



Young University Students and the Difficulties they Face in Entering the Job Market in the Municipality of Três Rios, Brazil

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Abstract: This article sought to analyze the difficulty of insertion of young college students in the labor market. This is an exploratory research of qualitative approach, which was developed with students from a Federal University in the city of Três Rios/RJ. The study sought to understand the problems that students face when entering the job market, and the sample consisted of 22 students from the Administration course. Based on the data collected, it was possible to see that the difficulty in entering the job market is present in the lives of students in general. The absence of previous professional experience and the recurrence of referral practices in the region make it difficult to get a job position. Moreover, it is clear that there is an inequality of opportunities between genders, because the job openings available in the city are mostly destined to men.

Keywords: Youth; Job market; University students.

1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of a globalized society has brought about structural changes in production systems, bringing as an implication a constant search for competitiveness among companies. In this scenario, a process of drastic and continuous redefinition of the labor market has begun globally, especially in Brazil. As a consequence, the difficulty of expanding the demand for Brazilian labor at a pace adequate to absorb people in the labor market has led to high unemployment rates, affecting mainly younger people (ROCHA, 2008).

Young people are the most affected by the adverse effects of the labor market, since these individuals are at a disadvantage compared to others because they have little work experience. Thus, unemployment among young people tends to be usually higher than that of the general population, which has caused concern in several countries around the world, since employability is a social problem that directly affects the economy of nations (CAMARANO, 2006).

In Brazil, as Pastore (2021, p. 1) reiterates, "for the average rate of 11.2% that reaches the entire labor force, unemployment among young people aged 18 to 24 years reaches 27%. Nevertheless, if one takes into account the underutilized who are unemployed, have given up looking for a job or work a reduced workload in the country, 42% of these people are also young.

Given this context, this study sought as a general objective to understand the difficulties that students at a public university, located in the municipality of Três Rios, face or have faced to get a space in the labor market, especially in the search for the first professional experience. The study will take into consideration both the perspectives of employed young people and those of young people who have not yet managed to enter the job market.

This research is justified in light of the situations faced by young people in entering the labor market. In this sense, understanding the main difficulties faced by students at a public university in the city of Três Rios/RJ will provide theoretical and practical subsidies that may contribute to the development of programs aimed at such individuals in their placements in the labor market. Furthermore, the

results of the research will help organizations to understand how the market is set for this new generation that is entering the job market, as well as for young people, to consider the barriers imposed on them.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The amount of a country's working-age population is an important issue, as it directly impacts the economy of a given location. Besides working age, another factor that is directly linked to economic rates and job vacancy rates are the political decisions of a government that jointly shape the current days and the future (SANTOS; GIMENEZ, 2015).

Young people are a part of the population that is increasingly seeking insertion in the job market. In Brazil, despite the growth in access to education and professionalization, young Brazilians face several difficulties in entering the labor market. This is due to the fact of a major economic downturn in the country, thus leading to the closure of several job openings (SANTOS; GIMENEZ, 2015).

According to Thomé, Telmo, and Koller (2010), the precariousness of labor relations, unemployment, poverty, and exclusion are factors that influence the vulnerability of young people entering the labor market in Brazil, because these aspects end up generating suffering to these individuals and a feeling of inability to get a job. Added to this, the prejudice and the precariousness of education by the school system generate even more suffering to these people, since they are in search of survival and financial independence. For these reasons, young people are prone to submit themselves to deteriorating work situations.

Also according to the authors, since childhood a longing for some profession is built, either by the influence of parents' representations or simply by identification, thus leading to the idealization of a professional career. However, when one reaches the age to start treading the path in the job market, many obstacles arise and one realizes that this beginning of the professional path is not as simple as it seemed when one was a child.

Authors like Silva and Kassouf (2002) reiterate that the percentage of unemployed young people is double in relation to the public between 25 and 64 years old. Therefore, more work experience is required than education. In this context, it becomes evident that the labor market values practice more than study.

Professional insertion is linked to a historical context, which deals with political and economic issues that are mediators for the relationship between education, work, and remuneration. Based on this, young people who seek an insertion in the labor market have some items that distinguish them from each other that can be points in favor or against, such as: their life trajectory, social and cultural issues, and their performance in school environment (DUBAR, 2001).

For Oliveira and Piccinini (2012), the concept of this insertion can also be separated by three dimensions: individual, collective and historical. The individual dimension focuses on each individual, their choices and professional experiences, i.e., it is linked to the inherent characteristics of each person, thus encompassing the hard and soft skills. On the other hand, the collective dimension shows that the experiences linked to insertion in the labor market can be lived by a certain generation or group of professionals. Ultimately, the historical dimension should be highlighted, which is shaped according to what is experienced by the individual throughout his or her life, including elements that delimit space and time through items such as politics, education, changes in the needs of the labor market, the vision of people management, and others.

Therefore, the insertion of young people in the labor market goes beyond supply and demand, also adding the factors of each subject throughout his or her life and professional trajectory (DUBAR, 2001).

A portion of the young population encounters serious difficulties in professional insertion and, according to Wickert (2006, p. 265):

[...] young people think that they didn't take enough courses, that they didn't qualify, that they didn't study in adequate places, that they don't individually meet the demands of the market. But sometimes they realize, in a more critical position, that even when they try to do the right things, complying with market standards, they still don't get hired.

For Wickert (2006, p. 269), these young people "are adrift professionally and cling to any possibility of insertion. For this reason, they have the feeling that they will never get where they really want to go, which causes a lot of dissatisfaction, stress and anxiety. This is what happens in part of our country according to the author, because the young people who find themselves unmotivated end up committing some crimes to support themselves or getting involved in other illegal activities to give some meaning to life.

Thus, unemployment contributes to the rupture among young people of having a healthy living condition, quality education, and a good job, which sends a baggage of discouragement and lack of perspective of a quality of life that triggers a series of problem factors such as frustration, depression, anxiety, increased consumption of alcohol, drugs, early pregnancy, and prostitution (SILVA; KASSOUF, 2002).

In this perspective, "with low future perspectives, the young person starts to connect to other values, such as violence, drug addiction, individualism (WICKERT, 2006, p. 262)." Based on these aspects, the psychological of young people who go through this transition from students to work activities is damaged, because this trajectory requires the focus of building adult life, which, most of the time, is not an easy and positive transition. Influences such as lack of support from school and family, the need for the individual to build their own identity, and the lack of status as a worker generate feelings of incompetence, insecurity, apathy, disorganization, and consequently illness, and even escape from reality (MELO, 2007).

In view of the above, professional insertion programs are necessary, such as reflection activities and learning about other ways of working, such as cooperative work and solidarity economy. For such young people to be able to withstand this phase, there should be the creation of mentoring programs at universities with the application in contexts of how to be skilled in decision-making, correct perceptions about the labor market, and personal development for certain issues (VOLKER; SCHERDIEN; OLIVEIRA, 2019).

The adoption of these aids could guarantee a smoother passage to adulthood for young people, allowing them to overcome, with more social support, the obstacles related to the transition period from university to the job market, since this experience is one of the most remarkable for youth (MELO, 2007).

From Parizzi's (2020) perspective, it becomes fundamental to apply public policies that contribute to the insertion of young people in the formal labor market, especially for those who are socially and economically vulnerable. With the Apprenticeship Law, for example, young people can be included in the labor market, thus developing their professional skills and abilities.

As Ribeiro et. al (2021, p. 40439) reiterate, it can be seen that young people in situations of social and economic vulnerability "are the most affected by the difficulties of access to education, work, and leisure, due to several inequalities that go through income distribution, social class, racism, and gender, among others.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research was characterized as exploratory with a qualitative approach, which allows various aspects inherent in the lives of human beings to be analyzed through an integrated approach to the phenomena that occurred, their determination/scenario and the people involved (GODOY, 1995). The research was applied with undergraduates of the Administration course at a Federal University located in the city of Três Rios.

The University in question has four undergraduate courses available (Administration, Environmental Management, Law and Economics), and, in this research, the sample was limited to students in the Administration course. The proposal was to present surveys of the students in relation to internship programs or work placements. The approach involved 22 students, 11 female and 11 male. As a selection criterion, undergraduate students from the 1st period to the 8th period were selected, not classified by age, but by availability in the job market and experiences acquired soon after entering college.

The tool used to approach this research was a questionnaire, with six questions, with a deadline of one

week to obtain the final result and an average of the opportunities that these students have in the job market. The questionnaire was composed of discursive questions, in order to obtain greater detail about the perceptions of the interviewees.

For the application of the questionnaire, structured interviews of exploratory nature were carried out, as well as systematic observations. According to Gerhardt and Silveira (2009), in the structured interview, a previously established script is followed, where the questions are predetermined. The goal is to obtain different answers to the same question, allowing them to be compared. Moreover, in systematic observation, the researcher does not integrate himself into the observed group, remaining outside. Thus, the researcher witnesses the fact, but does not participate in it and lets himself get involved in the situations, that is, he plays more the role of a spectator.

During the interview, data was collected about the students' current work situation, and whether they are facing or have faced difficulties in entering the labor market. If yes, what are these difficulties. To this end, we established a script of questions to be answered, but the interviewee was also given freedom to talk about the issue at hand. As for the observation, there was a closer contact with the interviewees, which helped to collect data and information relevant to our research.

The research took place in the second semester of the year 2022 and, in order to facilitate data transcription, the interviews were recorded using a cell phone. The interviews lasted an average of 7 minutes and 43 seconds.

After data collection, the data were analyzed through the technique of discourse analysis which, according to Orlandi (1999), is a technique that seeks to highlight the importance of meanings and representations of the subjects. In this view, the data were analyzed through the following steps: text selection, reading of transcripts, coding, data analysis, and discourse analytical transcription.

4. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

To apply the questionnaire related to the insertion of the students of the Administration course at a Federal University in the city of Três Rios/RJ, 22 students from different periods of the course were asked, 11 male and 11 female, to answer the questions written in it.

Within the form, it was possible to separate two situations: people who perform some kind of paid activity and those who do not. When it comes to the students already inserted in the labor market, it was possible to observe that they are mostly men and their activities are in the CLT and internship regime. The working time of these students varied from two weeks to 10 years and most of the companies they work for are located in and around the city of Três Rios.

The students who are employed consider that college makes it easier to enter the job market and that, in addition, it is necessary to seek other types of improvement and have some personal skills, such as proactivity, good communication, dedication, and responsibility, as evidenced by the reports transcribed below.

The University helps, to a certain degree, to enter the job market, especially if it is a Federal University like UFRRJ. But I believe that companies go beyond a person who is in higher education, they seek, above all, communicative people who know how to deal with the unexpected. After all, there is a huge difference between theory and practice (E1).

I believe that the University helps, but having higher education nowadays is basically a basic requirement to get a job. I must always look for courses to acquire more knowledge in order to obtain a competitive differential. The Administration course requires decision making and, because of this, I believe that the University alone does not prepare the student for the job market (E18).

In a second step, it was possible to analyze the cases of students who have not yet found a job, the majority of whom are women. Considering all those who are not gainfully employed, it is possible to see that, just like those who are already employed, they also consider education, improvement, and personal competences as facilitators for applying for a job position.

However, there are some reservations about this reality in the city of Três Rios, both for employed and unemployed youth, since the practice of referrals would be habitual for local companies, which leads to not considering the personal skills and qualifications of the candidate in the first place, but rather the degree of proximity between the applicant and the recruiter. In this sense, the recurrence of referrals when it comes to getting a job was the main factor of difficulty cited by the interviewees for entering the labor market.

Moreover, the women emphasized that many jobs offered in the city are only for men, which ends up preventing women from entering the job market, as can be seen in the report below from interviewees E14 and E17:

Companies often only offer vacancies for men. This occurs mainly in vacancies in the area of finance, which is the area that I intend to work in as a professional. Brazil has faced a patriarchal period throughout history and I realize that we women face the remnants of this period even today with gender inequality in the labor market. There is a broad discussion about harassment and wage inequality between men and women, but there is something even deeper behind it, which is precisely the lack of vacancies offered to women for high hierarchy positions (E14)."

I am currently focused only on studying, because I intend to do an academic master's degree. But on the CIEE (Centro de Integração Empresa-Escola - Company-School Integration Center) site, I notice that they are looking for more young men than women, and this (being a man) is even a requirement for certain positions, which ends up being a difficulty for women. In my circle of friends, many female friends still don't have jobs, and the few that do, are in positions as administrative assistants. My male friends work in the Human Resources, Marketing and Finance areas, that is, in higher positions (E17).

It can be observed that there is a gender inequality concerning the labor market in the municipality, since job openings are mostly destined to men. Most organizations in the city seek, as a prerequisite, to recruit males, even though the position's function is compatible for both genders. This shows, among other aspects, that patriarchal remnants still permeate the region's job market, thus evidencing that men are more likely to acquire a job than women.

The main impacts of unemployment on the lives of students who have not entered the labor market include: demotivation, stress, anguish, and demotivation. It can be observed that the implications of unemployment go beyond economic aspects, encompassing also psychological complications that are aggravated due to the impossibility of entering the labor market.

Regarding young employees, it was possible to verify that those who work and study emphasized that reconciling the two routines is quite difficult. In this sense, even though these young people are inserted in the labor market, they are affected by the difficulty in reconciling academic activities with work, which causes wear and tear. As respondent E19 emphasized:

Even with a job, there is a difficulty in reconciling studies with work. As an intern, I have a smaller workload, but the demands are very high. I have stayed up all night to study, and this affects my psyche a lot, because I'm afraid I won't be able to take a good test.

When comparing the perspectives of unemployed young people with those who are inserted in the job market, we notice that the meanings of the interviewees are similar, both in terms of the factors that facilitate entering the job market, and in terms of the difficulties encountered in finding a job.

Finally, we can highlight the most important points made in this work, which are: most of the people who perform some kind of paid activity are men; being in higher education is not enough to guarantee a job opening; improvement in areas involving technology is the main facilitating factor for employment admission; seeking to improve the personal skills most demanded by the current market is fundamental; and, finally, that in the city of Três Rios being favored by people who refer you to job openings is something recurrent.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Using the qualitative approach, through the exploratory field research, relevant results were obtained regarding situations that can become opportune in the job market for those who have graduated, since college is a facilitator.

Thus, it is notoriously difficult to get job opportunities in the city of Três Rios/RJ if you do not have any higher education, because according to what was mentioned in the interview, the companies in the city are increasingly demanding, and mainly asking for a degree on the resume, either in progress or completed.

In addition, what prevents the timely employment would be the lack of professional preparation, such as vocational courses, language courses, or even previously acquired experiences that do not contribute in some way to the desired position. In the city of Três Rios, the guarantee of a job position would be through the indication of a relative who works inside the organization, which frustrates

unemployed but qualified young people even more.

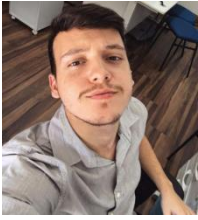
It was observed that women face even more difficulties to get their first job than men, since job openings in the city are mostly destined to males. This confirms that the remnants of patriarchal society still permeate the job market in Três Rios, where gender inequality further exacerbates women's access to work.

Based on the articles about the insertion of young people in the job market and comparing it with what was collected in the interviews, it can be concluded that there is an imminent difficulty for students to reach their labor goals. There are points that may go against what the young graduate expects, such as their life trajectory, social and cultural issues, and their performance in the school environment. Thus, young people start to believe that they have not prepared enough and that they are not ready yet, becoming distressed and unmotivated.

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