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Understanding the Employment Expectations of Young Professionals: A Study by Education Level

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Abstract

Young employees have to make many trade-offs in their job search and are often confronted with a need for more skills and abilities. In our survey, we investigated the expectations of young employees towards employers about their level of education and the factors that influence/inhibit their job placement. The results confirmed that remuneration, motivation, an inspiring work environment, and career opportunities offered by employers play a significant role in job choice. The young employees' responses showed that they feel underprepared for the challenges of the labor market and see the solution to this problem in increasing the number of practical training hours. The study highlights the differences in the expectations of students at different levels of education and could be a starting point for further research.

Keywords: *Job Market Preparedness, Skill Gap, Young Professionals, Career Development, Employment Expectations.*

Introduction

In addition to education and research, higher education institutions now play an increasingly important role in the provision of labor and contribute to the economic and social development of a country, which the literature describes as the "third mission" of universities (Gibb, 1996; Johannisson et al., 1998; Etzkowitz et al., 2000). In this context, the importance of universities is twofold. On the one hand, it is essential to train the ever-renewing student population and, on the other hand, provide the necessary workforce for the operation of businesses (Brixy et al., 2010; Szabó-Szentgróti et al., 2024; Tóth et al. 2023).

The present study focuses on the job search strategies of young people seeking to enter the labor market after higher education. Several studies have already examined Generation Z's different habits and behaviors, which sometimes take an extreme approach to the 'otherness' of the cohort. We know that Generation Z is the first generation to spend almost its entire life in the era of digital technology. Thus, it is natural that this generation is very proficient in technology and digital communication. Generation Z is often flexible, quick to learn, and adapts easily to changes and new environments. This agility and innovative mindset create many opportunities in the workplace. In addition, members of Generation Z value work-life balance. They are looking for a working environment that provides flexible working hours and remote working opportunities. Technological tools such as social media and online platforms allow them to work effectively remotely and stay in touch with their team members.

However, more information is needed about their job-seeking behavior. Employers also tend to experiment rather than follow best practices in managing the generation. The study aims to explore the job search strategies and employer preferences of students in higher education. To this end, based on the literature, career choices are presented as a dimension of success in the labor market. We then analyze the job search preferences of 779 higher education students in a nationwide quantitative survey.

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Literature Review

Career Choice Motives

Several researchers have studied the factors that influence career choice, which has led to identifying several essential factors to consider in preparing a career choice. Previous studies have shown that many, sometimes quite different, motives determine career choices. According to social learning theory (Akers & Jensen, 2003; Dajnoki at al., 2023), entrepreneurial event model (Shapero & Sokol, 1982, Ramayah, Rahman & Taghizadeh, 2019, Joshi, Joshi & Pathak, 2020), and behavioral theory (Conner 2015, Sniehotta, Presseau & Araújo-Soares 2014; Kautonen, 2013), the most important factors are personal cognitive, social, and economic. Cognitive factors include self-actualization (Mangné, 2020; Hegyi-Halmos, 2018), autonomy, independence, social recognition (Carter et al., 2003; Van Auken, Stephens, Fry, & Silva, 2006), status (Pusztai et al., 2019), risk-taking (Takács, 2014), and the need for learning, experience and personal development (Lautenschläger & Haase, 2011). Social factors have been relatively rarely researched so far in terms of career choice. The most significant role is played by family, friends, or other reference persons (Ajzen, 1991; Olteanu, 2019). Previous studies have shown that role models can also influence career choices (Krueger et al., 2000). Some researchers have also pointed out that parental occupation can impact young people's career choices, as children often prefer to work in the same field as their parents (Suhajda et al., 2022; Saleem et al., 2014). Economic and labor market conditions also play a role in career choices. Research has shown that firm size is a significant determinant of the choice of entry-level employees, as small firms tend to have lower wages, fewer career and training opportunities, and a lack of various welfare benefits (Polachek & Siebert, 1993; Wagner, 1997). According to Swanson and Gore (2000), career choices are influenced by socio-cultural, individual, personal, and cultural factors. Blustein, Schultheiss, and Flum (2004) and Schultheiss (2003) attribute a significant role to the relationships that greatly support occupational mobility and advancement. Beyon, Kelleen (1998), Agarwala (2008), Akosah (2018), Purohit (2020), and Marinas, Igret, Marinas, and Prioteasa (2016) highlighted the three-dimensional model among career theories. Accordingly, career goals are directly shaped by external factors (job availability, salary needs, job stability), internal factors (interest in the job, experience), and social factors (parents and reference persons).

Labour Market Entry Barriers and Challenges

Young people entering the labor market from higher education face many challenges when choosing their first job. Both the business press and academic research have strongly emphasized the differences between Generation Z and the older generations (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Vinkóczi et al., 2023), which is partly supported by research. However, several scientific findings show that there is not such a large gap between the work value preferences of Generation Z and the previous cohort. Nevertheless, employers also see the employment and management of young workers as challenging, consider their expectations excessive, and question their preparedness for the realities of the workplace (Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010; Dajnoki et al., 2021). Such misunderstanding of generational differences can manifest as conflict between generations through perceived differences in workplace values (Urick et al., 2017; Walter, 2023; Gálos & Vinkóczi, 2023).

Due to the global labor shortage, views on Generation Z's differences have been amplified in recent years. The extremely low level of labor supply, regardless of generation, has increased workplace expectations. Thus, young people's freedom of self-expression has become particularly striking, focusing on personal goals. As Kwok & Muniz (2021) have noted, Generation Z members already have well-defined workplace expectations. Young employees value work-life balance, frequent feedback from managers, cutting-edge technology, and quality human relations.

Malon, Hiatt, and Campbell (2019) conducted an international study on the similarities and differences between the work values of two successive generations. The results demonstrated significant differences in work value between generations Z and Y, with the order of preference of the two cohorts almost identical. According to the authors, one of Generation Z employees' most important work values is the transparency

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of results, which means the visibility of the results of everyday work, reflecting a fundamental interest in meaningful work. Regarding job value preference, a predictable career path and stability were rated highly important.

Overall, employers can target the young generation with a well-chosen recruitment strategy if the corporate side understands Generation Z's values and mindset.

Job Search Strategies for The Young Generation

One of the essential missions of higher education is to prepare students for employment. A well-chosen job search strategy is critical in entering the labor market. Both job search patterns and employers' recruitment practices have changed significantly in recent years. Research shows that networks of connections lead to the best-paid and highest-quality jobs in professional work but that they do not work for entry-level graduates (Glass et al., 2023; Dajnoki, 2022). Social media plays an increasingly important role in recruiting and selecting graduates. Facebook is the most frequently used medium in the international labor market, according to research by Kwok and Muniz (2021).

There are new behaviors and methods in the job-seeking behavior of Generation Z candidates. According to Dajnoki et al. (2021), graduates attach the most importance to career development, financial rewards, and work-life balance. A fundamental problem in recruiting young workers is that companies need to be more receptive to the expectations of university students. Both instrumental factors (e.g., salary, benefits, working hours) and symbolic factors (e.g., internal CSR, competencies, ethical behavior) can play a decisive role in the recruitment strategy of the target group. This can be expressed in a way that instrumental features are tangible and allow candidates to maximize benefits and minimize costs.

In contrast, symbolic attributes are intangible and symbolic for job seekers (Nguyen et al., 2022). So young workers seek more than just financial opportunities when choosing a new job. As a job seeker, you will be interested in an organization dedicated to addressing social issues and prioritizing its employees.

Educational Attainment and Labor Market Success

For the young generation, the desire to be validated in their future workplace, to be recognized and appreciated by others, to fulfill their potential, and to be recognized as effectively as possible is essential. (Fekete, 2022). Different skill levels can also be a differentiating factor in labor market opportunities and job search strategies. The research of Bartus and Róbert (2019) also draws attention to this phenomenon. It has been shown that the proportion of people who successfully find a job is slightly lower, and the time to find a job is slightly longer among those with a bachelor's degree than those with a master's degree. Working while studying is most common among Master's (M.A.) and PhD students, which may explain their more favorable labor market position (Fekete, 2022). According to Bartus & Róbert (2019), beyond the level of education, there are also specificities in the field of education, as the disadvantage of graduates at the bachelor level is above 10% in agricultural sciences, economics, and natural sciences. Another indicator of the disadvantage of bachelor's education is that there is not such a big difference between the fields of education for those coming out of master's and undivided programs. The labor market advantage of Master's degree holders is also explained by the labor competition theory, as employers consider educational attainment as an indicator of potential training costs for workers, so hiring and training highly educated candidates is expected to require less time and fewer resources (Albert & Davia, 2023). The job search gap between education levels is also reflected in the time to find employment. According to an extensive sample survey conducted by Fekete (2022) in Hungary, only 24% of bachelor and 46% of master students find a job within a month.

Overall, there are more frequent qualification differences in the supply of highly skilled labor in the graduate labor market. These differences result in varying job search strategies between different skill levels.

Following a literature review, the following research question is formulated: Do university students' attitudes toward their first job differ according to their level of education?

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In this context, we test the following hypotheses:

According to H(1), depending on the level of education, students consider different factors critical when choosing their first job.

According to H(2), depending on the level of education, university students perceive different leadership qualities as important in their first job.

According to H(3), depending on their level of education, students plan to look for their first jobs in different regions of the country.

Materials and Methods

- *Research Methods Applied*

Several studies in the literature have examined the job search strategies of Generation Z students. Trang, McKenna, Cai, and Morrison (2023) conducted interview research using students' LinkedIn profiles to construct questions. Karácsony et al. (2020) investigated the link between social media and job search in their research. Dobrowolski, Drozdowski & Panait (2022) investigated the values along which public administration can be attractive for Polish Generation Z workers. After reviewing the methodology of the above studies, we decided on the research method and the statistical procedures to be used to process the data. For the evaluation of the results, we used ANOVA and LSD post hoc tests, Chi-squared test, and Cramer's V coefficient using the SPSS software package. Of the post hoc tests, the LSD was chosen because it is the most lenient test, i.e., it is the most likely to detect significant differences (Sajtos & Mitev, 2007). Only results where $p \leq 0.05$ are presented. In order to be able to answer a research question, only university students participated in our research.

The research was carried out using secondary and primary methods. In the framework of the secondary research, the Hungarian and international literature on the topic has been explored and analyzed.

An online questionnaire was designed for the primary quantitative survey, and data was collected in the autumn of 2022. The research used a snowball sampling method, i.e., our research was not representative, so the conclusions drawn from the data cannot be generalized and are only valid for the sample. The research involved 779 university students. The questionnaire was distributed to students by contacting university lecturers and asking them to administer the questionnaires to students enrolled in their courses as part of their classes.

The questionnaire contained a total of 19 questions. The survey's first question asked about the demographic background of the respondents, the university they were attending, and the type of education they were pursuing. Additional questions explored respondents' employment preferences and their expectations of their first job and manager. We also asked about attitudes towards working abroad. Most of the questions were close-ended, with pre-assigned multiple-choice answers and 5-point Likert scales. Likert scales were used to assess the extent to which respondents agreed with our pre-selected statements about their job preference and future manager.

- *Composition of the Sample*

The proportion is 25.8% for men and 74.2% for women in the research. 83.6% of respondents are in the 18-25 age group, while 16.4% are aged 26-30. The majority of students (64%) are enrolled in a bachelor's degree, followed by students in a higher level vocational training (20%), with the lowest number of students (0.5%) enrolled in a doctoral program. A total of 16% of students in the survey are pursuing a Master's degree.

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Table 1 shows the sectors in which students see their future after graduation. More than half (51.6%) of students want to work in economics. A fifth of respondents (20.0%) would like to work in the medical and health sciences.

Table 1. In Which Sectors Do Students See Their Future After Graduation

Sector	Number of university students	Percentage of university students
Agricultural	102	13.1%
Humanities	17	2.2%
Economics	402	51.6%
Information technology	9	1.2%
Legal and Administrative	7	0.9%
Engineering	11	1.4%
Medical & Health Sciences	156	20.0%
Pedagogy	12	1.5%
Social sciences	51	6.5
Natural sciences	7	0.9%
Did not answer	5	0.6%
Total	779	100%

Source: Own Calculation Based on The Research Database

Of the respondents, 478 (61.4%) would still choose the same profession that they started studying at university. Of the respondents, 101 (13%) would not choose the same profession they chose when they started their university studies. Of the respondents, 199 (25.5%) would probably opt for the same profession they initially chose at university. (1 person (0.1%) did not answer the question.)

Results

This chapter analyzes the students' responses using the statistical methods mentioned earlier. In the following paragraph, we analyze the responses to the questions on the importance of the criteria taken into account in selecting one's first job. A significant difference was obtained in 12 cases of the statements assigned to the question. Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance of being able to perform meaningful and challenging work tasks when choosing their first job ($F(3) = 7.139$, $p=0.000$). The post hoc test showed significant differences between students in bachelor and higher-level vocational training ($p=0.001$), Master and higher-level vocational training ($p=0.000$), and bachelor and master students ($p=0.035$). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance they attach to having the opportunity for professional development when choosing their first job ($F(3) = 3.853$, $p=0.009$). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between students in higher-level vocational training and bachelor studies ($p=0.004$) and between bachelor and PhD students ($p=0.050$). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance they attach to job security when choosing their first job ($F(3) = 3.897$, $p=0.009$). The post hoc test showed a significant difference between bachelor and master students ($p=0.005$) and between bachelor and PhD students ($p=0.037$). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance of career opportunities when choosing their first job ($F(3) = 4.411$, $p=0.004$). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between students in higher-level vocational training and bachelor's degree ($p=0.011$) and between bachelor's degree and Master's degree students ($p=0.005$). Respondents differ significantly by education level in their perception of the importance of the working environment when choosing their first job ($F(3) = 10.805$, $p=0.000$). The post hoc test indicates that there is a significant difference between higher-level vocational training and Master's students ($p=0.000$), higher-level vocational training and PhD students ($p=0.001$), bachelor's and master's students ($p=0.000$), bachelor's and PhD students ($p=0.000$), and master's and PhD students ($p=0.009$). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance of

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the organization being a market leader when choosing their first job (F(3) =3.916, p=0.009). The post hoc test indicates a significant difference between students in higher-level vocational training and those in Master's programs (p=0.002) and between bachelor's and master's programs (0.017). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance they attach to the possibility of further training when choosing their first job (F(3) =3.961, p=0.008). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between higher-level vocational training and bachelor students (p=0.009). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance of strong leadership when choosing their first job (F(3) =4.522, p=0.004). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between students in higher-level vocational training and Master's degree (p=0.045), between students in higher-level vocational training and PhD students (p=0.001), between students in Bachelor's and PhD studies (p=0.002), and between students in Master's and PhD studies (p=0.007). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perceptions of the importance they attach to social responsibility when choosing their first job (F(3) =6.080, p=0.000). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between students in higher-level vocational training and Master's programs (p=0.001) and between bachelor's and master's programs (p=0.000). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance of modern technology when choosing their first job (F(3) =7.075, p=0.000). The post hoc test indicates that there is a significant difference between students in higher-level vocational training and PhD students (p=0.002), between bachelor and master students (p=0.001), between bachelor and PhD students (p=0.001), and between master and PhD students (p=0.008). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance of having a strong organizational image when choosing their first job (F(3) =6.991, p=0.000). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between students in higher-level vocational training and Master's programs (p=0.001), between students in higher-level vocational training and PhD students (p=0.003), between students in bachelor's and master's programs (p=0.001), between students in bachelor's and PhD programs (p=0.004), and between students in master's and PhD programs (p=0.027). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance of an organization's ability to manage diversity effectively when choosing their first job (F(3) =5.928, p=0.001). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between students in higher-level vocational training and Master's programs (p=0.030), between students in bachelor's and master's programs (p=0.000), and between bachelor's and PhD students (p=0.029). The average scores given for the statements are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Perception of the Importance of The Aspects Taken into Account When Choosing a First Job (N=779)

	Higher-level vocational training		B.A./BSc		MA/MSc		PhD	
	Average	SD	Average	SD	Average	SD	Average	SD
Professionally meaningful and challenging work tasks	3.522	0.795	3.787	0.851	3.967	0.848	3.250	1.707
Opportunity for professional development	4.254	0.683	4.438	0.701	4.406	0.687	3.750	1.258
Job security	4.457	0.617	4.503	0.698	4.300	0.858	3.750	1.892

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Career Opportunity	4.078	0.748	4.262	0.782	4.040	0.803	3.750	0.957
Work environment	4.444	0.605	4.450	0.663	4.146	0.785	3.250	0.957
The organization is a market leader	3.228	0.756	3.102	0.958	2.886	0.801	2.500	1.290
Training opportunities	3.875	0.853	4.080	0.836	3.918	0.883	3.250	0.957
Strong leadership	3.901	0.784	3.837	0.887	3.691	0.869	2.500	1.290
Corporate Social Responsibility	3.908	0.805	3.871	0.950	3.520	1.058	3.000	1.414
State-of-the-art technology	4.176	0.670	4.252	0.705	4.008	0.918	3.000	1.632
Strong image	4.000	0.707	3.949	0.813	3.674	0.953	2.750	1.707
Effective diversity management	3.908	0.837	4.006	0.912	3.666	1.013	3.000	1.154

Source: Own Calculation Based on The Research Database

Expectations From the Immediate Managers at The Workplace

In the following paragraph, we analyze the responses to the statements assigned to the question on the importance of the manager's attributes in selecting the first job. Of the statements assigned to the question, a significant difference was obtained in 9 cases. Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of how important they consider it to be for their future manager to be professionally competent ($F(3) = 7.299$, $p=0.000$). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between students enrolled in higher-level vocational training and bachelor studies ($p=0.000$), between students enrolled in higher-level vocational training and master studies ($p=0.038$), between students enrolled in higher-level vocational training and PhD students ($p=0.021$), between students enrolled in bachelor studies

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and PhD students (p=0.003), and between Master's and PhD students (p=0.005). Respondents have significantly different opinions based on their level of training in judging how important they think it is for their prospective manager to be consistent (F(3) =11.231, p=0.000). According to the post hoc test, a significant difference exists between students in higher-level vocational training and bachelor studies (p=0.000) and between students in higher-level vocational training and master studies (p=0.000). A significant difference in respondents' perceptions of the importance they attach to their prospective manager being credible was found based on their levels of education (F(3) =5.971, p=0.001). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between higher-level vocational training and bachelor students (p=0.005), higher-level vocational training and PhD students (p=0.007), bachelor and PhD students (p=0.001), and master and PhD students (p=0.002). Respondents differ significantly by level of training in their perception of how important they think it is for their future manager to be supportive and to provide mentoring (F(3) =8.106, p=0.000). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between higher-level vocational training and bachelor students (p=0.000), higher-level vocational training and master students (p=0.044), higher-level vocational training and PhD students (p=0.007), bachelor and PhD students (p=0.001), and between master and PhD students (p=0.002). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance they attach to their future manager being receptive to their subordinates' ideas (F(3) =5.778, p=0.001). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between students in higher-level vocational training and Master's degree programs (p=0.004) and between bachelor's and master's degree programs (p=0.002). Respondents differ significantly by level of training in their perception of how important they think it is for their prospective manager to always find the right communication style for the given situation (F(3) =5.578, p=0.001). According to the post hoc test, there is a significant difference between students in higher-level vocational training and Master's degree programs (p=0.025) and between bachelor's and master's degree programs (p=0.000). Respondents differ significantly by level of training in their perception of how important they think it is for their prospective manager to give feedback (F(3) =7.351, p=0.000). According to the post hoc test, a significant difference exists between students in higher-level vocational training and bachelor's programs (p=0.000) and between students in higher-level vocational training and Master's programs (p=0.018). Respondents differ significantly by level of education in their perception of the importance they attach to delegation (F(3) =5.204, p=0.001). According to the post hoc test, a significant difference exists between students in higher-level vocational training and bachelor programs (p=0.000) and between students in higher-level vocational training and master programs (p=0.006). Respondents differ significantly by education level in their perception of the importance of managers having a vision and strategy (F(3) =3.034, p=0.029). According to the post hoc test, a significant difference exists between students in higher-level vocational training and bachelor programs (p=0.036) and bachelor and master programs (p=0.011). The average scores for each statement are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Perception of the Importance of Attributes Related to The Manager When Choosing a First Job (N=779)

	Higher-level vocational training		B.A./BSc		MA/MSc		PhD	
	Average	SD	Average	SD	Average	SD	Average	SD
Professional competence	4.444	0.687	4.647	0.537	4.593	0.611	3.750	1.892
Consistency	4.143	0.653	4.468	0.611	4.487	0.644	4.250	1.500

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Credibility	4.542	0.595	4.691	0.546	4.674	0.593	3.750	1.892
Providing support, mentoring	4.359	0.674	4.573	0.587	4.512	0.657	3.500	1.732
Receptiveness to ideas from subordinates	4.209	0.713	4.384	0.649	4.178	0.653	3.750	1.258
The right communication style for the situation	4.470	0.628	4.555	0.606	4.300	0.688	4.500	0.577
Feedback	4.222	0.671	4.521	0.697	4.422	0.724	4.250	0.500
Delegation	3.908	0.719	4.190	0.807	4.170	0.754	4.250	0.957
Vision and Strategy	4.228	0.692	4.380	0.775	4.178	0.905	4.250	0.957

Source: Own Calculation Based on The Research Database

Next, we use Chi-square tests to examine whether respondents differ in their perception of the region of the country where they plan to look for work based on their level of education. The cross-tabulation analysis requires at least five respondents in each cell (Sajtos & Mitev, 2007). Therefore, PhD students were excluded from further analysis. PhD students were excluded, and not all respondents answered this question, so 763 responses were analyzed. In order to have a minimum of 5 people per cell, the Northern Great Plain and Southern Great Plain regions were merged. Our results show that individuals with different levels of education plan to look for work in different regions of the country ($\chi 2=94.838=$; df =10; p =0.00), (Cramer's V =0.249; p=0.000). The frequencies and percentages are presented in Table 4. The table shows that the higher the level of university education, the more likely a student will want to work in the Central Hungary region. In contrast, 33.6% of students in higher-level vocational training want to find a job in the Northern Hungary region, compared to only 9.1% of students in bachelor and master programs.

Table 4. Region In Which You Plan to Look for Work When Seeking Your First Job (N=763)

Region	Higher-level vocational training	B.A./BSc	MA/MSc	Total
Central Hungary	46 30.9%	192 38.9%	69 57.0%	307 40.2%

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Central Transdanubia	13 8.7%	31 6.3%	10 8.3%	54 7.1%
Western Transdanubia	7 4.7%	106 21.5%	12 9.9%	125 16.4%
Southern Transdanubia	25 16.8%	83 16.8%	9 7.4%	117 15.3%
North Hungary	50 33.6%	45 9.1%	11 9.1%	106 13.9%
Northern and Southern Great Plain	8 5.4%	36 7.3%	10 8.3%	54 7.1%
Total	149 100%	493 100%	121 100%	763 100%

Source: Own Calculation Based on The Research Database

The differences are also significant for net wage demands ($\chi2=13.282=$; df =6; p =0.39) (Cramer's V =0.093; p=0.039). The frequencies and percentages are presented in Table 5. In this case, we excluded PhD students; not all respondents answered this question. The table shows that Master's students have the highest proportion (9%) of those who expect a net salary of half a million forint immediately after starting their job. 45% of those in higher-level vocational training would settle straight away for a salary of 150.000 - 300.000 HUF.

Table 5. Net Wage Expectations When Choosing A First Job (N=773)

Salary band	Higher-level vocational training	B.A./BSc	MA/MSc	Total
HUF 150,000-300,000	69 45.1%	192 45.1%	45 36.9%	306 39.6%
HUF 300,001-400,000	49 32.0%	224 45.0%	45 36.9%	318 41.1%
HUF 400,001-550,000	23 15.0%	51 10.2%	21 17.2%	95 12.3%
HUF 500,001-	12 7.8%	31 6.2 %	11 9.0%	54 7.0%
Total	153 100%	498 100%	122 100%	773 100%

1 HUF = 357 USA $

Source: Own Calculation Based on The Research Database

Discussion and Conclusion

During our research, we involved students from as many universities as possible in different regions of the country. Nevertheless, our research is limited because our sample is not representative, so our conclusions are only valid for our research sample. Another major concern is that only 4 PhD students were included in the sample. Therefore, conclusions about doctoral students can only be drawn with great caution. For the Khi squared tests, Cramer's V coefficients are low, i.e., there are relationships between the variables, but they are weak. This is taken into account when interpreting the results.

Previous research shows that universities face several challenges. Universities have a crucial role to play in educating the future workforce (Brixy et al., 2010) and should actively contribute to the social development of their communities (Etzkowitz et al., 2000). According to Bartus & Róbert (2019), differences in educational attainment can predetermine differentiation in labor market opportunities and job search

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strategies. Generation Z, fresh out of university as graduates, are criticized by employers for not being sufficiently prepared to face the demands of the workplace once they have completed their tertiary education (Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010).

We formulated our research question with these in mind. The answer to the research question is that university students have different attitudes towards their first job depending on their level of education. In other words, they have different perceptions and expectations of their first job, depending on their training level. All three hypotheses were confirmed in our research:

According to H(1), depending on the level of education, students consider different factors critical when choosing their first job. This confirms the findings of Bartus & Róbert (2019), who found that people with different educational backgrounds use different strategies when looking for a job. Overall, no group did not consider the factors we listed as necessary. Across all factors, PhD students rated the factors we listed as least important. This may be because PhD students are more likely to work in research and teaching careers in the future, where other factors may be necessary, e.g., attending conferences. Social responsibility was important for all groups of students in higher education, although significant differences were found in the extent to which it was necessary. It can be observed that the lower the level of education, the more critical social responsibility is for the student when looking for a job. We intend to explore the reasons for this in a future study. The lower the level of education, the more critical leadership is for the student. One reason for this is that the lower the level of education, the less knowledge the student leaves the university with, therefore requiring a strong leader. Career prospects are important for all groups, but there is a significant difference between bachelor and master students. Career opportunities are more important for bachelor students than for master students or students in higher-level vocational training. This, we assume, may be related to the fact that a degree is now required for most white-collar positions, i.e., a bachelor's degree is considered the first step in a career for certain jobs.

According to H(2), depending on the level of education, students perceive different leadership qualities as important in their first job. All the qualities we listed were considered important by respondents. Feedback is seen as important for students in higher-level vocational training, masters students, and PhD students, while it is perceived as very important for bachelor students. An appropriate communication style in a given situation is considered necessary by students of higher-level vocational training, Master's students, and PhD students, while bachelor's students consider it very important. Support and mentoring are rather neutral for PhD students and important for those studying in higher-level vocational training, while it is very important for those studying at the bachelor's and master's levels. This may be linked to the fact that PhD students are already involved in the work of the departments, so they already have their own insight into how important the support is to them. Credibility is essential for PhD students and very important for other groups.

According to H(3), depending on the level of education, students plan to look for their first job in different regions of the country. More than half (57.0%) of Master's students would like to work in the Central Hungary region, compared to 9.1% in the Northern Hungary region. In contrast, less than a third (30.9%) of those with the lowest level of education in higher-level vocational training would like to work in the most developed region of Central Hungary. We think this may be due to the fact that in the Central Hungary region, people with higher education are the most sought-after, and therefore, there are many more jobs where a university degree is required. Another reason may be that master students are the most flexible and, therefore, the most willing to move to this region. 33.6% of students in higher-level vocational training are willing to work in the Northern Hungary region, compared to only 13.9% in the total sample. The difference may be because we believe this region is where organizations are least likely to expect employees to have a degree.

Looking at the salary bands, almost half (45.1%) of those in higher-level vocational training would be willing to work for a net salary of less than HUF 300,000. This confirms the results of another study, which found that students of the former University of Kaposvár (now MATE), both in bachelor studies and higher-level vocational training, are willing to work for a salary range of HUF 150 000 - 300 000 (Kőmüves et al., 2021).

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For Master's students, this is only 36.9%. Master's students have the highest proportion who selected the top two salary bands (17.2% and 9%, respectively). One reason for this may be that Master's students expect the market to pay for their higher education compared to the other two groups. Another reason may be that, according to Fekete (2022), the percentage of Master's students working is much higher than that of bachelor's students. M.A. students already have work experience by the time they obtain their Master's degree, which leads them to ask for a higher salary. This is also partly related to the fact that, according to Albert & Davia (2023), employers prefer people with higher education because they believe that they can save on their training. M.A. graduates can also ask for higher wages because, in the long run, it may be worthwhile for organizations to employ them, as they are no longer expected to have to spend money on their training. The most significant difference between students in higher-level vocational training and students in bachelor's degree programs is in the salary range of HUF 300,001-400,000. 32% of students in higher-level vocational training identified this as a starting wage requirement, compared to 45% of students in bachelor's degree programs. However, higher salary bands were chosen by a larger percentage of higher-level vocational training students than B.A./BSc students.

In the future, we would like to repeat our research on a representative sample, considering what the student is majoring in and comparing attitudes towards the first job by major. We would also like to complement this future research by exploring what familial, social, and cultural background variables are responsible for different attitudes toward a first job.

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