of responses
Definitely insignificant	1
I find it difficult to determine	2

Source: Research conducted by K. Sokołowska (2022).

The vast majority (92%) expressed a desire for fulfilment in their professional work, with nearly half (49%) considering it rather significant and a substantial portion (43%) considering it definitely significant. Only a few individuals declared that it is not important to them (6%, including only one who considered it definitely insignificant). Two individuals did not have an opinion on this matter.

The surveyed young women were also asked whether fulfilment in their professional role is important to them. The responses to this question are included in Table 7.

Table 7. Importance of fulfilling oneself in a professional role for the surveyed women [N=32]

Specification	Number of responses	% of responses
Definitely yes	15	46.9
Rather yes	15	46.9
Rather no	1	3.1
Definitely no	-	-
I find it difficult to determine	1	3.1

Source: Research conducted by O. Karwecka (2022).

For almost all (93.8%) of the surveyed women, fulfilment in their professional role is important, with the same percentage (46.9%) considering it definitely important and rather important. One respondent indicated that it is rather unimportant to her, and one had difficulty determining its significance. Therefore, the results of both studies once again demonstrate a similar pattern.

The significance attributed to a professional career in relation to parenthood by young adults, and to motherhood by young women

Given that the context of professional career development often takes into account family life, especially parenthood, young adults were asked about the significance they attribute to their professional career in relation to parenting. The results regarding this topic are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Significance attributed to a professional career in relation to parenthood by the surveyed young adults [N=100]

Specification	Number and % of responses
A professional career and parenthood are equally important	44
Parenthood is more important than a professional career	23
A professional career is more important than parenthood	23
I find it difficult to determine	10

Source: Study conducted by K. Sokołowska (2022).

The largest proportion (44%) of respondents indicated that both their professional career and parenthood are important to them. An equal portion of young adults (23% each) considered one of these areas to be currently more significant than the other. One in ten respondents stated that they have no opinion on this matter.

The surveyed young women were subsequently asked about the current significance of their professional career in relation to motherhood. The research results in this regard are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Significance attributed to a professional career in relation to motherhood by the surveyed women [N=32]

Specification	Number of responses	% of responses
Motherhood and a professional career are equally important	16	50.0
Motherhood is more important than a professional career	8	25.0
A professional career is more important than motherhood	5	15.6
I find it difficult to determine	3	9.4

Source: Research conducted by O. Karwecka (2022).

Half of the women surveyed consider motherhood and a professional career equally important. For one-fourth of the respondents, motherhood holds greater importance than a professional career, while for a portion of them (15.6%), a professional career is deemed more significant. Three respondents did not have an opinion on this matter.

Based on the above results, it can be observed that for the majority of young adults surveyed, including women, a professional career and parenthood are equally important. However, if they have to choose, they slightly lean towards motherhood. It is also noteworthy that a professional career is prioritized only

by women who do not wish to have children, constituting 15.6% of the total respondents. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the percentage of individuals who are parents aligns closely with the indications regarding the prioritization of this role over a professional career.

The opinion of young women regarding the assessment of Polish society towards the women who focus solely on their professional career

The respondents were also asked about their opinion on how society in Poland perceives the women who solely focus on their professional careers (those who do not want to start a family or fulfil the role of a mother). The data regarding this aspect are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Assessment of Polish society regarding the women who focus solely on their professional career according to the surveyed women [N=32]

Specification	Number of responses	% of responses
Definitely positive	1	3.1
Rather positive	2	6.2
Rather negative	12	37.5
Definitely negative	11	34.4
I find it difficult to determine/I don't know	6	18.8

Source: Research conducted by O. Karwecka (2022).

According to the respondents, women who solely focus on their professional careers are negatively perceived by society in Poland. The majority of the respondents (71.9%) hold this belief, with 34.4% considering them to be definitely negatively perceived and 37.5% believing they are rather negatively perceived. Some respondents (18.8%) do not have an opinion on this matter. Only three respondents believe that such women are viewed positively (3.1% as definitely positively and 6.2% as rather positively). Therefore, it can be inferred that, in the opinion of young women, Polish society holds a conservative approach to the role of women, preferring them to primarily be mothers, with family being the main priority in their lives.

Self-assessment of young adults regarding their own professional achievements and the course of their professional career

In the context of the discussed issues, it is also valuable to understand how young adults perceive their own professional achievements and career progression. The responses of the participants regarding the self-assessment of these achievements are presented in the subsequent Table 11.

Table 11. Self-assessment of young adults regarding their own professional achievements [N=100]

Specification	Number and % of responses
Definitely positive	9
Rather positive	61
Rather negative	5
Definitely negative	-
I have no opinion on this matter	8
The question does not apply to me – I am not professionally employed	17

Source: Research conducted by K. Sokołowska (2022).

A significant majority (70%) evaluate their past professional achievements positively, with 61% perceiving them as rather positive and 9% as definitely positive. Some respondents (17%) indicated that the question does not apply to them as they are not currently employed professionally, and a few individuals (8%) did not have an opinion on this matter. Only a small percentage (5%) expressed dissatisfaction with their achievements, describing them as rather negative. However, no one evaluated them as definitely negative.

The research author also inquired about the assessment of their own career progression among the young adults. The results regarding this topic are presented in the following Table 12.

Table 12. Self-assessment of young adults regarding the course of their own professional career [N=100]

Specification	Number and % of responses
Definitely positive	5
Rather positive	59
Rather negative	11

Specification	Number and % of responses
Definitely negative	1
I have no opinion on this matter.	10
The question does not apply to me – I believe I am not pursuing a professional career	14

Source: Research conducted by K. Sokołowska (2022).

The majority of the respondents (64%) evaluate their professional career progression positively, with 59% perceiving it as rather positive and 5% as definitely positive. Some participants (14%) indicated that the question does not apply to them as they believe they are not pursuing a professional career, and one in ten respondents was unable to assess their career progression. In comparison to the assessment of their own professional achievements, it can be observed that there are twice as many individuals dissatisfied with the progression of their professional career—11% evaluate this aspect as rather negative, and 1% as definitely negative.

Conclusions

The results of the conducted research reveal that for individuals in early adulthood, a professional career is a significant category and holds importance in their value hierarchy. Young adults are actively engaged in their professional lives and indicate that their professional work and the opportunity for professional fulfilment are important to them. They primarily understand a professional career as professional development, self-actualization, professional successes, and achievements, as well as a source of income. Young women especially associate it with the financial aspect, emphasizing their own economic independence. Therefore, respondents perceive a professional career in the context of both the process and the outcome. They generally evaluate their own professional achievements and the progression of their career positively. However, it is important to support them in order to enable their professional satisfaction at subsequent stages of their development. This is a task for pedagogy, which creates theoretical and methodological foundations for supporting human development at different stages of life, including supporting individuals in career development.

The research paints a relatively optimistic picture of young adults in terms of pursuing a professional career, which is one of the developmental tasks in early adulthood (92 out of 132 individuals are employed, accounting for nearly 3/4

of them – 70%). However, it reveals a pessimistic outlook regarding the fulfilment of the parental role (which applies to 32 out of 132 individuals, accounting for less than 1/4 of them – 24%) – the majority are currently without children (likely due to the postponement of procreative decisions based on the age of the participants, among whom only about every 7th person has reached the age of 30). Although they frequently declare that both a professional career and the parental role are equally important to them at the current stage of their lives, they do not pursue them to the same extent³. As Alicja Malina emphasizes, “decisions about having children should be linked to the represented value system. Typically, parenthood is associated with a decrease in marital satisfaction, the need to prioritize a professional career, and a deterioration in the family’s financial situation [...]. A young person is therefore forced to make choices and decide which roles are more important to them” (Malina, 2015, p. 561). Hence, supporting young adults is crucial. It is also important to note the negative societal attitudes towards women who solely focus on their careers, as recognized by the surveyed young women. This confirms that while women can pursue professional fulfilment, they cannot overlook their family roles, especially motherhood. However, it is essential to emphasize that women deserve the freedom to choose, and it is crucial to continuously sensitize society through education on this matter.

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³ The author of the article also delved into issues related to dilemmas and concerns of young adults regarding the combination of parenting, particularly motherhood, and career. However, this is not the subject of interest in this article. Therefore, the research findings on this topic will be presented in a separate text.

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