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WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS OF YOUNG HUNGARIANS - DREAM OR REALITY?

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to present the career plans, job search ideas and expectations of PTE students towards employers. Our research question is: What are the most critical factors during the decision?

The research took place in the spring of 2022. The target group was connected in the framework of an online questionnaire survey. A total of 886 full-time students filled out the questionnaire.

According to the main results of the research, when looking for a job, they first want to apply directly to the employer and plan to look at job advertisements. The respondents would primarily work in the competitive sector, and even within that, most insurance companies prefer the financial and activity sector.

For students, the most important things regarding their future workplace are the appropriate salary, achieving a sense of success for themselves, the development and advancement opportunities, and the existence of a predictable career path.

Keywords: Employee branding, future workplace, PTE students, employee expectations.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the everyday sense, a career means something different to everyone. Someone sees it as a professional challenge, moving up the ranks. Someone else sees it as self-realization, the achievement of their own goals, and the continuous growth of professional knowledge and lifelong learning. In recent years, the motivational structure of employees and their expectations of the workplace have also changed. Consciously planning your career is extremely important at a young age if you want to avoid going with the flow.

At the centre of our research were active students of the University of Pécs; during the research, we focused on the career plans of our students and their expectations of employees. In our study, we present our main results, which relate to the job search habits of our students. We explain which channels young people use when looking for a job, whose advice they seek, whether they plan to work at home or abroad, which sector they prefer, and what expectations they have of their employer.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Researching the career plans and expectations of young people is an exciting field because employers need to know the needs of their future employees. However, these formulated goals or expectations are often uncertain or unrealistic.

2.1. Career plans of young people in the light of previous research

Gergely et al. (2016) think that most Hungarian university students do not know their career orientation and what motivates them in relation to work. The investigations completed by Fényes et al. (2021) confirm the facts mentioned above. When entering higher education, career-conscious students do not behave in a career-conscious way later on during their training. Furthermore, during higher education, their previous career goals are often reinterpreted.

Despite all of this, it is essential to know what is on the minds of young, future employees and their expectations so that prospective employers can prepare for their reception in time.

Csehné Papp (2016) asked 198 students in a questionnaire survey. From the results, we learn that more than half of the respondents (59%) want to find a job after graduation but continue their studies in parallel. 16% only want to work, 12% only plan to continue their education, and 13% are still unsure. Most students would like to work for a multinational organization rather than in the public sector.

Kömüves, Hollósy-Vadász and Szabó (2021) interviewed 223 people during their research. They found that young people seek some compromise when getting their first job. First, they try to find a job using their network of contacts (asking acquaintances and friends).

2.2. Expectations of young employees towards the future workplace

In addition to career plans, it is also worth looking at workplace preferences in light of previous research.

Based on Juhász és Terjék's survey experience in 2014, for the 20-25-year-olds surveyed, salary, the person of the manager, preferred working hours and other benefits were the most important factors regarding their future workplace.

During their research, Garai-Fodor, Jäckel and Nagy (2017) conducted 30 mini-focus interviews among university students. One of their primary research goals was to determine which factors play an essential role in young people's choice of workplace. One of the most important job selection criteria for the examined is salary and benefits. They also prefer flexible working. It is vital for them to have time for themselves in addition to work. What matters is the working atmosphere, the attractive working environment. They want a workplace where they can feel good while working and where there are opportunities for advancement. They are able and willing to work hard, but only if their efforts are recognized and rewarded.

Kömüves et al. (2021) found that remuneration, motivation, an inspiring work environment and the career opportunities offered by employers play a significant role in choosing a future workplace.

Every year, PwC assesses the job choice preferences of the Hungarian population along several dimensions. In their 2022 report, they believe that in the constantly changing, uncertain geopolitical and economic environment, the most crucial employee needs have changed significantly compared to previous years' results. Existential security became more important than work-life balance and meeting social needs. By examining the answers of university and high school students, it was found that the basic salary is the most important factor, followed by overtime payment and career opportunities.

Based on the summary of Zyntern.com's 2022 survey (Túri 2022), a competitive salary is the most important consideration for young people when choosing a job or commitment. Furthermore, it is essential for them if the employer recognizes exemplary performance and if there are development and career opportunities at the company.

As for the previous researches showed, the most important factors for young future employees are the salary, career opportunities, flexibility and work-life balance.

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

In this section, we show the data collection-related questions as well as the basic sample characteristics. Due to the nature of the analysis, we provide descriptive information related to the questions covering the labour-market expectations and future trends, such as job-seeking channels and influencing actors, domestic or international preference, targeted sector, and the list of expectations towards the future workplace.

3.1. Data collection

The questionnaire was finalised in the EvaSys software licensed by UP and sent to the students in a unique, non-anonymous message. The sent message contained a link to the questionnaire. Compliance with the relevant GDPR regulations is ensured by the data management declaration, which was reviewed and approved by the UP data protection officer. During the survey, we used temporary data linking, through which the students did not have to fill in the questions about faculty, gender, age, study programme, level of education, study form, financing, and language of education. After the end of the data collection, we connected the data stored in NEPTUN with the responses, after which the connecting key variable was deleted, so the data analysis was carried out on the anonymised database.

According to the research plan and rector's permission that launched the official survey, the research group handles the information generated during the data management of the online survey with the utmost care, strictly confidentially,

temporarily only to the extent necessary, and prevents unauthorised access to it by all legal means. Under no circumstances will the research team release any individually identifiable data it has come to know, including the original print version of the completed questionnaires or its recorded online record. With this method, the maximum data security and anonymity expected for online surveys can be ensured.

The period of the survey is April – May 2022, which includes three repeat mailings, as well as personal requests for the possibility of filling in the selected faculties.

3.2. The sample

The target group of the research is bachelor and master students studying at the University of Pécs (including Hungarian and English students). Based on the data of the NEPTUN study system, the number of active students in the 2nd semester of the academic year 2021/2022 (those who have an e-mail address), altogether 20,331 students consisted the basic population (4,078 Hungarian language-based programmes, and 16,253 in non-Hungarian language-based programmes). A total of 886 students completed the questionnaire, which corresponds to 4.4% of the total student population. 34% is male, which corresponds to the general gender distribution of the university. 81% of the answers come from Hungarian language-based programme participants, 60% is from the bachelor level. It is to be highlighted that the sample distribution is slightly distorted due to the high presence (48%) of respondents coming from the Faculty of Business and Economics.

3.3. Results

When looking for a job, they first want to apply directly to the employer (60%), and they plan to look at job advertisements (56%). In addition, the respondents also trust other personal acquaintances (47%) and the social media platform (43%). Basically, National Employment Service and lecturer recommendation are the least planned job-seeking strategies. Even starting an own business and becoming self-employed could be more realistic options for them. However, it can be also seen that the university has a relatively important role by offering tailor-made career services (Fig. 1).

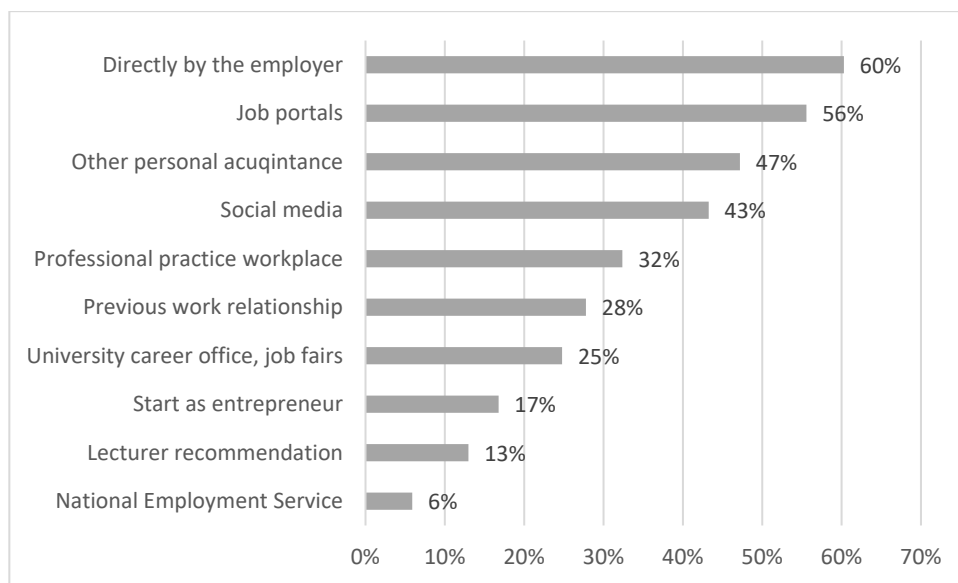


Figure 1: Job seeking channels
Source: Own elaboration

In the following table, it can be seen whose advice the students would ask for regarding their job search according to gender and age (Table 1).

Based on the results, we can conclude that the largest proportion of respondents would seek the help of acquaintances (73.1%) working in the given field and the advice of their family members (63.7%) or friends (56.7%) in relation to job hunting. In the smallest proportion, other actors were nominated, or none of the given options would be chosen in the event of a request for advice. Compared to the general job-seeking strategies, the lecturer's role is definitely more relevant.

The other non-categorised actors are:

- o partner of people living in a partnership, life partner
- o current and former colleagues
- o department manager, HR manager
- o employment websites

Table 1: Job-seeking suggestion

	n	Family members	Friends	Lecturers	Acquaintances working in the field	Career counsellor	Other	None of them
Gender								
Male	253	61.7%	62.5%	49.0%	67.2%	34.4%	1.2%	5.5%
Female	510	64.7%	53.9%	43.5%	76.1%	31.2%	1.6%	3.7%
Age								
25 years old or less	566	71.0%	59.0%	47.0%	74.0%	33.0%	0.9%	2.8%
26-30 years old	82	42.7%	57.3%	43.9%	70.7%	32.9%	1.2%	8.5%
31-45 year sold	100	42.0%	44.0%	40.0%	70.0%	26.0%	3.0%	9.0%
46 years old or more	15	46.7%	53.3%	26.7%	73.3%	40.0%	13.3%	6.7%
Total	763	63.7%	56.7%	45.3%	73.1%	32.2%	1.4%	4.3%

Source: Own elaboration

It is important to understand what sectors the students are targeting. 59.4% of them plan to work in the private sector, 30.3% in the public sector, while 10.3% in the non-profit sector. A higher proportion of men would like to work in the private sector (76.3%), while only 51.1% of women feel the same way. As age progresses, the preference for employment in the private sector decreases, and the desire to be employed in the public and non-profit sectors increases. 63.3% of the participants in the Hungarian language-based programmes would be employed in the private sector, while a higher proportion (46.1%) of the non-Hungarian language-based programme students would work in the public sector.

Altogether, 85% of respondents plan to work in Hungary, while only 15% plan to work abroad. The 46 years old or older definitely (100%) want to find a job in Hungary, probably because of the security, since people over 46 don't really plan to work abroad anymore, mainly because of their family or if they haven't worked abroad before, they won't in the future. More than half (53.3%) of the students participating in the non-Hungarian language-based programmes plan to work primarily in Hungary, and only 46.7% plan to work abroad.

Table 2: Workplace-related expectations

	Avg	Median	Mode	Std. Dev.
Expected salary, benefits, bonus	3.72	4	4	0.53
Success (for myself)	3.72	4	4	0.52
Opportunities for development and advancement, a predictable career path	3.66	4	4	0.56
Good workplace community, good relationship with direct colleagues and direct supervisor	3.62	4	4	0.60
Learning and experience opportunities	3.62	4	4	0.58
A secure job in the long term	3.48	4	4	0.71
Recognising and rewarding outstanding performance	3.47	4	4	0.67
Excellent working environment	3.46	4	4	0.68
Moral appreciation from my manager and colleagues	3.43	4	4	0.71
Interesting, diverse tasks, continuous challenges	3.40	4	4	0.71
Possibility of flexible working (e.g., home office work)	3.18	3	4	0.85
Family-friendly workplace	3.17	3	4	0.90
A reliable, well-known, reputable employer	3.00	3	3	0.81
The company excels in social responsibility and supporting good causes	2.94	3	3	0.89

Source: Own elaboration

The two most important factors regarding workplace expectations for the students are the appropriate salary, benefits, bonus, and the achievement of self-inflicted success (both statements reached a value of 3.72). As it is measured on a scale of 1-4, these average scores can be considered extremely high. It is also important to have a predictable career path with advancement opportunities, a good workplace community, learning opportunities, recognition and reward for performance. The statement related to social responsibility was given the least value, however, this is also a decisive part of the company's assessment, as it is only 0.06 behind the well-known, reliable, and reputable employer statement. It is to be noted that Covid could hinder the importance of the soft elements, and salary could become stronger to counterbalance the uncertainties related to and caused by the pandemic. Nevertheless, it is evident that the motivation-related elements are still dominant, which should be kept in mind by employers. (Table 2)

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

During our research, we sought the answer to what kind of career plans and expectations our students have towards employees. We discussed the job search habits of our students, the channels they use most often, and their preferences regarding the sector, branch, and work experience abroad. We presented the expectations of young people regarding their employers.

According to our results, the students first want to apply directly to the employer (60%) and plan to look at job advertisements (56%). Based on the results, the largest proportion of respondents would seek the help of acquaintances (73.1%) working in the given field and the advice of their family members (63.7%) or friends (56.7%) concerning job hunting. 59.4% plan to work in the private sector, 30.3% in the public sector, and 10.3% in the non-profit sector. 85% of respondents plan to work in Hungary. Regarding students' workplace preferences, the two most important factors regarding workplace expectations for students are the appropriate salary, benefits, bonuses, and the achievement of self-inflicted success.

Based on our research, it is worth emphasizing the branding of employers, since most students want to apply for a job directly with the employer. It is even worthwhile to address students directly to employers already during their university years since the results show that a significant part of students (85%) do not even want to go abroad, that is, a well-known organization with a strong employer brand has a good chance of finding the talents. Although salary is still very important on the employees' preference list, it is worth taking advantage of the fact that young people want to learn and develop, and employers should emphasize this possibility when looking for a new employee.

Our research has several *limitations*. In the present investigation, the students of the Faculty of Economics were overrepresented. On the other hand, in terms of the territorial distribution of the students, it is significantly limited to the southern Transdanubian region.

As a *future research direction*, we designate the extension of the data collection to other institutions in Hungary; the findings at the national level can strengthen its validity. We also plan to expand the research to other European countries.

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