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Determinants of feelings of anxiety in students entering the job market

Uwarunkowania poczucia lęku u studentów wkraczających na rynek pracy

Introduction

The issue of young people entering the labour market is an important and multifaceted issue. It is associated with the change of a quiet, carefree, usually parent-funded period of school or college life, to an existence in independent and responsible adulthood. Wiesława Kozek, defining the model of this market, noted that multiple behaviours and decisions take place in it, where the main role is played by the meeting between the owner and the job seeker. In the subject structure here appear people already working and looking for work, labour market institutions, such as local government

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bodies, labour administration, support units, and employers *sensu stricto* (Kozek, 1994). In this concept, the understanding of the so-called “labour force” has been clarified to include aspects relevant to market exchange, and the economic basis has been expanded to include properties arising on social grounds (Jezior, 2017). Concepts of labour market in a sociological perspective primarily demonstrate the problems of exchange and the various types of rules governing them, as well as the relations between actors and their social values. Of particular relevance to this dissertation seems to be the latter aspect, indicating, among other things, the psychic correlations between work and emotions, motivations and personality predispositions. In the current market situation, we note the cooperation of several generations of workers, whose diversity affects the performance and efficiency of businesses. Each generation has its own distinct understanding of and approach to work responsibilities, different priorities, attitudes and levels of anxiety toward work and its possible loss.

The entry of young people into the labour market falls, taking into account the stages of psychosocial development, in early adulthood. This stage conventionally encompasses the years 18-45 and is, on the one hand, a period of greatest vitality, while on the other hand, a person then faces many responsibilities, tasks and choices that are difficult to reconcile. However, as Alicja Malina writes, all developmental changes involve tasks that a person must go through in order for further development to occur (Malina, 2015). On how and how to solve the problems associated with entering this stage, depends the ability to adapt to work and demonstrate competencies that are crucial to employers.

Augustyn Bańka emphasizes that one of the most important growth elements of early adulthood is a sense of self-efficacy, which in his understanding means the individual’s ability to assess one’s own capabilities, competence and to cope with adversity (after Hauziński, 2013). The formation of self-efficacy occurs through experience (an empirical sense of efficacy), social modelling (successful replication of behaviour), social persuasion (support from the environment), and stress reduction and the formation of a positive attitude for the future. In addition to self-efficacy, Bubble also cites the following as most important in the context of job search: achievement motivation, proactivity, and openness to new experiences.

Building competencies related to gainful employment is one of the most significant challenges of any educational system, as well as the process of educating the younger generation. Such a process is carried out both in schools and family homes where occupational awareness and the rules and habits associated with it are developed (Nowak, 2017). Attitudes related to professional activity are built in a special way starting from the high school period and continuing through college and postgraduate courses.

From the perspective of a young person, the moment of transition from the period of education to the time of professional work is associated with choices that are not necessarily satisfying and coincide with education. This is influenced by the nature of the labour market, showing a significant demand for specialized graduates of technical schools – computer scientists, automation specialists, roboticists, while interest in humanists is declining (Kukla, 2017). Meanwhile, in Poland in recent years, we have noticed several disturbing trends, such as an oversupply of humanities graduates, a decline in the quality of education and a lack of thorough practical preparation for the profession.

The entry of school and university graduates into the labour market is a difficult task due to the lack of relevant experience, the need for employers to put up additional funds for professional further training, or, in the case of women, the prospect of their rapid departure for maternity leave.

The change associated with the existence in an independent and responsible adulthood has multiple dimensions, and is linked to social, economic and often worldview aspects, causing a young person to experience a real-life revolution. Sudden change can cause feelings of uncertainty, danger and instability, and in mentally weaker individuals can even lead to anxiety and depression. Long-term unemployment can cause, in addition to strictly mental degeneration, many additional side effects, such as alcoholism, drug addiction or common crime.

The most psychologically significant negative aspect of having to look for a job is the possibility of various mental disorders and problems. The most common consequences of failure in this area include anxiety, fear, stress and the associated uncertainty for the future. Anxiety lowers and sometimes even prevents an adequate presentation during a job interview, proper acquisition of professional skills and experience, and causes adaptation difficulties. Equally depressing can be the stress directly related to it; however, it should be added that while anxiety always has a negative tinge, stress can be both positive and

negative, manifesting itself in the form of uplifting eustress or destructive distress.

Work on the sense of anxiety among young people entering the labour market is scarce in the Polish literature. They usually concern a general approach to expectations, ambitions and related hopes for a good future. There is a lack of connectors showing the negative psychological effects of entering a new stage of life, as well as studies confirming (or denying) the existence of a correlation between feelings of anxiety and the beginning of working life. The available publications related to the topic were written a few or a dozen years ago, in the days before the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, while the new reality completely changed the psyche of the young generation entering the stage of professional life.

Anxiety is one of the most important and ubiquitous emotions accompanying humans in everyday life. Karen Horney (1982) drew attention to the distinction between the concept of “anxiety” and “fear”. She pointed out that, while in the case of anxiety the threat is subjective and invisible, in the case of fear the danger is objective and overt. Horney writes straightforwardly that “the strength of anxiety is proportional to the importance that a given situation has for a person, but the causes of this anxiety are not realized by the person” (Horney, 1982, p. 46). According to Kazimierz Dąbrowski, anxiety is an unpleasant state that cannot be explained in a rational way, having its source in the conflicts and disease disorders of the individual, and the individual’s psychological predisposition is responsible for its formation (Dąbrowski, 1976). Fear, on the other hand, in this author’s definition, is related to an immediate, real, external threat and is objective in nature, of which the subject is aware (Dąbrowski, 1976).

Researchers dealing with social phobias have tried to clarify the concept of social fears, and consequently also to separate them from fears that arise from non-social situations. All situations that have typically social roots ultimately boil down to a common trait – being judged by others (Aleksandrowicz, 2002).

Social anxieties that have the greatest impact on situations related to selection, recruitment and subsequent employment include:

- Self-presentation anxieties – people who have strong social anxieties manifest a motivation to undertake a protective interpersonal style. They use little “conquering” self-presentation, limiting themselves to presenting a decidedly minimalist image of themselves. They do

not want to present themselves in a very favourable light, fearing, as a consequence, too high demands, and “protective” self-presentation is sufficient for them (Leary, Kowalski, 2001). People with social phobias try to provide as little information about themselves as possible, placing themselves rather in a line of typical individuals, similar to others. They reduce the possibility of arguments, adopting moderate, easily defensible views.

- Anxieties associated with a sense of self-helplessness – occur in people with low self-esteem and lack of confidence in their own abilities (Czarkowska, 1986). They mostly often appear at times when it is necessary to undertake an action or a specific job that the disturbed person believes is beyond his or her strength and capabilities. Doubts and feelings of insecurity arise then: “am I up to it?”, “can I do it?”, “I won’t succeed...”.
- Social inhibition and withdrawal associated with dysphilia – occur most often when an individual has to interact interpersonally with others despite not wanting to do so at all (Leary, Kowalski, 2001). Manifestations include small talk, withdrawal, difficulty taking and defending a particular position in conversation and action. Inhibitions of this type are particularly difficult in situations of choice and taking up a job, since they limit the scope of its execution. They are particularly pronounced in the case of individuals who are strongly prone to phobias.
- Anxieties related to the threats to social or personal values – this category of social anxiety has been highlighted as one among the more common and hindering to work (Czarkowska, 1986). Among this type of anxiety is the anxiety about social and material well-being, as well as one’s own health and sense of security. The predominant fear here is the fear of making possible wrong decisions that could negatively affect the functioning of the workplace, the tools and equipment entrusted to it, or even greater damage or calamity. Fear also relates to one’s own health, physical weakness, lack of ability to perform work tasks. Inappropriate work can, according to survivors of social anxiety and fear, lead to accidents and direct threats to health and life (Czarkowska, 1986).

- Ergophobia – is a social anxiety specific and very serious in its consequences, concerning the work environment, taking employment in itself, but also taking action to find a job for oneself. This phobia combines many of the factors seen in other social fears, such as public speaking, interpersonal relations, making eye contact, fear of responsibility, sense of own inadequacy, etc. The etiology of this disorder is not fully understood, but it combines both biological and environmental factors. Individuals whose families have a history of various types of mental illnesses and those who have experienced difficult or traumatic events during their lives are more vulnerable (Psychtimes, 2022).

Purpose of work

With the historical changes in the labour market, young people have represented different attitudes toward work responsibilities, different priorities, attitudes and levels of anxiety toward work and its possible loss. The current generation, known as Generation Z, is the youngest group just entering the labour market. Individuals in this generation were born after 1996, and refer to themselves as the “outraged”, the lost, or sometimes the €1,000 generation. This generation grew up in comfortable circumstances, having, thanks to their hard-working parents, secured funds for education and a peaceful adolescence. Changes in the labour market, with companies investing in the experience and practice of the older generation, as well as the lengthening age of retirement, have made it more difficult for Generation Z to enter the labour market. The youngest are often hired reluctantly, in low-paid positions without greater social protection and clear employment contracts, resulting in unemployment and insecurity about tomorrow for the group in question (Zarębski, 2014). The purpose of the research was to try to add to the existing knowledge about the links between anxiety and the entry of young people into the labour market. This issue is particularly relevant in connection with the social, civilization and technological changes of recent decades, significantly changing the emotionality of young people. The pandemic situation, which has been going on for several years, as well as the war in Ukraine, can also have a considerable impact on the level of students’ anxiety. The study made it possible to show how the intensity of anxiety related to job search is currently presented in various correlations and social aspects.

Material and methods

The study involved 121 people currently studying, without specification for full-time or part-time studies. As the study was online, the respondents studied at various universities throughout Poland. The number of women in this sample was 64% of all respondents, and the number of men was 36%. Most people, as many as 36%, were in their second year of studies at the time of the study. The rest were as follows: 21% of respondents – 1st year of studies, 18% of respondents – 5th year of studies (or 2nd year of second-cycle studies), 17% of respondents – 3rd year of studies and, finally, 8% of respondents – 4th year of studies (or 1st year second-cycle studies). This research began by defining the research problem and then posing research questions and hypotheses. The next stage was to determine the dependent and independent variables, select appropriate research models (i.e. correlational and quasi-experimental) and appropriate statistical tests to verify the research hypotheses. After conducting the study, the results obtained were interpreted and assessed in terms of verifying the research hypotheses.

Own research was conducted from October 30 to November 14, 2022, via the Microsoft Forms online platform, and an online questionnaire was created, using it. As access to this test was possible thanks to a specially generated link available on websites, the surveys were completed by respondents at a time convenient for them. At the same time, they had the opportunity to choose appropriate conditions in terms of privacy, noise, and the amount of time they could devote to completing the survey. The specificity of the conducted own research also allowed the questionnaire to be completed by people from outside the Collegium Humanum University in Rzeszów, thanks to which the research sample was more diverse. When joining the study, each respondent was provided with information about the nature of the work and its purpose. The approximate time needed to complete the questionnaire was also provided, so that the respondent could choose a convenient time of the day. The study was anonymous and participation was completely voluntary. The respondents could resign from participation at any time while completing the questionnaire without any consequences, which was consistent with ethical standards. After joining the study, respondents completed the tests in a specific order: Anxiety Scale, Job Search Anxiety Scale and General Self-Efficacy Scale. Instructions on how to complete it were displayed next to each of these research tools.

The following research tools were used in our own study:

- Trait Anxiety Scale (SL-C) (2020) by Michał Pisek, Krystyna Golonka and Edyta Kosiorowska,
- Job Search Anxiety Scale (2019) by Thomas Britton, translated into Polish by the person conducting the study,
- The General Self-Efficacy Scale (2019) by Thomas Britton, translated into Polish by the person conducting the study.

The SL-C scale is intended to measure the intensity of anxiety, which is considered a human personality trait and expressed in cognitive, emotional, behavioural and somatic symptoms in response to stimuli perceived as threatening or dangerous by the person. This tool consists of 15 statements describing various situations potentially occurring in the respondent's everyday life. The respondent's task is to determine on a four-point Likert scale the frequency with which he/she encounters the events presented in the questionnaire, selecting respectively: Often - 3, Sometimes - 2, Rarely - 1 or Never - 0. The result is obtained by summing all the points, taking into account that questions 9 and 11 require reverse scoring. The obtained score ranges from 0 to 45, where 0 means the minimum and 45 the maximum intensity of the anxiety trait. The reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.862, which allows it to be considered to have high internal consistency. This tool is also characterized by high theoretical validity (Hornowska, 2005), which can be concluded from the fact that SL-C correlates with the "Big Five" personality traits (neuroticism and extraversion) and M. Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale.

The Job Search Anxiety Scale by Thomas Britton in the Polish adaptation of the person conducting the study, while maintaining its psychometric properties, is used to measure the intensity of anxiety felt in the aspect of job searching. This tool consists of 10 statements. The respondent determines on a five-point Likert scale to what extent he/she feels the feelings mentioned by the author in connection with the search for employment, selecting one of the following answers: 1 – I strongly disagree, 2 – I disagree, 3 – I have no opinion, 4 – I agree, 5 – I strongly agree. The score is obtained by adding up all the points, taking into account that questions 6, 9 and 10 require reverse scoring. The scale's reliability coefficient was 0.86, which allows it to be considered to have high internal consistency. Research has also shown that there is a significant relationship between job search anxiety and the generalized level of anxiety

and depression in a given person, which also allows this tool to have high theoretical validity (Britton, 2019).

The General Self-Efficacy Scale by Thomas Britton in the Polish adaptation of the researcher, while maintaining its psychometric properties, is used to measure general self-efficacy. This tool, similarly to the one presented above, consists of 10 statements. The respondent's task is to determine on a five-point Likert scale to what extent he/she agrees with the given judgments, choosing one of the answers: 1 – I strongly disagree, 2 – I disagree, 3 – I have no opinion, 4 – I agree, 5 – I definitely agree. The result is obtained by adding up the points obtained. It is, therefore, in the range between 10 and 50, where 10 means the minimum and 50 means the maximum intensity of self-efficacy. The scale's reliability coefficient was 0.84, which allows it to be considered to have high internal consistency (Britton, 2019).

Research questions and hypotheses

In the context of the question *Is the overall level of anxiety related to students' entry into the labour market determined by gender?* we get hypothesis H1. Overall level of anxiety related to entering the labour market is higher in the female students than in the male ones.

The hypothesis posed has its sources in the literature and in the divergent results of previous studies. The fact is that women are more than twice as likely as men to be characterized by a general high level of anxiety (Lewinsohn, Gotlib, Lewinsohn, Seeley, Allen, 1998), as well as more likely to have high social anxiety (Asher, Asnaani, Aderka, 2017). However, there are discrepancies in the research findings when it comes to anxiety related to or occurring during the job search process. Some studies indicate that the level of anxiety associated with entering the job market and seeking employment is equally high in both women and men (Kyoung, Ji, Wo, Na, Young, 2013). Other, contrary to the above-mentioned analyses report that men are supposed to have higher levels of anxiety than women during the transition from education to employment (De Clercq, Haq, Azeem, 2019). However, since most of the literature and research reports the occurrence of anxiety much more often in women (Pużyński, Wciórka, 2007), this research question adopts the hypothesis that women are characterized by higher anxiety related to entering the labour market than men.

For the next research question – *Is there a relationship with the general level of anxiety, and what is the relationship with the level of anxiety in the situation of entering the labour market in students?* – we get hypothesis H2. The lower the overall level of anxiety, the lower the level of anxiety in the labour market entry situation is also.

The hypothesis of a positive correlation between the general level of anxiety and the level of anxiety in the situation of entering the labour market is based on the results of research and inference from theory. Social anxiety is one of the most common forms of anxiety (Pużyński, Wciórka, 2007), hence one goes so far as to say that a co-variance between the two factors was observed. In addition, it should be noted that people in whom anxiety disorders appear are characterized by a distinctive loss in terms of self-confidence, as well as fear and anxiety (Aleksandrowicz, 1998), which can translate, among other things, into interview skills (Stein, Kean, 2000). Often, also, the cause of this condition is not having prior experience in any job. For students, the period of study is relatively often associated with taking up their first casual employment or preparing for a job in a profession, which can be particularly difficult for those who feel uncertain and apprehensive. Thus, it can be presumed that these layered factors, derived from general anxiety disorders, may contribute to the appearance of anxiety when entering the job market.

The cognitively interesting question seemed to be *Whether and what is the relationship between the level of self-efficacy and the overall level of anxiety related to entering the job market in students?* and the hypothesis here was H3. The higher the level of self-efficacy, the lower the overall level of labour market entry anxiety.

The hypothesis that there is a negative correlation between the level of self-efficacy and the overall level of labour market entry anxiety is also based on the results of the study, as well as the theory itself. People who believe in their abilities and have a high sense of control over the situation are not characterized by anxiety or apprehension. On the contrary, people who do not feel prepared to follow a certain scenario or deal with difficulties they may encounter on life's path are accompanied by distress and autonomic arousal, leading to the appearance of anxiety. According to Albert Bandura's theory, individuals are characterized by anxiety when they believe they are incapable of coping with a given state of affairs (Bandura, 1997). The above correlation is also confirmed by many other studies (Murriss, 2002). These observations

can also be translated into the aspect of entering a professional path and the prospect of future work.

For the next research question – *Is there a difference in the overall level of anxiety related to entering the job market and the year of study?* – the following hypothesis was formulated: H4. Those who start college have a lower overall level of anxiety related to entering the job market than those who graduate.

The hypothesis of a lower overall level of anxiety related to entering the labour market in people who begin their studies, compared to students who complete them, has its origins in the characteristics of the state of affairs faced by the students approaching the end of their education and entering the professional path. When starting college, the issue seems far away, a sense is formed that over the years one will gain the knowledge and experience needed for work. It would seem, however, that the closer one gets to permanent financial independence and finding stable employment, more and more fear, anxiety and uncertainty begin to appear. Anxiety about entering the job market has its origins in a lack of experience or a sense of lacking certain skills necessary to join the process (Himle, Weaver, Bybee, O'Donnell, Vlnka, Laviolette, Levine, 2014). Students who have not previously undertaken any permanent employment may, thus, face a completely new task in their lives, which may prove to be a serious challenge to them and their abilities.

The following research tools were used in the study: Anxiety Scale – Trait (SL-C) (2020) by Michal Pisk, Krystyna Golonka and Edyta Kosiorowska; Job Search Anxiety Scale (2019) by Thomas Britton, translated by the investigators; and The General Self-Efficacy Scale (2019) by Thomas Britton, translated by the investigators.

The research was conducted in 2022 via the Microsoft Forms online platform and the online questionnaire created with it. After taking the survey, respondents solved the tests in a specific order: Anxiety Scale, Job Search Anxiety Scale and Self-Efficacy Scale of Overall Self-Efficacy. Instructions were displayed next to each of these survey tools on how to complete them.

Results

Basic interpretations and conclusions are presented based on the questions and hypotheses in the text above.

H1. The overall level of anxiety related to entering the job market is higher in female students than in male students.

The results obtained show that there are no statistically significant differences in the overall level of labour market entry anxiety in male and female students. This contradicts the hypothesis that women are characterized by stronger anxiety in the above-discussed aspect than men. Although there are significant discrepancies in the literature, these results are nevertheless confirmed by research (Kyoung, Ji, Wo, Na, Young, 2013). The lack of differences may also mean that, contrary to popular belief, women are as emotionally stable as men. Women's superficial insecurity (or self-confidence in the case of men) is only due to their social roles and the stigmatization of the sexes in terms of this trait. As the fight against gender stereotypes and the encouragement to show true emotions are becoming stronger in today's individualistic cultures, this may influence, according to the Pygmalion effect, the real feeling of previously disallowed emotions. This provides an interesting direction for future research.

H2. The higher the overall level of anxiety, the higher the overall level of anxiety in the labour market entry situation.

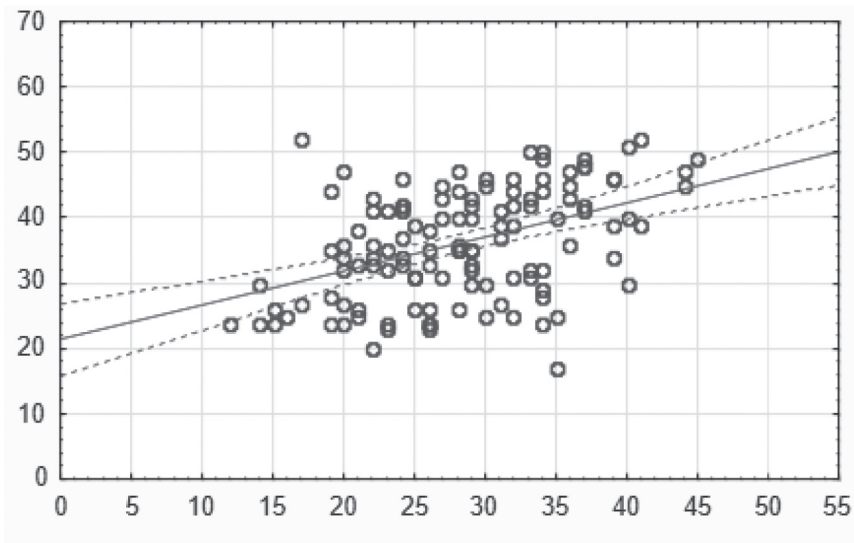
In the basic data analysis for the second hypothesis, which states that there is a relationship between the overall level of anxiety and the overall level of anxiety in the labour market entry situation, the results of all subjects, i.e., 121 people – 77 women and 44 men (N=121), were taken into account. The general level of anxiety was measured using the Scale of Trait Anxiety (SL-C) by Michal Pisk, Krystyna Golonka and Edyta Kosiorowska, and the general level of anxiety related to entering the labour market was measured using the Job Serach Anxiety Scale by Thomas Britton, translated into Polish by the subjects. The results of the comparisons are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and results for measuring the general level of anxiety and the general level of anxiety related to entering the labor market in students

Test position	Mean	SD	N
Anxiety Scale – Trait (SL-C)	28,36	7,2	121
Job Serach Anxiety Scale	36,2	8,41	121

Source: own study.

Histogram 1. Scatterplot of the variables of the general level of anxiety and the general level of anxiety related to entering the labor market



Source: own study.

The results were analysed using correlation analysis. It allowed us to observe a moderate positive correlation between the overall level of anxiety and the overall level of anxiety related to entering the labour market ($r=0.45$; $p<0.05$). The null hypothesis of no correlation between these variables was therefore rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. It confirmed that the higher the overall level of anxiety, the higher the overall level of anxiety in the labour market entry situation is.

There is a linear relationship between the variables, which is observable in Histogram 1. The results for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality of distribution test showed that the distributions of both the quantitative variable of general level of anxiety ($d=0.06$; $p>0.2$) and general level of anxiety related to entering the labour market ($d=0.08$; $p>0.2$) are close to a normal distribution. However, there are slight deviations here.

The hypothesis of a positive correlation between general anxiety and general anxiety in the situation of entering the job market was confirmed in the present study. As the analysis of the data shows, students with general anxiety disorders may also experience anxiety in the job search sphere. This makes it difficult to take up the first job as a casual worker, as well as fully mature

career in future. Therefore, the issues of raising confidence in recruitment, preparing for interviews or the first days in a new institution are worth of attention. Having replicated the research and verified the various aspects of work-related anxiety, it would be an interesting move for universities and other student institutions to organize workshops on stress management. The positive result of such activities would be particularly evident in the period of seeking employment and overcoming difficulties that arise in the course of it.

H 3. The higher the level of self-efficacy, the lower the overall level of anxiety related to entering the job market.

The primary data analysis for the third hypothesis – there is a relationship between the general level of self-efficacy and the general level of anxiety in the situation of entering the job market – took into account the results of all the subjects, i.e., 121 people – 77 women and 44 men (N=121). The general level of self-efficacy was measured using The General Self-Efficacy Scale by Thomas Britton, and the general level of labour market entry anxiety was measured using the Job Search Survey Scale by Thomas Britton. Both scales were translated into Polish by those conducting the survey. The results of the comparisons are shown in Table 2.

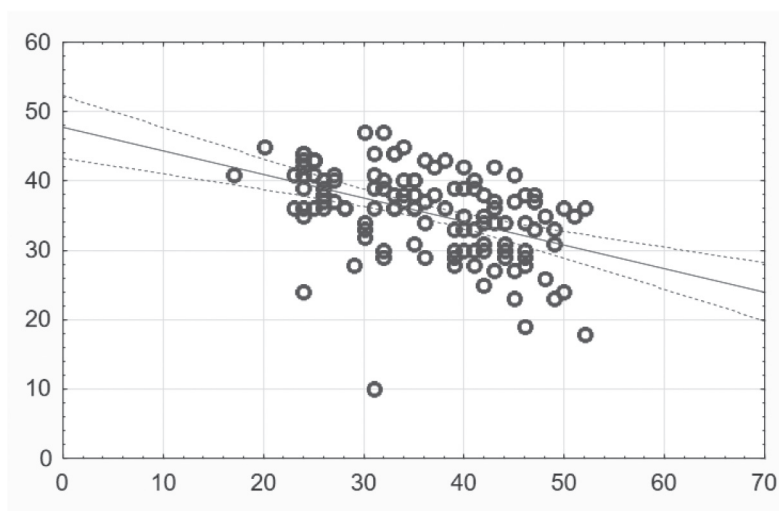
Table 2. Descriptive statistics and results for measuring the general level of self-efficacy and the general level of anxiety related to entering the labor market in students

Test position	Mean	SD	N
The General Self-Efficacy Scale	35,5	6,31	121
Job Search Anxiety Scale	36,2	8,42	121

Source: own study.

The results were analysed using correlation analysis. It allowed us to observe a moderate negative correlation between the overall level of self-efficacy and the overall level of anxiety related to entering the job market ($r=0.45$; $p<0.05$). The null hypothesis of no relationship between these variables was therefore rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. It confirmed that the higher the level of sense of efficacy, the lower the overall level of labour market entry anxiety is.

Histogram 2. Scatterplot of variables of the general level of self-efficacy and the general level of anxiety related to entering the labor market



Source: own study.

The assumptions of the test were tested. The dependent variables are measured on a quantitative scale, and the number of observations exceeds the number of 30 ($N=121$). There is a linear relationship between the variables, which is observable in Histogram 2. The results for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality of distribution test showed that the distribution of the quantitative variable on the general level of self-efficacy ($d=0.13$; $p<0.05$) is close to a normal distribution. There are slight deviations in the distribution of the variable general level of anxiety related to entering the labour market ($d=0.08$; $p>0.2$).

The hypothesis of a negative correlation between the level of self-efficacy in job searching and the general level of anxiety related to entering the labour market was also confirmed in our own research. Analogously to the solutions proposed above, students could benefit from both workshops on preparation for future professional work, as well as classes on self-perception and sense of agency. According to Bandura's theory, belief in self-efficacy is one of the most important aspects of self-actualization, therefore, these skills could also bring benefits in other areas of life (Bandura, 1997).

H4. People starting their studies have a general lower level of anxiety related to entering the labour market than people finishing their studies.

In the basic analysis of data for the fourth hypothesis, which states that people starting their studies are characterized by a generally lower level of anxiety related to entering the labour market than people finishing their studies, the results of all respondents were taken into account, i.e., 121 people – 77 women and 44 men (N=121). The general level of anxiety related to entering the labour market was measured using the Job Search Anxiety Scale by Thomas Britton, translated into Polish by the people conducting the study. The data were analysed using a one-way analysis of variance in a between-groups design because the year of study attended by the subjects was taken into account. The comparison results are presented in Table 3.

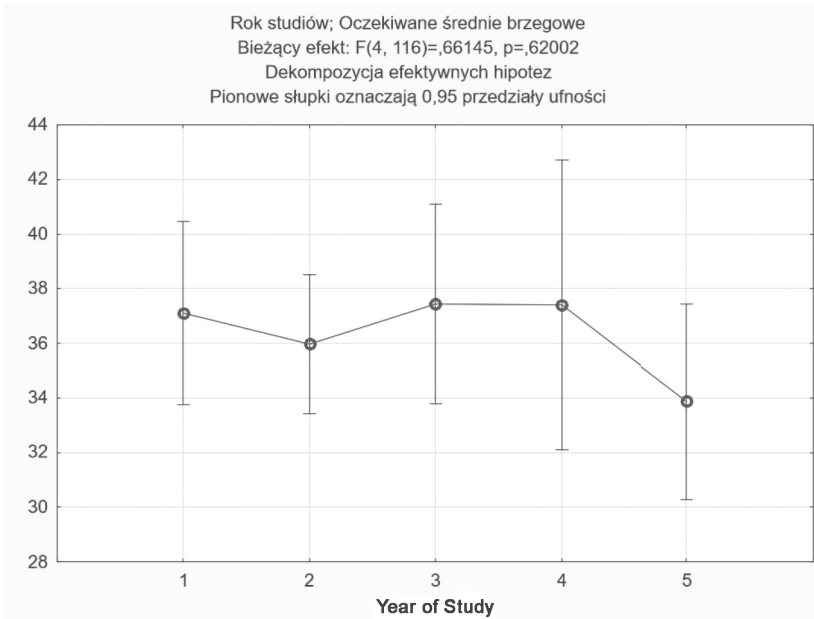
Table 3. Descriptive statistics and results for measuring the general level of anxiety related to entering the labor market among students in a particular year of study

Subgroup	Mean	SD	N
1	37,12	8,54	25
2	35,98	8,5	43
3	37,43	7,69	21
4	37,4	8,63	10
5	33,86	8,92	22

Source: own study.

The result of Fisher's test turned out to be statistically insignificant ($F_{(4,116)} = 0.66$; $p = 0.62$), which means that there are no differences in the general level of anxiety related to entering the labour market among students in a particular year of study. The lack of differences can also be observed in Chart 1 by overlapping mean bars in each of the subgroups. Therefore, no further post hoc analysis was performed.

Chart 1. Chart of the distribution of means in subgroups for the quantitative variable general level of anxiety related to entering the labor market



Source: own study. Annotation. Year of studies 1 means the 1st year of studies, 2- 2nd year of studies, 3- 3rd year of studies, 4- 3rd year of studies or 1st year of second-cycle studies, 5- 5th year of studies or 2nd year of second-cycle studies.

The test assumptions have been checked. The dependent variable is measured on a quantitative scale, while the independent variable on a nominal scale of at least three values (in our own study it is a five-value scale – years of studies I–V). The compared groups can be considered equal. The assumption of homogeneity of variances of the compared groups was also met ($p>0.05$).

The obtained results of our own research indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the general level of anxiety related to entering the labour market between people who start studies and those who finish them. This contradicts the hypothesis. It is possible that the similar level of means of the dependent variable in the subgroups results from the fact that for the students starting their studies, this period is associated with taking up their first job, even of a casual nature, while for the students finishing their education the focus is on finding employment in their profession. Both the first and second situations require appropriate preparation and are associated

with stress and anxiety about not finding a suitable profession. An alternative explanation may also be a subjective sense of lack of preparation during studies to perform functions in a specific position. As education takes place mainly at the theoretical level, taking on the responsibilities associated with demonstrating practical skills is often a challenge and requires time to find one's place in a given institution. The prospect of not being able to cope with the workload may cause anxiety both in people working part-time and in those who want to find permanent employment in their profession.

Conclusions

The stage of finishing school and starting to look for a job is undoubtedly a very difficult and extremely stressful time in every person's life. Uncertainty, the situation on the labour market, the need to ensure an independent existence, as well as the simultaneous desire for development, cause strong emotional reactions where the feeling of fear may dominate. A feeling that can be emotionally burdensome and may also be the seed of changes, leading to effective, long-term actions on the path of self-development.

The feeling of anxiety and its level may result from many reasons where both typical individual predispositions and external factors over which we have no influence play an important role. Fear, anxiety, panic, stress – these emotions have always been and will be reactions that intensify in completely new and unknown situations. How we deal with them may indicate both the ability to quickly adapt and our innate or acquired resourcefulness in life.

The research results presented above have introduced the reader to the issues related to the emotionality of a young person when faced with the challenge of finding a job, as well as answered important questions related to this process. They have application value because they can become a contribution to many activities aimed at better preparing a young person to start a career. Steps that universities could take to better prepare students to deal with anxiety situations on the labour market seem to be particularly important here. The study programme could include, for example, stress management workshops, learning relaxation techniques, as well as training in reducing anxiety levels through developed psychoeducational programmes.

Abstract: Work on the sense of anxiety among young people entering the labour market is scarce in the Polish literature. They usually concern a general approach to expectations, ambitions and related hopes for a good future. There is a lack of connectors showing the negative, psychological effects of entering a new stage of life, as well as the studies confirming (or denying) the existence of a correlation between the feelings of anxiety and the beginning of working life. The available publications related to the topic were written several or more years ago, in the days before the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, while the new reality completely changed the psyche of the young generation entering the stage of professional life.

The most psychologically significant negative aspect of having to look for a job is the possibility of various mental disorders and problems. The most common consequences of failure in this area include anxiety, fear, stress and the associated uncertainty before the future.

The results show that there are no statistically significant differences in the general level of anxiety related to entering the job market in male and female students. Students with general anxiety disorders also experience anxiety in the sphere of job search. The hypothesis that there is a negative correlation between the level of self-efficacy over job search and the overall level of anxiety related to entering the job market was confirmed in the present study. The results obtained further indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in the overall level of anxiety related to entering the job market between those who begin their studies and those who complete them.

Keywords: labour market, students, sense of anxiety, self-efficacy.

Streszczenie: Prace nad poczuciem lęku wśród młodych osób wkraczających na rynek pracy są w polskim piśmiennictwie niedostateczne. Dotyczą zazwyczaj ogólnie ujmowanego podejścia do oczekiwań, ambicji i związanych z nimi nadziei na dobrą przyszłość. Brakuje łączników, ukazujących negatywne, psychiczne skutki wkraczania w nowy etap życia oraz badań potwierdzających (lub negujących) istnienie korelacji pomiędzy poczuciem lęku, a początkami życia zawodowego. Dostępne publikacje powiązane z tematem powstały kilka lub kilkanaście lat temu, w czasach przed pandemią i wojną na Ukrainie, podczas gdy nowa rzeczywistość zmieniła całkowicie psychikę młodego pokolenia rozpoczynającego etap życia zawodowego.

Najistotniejszym z psychologicznego punktu widzenia negatywnym aspektem konieczności szukania pracy, jest możliwość wystąpienia różnorodnych zaburzeń i problemów natury psychicznej. Do najczęstszych skutków niepowodzeń w tej dziedzinie zaliczyć możemy lęk, strach, stres oraz związaną z nimi niepewność przed przyszłością.

Uzyskane wyniki badań wskazują na brak istotnych statystycznie różnic w ogólnym poziomie lęku związanym z wkraczaniem na rynek pracy u studentów i studentek. Studenci, u których pojawiają się ogólne zaburzenia lękowe odczuwają także lęk w

sferze poszukiwania pracy. Hipoteza o ujemnej korelacji między poziomem poczucia własnej skuteczności nad poszukiwaniem pracy, a ogólnym poziomem lęku związanego z wkraczaniem na rynek pracy, znalazła potwierdzenie w niniejszych badaniach. Uzyskane wyniki wskazują ponadto na brak istotnych statystycznie różnic w ogólnym poziomie lęku związanym z wkraczaniem na rynek pracy pomiędzy osobami, które rozpoczynają studia, a osobami, które je kończą.

Słowa Kluczowe: rynek pracy, studenci, poczucie lęku, poczucie własnej skuteczności.

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