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From Theories to Self-Concept: Aspirations of the 21st Century Polish Youth in Comparison to Other Nations and Generations

Od teorii do wizji samego siebie Aspiracje młodzieży polskiej XXI wieku na tle innych narodów i wcześniejszych pokoleń

ABSTRACT: Aspirations play a crucial role in shaping students' learning behaviors, which is why they have been a focal point of numerous theoretical frameworks. Research has shown that youth aspirations can either remain stable or evolve over time, influenced by various factors. This study investigates the aspirations of Polish youth in relation to previous generations and global trends, examining the extent to which these aspirations have changed or remained consistent. While Polish youth share common global aspirations, such as pursuing education and professional careers, they also uphold distinctive values, particularly those related to love, family, and faith, which have endured since the 1970s. The study further highlights the influence of socio-economic status, gender, and media in shaping these aspirations, with Polish youth displaying a greater emphasis on personal interests and less awareness of broader social realities. In this atmosphere, it is necessary to realize the critical role of teachers in guiding students to balance their aspirations with a deeper understanding of contemporary global conditions.

KEY WORDS: Aspirations, aspiration theories, self-concept, Polish youth.

STRESZCZENIE: Aspiracje odgrywają kluczową rolę w kształtowaniu potrzeb i praktyk edukacyjnych uczniów, dlatego też stanowią punkt centralny licznych ram teoretycznych. W świetle dotychczasowych badań aspiracje młodzieży mogą pozostać stabilne lub ewoluować w czasie pod wpływem różnych czynników.

W niniejszym badaniu dokonano analizy aspiracji polskiej młodzieży w odniesieniu do poprzednich pokoleń i obecnych trendów globalnych, wykazując, w jakim stopniu aspiracje te uległy zmianie lub pozostały spójne. Współczesna polska młodzież podziela globalne aspiracje, takie jak: zdobywanie wykształcenia i karierę zawodową. Jednocześnie ma odrębne aspiracje nawiązujące do wartości miłości, rodziny i wiary, które przetrwały od lat 70. XX w. Badanie dodatkowo ukazuje wpływ statusu społeczno-ekonomicznego, płci i mediów na kształtowanie się aspiracji młodego pokolenia. Polska młodzież większą wagę przypisuje osobistym zainteresowaniom, mniejszą szerszym realiom społecznym. Z tego powodu konieczny staje się namysł nad rolą nauczyciela w wypracowywaniu równowagi między indywidualnymi aspiracjami wychowanków a głębszym rozumieniem możliwości i wyzwań globalnych.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: aspiracje, teorie aspiracji, oczekiwania, polska młodzież.

Introduction

Maintaining school education to shape how we would live in the future is a complicated process affected by a number of internally (e.g. personal abilities and interests) and externally (e.g. socio-economic status, family background, access to better schools) shaped factors. Aspirations of youth might also be effective in their school-related behaviors such as being more motivated to study some specific courses and to become more successful. As motivation gives the purpose or direction to the behaviors, individuals might benefit from it to develop and reach their aspirations and expectations as two distinct elements. Aspirations of Polish youth have been investigated since 1970s, which might be better understood through comparison of the tendencies in behaviors of various generations. This study focuses on the question of “What are the aspirational tendencies of Polish youth in comparison to the previous generations and other nations of current time?” Accordingly, it demonstrates how some Polish youth aspirations have been changed or reshaped during time periods while others have been more stable. Moreover, the aspirations of Polish have been compared to the worldwide youth aspirations. As a result, we will identify the similar and different factors effective in shaping the aspirations of Polish youth across generations.

The terms of aspiration and expectation from the perspective of Polish and of other nationality researchers

In literature, aspirations are defined by as “hopes for success in realizing specific intentions or plans” (Pieter, 1966, p. 26) while aspiration level is “the level of performance adopted by a person in a specific form of goal-directed activity” (Krech et al., 1962, pp. 114–115). Another psychological perspective is to define aspirations as “a goal that an individual sets for himself as something

he expects to achieve or tries to achieve” (Hilgard & Atkinson, 1967, p. 985), which can be more related to the concepts of success and failure. According to another psychologist, Skorny, (1980, p. 11) aspirations are “(1) long-term life goals including desires, wishes and dreams and (2) temporary actual goals which are more short-term.” On the other hand, sociologists define aspirations as “views for the future from the perspective of the objective and subjective conditions of an individual’s life” (Sokołowska, 1967, p. 3) or “an emotional state accompanied by ideas of an achievement that satisfies various needs”, in accordance with specific values such as professions or wealth (Trawińska, 1979, p. 288). Another sociologist, Gołębiowski (1977, p. 85) also states that aspirations are “the dominant needs which are subject to strong motivation related to the intention to implement, but without the obligation to be implemented.” From pedagogical perspective, Janowski (1977, p. 32) proposes that aspirations are “to some extent strong and lasting wishes of an individual related to the features/personality traits or states necessary for the individual’s future life as well as the objects they will want to obtain during their life.” Similarly, Kowalski (1970, p. 355) widens the definition of aspirations as “future goals according to the hierarchy of values, equal, higher or lower compared to future achievements” by suggesting its relation to achievement. All in all, aspiration appeared as a term including hopes, goals, expectations, wishes to reach shaped through the surrounding values.

On the contrary to the aspirations, expectations are “motivations and wishes which are closer to the reality” (Janowski, 1977, p. 14). As they are more concrete targets, they are more related to social and, in consequence, economic conditions of students. These future-related plans are shaped by the life conditions of learners such as family values, financial conditions or social status. As they are based on real life elements, according to Baird et al. (2008, p. 946), they are away from the individual dreams of students, and “more probabilistic”, such as becoming a doctor or becoming a singer, which might not actually be the case. In terms of education, the probability of achieving an educational degree by the individuals stemming from graduating from a college provides the links between educational aspirations and attained achievements. These educational expectations are shaped by real life elements, such as the family background shaping the horizons or social conditions limiting the possibilities, which causes them to be more realistic and to provide better predictions for success in education (Baird et al., 2008, p. 946; Khattab, 2015). Overall, expectations are future targets which are highly linked to the conditions and limits of the students’ lives.

As a part of self-development process and selection of the most important values for the question of “Who am I?”, individuals develop a number of life goals and then classify them (e.g. the goals they can achieve, the goals which can not be achieved) based on their abilities, their chance to improve their skills and their reactions to the difficulties and failure (Elliot & Dweck, 2005; Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2017, p. 69). In this goal development process, aspirations are defined as long-term values such as hopes and dreams of students, which are independent from the social reality of students to some extent. Without thinking about the possibility to reach them under the surrounding conditions of students, aspirations are just like the long-term dreams which are very difficult, nearly impossible to make it real (e.g. becoming a world-wide known doctor or a member of a popular band). Baird et al. (2008, p. 946) also explain aspirations as “the idealized hopes for the future” which is not shaped by the life standards or real circumstances of the individual.

In order to have more clear ideas about the constructs of aspiration and expectation, the factors shaping them have been investigated some of which focused on individual factors. Aspirations are highly influenced by individual traits and background of students (e.g. family, community, school). Gardiner and Goedhuys (2020) grouped them as aspirations through *lived experience* ((1) structural constraints such as educational level or finance and (2) family such as parental education, wealth and parental occupation) and through *social context* ((1) community such as community values or role models and (2) values such as religion or social norms). In the same study, they collected data from 15 and 16-year-olds in the United Kingdom and demonstrated that youth aspirations do not match with the market demand between 2010 and 2020. Top 5 jobs that 16–21 year-old people wanted to be such as artistic, teaching, health profession, protective services, nursing were all with the decreasing demand in the market between 2018–2022. On the other hand, the sectors employing more people were listed as sales growth and customer engagement, human resources, technology and IT, marketing and communications and partnership and alliances (World Economic Forum, 2023, p. 18). In the same report, the occupations projected to have increasing demand until 2027 are also listed as AI and machine learning specialists, sustainability specialists, business intelligence analysts, information security analysts and FinTech engineers (World Economic Forum, 2023, p. 30).

Aspiration Theories

Bourdieu, a French sociologist, (1979, 1998) theorized the role of social power relations in shaping young generations' aspirations (Kopciewicz, 2007). According to him, the social environment (including financial, social and cultural conditions) is effective in the expectations of the young generation about their future. Based on the social elements surrounding their life, young individuals develop the sense of work (e.g. what kind of jobs are more available, suitable or acceptable for them), sense of duties (e.g. what kind of roles they have within their families and societies) and sense of border (e.g. what is not possible or acceptable for them). Relatedly, they group the behaviors or roles as "things for me" (what they can do or achieve), "things not for me" (what they can not do or achieve), and "things for the people similar to me" (what is acceptable for the individuals with similar conditions).

From the French perspective, Bourdieu (1979, 1998) suggested that schools in France were shaped by the social status of the families and they were actively shaping future social positions of children (e.g. unavailability of better schools in poor areas which resulting in less qualified jobs for the youth of these areas). Teachers were also effective in approving the limitations because of not only students' social backgrounds, but also their genders. They might impose gender-related roles by behaving differently towards girls and boys (e.g. becoming harsher for girls when they do not do their homework while tolerating boys for that). He also mentioned the role of course books, by focusing on the big difference between the representation of girls and boys in them (e.g. girls as unequal, weak members of society). This was also a reflection of the social reality of the limits and borders for social spaces such as matching specific jobs for males and females.

Previously mentioned Polish pedagogue, Janowski (1977) analyzed and compared specifically the aspirations of Polish and British youth in 1970s. He identified the role of gender, age and family background in youth aspirations. In 1970s Polish society, girls were prioritizing studying hard, cultivating family values, love and religious belief. They wanted to improve their resourcefulness throughout developing their life competencies. Regrettably, they had less-self-trust and less trial for their aspirations, while boys prioritized productive jobs and develop values more related to risk, independence, courage and adventure. When Janowski compared job-related aspirations of the graduates of high school, boys (15.7%) mostly targeted to be professional in engineering while girls preferred to work in health sector (16.1%), and education sector (23%).

Janowski (1977) also focused on the variety in youth aspirations as their “conscious” dreams which are closely related to the expectations based on their ages by identifying the role of getting older. According to his study results, when youth got older, love became more important for them and they gave more importance to have ideas related to themselves and to develop self-confidence. They started to see religion/belief as a value, give importance helping others and became more realistic about their life expectations in accordance with their ages and perceived life goals. Based on Janowski’s (1977) study, adolescents perceived the main values of adults in these years as financial status, happiness of family, job satisfaction, education and health. In addition, for 1970s youth, education was the most important way to be successful in life and their life expectations were generally related to having a better job, having their own flat and financial independence from their families.

Related to the influence of families on youth aspirations, Janowski (1977, p. 148) found out the parallelism between their aspirations and their families’ ideas, values and beliefs. Young generation wanted to talk about their life plans with their parents. They prefer getting advices from their mothers (64.9%) rather than their fathers (25.9%). Nearly half of them wanted their parents to know their success, and nearly one third of them trusted in their criticisms. Moreover, Janowski (1977) also listed three factors shaping aspirations of young generations. First influence of families on youth aspirations was firstly based on their social status (e.g. education of family, wealth). This is the social and status influence which includes the motives transferred from older generations to the younger ones. The second factor was their stuff amenities (e.g. what they possess and what they want to possess, consumption habits). This type of influence is material which is related to the objects comprising the standards of family home (e.g. furnishing) and to the abilities and experiences in using these objects. The last factor was their intentions/intentional realm (e.g. interactions between members of family and peer group). This factor covers parents’ intentional efforts on their children’s aspirations including their views, opinions, patterns of participating in culture or even free time activities.

Lewowicki (1987) also listed the elements shaping adolescents’ aspirations as parents’ education, the family’s social status and material conditions, family origins and traditions, educational climate, parents’ profession and social traditions about various occupations. He also named social aspirations of young people in order to be active in their social groups (e.g. helping other people, organizing and shaping life of communities). According to him, children develop high and low level of aspirations in relation with the factors surrounding them. For example, they have low level of future aspirations when

parents' attitudes are more tolerant and when they have more freedom in addition to close emotional relationship with their parents. In contemporary world, the necessity of the parents and teachers to be more tolerant towards youth is being widely valued and encouraged. However, based on Lewowicki's (1987) findings, this attitude interestingly seems to be limiting the aspirations of the youth. On the other hand, children have high level of aspirations in two different types of family atmosphere: (1) if the parents are highly demanding and have a cold relation with their children, (2) if parents are very protective of their children even if they have warm attitudes. Lastly, he draws attention to the fact that parents sometimes project their own (not achieved) aspirations to their children while trying to evoke desirable aspirations.

In another study, Lewowicki (1989, p. 203) identified the most important values of Polish youth living in Masovian Voivodeship (Ostroleka Voivodeship at that time, north-east to Warsaw, the capital of Poland) as having a happy personal and family life (79.9%), living based on moral and ethical values (63.8%), exciting and satisfying professional life (40.4%), participation to social activities and care for others (39.3%), having a risky but creative life (37.2%), financially comfortable and satisfying life (35%), and gaining knowledge (31.3%). That shows the young Polish people attended in this study mostly had aspirations related to their family life, education, social life, professional career, political views, cultural interests and financial issues (Lewowicki, 1989, p. 209). Lewowicki also emphasized the role of family aspirations and the role of living territory on shaping youth aspirations (Lewowicki, 1989, p. 210–212).

Factors Affecting Youth Aspirations

Family and social background is the most motivating factor for youth according to International Labour Organization report (Gardiner & Goedhuys, 2020). Therefore, the role of family in shaping youth aspirations should be the first major issue to be discussed. In terms of family income, while less financial power limits student aspirations, students have higher aspirations when they have parents with higher professional positions (Archer et al., 2014; Bussu et al., 2023; Gutman & Schoon, 2018; Khattab, 2015; Sharp et al., 2020). In economically disadvantaged groups, students appeared to have a higher number of aspirations than expectations to achieve and they generally had poor academic performance (Boxer et al., 2011). That means students from lower income families tend to have dreams about their future without believing the possibility to make them real. On the other hand, one of the more recent research (Mann et al., 2020, p. 8) identified that in the group of the most

successful students, the ones from disadvantaged background are nearly four times less likely to have high aspirations compared to their peers from the privileged social backgrounds. In other words, even if they have similarly high achievements, the ones from lower level income families do not have aspirations as high as the ones of students from the higher income families, which shows the dependence of their dreams on their social background.

The education level and the attitudes of parents towards their children might also be effective in students' aspirations. First, kids shape their educational life in accordance with their parents' educational level and with the expectations of their parents (Bussu et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Konieczny & Tylka, 2015). For example, students have more chance to continue education beyond high school in case their parents themselves have higher education or when parents expect their children to continue education (Gao & Eccles, 2020; Khattab, 2015, p. 746; Madarasova-Geckova et al., 2010; Sharp et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2011). In addition, these children become more motivated to develop their skills (Schoon & Parsons, 2002). Moreover, parents may reflect their ideas related to the future of their kids directly through their words (e.g. a father telling his son "Studying regularly is good for you") or indirectly through their behaviors (e.g. a father becoming a role-model by studying regularly himself) (Jodl et al., 2001). These open or hidden expectations of parents from their children shape the behaviors of these children towards becoming hard-working or more focused on professional dreams. On the other hand, there are some studies showing that parental involvement in school and close emotional relations between children and parents do not always affect students' aspirations (Chen et al., 2023; Hartas, 2016; Gutman & Schoon, 2018). That means even if parents have close bond with their kids or become actively involved in school-related issues of their kids, these kids may not have more dreams for their future. However, when there is a conflict between parents' aspirations and children's expectations, this might result in less well-being of the children (Rutherford, 2015), which shows the importance of the consistence between the aspirations of parents and their children. Accordingly, parents seem to be shaping their expectations about their children based on their children's own expectations (Zhang et al., 2011).

School environment appears as another factor shaping the aspirations and expectations of students (Archer et al., 2014; Sharp et al., 2020, Szczurek-Boruta, 2019). Both academic performance at school, and attachment to school and community have a role in predicting future aspirations and expectations. Engagement of students with the school affects aspirations positively (Madarasova et al., 2010; Zava et al., 2022). That means when children have

strong bonds with their schools such as showing more effort towards classes or having friends, they have higher aspirations. Moreover, the students with the highest future aspirations are most likely in colleges (Sharp et al., 2020), which shows the importance of the type of schools in shaping aspirations. As a result, aspiration development of students is based not only on students' school-related behaviors and attitudes, but also on school characteristics.

Gender is another factor in shaping aspirations and expectations of students (Hartas, 2016; Sharp et al., 2020). In a USA-sampled study, males were identified to be attending more comprehensive schools and they were more affected by their parents' expectations (Zhang et al., 2011). In addition, males have lower aspirations compared to the girls and girls have more aspirations related to pursuing higher education compared to the boys (Gutman & Schoon, 2018; Hartas, 2016). Males were suggested to have more aspirations only when they are emotionally engaged in schools (Gutman & Schoon, 2018). Going to school does not only provide students to have the chance to work for their aspirations by being aware of them, but also learning about different perspectives and the aspirations of others. As a result, they may have the chance to exceed the social or family-based limits in their future-related ideas. Moreover, they might be willing to take part in various professional areas by not grouping them as "suitable for males/females." The recent idea of "Education for All" as Sustainable Development Goals of United Nations is based on providing equal chance for girls and boys to participate in the educational system, which could help them to reach their dreams. As a result, these students might also develop various aspirations for their future, which could help them to cross the social and economic boundaries surrounding them.

The role of nationality or ethnicity on aspirations and expectations are not well-defined. On the one hand, there are some studies showing that nationality of students became effective in career-related aspirations (e.g. Swiss students have more stable aspirations) (Hirschi, 2010). In addition, the expectations of adolescents are less effective on their parents' expectations in African Americans compared to other ethnic groups of America such as Asians, Hispanics and Whites (Zhang et al., 2011). In a study conducted in Australia, most of the non-aboriginal islanders (69.1%) had the aspiration to go to university, while it is only 39.1% for the aboriginal islanders (Mission Australia, 2013, p. 8). On the other hand, some other studies could not identify the role of ethnicity in lowering aspirations because of the contradictory results provided such as African Americans did not have significantly lower aspirations (Gao & Eccles, 2020) or white people had lower aspirations (Gutman & Schoon, 2018). Similarly, in Canada, more 15-year olds (83.6% on average) from the

minority immigrant families had higher educational aspirations compared to the ones (71.3%) without minority background (Taylor & Krahn, 2005, p. 11).

Nationality is effective on educational aspirations also because of the fertility aspirations of each nation. For example, as one of the least developed countries, in Mozambique, adolescents have less educational aspirations when they want to have bigger families with more children as financing both self-education and the children is not possible. Interestingly, although Mexico and Nepal are economically developed, girls again do not have ambitious educational aspirations if they also have family related goals (Alcaraz et al., 2022).

World-wide youth aspirations in the 21st Century

The aspirations and expectations of the young generation have been studied widely. For example, children from higher social and financial level of England generally aspire more professional (e.g. medicine and science), managerial and technical careers for their future (Archer et al., 2014). Becoming famous is very important for them and 90% of them aspired to make a lot of money in the future. They also mentioned their family-related aspirations or social aspirations such as helping others (Archer et al., 2014). In another study, Swiss adolescents also reflect on their unrealistic aspirations such as becoming an artist or a professional athlete (Hirschi, 2010). The Global Youth Survey (IPSOS, 2017) with 18–24 years old from 32 countries revealed that most of them (67%) believe in the necessity of higher education and 69% of them had the aspiration to start their own business but were also aware of their lack of education and skills to achieve that. That shows young individuals do not simply dream about their future without being aware of their surrounding conditions, but they actually make reasonable decisions based on their realities. In addition to that, 20% of the youth stated their preferred career as in the field of technology or science, followed by professional activities (11%), arts or entertainment (11%), and health care (10%). Moreover, 55% of the whole told that they were not currently working in the industry they aspire to, with 62% of the participants from Latin America. Similarly, report by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development with 15-year-olds from 31 countries (OECD, 2018) demonstrated that the “dream jobs” for girls were becoming a doctor (15.6%) and a teacher (9.4%) while it is becoming an engineer (7.7%) and business manager (6.7%) for boys. In the similar report of 2000, girls had listed their “dream jobs” as becoming teachers (11.1%) and doctors (11%) again, while it was becoming business managers (6.8%) and ICT professionals (6.1%) for boys.

Another study with the focus on African Region and South-East Asia Region (Partnership for Maternal Newborn and Child Health, 2023, p. 8) demonstrated that adolescents and youth aged 10–24 put emphasis on their need for learning, competence, education, skills and employability in order to improve their aspiration of well-being. Safety and a supportive environment, and good health and optimum nutrition also appear as the other most important needs for them. Top personal concerns of “Generation Z” (born between 1995–2003, thus aged around 17 to 25) was listed in the report by global network platform of Deloitte (2021, p. 71) as climate change (21% in 2020, %28 in 2021), unemployment (21% in 2020, 27% in 2021), healthcare and disease prevention (28% in 2020, 26% in 2021), education, skills and training (13% in 2020, 19% in 2021) and sexual harassment (22% in 2020, 19% in 2021). In the survey of Foundation Higher Education for Good (FHEG, 2023), the young generation (45.000 participants of the ages 15 to 29, from 212 countries and territories) listed personal happiness (24%), success (18%) and a rich social life (11%) as their aspirations. For the future of the world, most of them listed their wish for peace (32%), environmental protection (22%) and human values and virtues (16%).

Youth aspirations in Poland

Siwko (2006) investigated the values of Polish youth and identified the reasons of why Poles want to be educated such as: earning high salary, avoiding unemployment and having an interesting profession. When she compared the viewpoints of Polish young generation in 1990s and 2000s, she suggested while only one fourth of Polish young people was convinced that they would have a higher education, in 2003, majority of them assumed it. That means the value of being educated re-appeared in 2000s generation similar to the statements of 70’s youth in Janowski’s study (1977). Actually being educated became a priority for all Polish youth groups before becoming an EU country in 2004. In 2003, more than a third of the Poles appreciated value of improving their resourcefulness as a result of their willing to be self-employed (25%), which was again similar to the ideas of 70’s Polish youth. While only 9% of the young generation was willing to go abroad to search of work in 1990, it became 15% in 2003. However, 76% of them stated they would not go abroad in case they have a permanent job in Poland. Relatedly, they also believed knowledge of foreign languages has an influence on finding jobs.

In a more recent study with Polish youth in Cracow (Tylka & Konieczny, 2015), a majority of them (77.9%) wanted to earn high salary in the future,

which was expressed more by boys (88.4%) than girls (73.1%). Similarly, 90.4% of them wanted to be financially independent in the future like the aspirations of 1970's youth (Janowski, 1977). In terms of occupations, Polish boys (11.6%) also seemed to give more importance to the prestige of an occupation compared to the girls (4.3%). They listed the factors to select their future occupations as interests and passions (36.8%), the university studies they plan to attend (22.1%), and earnings (16.9%). Related to their educational aspirations, most of Polish youth (56.9%) stated they want to go to university, which was a more dominant idea for girls (62.4%) compared to the boys (53.5%). Personal interests and passions (34.6%) and their friends' instigations (24.3%) were also some other factors effective in their decisions about education. The youth listed their values as love, family, health, freedom, honesty, faith and education. They also stated their opinions are influenced mostly by their own ideas (34.6%), and then by their friends (24.3%), mothers (13.2%), teachers (6.6%), fathers (5.1%), and media (3.7%). This finding is similar to Janowski's findings on 70's Polish youth in terms of prioritizing the ideas of their mothers rather than their fathers.

Ogrodzka-Mazur (2017) also focused on Polish children and youth living in Czech border and found out 23% of fourth graders were convinced that they will not achieve top positions (e.g. supervising other people and making decisions). Similarly, middle school 2nd graders do not believe that they will be able to fulfill success, high living standards, and getting top positions. This finding shows that today's youth have lower aspirations than the 1970s Polish youth who expected to have a good job, their own flat and financial independence in the future. In Ogrodzka-Mazur's study (2017), Polish youth listed their goals as peaceful life, having education and scientific achievements and comfortable life, which were similar to the findings of Janowski's study in 1970's. The same Polish group also believed that they would partially implement their aspirations of acquisition of knowledge and education (30%), leading a peaceful life among family and friends (28%), and achieving success (16%).

Mann et al's study (2020) were based on OECD PISA surveys in 2019 with 15-year-olds around the world and it demonstrated that youth people were focused on shaping their careers in a few occupational areas, which was also affected by their gender and social background. For instance, when career expectations of Polish students with the highest achievement in mathematics and science (18.1% of all Polish ones) are compared, there is not much difference between girls and boys for science and engineering professions. On the other hand, for health related careers, the number of girls was three times more than the boys. As a result of the technological developments, specific jobs are being

increasingly automated, which actually needs to be taken into consideration by the students while shaping their job expectations. However, nearly 40% of the Polish students from the advantaged groups and nearly 45% of the Polish students from the disadvantaged groups are reported to be interested in the jobs at the risk of automation, which demonstrates the unawareness of this generation about current life conditions. In terms of gender, more than 40% of Polish girls and more than 45% of Polish boys are expecting to become professional in an area which is under the risk of automation. Less than 10% of the high performing Polish students with advantaged background did not have the expectation to complete tertiary education, while the rate was nearly 50% for the disadvantaged group. Similarly, in the high performing students group, while only 18% of the students with advantaged background do not expect to become professionals and managers, more than 40% of disadvantaged students have the lack of this expectation. In terms of gender, girls (less than 20%) and boys (30%) are not that much worried about completing tertiary education, while they have low expectation rates to become professionals or managers (girls: 20%, boys: more than 30%). Interestingly, while 75% of Polish students expect to work in a high-skilled occupation, 10% of advantaged students and 55% of disadvantaged students do not plan to complete tertiary education (nearly 30% of the total group) (Mann et al., 2020, pp. 20–40).

Discussion and Conclusion

One of the issues that young generation around the world is currently aspiring to is related to their level of education. First, it is clear that the youth not only from the European countries, but also from African and Asian countries aspire to be well educated in order to have better life standards throughout their lives (Archer et al., 2014; IPSOS, 2017; PMNCH, 2023). Polish youth aspirations are parallel with the rest of the world in terms of their desire to get education and go to university (Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2017; Siwko, 2006; Tylka & Konieczny, 2015). However, the disadvantaged groups and boys are pessimistic about their chance to complete their education (Mann et al., 2020). Second common aspect of youth aspiration is related to their professional career. Recently, European youth has dreams to have professional, managerial or technical careers or even starting their own business with the motivation of earning a lot of money (Archer et al., 2014; IPSOS, 2017; OECD, 2000; OECD, 2018). Polish youth also has the aspirations to earn high salary through professional careers and to be self-employed, however they want to work in the areas that are interesting or passionate for them (Ogrodzka-

Mazur, 2017; Siwko, 2006; Tylka & Konieczny, 2015). Moreover, Polish youth are expecting to work in automated jobs in today's world conditions or in high-skilled occupations without completing tertiary education (Mann et al., 2020). These issues demonstrate that Polish young generation is focused more on their own selves and their own interests, rather than being aware of the realities of the world. At that point, teachers might get the responsibility to make their students aware of contemporary conditions of the world while also helping them to have free will for selecting and shaping their aspirations based on their own interests. By this way, students would have both self-satisfactory and more realistic aspirations for their future.

In terms of current values and concerns of young generation, need for peace and care for environment are common in Europe, which was also the case for Polish youth (Deloitte, 2021; FHEG, 2023; Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2017). On the other hand, the values related to love, family and faith are also significantly important for the young generation in Poland, which was also the case in 1970s and 1980s (Janowski, 1977; Lewowicki, 1987; Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2017; Tylka & Konieczny, 2015). The role of life standards and social status in shaping aspirations of youth is still effective both in Poland and other Western Europe countries, (Archer et al., 2014; Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2017), which was also the case for Poland in 1970s and 1980s (Janowski, 1977; Lewowicki, 1987). In other words, although their future aspirations have been closely shaped through their economic and social conditions, Polish youth has protected their values of love, family and faith for many decades.

In terms of the factors shaping aspirations, not only family income, but also gender has been effective for Polish youth. Girls are recently more optimistic about completing their education, studying at universities and they are more willing to pursue health-related careers. On the other hand, boys are more focused on becoming professionals and earning high salary, especially in science and engineering professions (Mann et al., 2020; Tylka & Konieczny, 2015), which was interestingly very similar to the case of 1970s (Janowski, 1977). That means there has been no change in the role of gender in Polish youth aspirations through time periods. Lastly, although school-related factors such as the effect of teachers' and friends' ideas on young ones' aspirations have been stable in Poland (Janowski, 1977; Ogrodzka-Mazur, 2017; Tylka & Konieczny, 2015), recently, the factor of media has appeared as a new element to shape aspirations for the current generation (Tylka & Konieczny, 2015). This finding is in parallel with Polish youth being more self-oriented and less aware of the social realities as they may be just observing the ones represented on media and accepting them as their role-models.

All in all, as a part of global sharing of knowledge and ideas, there is a parallelism between the future aspirations of Polish youth and of the other nationalities, especially in terms of the elements shaping these future views. On the other hand, there is also a clear distinction between Polish youth aspirations and other countries especially in terms of their prioritized values. As values of love, family, and faith are still present among Polish youth, investigating the reasons behind these tendencies might be examined through future studies. The issue of young generation's being unaware of about the current economic and social conditions also needs to be investigated thoroughly. In practice, teachers might have an active role in encouraging students to realize the issues around them, with or without using accordingly shaped course materials. Moreover, it is necessary to question the current role of technology and media on shaping youth aspirations, which is a completely different factor for this generation compared to the previous ones. For all of these purposes, collecting the current ideas of Polish youth would be effective, which could also be applied in some other contexts to identify the aspiration tendencies of young generations across cultures. That might provide the comparison of how the conditions and social expectations or changing reality surrounding various groups of youth are effective in shaping their aspirations. Teachers might also be focus of the future studies to identify their ideas about the current aspirational tendencies of youth and the reasons behind them. That might provide a more comprehensive perspective to understand the possible use of educational tools to develop students' self-focused ideas without disregarding the current world conditions. As a result, the young generation might start dreaming again (by specifying their aspirations) about their future careers and life standards in parallel with their personal interests by being aware of, but not being restricted by the limits of their social and economic conditions.

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