

EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES AND OTHER SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NEET ALBANIAN YOUNG PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

As the most energetic and creative part of the Albanian population young people are still lacking employment, educational and carrier development opportunities. Although policy makers have recognized the importance of adequate employment and educational strategies, understanding the situation of NEET young people still remains a challenge at both policy and practice aspects. The standard methodologies applied to identify unemployment rate among young people are not sufficient to fully understand the complexity of NEET young people in Albania. Inability of national institution to provide comprehensive information in relation to this category is considered as one of the present challenges. The purpose of this paper is to examine the gender differences among NEET young people. The demographic aspect include information about age, gender, marital status, educational level, educational and employment level of the parents, period of unemployment status, monthly income, accommodation. The snowball sampling strategy was used in the period January-March 2021 with the intention to provide a better insight on NEET youth situation in Albania from a gender perspective.

Keywords: NEET youth, NEET policies, gender.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of NEET was mentioned in the late 1980s in UK as an indicator to capture young people who were not in employment, education or training (NEET), (Furlong, 2007). Since then it has become widely used globally. Referring to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 193 member states pledged to ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection, fostering peaceful, just, and inclusive societies through a new global partnership. In particular its goal 8.6 has exclusively addressed NEET youth: “By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training” (United Nations, 2015). In the Europe Union level, six risk factors that increase the probability of young people becoming NEETs have been highlighted such as: low education, living in remote areas, disability, immigration background, difficult family environment, and low household income (Eurofound, 2012). Internationally risk factors associated with NEET status include low academic achievement, parental unemployment, lower socioeconomic status, low self-confidence, mental health problems, and young parenthood (Dorsett & Lucchino, 2014; Public Health England, 2014).

In Albanian Employment Strategy NEET concept was initially used as a statistical reference. Only in the National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2019- 2022 are mentioned real steps to improve the quality of life for this category as follows:

- a) Conduct a feasibility study to design, implement and analyze the cost-use of an active labor market program targeting young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET);
- b) The National Action Plan for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee will be drafted and the Youth Guarantee scheme for NEET category beneficiaries will be implemented.

Yet again, NEET young people are not included as one of ‘at risk’ category in the social security rights where various categories are mentioned. At the national level NEET indicators have been included for the first time by the Albanian National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) only in 2018. Earlier INSTAT data are referring only to employment rate. This indicator is very important however not sufficient to cover all the socio-economic deprivation that youth NEET is encountering. Meanwhile, since 2007 the International Labour Organization (ILO) has elaborated INSTAT on a yearly basis. Graphic 1 depicts changes in overall NEET youth status and by gender: male and female. As showed below the highest level of the Albanian youth NEET is 33.77% (2007) and the lowest one is 25.82% (2019) which compared with other development countries in the European Union is still high.

Graphic1. Share of youth not in education, employment, or training in Albania



Source: EUROSTAT

Furthermore, it is obvious that throughout a period longer than a decade the % of female NEET has been always higher than the one of male. The only exception stands for 2019 year where the male NEET is higher with 0.75% (26.2%) and the one of female is 25.45%. Theoretically it is not clear why this change occurred. The greater difference between both gender is noticed in 2009 whereas the female NEET level was 10.63% higher. To conclude this overview, the data gathered for 2016 shows the lowest difference between male and female NEET only with 0.43%.

To conclude, compared to other European countries, Albania still remains a relatively young aged country. Furthermore, young people between 15-29 years old are leading the largest group of active labour force with 23.3% (INSTAT, 2020). 28.6 % of all youth population (15-29 years old) represent youth people that are not in employment nor in education or training (INSTAT, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Different societies have conceptualized youth in different ways. Therefore, there is no universal definition of ‘youth’. It is a socially constructed concept: this means that it is not

something fixed and definite, but instead it is created and understood each time that it is used (Council of Europe and European Commission, 2019). Despite, in international policies this term involves various age groups. The United Nations are referred to youth as the 15-24 year age group. In respect to NEET youth, the Albanian National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) generate NEET youth data for the category between 15-29 years.

NEET status is associated with numerous negative economic, psychosocial and health impacts (Henderson et al, 2017). According to Bynner and Parsons (2002) the later-life consequences of NEET differ by gender. Boys have poor labour market experiences, whereas girls, most of them teenage mothers, additionally suffer from depression and low self-esteem. NEET rates for women are particularly high (Quintini et al. 2007). Also, gender affects NEET status more in the older age group than the younger one. The study from Schoon (2014) have indicated that boys growing up with a single parent are slightly more likely to be NEET than young women growing up in similar circumstances.

Belonging to one of the minorities in Albania is a clear risk factor for being a NEET (European Training Foundation, 2015). Thus, the NEET rate among minorities was almost double (58%) of the rate for non-minorities (29%). Gender-based evidences of this study showed no significant differences between man and women. The likelihood of becoming a NEET in Albania is higher for young people with low levels of education (primary education or less), those from a minority group, and, very slightly, for women. Among youth who are neither in employment nor in education or training by sex and their status in the labour market, men are more active than women (50.4 % of men are seeking for a job and are available to work, while for women this percentage is 25.7 %), (INSTAT, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

For this study a snowball sampling strategy was used in the period January-March 2021. For its purpose and due to Albanian data limitations youth will encompass the ages of 15-29 years. The questionnaire took place in Tirana which is the capital city of Albania. It was disseminated to young people that were living in different areas of the city. The total desired sample size was 500. It reached out to a total of 639 young people anonymously participated in the questionnaire survey. Out of them 534 fully completed the questionnaire. The data was analyzed through SPSS software and took in consideration only the 534 questionnaire that were fully completed. In this population a category of NEET young people was identified. In combination with literature review method the intention of this study is to provide a better insight on NEET youth situation in Albania from a gender perspective. Furthermore, the demographic aspect include information about age, gender, marital status, educational level, educational and employment level of the parents, period of unemployment status, monthly income, accommodation.

RESULTS

The specific objective of the study was to identify how gender and other socio-demographic characteristics differ between males and females for the identified group of NEET young people. The data indicated that 70% of the total Albanian young people participated in the study were women. They have really a slightly difference of distribution between the main three categories of age (15-19 years old; 19-24 years old and 25-29 years old), whereas the males are not present at all in the first category; around 66% at the second one and the rest is part of the third category.

Furthermore the study demonstrates that the share of NEET women with a university diploma (64%) is higher than those with high school (36%), whereas for males the situation is completely the opposite. 82.11% of male NEET youth are with high school and only 17.89% have a university diploma. Supporting this existence of gender difference in education, it relates also to the parents educational level. The highest percentages are achieved to the group of mother with university diploma (57.66%) and father at high school level (64.53%). The female NEET youth seems to have a slightly difference of having their mother employed whereas the male NEET youth more often their mother is unemployed. In regards to family unit income female NEET youth have been shared also at the category with the highest level of income. The family unit income for NEET males is distributed only in the three first category and the highest percentages is captured for the middle level of income. On the other hand, the period of being unemployed has almost the same distribution for males but not for females. 70.25% of females NEET young people are unemployed for more than a year.

Table 1. Frequency of NEET young people based on demographic variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>
Age			
15-19	33.78%	-	23.52%
20-24	39.68%	65.96%	47.66%
25-29	26.54%	34.04%	28.82%
Status			
Single	72.76%	83.84%	76.12%
Married	27.24%	16.16%	23.88%
Education			
Bachelor/Master	64.00%	17.89%	47.63%
High School	36.00%	82.11%	50.01%
Finalization of studies			
Between 2010 – 2015	38.22%	34.04%	36.95%
Between 2016 – 2020	61.78%	65.96%	63.05%
Father education level			
Compulsory education	22.10%	42.12%	28.18%
High School	67.44%	57.88%	64.53%
Bachelor/Master	10.46%	-	7.29%
Mother education level			
Compulsory education	24.47%	32.22%	26.83%
High School	22.28%	-	15.51%
Bachelor/Master	53.25%	67.78%	57.66%
Father employment status			
Unemployed	36.31%	34.04%	35.62%
Employed	63.69%	65.96%	64.38%
Mother employment status			
Unemployed	48.95%	50.10%	49.30%
Employed	51.05%	49.90%	50.70%
Monthly income of family unit			
Less than 30.000 lek	17.98%	8.08%	14.97%
30-60.000 lek	25.09%	65.45%	37.35%
60-90.000 lek	27.51%	26.47%	27.20%
90-120.000 lek	25.78%	-	17.95%
120-150.000 lek	3.64%	-	2.53%

Period of being unemployed

1-3 months	12.97%	34.45%	19.49%
3-6 months	16.78%	24.24%	19.05%
9-12 months	-	17.89%	5.43%
More than a year	70.25%	23.42%	56.03%

Accommodation

Renting apartment	28.40%	16.06%	24.65%
Owning their apartment	71.60%	83.94%	75.35%

DISCUSSION

The strength and the added value of the research consist on a systematic national and international literature review. The most important and related strategies have been approached. The data of youth NEET involve a large scale at national representative. However, there are important data still missing. The studies reviewed didn't provide further information with regards to the Albanian youth NEET and their families' experiences. The association with demographic dataset or socio-economic risk factors is restricted to few categories as gender, employment or education.

As indicated in the table above personal characteristics such as marriage status, period of finalizing the education, parents employment status and accommodation statistically have not significant difference between male and female NEET young people. The gender difference of educational level of NEET young people display a compliance with the general educational level of Albanian citizens. Participation of females in university is higher than males. As a consequence, this gender difference relates also to the parents educational level. This finding potentially points out the lack of adequate and inclusive policies that oversee education system and a smooth transition from school to labour market.

CONCLUSIONS

Youth is the most valued human capital in a country. As the most energetic and creative part of a population they are still lacking employment, educational and carrier development opportunities. In order to develop and build a more resilient society, the Albanian government should address explicitly policies and strategy for youth NEET.

In addition, measures in Albania are not designed with a special focus on the NEETs (European Training Foundation, 2015). Indeed, only in 2014 was decided to prepare a National Action Plan dedicated to youth. The National Youth Action Plan covered the period from 2015-2020 and was one of the most important legislative document prepared for youth. It includes six strategic objectives: youth promotion and participation in democratic decision-making processes; fostering youth employment through effective labour market policies; health, sport and environment; youth education; social protection; culture and volunteerism. Therefore, it is necessary and crucial to have political commitment and local engagement for this target group. Targeted action plan should be tailored particularly for the most in risk category and in the same time be financially supported.

Moreover, to keep a long-term growth perspective one of the most important requisition is to set up appropriate structures that will help in raising awareness among all interested parties. Engaging with other stakeholders will link gaps especially for youth that are transitioning from education system to employment. In the context of sustainable development,

intervening in the early stage by preventing will maximize the effectiveness of related policies.

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