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HOW THE MEDIA AND SOCIAL POLICIES AFFECT EMPLOYMENT?

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Abstract

The foundation of this work draws from Manuel Castells' renowned book, "The Rise of the Network Society" (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). The methodology is rooted in key texts, including "Social Research Methods" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) by Alan Bryman, "Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research" (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2011) by John W Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, and "Doing Qualitative Research" (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010). This paper aims to delve into the interplay and impact between the unemployment of specific social groups and the government's development strategy on one hand, and the influence of the media on the other. The research employs mixed methods, primarily qualitative through the content analysis of documents and non-experimental data. It also integrates a quantitative aspect by utilizing data from the State Statistical Institute, Government sources, and other quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). The paper investigates the connections between structural unemployment, unemployment among specific social groups, and the government's development strategy, with a focus on addressing these challenges. Additionally, it explores the combined efforts of the government and other relevant state bodies, as well as the media's role in addressing unemployment among these specific social groups.

KEYWORDS: unemployment, social groups, media, risks, impact

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to address the following research questions:

- How is structural unemployment connected to the unemployment of specific special social groups (such as "marginalized" or those "with special needs")?
- What role does the state (i.e., Government) play in addressing the challenge of unemployment among special social groups?
- What impact does the media have in addressing the challenge of unemployment?

This study employs mixed research methods, primarily qualitative, involving content analysis of documents and non-experimental data. Additionally, it includes a quantitative component using data from the State Statistical Institute, Government sources, and other quantitative data.

Creswell and Plano Clark describe mixed methods as offering "multiple ways of seeing and hearing" (2011, p.2). Bryman (2012) provides an argumentative discourse on mixed methods research within Chapter 27, presenting perspectives both for and against, like the debate surrounding quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 2012, pp.628-649). The use of mixed methods can enhance confidence in findings, particularly through well-conducted triangulation (Bryman, 2012, p.649).

The media plays a significant role in the world, exerting influence on politics as a source of power and acting as a check on government and opposition activities, promoting transparency (Chandler & Munday, 2011, pp.255-258). Media is the subject of various theories, discussions, and ideas that emerge and spread to a wider audience (Chandler & Munday, 2011, p.269). Furthermore, the media is a major employer and a means for the promotion of democratic values, with an impact on encouraging employment for certain social groups.

In recent years, technological developments, online media, and social networks have transformed our lives, altering the way we connect, communicate, and access information (Chandler & Munday, 2011, p.293). Social networks, as highlighted by Castells (2000, pp.396-451), have become tools for quick and effective communication, business, and socialization, influencing how individuals pursue employment opportunities.

The development of social networks has facilitated individuals' connection with recruiters, allowing them to gather information about companies and build networks before gaining work experience (Castells, 2000, pp.85-340). Companies, recognizing the importance of an online presence, have utilized social networks to find talents and recruit individuals, creating new job opportunities (Castells, 2000, pp.463-477). The increased use of social networks in the region has led employers to leverage their audiences for advertising services, profiles, and job vacancies (Castells, 2000, pp.242-339).

This paper adopts a descriptive and comparative methodology, exploring policies that promote the employment of specific social groups and examining the media's impact on their employment (Castells, 2000, pp.27-36; 297-332).

2. Media Influence on Competitions and Open Job Opportunities

The impact of media on the present day is undeniably significant, particularly in shaping the attitudes of specific social groups through various social networks. The widespread use of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and others has made information, including job advertisements, competitions in both public and private sectors, and free working opportunities for specific social groups, easily accessible to individuals of all ages.

The internet and social media platforms have democratized the job search process. Job applications can now be submitted online, or individuals can upload the necessary documents directly to the sectors advertising job vacancies. Social media facilitates seamless access to job opportunities, ensuring that everyone with internet access can stay informed about available positions and their durations.

In essence, the media plays a positive role in influencing the lives of citizens, especially those belonging to specific social groups seeking employment in either the private or public sector. The ease of access to job information through social media contributes to creating more inclusive opportunities and leveling the playing field for individuals from diverse backgrounds. This, in turn, enhances the overall impact of media in fostering a more equitable job-seeking landscape.

3. Promoting Employment: Policies for Specific Social Groups

Structural unemployment poses a formidable challenge in the realm of unemployment, requiring profound systemic solutions to address the difficulties faced by certain groups during the inconsistency of demand and supply in the labor market. These groups, often referred to as 'vulnerable,' 'marginalized,' or 'excluded social groups,' share the commonality of limited or no access to employment opportunities. Encountering social problems such as rejection, stress, and weakness, these groups deserve special attention and targeted measures across all aspects of social life.

To comprehend what constitutes a social problem, we need to consider three major categories: social problems related to social development, deviations, and natural disasters. A social problem is defined by several conditions, including acceptance by the majority, inconsistency with social values, widespread impact, public nature, disturbance with negative consequences, a social character rooted in societal factors, and a call for social response and action (Spasovska & Bornarova, 2013).

The individuals falling into these vulnerable groups lack access to resources, institutions, and social advancements, hindering their ability to satisfy educational, employment, cultural, political, and other needs. Identifying the endangered groups depends on historical, cultural, demographic, and geographical characteristics of a community. In our research, the focus is on groups such as long-term unemployed, those on the brink of poverty, young unemployed individuals, those with low education levels, people aged 50 to 59, children without parents, individuals with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, homeless individuals, single parents, those exposed to various forms of discrimination, immigrants, refugees, internally displaced people, and others facing social, educational, and cultural deprivation.

These groups represent the target audience for every community striving for democratic values. The comprehensive list includes individuals undergoing social rehabilitation, illiterate individuals in technology, and professional soldiers whose engagements have concluded. Addressing the specific needs and challenges of these groups is crucial for fostering an inclusive and equitable society.

3.1. Understanding Influential Factors Affecting Vulnerable Groups

Americans employ a tool known as PESTEL analysis, breaking down factors influencing vulnerable groups: political, economic, social, technological, ecological, and legal (Janevska, R. 2011). Let's explore what this means for us:

Political Factors:

- Employment influenced by party affiliation.
- Lack of support for laws benefiting endangered groups (e.g., persons with physical/mental disabilities).
- Low representation and political awareness for endangered groups in party platforms (Janevska, R. 2011).

Economic Factors:

- Limited financial means for basic needs.
- Budget reductions affecting resources.
- Exploitation of endangered groups by the business sector.
- Lack of confidence in the abilities of people with disabilities.
- Inadequate investment for the employment of endangered groups.
- Need for special economic programs and European standards for inclusion.
- Stimulation of entrepreneurship for vulnerable groups.
- Lack of promotion of public-private partnerships (Janevska, R. 2011).

Social Factors:

- Insufficient NGOs.
- Lack of training and retraining centres for the unemployed.
- Persons with disabilities treated as a social burden.
- Differential incomes based on disability.
- Dysfunctional labour unions.
- Insufficient social protection teams in institutions.
- Limited promotion of public-private partnerships and social funds (Janevska, R. 2011).

Technological Factors:

- Insufficient use of technologies to reduce unemployment.
- Need for increased internet use to improve the situation for endangered groups.
- Discrimination during access to the labor market due to disability (Janevska, R. 2011).

Legal Factors:

- Change and harmonization of legal regulations in line with international standards.
- Consequent implementation of existing legal norms.
- Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Lack of information on certain laws and regulations.
- Approval of essential legal measures against discrimination.
- Amendments to labor relations and legislation (Janevska, R. 2011).

Solving the unemployment issues of these groups goes beyond identification; it requires active policies, intervention in legal and tax policies, credit policies, and educational measures (Janevska, R. 2011). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) classifies active labor market policies into five sets of measures, including public employment institutions, educational measures, measures for young people, employment subsidies, and measures for groups with difficult employment factors (Kluve, K. 2014). Positive results can be achieved by fully incorporating all relevant factors that influence the labor market, practicing positive discrimination in favor of these citizens.

3.1. Policies to Boost Employment for Marginalized Groups: A Glimpse into the Republic of North Macedonia

In the Republic of North Macedonia, a game plan for tackling unemployment and social exclusion is laid out in the National Employment Strategy of 2015. Aligned with the broader European strategy "Europe 2020," this document, birthed in 2011, outlines a roadmap filled with measures aimed at addressing the employment challenges faced by socially excluded groups.

The strategy shines a light on key hurdles that the state grapples with, calling for organized efforts to yield tangible results in the social reality of North Macedonia. The primary challenges identified include:

- Inadequate Guidance for Socially Endangered Groups.
- Difficult Access to the Labor Market for Endangered Groups (such as ethnic communities, women, disabled persons, and older individuals).
- Limited Involvement of Local Government in Social Inclusion Projects.
- Underdeveloped Personal Services for Specific Endangered Groups.
- Incomplete Alignment between Central and Local Government in Social Protection.
- Scarce Public Works Presence at the Local Level, Hindering Labor Market Involvement.
- Undefined Minimum Wage Levels.
- Lack of Development in Social Ventures (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2011).

These challenges, as highlighted in the strategy, set the stage for interventions and strategic planning. For instance, there's a call for increased local government involvement in social

inclusion projects and the development of personal services tailored to specific endangered groups.

The National Employment Strategy of RM - 2015 also sets indicators with a snapshot of their status in 2010 and the envisioned progress by 2015 (Gruevski, N. 2011). This approach provides a clear path for tracking and assessing the effectiveness of the strategies laid out in the pursuit of improved employment opportunities for marginalized groups in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Indicators	Nord Macedonia 2010	National goal 2015
Percentage of Employment (20-64 years)	48,1%	55%
Percentage of Youth Employment (15-29 years)	26,5%	29%
Percentage of Youth Employment (15-24 years)	15,4%	17%
Percentage of Women's Employment	34%	42%
The proportion of Older Persons Employment	34,2%	41%
Persons who have left Education	16,2%	14%
People with Higher Education (30-34 years)	14,2%	19%
The population Living Below The Poverty Level	30,9%	29%

Table 3: *Indicators - Situation and Purpose in the Republic of North Macedonia*

(Extracted from the National Employment Strategy of North Macedonia - 2015)

This strategy, implemented from 2011 to the present, has involved the following initiatives:

1. **Empowering individuals through self-employment:** This includes training unemployed individuals interested in entrepreneurship, developing sustainable business plans, aiding in business registration, and providing financial support for starting or formalizing existing businesses. The legislative process for social entrepreneurship is currently in progress.
2. **Supporting the employment of 150 orphans from 2011 to 2015:** This involves a monthly financial subsidy of 15,000 denars for a 6-month period, with the condition that employers retain these employees for at least 12 months.
3. **Assisting 400 single parents in the period 2011-2015:** Single parents receive a monthly support of 15,000 denars for a 6-month period, with the commitment from employers to retain these employees for at least 12 months.
4. **Backing the employment of 600 individuals aged 55-62 from 2011 to 2015:** This includes a monthly support of 15,000 denars for a 6-month period, with the obligation for employers to keep these employees for at least 12 months.

5. **Supporting the employment of professional soldiers completing service in the Army of North Macedonia from 2011 to 2015:** Monthly support of 15,000 denars for a 6-month period is provided, with the requirement for employers to retain these employees for at least 12 months.
6. **Aiding 120 victims of family violence from 2011 to 2015:** This involves a monthly support of 15,000 denars for a 6-month period, with the commitment from employers to retain these employees for at least 12 months.
7. **Supporting the employment of 800 people with disabilities from 2011 to 2015:** Monthly support is provided based on the average of 20 wages or the average of 40 wages for blind individuals and those with physical disabilities requiring a wheelchair. After employment, employers must pay 9 consecutive salaries before submitting a refund request to the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia (EARM).
8. **Providing financial assistance through microcredit to small and medium enterprises.**
9. **Offering employment subsidies for individuals under 29 years old.**
10. **Providing professional training to meet labor market demands.**

Additionally, amendments to the minimum wage law, approved in 2014, outline a three-phase salary increase over a dynamic three-year period. The minimum wage is set to reach 10,080 denars by March 2016. Employers are obligated to implement these increases. It's important to note that, alongside annual programs combating poverty and social exclusion, local employment action plans are developed in North Macedonia. These plans largely mirror the measures of the national action plan, with specific considerations for certain municipalities and the adoption of national employment plans for Roma communities based on municipality-specific needs.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, our exploration has highlighted the pivotal role that media plays in contemporary society. Its profound impact is particularly evident in shaping the perspectives of various social groups, largely influenced by the widespread use of diverse social networks. With nearly every age group having internet access, individuals can easily navigate platforms featuring job advertisements, competitions in both public and private sectors, and job opportunities tailored to specific social groups.

Social media facilitates effortless access to employment opportunities, providing a streamlined way for individuals to stay informed about job vacancies and their durations. This accessibility, enabled by the internet, positively influences the lives of citizens and specific social groups seeking employment in both private and public sectors.

Structural unemployment emerges as a formidable challenge in the realm of joblessness, representing the most complex type to address. Amid the fluctuations in demand and supply,

distinct groups of unemployed individuals face challenges in finding or reacquiring employment, sometimes encountering seemingly insurmountable hurdles.

The terms 'vulnerable groups,' 'marginalized groups,' 'socially vulnerable groups,' and 'excluded social groups' may differ slightly, but they all signify similar challenges regarding employment opportunities. These groups, whether labeled as such, face significant barriers to entry or success in the labor market. Consequently, they grapple with social problems, risks, stress, and vulnerabilities. In light of this, society bears a profound responsibility to implement specific measures and methods across all facets of social life to address the unique needs of these groups and foster inclusivity.

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