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THE YOUTH LABOR MARKET SITUATION IN THE DURRES REGION, ALBANIA

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Abstract

In a limited demand for work, young people face high competition, which linked to the mismatch between demand and supply. Rapid technological developments and changes in labor market requirements create the need to be prepared with advanced, up-to-date skills and professional training. At an age when many of them want to have a family, they tend to seek stable and high-paid jobs which means to have a job that offers opportunities for improvement and development. On the other hand, the desire to do more than one job, or to balance professional and personal life pushes young people to seek employment opportunities that offer flexible schedules or online work. Using data from 2 surveys, responded to by 82 employers and 270 jobseekers, we give a clear overview of the situation regarding the youth demand and supply for jobs in the Durrës Region as well as the challenges faced by them. The purpose of the paper is to evaluate, on the one hand, the challenges and opportunities for young people in the labor market, focusing on their perceptions, preferences and needs for professional development, and on the other hand, to better understand the challenges and needs of businesses regarding employment and the development of employee skills in the Durrës Region. As mentioned above, we emphasize the need for sustainable reforms in the education system, labor policies, and opportunities for professional growth.

Keywords: Employer, Labor force, Labor market, Survey, Unemployment

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment remains one of the most discussed topics by economists, due to the negative effects that unemployment brings to the economy as well as the social costs that unemployed people experience. Many scholars have referred to the problems of unemployment and, in particular, to the problems of youth unemployment. Youth employment today is a very complex and challenging issue, which depends on many economic, social, and technological factors.

For the Albanian economy, the high rate of youth unemployment continues to remain a serious problem. The analysis of this phenomenon is difficult due to the high level of informality that characterizes the labor market, becoming an obstacle to both economic growth and full participation in the labor market by young people.

Young people who have just finished school or university often have difficulty finding work due to a lack of experience required by the job. Sackey and Osei (2006) argued that youth unemployment happens as young people have fewer skills in the labor market than adults. Due to their lack of experience, their job search period becomes longer compared to experienced workers. This can lead young people to accept temporary job positions that do not always

match their qualifications. Moreover, temporary jobs often pay less and do not offer job-related training. This has led to young people often looking at emigration as a solution. Many young Albanians leave the country in search of better job prospects, which also impacts the unemployment statistics. Hass et al. (2019) show that segmentation of labor markets, and job specialization, encourage people to migrate to secure a job, a quality education level, and their family perspectives. Also, high unemployment among young people hurts productivity and consequently the country's economic growth. Young people who look for work but do not find work or do not find work according to the branches in which they graduated will lose the skills and talents they possess.

The main focus of this paper is to analyze the compatibility of demand and supply for youth employment in the city of Durrës. There's often a mismatch between the skills young people acquire and the demands of the job market. Many young people in Albania graduate with degrees in fields that don't have enough demand in the economy. For this reason, two surveys were designed, one for employers and one for jobseekers. The purpose of the surveys was to analyze the challenges faced by young people in the workplace, focusing on perceptions, preferences, and care for professional development. Also, the employers' survey was designed to better understand the needs of businesses regarding employment, and skills development of young people in the Durrës Region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The labor market is a complex system influenced by factors like education, technology, globalization, and policy interventions. It impacts individuals' career paths, income, and overall well-being.

The problem of underemployment, especially among recent graduates, is one of the main topics in the literature. Meroni and Vera-Toscano (2017) draw attention to the growing issue of recent graduates working in positions that do not fully utilize their skills, which frequently leads to salary penalties, slower career advancement, and decreased job satisfaction. According to their research, graduates in less demanding fields typically struggle to obtain the experience required for higher-level roles, which hinders their career advancement and lowers their earning potential.

There aren't enough job openings in some industries, which exacerbates the underemployment problem. According to Tyrrell-Hendry (2024), people's expectations of future earnings and the state of the job market have an impact on their decisions about their educational and professional pathways. For instance, because there are few acceptable employments in their fields of study, many graduates are compelled to choose

professions that do not match their skill levels. In nations with little labor market flexibility and an excess of graduates in specialized disciplines, this situation is especially prevalent. Thus, there are broad ramifications for career advancement, income growth, and general job satisfaction when educational accomplishments and labor market expectations are not aligned.

To improve labor market matching, Shigapova et al. (2015) stress the significance of precise labor market projections. Policymakers can more effectively match the supply of skilled workers with demand by predicting future labor market trends and identifying regions of skill surpluses or shortages. By directing people toward industries with better employment prospects and lowering labor market inefficiencies, accurate forecasting can aid in addressing the problem of underemployment. Additionally, by adjusting their curricula to the evolving demands of the job market, educational institutions can lessen skill mismatches in the marketplace.

Global labor markets now face both opportunities and problems as a result of globalization and technological improvements. According to Feijoo Moreira (2022), these worldwide patterns have exacerbated income inequality by contributing to the long-term fall in the labor share of income. Workers, especially in industrialized nations, have suffered stagnant or declining wages as a result of the growth of global supply chains and the outsourcing of manufacturing employment to nations with lower labor costs. This has concentrated wealth in the hands of multinational firms and capital owners. Additionally, workers in some industries have been displaced by technological improvements, especially automation and artificial intelligence, which have made the pay gap worse.

Although technological advancements have increased production, their impacts have been inconsistent across sectors. Although labor-augmenting technologies, that support human workers, can boost productivity and open up new job opportunities, Ross, McGregor, and Swales (2024) contend that they can exacerbate wealth inequality. While low-skilled individuals, who are more likely to be displaced by automation, lose their jobs or see their wages stagnate, highly skilled professionals who can take advantage of these technologies frequently realize significant income gains. The outcome is a more polarized labor market where high-skilled workers prosper, and low-skilled workers are more economically vulnerable.

In the global north, where technology has replaced traditional manufacturing jobs, these changes are most noticeable. In their study of youth unemployment in Europe, Gökten, Heimberger, and Lichtenberger (2024) contend that structural problems including skill mismatches and rigid labor market structure have made it more difficult for many young people to find steady work. Although new opportunities in industries like information technology have been made possible by technical advancements, young people frequently find it difficult to take

advantage of these chances because they lack the necessary education and skills. The situation is further complicated by regional differences in economic development, with Southern Europe having notably high rates of youth unemployment.

The differences between various industries, which can result in unequal labor demand and income distribution, are another area of concern in labor markets. The significance of sectoral differences in labor market outcomes is emphasized by Doeringer (1988), who points out that occupations that demand a high degree of education and experience typically pay more and provide more job security. Workers in fields like technology, healthcare, and finance, for example, typically earn more money and have more stable jobs than those in low-skilled ones. However, in certain areas of the labor market, especially for workers in the industrial and service industries, this sectoral split has led to increased income disparity and job instability.

The impact of labor market constraints, such as minimum wage regulations and employment protection legislation, on corporate behavior is examined by Bottasso et al. (2025). They contend that in order to reduce labor-related risks and expenses, such restrictions frequently encourage businesses to look for more highly skilled staff. Employing people with particular expertise can help firms increase production while lowering training expenses and employee churn. However, because low-skilled individuals are more expensive to hire under strict labor market laws, companies may be less inclined to hire them, thereby widening the gap between high- and low-skilled workers.

Kolesnikova, Kamasheva, and Fakhrutdinova (2015) have also observed the growing need for skilled workers, arguing that sectors like information technology, banking, and healthcare are especially dependent on highly skilled and educated personnel. In an increasingly complicated and worldwide economy, this trend reflects the increased demand for higher education and advanced technological capabilities. Because of this, employees with more education and training have a better chance of landing steady, well-paying positions, while those with less education have a harder time breaking into high-demand fields.

A major obstacle to attaining labor market equality is discrimination, which disproportionately affects people of color and women. According to Kamasheva et al. (2013), prejudice causes inefficiencies in the labor market by excluding eligible people from particular job possibilities on the basis of age, gender, or race. Employers are unable to effectively utilize the workforce due to discrimination, which results in less-than-ideal labor allocation and the continuation of labor market imbalances.

In emerging nations, where women frequently have restricted access to well-paying employment and prospects for career growth, gender inequality in the labor market is especially noticeable. Enhancing women's economic empowerment is crucial for promoting

improved human development outcomes, according to Balasubramanian et al. (2024). They contend that giving women more economic authority not only improves their well-being but also has wider social and financial advantages including higher productivity and lower rates of poverty.

Kusumawardhani et al. (2023) investigate how the internet might help women in Indonesia find better jobs, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas. According to the authors, women who have access to the internet may have better access to educational materials and employment options, which will enhance their chances in the job market. But they also point out that regional characteristics, cultural norms, and educational attainment all continue to have a big impact on how gender gaps in labor market outcomes are shaped.

In many regions of the world, youth unemployment is still a major problem. Young workers frequently deal with unstable employment, low pay, and little possibilities for career growth. The difficulties young workers have finding steady jobs are examined by Gontkovičová, Mihalčová, and Pružinský (2015). These difficulties include a lack of work experience, skill mismatches, and adverse economic situations. The authors contend that by giving more weight to vocational training and the development of practical skills, educational systems must adjust to the shifting demands of the job market. Educational institutions can assist in lowering the barriers to entry for young workers by providing them with the skills they need to thrive in the workforce.

In his discussion of the efficacy of job training programs in France, Burlat (2024) points out that they greatly enhance employment prospects, especially for participants who are younger and better educated. Younger and better educated people gain the most from these programs; however, their effectiveness varies by age and level of education. This emphasizes the necessity of tailored training programs that address certain skill gaps in the labor market and enable people to gain the abilities that employer's value most.

Glitz and Wissmann (2021) have examined the rising skill premium, especially in light of globalization and technological developments. They contend that there is a growing need for skilled workers in industries that demand a high level of education and vocational training. Even if today's youth have higher levels of education than their predecessors, there is frequently a discrepancy between the need and supply of trained workers in some areas. Higher educated workers might therefore have trouble finding lucrative positions in industries where there is a lack of demand for their expertise.

In their analysis of South Africa's youth unemployment problem, Ebrahim and Pirttilä (2025) emphasize the necessity of all-encompassing governmental solutions that include programs like job subsidies, skill development, and youth entrepreneurship. Since these

problems are frequently linked and call for coordinated efforts across multiple policy domains, their research emphasizes the significance of a multidimensional strategy to addressing adolescent unemployment. Governments can lower unemployment and promote long-term economic growth by giving young people access to training, funding, and entrepreneurial possibilities.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

To achieve the paper objectives, two surveys were developed: one for employers and one for jobseekers. The purpose is to evaluate, on one hand, the challenges and opportunities for young people in the labor market, focusing on their perceptions, preferences, and needs for professional development, and on the other hand, to better understand the challenges and needs of businesses regarding employment and the development of employee skills in the Durrës Region.

The study involved 82 different businesses, selected through a purposive sampling process to represent a wide range of different economic sectors, ensuring that the representation included large, medium, and small enterprises. Additionally, 270 young jobseekers of various ages and educational levels participated, representing a broad spectrum of employment status and professional preparation.

The design of the surveys included a significant number of both closed and open-ended questions, covering various demographic aspects, education levels, employment status, preferences regarding working conditions, and opportunities for professional development for jobseekers. There were also questions related to employees' gender, their geographical location, economic activity sectors, enterprise size, and types of employment contracts for employers.

The surveys were created and distributed through the Google Forms platform, providing an easy, fast, and accessible method to reach a wide number of participants. They were distributed via social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram), email, and phone numbers, supported by follow-up phone interviews to ensure complete responses and clarify any ambiguities. The data collection period was from May to October 2024. The flexibility of online distribution and easy access for participants contributed to a higher response rate and the collection of a diverse and representative sample from various social and professional groups. This digital and inclusive approach enabled the creation of a reliable database with detailed data for further analysis and the development of recommendations aimed at improving youth employment in the Durrës Region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Although distributed in different directions, the surveys have points of intersection in their questions, as the demand and supply for jobs meet in the fulfillment of the interests of both parties.

Considering a sample of 270 participants in the jobseekers survey, the data show a gender imbalance with high participation of females (81%) and an overwhelming majority of young people aged 18-20 years, reflecting the interest of youth in engaging in this study and their focus on career development. The majority of participants are city residents (83.8%), suggesting that employment opportunities and access to information are more concentrated in urban areas.

In analogy with this analysis, of the 82 businesses that participated in the employer survey, it was found that 58.3% of participants were male and 41.7% were female, showing gender diversity in business leadership, with a significant portion being led by women. The analysis of businesses by their location, urban or rural, showed that 95.8% of the enterprises are located in urban areas and 4.2% in rural areas. These figures are in line with jobseekers, the majority of whom were city residents. Although a very small percentage of businesses are in rural areas, this does not mean they should be overlooked. Special programs could be developed to support employment in these areas, including initiatives promoting agribusiness, rural tourism, and infrastructure development.

From the chart on the education level of respondents, it can be seen that 232 respondents (85.9%) have completed university education (bachelor's or master's), indicating a high level of education among the interviewees. Jobseekers with postgraduate education (doctorate) represent a small number of 5 individuals (2%). While those who completed professional or secondary education represent 11.3% of respondents (31 individuals). Respondents with lower education make up only 1% of the total number.

Analyzing on the one hand the educational level of jobseekers and on the other hand the employers' demand for the educational level of employees, we note that the majority of jobseekers have completed a university education, indicating their academic preparation for the challenges of the labor market. However, many of them report a lack of experience and difficulty finding jobs that meet their financial and professional expectations. A smaller percentage of respondents have completed professional or secondary education, while a very small group, has completed postgraduate education (doctoral or other advanced levels).

The analysis shows great potential for further professional development and a focus on employment prospects that require high qualifications, but at the same time reflects the challenges these young people face in finding stable employment.

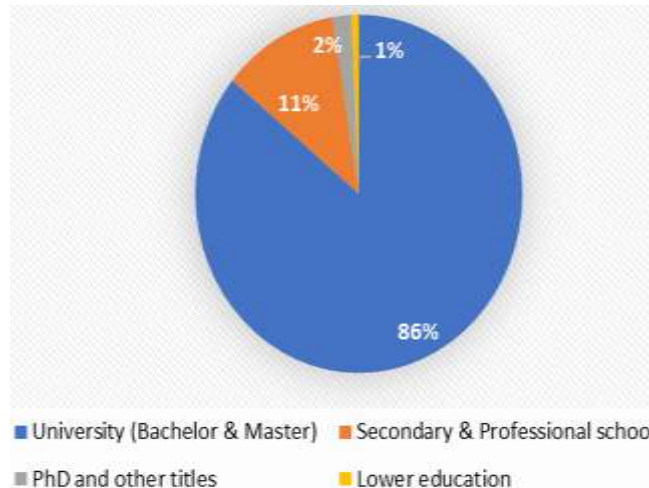


Figure 1. Jobseeker education categories

Analyzing this indicator from the employer's side, in a 5-point Likert scale evaluation of the demand for higher education (bachelor's & master's), where 1 indicates that this education is not required at all, and 5 indicates it is highly required, it was found that approximately 63% of businesses assess the demand for university education as average to very high, which also matches the job demand of jobseekers with higher education.

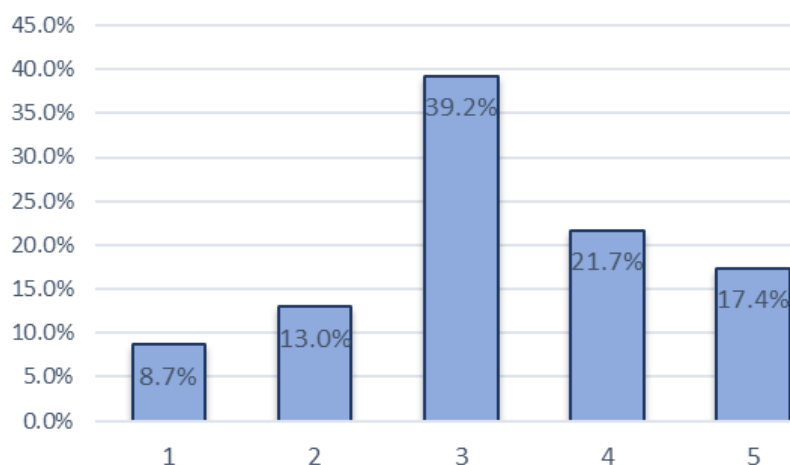


Figure 2. Evaluation of university education (bachelor & master) by employers

This evaluation suggests the need for advanced skills and knowledge provided through university education. Employment projects could focus on offering training and certifications that complement or expand these skills.

The demand for employees with postgraduate education is even higher. The data shows that 87.5% of businesses assess the demand for postgraduate education as average to very high. Government policies on education should encourage the opening of doctoral programs at universities and promote the participation of young people in doctoral programs and other specializations that provide advanced and specialized skills.

With high interest is the demand for employees with professional education. About 66% of businesses seek specialized workers, and this type of education prepares employees for specific and technical careers, which can be especially important in industries facing shortages of specific skills. Considering the increasing demand for certain technical and professional skills could lead to a review of existing education and training programs to ensure they are relevant and suited to market needs.

Continuing with the analysis of jobseekers' employment preferences, the results show that preferences for working in the public sector (51%) and leadership roles are high among respondents, reflecting interest in stability and high-level responsibilities. However, the main challenges highlighted, include a lack of experience and low wages, which are the two main barriers to finding a good job. On the other hand, awareness and use of employment counseling services remain low, with the majority of respondents reporting that they have not received information or advice from dedicated institutions.

An interesting finding is the analysis of the question about whether respondents would seek a new job while employed. The data shows that 62.1% of those currently employed are looking for a new job, while 37.9% are not.

The high percentage of demand for a new job is linked to the level of satisfaction with the current job. According to the survey data, in a 5-point Likert scale assessing satisfaction with their current job, where 1 indicates dissatisfaction and 5 indicates high satisfaction, the majority, or 39.2%, chose option 3, indicating an average level of satisfaction. A smaller percentage, 21.7%, expressed a higher level of satisfaction (rating 4), and only 17.4% rated their satisfaction at the highest level, 5. On the other hand, a small portion of respondents, 13% and 8.7%, expressed lower levels of satisfaction (with ratings 2 and 1, respectively). This result suggests that not being very satisfied with the work you do encourages you to look for a new job where you feel better in the complex conditions it offers. Although the majority of respondents feel moderately satisfied with their work, there is still a significant percentage who feel

dissatisfaction, which could be a signal for employers about possible improvements in working conditions.

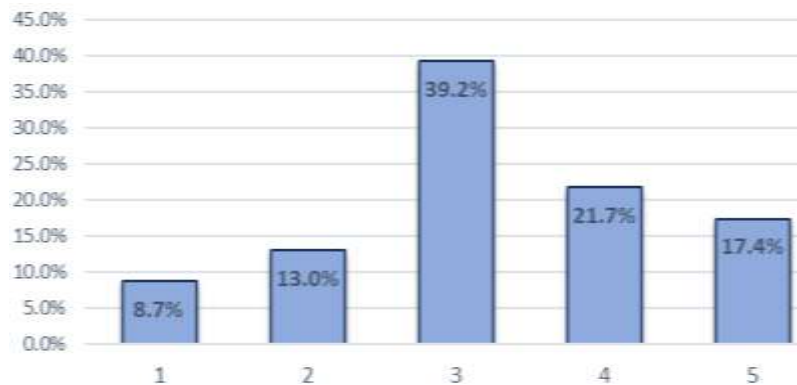


Figure 3. Assessment of satisfaction with current job

The method of staffing by employers is another interesting analysis, where it was found that the most dominant method, at 62.5%, is personal connections with jobseekers. Notably, a high percentage, 33.3%, of businesses use educational institutions to find employees, indicating a strong relationship between education and employment, which is achieved through job fairs organized by universities, as well as through bilateral university-business agreements. The Internet is used by 25% of businesses for staff recruitment, including job portals and social networks. Employment offices are used by 12.5% of businesses, and 8.3% of them use newspapers, TV, or radio. The "other" method, which may include other networking strategies, is used at the same rate. Private recruitment agencies are used by 4.2% of businesses, indicating a low use of these services.

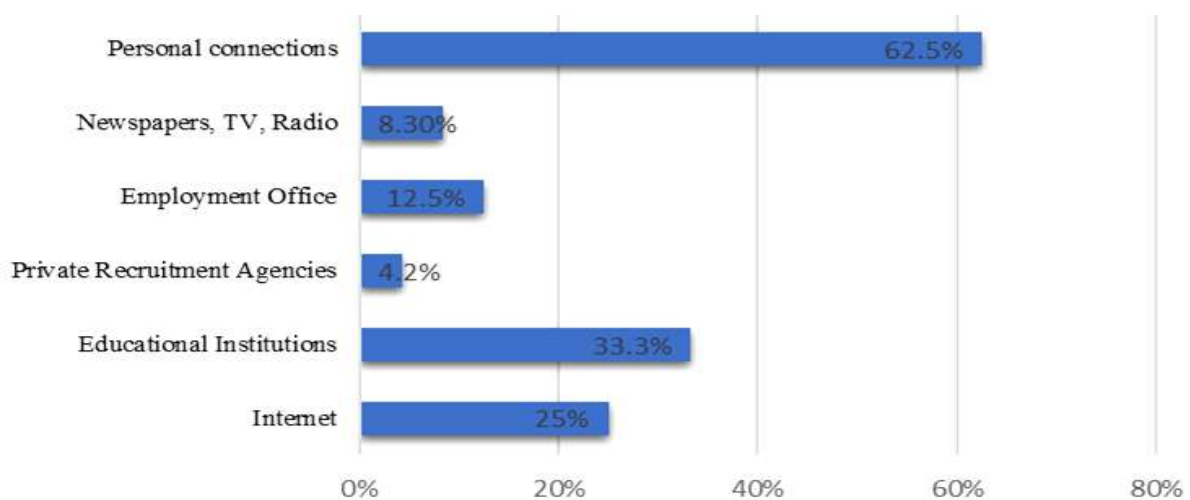


Figure 4. Staff employment methods

Analyzing this indicator from the jobseekers' side results that the majority of them (47.9%) received employment information through personal connections (friends and relatives), highlighting the importance of informal social networks in finding jobs in Albania. Meanwhile, 21.3% used the internet as a source of information, suggesting an increasing trend towards using online tools for job searching.

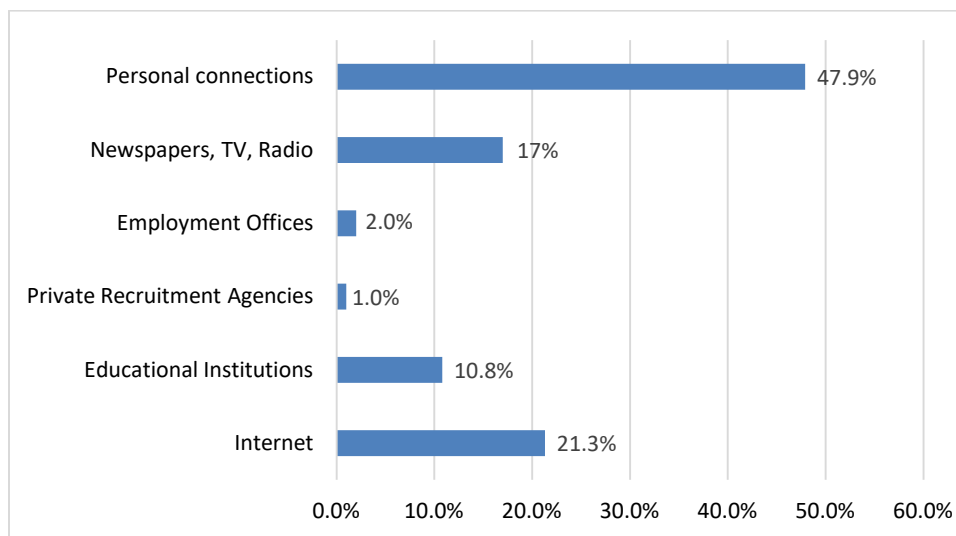


Figure 5. Methods of providing job information for jobseekers

The rest of the respondents used other sources such as educational institutions (10.8%), newspapers, TV, or radio (17%), while the lowest percentage of respondents used the Employment Office (2%) or private employment agencies (1%). These data provide an important overview of the main channels for employment information and can help organizations and public policies focus on expanding employment services through the most commonly used channels.

Asked whether or not they have difficulties finding a job, 52.6% of respondents reported “Yes”, while 47.4% responded “No” in this regard. This result suggests that more than half of the participants experienced challenges in the employment process, which may reflect a difficult labor market or a limited fit between their skills and labor market requirements.

Following up on the previous question, respondents were asked about the main reasons that have made it difficult to find a job position. It is noted that the most common reason respondents have faced difficulties is the lack of work experience, which accounts for 47.2% of the responses. This is followed by inadequate salary levels at 28.4%, as well as the lack of the appropriate qualifications for the jobs that the market requires, at 11.1%. Additionally, 12.5% of respondents report that free jobs are far from their place of residence, and 20.8% mentioned

other reasons such as age, gender, appropriate education for the jobs required by the labor market, lack of information about current employment opportunities etc. These data suggest that insufficient experience and qualifications are the main factors negatively affecting the employment opportunities for young people.

The analysis of the indicators from both surveys, provided a clear overview of the situation regarding the youth demand and supply of jobs in the Durrës district, as well as the challenges faced by them.

CONCLUSIONS

Youth employment in Durrës Region, like in many regions of Albania, faces challenges that depend on many economic, social, and technological factors. The main obstacles young people face when entering the labor market are the lack of experience and skills needed to seek the labor market (Zisi & Merko, 2017). While there is a strong demand for workers in tourism, services, and the maritime sector, young people often face difficulties entering these fields due to mismatched qualifications and a lack of specialized training. The supply of youth labor doesn't always match the demand in terms of both quantity and skills.

The analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire brings some important conclusions regarding the challenges and perceptions of young people in the labor market in the city of Durrës. The majority of respondents, 83.8%, are city residents, which suggests that employment opportunities and benefits from support services are more accessible in urban areas. The lower participation from rural areas indicates the need for policies that address the specific employment challenges in these areas. Analyzing the employment preferences, over half of the respondents choose the public sector due to the stability and economic security it offers. This high interest in the public sector, in addition to the interest in leadership and qualified roles, indicates ambition for positions of responsibility and the need to develop managerial and professional skills.

Regarding work motivation, the majority of respondents are willing to work more hours if a higher salary is offered, indicating that financial reward remains an important factor in determining their commitment to work. A significant percentage of respondents also have difficulties finding work, mainly due to lack of experience and low wages. These factors indicate that the labor market does not fully meet the demands and expectations of young people, suggesting the need for training and employment opportunities that are better suited to their needs.

The results also indicate a low use of employment counseling and information services. The majority of respondents are either not aware of the existence of these institutions or have not used their services. This phenomenon highlights the need for greater awareness and

improved access to these services. Furthermore, most young people report they need to develop technical and managerial skills, which are key to success in their preferred job roles.

In conclusion, the results of the surveys show that young people in Durrës face numerous challenges in the labor market, from the difficulty of finding suitable jobs to the lack of opportunities for training and professional development. These data provide the basis for policies and programs that support the career development of young people, their inclusion in the public and private sectors, and improving their access to employment counseling and training services.

To improve the match between labor supply and demand, initiatives such as better alignment between educational programs and market needs, improving vocational education and training to better adapt to market needs, providing better job support services, and encouraging local entrepreneurship to create more employment opportunities are needed. Furthermore, ensuring better working conditions and wages will stop young people from seeing emigration as a better option for their future.

To achieve a match between demand and supply for jobs in the Durrës Region, but not only, it is also very important to have close cooperation between the government, education, businesses, and young people themselves. The aim is to align the skills of young people with the needs of the labor market, while also creating an environment where job opportunities are more accessible.

Despite the detailed analysis of the surveys and the conclusions reached, the authors will not stop here with the analysis of this problem. The paper is a starting point for larger projects regarding youth demand and supply for work. A broader analysis of this issue for the whole Albania, or even for the Western Balkan countries, would highlight and compare the problems of youth employment for them.

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