
***FIRST EXPERIENCE IN WORK OF ROMANIAN YOUTH – A SOCIOLOGICAL
EXPLANATION***

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Abstract: In this paper we try to start the first work experience. In our explanation we will use the careership theory (Hodkinson P., and Sparkes A., 1997) a sociological theory of career decision making. The purpose of this article is to test on the basis of two logistic regression models which are those factors (demographic and psychological) that predict the relative chance of successful employment among young people in Romania. Our data come from a longitudinal study on a sample of 1509 young people who were interviewed at an interval of two years. If the first wave of the survey, in 2012 when our sample were young students in twelfth grade high school, 76.6% stated that they will work in the next 2-3 years, in 2015 50.4% of the same young people say they have a work experience. What are the factors that influence the decision to start the work of this young people?

Keywords: *careership theory, Romanian young people, first experience of work*

Introduction

Although the majority of today's young Europeans enjoy good living conditions, they are experiencing difficulties in education, employment, inclusion and health, which combined with financial problems, in terms of housing or transport, prevents them from becoming independent, to benefit resources and opportunities to manage their own lives, to participate fully in society and to make decisions in an independent manner (EC, 2009). Transitional period is often described as characterized limited employment opportunities, lack of skills and work experience are a substantial obstacle to entering the labour market. The low level of education or training often prevents young people from finding a suitable employment and increase the risk of their exclusion from the labour market (MMFPSPV, 2013). In the EU, about 5,5 million young people are unemployed, which means that 1 in 5 European citizens under the age of 25 years, is unable to find a job, although they would like to. The unemployment rate among young people is more than double compared to the other age groups and almost three times higher than in the case of those over 25 years old. Young people in this age group (15-24 years) are in education, but may be hired or not, there is an overlap between the labour market and education. In 2010, 7,5 million EU citizens between the ages of 15-24 years did not have a job and would not study or participate in training courses (ECa, 2015). In 2011, 12,9% of young people in the EU-27 were classified as NEETs (young people in the age group 15-24 years who are neither employed nor in any form of

education or training), with the most severe cases recorded in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Ireland and Italy, according to the EU Youth Report (EC, 2012). In Romania there has been an increase in the proportion of young people who are not employed and do not follow a program of education and training, from 13,3% in 2007 to 17,4% in 2011 (MTS, 2013). In 2012 it fell to 16,8% (EC, 2014a) as in 2013 it grew to 17,3% (EU Council, 2014). In 2014 the unemployment rate among young people (15-24 years) at EU level-28 was 21,9%, with 1,6 percentage points lower than that in 2013 and declining for the first time in six years after the start of the financial crisis in 2008. At the level of the EU-15 countries are faced with unemployment rates which exceeds the EU average including Romania (24%). The situation is worrisome in countries like Spain and Greece, where more than 50% of young people aged 15-24 years are without a job (52,4%) 53,2% respectively (Montaigne F., Strandell H., 2014). In Romania the number of young unemployed people was 72.300 in February 2014 (SPO), and the young NEET registered was estimated at 450.000 in the last quarter of 2012 (National Institute of Statistics of Romania) (EU Council, 2014), although in Romania doesn't exist a database with NEET young people's nor a nationally representative research relating to their situation. The EU institutions have launched programs aimed at young people since 1988, but in recent years, they have been intensified by a series of social policy and active measures taken both at EU level and in each Member State. The main document at present is the Europe Strategy 2020. Among the measures taken at European level in recent years include the „Youth Guarantee” an action that gives young people in EU countries a job or access to education and training or retraining programmes, within four months after finishing their studies, The European quality label for internship or first job Eures-actions intended to help 5.000 youths to find a job in another EU country (2010-2013); The Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci Programme, where over 130.000 internships in enterprises have been available in 2012 for young people who have been following University courses or training programmes; Erasmus for entrepreneurs, there are 600 internships enabling young entrepreneurs to acquire experience in a small enterprise in another country of the EU and European voluntary service where 10.000 volunteer opportunities were proposed by member countries (EU, 2014). Legislation relating to young people in Romania has been greatly enriched and improved, most of the important decisions and normative acts were adopted in the past 10 years, including volunteering Law (Law 95/2001), the Law on the system of unemployment insurance and stimulation of employment (Law No. 76/2002), the Youth Act (Law No. 350/2006), the Law on apprenticeship in the workplace (Law 279/2005, reissued in 2012), the

Law on pupils and students practice stimulation (Law 72/2007), The New Labour Code (2011) and National Education Law (Law No. 1 of 2011) (MMFPSPV, 2013). Romania currently has a National Youth Strategy 2014-2020. Romania has made some progress with regard to the recommendation to combat unemployment among young people. The authorities adopted in April 2013, a National Plan for employment of young people, which was followed by the legislative improvements related to on-the-job apprenticeship and a new law on on-the-job training. Therefore, by the end of 2013, about 30.000 young people have received a job offer, and 44.000 students have benefited from the programs of vocational guidance. In addition, two schemes have been introduced pilot type security for youth, for a total of 10.000 young people without high school diploma (EU Council, 2014). Romania has also created 27 pilot centers for youth Guarantee, with the aim to identify young NEET and to offer personalized service packages, however, the impact of these centers and their range remains unequal. Currently, the public services of employment of labour (SPOFM) develops an integrated data base with NEET and introduce new measures to support their early activation. The capacity of these services to reach young people, to support and to enable them effectively continues to be a challenge for Romania (EC, 2015- 11).

1. Careership theory – a sociological explanation for decision to start work

Analyzing data from interviews with young people Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) have come to the conclusion that they make partially rational decisions being influenced by emotions and feelings. The decisions they take are pragmatic, they are based on that in the immediate vicinity of familiar persons and those of acquaintances. Decisions are taken in interrelated manner, since they cannot be separated from the family, cultural background and life story of the young. Thus, they accept or reject a job based on the previous personal experiences or due to advice received from relatives, friends or neighbors, and their decisions are often opportunistic being reactions to perceived and encountered opportunities. The decisions often imply an acceptance of an option than a choice between several other choices. Feature theory or „matching the self with the occupation or work” as it called by Kidd (1984), the model of development of Ginsberg and Cooper (1951) and Super (1953, 1957, 1980) and social learning theory outlines the decision-making process on career as one planned, but Baumgardner (1977, 1982) and Miller (1983) argue that in reality people react to random opportunities. Roberts (1968, 1975) argues that the decisions are not determined by the individual but „opportunity structures” on the labour market, which are influenced by

industrial organization, government regulations and social class. Process of career decision making depends on a complex pattern of relations with stakeholders (youth, employers, training providers, trainers of career centers) and their various perceptions and reactions to official regulations. In the transition of the labour market, other players often hold more capital, and can wield more power than young people, and there are gamers who have the resources to determine the rules of the game. In the current literature regarding the transition to work, a common concept is that of „career path” (Furlong, 1992). Banks et al. (1992) argue that there are models of career advancement that they describe as paths. They depend largely on the characteristics of what the educated young people have, as well as social class, gender, ethnicity, geographical location and level of education. Strauss (1962) suggests that often we describe this „cognoscibility” according to one of the two metaphors: career and turning point. Although the route plan may change, they are seen as occasional aberrations when a person changes its runway, step by step (or quits!) from one scale to another. In many studies over the course of life, similar notions of turning points are often used. Denzin (1989) calls the „epiphanies”, Antikainen et al. (1996) calls the events of life which change the learning, while Alheit (1994) speaks of „biographical discontinuity”. Most of the studies using the idea of turning points and epiphanies (Strauss, 1962; Denzin, 1989; Antikainen et al., 1996) focuses on harnessing the turning points rather than periods interspersed with routines. However these turning points are inseparable from the routine that they follow and precede, and these routines are of central importance for transforming the career. There are five types of routine: confirmation contradictory, socialization, deployability and evolutionary. Routine periods and turning points are interrelated, so that can not be understood without the other one, and the separation between them is often arbitrary. The path to a turning point at another turning point may be predictable and smooth or irregular and idiosyncratic.

2. Longitudinal research with two waves

The purpose of this article is to test on the basis of two logistic regression models which are those factors (demographic and psychological) that predict the relative chance of successful employment among young people in Romania. Our data come from a longitudinal study with young people who were interviewed at an interval of two years. In the first wave of the survey, in 2012 the sample refers to 3509 young students in twelfth grade high school, and in 2014, 1509 of the same teenagers complete the questionnaire in the second wave of research. The research instrument used in both waves is an online questionnaire, using an internet

platform of a larger national research project, which deals with young people's transition from adolescence to adulthood in Romania¹. For both waves the survey had common scales for social support, material deprivation and some psychosocial scales for depression, optimism, future orientation, family planning. The teenagers from our sample were asked to visit the online page of the project where there was the research instrument, to register for an account and to fill the online questionnaire. After 2 years we reconnected with young people in the first wave of research either through their telephone numbers, by email, or by means of the accounts on the social network Facebook to fill out a second questionnaire that captures aspects of life as well as continuing education training in two years after completion of compulsory education, the first experiences in the workplace and their intention of work, desire of educational training and perceptions over the future and the opportunities that young people have in Romania.

3. Results of the study and discussion

In the two waves of the survey the proportion of girls and boys is almost equal. Almost half (46,8%) of young urban high school graduates of the initial sample responded in wave two. In wave two only 7,6% of young people are graduates from high school areas and 16,6% come from deprived families. Table 1. shows the socio-demographic characteristics in the two study waves.

Table 1. Social demographic characteristics of the samples in the two waves

		I st Wave 2012-2013 (no)	I st Wave %	II nd Wave 2014-2015 (no)	II nd Wave %	Percent II nd Wave/ I st Wave (%)
Gender	Girls	2043	58.2	891 (-1152)	59	43.6
	Boys	1466	41.8	618 (-848)	41	42.1
High school environment	Urban	2962	85.7	1389 (-1573)	92.4	46.8
	Rural	493	14.3	114 (-379)	7.6	23.1
Family's material deprivation		610	19.5	236 (-374)	16.6	38.6
Total		3509		1509		43

Analyzing data with an interval of two years after completion of high school on the vast majority of our sample, 82,4% we have found that they are following a form of education, while 17,6% did not continue their studies.

Table 2. Work experience in relation with various factors

¹ The present study is a part of a larger research project aiming to investigate transition into adulthood, which is called "Outcomes of adolescence. A longitudinal perspective on the effect of social context on successful life transitions", funded by The Romanian Research Fund: UEFISCDI. Project IDEI 2011-14.223 /5.10. 2011 (www.viitoradult.ro).

		Work experience	
		Yes (%)	No (%)
Continuing education after completing high school	No	82,8	17,2
	Yes	43,5	56,5
Bacalaureate result (finals exams from high school)	Successful	46,6	53,4
	Failure	75,8	24,2
Gender	Girl	46,1	53,9
	Boy	56,5	43,5
Severe material deprivation situation	No	48,1	51,9
	Yes	60,9	39,1
High school environment	Urban area	49,4	50,6
	Rural area	50,4	49,6
Self esteem	Good	50,8	49,2
	Low	49,7	50,3
Optimism	Low	47,8	52,2
	Increased	56,5	43,5

Half of those who study, 56,5% have no work experience, a possible explanation being that young people consider that at this age stage of formation and accumulation of knowledge better put on the forefront education, bearing in mind that the youth of 97,8% from the second wave of the survey say they „do not want a job right now” and 96,6% say they don't have a job now because „they are attending school or a training program/training”. The vast majority (82,8%) of those who do not continue their studies after high school, have experience at work, the cause probably being a material one. According to the experience of labor, youth are divided into two almost equal halves. Just over half (50,4%) of those who do not continue their studies have experience in work, and the rest has never worked. From those with experience in the workplace, half (25,2%) currently work, and the other half (25,1%) had a job but now they don't have. Those who didn't continue their studies are more from rural high school graduates (43% to 15,5%) but their experience at work is higher (62,3% compared to 49,4% of urban high schools graduates). The boys know more the failure of 13,9% (6% for girls) have not been able to pass their final exam, while 26,1% (11,6% for girls) do not continue their studies. But of the total percentage of boys with experience of work is greater compared to the percentage of the total girls (56,5% from 46,1% girls). Moreover, of those who have never had a job of 64,2% are girls, they are those who don't have a job now (52,5% compared with 47,5% for boys). The youth from the second wave 17% have gone through the experience of unemployment and benefited the allowance. The fact is that the young people from deprived families and those who are graduates of high schools of rural, poverty and social exclusion is higher due to an educational failure and dropping out of school. From those who are deprived from material point of view (18,1% compared with 6,5% failed in their final exam; 29,9% compared with 13,7% don't continue their studies), but the

percentage of those among them who have never worked is lower (39,1% compared with 51,9% of young people from deprived families). And the situation of rural high schools' graduates is worse compared to urban high schools' graduates (26,9% versus 7,9% failed the final exam; 43% versus 15,5% don't continue their education, while 50,6% compared with 37,7% have no work experience). Our results seem to confirm the idea of Careership's theory, according to this the decisions which young people take regarding the choice of the workplace are pragmatic, they are based on information from familiar persons and acquaintances or due to advice received from relatives, friends or neighbors because the second way of hiring in the first job which the young people from our sample have mentioned, after the interview/contest (45,9% saying this), 37,4% have undertaken with the help or a recommendation from a friend/acquittance, and 11,5% declares that their parents have found jobs for them. In the case of young people it is possible that the decision concerning the choice of the workplace is opportunistic, being reactions to perceived and encountered opportunities since all young people in our sample, 79,2% of young people say that the industry in which they work/have worked there is/was related to the specialization that they followed, and 60,6% of them declare that the current job doesn't help/didn't help them in achieving career-related plans, but the explanation may be a material reason, those who work being forced to do it to survive.

Table 3. Predicting significant factors of the unexperienced at work, after adjusting for demographic factors

Studied (significant) factors	Relative risk OR	Confidence interval 95% min-max	Sig. p
Gender Girl	1,47	1,18-1,82	<0,0001
Presence of material deprivation situation Not in a material deprivation situation	1,67	1,25-2,24	<0,001
Environment of graduated high school Urban area	1,57	1,04-2,35	<0,05

Analyzing predicting factors of unexperienced in the workplace through a logistic regression model (Nagelkerke $R^2=0,029$; $p<0.0001$) in which we included demographic factors, we have concluded that compared with those who have experience in work, the risk of unemployment is statistically significantly increased for young girls (OR=1.47; 95% CI 1.18-1.82; $p<0.0001$), for young people who are not in a situation of material deprivation (OR=1.67, 95% CI 1.25-2.24; $p<0.001$) but also for graduates of high schools in urban areas (OR=1,57; 95% CI 1.04-2.35; $p<0,05$).

Table 4. Predicting significant factors of the unexperienced at work, after adjusting for demographic and psychological factors

Studied (significant) factors	Relative risk OR	Confidence interval 95% min-max	Sig. p
Gender Girl	1,50	1,19-1,87	<0,0001
Presence of material deprivation situation Not in a material deprivation situation	1,51	1,12-2,03	<0,001
Environment of graduated high school Urban area	1,46	0,97-2,20	<0,05
Low Optimism	1,40	1,08-1,82	<0,01
Good Self esteem	0,87	0,68-1,12	<0,29

In the second logistic regression model (Nagelkerke $R^2=0.35$; $p<0.0001$) in addition to the demographic factors we tested two psychological factors such as self-esteem and optimism, and it appeared that compared with those who have work experience, have relative employment opportunities, for girls (OR=1.50; 95% CI 1.19-1.87; $p<0.0001$), those who are not in situation of material deprivation (OR=1.51; 95% CI 1.12-2.03; $p<0.01$) young graduates of high schools in urban areas (OR=1; 95% CI 0.97-2.20; $p<0.01$) and those who have low optimism (OR=1.40; 95% CI 1.08-1.82; $p<0.01$). If self esteem has no effect on the degree of predictability of the employment of young people, those who have lower levels of optimism have relatively lower chances of employment, but lack of optimism or low levels of optimism is a factor that can be changed through counseling and psycho-social interventions. Social protection systems should be designed to provide incentives in order to promote the transition of young people and to avoid the risk of long-term exclusion and poverty. Young urban high graduates have 1,5 times greater chance to not have work experience. Girls have 1,4 times higher chance to not have work experience and young that are not in material deprivation situation have 1,6 times higher chance to not have work experience.

Conclusion

The vast majority of young people in our sample follows a form of education to two years after completing high school, and half of the students did not have experience in the workplace. Of those who do not study the vast majority have the experience in the workplace, the cause being probably a material one. Our data shows that for the young people from deprived families and for those who are graduates of high schools in rural areas, poverty and social exclusion is higher due to an educational failure and dropping out of school. The boys know more the failure of maturity exam (the final exam) and there they don't continue their studies, and from the young people who have never had a job the percentage is higher among the girls. Our results seem to confirm the idea of Careership's theory, according to which, the decisions what young people take regarding the choice of the workplace are pragmatic, they

take account of the information in the immediate vicinity, from the arrangements for employment that they have mentioned is being helped by a friend/acquittance or a recommendation from them, while others say their parents have found job for them. In the case of young people it is possible that the decision concerning the choice of the workplace to be opportunistic, at the moment and because of necessity in the conditions under which the vast majority say that their experience is not related to their specialization and that their job has not helped them in achieving career-related plans. Compared with those who have experience in work, the risk of unemployment in a job is increased for young girls, for young people who are not in a material deprivation situation, but also for graduates of high schools in urban areas. In addition to tested demographic factors to the psychological ones such as self-esteem and optimism, has appeared that self esteem has no effect on the degree of predictability of the employment of young people, but in comparison with those who have work experience, those who have a low optimism have relatively smaller chances of employment. Those who have lower levels of optimism need counseling, this feature can be enhanced through psycho-social intervention by specialists.

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