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Would You Follow the Advice? Attitudes Towards Formal and Informal Career Counseling in Poland*

Czy posłuchałbyś tej rady? Stosunek do formalnego
i nieformalnego doradztwa zawodowego w Polsce

Abstract

In this study, we analyze and test attitudes towards job advice from both a professional and informal advisors (parents). We have conducted a vignette study in which subjects advised a fictional character on a job choice. Participants were informed that the vignette characters had already received advice from either a parent (informal advisor) or a professional online occupational counsellor (formal advisor). Our findings indicate that subjects are less likely to follow the advice provided by parents. They were also less likely to advise higher-paid, but less comfortable job offers (those with more risk, competition, or less flexibility). Contrary to our expectations, the gender of the character did not moderate the results. However, women were more likely to prefer and recommend more comfortable but lower-paid job offers. The conclusion from the study is that Poles tend to reject advice provided by informal advisors (parents) and react more positively to advice from a formal advisors. However, the overall effect of the advisor is relatively small.

Keywords:

family, career counseling, labor market, job choice

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Streszczenie

W tym badaniu badamy, jak Polacy reagują na porady zawodowe od doradcy zawodowego i doradcy nieformalnego (rodzica). Przeprowadziliśmy badanie winietkowe, w ramach którego badani doradzali fikcyjnej postaci w wyborze pracy. Jak poinformowano badanych, bohaterowie winietek (historii) otrzymali już poradę od rodzica (nieformalnego doradcy) lub profesjonalnego internetowego doradcy zawodowego (doradca formalny). Ustaliliśmy, że badani rzadziej stosują się do rad udzielanych przez rodziców. W szczególności badani rzadziej polecali lepiej płatne, ale mniej komfortowe oferty (bardziej ryzykowne, konkurencyjne lub mniej elastyczne). Płeć bohatera, wbrew naszym oczekiwaniom, nie miała znaczenia. Kobiety częściej preferowały i polecały bardziej komfortowe, ale gorzej opłacane oferty pracy. Z badania wynika, że Polacy odrzucają porady doradcy nieformalnego (rodzica), a pozytywnie reagują na porady doradcy formalnego. Efekt doradcy jest jednak ekonomicznie niewielki.

Słowa kluczowe:

rodzina, doradztwo zawodowe, rynek pracy, wybór pracy

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Introduction

The transition from formal education to the labour market is one of the biggest challenges for young adults. Therefore, the role of career counsellors, who help young people choose their professional paths, cannot be neglected. The educational system and public labour market services provide several ways to support students and workers in their occupational choices. Apart from the official institutions, labour market decisions can be supported informally through families, friends or peers. In this study, we explore the role of both types of career counselling: formal and informal, and test attitudes towards job advice.

The study aims to enhance the understanding of the role of career counselling for Poles, focusing on attitudes towards advice from formal (professional) and informal (parents) advisors. We explore gender differences in attitudes and choices, particularly in the context of gender wage gap determinants and gender norms related to the labour market and family decisions of women and men, through an experimental design. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to experimentally test attitudes towards formal and informal job advice in Poland, with a special focus on a gender angle. The study is set in the context of job features that are considered to contribute to wage differences, especially the gender wage gap [Cortes, Pan, 2018], such as the load of risky tasks (with uncertain results), competitiveness of a workplace, and flexibility of working arrangements. The experiment was conducted online on a sample of Poles registered on a platform for surveys and experiments. The sample is representative of the population of working-age Poles concerning age and place of residence. We invited survey participants to advise vignette characters who are about to choose a job offer. The alternatives always differed by wage and one other job feature. The job offers either included more tasks with uncertain results (risky tasks), had a more competitive bonus scheme, or provided less flexibility in working arrangements. These less comfortable job features came with a higher wage. Survey participants were the second advisors. The first advice was provided by either the parents of the character or by an online professional job counsellor. We explore the experimental treatment effects in two models. First, we examine the willingness to follow the advice provided by formal or informal advisors to test attitudes towards such advice. Second, in investigating the importance of risk aversion, competitiveness and flexibility for gender differences in labour market choices, we estimate whether formal or informal advisors can mitigate the effect of undesired job features, especially in the context of gender norms.

The contribution of the study is twofold. First, we use an experiment to directly test the effect of advice provided by formal or informal advisors on the job advice given by participants. Second, we explore the gender context of the mechanism in several ways: by controlling the gender of the character for whom the advice is provided, the gender of the participant, the gender norms of the participant, and finally, by setting the experiment in the context of job features significant from the perspective of gender differences in job choices.

Controlling for subjects' preferences and demographic characteristics, we find that Poles follow advice provided by others to a very small extent. They are more likely to consider advice from a professional than from a relative. Moreover, advice provided by parents decreases the probability that the subject will favour a higher-paid job offer. Although female subjects are generally more likely to prefer flexibility, lower risk, and lower competition to higher wages, the advice did not differ when the character in the vignette was a woman. Also, the gender of the participants did not interfere with the experimental effects. The more traditional gender norms reported by the participant, the higher the probability that the participant will follow the advice of the formal or informal advisors. However, norms do not matter for the probability of advising a higher-paid offer. The most important aspect of the job is the flexibility of working arrangements. At the same time, the choice between flexibility and higher wages was the most susceptible to the effects of the treatment: advice from a professional or parents.

These results lead to three main insights. First, there appears to be little trust among Poles in advice provided by both professional job counsellors and informal ones – parents. Second, the parental perspective can even be treated as harmful – subjects are more likely to provide the opposite of the parents' advice when con-

trolling for other aspects. Third, the gender context does not play a significant role in either the willingness to follow the advice or the probability of choosing a higher-paid offer.

The article is structured as follows. First, we provide information on the structure of formal job counselling in Poland. Second, we show insights from the literature on attitudes towards job counselling and parents' role in the choice of occupation and education. We also elaborate on the importance of job features that differ between job offers described in the vignettes. Third, we describe in detail the participants and the experimental survey. Fourth, we present and interpret the results of the study. Finally, we conclude and provide some policy implications of the study.

The structure of formal job counselling in Poland

Formal job counselling in Poland is provided by several institutions. Under the current regulations [**Educational Law, 2016; Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions, 2004**], there are two pillars responsible for career guidance and information tasks: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour. Although the concept of job counselling has been recognised for a long time, the responsibilities of these pillars were specified and implemented in Polish law more formally in the last 30 years.

The educational system includes career orientation and guidance for students at each level of their education. Under regulations introduced in 2013 and 2018, all children, starting from kindergarten, are obligatorily introduced to the concept of occupation and job choice. Subsequently, primary and high schools provide students with regular classes designed to support them in the choice of further education – vocational, general education, or higher education, and the choice of occupation. In the last grades of primary school, within-class career counselling should include at least 10 hours per year, and in high school 10 hours per four years. Since 2013, high school students in Poland have had the opportunity to choose a specialisation, such as mathematics or biology, after their first school year. This means that career counselling in primary schools (previously junior high schools) should focus on selecting between general and vocational education and the specific specialisation. In high school, guidance becomes more targeted towards a chosen specialisation. Apart from career orientation classes, each student should have individual access to a school career guide and, if needed, support from psychological and pedagogical counselling centres outside of school. The requirements for the competencies of these guides are becoming more detailed over time. However, there is little information about the usage and effectiveness of such services, as data on this topic is scarce. Students should universally attend guidance classes, but schools are free to provide their own programmes of career counselling. Individual meetings are voluntary. At the higher education level, career guidance tasks are carried out by academic career offices. They are mostly involved in providing job and internship offers.

Although, in theory, the career guidance system is quite broad and provides several instruments to support students, there exists mixed empirical evidence on the attitudes towards professional career guidance among young Poles. In several studies, students claim that access to career guidance, and individual and group meetings, are the most important types of support in career decisions. They claim that everyone should have access to and use such guidance [**Bartosiak, 2015; Kanclerz et al., 2022**]. Moreover, students report that they would use such support if needed. At the same time, among university students surveyed by **Czerw and Bielias [2020]**, most respondents identified their own interests as the main determinant of their educational choices. Almost 30% named their parents' opinion as a key factor in choosing a high school, while 20% said the same about their field of study. Only 4.9% and 7.84%, respectively, mentioned professional career guidance as a significant factor. In the same study, almost 56% of respondents participated in career guidance classes (most likely in primary and high school), and almost 60% agreed that it is worth seeking job counselling from a professional advisor. Most of the respondents positively assessed their contacts with the advisor. However, almost 20% do not consider advisors to be trustworthy and student-oriented, because "it is just their job". In this study, students do not share opinions about individual meetings with advisors.

Career counselling for workers is provided by employment offices and career planning centres. These institutions provide individual and group counselling for all interested adults, including the unemployed and job seekers, both registered and unregistered. The effectiveness of job counselling provided by employment offices as a tool for improving skills and enhancing labour market opportunities appears to be unsatisfactory. Career guidance is considered one of the least effective instruments of active labour market policies by project coordinators in employment offices and is among the worst-rated in terms of helping the unemployed acquire new skills and knowledge [Hardy et al., 2018]. The effectiveness of job counselling can be gauged not only by the duration of unemployment. Szewczyk-Jarocka [2019] finds a significant relationship between job counselling and the length of employment office registration. She argues that counselling can facilitate the social inclusion of individuals struggling to find a job.

Literature review

From the perspective of this study, three strands of literature are particularly important: on attitudes towards formal job counselling; the role of parents in educational and occupational choices; and gender differences in labour market choices, with a special focus on job characteristics such as risk, competitiveness and workplace flexibility, as highlighted in the experimental questions.

Attitudes towards career guidance

There is a universal belief that young people are often confused about their career paths, and thus effective career guidance can aid in their labour market choices and decrease the number of young workers dissatisfied with their educational and vocational decisions [Athanasou, Van Esbroeck, 2008; Czepiel, 2013]. However, one of the key factors in the successful provision of such support is the positive attitude towards career guidance [Chhatrani et al., 2022]. Czepiel [2013] claims that the lack of a habit of using such services is one of the major obstacles to achieving effective career guidance in Poland.

The low level of the usage of career guidance might be related to the so-called *help-seeking stigma* – the perception that looking for support is a signal of weakness [Vogel, Wade, Haake, 2006], and that it is associated with a negative societal label [Corrigan, 2004]. This effect is especially common among men. Moreover, men with more traditional gender norms report stigma more often than those with less traditional views on gender roles [Rochlen, O'Brien, 2002]. Indeed, boys are less likely to seek career guidance and report less positive attitudes towards such support [Balin, Hirschi, 2010].

Ludwikowski et al. [2009] find that public and personal stigmas strongly correlate with attitudes towards career counselling. The willingness to use such services is lower among those who report a belief that looking for help is associated with serious personal issues. Chhatrani et al. [2022] highlight the role of four factors in stigma reduction regarding using career guidance. These are the definition of career counselling, information of the options of such guidance, opinion of career counselling, and knowledge about the benefits of participating in career counselling. This study reports no significant gender differences in attitudes or factors that correlate with a positive attitude towards the use of career counselling. Universally, what makes a difference is information about counselling content, career options, and the benefits of using such services for each student.

In our study, we look at the responsiveness of participants to career guidance rather than the effectiveness of such support. In the context of the reported demand and belief in the benefits of using counselling [Czerw, Bielas, 2020], we test whether a job advisor's voice has a chance to be listened to or whether a lack of habits to rely on such help will make this voice silent.

Parents as occupational role models and advisors

Literature on the role of parents in their children's educational and occupational choices is quite comprehensive. The main finding in this literature is that there is a positive correlation between parents' education, wealth and occupational status, on the one hand, and their children's educational plans, perspectives and choices, on the other [Bengston et al., 2007; Sandefur, Wells, 1999; Solon, 1999; Björklund et al., 2007; 2009; Björklund, Salvanes, 2011; Black et al., 2011].

These correlations seem to be particularly important in the gender context. Olivetti et al. [2020] find a positive correlation between hours worked by mothers (and their female friends) and hours worked by daughters. Fernandez et al. [2004] observe that men whose mothers were highly skilled, educated, and working during their childhood were more likely to marry women involved in the labour market and developing professional careers.

While studies on how mothers can affect children's choices are mostly focused on employment, studies relating fathers' careers to children's choices are more focused on a field of education or a sector of work. Hellerstein and Morrill [2011] study patterns of daughters' decisions on occupation and find that, as the participation of women in the labour market increases, daughters are more likely to choose their fathers' profession. Schwenkenberg [2014; 2015] focuses on intergenerational occupational mobility. Her results indicate an upward mobility of children in comparison to their father's profession in the context of earnings and prestige. Humlum et al. [2019] show that gender-stereotypical labour market choices by parents increase the probability that their children of the same sex will also choose gender-stereotypical fields of education and occupation.

The direct role of parents as occupational advisors is considered in Ulrich et al. [2018]. The study provides insights into the duality of the job counselling system in Germany. They conclude that parents serve as important career guides; thus, their competencies should be strengthened to improve the decision-making process. In Poland, Peplińska et al. [2014] find that parental emotional attitudes correlate with job preferences in adolescence. To the best of our knowledge, there is no direct empirical test of the role of parents as job advisors in Poland. This study attempts to fill this research gap.

Gender differences in labour market choices, and their determinants

The literature on gender differences in labour market choices is extensive and offers multiple perspectives that contribute to explaining the gender wage gap and gender occupational segregation. This research remains incomplete, as a large portion of the gender gap cannot be explained by the observable characteristics of workers, various features of labour markets, or economic circumstances.

Patricia Cortes and Jessica Pan [2018], in their summary of the factors behind gender occupational segregation, identify broad classes of explanations that have been recently explored in empirical studies. They also provide suggestions on directions for future research. They highlight the importance of three behavioural traits (corresponding with specific job characteristics) that have been proven to be significant in explaining some of the gender differences in labour market choices. These traits are risk aversion, willingness to compete, and social preferences. Evidence on the differences between women and men in risk-taking, competitiveness and preferences is provided mostly by experimental research [Azmat, Petrolongo, 2014].

Empirical evidence shows that men typically take more risk. Byrnes et al. [1999] compare over 100 research studies on risk attitudes and find that in the majority of tasks, men are more likely to take risk. They also find that, for some tasks, the gender difference in taking risk is larger than in others. In the case of social risks, a study by Arch [1993] also shows that women are more likely to avoid risk. The author of the study claims that this could be related to a different way of thinking about risk: men treat it as a challenge, while women are trying to avoid possible harm.

In experimental economics, the literature on risk taking is inconclusive. Experimental results show that specific circumstances are crucial when it comes to the difference in risk taking between men and women. Eckel

and Grossman [1996] demonstrate higher risk aversion among women in field experiments, but not in laboratory ones¹. Holt and Laury [2002; 2005] show that the differences appear significant only when the payoffs are low. If the stakes are high, women take risks as often as men. In a choice study, Hartog et al. [2002] test respondents' willingness to play a high-stakes lottery and find substantial gender differences. These two studies suggest that women tend to act like they are more risk averse, but when the stakes are high, as in educational choices, the difference is much smaller or even disappears. In the context of labour market choices, Jung, Cho, and Oaxaca [2018] show that women are more likely to choose secure jobs, which contributes to explaining a large part of the gender wage gap (between 40% and 77%).

Gender differences in the willingness to compete were studied carefully by Muriel Niederle and Lisa Vest-erlund [2007]. In a series of economic experiments, they confirmed that women are less likely to choose payment schemes that are based on competition between players even though they have the same abilities as men and perform similarly in tasks. Buser et al. [2014] report the results of a classroom experiment measuring an individual's willingness to compete with the first important decision on specialisation profiles for secondary school students in the Netherlands. They find that up to 23% of gender sorting between high-school profiles can be associated with differences in competitiveness.

There is evidence that gender differences in the willingness to compete are driven by nurture rather than biology. Gneezy et al. [2009] compare gender differences in the willingness to compete in two different societies: patriarchal and matrilineal. They find that competitiveness within society is highly correlated with its type. Massai (patriarchal) men are more competitive than Massai women, but also women from the Khasi (matrilineal) society compete much more often than men of the same ethnicity. Contrary to what was found so far for risk aversion, this suggests that, in the case of competing, socialisation may play a more important role.

The last attribute mentioned in the literature is the so-called social preferences. Among the various dimensions of these preferences, this study focuses on a preference for flexibility in working arrangements, highlighted by Goldin [2014]. Goldin claims that the key to closing the gender wage gap is to equalise pay for flexible and inflexible working time arrangements. Gender differences in preferences for working time flexibility are related to the fact that women are more often the primary caregivers within the family. As a result, they need more flexibility than men, who are more likely to be considered the primary breadwinners and thus more available to their employers.

Finally, considering all three attributes, a hypothetical choice experiment using the willingness-to-pay approach [Wiswall, Zafar, 2015] shows that women are more likely to select job offers with lower remuneration but also lower levels of risk (understood as the chance of being dismissed within a year), competition (higher bonus for excellent performance) and flexibility (fewer hours worked or lower probability of working long hours). Based on insight from the literature, we designed a survey allowing participants to reveal preferences towards these three job attributes and their attitudes towards job advice in this context. Introducing these dimensions of job offers is an indirect way of testing attitudes towards job advice in the context of gender differences in labour market choices and outcomes.

Study implementation

The survey was conducted online in mid-February 2021. Each participant received USD 1 (around PLN 4) for completing the survey, which is typical compensation for a survey of such length. The median time of survey completion was around 10 minutes.

¹ We observed a similar pattern in our experiment. As an additional reward, female subjects were more likely than men (76.4% vs. 70.76%) to choose the risky lottery than a sure payment. In a hypothetical choice question in which subjects were choosing between offers described as more or less risky (and with different remuneration), less risky offers were more likely to be chosen by women (56.5% vs. 46.5%).

The sample

Participants in the experiment were recruited from a panel of respondents registered in a Polish online platform for surveys and studies called ANSWEO. This platform is used for both commercial purposes and research studies. Participants were informed in the invitation about the nature and basic features of the survey, as well as their compensation. They were aware that they could withdraw at any point, but compensation would only be paid to those who completed the tasks.

A total of 640 subjects completed the survey, of which 53% were women. The average age was 37 years. Most subjects had completed secondary (50%) or tertiary (48%) education. One-fifth of the sample grew up in the countryside, one-fourth in a small town (with fewer than 50,000 residents), 35% in a medium-sized city (50,000–500,000), and 15% in a large city (more than 500,000 residents). The sample is representative of the population of Polish adults (aged 20–54) in terms of age and place of residence (voivodeship) – see Section A1 in the Appendix. These two dimensions are important in the gender context of the experiment, as gender norms differ between birth cohorts and regions [Goraus et al., 2015]. The experimental treatments – including the type of advisor, the content of the advice (higher or lower wage), and gender of the character – were randomly assigned and equally distributed among subjects, as is typical in randomised controlled trials.

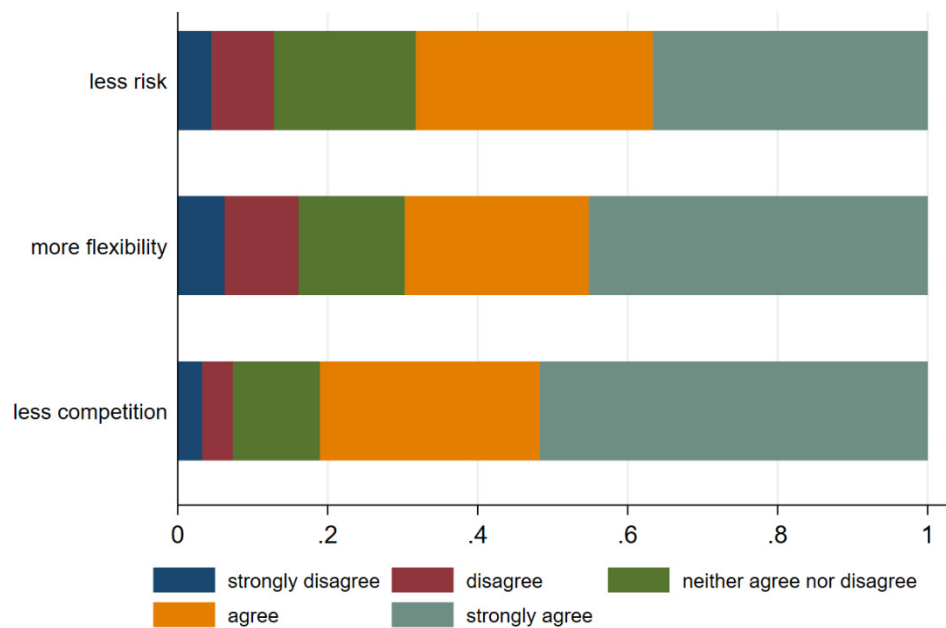
The survey

In this section, we provide a detailed description of the survey along with an overview of the participants' responses. In the first part of the survey, subjects were introduced to three job attributes of interest: risk, competitiveness, and flexibility at work. Risk was described as follows: "In some occupations, tasks are performed under time pressure, with uncertainty about the outcome. Incorrect decisions by the worker can harm the firm's outcomes and reputation". Competitiveness at work was introduced as: "Some employers reward individual effort more than team effort, e.g., conditioning the amount of the bonus on individual results rather than the outcomes of the team or the whole firm. This is a way for the employer to introduce competitiveness within the firm". Work flexibility was described as: "Some employers provide flexible working conditions, allowing the worker to decide when and where to perform tasks. The worker is evaluated based on results achieved over a longer period (e.g., once a month) rather than on fixed working hours". After presenting these descriptions, we asked participants whether they agreed with the following statements: (a) The job offer is more attractive if there are fewer tasks with a high risk of making a wrong decision; (b) The job offer is more attractive if there is more work flexibility; (c) The job offer is more attractive if the employer rewards team results more than individual competition. The distributions of responses are presented in Figure 1. Most subjects agree (or strongly agree) that more attractive job offers include fewer risky tasks, less competitiveness among co-workers, and more flexibility. Notably, competitiveness was considered an undesirable feature of a job offer by most respondents.

Consecutively, subjects were asked to rank these three job attributes from the most to the least important to them. Over 80% of participants selected job flexibility as the most important attribute, while only 5% chose competition at work.

The main experimental task required participants to advise on a job offer for a fictional character. The vignette introduced the gender of the character (Maria or John); previous treatment advisor (s) (parents or online career guide), and the advice content (offer A – with a higher wage or offer B – with a lower wage). The wording of the vignettes was as follows:

Maria/John is looking for a job. She/He is currently considering several job offers and needs some advice. Her/His parents/Online career guide advise her/him to choose offer A/B. Assuming that the offers differ only by the described features, which job offer would you recommend to her/him?

Figure 1. The job offer is more attractive if there is...

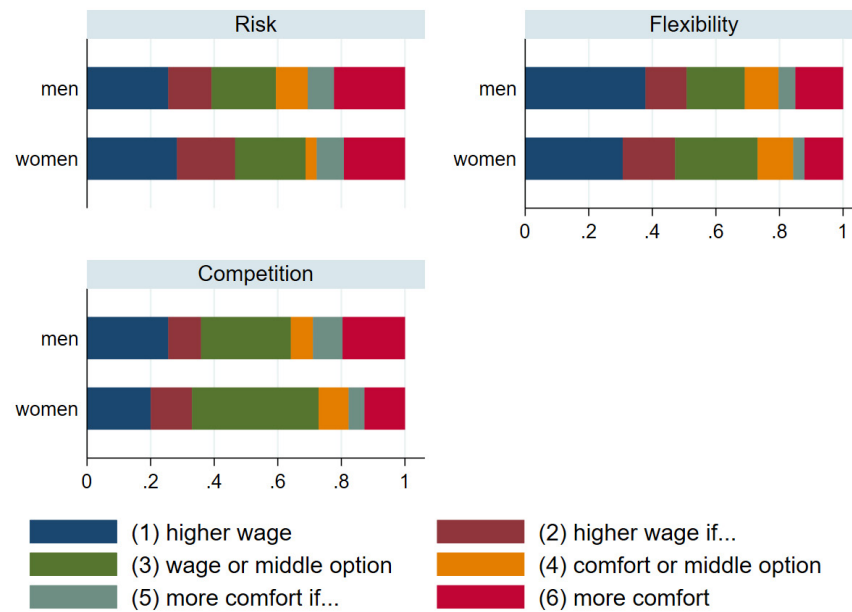
Note: The figure shows the percentage of participants who agree or disagree with statements indicating that a job offer is more attractive if it involves fewer decisions with uncertain outcomes (less risk), offers more flexibility in working arrangements (more flexibility), or places greater emphasis on team results rather than competition within the team (less competition). Responses were provided on a 5-level Likert scale. The total number of participants was 640, and each participant answered three questions.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Examples of the experimental vignettes are presented in Appendix Figure A1. Participants could choose between two job offers, each differing in two features: wage (basic salary plus either a 5% or 30% bonus) and one of the following: (a) risk: "Every 8 out of 10 tasks are risky" vs. "Every 2 out of 10 tasks are risky" (b) competitiveness: "Bonus is paid only to the best worker in a team" vs. "Bonus is equally distributed among team members" (c) flexibility: "inflexible time and place of work, with schedule changes practically impossible" vs. "full flexibility in working arrangements". The job offers differed by around 20% of the total payment (described as a difference in bonus), which corresponds to the average gender wage gap in Poland adjusted for personal worker characteristics [Goraus et al., 2014]. Each participant was asked to give advice three times: in the context of risk, competitiveness, and flexibility. All three experimental treatments (gender of the character, type of advisor, and type of advice) were randomly assigned to participants. Our design aimed to amplify the advisor's influence, as participants had little information about the character but could assume that both formal and informal advisors had more knowledge.

After the experimental part, subjects answered a set of hypothetical choice questions revealing their own preferences towards job attributes. The first question included the same choice set introduced in the vignettes and served as an indicator of the subject's own preferences for job offers. The other two questions further explored attitudes towards risk, competitiveness, and flexibility. Based on three questions, we create six categories for each feature: (1) always higher wage, (2) higher wage, but only when the more uncomfortable feature is additionally compensated (subject selects lower wage if there is only a proportional increase in wage due to the uncomfortable attribute), (3) higher wage only if there is no middle alternative: "4 out of 10 tasks are risky", "premium is partially paid for individual effort and partially for team effort", "some flexibility is available", (4) less risk, competitiveness or inflexibility, only if there is no middle alternative (5) less risk, competitiveness or inflexibility, only if there is a proportional decrease in wage (6) always less risk, competitiveness or inflexibility. The distribution of frequencies for each category is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The choice between higher wages and more risky tasks, less flexibility, or a more competitive bonus scheme



Note: The figure shows the distribution of responses to a set of questions about the choice between job offers that differ in terms of higher wages and lower risk/greater flexibility/less competition. The total sample includes 340 women and 300 men. Each category is based on three questions. The categories are as follows: (1) “higher wage” indicates that the subject consistently chooses the higher wage offer; (2) “higher wage if...” applies when the higher wage offer is chosen only if the bonus for higher risk/lower flexibility/greater competition is disproportionate to the burden of these uncomfortable job features; (3) “higher wage if there is no middle option” applies when a higher wage is chosen only if there isn’t a middle option offering a slightly higher wage and more comfortable job features; (4) “lower wage or middle option” (5) “lower wage if there is only a proportional increase in wage due to additional features” (6) “always lower wage with more comfortable job features”.

Source: Author’s own elaboration.

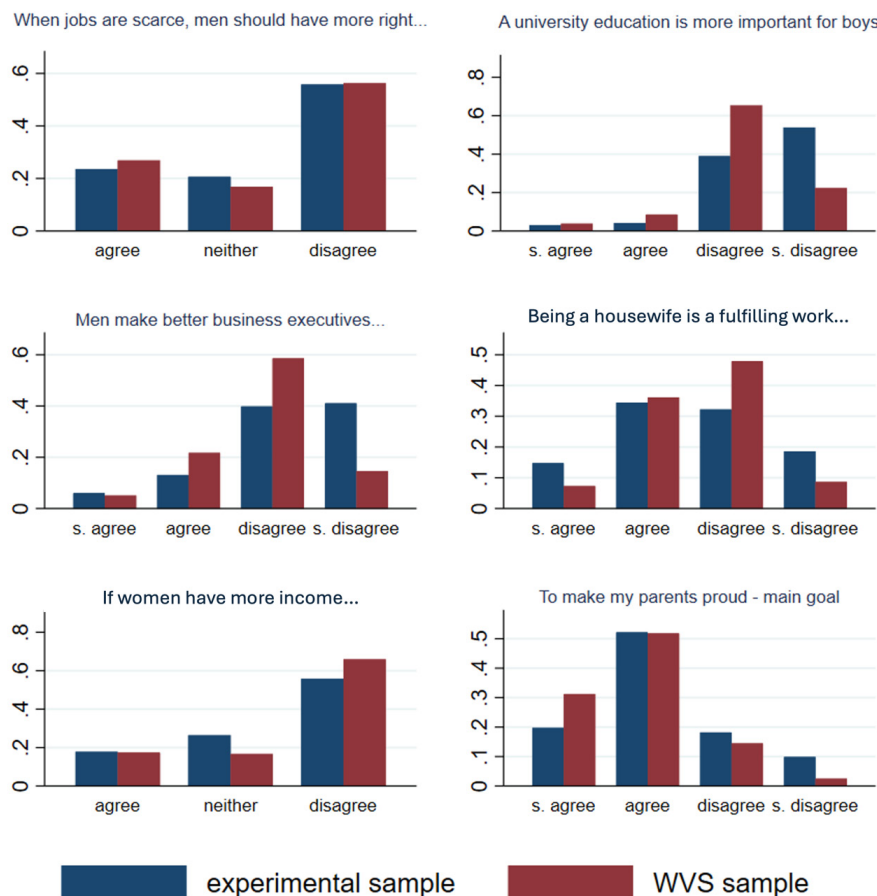
The hypothetical choice experiment is a typical way of testing the importance of job attributes. It allows researchers to quantify the financial value of each job feature for each subject. In our study, such wording of the question provides broader information about the acceptable trade-off between the salary and the job features determining the decision to choose the job. This is especially important from the perspective of gender differences in job choices, as shown in the literature. In our study, we also observe gender differences in such choices. First, it seems that the context of risk differs substantially from the two other features, competitiveness and flexibility. This is consistent with earlier experimental evidence that, although women are more likely to value less competition and more flexibility at work, in the context of risk the relationship may be more complex, and sometimes reversed. In our sample, we observe that women are more likely to choose offers with a higher load of risky tasks and higher wages, while being less likely to select a middle option and similarly prone to choose lower-risk jobs. In the context of flexibility, women are more likely than men to choose the middle option, while men are more likely to choose extreme scenarios. The same pattern is observed for competitiveness. However, participants are more likely to sacrifice flexibility than lack of competition. We benefit from literature using the willingness-to-pay (WTP) approach [Eriksson, Kristensen, 2014; Mas, Pallais, 2017; Datta, 2019; Folke, Rickne, 2020]. Our questions resemble those asked in Wiswall and Zafar [2015] and Gelblum [2020].

The willingness-to-pay approach is a technique used to evaluate the value of goods that do not have a market price. This method measures the value of an item by asking individuals how much they would be willing to pay for access or use of that item. For example, the willingness-to-pay approach can be used to assess the value of green spaces in cities, such as “How much of your monthly income would you be willing to spend to have a new park created and maintained in your locality?”. It can also be used to determine the value of certain workplace characteristics, such as “How much of a salary reduction would you accept in exchange for the ability to choose your own work hours?”. The vignette study technique is common for research questions

exploring choices and attitudes that are more likely to be revealed by subjects in the context of a third person rather than in a direct question. We follow the best practices in the vignette experiment approach provided by [Aguinis and Bradley \[2014\]](#). We decided to use vignettes and a third-person perspective in our study because we could not provide perfectly suited advice for each subject (based on their individual preferences, abilities, and goals) to observe their attitudes towards such advice. The employed methods were designed to reveal the subject's own views in such circumstances. However, in the analysis of the experimental treatment effects, we always control for the subject's own preferences towards job attributes revealed in the direct questions.

In the last part of the survey, we asked respondents about their personal characteristics, including age, place of residence, size of the city where they were raised, their occupation, and their parents' occupations (using the ISCO 4-digit code with descriptions). We also inquired about the closeness of their relationship with their parents, and whether their parents serve as occupational advisors for them. The survey concluded with five standard values survey questions on gender norms and relationships with parents. The norms questions were incorporated to explore gender differences in attitudes towards counselling and labour market choices. The goal was to test whether adherence to traditional gender norms influences the willingness to follow advice, especially advice that deviates from traditional gender expectations.

Figure 3. Gender norms and relationship with parents – our sample and the World Values Survey



Note: The figures compare responses from our experimental sample with those from the 2012 World Values Survey (WVS) for Polish respondents (the most recent wave available). In our sample, respondents answered each question using a 5-level Likert scale, whereas WVS respondents had either three or four options to choose from. To align the data, the experimental sample's response categories were either aggregated (3 levels: "strongly agree" and "agree" combined as "agree", and "strongly disagree" and "disagree" combined as "disagree") or restricted (responses selecting the middle option were excluded). Data sources: World Values Survey 2012 and our experimental data.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

We utilise the following questions from the World Values Survey, asking respondents if they agree with the following statements: "When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women"; "A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl"; "On the whole, men make better business execu-

tives than women do”; “Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay”; “If women have more income than a husband it will most likely cause problems”. Figure 3 compares answers from an experimental sample and a Polish sample from the World Values Survey in 2012. This is the last available wave of the World Values Survey conducted among Polish respondents. In most cases, the difference is either negligible or very small. Significant differences can be attributed to the fact that, in the experimental sample, more respondents chose “strongly disagree” rather than “disagree”, but this should not affect the results regarding gender context. This can also be the effect of gender norms time changes – there is almost a decade difference between the experiment and the World Values Survey study in Poland. We observe that, in our sample, participants less frequently claim that it is their goal to make their parents proud. We sum up these five answers to gender norms questions creating a quasi-continuous measure of how traditional subjects’ gender views are.

In the context of the parent-subject relationship, subjects referred to the sentence that “one of the main goals in life has been to make my parents proud”. Again, a comparison of the response distributions is presented in Figure 3. Additionally, one-third of the subjects agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they received job advice from parents.

Analysis plan

To achieve the main goals of the analysis, we estimate two regression models. First, we analyse whether, and if so, how strongly subjects are willing to follow the advice provided by the previous advisor (provided as an experimental treatment). For this purpose, we estimate the following model of interest (baseline specification):

$$P(adv_{i,t} = treatment\ adv_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 higher\ wage\ treat_i + \beta_2 parents_i + \beta_3 compatible_{i,t} + \epsilon_i, \quad (1)$$

where $adv_{i,t}$ is a job offer (A – with higher wage or B – with lower wage) advised by the participant, and $treatment\ adv_i$ is a job offer advised by the treatment advisor (A or B), $higher\ wage\ treat_i$ is equal to one if the offer advised by the treatment advisor includes a higher bonus (30%), and zero otherwise, $parents_i$ is equal to one if the treatment advisors are parents, and zero if the treatment advisor is a professional, and $compatible_{i,t}$ is assigned a value of one if a participant advised an offer in the experimental question that was in line with their own preferences, and zero otherwise.

In this specification, the outcome variable is equal to 1 if the participant chooses the same job offer as it was advised by the treatment advisor (parents or professional), and 0 otherwise. This specification is suited to test the attitude of the subject towards career guidance provided by a formal or informal advisor (s). The baseline specification is complemented by introducing interactions between the treatment variables, other treatment dimensions (gender of the character), and subjects’ characteristics (gender of the participant, size of the city where the participant was raised, age, education level, and gender norms revealed in the WVS questions).

Although we include the gender dimensions (both as the gender of a vignette character and the gender of the participant) in the model (1) extensions, we also explore the context of job features (risk, flexibility, and competitiveness) as the important dimensions of gender differences in job choices. As suggested in previous research reports on gender differences in job choices and gender norms, job features used in the experiment are significant factors of the gender differences in pay [Cortes and Pan, 2018]. Offers with a higher level of risky tasks, less flexibility and more competition are more likely to be selected by men than women, and, according to traditional gender norms, are considered better suited for male candidates. Taking this into account, we estimate a model to determine the probability of advising an offer with a higher wage, conditional on the experimental treatments:

$$P(higher\ wage_{i,t} = 1) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 parents_i + \beta_2 higher\ wage\ treat_i + \beta_3 pref\ higher\ wage_{i,t} + \epsilon_i, \quad (2)$$

where $higher\ wage_{i,t}$ is equal to one if the participant advises the offer with a higher wage (and a higher load of risky tasks, or less flexibility, or higher competition), and zero otherwise, $parents_i$ is equal to one if the

treatment advisors are parents, and zero if the treatment advisor is a professional career guide, *higher wage treat_i* is equal to one if the offer advised by the treatment advisor includes a higher bonus (30%), and zero otherwise, *pref higher wage_{i,t}* is equal to one if the participant prefers an offer with a higher wage to one with a lower wage in the matching context (risk, flexibility, competitiveness). As with the first model, the baseline specification includes interaction terms, the gender of the character treatment, and participant characteristics. In each estimation using the logit model, marginal effects calculated at means are provided. Additionally, we perform a heterogeneity analysis considering variations in job features and differences in subjects' characteristics.

Results

The result section focuses on analysing the effects of the experimental treatments. First, we aggregate all responses (choices between wage and risk, competitiveness, or flexibility) and provide the estimation results for both models: willingness to follow the advice (1), and probability of advising a higher wage offer (2). Second, we analyse each job offer feature separately for both outcome variables. Third, we explore the heterogeneity of subjects' characteristics to determine if these differences affect their reactions to the treatments.

Table 1. Willingness to follow advice – marginal effects from a logistic regression – model (1)

$P(adv_{i,t} = \text{treatment } adv_i = 1)$	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
VARIABLES	without interactions	with interactions	with interactions and gender	with interactions, gender, and norms
<i>Higher wage treat</i>	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.10*** (0.03)	-0.10*** (0.03)	-0.10*** (0.03)
<i>Parents as advisors</i>	-0.04** (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.06** (0.03)	-0.06** (0.03)
<i>Higher wage treat & parents as advisors</i>		0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.04)
<i>Higher wage treat & female character</i>			-0.00 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)
<i>Parents as advisors & female character</i>			0.04 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)
<i>Female character</i>			-0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)
<i>Parents & higher wage & female character</i>			0.01 (0.06)	0.02 (0.06)
<i>Advice compatible with the subject's preference</i>	0.39*** (0.01)	0.392*** (0.01)	0.39*** (0.01)	0.39*** (0.01)
<i>Female subject</i>				0.01 (0.02)
<i>Personal characteristics</i>	YES	YES	YES	YES
<i>Traditional gender norms (continuous variable)</i>				0.01** (0.00)
Sensitivity	0.8708	0.8708	0.8708	0.8708
Specificity	0.8847	0.8847	0.8847	0.8847
Observations	1,920	1,920	1,920	1,920
Number of participants	640	640	640	640

Note: Marginal effects calculated at means from the logistic regressions on the probability that a subject follows advice provided by another advisor (participant's advice is the same as treatment advice assigned in the experiment). Dataset includes three data points from each participant. Personal characteristics include age, size of the city where the participant was raised, level of education, and voivodship. Standard errors are clustered at the subject level.

Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

We begin by analysing the probability that a subject follows the advice from the treatment advisors, controlling for their own preferences between offers A and B, as revealed in the direct preference questions. Table 1 shows the marginal effects of the logistic regression on the probability that subjects will repeat the same advice given in the treatment.

The probability of a subject following the advice is higher when the treatment advice (provided by parents or an online counsellor) includes lower wages and more comfortable conditions. This translates to an average 10 percentage points higher probability of following the advice for those assigned to the treatment advice with lower wages, compared to those with higher wages. This effect can potentially be driven by two mechanisms: intrinsic attractiveness of comfortable jobs and stronger willingness to follow comfortable advice. First, more comfortable but lower-paid jobs may generally be more attractive to participants, regardless of the treatment advice. Thus, among those assigned to the treatment advice with lower wages, a higher share might decide to advise the same offer (with lower wages) compared to when the treatment advice includes a higher wage. Second, subjects may be more inclined to follow advice when it includes offers with more comfortable conditions. Since all specifications account for the subject's preferences (i.e., the job offer – A or B – selected by the participant in the direct question on which offer they would choose for themselves), we cannot reject this explanation. The positive attitude towards job advice provided by formal or informal advisors is stronger when the advice involves more comfort but lower pay. This could be expected for female characters, according to gender norms, but we observe this effect for all characters, with no statistically significant interactions between gender and higher wage offer advice. This suggests that participants are more likely to trust the advisor who suggests the more comfortable offer, as opposed to those with more risk, competition, or less flexibility. This aligns with psychological research indicating that students are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards counsellors who emphasise self-care and work-life balance [Peluso et al., 2011].

The second significant aspect affecting the probability of following advice is the type of advisor. There is a 4–6 percentage point higher probability of following advice from a formal counsellor compared to advice from parents. This suggests that, although the use of professional career counselling in Poland is rare, advice from a career advisor is more likely to be taken seriously than suggestions from a parent. However, none of the interactions of treatments (such as higher wage offers or the gender of the character) are statistically significant, indicating that the lower trust in parental advice cannot be explained by the role of gender norms. Overall, we find a small effect of the advice itself: only 55% of subjects followed the advice from a professional advisor, compared to 45% who followed parental advice (without correcting for other characteristics).

Nonetheless, there is a high correlation between the probability of following advice and the subject's preferences towards job advice content (based on the direct question). If the treatment advice included a job offer that matched the participants' own choice, the probability of following such advice was around 40 percentage points higher than in the opposite scenario. This result confirms that in most cases, subjects advised the vignette character according to their own preferences and experiences. Including these preferences in the regression specification allows us to control for unobservable individual differences between subjects, which we cannot measure in the experimental data.

Finally, we observe no statistically significant effects based on the gender of the participant or the character. However, the more traditional the gender norms of the participant, the higher the probability that they will follow the advice from the treatment advisor. To summarise the results of model (1), only two experimental dimensions significantly influence the probability of following the advice: the content of the advice and the type of advisor. Among individual characteristics, the attitude towards gender roles correlates with the willingness to follow the advice, but the gender of the character, the gender of the participant, and interactions between gender and other experimental treatments remain statistically insignificant.

In the second step, we estimate model (2) to assess the probability to advising an offer with a higher wage, conditional on the treatments. This aspect of advising is particularly important for understanding gender differences in labour market choices. Previous literature shows that women are less likely to choose jobs that

include risk, competition, and low flexibility, contributing to a significant pay gap between men and women. We test whether career counselling, formal or informal, can mediate this effect. The estimation results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Probability to advise an offer with a higher wage – marginal effects from a logistic regression – model (2)

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	without interactions	with interaction	with interaction and gender	with interactions, gender, and norms
<i>Higher wage treat</i>	0.02 (0.02)	0.06** (0.02)	0.07** (0.03)	0.07** (0.03)
<i>Parents as advisors</i>	0.01 (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)	0.06** (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)
<i>Higher wage treat & parents as advisors</i>		-0.08** (0.03)	-0.12*** (0.04)	-0.12*** (0.04)
<i>Higher wage treat & female character</i>			-0.03 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)
<i>Parents as advisors & female character</i>			-0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)
<i>Female character</i>			0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)
<i>Parents & higher wage & female character</i>			0.08 (0.07)	0.08 (0.06)
<i>The subject's preference – higher wage offer</i>	0.39*** (0.01)	0.39*** (0.01)	0.39*** (0.01)	0.40*** (0.01)
<i>Female subject</i>				-0.00 (0.02)
<i>Personal characteristics</i>	YES	YES	YES	YES
<i>Traditional gender norms (continuous variable)</i>				-0.00 (0.00)
<i>Sensitivity</i>	0.8023	0.8023	0.8023	0.8023
<i>Specificity</i>	0.9101	0.9101	0.9101	0.9101
<i>Observations</i>	1,920	1,920	1,920	1,920
<i>Number of participants</i>	640	640	640	640

Note: Marginal effects calculated at means from the logistic regressions on the probability that a subject is offered a job with higher wage and less comfortable features. Dataset includes three data points from each participant. Personal characteristics include age, size of the city, level of education, and voivodship. Standard errors are clustered at the subject level.

Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The subject is more likely to advise a job with a higher wage if the assigned advice treatment includes a higher wage offer. The magnitude of this effect is around a 7-percentage point difference between treatments with higher wage advice and with lower wage advice. However, the effect of the advice becomes statistically significant when considering the differentiation between advice provided by professional advisors and parents (interactions). Although subjects are generally more likely to advise a higher wage offer when it is initially recommended by the character's parents, the interaction effect between parents as advisors and higher wage offer advice is significant, negative and larger than the effect of parents as advisors. This suggests that subjects are more likely to follow higher wage offer advice only if it is provided by a professional counsellor. Conversely, if parents recommend a higher wage offer, subjects are less likely to follow such advice. Moreover, in the parents' treatment group, subjects are generally more likely to advise a higher wage offer, meaning that if parents recommend a lower wage offer, subjects are more likely to advise the opposite, i.e., a higher wage offer. Summing this up, the mediating effect of guidance can be provided only by professionals, while

the effect of parental higher wage offer advice, after accounting for all statistically significant effects, is close to zero. It is also possible that parental advice triggers a mechanism leading subjects to advise the opposite of the parent's recommendation. This might suggest an internal mechanism of disagreeing with parental job advice, though exploring this effect is beyond the scope of this study. We find a high correlation between the probability of advising a higher wage offer and the subject's own preference for a higher wage offer. Similar to the effect in model (1), subjects who would choose a higher-paid offer for themselves are about 40 percentage points more likely to advise a higher-wage offer.

Surprisingly, in model (2), none of the gender variables are statistically significant. Contrary to expectations from previous literature, women are equally likely to advise a higher wage offer. This offer is also advised equally often to male and female characters. Interactions of treatments with gender variables are also insignificant. Finally, having a more traditional view on gender roles does not change the probability of advising a higher-wage offer. Table 3 shows the estimation results separately for each job feature. This analysis allows us to verify whether the observed effects are driven by a particular factor or are universal across the dimensions of the job offer.

Table 3. Willingness to follow advice, and probability to advise a higher wage offer – risk, flexibility, and competitiveness separately

VARIABLES	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	RISK		FLEXIBILITY		COMPETITIVENESS	
	Follow advice (1)	Advise higher wage (2)	Follow advice (1)	Advise higher wage (2)	Follow advice (1)	Advise higher wage (2)
<i>Higher wage treat</i>	-0.09* (0.05)	0.05 (0.05)	-0.09* (0.05)	0.09* (0.05)	-0.12** (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)
<i>Parents as advisors</i>	-0.08 (0.05)	0.08 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)
<i>Higher wage treat & parents as advisors</i>	0.04 (0.07)	-0.13* (0.07)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.17** (0.08)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.07)
<i>Higher wage treat & female character</i>	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.07)	0.00 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.07)	0.00 (0.07)	0.03 (0.07)
<i>Parents as advisors & female character</i>	0.08 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.07)	0.08 (0.08)	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.04 (0.07)	0.04 (0.07)
<i>Female character</i>	-0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)
<i>Parents & higher wage & female character</i>	0.03 (0.10)	0.18* (0.11)	0.03 (0.11)	0.19 (0.11)	-0.03 (0.10)	-0.12 (0.10)
<i>Advice compatible with the subject's preference</i>	0.41*** (0.01)		0.40*** (0.01)		0.36*** (0.01)	
<i>The subject's preference – higher wage offer</i>		0.41*** (0.01)		0.40*** (0.01)		0.36*** (0.01)
Sensitivity	0.8750	0.8246	0.8650	0.7871	0.8723	0.8192
Specificity	0.8750	0.9029	0.8726	0.9064	0.9060	0.9158
Number of participants)	640	640	640	640	640	640

Note: Marginal effects calculated at means from the logistic regressions on the probability that the subject follows advice from a treatment advisor (1), and on the probability that the subject advises the offer with a higher wage and less comfortable features (2). Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

First, we observe that the negative correlation between the probability of following the advice and the treatment advice with a higher wage is universal across experimental contexts (risk, competitiveness, and job flexibility). The size of the effect is similar across these contexts, with a slightly larger effect for competitiveness. This highlights the general finding that subjects are more likely to follow the suggestion of an advisor who prioritises comfortable work arrangements over financial benefits. Surprisingly, the effect of parental

advice becomes statistically insignificant when regressions are across job features. The negative signs of the estimates in all three regressions suggests that the effects are economically small, becoming significant only in the pooled sample. The effect of the treatment advice being the same as the offer selected by the subject for themselves remains the strongest and universal across job features.

The results for the probability of advising a higher wage offer are more diverse. In the context of risk, the recommendation by the treatment advisor of an offer with a higher load of risky tasks only matters if such advice is given by parents. However, when parents provide such advice, it decreases the probability that the subject advises an offer with a higher wage and a higher load of risky tasks. Additionally, the interaction between higher wage treatment advice, parents as advisors, and a female vignette character is associated with a positive change in probability. This indicates that participants are more likely to advise a higher wage offer to Maria when her parents had previously suggested it, compared to John. This result contradicts traditional gender norms but aligns with the general trend of providing contradictory advice to that of parents. This contradiction might be related to traditional gender role views, though we lack the instruments to test this interpretation. In the context of flexibility, apart from the universal pattern in the estimation of the probability of following the advice, two significant effects emerge for the probability of advising a higher wage offer. First, flexibility is the only feature for which there is a positive correlation between treatment offers with higher wages and the subject's advice with the same content. Second, the negative effect of parental advice is significant and large. In the context of competitiveness, none of the treatment effects remain significant, except for the negative effect of the higher wage treatment advice.

Aware of the general trends from the whole sample, we further explore whether the effects are driven by subjects with certain characteristics.

Table 4. Advising offers with higher wages by age group

VARIABLES	Follow the advice – model (1)				Advise higher wage offer – model (2)			
	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59
<i>Higher wage treat</i>	–0.08 (0.08)	–0.16*** (0.05)	–0.07 (0.06)	–0.07 (0.10)	0.12 (0.08)	0.04 (0.05)	0.09 (0.06)	–0.05 (0.11)
<i>Parents as advisors</i>	–0.13** (0.06)	–0.04 (0.04)	–0.06 (0.05)	0.03 (0.09)	0.12* (0.06)	0.04 (0.04)	0.06 (0.05)	–0.02 (0.10)
<i>Higher wage treat & parents as advisors</i>	–0.07 (0.10)	0.04 (0.06)	0.01 (0.08)	0.04 (0.13)	–0.31*** (0.10)	–0.04 (0.06)	–0.09 (0.08)	0.08 (0.14)
<i>Higher wage treat & female character</i>	0.06 (0.10)	0.02 (0.07)	–0.09 (0.09)	–0.07 (0.17)	0.03 (0.11)	–0.06 (0.07)	–0.03 (0.09)	0.09 (0.17)
<i>Parents as advisors & female character</i>	0.08 (0.10)	–0.01 (0.07)	0.01 (0.09)	–0.01 (0.19)	–0.10 (0.09)	0.01 (0.08)	–0.03 (0.09)	–0.01 (0.20)
<i>Female character</i>	–0.02 (0.08)	–0.04 (0.05)	0.03 (0.07)	0.08 (0.13)	0.03 (0.08)	0.04 (0.05)	–0.02 (0.07)	–0.08 (0.14)
<i>Parents & higher wage & female character</i>	0.06 (0.13)	0.02 (0.11)	0.06 (0.12)	–0.14 (0.23)	0.23* (0.14)	–0.02 (0.11)	0.08 (0.12)	–0.10 (0.25)
<i>Advice compatible with the subject's preference</i>	0.39*** (0.02)	0.39*** (0.01)	0.39*** (0.01)	0.37*** (0.02)				
<i>The subject's preference – higher wage offer</i>					0.39***	0.39*** (0.01)	0.39*** (0.01)	0.38*** (0.02)
<i>Traditional gender norms</i>	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.02* (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	–0.00 (0.00)	–0.01* (0.00)	–0.01 (0.01)
<i>Sensitivity</i>	0.8750	0.8813	0.8746	0.8036	0.8272	0.8177	0.8232	0.7222
<i>Specificity</i>	0.9127	0.8632	0.9004	0.8594	0.9270	0.8966	0.9165	0.8869
<i>Observations</i>	477	627	576	240	477	627	576	240

Note: Marginal effects calculated at means from the logistic regressions on the probability that the subject follows advice from a treatment advisor (1), and on the probability that the subject advises the offer with a higher wage and less comfortable features (2). Dataset includes three data points from each participant. Standard errors are clustered at the subject level. Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Source: Author's own elaboration.

Table 4 shows the estimation results separately for four age groups. For the probability of following the advice, the content of the advice (higher wage versus more comfortable conditions) is important for subjects in their thirties. The negative effect of parents as advisors is significant only among the youngest participants. Among the oldest participants, traditional gender norms correlate with a higher likelihood of following the advice. For the probability of advising a higher wage offer, the significance of treatment effects appears only in the youngest group, those below 30 years old. This suggests that the role of the advisor is most significant for those who are about to decide on their first job or for whom such memories are still fresh.

Another important aspect of successful advice is related to the overall relationship with the advisor. While we cannot measure this for professional advisors, we did ask about the closeness of the relationship with parents. Most subjects described their relationship with their parents as close or very close. We separated these categories and compared them with a subsample that reported a lack of close relationships with their parents. Table 5 shows the regression results for each group. The experimental effects are driven by the subgroup of subjects who reported close, but not very close, relationships with their parents. For those who do not describe the relationship as close, the experimental treatments do not matter. The only aspect affecting the probability of following the treatment advice or advising a higher wage offer is their own preferences. Among those who report very close relationships with their parents, the probability of following the advice correlates only with the content of the advice (*higher wage treat*). For the probability of advising a higher wage offer, statistical significance appears for the interaction of the content of the offer and the gender of the vignette character. This means that for those reporting the closest relationships with their parents, we do not observe any differences in attitudes towards professional advisors and parents as advisors. In particular, there is no sign of a willingness to provide advice contrary to that provided by parents. However, parental advice is not treated as more credible than advice from an online career counsellor. In this group, a positive correlation between the probability of following the advice and traditional gender norms remains significant.

The experimental treatment effects are significant in the group that reported close (but not very close) relationships with their parents. Within this group, subjects are more likely to advise a higher-wage/low-comfort offer, but not when advised by parents. Also, the gender of the character plays a role – subjects are less likely to follow the advice of a higher-wage offer for female characters, especially if the initial advice was provided by parents.

Table 5. Advising offers with higher wages by relationship with parents

VARIABLES	Follow the advice – model (1)			Advise higher wage offer – model (2)		
	not close with parents	close with parents	very close with parents	not close with parents	close with parents	very close with parents
<i>Higher wage treat</i>	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.15** (0.06)	-0.13** (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	0.23*** (0.06)	0.02 (0.06)
<i>Parents as advisors</i>	0.03 (0.05)	-0.17*** (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)	0.17*** (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)
<i>Higher wage treat & parents as advisors</i> -0.09	0.00 (0.08)	0.04 (0.07)	0.01 (0.07)	0.05 (0.08)	-0.30*** (0.08)	-0.11 (0.07)
<i>Higher wage treat & female character</i>	-0.00 (0.08)	0.07 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.09 (0.08)	-0.23*** (0.09)	0.14* (0.08)
<i>Parents as advisors & female character</i>	-0.01 (0.08)	0.20*** (0.07)	-0.01 (0.08)	0.02 (0.08)	-0.20*** (0.07)	0.01 (0.08)
<i>Female character</i>	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.15*** (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)	0.05 (0.05)	0.15*** (0.06)	-0.09 (0.06)
<i>Parents & higher wage & female character</i>	0.05 (0.11)	-0.10 (0.10)	0.04 (0.11)	0.01 (0.11)	0.27** (0.11)	0.01 (0.11)
<i>Advice compatible with the subject's preference</i>	0.42*** (0.02)	0.39*** (0.01)	0.39*** (0.01)			
<i>The subject's preference – higher wage</i>				0.42*** (0.02)	0.38*** (0.01)	0.40*** (0.01)

VARIABLES	Follow the advice – model (1)			Advise higher wage offer – model (2)		
	not close with parents	close with parents	very close with parents	not close with parents	close with parents	very close with parents
Traditional gender norms	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)
Sensitivity	0.8750	0.8977	0.8462	0.7849	0.8238	0.8202
Specificity	0.8836	0.8659	0.8959	0.9304	0.9129	0.8932
Observations	531	618	771	531	618	771

Notes: Marginal effects calculated at means from the logistic regressions on the probability that the subject follows advice from a treatment advisor (1), and on the probability that the subject advises the offer with a higher wage and less comfortable features (2). Dataset includes three data points from each participant. Standard errors are clustered at the subject level. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Summing up, advice from a professional advisor is more likely to be followed than advice from the parents of the vignette character. However, it is important to note that the overall effect of advice is generally very small. Advice that includes less comfortable job features and higher pay may be more successful if provided by a professional advisor. Conversely, parental advice increases the probability that the advice provided by a subject will have the opposite content when controlling for the subject's own preferences. The heterogeneity of the subjects, including age and the closeness of the relationship with parents, plays a role. Finally, the gender context is mostly insignificant for attitudes towards job advice and the probability of advising a higher-wage offer. The only context that remains significant is a positive correlation between traditional gender norms and the probability of following the advice.

Conclusions

Although the job counselling system is broad, the knowledge of Poles' attitudes towards job advice is rather limited. Several studies assessing job counselling conclude that there is a demand for such services, but there is no universal habit or broad positive experience of using such guidance. In this study, we indirectly test the attitude towards job advice provided by formal (professional) or informal (parents) advisors and the gender context of such guidance. We conducted a vignette experiment in which subjects advised a fictional character in choosing between job offers that differ in levels of wage and job features such as the load of risky tasks, work inflexibility, and competitiveness at work. These aspects are important from the perspective of gender differences in choices and outcomes in the labour market.

We find that, in general, young Poles only to a very small extent follow other advisors' views on which job offer should be desirable for the fictional character. If they do, they are more likely to follow the advice from a professional advisor. Parental advice decreases the probability that the subject would advise a higher-wage offer with less comfortable conditions. This result suggests that parents are not considered reliable job advisors, especially among the youngest Poles and in the context of the first job choice. We do not find any gender biases regarding the gender of the subject or the vignette character in advising, even though we report some gender differences in preferences.

This study can be treated as an introduction to a more in-depth analysis of the role of advisors – formal and informal – in the Polish labour market. Such analysis would be valuable from the perspective of all market players: workers, employers, and employment offices. The insights from this study are limited; we do not include other parties (friends, teachers, other types of formal advisors, etc.), or other aspects of job offers. Also, the experimental task is only indirectly associated with an actual labour market choice, and the description of job offers and characters is rather simplified. However, we do find the effect of advice significant. We also confirm that the role of parents is either negligible or negative. Based on these results, some policy recommendations can be provided. First, there seems to be a demand and space for valuable career guidance, but the habit

of using it has to be developed. In the context of the tendency to provide advice opposite to that provided by parents (corrected by preferences and other characteristics), a possible way to overcome such a reaction could be to increase the role of parents by investing in their competencies as career guides.

In the context of support for young people entering the labour market, our study shows rather pessimistic trends. There is a clear need to explore the topic further and provide instruments to build more trust in the professional advising system.

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Appendix

Table A1. Representativeness – comparison between shares in experimental sample and population

Voivodship	Age	Share in the PL population aged 20–54, in % (p_1)	Share in the sample, in % (p_2)	Difference, in percentage points ($p_1 - p_2$)	Equality of proportions test p-value H1: ($p_1 - p_2 \neq 0$)
DOLNOŚLĄSKIE	20–29	1.70%	1.72%	-0.02%	0.97
	30–39	2.59%	2.66%	-0.07%	0.91
	40–49	2.37%	2.34%	0.03%	0.96
	50–54	0.87%	1.09%	-0.22%	0.55
KUJAWSKO-POM.	20–29	1.35%	1.41%	-0.06%	0.89
	30–39	1.74%	1.72%	0.03%	0.96
	40–49	1.65%	1.88%	-0.23%	0.65
	50–54	0.67%	0.63%	0.05%	0.89
LUBELSKIE	20–29	1.41%	0.63%	0.79%	0.09
	30–39	1.74%	1.41%	0.34%	0.51
	40–49	1.63%	0.78%	0.85%	0.09
	50–54	0.69%	0.31%	0.38%	0.25
LUBUSKIE	20–29	0.63%	0.78%	-0.15%	0.64
	30–39	0.87%	0.78%	0.09%	0.81
	40–49	0.82%	0.94%	-0.11%	0.75
	50–54	0.31%	0.63%	-0.31%	0.15
ŁÓDZKIE	20–29	1.49%	1.72%	-0.23%	0.63
	30–39	1.98%	2.03%	-0.06%	0.92
	40–49	1.96%	2.03%	-0.07%	0.89
	50–54	0.79%	0.78%	0.01%	0.97
MAŁOPOLSKIE	20–29	2.25%	2.03%	0.22%	0.71
	30–39	3.01%	3.28%	-0.27%	0.69
	40–49	2.70%	2.66%	0.04%	0.95
	50–54	1.11%	0.94%	0.17%	0.68
MAZOWIECKIE	20–29	3.19%	3.44%	-0.24%	0.73
	30–39	4.75%	4.84%	-0.10%	0.91
	40–49	4.52%	4.69%	-0.17%	0.84
	50–54	1.65%	2.19%	-0.53%	0.29
OPOLSKIE	20–29	0.60%	0.63%	-0.02%	0.94
	30–39	0.83%	0.78%	0.05%	0.89
	40–49	0.78%	0.78%	0.00%	0.99
	50–54	0.35%	0.31%	0.04%	0.86

Voivodship	Age	Share in the PL population aged 20–54, in % (p_1)	Share in the sample, in % (p_2)	Difference, in percentage points ($p_1 - p_2$)	Equality of proportions test p-value H1: ($p_1 - p_2 \neq 0$)
PODKARPACKIE	20–29	1.49%	1.88%	-0.39%	0.42
	30–39	1.83%	1.88%	-0.05%	0.93
	40–49	1.67%	1.72%	-0.05%	0.93
	50–54	0.70%	0.78%	-0.08%	0.82
PODLASKIE	20–29	0.79%	0.78%	0.01%	0.97
	30–39	0.99%	0.94%	0.06%	0.89
	40–49	0.90%	0.94%	-0.04%	0.92
	50–54	0.40%	0.31%	0.09%	0.72
POMORSKIE	20–29	1.49%	1.56%	-0.07%	0.88
	30–39	2.06%	1.88%	0.18%	0.74
	40–49	1.87%	1.41%	0.46%	0.39
	50–54	0.72%	0.47%	0.25%	0.45
ŚLĄSKIE	20–29	2.63%	2.66%	-0.03%	0.96
	30–39	3.80%	3.75%	0.05%	0.94
	40–49	3.61%	3.59%	0.02%	0.98
	50–54	1.51%	1.88%	-0.37%	0.45
ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKIE	20–29	0.80%	0.94%	-0.14%	0.70
	30–39	1.00%	0.94%	0.06%	0.88
	40–49	0.96%	0.94%	0.03%	0.95
	50–54	0.40%	0.16%	0.24%	0.33
WARMIŃSKO-MAZ.	20–29	0.95%	0.94%	0.01%	0.97
	30–39	1.21%	1.25%	-0.04%	0.92
	40–49	1.12%	1.09%	0.02%	0.96
	50–54	0.46%	0.47%	-0.01%	0.98
WIELKOPOLSKIE	20–29	2.23%	2.50%	-0.27%	0.65
	30–39	3.07%	3.28%	-0.21%	0.75
	40–49	2.83%	3.13%	-0.29%	0.66
	50–54	1.09%	0.94%	0.15%	0.71
ZACHODNIOPOM.	20–29	1.05%	1.25%	-0.20%	0.63
	30–39	1.43%	1.25%	0.18%	0.70
	40–49	1.38%	1.09%	0.28%	0.54
	50–54	0.53%	0.63%	-0.10%	0.74

Note: The table presents a comparison between the share of respondents in a voivodship and age group for each cell in the experimental sample and the Polish Labour Force Survey 2021 weighted sample. The alternative hypothesis in the test of equality of proportions was that the difference is different than zero. We could not reject the null hypothesis at the 5% significance level in any cell, and reject the null hypothesis at the 10% significance level only in two cells.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Figure A1. Examples of a vignette question from a survey

Online career guide advise **John** to choose offer **B**.
Which job offer would you advise John?

Offer A:
 * **every 8 out of 10** tasks involve making **risky decisions**
 * **wage**: basic salary + **30%** bonus

Offer B:
 * **every 2 out of 10** tasks involve making **risky decisions**
 * **wage**: basic salary + **5%** bonus

Online career guide advise **John** to choose offer **B**.
Which job offer would you advise John?

Offer A:
 * **every 8 out of 10** tasks involve making **risky decisions**
 * **wage**: basic salary + **30%** bonus

Offer B:
 * **every 2 na każde 10 out of 10** tasks involve making **risky decisions**
 * **wage**: basic salary + **5%** bonus

Maria's parents advise her to choose offer **A**.
Which job offer would you advise Maria?

Offer A:
 * **totally inflexible time and workplace**, schedule changes are practically impossible
 * **wage**: basic salary + **30%** bonus

Offer B:
 * **flexible time and workplace**, worker decides when and where to work
 * **wage**: basic salary + **5%** bonus

Online career guide advise **Maria** to choose offer **B**.
Which job offer would you advise John?

Offer A:
 * bonus is paid **to the best worker** in the team
 * **wage**: basic salary + **30%** bonus

Offer B:
 * bonus is shared **between all workers** in the team
 * **wage**: basic salary + **5%** bonus

Notes: Figure shows three examples of experimental vignette questions translated into English. First vignette presents question regarding choice between wage and frequency of risky tasks from treatments: male character, professional advisor, lower wage advice. Second vignette presents question regarding choice between wage and flexibility from treatments: female character, parents as advisors, higher wage advice. Third vignette presents question regarding choice between wage and competitiveness from treatments: female character, professional advisor, lower wage advice. The remaining experimental questions were presented analogously.

Source: Author's own elaboration.