ORIGINAL RESEARCH
PROJECTS

ORYGINALNE
ARTYKUŁY BADAWCZE

Joanna Kozielska
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland
e-mail: askowr@amu.edu.pl
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2319-964

Determinants of Professional Success –
About the Beliefs of Primary School Students

Abstract

The paper focuses on the issue of professional success and its perception. The study, carried out using the diagnostic survey method, covered 1099 respondents – students at primary schools, residing in a medium-sized city in Poland. It solved the following research problems: How do youth perceive life and professional success? What associations do male and female students of primary and secondary schools have about post-primary education (vocational/trade school, technical vs. comprehensive school)? What educational pathways do students perceive as prestigious and not prestigious, as enabling professional success and preventing the same? Which professions do students at primary schools perceive as prestigious and non-prestigious? What, in young people's opinion, are the conditions conducive to professional success? What is the youth's self-esteem in terms of opportunities to achieve professional success? How do selected socio-demographic characteristics differentiate the perception of professional success, its determinants, and self-esteem concerning the chances of achieving it? An alarming fact is that the beliefs of nearly half the students from the present research sample appear to be that to achieve success, it is necessary to have connections or luck. This arouses concern because, in the expectation of chance, luck (in case of lack of connections) students may adopt a passive attitude in the context of creativity and in fact "moving forward (without their active participation)" in their educational and professional careers.

Keywords: professional success, determinants of success, youth.

Introduction

The socio-cognitive approach to conditions leading to understanding the determinants of individual actions involves knowing the beliefs of people about themselves and the world. They do not remain without influence on the decisions taken, including the choice of profession or, more broadly, on the professional path and its destination (Bandura, 2006, pp. 165–180). The question of why some people are ready to undertake tasks requiring effort, while others are not, remains unresolved. Previous research in this area has shown, e.g., that personality traits are poor predictors of entrepreneurial behaviour (Wooten et al., 1999), while suggesting that beliefs and judgments about the self and the world may constitute a determinant of success (Shook et al., 2003). Therefore, it can be assumed that positive beliefs about the determinants of success, such as optimism and hope for success (Scheier & Carver, 1985) will foster a more positive perception of the transition process from education to the labour market. Importantly, the way we perceive the determinants of success (what we consider them to be) determines the adoption of a passive *versus* active attitude in shaping our fate (Gladys-Jakóbik, 2005). The independent variables in this research project are: aspirations, plans, educational and vocational choices of youth; perception of a successful professional, his/her conditions and self-assessment of his/her chances of achievement and perception of the process of school vocational guidance. The independent variables are gender, domicile, the educational level of respondents' parents, activity vs. lack of professional activity of the respondents' parents, the level of parents' involvement in the respondents' educational life, as declared by the students, material status of the student's families, the level of educational achievement of students, the level of student involvement in out-of-school and after-school activities and the type of school the respondents learn at.

The aims of the research project were as follows: characteristics of aspirations, plans and educational and professional choices made by youth, presenting young people's opinions about the category of 'success' (including professional success), along with its determinants, characteristics of associations accompanying young people on the paths of education enabling or

preventing the achievement of professional success (technical secondary schools, vocational schools vs. general secondary schools) and prestigious and non-prestigious professions, and characterisation (as a consequence of the students' evaluation) of the process of vocational guidance and description of the desired shape by the students. This paper presents only the module on success. The author is interested in how students at primary schools perceive success (life and career), the dimension with which they identify it, how they perceive the factors that determine it and what determines their attitude towards shaping their own lives. In the author's research project, conducted using the diagnostic survey method (technique: surveying, research tool: author's survey questionnaire and author's questionnaire of the individual action plan), answers were sought for the following research problems: How do youth perceive life and professional success? What associations do male and female students of primary and secondary schools make concerning post-primary education (vocational/trade school, or technical/ comprehensive school)? Which educational pathways do students perceive as prestigious and non-prestigious/ enabling professional success and preventing it? What professions do students at primary schools perceive as prestigious and non-prestigious? What, in young people's opinion, are the conditions conducive to professional success? What is the youth's self-esteem in terms of chances to achieve professional success? How do selected socio-demographic characteristics differentiate the perception of professional success, its determinants and self-esteem of chances to achieve it? Youth perceive success determinants on a continuum, from those depending on luck and chance to those related to activity and work, which may influence their style of action. While the second option seems promising, those convinced of the decisive impact of luck and chance, passively awaiting its occurrence, may become a group threatened with social exclusion, passive and helpless (in the face of lack of luck, chance), whose (externally reinforced) sense of coherence/control may derail them from the career path towards unemployment, helplessness and social exclusion. The presented results may prove useful for guidance counsellors working at schools, who, while developing in-school programmes of vocational guidance, should consider

the student's beliefs about professional success, its determinants and the paths leading to it, which influence educational and professional choices.

Materials and methods

To obtain answers to the aforesaid research problems, the diagnostic survey method was adopted. As part of the research method, a research technique, viz., the questionnaire survey, was chosen as a research tool. The questionnaire used in the study consisted of a short data sheet and a series of questions, some of them conclusive, and others with closed, semi-open and conjunctive options. Open questions were also used contextually.

The research presented in the next part of this paper was conducted in the school year 2019–2020 in one of the 50 medium-sized (up to 100,000 inhabitants) Polish cities. The research process, in line with the quantitative method, used a combined purposive and random sampling scheme, by first defining the layers of the sample, comprised of purposively selected types of schools-which were primary schools- and the location in terms of population (medium-sized city). At the next stage, groups of students (class teams) were randomly selected for inclusion in the survey. Each student received a questionnaire with instructions on how to fill it.

To capture and recognise the relationships between variables and to achieve the aforesaid research objectives, selected statistical procedures were applied that enabled the determination of the presence of statistical significance and the strength of relationships between the analysed factors. The relationships between questions were tested by Pearson's chi-square test, and when the expected numbers were too small (secondary school students signally included for comparison purposes) (less than 5) the chi-square NW test (highest reliability) was used. When analysing questions with multiple responses, for comparing the proportion of responses in two groups, the significance test between two indicators of the structure was used, and for comparing the proportion of responses, in at least 3 groups, the Fp test comparing k frequencies was used. The value of $p < 0.05$ was assumed to be statistically significant. Moreover, in questions concerning the prestige of professions

and determinants of educational and professional choices, the categories of answers were assigned ranks (numerical values) and the answers were treated as quantitative variables. Therefore the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the significance of differences in the level of respondents' evaluations in at least three groups. Statistical calculations were performed using Statistica 10 Pl.

Statistical and descriptive analysis of the research material collected in primary schools (6th–8th grades) was conducted on 1099 anonymous questionnaires. The participant group was almost equally divided between female and male students, with 548 female students (49.90%) and 551 male students (50.10%). The respondents were students of the 6th, 7th and 8th grades (i.e., 12–15 years old), forming almost equal groups. While students from the 6th and 8th grades constituted nearly 60% (30% each) of the research sample, the most represented group was the students from the 7th grade, constituting 37.50% of the sample. The majority of respondents from primary schools came from a medium-sized city (50,000 to 150,000 inhabitants) constituting 81.00% of the research sample. The second largest group consisted of students living in rural areas (16.00%). Only 2.10% of the respondents lived in small towns (up to 50,000 inhabitants) and only 10 (1.00%) were residents of towns with more than 150,000 inhabitants.

The structure of the education undergone by the parents of the respondents from primary schools was quite varied, as evident from the figure below. Nearly 50.00% of the parents had higher education (48.40%). The most educated and, at the same time, the most numerous group of parents was the mothers – every third of them had received higher education. The next largest group comprised the fathers, who too had higher education (almost every fifth father). The education structure of parents reveals a specific bipolarity-the second largest group were parents with basic vocational education (30.60%), with a slight predominance of men in this category. The respondents' fathers graduated from secondary schools (technical) almost twice as often as their mothers. It is disturbing that the vast majority of the respondents (75.10%) were unable to indicate the level of education of their parents/guardians. Similar conclusions were provided by the studies conducted in 2016–2018, indicating that students

of the last grades of lower secondary schools were unaware of their parents' / guardians' current profession. The vast majority of the parents of the research sample are active professionals (about 90.00% of the fathers and nearly 80.00% of the mothers of primary and secondary school students). The lower activity of mothers was caused by their caring for a dependent person/persons (about 15.00% in the case of primary and secondary school students). Nearly 7.00% of the surveyed students from both educational levels were unable to determine the status of a parent/guardian on the labour market-students did not know whether their parents/guardians were working or not. The inability to indicate the parent's status in the labour market was higher in terms of defining the father's professional situation. The respondents assessed the material status of their family as high, with nearly 65.00% of the surveyed primary school students describing it as high or very high, thus indicating that they were satisfied with it and that the family can, in principle, afford everything it needs. Almost every third primary school student surveyed stated that the material status of their families should be defined as average – "we are neither poor nor especially wealthy". Primary school students also rated the level of parental/guardian involvement in their education process as high or very high. This indicates that parents participate in meetings with the tutor, help with lessons if necessary, organise additional classes, including tutoring, and often ask and talk to children about school, and plan for the future, (in nearly 80.00% of the cases). Every third respondent described the involvement of parents as average – "Parents are moderately interested in school, they attend parent-teacher meetings when necessary, I rather have to deal with myself, although in case of great difficulty, I can count on their help". Primary school students constituting the research sample were a group which, considering the average grades achieved of higher than 4.01, should be defined as a group of very good and good students (constituting almost 66.00% of all respondents). The group of average students (with an average grade between 3.01 and 4.00) comprised nearly 30.00% of the respondents, while weak and very weak students (1.00–3.00) formed 10.00%.

Students from the reported research sample constituted a very diverse group in terms of self-assessment of their activity (educational and hobby)

in the mean curricular and extracurricular dimensions. The most numerous group among primary school students comprised students who declared a high commitment to additional activities carried out outside school-nearly one-third of the respondents. Students who define their commitment as very high (school and extra-school), high (implemented in glass walls) and medium (expressed by the statement that such activity takes place "from time to time" – in the school and out-of-school form) constituted approximately equal groups of about 15.00–20.00%. Every tenth respondent described his/her involvement in the discussed area as low, stating that he rarely participates in any extra-curricular activities. A similar group of students does not participate in any activities beyond the standard, regulated curriculum, the school offers.

Results

Success in life success as perceived by primary school students

The text presents a survey module conducted in 2020 in Poland, relating to the choices, aspirations, and educational and professional plans of youth (and the broad context accompanying them–including the perception of success). As the cognitive objectives, the following were chosen: the characteristics of the aspirations, plans and educational and professional choices made by youth, presentation of young people's opinion on the concept of "success" (including professional success) along with its determinants, the characteristics of associations accompanying young people on the paths of education enabling or preventing the achievement of professional success (technical schools, vocational schools vis-a-vis general secondary schools) and prestigious or non-prestigious professions, and the characteristics (as a consequence of the evaluation made by the students) of the process of vocational guidance and description of the form thereof desired by the students. The study was carried out through the diagnostic survey method (questionnaire). The research sample constituted 1099 primary school pupils.

Primary school youth participating in the study, when asked to indicate three answers that best represent their associations constituting the achievement of success in life, specified, as shown in Table 1, that it is above all having a happy family (72.40%) – which indicates the importance of the emotional-affiliate dimension (success as an effect of family orientation) and a good job from which a person derives satisfaction (63.30% – success as an effect of work orientation). These two answers were chosen by the largest part of the group. The next positions, based on responses from primary school students, included success perceived as having true friends (34.80%) (success in the emotional-affiliation dimension), education (34.80%) (success in the stratification-prestige or self-fulfillment dimension) and good health (39.50%).

Interestingly, given, *inter alia*, the consumer lifestyle in the supermarket culture attributed to global teenagers, and the need for immediate gratification of needs (Melosik, 2004), and in the context of the young age of respondents, a rich spiritual life was more often indicated as associated with success than, for example, having a high social status and accompanying material goods. The 'humanitarian' categories related to success perceived in the light of helping others or dignity and honesty were indicated the least.

An analysis of the answers of primary school students is shown in Table 1 (where "–" means that independent variables of an individual and social nature did not have a statistically significant influence on students' associations related to the indicated category of success). It is worth noting that considering the respondents' gender, statistically significant differences occurred in the "health" response (p = 0.0156), which was more often indicated by female students. This aspect was also mentioned more often by students obtaining average (3.01–3.50) as well as very good and excellent (above 5.00) school results (p = 0.0249).

The students with the highest scores also indicated most often that they perceived success as "dignity, honesty, independence" (p = 0.0149) and "achieving goals, self-fulfillment, and self-development" (p = 0.0068), similar to students aspiring to continue their education after primary school, to obtain secondary school certificate and higher education (p = 0.0186). The latter,

Table 1. Youth's associations about life success

	Most frequently identified significant individual and social differences
Happy family	–
Good work, satisfaction with it	• Students declaring very high and high family material level (p = 0.0025)
Having real friends	–
Education	–
Health	• Girls (p = 0.0156) • Average, good, very good students (achieving average grades in the range of 3.01–5.00) (p = 0.0249)
Joy, making dreams come true	• Girls (p = 0,0029) • Very good students (achieving average grades above 4.50) (p = 0.0318)
Good material, financial conditions	–
Achievement of goals, self-fulfillment, self-development	• Very good students (p = 0.0068)
A rich inner life, spiritual	–
High material status, high earnings, high standard of living	• Aspiring for higher education (p = 0.0046)
Dignity, honesty, independence	• Very good students (achieving average grades above 4.50) p = 0.0149
Being helpful to others	• Girls (p = 0.0181) • Very good and excellent students (achieving average grades from 4.50 and above 5.00) (p = 0.0306)
I don't know, it's hard to say	• Students whose educational plans involve only graduation from primary school

Source: Author's research.

aspiring to graduate from university more often than their peers, specified that they associate success with "high material status, high earnings and a high standard of living" (p = 0.0046). The category "joy, fulfillment of dreams" as an association related to success in life was chosen more often by female respondents (p = 0.0029) and also (p = 0.0318) by students with high and

very high grade point averages (with grade average of 4.51–5.00 and above 5.00). Female students, similar to the previous category, were more likely to indicate that success means "being a helpful person to others" (p = 0.0181), this category was also indicated (p = 0.0306) by students, with high and very high academic achievement (with grade average of 4.51–5.00 and above 5.00). "Good job, satisfaction with it" (p = 0.0025) as an association with success was most often indicated by students declaring very high and high family material level.

Professional success and educational paths

The respondents' associations, used by the researcher to indicate the determinants and the perception of professional success by young people, were in most cases understood in the subjective and objective dimensions, concentrating on such values as professionalism, autonomy, security and stability, entrepreneurship, and less frequently, sacrifice for others. Students of 6th to 8th grades overwhelmingly perceived professional success through the following prisms:

I. fulfilled goal (dream, intention, plan of educational and professional character, often resulting from the passions and interests of the individual)

Professional success is, in my opinion, fulfilling own dreams regarding the favorite profession and practising it (F/13/VI) (Explanation of the description: F (female) – M (male); Number e.g., 34 – the number assigned to the respondent; Mark VI–VIII educational level – primary school and I–III educational level – secondary school);

II. its effects (in the sphere of personal and work-related life) – (in the vast majority of opinions) the material (financial) dimension (from sufficient to satisfy basic needs through high and very high salaries; a guarantee of a prosperous (=) happy life)

A successful man is a man who pursues his dream direction, sometimes achieves success and support without problems, can afford a good car,

a nice house and other things, goes to work with pleasure and is able to develop in it (F/339/IISB);

III. performing function – bringing fulfillment, satisfaction and harmony, peace and balance, autonomy and independence in private life (also through the material goods listed in Section II) and at work

A successful man/woman is happy and earns adequately for whatever he/she needs his/her needs, can live well, does not have to worry about anything, and has a happy family (F/117/VIII);

IV. personal qualities of individuals (or pointing to specific exemplars of individuals) who have experienced it and what they have become as a result of achieving it

A successful man is satisfied with his work and well educated, smart, and likes going to work. His earnings are rewarding, and he is independent at work and in life in general. Going to this job makes his dreams come true, he is ambitious and hard-working, he manages people well and learns all the time and is […] a rather enterprising person (F/765 VIII);

A successful man for me is Michael Jackson, Bill Gates, Donald Trump, Queboanfibe and several others (M/659/IT).

V. characteristics of the work performed (rather light, pleasant, liked by the person performing it, stable, etc.) or specific exemplifications of it (e.g., professional success includes being a doctor, lawyer, etc.)

Professional success is to be a millionaire and to have a goggle-type company […] success can also be a job at a university, in a hospital and in a private office by the house. In my opinion, this is a man who is independent. He has high property status, acquaintances around the world (M/87/IT);

Professional success = enjoyable, rather easy work, with money that covers all the family's needs (M/608/ISB).

The largest part of students from primary schools (Pearson's chi-square test p 0.000; df 4) indicated that they perceive success in terms of getting ahead, and thus in its traditional formulation–as the pursuit of status, responsibility, high pay and power (43.40%) (Categories of variables: Pietruszewski, 2014,

pp. 65–78). The next most frequent indication was getting free – success bringing autonomy, freedom and independence (20.80%). Nearly one in five primary school students perceived success as getting secure (stability, safety, predictability). Being a master in their field (getting high – developing skills beyond the average, being experts in their industry), is an association indicated rarely. Similarly, a small percentage of students perceived success in terms of security (stability, safety, predictability).

Specifying the analyses of primary school students' perceptions of success – success as getting ahead was more often indicated by male than female students (p = 0.0032); getting free – success as autonomy, freedom and independence was more often indicated by students with high and average, low and very low family material level (p = 0030) and students who do not intend to remain in primary education, planning to study in secondary school, technical school or vocational school (Pearson's chi-square test p = 0.0029; chi2 = 36; df = 16); getting secure – stability, safety, predictability – as the category of perceived success was more often expressed by girls (Pearson's chi-square test p = 0.0030; chi2 = 22.7; df = 12), students who did not know (or could not determine) their family's material level (Pearson's chi-square test p = 0,0032; chi2 = 15,9; df = 12), and students not planning to go to the university (p = 0.0029); getting high – developing skills above average, being an expert in their field was more often indicated by males (p=0.0032) and students who aspired to graduate (p = 0.0029); getting balanced was most often selected by females (p = 0.0032) and students who would like to have a college education in the future (p = 0,0029).

The largest part of students from primary schools indicated that technical school enables them to achieve professional success (35.50%), every third student chose general secondary school (28.80%), and almost every fifth student stated that success would enable him to graduate from university. Their statements were similar, regardless of the independent (individual and social) variables determined by the methodological assumptions (p > 0.05).

Students describing their perceptions and opinions about secondary schools, technical schools, and vocational schools usually referred to several areas to illustrate their expressed evaluation of these schools, including:

I. Students studying in a particular type of school (their individual and environmental characteristics–such as school achievements, aspirations, as well as educational and vocational plans, the level of self-determination in terms of career preferences);

II. Teaching level in the school, curriculum (including the way teachers function in this area and the expectations they formulate);

III. Relationships (teacher-student, student-student, etc.);

IV. School infrastructure and

V. Perceptions of the school.

The opinions of primary school adolescents were mostly positive concerning secondary schools and technical schools, while more pejorative terms were applied to vocational schools. The following statements serve as an example:

a) Vocational school

I must admit that uncomplimentary things are said about students of vocational schools and this kind of school, but they are often people who are skilled in a certain trade or activity, but not very smart. My friend went to a vocational school. She wanted to go there because of her skills in this field and she knew what she wanted to do in life. In September, she will already be in the 3rd grade –she learns very poorly, even though the material is very easy; but she is supposedly a great hairdresser. Well, these are schools for talented people who did not learn or did not have the conditions to learn. She had to go to work, so she told me [...] (F/506/IIIT).

Vocational schools have a low level of education and people are sent there who have no idea what to do, but they do not all have to be university graduates. Someone has to sell in a store, deliver letters, cook in a restaurant, do hair or even clean the streets. Teachers sometimes threaten that if we don't learn, we will end up there. The level is low, and the teachers are probably not the best either. I'm a bit put off by such a school. I associate it with dirt behind my fingernails and hard work in the future, but someone has to (M/202/IT).

b) Technical school

It seems to me that technical school is a good option for those interested in it but also learn well. It's a 2-in-1 option because you have a profession and a high school diploma afterwards. The students are nice (my brother is studying economics and he doesn't complain), and so are the teachers. I'm going to technical school because I already know more or less what to choose for the future and it will be rather a good choice, then maybe also studies (M/498/VIII).

It's a school for good or average students who have already chosen their profession, know what they want and then they can go to work. My friend at the age of 20 already has her own hairdressing salon and is doing well. She had the equipment to learn there. She also did some additional courses and practices, so she learned the profession. The level of teaching is probably average – it also depends on the subject (F/201/T).

c) Comprehensive secondary school

Secondary school is a school for ambitious people who want to study, have good grades, and generally want to achieve something more in life. The level of teaching is certainly high, and the teachers put a lot of pressure on everyone to pass their final exams and go to university.

Secondary school is for the best – there is no place for ignorant people, although nowadays it is probably easier to get in than before. If you want a good job, you should be in secondary school. (M/12/VII).

Determinants of professional success in students' opinion

As mentioned, the perception of success determinants conditions the adoption of passive versus active attitudes towards shaping one's future (Gladys-Jakóbik, 2005). Therefore, it is interesting to investigate this part of youth's reality,

which may determine their attitude towards shaping their own life, including its professional aspects.

Young people were asked to indicate five factors on which, in their opinion, achieving professional success depends. The students ranked ambition and hard work highly, which is pleasing. It can thus be assumed that they are aware that their life and career are in their own hands, and what they achieve in their (professional) life will depend on the amount of work they put in and the persistent pursuit of the goal. Primary school students further believe in the causal power of higher education (placing it in the 3rd position) (Table 2).

Table 2. Determinants of professional success

Determinants of professional success	n-Primary school students	% answer	% case
Ambition	738	18.6	81.7
Intellect	449	11.3	49.7
Higher education	422	10.6	46.7
Hard work	698	17.6	77.3
Innate ability, talent	413	10.4	45.7
Luck, chance	425	10.7	47.1
Knowledge of the right people, connections	396	10.0	43.9
Wealthy family	128	3.2	14.2
Big city background	99	2.5	11.0
Contact with politically influential people	200	5.0	22.1
Total	3968	100.0	439.4

Source: Author's research.

Besides the frequently selected individual-dependent factors, the youth also highly rated luck and chance (ranked 4th). Talent and innate ability also ranked high. Less frequently, youth indicated factors that can be described as hybrid connections. For instance, according to the dual labour market theory, there are factors of dual nature, which can be described as dependent and not dependent on an individual. To use their connections, an individual

must be in a privileged group (or have even indirect access to it) to have them at all. Another aspect of their influence occurs outside the group, where the privileged (in some respect) acquaintance influences reality in such a way as to modify it in favour of the 'principal'.

Considering individual and social variables, their distinctions are presented in Table 3, determining which part of the sample, differentiated in terms of individual and social variables, pointed to a specific determinant of success significantly more often. Variables marked with a "–" in the table did not significantly differentiate statistically students' associations with professional success.

Table 3. Hierarchy of professional success determinants (Primary school students)

Determinants of professional success (in the order of most frequently selected) – SP students (Pearson's chi-square test p 0.0000; chi-square 1666.6; df 9)	Who indicated significantly more frequently (individual and social variations)
Ambition	• (p = 0.0049) men • (p = 0.0023) – the most frequent indication was given by students with very high and average, low and very low family material level • (p = 0.0001) good and very good students with a grade point average of 4.51–5.00 and above 5.00 • (p < 0.0001) students who would like to have secondary, post-secondary and higher education
Hard work, diligence	• (p = 0.0006) students with average, low, and very low family material level • (p = 0.0007) – very good students (with a grade point average of 4.51–5.00 and above 5.00) • (p = 0.0004) students who would like to pursue secondary and higher education
Higher education	• (p = 0.0133) students with very high and high family material levels • (p = 0.0001) very good students with a grade point average of 4.51–5.00 and above 5.00 • (p < 0.0001) – students who would like to pursue higher education

Table 3. (continued)

Determinants of professional success (in the order of most frequently selected) – SP students (Pearson's chi-square test p 0.0000; chi-square 1666.6; df 9)	Who indicated significantly more frequently (individual and social variations)
Luck	–
Intellect	(p = 0.0179) students with average, low, and very low family material level (p = 0.0003) good and very good students with a grade point average of 4.00–4.50, 4.51–5.00, and above 5.00.
Talent, innate ability	(p = 0.0286) students with average, low and very low family material (p = 0.0002) – the most frequent indication was given by students with good and very good students with a grade point average of 4.51–5.00 and above 5.00
Knowledge of the right people, connections	(p = 0.0111) men
Knowledge of people who have political connections	(p = 0.0360) average students (grade point average of 3.51–4.00)
Wealthy family	–
Big city background	–

Source: Author's research.

Students were able to indicate their own factors for success, most often identifying as determinants (besides those repeated in their statements above) the possession of work experience, skills acquired outside school (students described these as life skills, resourcefulness, independence), readiness for further study, gender, and knowledge of foreign languages.

Chance of success from the students' perspective

Professional success, or rather its perception, is marked by subjectivity, as pointed out by A. Cybal-Michalska (2013), indicating it to be the result of individually made career assessment from the perspective of valued values.

Preceding this 'post-professional' reflection, students were asked about the anticipated state to which it is necessary to refer, in trying to answer the question of self-esteem regarding the chances of achieving professional success in the future.

Primary school students were very optimistic in this area. According to 43.00% of them, the chances for professional success are very high or high, and every second respondent in this group described them as average or greater than average.

In conclusion, the neoliberal attitude to a satisfying life is reflected in the statistical data on the quality of life of the Polish people. The results of studies indicate that achieving professional success is important for the Polish (Firkowska-Mankiewicz, 1997). The term in question is also very often the subject of studies with an advisory character [(e.g., *Success and Failure in Upbringing* (Tchorzewski, 2014); *Habits Worth Millions*; *Sales Success*; *Believe It*, to *Achieve It*; *Eat that Frog* (Tracy, 1998; 2004; 2013; 2014); *Awaken the Giant Within* (A. Robbins, 2001)], thus indicating the multitude of its components and areas of life that it may concern, as well as a specific "demand for achieving (variously understood) life success." Therefore, it is not surprising that the demand for broadly understood counselling and services of mentoring or coaching nature, which to support an individual on his way to achieving success, has also increased.

Discussion

Awareness of how success is perceived enables the correction of wrong beliefs about it, which in turn is an invaluable tool for supporting young people in their development on the path of their educational and professional actions. As pointed out beliefs, do influence the decisions taken, including the choice of profession, given that some people are ready to undertake tasks requiring effort, and not others. Positive beliefs as to the determinants of success, such as optimism and hope for success, will be conducive to a more positive perception of the transition process from education to the labour market, intensifying the activity and efficiency of the individual in developing their educational

and professional identity. The beliefs of nearly half the students from the presented research sample are that to achieve success, it is necessary to have connections or luck, which should raise concern, because in the expectation of chance, luck (or, in the absence of connections) they may adopt a passive attitude in the context of creating, and in fact "moving forward (without their participation)" in their educational and professional career.

References

Bandura, A. (2006). Toward a Psychology of Human Agency. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2, 165–180.

Berings, D., De Fruyt, F., & Bouwen, R. (2004). Work Values and Personality Traits As Predictors of Enterprising and Social Vocational Interests. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 36.

Bylok, F. (2005). Wzór sukcesu w społeczeństwie polskim w okresie transformacji społeczno-kulturowej [Model of Success in Polish Society During Social and Political Transformation]. *Annales. Etyka w Życiu Gospodarczym*, 8/1, 87–96. Retrieved 30 Ferbruary 2020 from: https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Annales_Etyka_w_zyciu_gospodarczym/Annales_Etyka_w_zyciu_gospodarczym-r2005-t8-n1/Annales_Etyka_w_zyciu_gospodarczym-r2005-t8-n1-s87-96/Annales_Etyka_w_zyciu_gospodarczym-r2005-t8-n1-s87-96.pdf.

Cybal-Michalska, A. (2013). *Młodzież akademicka a kariera zawodowa* [University Youth and Careers]. Kraków: Impuls.

Firkowska-Mankiewicz, A. (1997). Czym jest sukces życiowy dla współczesnego Polaka? Kontekst socjodemograficzny i psychologiczny [What is Life Success for a Contemporary Pole? Sociodemographic and Psychological Context]. In: H. Domański, & A. Rychard (Eds.), *Elementy Nowego Ładu* [Elements of New Order] (pp. 303–330). Warszawa: IFiS PAN.

Gładys-Jakóbik, J. (2015). *Różne oblicza i uwarunkowania sukcesu w Polsce* [Different Aspects and Conditions of Success in Modern Poland]. Warszawa: OW SGH.

Melosik, Z. (2004). Kultura popularna jako czynnik socjalizacji [Popular Culture as a Factor of Socialization]. In: Z. Kwieciński, & B. Śliwerski (Eds.), *Pedagogika II. Podręcznik akademicki* [Pedagogy II. Academic Textbook]. Warszawa: PWN.

Pietruszewski, M. (2014). Uwarunkowania sukcesu zawodowego w dzisiejszej gospo-

darce [Conditionings of Professional Success in Today's Economy]. *Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Częstochowskiej*, 15, 65–78.

Robbins, A. (2001). *Awaken the Giant Within*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Scheier, M.F., & Carver, Ch.S. (1985). Optimism, Coping, and Health: Generalized Outcome Expectancies. *Health Psychology*, 4(3), 219–247, doi: 10.1037//0278-6133.4.3.219.

Shook, Ch.L., Priem, R.L., & McGee, J.E. (2003). Venture Creation and the Enterprising Individual: A Review and Synthesis. *Journal of Management*, 29(3), 379–399, doi: 10.1016/S0149-2063_03_00016-3.

Tchorzewski, A.M. de (2014). Sukces i porażka w wychowaniu [Success and Failure in Upbringing]. *Edukacja Elementarna w Teorii i Praktyce. Kwartalnik dla Nauczycieli*, 4, 9–25.

Tracy, B. (1998). *Sales Success*. California: HarperCollins Focus.

Tracy, B. (2004). *Believe It, to Achieve It.* California: HarperCollins Focus.

Tracy, B. (2013). *Eat That Frog! 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Tracy, B. (2014). *No Excuses, The Power of Self-Discipline*. New York: Vanguard Press

Wooten, K.C., Timmerman, T.A., & Folger, R. (1999). The Use of Personality and the Five-Factor Model to Predict New Business Ventures: From Outplacement to Startup. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 54(1), 82–101, doi: 10.1006/jvbe.1998.1654.