



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF ADOLESCENTS' VISION OF PROFESSIONAL LIFE

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ZNACZENIE SPOŁECZEŃSTWA INFORMACYJNEGO W KONTEKŚCIE WIZJI ŻYCIA ZAWODOWEGO ADOLESCENTÓW

Keywords: adolescence, work, professional life, civilization changes, information society

Abstract. The subject of this publication is the perception of the professional future by adolescents in the context of civilizational changes. The article is a report on the research carried out as part of the master's thesis. The author is looking for an answer to the question about the connections between civilizational changes and the perception of the professional future by young people. The study was conducted on a sample of 138 people aged 13-16 using the survey technique. The results of the research describe the ways of obtaining professional information by young people, as well as indicate some future professional preferences of adolescents.

Słowa kluczowe: adolescencja, praca, życie zawodowe, przemiany cywilizacyjne, społeczeństwo informacyjne

Streszczenie. Przedmiotem rozważań niniejszej publikacji jest postrzeganie przyszłości zawodowej przez adolescentów w kontekście przemian cywilizacyjnych. Artykuł stanowi raport z badań realizowanych w ramach pracy magisterskiej. Autorka szukał odpowiedzi na pytanie o powiązania łączące przemiany cywilizacyjne z postrzeganiem przyszłości zawodowej przez młodych ludzi. Badania przeprowadzono na próbie 138 osób w wieku 13-16 lat z wykorzystaniem techniki ankiety. Wyniki badań opisują sposoby pozyskiwania informacji zawodowych przez młodych ludzi, jak również wskazują pewne przyszłe preferencje zawodowe adolescentów.

Introduction

The choice of a career path is a milestone that every young person encounters. It is imperative that this decision is made responsibly, taking into account factors such as personal preferences and capabilities. Compared to representatives of previous generations, for whom the choice of profession was often simplified and usually dictated by external opportunities, today's youth stand before the open gates of the world. They have the option to choose a career path that diverges significantly from familial expectations. Moreover, they can also receive institutional support, for instance, in studying abroad.

The current transformations occurring in the labour market, such as technological advancements, the disappearance of existing professions and the creation of new ones, the emergence of short – and long-term trends, the “shrinking” of the world, etc., can have a dual impact on the professional lives of current and future workers. Observing contemporary realities, it is challenging to predict the eventual direction society will take. Young individuals, who are at the stage of designing their future career paths, often attempt such assessments. On one hand, youth, through almost unlimited access to media and information, may perceive various opportunities for personal and professional development within reach. On the other hand, however, the multitude of choices can be overwhelming, at least giving one a headache. In the worst case, it can overwhelm an individual and encourage passivity. The role of adolescents is to make a seemingly autonomous decision that will affect their future lives. Is it the right one? Have they utilized all available information and made proper considerations? Do they have a realistic basis for making a fully informed decision that leverages their potential? It is not the role of the author to answer these questions. The author has attempted to explore how the youth growing up in an information society acquire and evaluate knowledge on vocational topics and how this may translate into their vision of the future concerning the discussed themes. The author also wishes to highlight that young people should receive appropriate support in this area to reduce the stress and frustration associated with making a choice. It is possible to assist young individuals in achieving personal success, which, as we have seen on numerous occasions, has many names. Success is currently an ambiguous concept. It may be associated with holding a high position or achieving high earnings. However, in the author's view, it should primarily signify work that is consistent with one's personal and professional values. Success should also

mean performing work that utilizes individual capabilities, as well as providing satisfaction and fulfilment.

This article was developed based on the author's master's thesis. It deepens the presented theme and is enriched with further reflections; it has been constructed with the aim of providing a broader context of the discussed phenomenon, as well as enhancing its practical value.

The information society and the labour market

To better present the issue at hand, it is worthwhile to consider the very concept of the *information society*, which the European Commission describes as a specific “turning point” in the current transformations of communities (European Commission, 1997, p. 5). As Tomasz Goban-Klas points out, this term currently lacks a unified definition. It may prove significant to isolate the word ‘*information*’; it has become ubiquitous, universally accessible, and “all-powerful”. This is thanks both to inventions and the dynamic development of telecommunication techniques (Goban-Klas, 2005, p. 291). This development is so vigorous that currently, almost instant access to information is available to the vast majority of society, including young people. Returning to the terminological approach, the concept of the *information society* is defined by Tomasz Goban-Klas and Piotr Sienkiewicz as: “a society that not only possesses developed means of processing information and communication, but information processing is the basis of national income creation and provides a source of livelihood for the majority of society” (Goban-Klas, Sienkiewicz, 1999, p. 43). This definition points to the transformations that have occurred within society itself, as well as in the professional field. Due to the rapid development of technological availability, almost every aspect of an individual's life has changed, including professional life. The form and nature of the work performed are changing, as noted by Wojciech Januszko, who writes that society becomes informational “when the workforce consists mostly of information workers, and the majority of gross national income is generated within the broadly understood information sector” (Januszko, 2005, p. 30). Agnieszka Szewczyk similarly captures this definition. In her view, it is a society that “possesses rich means of communication and information processing, forming the basis for creating most of the national income and providing a source of livelihood for most people” (Szewczyk, 2007, p. 19).

From the definitions cited, it is clear that for people living in the information society, information and various channels of its transmission, such as digital

techniques, are often the most critical aspects of work, as well as the entire life of an individual. Kazimierz Krzysztofek and Marek Szczepański, in the definitional context of the information society, also emphasize developed means of communication and information processing processes, which are the basis of economic processes. However, they add that it is “a society in which information has found broad application in daily social, cultural, economic, and political life” (Krzysztofek, Szczepański, 2002, p. 170), highlighting the impact of current transformations on the life of nearly every individual. Regarding the development of the knowledge society, Jonathan Fitoussi notes that the individual’s living environment not only becomes highly automated but also undergoes continuous modernization. Current and future inventions or discoveries, as well as emerging new value systems, influence every aspect of daily life. Through scientific and technological progress, the lifestyle of individuals, as well as attitudes or career models, are undergoing transformations (Fitoussi, 2000, p. 22). It is important to emphasize that science has changed the traditional perception of career development solely as advancement in a given profession or a change of position in the company hierarchy. The ongoing transformations have created entirely new career concepts. Today, scientists highlight the importance of elements such as seeking the meaning of one’s role at work, professional development, and lifelong progress in work and learning. Currently, individuals do not want to be seen only through the material dimension of their work (Voivodeship Labour Office in Łódź, 2013, p. 7). As early as 1995, the European Commission warned that the current transformations not only increased access to knowledge and information but also “necessitated significant changes in terms of required skills and the work system” (European Commission, 1997, p. 5).

Among the main manifestations of the impact of the information society, one can include transformations in the nature of work as well as in the organization of production (European Commission, 1997, p. 5). When analyzing these factors, attention should be paid to the hallmark features of the information society, such as the utilization, transmission, production, storage, and retrieval of information (Konopka, 2006, p. 19-21). A number of characteristics are also listed by Marian Golka (2005, p. 259). It is worth focusing mainly on one of the features mentioned by the author: “the necessity of continual self-education in operating ever-changing and ‘improved’ digital devices and the readiness to be educated in this direction” (Golka, 2005, p. 259). Consequently, it may turn out that not everyone will be able to adequately adjust to the ongoing transformations. The pace of development somewhat forces people to continually deepen their

knowledge and follow trends. The contemporary individual should constantly evolve, deepen their knowledge, and be characterized by flexibility, which will allow them to adapt to the mechanisms governing the world in order to gain benefits. If an individual is unable to “keep up” with the course of events, they may face digital exclusion or a misalignment of qualifications and skills with the current market requirements. Discussions on the transformations of work have been available in the literature for years. As Zofia Dach (2008, p. 254) points out, “all technological changes influence the changes in the structure of demand for labour, especially in terms of qualifications”. It can also be observed that in certain fields that do not require special qualifications, transformations lead to the elimination of jobs. On the other hand, many sectors under their influence create vacancies that, in turn, require other, often higher, qualifications (Kryńska, 2015, p. 262-263). It is worth noting that, according to 2008 data, the pace of technological changes means that about 80% of currently used technologies become obsolete every 10 years, to be replaced by new ones. This results in the devaluation of both the knowledge and skills of workers (Voivodeship Labour Office in Łódź, 2008, p. 4). Moreover, there are justified concerns about the substitution of labour; however, as analyses from 2021 indicate, only 5-9% of all professions can be fully automated. Furthermore, analysts predict a significant increase in tasks and professions related to new technologies, including sectors such as service or services (Ćwiek et al., 2021, p. 36). It is also necessary to emphasize the high increase in the individuality of the current worker. More independent and varied actions are largely replacing routine tasks. As a result, not only the form of work changes but also the internal relationships in companies, characterized by an increase in the human factor. Currently, workers are therefore forced to adapt not only to technological changes but also to the conditions of work itself (European Commission, 1997, p. 5-6).

As mentioned earlier, analysing the literature on the subject, it is challenging to unequivocally demonstrate which direction current transformations will take. Consequently, it is not easy to prepare young people for the coming future. However, focus can be placed on the direction in which education should currently develop. A thorough analysis, based on the Jacques Delors Report, was conducted by Tomasz Warchoł. The author highlights various factors that support and enhance the educational process. Education should focus on teaching how to use knowledge tools, creating new educational concepts and solutions with the use of external institutions, expanding horizons through openness to the new and implementing projects in school practice, and creating education focused

on the broad development of each individual (Warchoł, 2022, pp. 217-220). The European Commission also notes that educational activities should focus on “restoring the beneficial effects of broad knowledge bases and developing employability” (European Commission, 1997, pp. 6-7). This can be achieved through certain general actions, classified by the above body, in the form of the following guidelines:

- Encouraging the acquisition of knowledge,
- Bringing schools and businesses closer together,
- Combating marginalization,
- Proficiency in the three languages of the European Community,
- Equal treatment of material investments and expenditures on education (European Commission, 1997, pp. 9-11).

Implementing these guidelines is undoubtedly also a task for education, which should foster the development of broad-based knowledge aimed at eliminating differences between the “knowledgeable” – those capable of adapting to economic transformations, and the “unknowledgeable” – those at risk of exclusion (European Commission, 1997, p. 6). The educational environment is not left without support in this area. In 2020, the European Commission issued a communication emphasizing the need for continuous professional development of teachers and trainers. As noted, teachers themselves highlight the “need to develop their competencies in teaching students with special educational needs, using digital technologies, and teaching in multilingual and multicultural classrooms” (European Commission, 2020, p. 11). Furthermore, education should focus on the international mobility of teachers, as well as students or trainers. This will expand access to various types of high-quality teaching methods that will meet the needs of students (European Commission, 2020, p. 12).

Returning to the professional aspects, certain characteristics of a desired worker can also be identified, which in themselves may serve as a guide for the direction of young people’s education. These are general traits that can be cultivated from the earliest years. As Piotr Szeliga states, with the dynamic development of information technologies, there is a significant increase in demand for workers characterized by the following features: independence, decisiveness, professionalism, a focus on lifelong learning, the ability to share knowledge, the capacity to sense trends, openness to changes, flexibility, and awareness of the cyclicity of phenomena and processes (Szeliga, 2007, p. 224). As Zofia Dach (2008, p. 260) points out, forecasting the demand for future professions is

not entirely possible because “many professions that will exist in the future are currently unrecognized, resulting from the permanent development of knowledge, new technologies, as well as from the dynamic development of human needs”. This statement further illustrates the unpredictability of transformations. It is worth mentioning that the author’s stance is not isolated. Radosław Malik also observes that current transformations “affect labour markets, among other things by changing the percentage of employment in sectors and industries, leading to the development of new professions, the transformation of existing professions, and the disappearance of specific types of gainful activities” (Malik, 2018, p. 137).

It is therefore not surprising that there have been transformations in the perception of the worker and their career path. Not so long ago, it was believed that an individual who frequently changes jobs is maladjusted, undisciplined, and complains about the entire surrounding world. Such a person was not viewed positively in the eyes of employers and often had trouble finding permanent employment. Currently, frequent job changes are quite common. The employment model of staying in one job for an entire lifetime seems to be somewhat unrealistic at present. Constant civilizational changes necessitate adaptation to labour market transformations if one wishes to remain competitive. The desire to change professions, openness to new trends, or even a thorough reconstruction of a career path indicate a flexible attitude towards change and the ability to manage one’s professional career effectively (Voivodeship Labour Office in Łódź, 2013, p. 79). To facilitate the transition of young people into the labour market, it would be worthwhile to develop certain personality traits in them, such as flexibility or a willingness to develop and learn. Among the most sought-after soft skills are adaptation and stress resistance, analysis and critical thinking, active learning, and insightfulness (Manpower, 2023).

Interestingly, as revealed by a study conducted by Manpower in 2008, just 15 years ago, IT workers or senior management did not top the list of the most sought-after professions in Poland, a trend that was noticeable in global results. According to the study, among the 10 most sought-after professions, one could list skilled manual workers, such as electricians, bricklayers, plumbers, and welders. Following them, among the desired workers were drivers, technicians, engineers, customer service staff, hotel and restaurant personnel, production workers, and sales representatives. The study also indicates that in Poland, the main reasons for staff shortages in the aforementioned sectors could be found in the education system’s lack of alignment with market needs and the migration of workers

abroad (Kurkowska, 2008, p. 15). Currently, as reported by the *Talent Shortage 2023* report, the most sought-after competencies are in IT and data analysis, sales and marketing, and technical skills. The greatest difficulties in acquiring new employees are experienced by the IT sector and technology companies, as well as the communications services sector (Manpower, 2023). Meanwhile, according to the *2023 Profession Barometer* study, 27 deficit professions were identified in Poland, such as construction carpenters and joiners, roofers and sheet metal workers; electricians, electromechanics, and electrical fitters; physiotherapists and masseurs; bus drivers as well as truck and tractor-trailer drivers; chefs; doctors; warehouse workers; automotive mechanics; construction installation fitters; bricklayers and plasterers; teachers of vocational training; teachers of general education subjects; teachers of vocational subjects; teachers in special schools and integration departments; operators and mechanics of earthmoving equipment; machining operators; caregivers for the elderly or disabled; nurses and midwives; accounting and bookkeeping staff; finishing work workers in the construction industry; psychologists and psychotherapists; construction labourers; independent accountants; welders; locksmiths (Voivodeship Labour Office in Kraków, 2022, p. 18-26). Based on this, a certain type of demand can be observed. On one hand, there are individuals with specific qualifications and practical skills (e.g., electricians, carpenters, welders, or roofers). On the other hand, there is a demand for highly qualified workers (e.g., doctors, psychologists, or teachers). Attention should also be drawn to the staff shortages in vocational education, which could translate into a lack of workers with practical skills. Nonetheless, certain trends in the market are noticeable; it would be worthwhile to examine the permanently deficit professions and consider the causes of this situation. However, these considerations are not the subject of this article.

In summary, the information society and the dynamic development of media offer numerous opportunities for directing one's own career path – from acquiring desired information, through various forms of education and obtaining qualifications, to facilitated contact with companies. They also provide young people with the chance to gain key information in the professional sphere and personal development. From another perspective, a young person without support, faced with such a wide choice and information about the unpredictability of the current world, may feel overwhelmed. It is therefore worthwhile to strive for education on how to responsibly use this source. Social media – in a certain context – can be dangerous, especially for a young mind. Not all information present there is true, just as not all of it is valuable. It is important to remember

that, although undoubtedly the use of social media is a significant convenience in the current world, it does not replace direct human contact. As mentioned earlier, we cannot unequivocally answer the question of where the contemporary world is heading. However, we can forecast which traits and skills are likely to help find one's way into it. Currently, workers should be prepared for changes and focused on versatility and continuous development – not only in terms of professional skills and substantive knowledge. A worker desired in the labour market should also focus on developing social competencies and soft skills, thanks to which they will be able to find their own career path.

Research results

The study was conducted in February 2023. The respondents were students aged 13-16, attending the eighth grade of primary school and the first grade of secondary school. The study involved 138 individuals, including 90 women (65.22% of the studied group) and 48 men (34.78% of the total respondents).

In formulating the research assumptions, the following main problem was defined: *What significance does the information society have in the context of adolescents' vision of professional life?* The aim was thus to find answers to how young people, living in the era of the information society, perceive professional life in relation to their own careers, as well as in a global understanding.

The purpose of this research was to provide information on how adolescents perceive their future professional lives, as well as the possible impact of external factors on their actions. For the analysis, the method of diagnostic survey was adopted. The technique used in the study was a survey technique, with a questionnaire as the research tool. It consisted of 24 questions that related to the respondents' perceptions of issues related to professional work. For the purposes of this publication, only part of the results is presented.

The analysis of the study showed that most respondents think about choosing their future profession (68.12%), while the smallest portion of them have already made a decision (13.04%). The research results indicate that most young people are in the phase of constructing their future vision of professional life. The smallest group has specific plans regarding their future profession. This may be related to their current developmental stage, where young people are only discovering their passions, interests, strengths, and predispositions. It may also be associated with an overload of information, which in turn leads to difficulty making decisions, as well as with a lack of information, which can make it hard

to discover one's own preferred career path. It is worth noting that only 15.94% of the respondents think about choosing a profession that is not popular in Poland. This could indicate that young people prefer professional models that are familiar to them.

In relation to the methods of acquiring knowledge about professions and future professional life, the respondents indicated the Internet as the primary source (47.10%), as shown in Chart 1. Information obtained at school, however, was only indicated as the fifth most common source (7.25%). Considering gender, young women (10%) showed a significantly higher degree of utilizing school information compared to young men (2.08%). The latter, in turn, indicated a significantly higher level of obtaining professional information from fathers than young women (respectively: 16.67% and 4.44%).

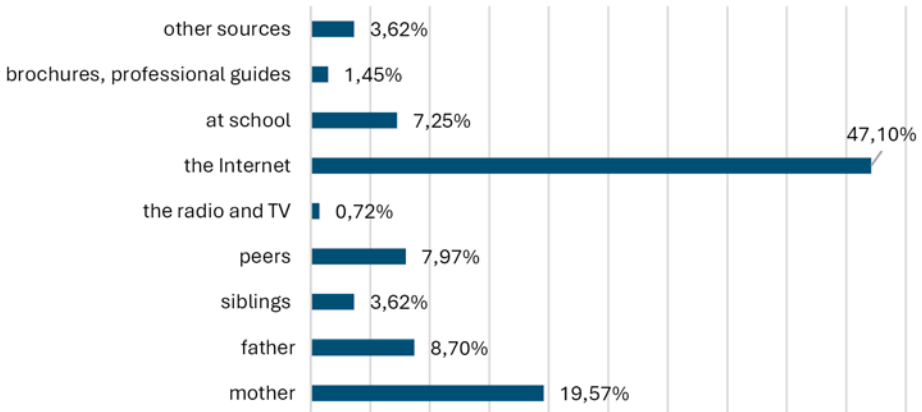


Chart 1. Sources of knowledge about professions and professional future ($N = 138$)

Source: Own research.

The data may indicate that young people most often acquire professional knowledge independently, using the Internet for this purpose. This aligns with the model of the information society, especially in its technological aspect, which talks about shaping society through the Internet and developing technology. Adolescents also significantly declare acquiring knowledge from family and other significant persons, who, in a sense, may serve as authorities for them.

In terms of non-professional information, frequent use of the Internet is declared by 93.48% of respondents. From the *Youth 2018* research report, it emerges that “students spend an average of over four hours online per day

(average = 4.31)” (Felisiak, Omyła-Rudzka, Bożewicz, 2019, p. 203). Interestingly, despite the widespread and very frequent use of the Internet, most respondents (60.87%) are unable to unequivocally assess the truthfulness of the professional information available in the media, as shown in Chart 2. The above data may indicate the complexity of the problem. In the media, one can find information that is true, false, and exaggerated. This thought is confirmed in the open responses of the respondents, who most often highlighted the following aspects: *lack of trust in the media; dependence on the source of information; sharing knowledge by experts; the possibility of learning opinions rather than facts; distortion of reality by the media; information is only meant to interest the recipient; underestimation or overestimation of statistics by the media*. The statements presented may indicate that, despite their young age, individuals living in the information society perceive a certain “greyscale” and are sensitive to aspects such as the reliability of sources.

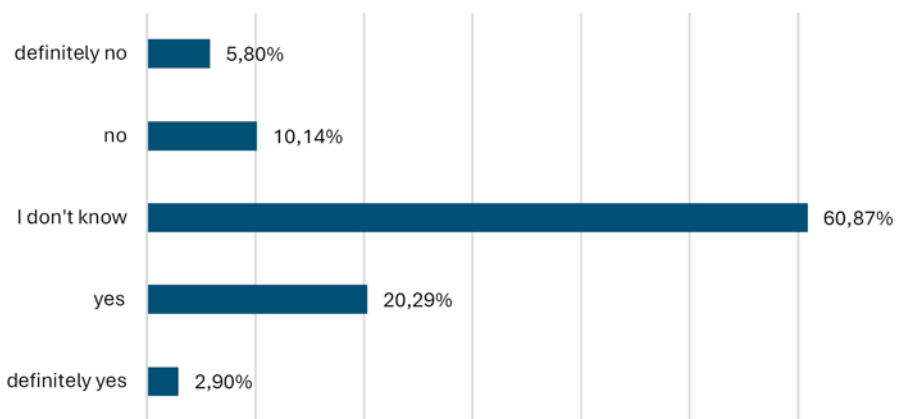


Chart 2. Occupational information conveyed in the media is true ($N = 138$)

Source: Own research.

Despite difficulties in assessing the information available in the media, most respondents (44.93%) declare that acquiring information on the discussed topic makes them more at ease about their own professional future. A smaller portion of the respondents (31.88%) are unable to make this statement. The fewest respondents (23.19%) believe that such information does not give them a sense of peace. These data may indicate that currently, young people, by acquiring professional information, on one hand, may be satisfied in this regard, which

leads to positive thoughts about this aspect of the future and facilitates the construction of an individual career plan. However, the high proportion of *I don't know* responses may also suggest that the abundance of information probably leads to difficulties in making a choice about one's own future. This result may also stem from the fact that by familiarizing themselves with information, myths or personal professional beliefs are somewhat debunked, influencing the decision to abandon a potential choice. Perhaps also due to access to new information, it is difficult for a young person to make a decision, as many paths appear attractive in their eyes.

Based on the information obtained, young people construct a vision of their own professional future. In relation to this vision, the majority of respondents indicate that it will involve running their own business (35.51%). In second place, respondents declare a desire to work in a private or public company (19.57%). The third place, according to the respondents' indications, was taken by the response *other* (14.49%). In this context, respondents most frequently pointed to specific life plans, which sounded as follows: *I will work in a calm place; I will be a soldier; I will be a lawyer; I will be a physiotherapist; I will play in a symphony orchestra; I will work where I feel good; I will be an athlete; I still don't know; I will establish my own institute and improve psychological help*. In fourth place, respondents indicated short-term work abroad (13.77%). Permanent work abroad was in fifth place, indicated by 7.97% of respondents. The sixth place (4.35%) was taken by work in the entertainment industry (Internet/television), followed by running a household (3.62%), and in the last place, respondents indicated working on a farm (0.72%).

The results show that a significant portion of adolescents, in the context of their professional future, think about starting their own business. This may indicate the high ambition of young people. They may not currently see a job position where they could find themselves, so they decide to create one independently. This could be related to the unpredictability of current times. They may also be motivated by earnings. According to a CBOS study from 2019 regarding plans to start one's own business, "three-fifths of respondents (60%) do not exclude such a possibility. Only every tenth respondent (10%) rejects the possibility of taking the risk associated with running their own business. Meanwhile, almost every third student (30%) cannot unequivocally assess whether they would ever be able to start their own company" (Boguszewski, 2019, p. 95).

Considering the gender criterion, young men, to a greater extent than young women, want to start their own business (45.83%), although, among women, this

is also the highest-rated response (30%). This may be related to men's greater tendency to take risks. Young men, more often than women, indicate a desire to work in the entertainment industry (respectively: 8.33% and 2.22%). Young women, on the other hand, think more about moving abroad permanently (respectively: 12.22% and 0.00%) and temporarily (respectively: 15.56% and 10.42%). Women also more frequently indicate working in a state-owned and private company (22.22%), although, among men, this response also scored high (14.58%). To illustrate the issue discussed, the above data is presented in graphic form (Chart 3).

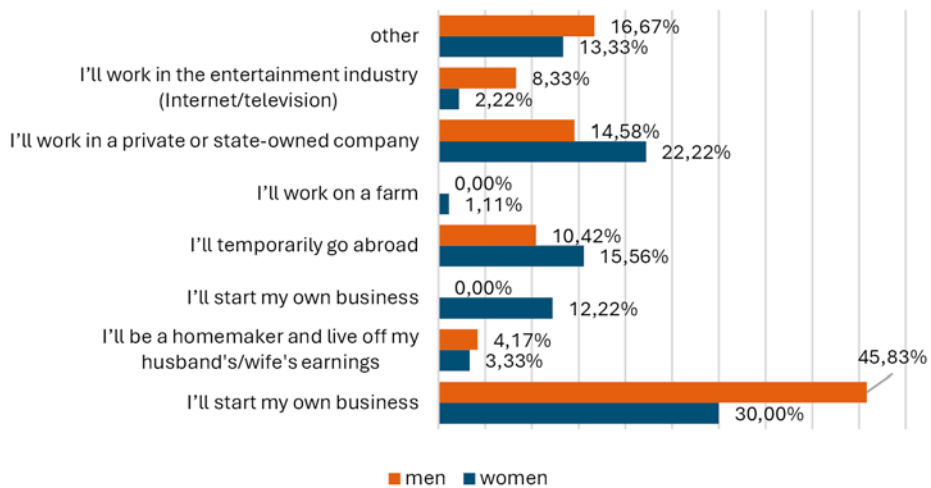


Chart 3. *In the future, my professional life will consist of...*

Source: Own research.

In relation to the older group of respondents, the reality is somewhat different. Among students and graduates – according to a 2021 study – 77.5% of respondents chose stable employment over self-employment (PwC, Well.hr, Absolvent Consulting, 2021, p. 12). In 2022, this figure was 74.1% (PwC, Well.hr, Absolvent Consulting, 2022). It can be observed that older individuals are less willing than younger ones to take the risk associated with running their own business. This may be the result of expectations clashing with reality; on the other hand, it could concern differences in views between generations.

For most respondents, the most important aspect of their future job is the opportunity to develop their interests (54.35%). The dream job for students and graduates is also one that develops passions – for 36.30% of respondents, this is an indicator of professional success (PwC, Well.hr, Absolvent Consulting, 2021,

p. 16). The possibility of making a career is ranked second by respondents, with a significantly lower result (19.57%). In third place, respondents indicated that their future job should present them with new challenges (13.04%). The next aspect indicated by the respondents is the possibility of independence in action (10.14%). In the last place, respondents chose “*other*” (2.90%), supplementing it with earning motives. The most frequently chosen response, related to developing one’s own interests, may be linked to previous data. Perhaps, by starting their own business aligned with their interests, young people, in their assessment, will be able to develop in this area while simultaneously obtaining financial benefits.

Conclusions

The research results presented in this article indicate the high level of autonomy among young people in acquiring professional information. Despite growing up in a society with wide access to information, they have certain difficulties in assessing the veracity of the available knowledge. This may point to the need for support from institutions such as schools or families. As the studies attest, despite the comprehensive use of the Internet, most respondents do not yet have fully concrete career plans.

This article encourages further research exploration regarding the lives of young people and the possibilities of providing them with optimal support – especially in the face of the unpredictability of the labour market. The topic of the presented studies is significant as it touches on the issues of young individuals entering adult life (personal, social, and professional). The publication also addresses the methods of their functioning within it and their knowledge about the surrounding world and the possibilities of its utilization.

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