

Decision-making factors for job choice in Romanian rural areas.

Employment on the strand of options, capabilities and access.

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Abstract

Rural area represents the population with a high work capacity, but with less employment opportunities than in urban areas, so in order to have a decent job 5 (five) needs are referred to: working conditions should be safe, both physically and mentally, people should have access to medical facilities, health, working hours should be ones in which you can rest and have time for family and compensation should be acceptable for the work done.

The employment opportunities that people have differ depending on the environment they come from, so in rural areas the job opportunities are discrete, as it is the quality in work, both of them depending strongly on the area characteristics - whether it is developed or underdeveloped- and by its infrastructure, always considering that agriculture is most increased activity in these areas.

The study aims to map and depict the occupational situation of people living in Romanian rural areas, coping with limited job opportunities, compared to those living in towns and cities, as well as how people in rural areas choose their jobs, how the labour market has influenced them to find a suitable job and where they can get or acquire the skills they need.

As people in rural areas choose to migrate, the population is an ageing one and over time, villages will depopulate and the labour force and human resources will shrink.

Keywords: rural area; job satisfaction; staff motivation; migration

Introduction

In rural areas unemployment is prevalent because there is no access to a good infrastructure and young people find it difficult to find a suitable job, relying on unpaid and even inefficient activities, low living standards in rural areas and poverty are two factors considered as risk factors from which economic problems result (Patache, Chiru, Bebeșelea, 2008).

Due to the large discrepancy between the labour market and education, young people find it difficult to find a job and the lack confidence becomes prevalent; few are those who manage to develop personally and become entrepreneurs, working the land or doing other activities specific to the rural area they come from (Preda, Chirculescu, 2016).

Financial stability is also an important determinant because it leads children to take up employment much too early because the family does not have the necessary income and as a consequence, education is interrupted. Health influences the employability of people, especially among those in rural areas, in agriculture working conditions are difficult, and another activity or another job requires too much effort, being at a great distance from home, people who have health problems negatively determine the level of employment.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions conducted a research for the quality of work at national level, standing that if employment is decreasing in rural areas, because it is a natural labour market that is based on agriculture, in urban areas it is a normal labour market that works according to EU requirements (Mocanu, Serban, 2015).

The decision to migrate is often influenced by interpersonal relationships, family, access to infrastructure, the impossibility of finding a job, the relief of the country that does not allow quick access to cities where most organizations are located and the labour market that is less developed in some areas, especially in rural areas. So the EU offers all individuals who choose to migrate a decent living by providing housing and social aid on condition you are employed (Ionescu, 2006).

Analysis and results

The main objective of the study was to identify the main factors that lead to the choice of employment in rural areas, being a more disadvantaged area with poor infrastructure. From the main objective, specific objectives resulted, such as:

- Identification of the reasons and factors that influence the interviewee in choosing a particular job;
- Identification of the job opportunities that the interviewee has in the area where he/she lives as well as the skills he/she needs when he/she wants to get a job;
- Identification of job satisfaction and the possibility of emigrating to another country for a more satisfying job;
- Identification of the future plan in terms of job satisfaction, education, remuneration as well as the proposals that the interviewee has for change in these respects.

For this study, we used the semi-structured interview as a tool, because it is a qualitative research technique that gives you detailed information about the interviewees; it was conducted face to face and by phone call when the interviewees did not want a physical meeting to be subjected to the questionnaire, and the probability that the information obtained is erroneous is very low due to the fact that you can observe gestures, emotions in communication (including variations of the voice tone), as well as facial expressions of the interviewee. The interview consisted of several questions that were organized according to the five objectives that we mentioned above, where all interviewees were allowed to express their own perception with reference to employability and everything related to the labour market, as well as their own beliefs and desires regarding the future and their personality.

The interviews were carried out in rural areas, and the localities were Banloc and Ofseșița in Timiș county, Romania, the interviews were conducted face-to-face as well as by telephone.

Through the interview, the data that are collected have a higher degree of veracity, because they are recorded face to face or by telephone, being asked questions related to experience, personal data, future perspective, skills that the interviewee has, but also other aspects related to the topic of discussion. The environment in which these data are collected must be pleasant and peaceful, so that later all data can be processed faithfully and correctly and all answers can be dealt with as objectively as possible (Șandor, 2013).

The population studied is the *rural population*, regardless of the interviewee's level of education or position, with the aim of obtaining data about their job satisfaction and the main factors they consider when they want to get a job.

The sampling method we considered was to choose people who have been in the labour market for more than 10 years, who have not changed their job so far, in order to have the same seniority and observe similarities in the interview applied, and people who have 1-5 years of experience in the labour market, who have just been employed for a year and who have changed their job often because they were not satisfied. Some of them even emigrated and then returned back home.

The results of this study are presented below. These results are structured by discussion themes as follows:

Employee profile

Starting from the skills that the interviewees had learned while studying, the answers were very different, some of the interviewees answered in the affirmative (D.S: "...I learnt certain work techniques with which I developed my skills and I was able to go

further, to get to perform in my job that I had"; N.A: " Yes, I learnt everything related to mechanics, and nowadays it helps me in my job..." and others felt that they had not learnt any skills during their studies that would help them in finding a job and even in the job they have (C.D: "One is what I learnt in High School and another is what I am currently teaching"; B.M: "Honestly no skills, it didn't help me at all what I learned in vocational school for the current job I have.").

Regarding the interviewees' strengths and weaknesses (item three), the answers were very similar, most of the interviewees felt that they were: C.L "hardworking, punctual and I know how to organize myself well, and as a weakness I am a bit emotional..."; N.A: "I am a resourceful, hardworking person, and as a weak point I am too emotional."

What stands out is that most people consider that they are more disadvantaged because they live in the countryside and not in the city, because it is very difficult to find a job in the village and transport is a problem (C.L: "Yes, because it was difficult for me to find a well paid job, in the city there are more jobs..."; D.S: "Yes, this job affects us in the village a lot because we depend a lot on transport, transport has lost a lot in recent years."), only one interviewee answered that he does not consider himself disadvantaged living in the village and not in the city (N.A: "No, I don't consider myself a more disadvantaged person living in the village because I live in a clean air environment and in terms of jobs it is very close.").

The main reasons and influencing factors that led interviewees to choose a particular job.

Regarding the influencing factors that led the interviewees to choose a certain job or to leave, we started from a first question, important in our development, and the majority answered negatively, because they do not consider that education has a role in the vocational training of students and in guiding and preparing them for a future job. Thus, B.M considers the following: "Education in Romania honestly does not help with absolutely nothing, at least on this side, i.e. everything is self-motivated I do what the teacher tells me and as the teacher says, I am not left to do as I want and in the style I should be left, so it's really zero.", and in addition to this comes C.L who says: "At the moment I do not think that education in Romania shapes students for the future job because they are not professionally prepared, putting more emphasis on the theoretical than on the practical side.". A positive opinion about the influence of education in Romania in shaping students to find a job that is suitable and for which students have already formed all the necessary skills from school is that of M.F who says: "Honestly I really think that in Romania school is done properly that if students are interested, because they are shaped properly from the first classes, from primary school." and D.S who says that: "So the Romanian school is a pretty good school, I think, that teaches a lot of things although some things have been lost over time, but

nevertheless it is preserved and children in Romania are quite prepared, they become quite prepared for a job...”.

In relation to finding a better job than in Romania by emigrating to another country with a more developed infrastructure, opinions are divided; some of the interviewees consider that it is a very good solution to go to another country especially for young people who want to have a better future, so D.D. confesses that “A solution in finding a better job abroad, I think that for most young people without school it is a better solution, young people with school can still find a good job here, to earn good money...”, the same considers B. A “Yes, of course, first of all materially speaking it is not comparable, then there at whatever job you go to there is no stress like here...”, and others consider that in the country it is much better and that you can find well paid jobs and suitable jobs when you really want them, like M. F who says: “Yes, emigrating to another country is a better solution, but personally I think that in our country you can also have a job that satisfies you because after all if everyone didn’t run after money and more money they would realise that they can be happy and fulfilled in our country on a decent salary”. and C.D who says: “No, because you can find a nice place in Romania if you want to”.

Concerning how the interviewees chose their job and what determined and influenced them to choose their current job, half of the interviewees confessed that they chose their job based on distance and financial aspect, C.L confessed that: “First of all, in my professional career I was determined by the transport that is provided from my workplace to where I live, and secondly the distance is only 10 km. to my workplace”. and N.A: “I chose my job according to the distance from home, being only 7Km away, it is a stable and well paid job”. The other half confessed that they chose their job based on the environment and what they like to do, C.D said that “Well it was determined by the fact that I work with plants and gardening, which I like very much.”, and M.F confessed that, “Yeah, I can’t say I remember exactly when I chose to go into HR but I know I looked hard at the areas I could go into and realised HR was right for me.”

Regarding the motivation for changing/staying at work, the interviewees mentioned that the reasons for wanting to leave their old job were low pay, too long distance, lack of opportunities for advancement and an atmosphere that was not pleasant (G.R: “So, first of all it would be the distance being too long to work, me working at a gas station in Timisoara and having to travel about 100Km round trip”; B.M: “Like every employee I think the financial factor is the first thing that is quite good or even tempting and secondly the commute”) or that they didn’t have to change their job because they are just starting out or because they have been at their current job for more than ten years and they are doing very well at the moment, that’s why they decided not to change it (N.A: “I didn’t change my job, I have the same job for more than 12 years,

I stayed because I am close to home and because it is a good job”.; C.M: “I haven’t changed my job, being at the beginning of my career I’m doing very well in this job.”).

Regarding the changes the interviewees would make in their workplace if they were ‘the bosses’, the answers were similar, and what they would like to change are things related to the organisation of the staff and the place where the daily work is carried out, as well as the responsibility in terms of cleanliness, each member of the work team or within the organisation where they work being able to clean the area where they work. Thus, in relation to these aspects mentioned, G.R. says “First of all I would make each employee responsible for the cleanliness of the workplace”; N.A. states that “The changes I would make are to better organise the tasks we receive at work” and C. L confesses that she would change the way of working, referring to the organization at work, to the remuneration according to the work done: “First of all I would change the way we work, I would like to be more organized, to be better paid, much better compared to the work we do”.

With regard to the impressions said by colleagues, about the interviewees, they would like the following to be said about them: D.D: “Three things, well first of all I think my kindness, my care for them, and thirdly the help I can give at any time.”; C.D: “Colleagues would say about me that I am communicative, industrious and respectful” and B.M: “The three things: I am determined, restless and persevering.”.

In terms of respondents’ perceptions of pay, all respondents answered that it is a decision making factor they take into account when they want a change such as looking for a job or changing jobs, so N.A mentions “Yes, because money is the main factor I would go by if I wanted to change my job”., M.F: “Yes, it’s a factor that everyone takes into account when changing their job, why, because many things are getting more expensive, you can’t live if you don’t have a decent salary” and G.R: “Yes, it’s an important factor for me, that’s why I also decided to leave my old job, because apart from the very long distance, the remuneration was not commensurate with the work I was doing”.

Job opportunities and skills needed

For future employees, as well as for those already employed in a company or any other institution, there is a need for them to acquire certain skills over time that they can put into practice when they are hired or at work. So, when asked about the skills needed to do the job, in any kind of job, the answers were somewhat different, few people answered that they did not have the skills needed to do any job, including C.L who mentions “No, because I am only qualified as a tailor and I don’t think I could do anything else” and C.M who is of the same opinion “No, in the field I work in you have to have certain skills depending on the department you are assigned to and trained”.

Those who answered in the affirmative to the question considered that they had the right skills and competences for any type of work and situation, as follows: B.R: "Yes, if I put myself in the employer's shoes I would consider that I would fulfill all the tasks in any job". and B.M: "Honestly yes, I think I have the skills to fulfill any purpose and any job in the workplace".

Regarding the thing that makes them stand out from other people, the respondents clearly confessed that hard work, seriousness, organization, as well as perseverance at work are the main things that characterize and distinguish them from other people. D.D said that "Hard work, that's what makes me stand out, I can't just sit at work, I work I do my job and I'm always aware that I'm moving forward with it." and M.F thinks: "Ambition and the fact that I am very organised."

With reference to the job opportunities that people have in rural areas compared to the opportunities that exist in urban areas, all interviewees were of the opinion that in rural areas job opportunities are almost non-existent, jobs are hard to find and people are very dependent on transport to get to work. The answers were similar and one can see similarities such as the fact that there are more factories in the city than in the village and it is much easier to find a decent and well-paid job. M.F. says: "Job opportunities in the rural area are almost non-existent in the sense that we have state institutions, the town hall, schools, hospitals, but that's it, we don't have factories in the area, we don't have anything, infrastructure, nothing", and G.R. says: "No, there are more jobs in the urban area than in the rural area, and people have diversity in terms of jobs".

Regarding the skills and competences needed for a future job or even the job that respondents currently have, the majority of respondents referred to the need for education, the desire to get a job, considering teamwork which is essential. C.L confesses that, "A man would need the ability to cope and be adaptable to any situation within the company where he works and be resilient to stress." and M.F says: "Teamwork is the first thing, you need to find in a man inside an organization and also to be organized and work under pressure that is what they are looking for lately."

In order to emphasise skills in relation to the work done in the workplace, opinions were divided, some felt that at the time of employment you should already have a set of skills and competences that you have acquired during your studies or through other circumstances, such as B.R who felt that "These skills the employee should acquire before they are hired, many of them you are born with". and M.F who says: "There are some skills that you have to have already before being employed, now it depends on what job we are talking about, if we are talking about my field, we must of course be sociable and be a pleasant person for others". Others consider that skills are competences that the employee learns while working, when practice is needed at

work, as C.M. says: "I think most skills are acquired at work, when you put them into practice and practise what you have learned." and C.D: "I believe that the employee learns the skills after they get employed and practice what they have learned".

Regarding opportunities for advancement at work, most of them answered that there are such opportunities which makes them optimistic and perseverant because they can advance at work, as D.S: "Yes, we have a lot of opportunities at work, we can advance, it's clear, if you persevere and your workplace has advancement opportunities for that type of work, you can advance, you can advance, so you have this opportunity, you just must have the will." and C.L: "Yes, there is the possibility of advancement, I became a line manager, but because of the stress, I went back to my original job as a garment maker". Only D.D, B.R and M.F answered that they have no possibilities of advancement at work because: B.R has a little time before retirement: "No, now I have no opportunities for advancement at work because I am approaching retirement".; D.D works in horticulture and there is no opportunity for advancement yet: "At the moment there are no opportunities for advancement at work, we will see what will happen". and M.F works in a small company as a recruiting analyst and there is no such opportunity for advancement: "Not at my current job, but if I were in a larger organisation, yes".

In relation to job satisfaction, the majority of responses were negative, as respondents do not feel that they are advantaged and satisfied in their current job, due to living in the village, the job being far away from them and being very dependent on transport. The salary is not satisfactory either, they feel that they work much more compared to the remuneration they receive. Thus, D.S considers that he is: "50% satisfied because as I told you we depend a lot on transport and then we accept anything so-so, but we are satisfied because we do our job properly, we are reassured, we know we have a job to go and earn our daily living". and M.F. says: "I am satisfied with the work I have now but not with the job itself because the company is very small, we lack customers, the salary is very low as I said at the beginning, these would be the reasons". Only N.A and C.M consider that they are satisfied at work because C.M is a nurse and this is her first job: "Yes, I am satisfied because I am well paid in relation to the work I do and I enjoy working with people" and N.a considers that her current job gives her stability: "Yes, because it is a stable job that gives you the satisfaction of a balance where the boss can't kick you out from one day to the next for no reason".

Some people are not fortunate enough to work in a pleasant environment where the employer offers all the benefits an employee would need, so when it comes to certain benefits, the responses were negative, with interviewees believing that the pay is not enough and that the organisation where they work does not offer any additional bonuses apart from meal vouchers. M.F says: "No, the employer doesn't offer anything at all, coming from a multinational where I was offered benefits such

as even the morning coffee matters if the company gives it to you or not, here they don't offer anything at all, no coffee, no water, no, I don't know, the meal vouchers are 15 lei where you don't find them in other companies". and C.D: "No, they don't offer me so many benefits, the vouchers have been introduced recently and the salary is not very high". Only two of the respondents answered that they are satisfied with the benefits that the employer offers, namely: G.R "Well yes, I for one am satisfied the benefits I can say are satisfactory namely by receiving holiday vouchers, receiving holiday bonuses, plus many other bonuses." and N.A "Yes, I am satisfied because they offer holiday bonuses, the salary is given on time and I receive holiday vouchers once a year".

When the pay is not satisfactory and people do not find a job that meets their needs (to be closer to home, transport to be provided, benefits through bonuses) they think of looking for a job in another country with a more developed infrastructure and where they can be financially fulfilled. From this point of view, the answers were divided, as half of the interviewees answered that they had thought of going to another country because of the multiple benefits that other countries offer, D.D confessing that he had been to Germany: "I have been to another country, it's not what it seems here in Romania it's ok, but it's not such a big difference", and M.F saying that: Yes, in another company yes, in another country no, but I'm still waiting a bit so I don't leave too soon.. The other half say that they have not thought about leaving their current job and that they have not thought about leaving the country to look for another job, G.R says that: "I haven't thought about changing my job yet, it's very ok because my current job pretty much gives me everything I need", and N.A confesses that "No, I haven't thought about it because I love job stability".

Emigration for more satisfying work

Most people choose to emigrate when they want a more satisfying job that offers a better living. Thus, in terms of looking for a job in another country, most of them answered that they had not thought of looking for another job in another country because of the distance from home, B.M: "Not very often, I don't really agree with going to another country, especially with us young people because we are the engine of the country, we make everything possible now and we should fight for our right". Few respondents thought of emigrating for a better living because the salary is more attractive and the benefits are more: D.D: "Well I thought about it for about 4-5 years, I've been abroad and I turned back, finally I managed to leave, I've been gone for about 2 years outside, I've been gone to Germany, I've worked for a year and a half on the construction site".

Although most of the answers were negative when referring to emigrating to another country, when it comes to the opportunities offered by foreign employers, the answers

were positive, with foreign employers offering more benefits and opportunities than those in Romania, as follows: C.M says “Yes I think they offer more opportunities because they have a more developed infrastructure than in Romania” and G.R mentions that “Yes, because they offer a considerable monthly income and a more decent living”.

Projection into the future

As regards the respondents’ projection into the future and how they relate to education, health and the remuneration they receive now and in a few years’ time, they expressed their own opinion and most of them wished for changes, that in the future employees would be better paid, that they would be offered better health conditions and that in education more emphasis would be put on the professional development of students. Two of the most relevant answers are: “From a financial point of view I would propose that the state pays more attention to the employee and the money we receive especially to pensions, from an education point of view it should focus more milt on children and their practice in firms to see what a job entails, and in hospitals, they should be some milt cleaner where people get what they deserve”(C.I.) and M. F said: “So what I propose to change in the future given the profession that I will have or I already have is to evolve much more in courses that will help me in the workplace, what I would change in terms of education or this part of employment would be that, in our country, the emphasis is on the experience that you have and this is a big mistake, indeed a lot of companies offer interships for students but they don’t cover the number of students and we end up with a lot of us having nowhere to get a job when we get out of university and that’s a weakness in our country, and from a health point of view, I really don’t know what I could say here to be honest.”

Conclusions

This study was developed in order to find out as much information as possible about people living in rural areas and how they manage to find satisfactory employment, given that they live in a more deprived area where jobs are hard to find and people depend on transport. We wanted to find out the main reasons why they want to leave the country in search of a better job and by what criteria they choose their place of work, given that the population we observed lives far from the urban area.

Thus, some information was found out about the two groups of people, those who have more than ten years in the job, aged between 30-60 years, they were complacent to stay in that job although they are not satisfied with the pay and benefits that the employer offers, because they live in the rural area and they found a decent job, some close to home, some further away from home but with transport to get to work

and back home. The second group is made up of people who have been in work for between zero and five years and are aged between 20 and 30, who are young people eager to work and with skills that require training, either acquired during their studies or on the job. Some of these people feel that they are satisfied at work because they are starting out and want to gain experience, while others feel that they are underpaid compared to the duties they carry at their work, the atmosphere is not pleasant, and have changed jobs before.

There are some similarities identified between the two groups of interviewees, such as: in choosing a job they depend very much on transport; they have thought of emigrating to another country to find a more satisfying job and then return to their country after some time; they are not satisfied with the pay and benefits offered by the employer and the organisation at work, they are easily adaptable to any situation and are resourceful at work.

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