

Perception of Visible Tattoos in Employment and Career Development: Evidence from Hungarian Labour Market

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Abstract

In this study, the perception of tattooed employees is examined, focusing on their employment and career development opportunities. The perception of tattoos in employment and career development is a complex and changing issue that depends on many factors. Some industries and workplaces may be stricter about tattoos, while other workplaces are more tolerant and accepting. The method of the research is primary research, including a questionnaire survey, which presents the subject under research in relation to the Hungarian labour market. The hypothesis test revealed that a statistical correlation between the visibility of tattoos and the type of employment (white-collar or blue-collar) can be demonstrated, and that visible tattoos also have an impact on an individual's career development. These results support that the perception of tattoos can vary in employment and career development, individual circumstances, the applied employment policy, and the specific workplace culture can significantly influence this process. It is important that employees, thinking about the future and labour market opportunities, make a decision that supports the creation of a balance between tattoos and career.

Keywords: Market, Tattooed Employee, Visibility of Tattoos, Career Development, Hungary.

Introduction

Tattoos have become mainstream accessories over time. The consumer base is ageless, independent of education, that is, a current form of body art for everyone (Snelson, 2023). The term "tattau" is associated with the name of the British ship captain James Cook, when he sailed to the islands of the South Pacific Ocean, including Tahiti, in the 18th century. The initial spread of tattoos was typical of the lower social classes. The wearers of the tattoos were sailors, criminals, prisoners, slaves, later motorcycle gangs and underworld individuals. Tattoos were associated with deviant, rebellious behaviour patterns (Burgess & Clark, 2010). At first, tattoos were hand-drawn patterns, nowadays they are made using mechanical devices using mineral pigments. Needles and ink can be used once for each new drawing, even if it's the same person. Machines must be cleaned in a special way to avoid infections (Lise et al., 2010). Thanks to the media, body art has become popular across social classes. Some believe that tattoos are just part of fashion, while others attribute a deeper psychological meaning to them (Wohlrab et al., 2007). The social acceptance of tattoos is questionable to this day (Adisa et al., 2024). In the selection process, the professional experience and competencies of potential candidates take a back seat to the external appearance (Simpson & Pullen, 2018). Tattoos have a long-term impact on the wearer's employment and career opportunities, and can even be a factor in economic disadvantage (Ruffle & Wilson, 2019). Tattoos shape an individual's appearance and have an impact on labour market decisions, opportunities, and limitations. Despite the fact that tattooing raises important social and economic problems, a limited amount of literature has been published on the subject. Identification and compliance with the image of the organization is an authoritative aspect of labour recruitment. The physical appearance of potential applicants affects their employment opportunities, inappropriate physical appearance can be a source of stigma and prejudice. Employees with an attractive appearance receive positive discrimination, even in terms of salary or career development. However, an attractive and pleasant aesthetic view does not necessarily go hand in hand with expertise and performance (Shapir & Shtudiner, 2022). The physical appearance of employees has an intense effect on colleagues, superiors and customers (Karl et al., 2016). Stigmatization means a real or assumed difference

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from the point of view of the individual's actual and expected social identity. Stigmatized people face many problems in their employment, including performance bias, low ranking positions, fewer opportunities for advancement and training, pay disparities, lack of status within the group, lack of mentors, self-esteem issues (Miller et al., 2009). Unfavourable clothing, overweight, physical disability, and the wearing of tattoos and body jewellery can make potential employees appear in a negative light (Timming, 2017; Baumann et al., 2016). Appearance at work is regulated by the organization itself, in addition to political and social norms. Despite the fact that the modern perception is more accepting of tattoos, many employers are still not clear about the employment of tattooed employees (Baglione et al., 2022).

The purpose of the research is to reveal how the visibility of tattoos affects the chances and workplace perception of employees in the Hungarian labour market. The research also analyses the impact of visible tattoos on career development, as well as examines the extent to which visible tattoos represent an obstacle in the labour market and how this attitude changes in different industries and types of employment. With the help of these research goals, we can get a detailed and comprehensive picture of the various aspects of the labour market placement of employees with visible tattoos, which can help improve labour market integration and overcome possible prejudices.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Tattooing the body is a popular activity, but its impact on the labour market varies. Tattooing means drawing different patterns by changing the pigment of the skin, which are introduced into the skin with the help of ink with quick needle pricks. Tattoos reflect uniqueness, are means of expressing individuality, cultural and aesthetic values (Adisa et al., 2021). The motivational research appearing in the topic proves that consumers mostly strive to achieve uniqueness when acquiring a tattoo (Fallah & Orosz, 2014). The development of techniques for designing and removing tattoos also serves the growth of the tattoo industry (Tews et al., 2020). Based on external appearance, it can be decided who is competent, intelligent, reliable and employable in a given position. Tattooed individuals are perceived as less likable, motivated, religious, and decent than their non-tattooed peers (Henle et al., 2022). More and more people are getting tattoos, as a result of which it is increasingly questioned whether employers should discriminate based on this during the hiring process. The quantity, meaning and style of the tattoos are an authoritative aspect in the assessment of tattoos in the workplace (Tews & Stafford, 2019). The perception of tattoos varies by industry. Tattoos are often considered career killers. Certain organizations limit visible tattoos in the workplace with strict regulations, while others have a more lenient organization policy regarding external appearance, thus promoting the diversity of the employee base. For these organizations, performance is authoritative and employees are categorized based on that. Among those working with children, the use of tattooed employees should be considered, as it is important to make a good impression on parents and to demonstrate exemplary behaviour (Coleman et al., 2017). The two main factors when it comes to getting a tattoo are the physical location and amount of the tattoo. Visible tattoos play an important role in the screening process of job seekers. If someone has smaller and fewer tattoos, they can accept them more easily. From an employment point of view, tattoos on the head, neck and hands are rejected. Some organizations state their policies regarding employee physical appearance through written standards or employee handbooks (Antonellis et al., 2017). In recruitment and selection processes, the evaluation of professional competence and knowledge is sometimes pushed into the background compared to physical appearance, which can affect the employment decision and conditions. Adapting to the profile of the profession and the accompanying physical appearance is an important aspect, especially in customer-oriented service provision (Barbosa et al., 2016). In research covering 18 countries, it was found that 38% of respondents in the research had at least one tattoo. It can be proven statistically that a quarter of the European adult population has a tattoo (Karl et al., 2016). People with visible tattoos are viewed differently in society, in many cases they are classified as a lower class of society (Adisa et al., 2021). Human resources professionals and recruiters are less likely to hire applicants with visible tattoos (Dean, 2011). For every organization, the opinion of the consumer circle is the most important, which is why it is important how customers relate to tattooed employees. It happens that tattooed employees are considered incompetent and unreliable, especially those who work in clerical positions (Ozanne et al., 2019). Despite the fact that the social perception of tattoos is not necessarily only negative or positive, the older generation believes

that it can have a bad effect on the perception of the quality of services (Karl et al., 2013). Baert et al. (2024) found in their research that job seekers with tattoos are considered less likable. Applicants with tattoos are considered emotionally unstable, less honest and conscientious, but they are more extroverted and open to new experiences. In her empirical research, Fallah (2012) proves that tattoos serve as a mean of communication and self-expression. The results of Chang (2023) reflect that the motivation for tattooing can usually be linked to a life-changing experience or event, because tattoos act as a personal processing mechanism. Naudé et al. (2017), according to their understanding, tattoos are a visual experience and an expressive means of non-verbal communication. The reason for getting a tattoo is usually to preserve a memory, express emotions, sense of belonging to a group, rebellion, inexplicable urge, addiction, expression of identity, emphasis on religious and cultural identity, physical endurance, fashion, etc. In order to distinguish between roles and the work environment and according to the physical and psychological requirements associated with the role, jobs can be categorized as white-collar and blue-collar roles. Blue-collar roles are combined with physical work demands, the job is characterized by a low degree of independence and contribution to decision-making, and also requires a lower level of education for employees. White-collar roles are combined with intellectual work demands, the job is characterized by a high level of independence and contribution to decision-making, and employees need deeper knowledge and professional competence. There are differences in the acceptability of tattoos in white- and blue-collar job roles. The degree of contact with the client has the greatest influence on the employment of employees with tattoos. A white-collar job is customer-oriented, which is why visible tattoos are a disadvantage when applying for such a position. A blue-collar job requires less interaction with customers, which is why the presence of visible tattoos is not necessarily an influencing factor (Wohlrab et al., 2007). In a previous study, Dean (2010) found that the respondents viewed the visible tattoos of employees working in intellectual positions negatively, while, in contrast, the visible tattoos of employees working in physical positions were positively assessed. Regardless of age and having tattoos, respondents believed that people working in financial/banking services should not wear tattoos. Employees with visible tattoos have more limited opportunities in the labour market. In general, the competence level of employees with visible tattoos is coupled with a low level of education, which is not necessarily verifiable (Mironski & Rao, 2019). Organizations targeting youth look positively on tattoos as a means of conveying their own brand personality, but in the tourism and hospitality sectors there are still strict rules regarding the physical appearance of employees (Uzunogullari & Brown, 2021). Timming et al. (2017) results reflect that a job applicant's options are limited if they have visible tattoos. The negative impact of body art on employment is reduced if the tattooed employee does not come into direct contact with customers. In non-customer-oriented jobs, the presence of tattoos is not an authoritative criterion. In his research, Timming (2015) points out that in the service industry, candidates with tattoos significantly rearrange the recruitment and selection processes. During the selection process, managers' decisions are influenced by customers' stereotypical thinking towards tattooed candidates. The negative image and prejudice formed by the employer depends on the visibility of the tattoos. Tattoos are still viewed negatively in direct consumer relations. Milder and coverable tattoos caused less dislike from employers and clients. From an industrial point of view, the acceptance of tattoos is variable, which is modified based on the brand's communication and demographic target group appeal. Tattoos cannot always be covered up or destroyed during working days. Lawyers, and judges with visible tattoos are treated in a completely subjective manner in the judiciary and the legal field (Flanagan & Lewis, 2019). Visible tattoos generally have a negative effect on the credibility of police officers. Police officers with tattoos are less competent and reliable in public opinion (Rowe et al., 2023). Sexton et al. (2023) found that among library managers and employees, employees with tattoos are accepted. In Swanger's (2006) study, he points out that in a sales and marketing management survey, the majority of managers reject applicants with an unfavourable appearance and visible tattoos during the hiring process. Recruiters and managers from various companies (hotel industry, restaurant chain, recreation and entertainment industry) evaluate visible body decoration negatively. Morello et al. (2021) in their study discusses the parallel between tattoos and deviance, which is not specifically aimed at the existence of tattoos, but rather at their meaning and location. Based on the conclusions of Ruggs and Hebl (2022), tattoos have a double function, in a negative sense, they stigmatize people, in a positive sense, they are part of fashion. Tattoos are still a matter of debate for those employed in clerical jobs. The meaning and location of tattoos have different effects on people. Customers place less emphasis on employees' tattoos, and tattooed employees cannot be equated with a low level of competence. In their research, Burgass and Clark

(2010) concluded that people with visible tattoos are in a vulnerable position, which also affects their personal development. It has been shown that employees who wear less conspicuous and soft motifs are socially judged in almost the same way as employees without tattoos. Employees wearing ritual tribal or rebel motifs appear in a negative light in the workplace. According to the findings of Tews and Stafford (2020), employees in the hospitality industry get tattoos most often. The degree of negative discrimination is determined by the characteristics of the tattoos. Their results indicate that the main reason for the negative treatment of tattooed employees is the lack of fair treatment, discrimination and underemployment. Stigma is a visible or invisible characteristic that affects the relationship between an individual and society. Individuals with visible tattoos are subject to public stigma as others see what their tattoos represent (Ojeda et al., 2023; Ojeda et al., 2022; Kremer et al., 2020). The underlying content of tattoos can be both positive and negative. A significant percentage of employers consider tattooed applicants to be less thoughtful and responsible. Negative attitudes towards employees with tattoos in healthcare services may affect the relationship between the doctor and the patient (Huang et al., 2022). In the field of medicine, the presence of tattoos does not necessarily affect the acquisition of a position, however, there are strict regulations for covering them up (Baumann et al., 2016). The results of Wildeman & Residorfer (2023) reflect that the location of tattoos plays an important role in social perception. Women with tattoos working in the healthcare field are generally judged more negatively than men. Tattooed women tend to be viewed as less attractive than tattooed men. Galović et al. (2023) research results show that patients are confused about the need to cover up visible tattoos, but there is a general agreement that healthcare professionals should look professional. Based on studies conducted by Cerenado (2024) in an educational environment, students did not differentiate between instructors with tattoos and their non-tattooed colleagues. The presence of tattoos has no effect on the image of the instructor, that is, students cannot attach any particular positive or negative significance to the fact that an instructor has tattoos. Visible tattoos can be a trigger for discrimination in the workplace, even though this is not legally established. Regardless of this, the employer has the right to regulate the appearance of employees. Discrimination can manifest itself very early in the selection process, and after hiring, the employer can ask the employee to cover up his tattoos. A milder discrimination is a verbal comment (Farley et al., 2019). Unequal treatment at work and discrimination against others cause social and psychological problems (Larsen et al., 2014). Employees who are discriminated against because of their appearance lose their self-esteem and motivation for work. In addition, performance and satisfaction decrease. Due to the well-being of employees, it is important for organizations to show a more accepting attitude (Ellis, 2015). Workplace discrimination can be triggered by: ethnic and religious affiliation, gender orientation, age and health status, as well as belonging to a social group and appearance. Workplace discrimination threatens the sustainability of the labour market. In practice, discrimination in the labour market is difficult to separate from low levels of education, as the level of productivity depends on both (Doleac & Stein, 2013; Stanila et al., 2020). The website stapaw.com deals with the support of employees with body art and body jewellery, the motto of which is: my body is not my resume. The goal is to get rid of deviance and anti-social behaviour and express self-expression and individuality. At the same time, the motto conveys the limitations that lovers of body art face in the labour market. A significant percentage of organizations primarily screen potential candidates through aesthetic standards in terms of entry, retention and advancement (Efthymiou, 2018). Jibuti (2018) shows through the German sample that employers treat applicants without tattoos more positively and respond to them more quickly when filling a position, however, negative discrimination on the part of co-workers and customers against tattooed employees has not been proven. Hamilton (2019) found in his research that regardless of gender and age, tattoos are increasingly accepted in the workplace. He dedicates his research results to young people starting their careers who are considering getting a tattoo before entering the labour market, and also recommends companies to create an accepting and tolerant work environment. According to Waitt's (2024) findings, employees in the service sector cover up their tattoos before being in an uncomfortable situation with colleagues, customers, or management. In their research on the Jordanian labour market, Al Twal & Abuhassan (2023) found that in the conservative Jordanian culture, tattooed employees are discriminated against at work, and because of this, they cover up their visible tattoos at work. Visible tattoos can affect employment opportunities in certain sectors, including medicine, justice or marketing. The attitude of tattooed employees to their colleagues and superiors is superficial, it is more difficult for them to form relationships, which affects their job security or their promotion to higher positions. In their research in Romania, Mitu and Bota (2023) argue that there is still a generational divide

and a certain level of stigmatization, especially among the elderly generation and in aviation and hospitality. The size, aesthetics and location of the tattoo are important aspects. Conservative organizations remain wary of visible tattoos, even though some are more open and value the skills and attributes of employees. A tattoo is a form of body decoration independent of age, education and type of work. French et al. (2019) concluded in their research that tattooed employees do not experience workplace discrimination, neither in terms of employment nor wages. Tattooed employees are just as likely to find work as their non-tattooed counterparts. Based on their results, it can be concluded that the existence of tattoos does not cause workplace discrimination. Ozanne et al. (2019) results, in contrast to many other research results, reflect that customers do not differentiate between employees with or without tattoos. In their study, they also point out that tattooed men are judged more negatively than women. This result of theirs contradicts many other studies. According to the results of Kaldeneker and Pikó (2005), men tattoo themselves more often and prefer larger motifs, while aesthetic motifs apply to women. Body art is more popular among the younger generation than among the older generation. Dillingh et al. (2020) studied the prevalence of tattoos among the Dutch population. They found that there is a correlation between tattoos and low education, as well as a negative impact on income. Middle-aged women with visible tattoos have lower employment opportunities. Despite this, tattoos are viewed positively in the entertainment industry, at festivals and among craftspeople. Based on the literature and in accordance with the research objectives, the following two hypotheses and their corresponding null hypothesis were formulated:

H0: There is no significant correlation between the type of employment and the visibility of the tattoo.

H1: There is a significant correlation between the type of employment and the visibility of the tattoo.

H0: There is no significant correlation between career development and tattoo visibility.

H2: There is a significant correlation between career development and the visibility of the tattoo.

Method

The questionnaire survey took place in 2023, using an online questionnaire. The data were collected based on the snowball sampling method. The snowball method consists of first sending the questionnaire to some members of the target group, and then additional participants are recruited through those who have already been interviewed (e.g. by involving their acquaintances). This method can be particularly useful if the respondents are difficult to reach and the usual information methods are not efficient enough. The target group participating in the research were Hungarian tattooed employees. More than 500 questionnaires were sent out, but 248 of the returned questionnaires were valid. A structured questionnaire was prepared for the questionnaire survey, consisting of a total of 19 questions. In addition to general data, the first half of the questionnaire dealt with demographic data, while the second half dealt with questions about tattooing and the labour market. In order to provide useful results and novel information, a Likert scale from 1 to 7 was used to rank individual preferences. In relation to the scale questions, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency measure and reliability indicator was identified. The goal was to prove the measurement efficiency of the scale. Statistical methods were used to evaluate the data and test the hypotheses using SAS EG.

Table 1 shows the demographic data of the questionnaire survey. Demographic data were aggregated using simple descriptive statistical analysis and frequency calculation. In terms of gender distribution, underrepresentation was observed, as 36,3% of respondents were men and 63,7% were women. Regarding the continuous variable of age, the respondents can be divided into four age groups. 39,9% of the respondents were in the age group between 16-25, 41,5% in the age group between 26-35, 10,1% in the age group between 36-45, 7,7% in the age group between 46-55, 0,8% belonged to the age group between 56-65. 0,4% of the respondents in the questionnaire survey had a primary education, 20,6% had a vocational secondary school education, 24,2% had a high school education, 37,9% had a Bachelor's degree, 15,3% Master's (second) degree and 1,2% had a Doctoral PhD (third) degree. Regarding the type of employment, 73% of the respondents were in white-collar (intellectual) and 27% in blue-collar (physical) employment.

Table 1. Demographic Data

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Women	158	63,7%
	Men	90	36,3%
Age group	16-25 age group	99	39,9%
	26-35 age group	103	41,5%
	36-45 age group	25	10,1%
	46-55 age group	19	7,7%
	56-65 age group	2	0,8%
Educational level	Elementary School	1	0,4%
	Secondary School	51	20,6%
	High school education	60	24,2%
	Bachelor (first degree)	94	37,9%
	Master (second degree)	38	15,3%
	Doctoral degree/PhD. (tertiary degree)	3	1,2%
Type of employment	Other	1	0,4%
	White collar	181	73%
	Blue collar	67	27%
			N=248, Total=100%

Source: Own research (2024)

Hypothesis Testing

Before analysing the effect of the variables on each other, it can be established that the first two conditions of the analysis of variance have been met, because the research was carried out in the form of a questionnaire, so the collected data are not dependent on each other, or are normally distributed within a group. The third condition, testing the validity of homoscedasticity. When examining the respondents participating in the research, we highlighted the type of employment, according to which we divided the people who filled out the questionnaire into two main groups, blue-collar and white-collar employees. Furthermore, when examining tattooed persons, we considered it important to take into account the highest educational level of the persons filling in, which we interpreted as career development. For this question, they could choose from 6 options, from general education to tertiary university education. If we want to analyse the effect of these two factors on the importance of the visibility of the tattoo, then our task is to analyse the equality of the standard deviation between the two types. Levene's homoscedasticity test was used for this investigation.

The validity of the null hypothesis is tested against the alternative hypothesis $H_0: \sigma_1^2 = \sigma_2^2$ based on the chosen significance level $\alpha=0,05$ $H_1: \sigma_1^2 \neq \sigma_2^2$. Based on Levene's homoscedasticity test, we can conclude that the p-value of both variables is greater than the given significance level. We reject the alternative hypothesis, according to which we can state that the third condition regarding the equality of the standard deviation of the sets has been fulfilled, so the ANOVA statistical method can be used for the analysis.

Table 3. Levene's Homoscedasticity Test for The Variable of Visibility of Tattoos

Levene's Test for Homogeneity of visibility of tattoos Variance ANOVA of Squared Deviations from Group Means					
Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Employment	1	25.8807	25.8807	1.70	0.1934
Error	239	3636.3	15.2147		

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Educational level	4	43.2213	10.8053	0.60	0.6619
Error	234	4203.5	17.9637		

Analysis of the effect of the type of employment on the visibility of the tattoos					
Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	1	135.735798	135.735798	32.34	<.0001
Error	239	1003.260052	4.197741		
Corrected Total	240	1138.995851			

Analysis of the effect of career development on the visibility of tattoos					
Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Model	6	119.582062	19.930344	4.57	0.0002
Error	234	1019.413789	4.356469		
Corrected Total	240	1138.995851			

Source: Own analysis with SAS EG based on own research (2024)

Table 3 shows that the p-value is lower than the determined significance level, so we reject the null hypothesis and can state that the type of employment, or there is a statistically significant difference between career development and tattoo visibility.

Furthermore, using the table analysis procedure, we created a 2x7 contingency table with the variables visibility of the tattoo and type of employment, where white-collar employees were marked with zero, while blue-collar employees were marked with a single number.

Table 4. Contingency Table for The Analysis of The Distribution of Employment Type and Tattoo Visibility

Table of type of employment by visibility of tattoos										
		Visibility of tattoos							Total	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Type of employment	0	Frequency	29	11	15	20	33	32	36	176
	1	Frequency	28	7	8	6	6	10	0	65
	Total	Frequency	57	18	23	26	39	42	36	241

Frequency Missing= 7

Source: Own analysis with SAS EG based on own research (2024)

We tested the dependence of the variables with the following hypothesis:

H0: There is no significant correlation between the type of employment and the visibility of the tattoo.

H1: There is a significant correlation between the type of employment and the visibility of the tattoo.

To verify the dependence of the variables, the quantile $\chi^2_{1-\alpha}(r-1) \cdot (s-1)$ must be determined, which in our case is $\chi^2_{0,95}(6) = 12,5916$. From the attached table, we can determine that the value of the test statistic $\chi^2 = 32,5779$ is greater than the quantile we defined, or the p-value is less than the chosen significance level. According to these two facts, we accept the alternative hypothesis about the relationship between the type of employment and the visibility of the tattoo. The table also contains the results of the tests for measuring the dependence and intensity of the observed variables, according to which we can conclude that a moderately strong dependence is observed according to the Phi and Cramer's V coefficients.

Table 5. Chi-Square Test of Independence Between Type of Employment and The Visibility of Tattoos

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	6	32.5779	<.0001
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	6	40.5298	<.0001
Mantel-Haenszel Chi-Square	1	28.6012	<.0001
Phi Coefficient		0.3677	
Contingency Coefficient		0.3451	
Cramer's V		0.3677	

Source: Own analysis with SAS EG based on own research (2024)

Furthermore, we created a 6x7 contingency table between tattoo visibility and career development, where we used the following notations: 0 = Elementary school, 1 = Secondary school, 2 = High school education, 3 = BA/BSc (first degree), 4 = MA/MSc (second degree), 5 = Doctoral degree/PhD. (tertiary degree), 6 = Other.

Table 6. Contingency Table for The Analysis of The Distribution of Career Development and Tattoo Visibility

Table of educational level by visibility of tattoos										
		Visibility of tattoos							Total	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Educational level										
0	Frequency	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
1	Frequency	22	5	8	3	5	1	4		48
2	Frequency	11	1	4	10	13	10	9		58
3	Frequency	17	6	8	7	18	25	12		93
4	Frequency	6	5	2	5	3	5	11		37
5	Frequency	1	0	0	1	0	1	0		3
6	Frequency	0	0	1	0	0	0	0		1
Total	Frequency	57	18	23	26	39	42	36		241

Frequency Missing= 7

Source: Own analysis with SAS EG based on own research (2024)

We test the dependence of the variables with the following hypothesis:

H0: There is no significant correlation between career development and tattoo visibility.

H2: There is a significant correlation between career development and the visibility of the tattoo.

To verify the dependence of the variables, we define the quantile $\chi^2_{1-\alpha}(r-1) \cdot (s-1)$ k, which is $\chi^2_{0,95}(36) = 50,9985$. From the Chi-square independence test, we can determine that the value of the test statistic $\chi^2 = 74,0373$ is greater than the quantile calculated by us, or the p-value is less than the specified significance level. According to these two facts, we accept the alternative hypothesis about the relationship between career development and tattoo visibility. The results of tests for measuring the

intensity of dependence reveal that the highest dependence can be observed with the Phi coefficient, whose value is 0,5543.

Table 7. Chi-Square Test of Independence Between Career Development and The Visibility of Tattoos

Statistic	DF	Value	Prob
Chi-Square	36	74.0373	0.0002
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	36	64.0271	0.0028
Mantel-Haenszel Chi-Square	1	12.6742	0.0004
Phi Coefficient		0.5543	
Contingency Coefficient		0.4848	
Cramer's V		0.2263	

Source: Own analysis with SAS EG based on own research (2024)

The statistical analysis of the first hypothesis reveals that a correlation can be shown between the type of employment and the visibility of the tattoo in the case of the participants in the questionnaire survey. In connection with this result, it can be said that it is important for employees that their tattoos can be covered depending on the type of employment. In previous decades, visible tattoos were less commonly accepted in white-collar jobs, while they were more common in blue-collar jobs. Today, more and more companies are relaxing such rules, and adoption is gradually increasing at all employment levels. While traditionally conservative industries and white-collar professions may still be sensitive to visible tattoos, they have become much more accepted in modern, creative fields and blue-collar professions. This is partly due to changes in social attitudes and recognition of the right to personal expression. In addition, the acceptance of tattoos can be influenced by the culture and personnel policy of the given organization. The statistical analysis of the second hypothesis reveals that a correlation can be shown between the career development opportunities and the visibility of tattoos for the participants in the questionnaire survey. Acceptance or rejection of visible tattoos in educational settings and the labour market can significantly affect an individual's career development. In industries (such as the service industry) where appearance is important, visible tattoos can limit advancement. In other sectors, creativity, expression of individuality and diversity are valued, so tattoos are not an obstacle to career development. It's important to understand that every workplace and industry has different standards for appearance. Employees should carefully consider how the tattoo they choose fits into the environment and culture of the job and what effect it may have on their career. Overall, the association between visible tattoos and career development depends on the individual's professional target group and organization culture.

Discussion

People's motivations for getting tattoos are diverse and diverse, often closely related to personal experiences, values and identity. In addition to expressing identity, many choose tattoos as religious or spiritual symbols. In different cultures and religions, tattoos often carry a deeper meaning or sacred significance, and people express their faith or spiritual affiliation through them. The rise in popularity of tattoos is partly the result of social, more broadly cultural acceptance. Nowadays, more and more people choose this form of body decoration, regardless of social or economic status. Figure 1 shows the tattoo motivation of the respondents participating in the questionnaire survey, represented through a word cloud. In 70,2% of the respondents, the motivation for tattoos was personal motivation and in 32,7% the emphasis on individuality, which can also be identified with the research result of Fallah and Orosz (2014), according to which people mostly strive to achieve uniqueness with their tattoos. Furthermore, the respondents' motivation for tattoos is art in 27,8%, fashion and aesthetics in 21,8%, cultural and spiritual reasons in 10,5%, belonging to a social group in 6%, rebellion in 3,6% and cosmetic intervention, and 3,6% of the respondents could not justify their motivation for getting a tattoo. Naudé et al. (2017) also examines the motivation of tattoos, according to which the most common motivations for getting a tattoo are: preservation of a memory, expression of emotions, sense of belonging to a group, rebellion, inexplicable urge, addiction, expression of identity, emphasis on religious and cultural identity, and fashion. 14,1% of the respondents identified the motivation for their tattoos as processing trauma, as Chang (2023) mentions

in his research that the motivation for tattooing can usually be linked to a life-changing experience or event, because tattoos act as a personal processing mechanism.

Figure 1. Motivations For Getting a Tattoo Among Respondents



Source: Own research (2024)

73% of respondents believe that external appearance does not determine an individual's attitude to work and performance, and 75.8% believe that organizational success is independent of an employee's external characteristics and appearance. In the literature, we could read a counterexample to this, that Karl et al. (2016) in their research considers external appearance as an authoritative aspect in relation to labour market opportunities. In the German sample of Jibuti (2018), external appearance is considered important by employers, but less so by colleagues and clients. In general, it can be said that the choice of the location of the tattoo plays an increasingly important role in the placement in the labour market and during career development. Based on the fact that people with a university degree are usually employed in white-collar jobs, it is important for them not to be disadvantaged when looking for a job due to the visibility of their tattoos. The visibility of the tattoo can also cause a problem when performing a higher function, because in contrast to the constantly developing world view, people still have many prejudices. 48.5% of the respondents considered it important that their tattoos could be covered up, in order to avoid being judged on the basis of their tattoos on the labour market. These respondents most often rated the question between 4 and 7 on the Likert scale. Waitt (2024) came to a similar conclusion that employees in the service sector cover up their tattoos before being in an uncomfortable situation with colleagues, customers or management. Furthermore, Al Twal & Abuhassan (2023) in their research conducted on a Jordanian sample state that employees cover up their visible tattoos at work, as visible tattoos can affect employment opportunities in certain sectors. The respondents who took part in the survey believed that 89.9% of society and 81.5% of workplaces were accepting of tattooed people. These respondents most often rated the question between 4 and 7 on the Likert scale. Adisa et al. (2021) and Wildeman and Residorfer (2023) found in their research that people with visible tattoos are perceived differently in society, just as Dean (2011) found in his study that in the perception of young people, white-collar employment status (in this case financial and tax provider) it is not appropriate to wear visible tattoos, as there is an interaction between the external appearance of the employees and the result of the service. Similarly, Antonellis et al. (2017), Naudé et al. (2017) and Wohlrab et al. (2007) in their research, according to which body art is rejected in white-collar jobs, while it is accepted in blue-collar jobs. Henle et al. (2022) state in their study that job applicants with visible tattoos are not considered during the selection process, even despite their high education. We asked the people participating in the questionnaire survey whether they received negative discrimination or discriminatory treatment during their job search because of the tattoo on their body. Only 6.9% of the people who filled out the questionnaire experienced the mentioned problem when looking for a job, of which 76.92% applied for a white-collar job position. The discriminatory treatment was shown in 58.3%

of the interviews, after which the tattoo played an important role in decision-making. There are companies that state in the job interview that the applicant must not have a tattoo. Several of respondents came across such an ad during their job search. Dillingh et al. (2020) in their research on a Dutch sample claimed that there is a correlation between tattoos and low education, and middle-aged women with visible tattoos have lower employment chances. Furthermore, Mironski and Rao (2019) claim that the competence level of employees with visible tattoos is coupled with low education. We refute the results of the two researches through our own research sample, because in our research the respondents' educational level, and thus their career development, was not shaped by the presence of tattoos. In our hypothesis test, we only showed that there was a significant correlation between the career development of the respondents and the visibility of the tattoo. Our result can be compared with the results of Timming (2015) and Burgass and Clark (2010), according to which the negative image and prejudice formed by the employer depends on the visibility of tattoos. Milder and coverable motives are less likely to cause resentment on the part of employers and clients. We can also agree with the conclusions of Ruggs and Hebl (2022), that the meaning and physical location of tattoos have different effects on people, however, tattooed employees cannot be identified with a low level of competence. Despite the fact that Mitu and Bota (2023) in their research conducted on a Romanian sample also agree that tattooing is a form of body decoration independent of age, education and type of employment, they believe that the size, aesthetics and location of the tattoo are important in social and economic judgment. Based on the literature and our own research, no clear consensus can be drawn, as many paradoxical studies appear regarding the perception of tattoos in the workplace. An example of this can be Sexton et al. (2023), according to which, in their research conducted among library employees in a clerical role, they found that managers and colleagues show acceptance towards tattoos. Furthermore, Cerenado's (2024) research in education found that students do not differentiate between tattooed and non-tattooed instructors. Meanwhile, Fallah and Orosz (2014) in Hungary and Swanger (2006) in other countries show that employees with visible tattoos are considered less suitable for sales and customer-oriented positions.

Limitations and Future Directions

Research on the labour market situation of tattooed employees is an important area for understanding social and employment trends. One of the limitations of the research is that very little analysis has been done at the European level, despite how important the problem is globally. Furthermore, reaching a representative sample of tattooed employees is a significant challenge. The proportion of tattooed people is still relatively low and not evenly distributed in all economic sectors.

Due to the slow change in social attitudes, there is a need for long-term observations in order to detect changes in the acceptance of tattoos and the labour market situation related to them. Despite the fact that body art is becoming more and more popular in Hungary, the amount of literature on the subject is small. In order to further develop this field, several possible research directions could be considered. Primarily, the expansion of the literature is recommended both from a socio-economic and psychological point of view. As a possible research, the relationship between employer attitudes and discrimination of tattooed employees should be investigated. Such research can help identify potential biases and to overcome them. Furthermore, the career development and advancement of tattooed employees should be investigated more deeply, including the availability of management positions and possible obstacles. Examining the workplace experience and engagement of tattooed employees can help us better understand how tattoos affect individuals' attitudes to work. From a psychological approach, it would be important to examine how tattoos shape and influence the professional identity of employees, including self-esteem and self-identity. These directions and challenges can help to define and promote future research on the labour market situation of tattooed employees, not only in Hungary, but also worldwide.

Conclusion

The labour market role and career development of employees with visible tattoos is a complex topic, whether we are talking about white-collar or blue-collar jobs. Despite increasing social acceptance in recent years, it is still not clear whether the presence of tattoos moves public opinion in a positive or negative

direction. The motivation for body art varies from individual to individual, but there is agreement that tattoos function as a mean of self-expression. The success and career development of employees with visible tattoos is highly dependent on the social and cultural context, industries and organizations. In the case of blue-collar jobs, the expectations regarding appearance can often be more flexible, and tattoos are less of an obstacle to employment. However, it is important to emphasize that the skills of tattooed employees can be just as varied and valuable as those of any other employee.

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