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Work Experience of Working Poles and a Sense of Professional Attractiveness – Results of an Empirical Study

Abstract: The article addresses the issue of working Poles' work experience and their sense of professional attractiveness as factors shaping the quality of working life. The research sought not only to identify the potential relationship between employees' work experience and their sense of professional attractiveness but also to analyse factors that may differentiate the indicated variables, such as gender or generational affiliation. To show the factors shaping the quality of work experience, individual aspects of the work performed were examined, taking into account the potential effects of a sense of professional attractiveness, financial expectations and the willingness to change place and position. Achieving the purpose of the study, including verification of the hypotheses set, would not have been possible without the empirical research which was carried out in June 2022 using the CAWI technique on a sample of 384 Poles. The results of the survey were subjected to statistical analysis using the STATISTICA package. The research shows that there is a relationship between the quality of work experience and the level of professional attractiveness. As the positive evaluation of experience increases, so does the positive evaluation of the level of professional attractiveness of employees.

Keywords: work experience, professional attractiveness, work

JEL: J2, M5

1. Introduction

Numerous studies conducted in recent years by representatives of the social sciences, including management science, sociology, psychology and marketing, are devoted to the issue of building an organisation's image as an employer. Employer branding (EB) is dissected from many aspects, with the attention of researchers focusing, among other things, on EB strategy, EVP (Employer Value Proposition – the package of benefits offered by an employer to employees), employer brand communication, the use of online tools in the whole process, the division of activities into internal and external EB, etc. A growing number of publications show how important the image issue is and its importance in building employer attractiveness (Ambler, Barrow, 1996; Wojtaszczyk, 2012; Kozłowski, 2016). The level of attractiveness is not only considered as a result of EB efforts but also as a key intangible asset that is a factor of competitive advantage. The effectiveness of EB efforts, and therefore the attractiveness of an organisation, is assessed by employees themselves, as well as by job candidates (Pernkopf, Latzke, Mayrhofer, 2020). At the same time, both employees and job candidates evaluate their own professional attractiveness, which is based on, among other things, valuing work experience. Kennedy points out that the image of an organisation depends on employees and is constructed based on the overall experience with the company (Kennedy, 1977: 119). Emphasising the importance of employee experience in the process of building an organisation's image has given rise to the development of the concept of employee experience and more cross-sectional research in this area.

While employer attractiveness has been explored multidimensionally, the issue of professional employee attractiveness has not received such numerous and in-depth analyses. In the literature, it is more common to find considerations of work experience, including in particular the relationship of experience to effectiveness and productivity (Schmidt, Hunter, Outerbridge, 1986; McDaniel, Schmidt, Hunter, 1988; Schmidt et al., 1988; Weiss, 1990; Dokko, Wilk, Rothbard, 2008; Rodrigues, Rebelo, 2009; Sinambela, Ernawati, 2021). Attractiveness research typically addresses the impact of an employee's physical attractiveness on his or her functioning in the work environment, including, in particular, the results of the hiring process (Desrumaux, Bosscher, Léoni, 2009; Pfeifer, 2011), the relationship between attractiveness, gender or background and the ability to get a job (Busetta, Fiorillo, Palomba, 2021), success in applying for managerial jobs (Heilman, Saruwatari, 1979), or the impact of physical attractiveness on career success (Hamermesh, 2011). The importance of attractiveness in physical aspect is emphasised by researchers explaining that it is related to self-esteem, which in turn affects the way one manages one's potential (Krasnova, Róžańska-Bińczyk, 2017). Attractiveness considered, on the other hand, in relation to professional issues (career potential, career trajectory) is not so widely explored. The gap in research findings

on professional attractiveness, including the relationship between work experience and a sense of professional attractiveness, prompted the author of this article to explore this issue.

With the aim of revealing the potential relationship between valuing work experiences and a sense of professional attractiveness, an empirical study was conducted among 384 Poles. The research was carried out using the CAWI technique, and the research sample reflected the structure of the general population of people aged 18–59 years (women) and 64 years (men). Within the framework of the research conducted, five research hypotheses were adopted, the verification of which required statistical analyses.

Within the framework of the hypotheses, the influence of independent variables on the evaluation of work experience and a sense of professional attractiveness was considered, as well as the search for a relationship between the indicated variables and the consideration of the possibility of changing location, job, employer, and place of residence. The study also analysed how occupational attractiveness affects financial expectations, which was considered an important aspect that could indirectly influence the further shaping of work experiences.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Work experience of employees

The issue of examining employees' work experience is one of the more frequently addressed issues, as it is related, among other things, to the effectiveness of an employee's functioning in the professional environment. Analysing employees' work experience, including taking actions aimed at shaping positive experiences, is a key activity that allows for building the image of an organisation as an attractive employer, and which is associated with the increasingly popular concept of employee experience management (Morgan, 2017; Plaskoff, 2017; Essex, 2020). Employee experience is defined as the sum of an employee's experiences with an employer across all fields and stages of operation, beginning with the recruitment process and continuing through development within the company to leaving the organisation. Employee experience is influenced by a number of factors that have both an individual and situational dimension, which means that it can be considered both in a narrower and broader scope that allows us to see the existing relationships. A holistic approach to experience makes it possible to shape a more tailored work environment for employees (Itam, Ghosh, 2020).

The term work experience has received many interpretations. According to the Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary (n.d.), experience is defined as ‘practical knowledge, skill, or practice derived from direct observation of or participation in events or in a particular activity and as the length of such participation.’ Sinambela and Ernawati point out that: ‘[...] work experience is an accumulation of relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities so that the accumulation will improve employee performance’ (Sinambela, Ernawati, 2021: 69). Referring in turn to the Act of April 20, 2004 on employment promotion and labour market institutions (Journal of Laws 2022.0.690), ‘work experience means experience gained in the course of employment, performance of other gainful employment or economic activity for a period of at least 6 months’ (Article 2(1)(9)(a)). The definitions indicated show two possibilities for defining work experience: by using a narrow approach (work experience included in the category of the length of cooperation with the employer, and therefore partially treated as synonymous with the term length of service) and a broad approach (experience as a result of cooperation with employers reflected in the level of knowledge, skills, practical abilities and emotions related to these aspects).

Work experience is directly related to a career, defined as a ‘sequence of professional roles and positions taken up by an individual at different phases of the life cycle’ (Rokicka, 1995: 23). The relationship between experience and a career is exposed by Poczowski, pointing out that: ‘it can be assumed that it means the sequence of an individual’s attitudes and behaviours related to his or her work experiences and achievements over the course of a lifetime, running in a space that has an objective dimension, shaped by the market and the work environment, and a subjective dimension, reflected in the perception of work experiences taking place through the prism of professed values and aspirations’ (Poczowski, 2018: 334). A similar view of career is presented by Sullivan and Baruch. According to the researchers, a career ‘is the arrangement of an individual’s work-related experience and other related experiences, both within and outside the organisation, in a unique pattern’ (Sullivan, Baruch, 2009: 1543). Emphasising other related experiences seems a legitimate approach, since careers are not pursued in a vacuum. Events in the labour market, or in employees’ private lives, strongly shape the course of their career, and therefore affect the quality of the overall work experience.

The sequence of an employee’s work experience (Hall, 1976) in the form of changes in jobs, employers or occupations can be considered within the framework of the so-called objective dimension of career (Hellriegel, Slocum Jr., Woodman, 1995: 726), which is measurable in nature (Czeranowska, 2022: 15). From an internal perspective, the subjective dimension is also important, which concerns the ways in which a career is experienced and interpreted by an individual. This is because career experiences are linked not only to functional aspects but also to emotional ones. This is directly related to the dynamic process of experiencing career successes and disappointments over the course of a career. This is confirmed by the definition in the Oxford Dictionary

of Sociology, where a career is defined as 'a conditioned sequence of occupational roles through which individuals move in the course of their working life phases, which implies an increase in prestige, but does not exclude downward trend of socio-professional mobility' (Scott, Marshall, 2009: 61–62).

The process of studying careers, and therefore the work experience of employees, can be carried out using qualitative and quantitative approaches. As Czeranowska points out, in the quantitative approach, the objective dimension of careers is analysed, while qualitative research 'allows the analysis of the subjective dimension of careers, i.e. individual evaluations, ambitions and feelings' (Czeranowska, 2022: 15).

The accumulation of work experience occurs with the start of the first job. This often happens while a young person is learning or studying. The value of professional activity during studies as a way to increase the potential and attractiveness of the future employee in the labour market is analysed by many researchers. This is because this kind of work allows for an understanding of the requirements that will be necessary later in working life (Steinberg et al., 1981) and enables an individual to improve his or her employment prospects (Curtis, Shani, 2002; Curtis, Williams, 2002), as well as to gain experience that enhances future career opportunities (Harvey, 2000; Nonis, Hudson, 2006; Devlin, James, Grigg, 2008).

Work experience accumulated over the course of an employee's working life is also related to the job search process itself (Wanberg, Ali, Csillag, 2020) as well as to the change of location and job position. The change of employer is a difficult time for an employee during which there is a confrontation of expectations resulting from self-assessment with the realities of the labour market, employers' expectations, and their assessment. In addition, older workers point out that age discrimination in employment is a common phenomenon, which is directly related to stereotypes (Wanberg et al., 2020). According to a study by Baert et al. (2016), older age was a disadvantage when the applicant displayed out-of-field experience but not when the applicant displayed additional in-field experience. During a job search, it is age (generational affiliation), gender, or appearance, among others, that can significantly determine a job seeker's disadvantage (Baert, 2017; Derous, Ryan, 2018; McCarthy, Cheng, 2018). If an employee's self-esteem, related to the level of professional attractiveness captured as an effect of valuing the experience resulting from employment and job search, is added to external factors – independent of the employee, there may arise a situation in which employees who positively evaluate their work experience will present an underestimation of their professional attractiveness. The opposite situation to the one indicated may also occur: those who evaluate their work experience negatively may present an inflated sense of professional attractiveness, which will determine career choices and simultaneously affect job satisfaction or motivation to work and loyalty to the employer.

To conclude, work experience is taken as the totality of work experiences (taking into account an employee's entire career to date), which consists of functional aspects: the frequency of job and employer changes, resignation for various reasons, as well as emotional aspects such as job satisfaction (the importance of job satisfaction as a factor shaping an employee's mental and physical condition is emphasised by Pekkan and Bicer, 2022), a sense of pride in one's work, the quality of relationships in the workplace, the opportunity to maintain WLB, a sense of appreciation at work, the opportunity for professional development, and the compatibility of one's work with one's aspirations. An employee's work experience is subject to valuation during job search, job performance, job loss, change of employer and termination of work activity, among other things. The evaluation of experience can be individual – an evaluation of the experience of working for a current or former employer, as well as global – an evaluation of the totality of work experience throughout one's working life to date.

2.2. Professional attractiveness

The issue of a sense of professional attractiveness is directly related to the process of career management, during which it becomes an important activity to generate information about oneself, as well as about the objective career space, and to set realistic goals, thus creating a positive self-image. Researchers emphasise that people want to create and maintain a positive self-image in their own eyes (Steele, 1988) and in the eyes of others (Baumeister, 1982; Erez, Earley, 1993), they also strive to build positive self-images at work (Dutton, Dukerich, Harquail, 1994). The pressure to create a positive image permeates many aspects of employees' work. The link between image and job crafting is pointed out by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), while Goffman (1956) focuses attention on respect and behaviour by illustrating the range of actions people take to create a positive impression of themselves in the eyes of others.

A sense of occupational attractiveness is built as early as in the educational environment and then in the work environment (Jakimiuk, 2016). Therefore, an analysis of attractiveness can refer to the assessment of attractiveness during education, the search for a first job, the performance of a job, the search for another job after losing a job, during job retraining, or after the end of professional activity. Attraction as a result of self-evaluation, considered one of the most important psychological constructs that are the subject of analysis in social psychology and personality psychology, significantly affects mental condition. A broader concept than the term self-esteem is self-awareness, defined as the 'totality of a complex, organised, yet dynamic system of learnt attitudes, beliefs and judgements people have about themselves (Wehrle, Fasbender, 2019: 1). Self-awareness is conditioned by gender, age

(Hurlock, 1979), personality (Orth, Robins, 2014), membership in social groups, or roles played, among other factors (Rosenberg, 1979; Baumeister, 1998; Oyserman, Elmore, Smith, 2012). It is a developmental element and becomes more stable as a person ages (Coleman, 1996).

Attraction is generally considered as a 'characteristic of something that, by its qualities, arouses the interest of others' (WSJP), or as 'the qualities of a person that cause others to have a positive attitude toward her/him' (*Encyklopedia PWN*, n.d.). Thus, professional attractiveness could be defined as the qualities of a person that arouse the interest of employers, make a person a desirable employee, and translate into positive attitudes towards the employee, as well as a positive evaluation of oneself. This is because the level of attractiveness affects a person's emotions, self-esteem and attitudes, but most importantly, it affects social relationships, and therefore also determines the quality of work life. Professional attractiveness, and therefore an employee's self-esteem, is shaped by the results of social inclusion/exclusion (Leary, Baumeister, 2000). People who believe that they have been rejected by others (e.g., candidates who have not passed the recruitment stages, employees who have been fired from their jobs) experience a decline in self-esteem and rate their attractiveness lower (Kavanagh, Robins, Ellis, 2010).

Self-esteem, and therefore a sense of professional attractiveness, can be overrated as well as underrated, which is related to an employee's level of self-awareness, shaped by, among other things, feedback from recruiters, employers, or co-workers. Self-assessment of professional attractiveness can differ between men and women, younger and older workers (Minev et al., 2018), be determined by the place of residence, the length of service and the level of education. Self-esteem of attractiveness is not permanent – it changes over time due to an increase in self-awareness resulting from the accumulation of new experiences. In addition, self-esteem tends to increase from adolescence to middle adulthood, peaking around the age of 50 to 60, and then declines at an increasingly rapid rate (Orth, Trzesniewski, Robins, 2010; Orth, Robins, Widaman, 2012).

An inflated self-perception of professional attractiveness has both positive and negative consequences. High self-confidence translates into both successes and failures, underestimation of one's own mistakes, over-sensitivity to suggestions from others, disappointments (Łaguna, Lachowicz-Tabaczek, Dzwonkowska, 2007), greater susceptibility to stress (Galanakis et al., 2016) and criticism, malaise, a lack of self-confidence, and blaming oneself for one's mistakes (Młynarczyk, 2006). The impact of self-esteem on employees' financial expectations is also an important issue. Individuals who have a conviction of high professional attractiveness tend to expect a higher salary than those individuals whose level of professional attractiveness is considered low. The inadequacy of financial expectations relative to actual attractiveness can result in additional negative emotions and experiences, which translates into an employee's psychological well-being.

The emerging sense of worthlessness fuelled by the adoption of unrealistic goals results in long-term low self-esteem and has a destructive effect on the psyche causing depressive states, thus worsening both the quality of the employee's professional and personal life.

3. Research methodology and the structure of the research sample

The main objective of the conducted research was to identify the relationship between work experiences and a sense of professional attractiveness of the surveyed Poles. The research analysed factors that may differentiate the indicated variables, such as gender, generational affiliation, education, place of work, and place of residence. In order to show the factors shaping the quality of work experience, the study examined particular aspects of the work performed (the frequency of changing the place of work, job position, changing the place of work due to the employer's bad image, and changing the place of residence to find a better job). In turn, taking into account the potential effects of a sense of professional attractiveness, financial expectations and the willingness to change location and job position were verified. The research conducted adopted the following main research problem: "Is there a relationship between employees' work experience and their sense of professional attractiveness?". During the study, answers to the following specific research problems were also sought:

4. Is the work experience of Poles influenced by gender, generational affiliation, education, place of work, and place of residence?

1. Is a sense of professional attractiveness influenced by gender, generational affiliation, education, place of work, and place of residence?
2. Do employees who rate their work experience positively not consider changing their job, place of work, resigning from their job, or changing their place of residence?
3. Do employees who rate their professional attractiveness positively have higher financial expectations and are considering changing their jobs and positions?

Based on the results of the study, the following main research hypothesis was tested: "There is a relationship between employees' work experience and their sense of professional attractiveness". The following specific hypotheses were also verified:

- H1. Poles' work experience is influenced by gender, generational affiliation, education, place of work, and place of residence.

- H2. A sense of professional attractiveness is influenced by gender, generational affiliation, education, place of work, and place of residence.
- H3. Employees who rate their work experience positively do not consider changing their job, place of work, resigning from their job, or changing their place of residence.
- H4. Employees who rate their professional attractiveness positively have higher financial expectations and are considering changing their jobs and positions.

Achieving the purpose of the study, including the verification of the hypotheses set, would not have been possible without the empirical research which was carried out in June 2022 using the CAWI technique on a sample of 384 Poles. The choice of the quantitative method was dictated by the desire to test hypotheses on issues related to the opinions, attitudes, views of the respondents which showed the relationship between variables (Samul, 2022).

To map the structure of the general population in the structure of the research sample, three criteria were taken into account: gender, generational affiliation and voivodeship. In addition, considering the need for a more complete description of the study population, the structure was characterised by education level, place of work and place of residence (Table 1).

Table 1. Structure of the research sample

| Variables | N | % |
|--|-----|-------|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 178 | 46.35 |
| Male | 206 | 53.65 |
| Generation | | |
| Generation X | 126 | 32.81 |
| Generation Y | 146 | 38.02 |
| Generation Z | 112 | 29.17 |
| Education level | | |
| Lower than secondary school | 28 | 7.29 |
| Secondary | 186 | 48.44 |
| Higher | 170 | 44.27 |
| Place of residence | | |
| Village | 67 | 17.45 |
| City with up to 19,999 inhabitants | 40 | 10.42 |
| City with 20,000 to 49,999 inhabitants | 57 | 14.84 |
| City with 50,000 to 99,999 inhabitants | 51 | 13.28 |
| City with 100,000 to 499,999 inhabitants | 97 | 25.26 |

| Variables | N | % |
|--|-----|-------|
| City with 100,000 to 499,999 inhabitants | 72 | 18.75 |
| Place of work | | |
| Public organisation (state institution) | 109 | 28.39 |
| Organisation from the business community | 128 | 33.33 |
| Family business | 60 | 15.62 |
| Sole proprietorship | 27 | 7.03 |
| Own company | 14 | 3.65 |
| Other, what kind? | 46 | 11.98 |

Note: n – number; % – percentage.

Source: own elaboration

The survey included 206 men and 178 women. They were from generations X (32.81%), Y (38.02%) and Z (29.17%). Most of the respondents had secondary school education (48.44%), followed by higher education (44.27%), and less than secondary school education (7.29%). The largest group of respondents lived in cities with a population of 100,000 to 499,999 (25.26%), while the fewest lived in cities with a population of up to 19,999 (10.42%). The majority of respondents were employees of organisations operating in the business environment (33.33%) and employees of public organisations (28.39%). The percentage of respondents working in private organisations was higher than indicated, as the 11.98% of respondents who marked the answer ‘other’ included people who also indicated organisations from the business environment.

In order to verify the reliability and relevance of the measurements, an analysis was carried out using Cronbach’s α of the measured variables on a Likert scale, while the relevance of the tool was verified by consulting the tool with experts involved in the study of the indicated issues – university professors. The study showed that Cronbach’s alpha was 0.671. It was also checked whether Cronbach’s alpha of the scale changes when items are removed. The change was indicated in terms of two Likert scale questions concerning work experience and the level of attractiveness – after removal, Cronbach’s alpha was 0.764 and 0.706.

5. Analysis of research results

Subjecting the work experience of Poles and their level of attractiveness to a detailed analysis, the study began by determining the overall work experience of the respondents and analysing the factors that are important in shaping work experience.

The survey included 83.33% of respondents with work experience of more than five years. 13.02% of respondents indicated seniority of one to five years, and only 3.65% of respondents had worked for less than one year (Table 2).

Table 2. Overall seniority of respondents

| Responses | % | N |
|-------------------|-------|-----|
| Less than 1 year | 3.65 | 14 |
| 1–5 years | 13.02 | 50 |
| More than 5 years | 83.33 | 320 |

Source: own elaboration

The survey shows that 21.09% of respondents have worked continuously in the same organisation. 29.43% have changed job 1–2 times during their career. 34.64% of respondents have changed jobs 3–4 times, while 14.84% of respondents have changed jobs at least five times (Table 3).

Table 3. Changing the place and position of work – survey results

| Question | Responses | % | N |
|--|---|-------|-----|
| How many times have you changed your place of work during your career? | I still work in the same organisation | 21.09 | 81 |
| | 1–2 times | 29.43 | 113 |
| | 3–4 times | 34.64 | 133 |
| | At least five times | 14.84 | 57 |
| How many times have you changed your job position during your career? | I've worked constantly in the same position | 22.4 | 86 |
| | 1–2 times | 30.99 | 119 |
| | 3–4 times | 34.63 | 133 |
| | At least five times | 11.98 | 46 |

Source: own elaboration

Changes in the working life of employees are not only related to a change of workplace but also to a change of job position. The largest number of respondents (34.63%) have changed their job position 3–4 times. Slightly fewer (30.99%) have changed their position 1–2 times, 22.4% of respondents have worked continuously in the same position, while 11.98% of respondents have changed their position at least 5 times.

The frequency of job changes can be interpreted negatively by potential employers. This is because too frequent change may be associated with a lower level of commitment, concern about an investment in the employee that will not pay off, or the employee being guided only by financial aspects at work as a motivating factor. However, it should be noted that changing jobs can also be associated with a negative

employer image (Table 4). A bad image of the employer can affect an employee's well-being, job satisfaction, a sense of importance of the job, motivation to work, or directly affect an employee's self-image in the labour market. The survey shows that one in five Poles has experience of changing jobs due to a negative employer image (21.35%). The scale of the recorded phenomenon allows us to conclude that many employers in Poland are struggling with the consequences of a negative image, not only in terms of difficulties in attracting or retaining customers, but above all in relation to having to cope with higher employee turnover.

Table 4. Changes in the work experience of respondents

| Question | Responses | % | N |
|---|-----------|-------|-----|
| Have you ever changed jobs due to a negative employer image in the market? | Yes | 21.35 | 82 |
| | No | 78.65 | 302 |
| Have you ever had to change your place of residence in order to find a desirable job? | Yes | 27.86 | 107 |
| | No | 72.14 | 277 |

Source: own elaboration

The work experience of surveyed Poles is related not only to changing the place of work and position, but also to having to change the place of residence in order to find a desired job. 27.68% of respondents confirmed that at least once during their career they were forced to change their place of residence. The rest of the respondents (72.14%) did not indicate such experiences, which does not mean that these people have not considered this possibility. After all, not every employee is brave enough to not only change the employer but also to look for a job outside the place of residence. Changing jobs alone can be considered a difficult experience, and if a change of residence is also involved, the challenge becomes much greater. The survey also analysed the possibility of change in the areas indicated (Table 5).

Table 5. Potential changes – opinions of respondents (results in %)

| Statements | Definitely yes | Rather yes | It's hard to say | Rather not | Definitely not |
|---|----------------|------------|------------------|------------|----------------|
| I am considering changing my job position | 15.63 | 21.09 | 30.47 | 16.67 | 16.14 |
| I am considering a change of employer | 13.28 | 21.36 | 27.60 | 20.57 | 17.19 |
| I am considering resigning from my job due to my family situation | 7.55 | 11.98 | 18.49 | 26.30 | 35.68 |

| Statements | Definitely yes | Rather yes | It's hard to say | Rather not | Definitely not |
|---|----------------|------------|------------------|------------|----------------|
| I am considering changing my place of residence to get a better job | 10.94 | 15.62 | 17.97 | 20.57 | 34.90 |

Source: own elaboration

36.72% of respondents are considering changing their job position. Slightly fewer, 34.64%, are considering changing employers. 19.53% are considering quitting their jobs due to their family situation, and 26.56% are thinking of changing their place of residence to get a better job. The results of the survey allow us to conclude that employees are constantly considering a range of career options, though in many cases these considerations remain only in the theoretical sphere and do not involve real actions. While the scale of considerations in changing jobs may indicate a desire for professional development, the results of the study revealing that one in three employees is considering a change of employer may indicate that employees' needs are higher than their ability to meet them in a given organisation.

After analysing individual aspects shaping the work experience of Poles, the overall quality of work experience was assessed (Table 6).

Table 6. Respondents' evaluation of work experience

| Responses | % | N |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-----|
| Definitely positive | 26.56 | 102 |
| Rather positively | 46.88 | 180 |
| Neither positively nor negatively | 19.01 | 73 |
| Rather negatively | 5.99 | 23 |
| Definitely negative | 1.56 | 6 |

Source: own elaboration

A positive assessment of their work experience was revealed by 73.44% of respondents. The opposite position was presented by 7.55%. Nearly one in five respondents was unable to explicitly evaluate the experience (19.01%). The revealed survey results indicate that almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the surveyed Poles evaluate their experience positively. Despite changes in jobs and employers, a positive assessment of work experience may indicate satisfaction with the course of employment to date. In addition, one of the key reasons for the willingness, as well as the courage, to look for a new employer is a sense of professional attractiveness (Table 7).

Table 7. Respondents' rating of professional attractiveness

| Responses | % | N |
|---------------------|-------|-----|
| Very high | 14.32 | 55 |
| Rather high | 38.02 | 146 |
| At an average level | 42.97 | 165 |
| Rather low | 2.61 | 10 |
| Definitely low | 2.08 | 8 |

Source: own elaboration

Very high and rather high levels of professional attractiveness were rated by 52.34% of respondents. The medium level was indicated by 42.97% of respondents. Only 4.69% of respondents rated their attractiveness low and definitely low.

6. Hypotheses verification

As part of the analyses conducted, the existence of a relationship between the work experience of working Poles and their sense of professional attractiveness was verified (main hypothesis). The STATISTICA package was used for this purpose and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was calculated. Spearman's rho was 0.386 ($p = 0.001$). The correlation was found to be statistically significant. There is an average (called moderate) positive relationship between the two variables. High values of one variable are accompanied by high values of the other: as the evaluation of the level of work experience increases, the level of professional attractiveness of the respondents increases. Based on the results of the study, the main hypothesis was verified positively.

The existence of correlations between work experience and the level of attractiveness and employees' considerations of potential changes was also analysed. No statistically significant correlations were revealed between the sense of professional attractiveness and the desire for change (H4) in the areas indicated ($p > 0.05$). There are, however, correlations between work experience and consideration of: changing jobs (Spearman's rho -0.203 , $p = 0.001$), changing employers (Spearman's rho -0.265 , $p = 0.001$), resigning from a job (Spearman's rho -0.126 , $p = 0.01$), and changing residence (Spearman's rho -0.214 , $p = 0.001$). All correlations had a negative very weak relationship (H3). In addition, the relationship between occupational attractiveness and the desired salary level was verified (H4). The study revealed a positive weak relationship (Spearman's rho 0.152, $p = 0.003$).

The correlations between the independent variables (gender, generational affiliation, place of residence, level of education) and the considered individual events of employees' working life were also analysed. The results indicate that there is a very weak relationship

between gender and the frequency of job change ($p = 0.02$, Cramér's $V = 0.156$), generational affiliation and the frequency of job change ($p = 0.001$, Cramér's $V = 0.166$) and job ($p = 0.001$, Cramér's $V = 0.179$), seniority and the need to change one's residence ($p = 0.03$, Cramér's $V = 0.133$) and job ($p = 0.02$, Cramér's $V = 0.162$).

To determine whether the quality of work experience and the level of professional attractiveness of employees are influenced by gender, generational affiliation, educational level, place of work, and place of residence (H1 and H2), 8 Kruskal-Wallis H tests (Tables 8 and 9) and 2 Mann-Whitney U tests were performed (nonparametric tests for inferential statistical analysis).

Table 8. Results of Kruskal-Wallis H tests comparing attractiveness and education

| | Lower than secondary ($n = 28$) | Secondary ($n = 186$) | Higher ($n = 170$) | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------|----------|
| | Average rank | | | <i>H</i> | <i>p</i> |
| How would you rate your attractiveness as an employee in the market? | 247.36 | 194.11 | 181.70 | 9.84 | 0.007 |

Note: n – number of observations; H – Kruskal-Wallis test result; p – significance.

Source: own elaboration

Table 9. Kruskal-Wallis H test results comparing experience and place of residence

| | Rural area ($n = 67$) | A city with a population of up to 19,999 ($n = 40$) | A city with a population of 20,000 to 49,999 ($n = 57$) | A city with a population of 50,000 to 99,999 ($n = 51$) | A city with 100,000 to 499,999 inhabitants ($n = 97$) | Cities with more than 500,000 residents ($n = 72$) | | |
|--|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|----------|----------|
| | Average rank | | | | | | <i>H</i> | <i>p</i> |
| How would you rate your work experience? | 186.37 | 215.59 | 217.46 | 196.27 | 196.93 | 156.97 | 14.24 | 0.014 |

Note: n – number of observations; H – Kruskal-Wallis test result; p – significance.

Source: own elaboration

The analyses conducted show that those with college education rated their professional attractiveness significantly higher than those with less than secondary school education ($p < 0.05$). Taking into account work experience, those living in cities with more than 0.5 million residents rated their work experience more positively than those from cities with 20,000 to 49,999 residents (only statistically significant results were presented – two statistically important results of eight Kruskal-Wallis H test; the results of two Mann-Whitney U test were not statistically important).

An analysis of the survey results enabled the verification of the research hypotheses (Table 10).

Table 10. Hypothesis verification results

| No. | Hypothesis | Verifica-tion | Positive verifi-cation in terms of |
|-----|--|---------------|------------------------------------|
| H | There is a relationship between employees' work experience and their sense of professional attractiveness. | Positive | – |
| H1 | Poles' work experience is influenced by gender, generational affiliation, education, place of work, and place of residence. | Negative | Place of residence |
| H2 | The sense of professional attractiveness is influenced by gender, generational affiliation, education, place of work, and place of residence. | Negative | Educational level |
| H3 | Employees who rate their work experience positively are not considering changing their job, their place of work, resigning from their job, or changing their place of residence. | Positive | – |
| H4 | Employees who rate their professional attractiveness positively have higher financial expectations and are considering changing their jobs and positions. | Negative | Salary level |

Source: own elaboration

The main research hypothesis indicating that there is a relationship between employees' work experience and their sense of professional attractiveness has been verified positively. The study shows that as the evaluation of the level of work experience increases, a sense of professional attractiveness also increases. H1 has been verified negatively. Only the relationship between work experience and respondents' place of residence was confirmed. For H2, the verification has also been negative. Only the relationship between the level of professional attractiveness and the respondents' education was observed. H3 has been verified positively, confirming the existence of a correlation (albeit a weak one) between the positive evaluation of work experience and the lack of consideration of changing

location, job, employer, and place of residence. The last hypothesis (H4) has been verified negatively. Only the relationship between the level of professional attractiveness and financial expectations has been confirmed.

7. Conclusions, limitations and future research

Work experience and professional attractiveness can be regarded as two main factors shaping the quality of working life. Bearing above in mind and identifying a gap in research findings on professional attractiveness, including the relationship between work experience and a sense of professional attractiveness, the author of this article decided to explore and fill the research gap in this area. With the aim of revealing the potential relationship between valuing work experiences and a sense of professional attractiveness, an empirical study was conducted. Within the framework of the formulated hypotheses, the influence of independent variables on the evaluation of work experience and a sense of professional attractiveness was also considered. The study conducted encompassed the search for a relationship between the indicated variables and the consideration of the possibility of changing location, job, employer, and place of residence.

The results of the study allow us to conclude that the formation of positive work experiences is important in terms of feelings of professional attractiveness (as the evaluation of the level of work experience increases, the level of professional attractiveness of the respondents increases). The quality of work experience differs considering the size of the locality in which employees reside, while the level of professional attractiveness changes under the influence of education. The research has not confirmed that those with higher levels of professional attractiveness consider changing positions or jobs. It only indicates that they expect a higher salary. Importantly, the research shows that those with positive work experiences do not consider changing jobs or employers, resigning or relocating to look for a better job. This shows the importance of shaping positive work experiences, taking care of employees, as well as not considering employees in the category of homogeneous groups. Certain actions are taken more or less frequently by employees, which can be verified through ongoing research, and which allows for a better shaping of employment policies and employer branding strategies.

The survey sample was random (stratified selection), which makes it possible to scale to the entire population of working Poles. The research was conducted on a sample of 384 Poles, which limits the possibility of inference on employees of other nationalities. The assessment of the level of professional attractiveness and work experience may be related to the mentality of employees, dictated by the specific culture of the country, as well

as organisational cultures. The author sees the need to conduct research on employees of other nationalities as well, which will enable broader inference and, above all, will bring closer the peculiarities of the functioning of employees in different labour markets, and will allow to reveal potential convergences or differences in views.

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Doświadczenia zawodowe pracujących Polaków a poczucie atrakcyjności zawodowej – wyniki badań empirycznych

Streszczenie: W artykule podjęto problematykę doświadczeń zawodowych pracujących Polaków oraz poczucia atrakcyjności zawodowej jako czynników kształtujących jakość życia zawodowego. W ramach prowadzonych badań dążono nie tylko do identyfikacji potencjalnej zależności pomiędzy doświadczeniami zawodowymi pracowników a ich poczuciem atrakcyjności zawodowej, ale również poddano analizie czynniki mogące różnicować wskazane zmienne, takie np. jak płeć czy przynależność pokoleniowa. W celu ukazania czynników kształtujących jakość doświadczeń zawodowych badaniom

poddano poszczególne aspekty wykonywanej pracy, uwzględniając potencjalne skutki poczucia atrakcyjności zawodowej, oczekiwania finansowe, chęć zmiany miejsca oraz stanowiska pracy. Osiągnięcie celu badań i weryfikacja postawionych hipotez nie byłyby możliwe bez przeprowadzenia badań empirycznych, które zrealizowano w czerwcu 2022 r. techniką CAWI na próbie 384 Polaków. Wyniki badań poddano analizie statystycznej przy wykorzystaniu pakietu statistica.pl. Z badań wynika, że istnieje zależność pomiędzy jakością doświadczeń zawodowych a poziomem atrakcyjności zawodowej. Wraz z rosnącą pozytywną oceną doświadczeń rośnie także pozytywna ocena poziomu atrakcyjności zawodowej pracowników.

Słowa kluczowe: doświadczenie zawodowe, atrakcyjność zawodowa, praca

JEL: J2, M5

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