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Psychological Assessment of the Wellbeing and Economic Related Issues of the Albanian Population Living in the Pandemics

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Abstract: As Covid19 pandemic exposed all people to be living in the pandemic, psychological concern was raised referring to vulnerable populations who could be developing psychological concerns. Therefore, during November 2022 an assessment survey was launched online aiming to screen and assess the psychological wellbeing of Albanian adults referring to their level of education and economic relatedness. Objectives of the study consist in (i) assessing the socio-demographic and economic data referring to the perceived financial expectancies and hopefulness; (ii) screen the psychological concerns related to mental health and wellbeing in relation with their economy; (iii) assess comfortability when meeting others with levels of education. Data was processed through SPSS and was analyzed using non-parametric Chi square tests and crosstabulation. Results showed that economic problems are relevant to the level of personal revenues. Sensitivity towards mental health problems is detected with the rise of the level of education. People's capacities to resuming life just like before the pandemic has no relationship with personal revenues. Still, people report that meeting the others does not make them feel better and calmer, and makes people feel happier only in minor cases. Conclusions show that social distance could have taught people that being physically distant from others, has their own benefits.

Keywords: Psychological wellbeing, Mental health, Education level, Revenues level, Economy.

Introduction

The technical committee of experts for the Covid19 outbreak launched the Reopening strategy which started in May 2020 considering that 90% of the business and activities would open except public transportation and gathering of more than 10 people. The opening happened progressively where all activities including universities and working in person was accompanied by an inclusive vaccination campaign. In October 2022 the decision of the committee of experts decided that "even though there has been a raise in infection rate, restrictions will remain the same" referring to the curfew from 23.00-6.00 am, holding masks, and other conditions of vaccination issues. The spike of the pandemic was worldwide and engaged many research in different countries to investigate wellbeing. Therefore, a COVID-19 Psychological Well-being study was conducted in UK during March 2020 and many other studies in China (Alamsyah & Zhu, 2022). where authors intended to assess how "information overload predicts anxiety and satisfaction" in life. Studies were conducted to assess whether researchers were able to move during the as a result of training, from the "fear zone to the knowledge zone and then to growth zone (Kunar et al., 2020). Where was discussed even the level of productivity in time of stress and anxiety. Youth and their mental health are seen in a "great danger during the pandemic (Branquinho et al., 2022) etc. Research refers to levels of education, specifically university students who report a higher number of negative effects including: Relationships, sleeping eating. (Branquinho et al., 2022). etc.

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After conducting an international study in 2020 by a group of authors (Glotser et.al.,2020), referring to wellbeing (including psychological flexibility and social support as the largest predictors on wellbeing), it was reported that higher educational levels are associated with higher levels of wellbeing. Research shows that levels of education may alter the level of worries in people since they build up their own protection regarding anxiety and stress; a study in Lebanon showed that “a lower level of education was found to be associated with higher health worries” (Bou Hamad et al., 2021). A study in Denmark focusing on wellbeing before and during the pandemic report a decreased level of well-being observed among both genders and age groups: interestingly the decrease of wellbeing was reported higher in low education level groups (Thygesen et.al.,2021). A Study in Spain reports that during Covid19 pandemic, the most vulnerable populations were women, youths, people with basic or medium level of education, students and single or reduced number of children people (Gonzalos et al., 2020). In many cases, the pandemic highlighted the difference between social classes (Buheji et.al.,2020) and economic impact of the pandemic (Rodríguez Rey R et al., 2020).

Objectives of the study are presented as below:

- Assess the socio demographic and economic data of the respondents referring to the perceived financial expectancies and hopefulness when living in the pandemic
- Screen the psychological concern related to mental health and wellbeing while living in pandemics in association with levels of education
- Assess the pandemic individual social-functioning in terms of worry and social comfortability when meeting others in person

Hypothesis:

1. Ho: The perception of economic problems is not associated with levels of revenues
H1: The perception of economic problems is associated with levels of revenues
2. Ho: The perception about the rise of psychological and mental health problems is not associated with levels of education
H1: The perception about the rise of psychological and mental health problems is associated with levels of education
3. Ho: Perceptions of worry and comfortability from social contact is not associated with levels of education
H1: Perceptions of worry and comfortability from social contact is associated with levels of education

Methods

Research Design

A cross-sectional research design was used for the study where Albanian adults completed an online questionnaire via Google form launched in different social online media channels. The period of data collection was from November 14th to November 29th. During this time of pandemic, restrictions were limited only in the curfew but all working places and universities were opened associated with a raise in infection rate, while living in the pandemic.

The sample consisted in Albanian adults starting from 18+. Data was collected anonymously in 217 respondents. Participants were given information about the nature of the survey and provided consent for the data collection.

Researchers reviewed and launched for the second time the questionnaire which had been used during the first lockdown in 2020. The questionnaire was self-administered and declarations ranged in a Likert Scale (ranging from 1-5: Strongly disagree = 1, to strongly agree = 5) referring to a high level of agreement of each item. The instrument was piloted in 30 respondents, to further adapt with the requirements of the study for this period of time. Data analysis was processed vis SPSS, where researchers compiled descriptive and crosstabulation data.

For the purpose of this paper, we extracted cardinal questions related to economy, mental health issues and social contacts during the pandemic. Below there is a presentation of some socio-demographic data of the respondents in this study.

Table 1. Socio-demographic and economic data of the respondents (N=217)

Table 1.1.1. Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	CumulativePercent
Valid	Female	160	73.7	73.7	73.7
	Male	57	26.3	26.3	100.0
	Total	217	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.1.2 Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	116	53.5	53.5	53.5
	25-34	50	23.0	23.0	76.5
	35-44	30	13.8	13.8	90.3
	45-54	11	5.1	5.1	95.4
	55-64	7	3.2	3.2	98.6
	65-70	3	1.4	1.4	100.0
	Total	217	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.1.3 Educational level					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High school level	32	14.7	14.7	14.7
	Post-university level	50	23.0	23.0	37.8
	Basic level	3	1.4	1.4	39.2
	University level	132	60.8	60.8	100.0
	Total	217	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.1.4. Revenue' level (approximately)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	30.000-40.000 lek	24	11.1	11.1	11.1
	40.100-50.000 lek	34	15.7	15.7	26.7
	50.100-60.000 lek	25	11.5	11.5	38.2
	60.100-95.000 lek	35	16.1	16.1	54.4
	95.000-120.000 lek	12	5.5	5.5	59.9
	Less than 30.000 lek	69	31.8	31.8	91.7
	over 120.000 lek	16	7.4	7.4	99.1
	Retired	2	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	217	100.0	100.0	

The first part of the survey included questions related to gender, age, educational level and personal revenues. Most of our respondents 73.7% are female and 26.3% are male. The majority of respondents are from 18-24 years old (53.5%); 23% are from 25-34 years old; 13.8% belong to the group age from 35-44; 5.1% are from 45-54 years old and 4.6% belong to the age group between 55-70 years old. Referring to the educational level, only a few participants representing 1.4% of the sample have a basic level of education. 14.7% have a high school level and the majority of the participants have a university (60.8%) and post university level (23%). From the sample, 31.8% of respondents have less than 30.000 lek per month (the minimum wage allowed in Albania from January 2022, it was not such during the data collection). 11.1% declare personal revenues in the revenue level between 30.000-40.000 lek. 11.5% represent individuals who have 50.100-60.000 lek/month; 16.1% of the sample represents 60100-95.000 revenue category and 7.4% declare to have more than 95.000 lek/month as personal revenue. Only a few respondents represent retired population (0.9%).

Other parts of the questionnaire include:

- Information referring to the economic situation expected in the upcoming 12 months, questions comparing this period of time with the last two years etc. aiming to screen the economic expectations and then hopefulness that respondents have to make savings in the upcoming months.
- Information regarding individuals' perception referring to the economic situation, power to resume life and perceptions about the presence of psychological and mental health problems in relationship with levels of education and grouped revenues.
- Information regarding perceptions of the social contact in person and its effect on people's relaxation, happiness and comfortability.

Results

1. Perceived Financial Expectancies and Hope during the Pandemic

Respondents' financial situation and expectations for the upcoming 12 months were asked. The principal questions have been presented in the descriptive tables (1.1.5; 1.1.6; 1.1.7; 1.1.8) as attached, reporting that for the majority of the respondents (47.9%) report there is no difference regarding their family financial situation in the last 12 months (referring to the timeline between November 2020-November 2021). For 34.5% of the cases, the situation has become worse and for 18.9% of the cases the financial situation has improved. However, 38% of the cases report that the situation is expected to get worse. 35.9% of respondents are quite optimistic that the financial situation will improve and 25.3 remain without a distinctive answer. Albanian adults assert that in the coming 12 months they plan not to purchase furniture or electric supplies for the house in the majority of the cases (56% of the cases), only 24.4% report they will purchase these goods in the same level as before and 7.4% remain uncertain. 43.8% of our respondents declare they will not have the possibility to make savings in the upcoming 12 months. 41.9% of respondents declare it will be possible and 14.3 % are not certain about this. In order to further investigate this moment in terms of grouped revenues and levels of education, crosstabulation and chi-square tests have been utilized.

Association between Financial Situation and Level of Revenues

Aiming to see whether there is any association between the financial family situation in the upcoming months and the level of revenues show that the financial situation has been getting worse for the range between 40.000-60.000 lek/month in 47.5% of the cases, representing the most sensitive revenue group. For families under 40.000 lek, the situation has become worse in 37.8% of the cases. With the increase of the revenues, it is noticed that there is not a higher level of optimism, however they have a lower perception about the financial situation in the upcoming months. In conclusion, the financial situation is dependant from the level of revenues. People's perception about the change of the financial situation during the last 12 months is dependant from their level of revenues.

Table 2. Change of the financial situation over the last months and grouped revenues Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	34.366 ^a	15	.003
Likelihood Ratio	34.250	15	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.754	1	.029
N of Valid Cases	212		

a. 13 cells (54.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .53.

Perceptions about the likelihood of making savings in the upcoming 12 months is positive in the group of respondents having the highest level of revenues. Savings are dependent from the level of revenues.

Table 3. Likelihood to make savings in the upcoming 12 months and grouped revenues Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	34.170 ^a	12	.001
Likelihood Ratio	34.239	12	.001
N of Valid Cases	212		

a. 7 cells (35.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.98.

Table 4. Perception about economic problems of today, in comparison with two years ago, with levels of education. Chi-Square tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.406 ^a	8	.906
Likelihood Ratio	3.246	8	.918
N of Valid Cases	206		

a. 7 cells (46.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .84.

In the meantime, referring to the question "economic problems perceived today in comparison with two years ago with levels of education" data shows that despite their levels of education, respondents report that this period of time reflects more economic problems in comparison with two years ago.

2. Psychological Wellbeing and Mental Health in Association with Education and Revenue Level

In the study, respondents were asked about their perception regarding more economic and mental health problems during this time, in comparison with two year ago. Respondents perceive in 77.2% of the cases that there are more economic problems, since this is evident in their family pockets. Regarding the presence of mental health problems, respondents are aware in 75.3% of the cases that there is a rise in mental health problems. Mental health problems have been reflected more during the Covid19 pandemic in comparison with two years ago, as reported from all respondents. Mental health problems are easily detected with the rise of the level of education. Referring to our example, respondents with a high school level of education, report 58.6% sensitivity to the concerns of mental health; university and post-university level respondents report in 75- 79.1% of the cases.

Table 5. Psychological wellbeing in association with levels of education Chi-Square tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.173 ^a	8	.253
Likelihood Ratio	9.593	8	.295
N of Valid Cases	207		

a. 6 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .98.

Levels of Education and Perceptions about the Economic Situation

Chi square tests shows that the educational level is not an indicator showing people who perceive the power to successfully resume life as before the pandemic. Crosstabulation shows that the power perceived to resume life is seen in 25-30% of the cases maximum despite their level of education.

Table 6. Perceptions about this period of time, in comparison with two years ago, and resuming life Chi-Square tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.892 ^a	8	.941
Likelihood Ratio	2.947	8	.938
N of Valid Cases	203		

a. 3 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.52.

Revenue Level and Perceptions about the Economic Situation

Economic problems have arisen during the pandemic, in 70- 80% of respondents. Economic problems are relevant to the level of personal revenues. We observe that for 78.6 % in people's revenues until 40.000 economic problems are quite evident. 80.7% of the revenue group from 40.000-60.000 consider the same pattern; 73.3% from 60.000-95.000 and 69.2% in the revenue group over 95.000 lek. Perceptions about the economic situation are associated with the revenue level.

Table 7 Revenue level and perceptions about the economic situation Chi-Square tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.012 ^a	12	.528
Likelihood Ratio	12.407	12	.414
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.184	1	.139
N of Valid Cases	206		

a. 9 cells (45.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .76.

Mental Health Problems and Revenue Level

The presence of psychological and mental health issues is more sensitive (70% of the cases) to the grouped revenues until 40.000 lek. With the rise of the revenue level, there is a decrease of perception 42.9% is seen in 40.000-60.000 lek, and it gets lower by 24.9% individuals earning 60.000-95.000; 21% is the level of perception in the highest revenue level. As a conclusion, we might say that referring to our example Perceptions about problems related to psychological and mental health problems is strongly related to levels of revenues. The higher the revenue level, the lower the perception about the presence of these issues.

Table 8. Perception about risen psychological and mental problems with grouped revenues Chi-Square tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.475 ^a	12	.271
Likelihood Ratio	16.356	12	.175
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.748	1	.097
N of Valid Cases	207		

a. 9 cells (45.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .95.

Perceptions about Resuming Life and Revenue Level

Pessimism is reported in 41.2% of grouped revenues until 40.000 lek, representing the low level of revenues. By the increase of the level of revenues, however, there is not a more optimistic view about the power people perceive to resume life after the pandemic. Grouped revenues with higher level of revenues, do not perceive the situation as more optimistic neither.

Table 9. In your perception, in this period, in comparison with two years ago, you have the power to resume life (there is no difference, life is the same) Chi-Square tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.956 ^a	12	.372
Likelihood Ratio	12.082	12	.439
Linear-by-Linear Association	.005	1	.944
N of Valid Cases	203		

a. 5 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.35.

3. In Person Contact and Social Worry and Comfortability

Still, people report that meeting others, during the pandemic, does not particularly make them feel comfortable in 27% of the cases; in 27.5% they feel comfortable and 18% of the respondents do not provide a clear answer about this statement (18%). On the contrary in 21.4% of the cases it makes people feel worried; meanwhile in 40% of the cases, they report they do not feel worried. This question was made because during the lockdown people reported not to feel good because they were not meeting others. Social distance could have taught people that being physically distant from others, has their own benefits.

Respondents do not feel worried when meeting others while living in Pandemic, however they do not feel relaxed due to the contact neither (aprox.30% in post-university level). It is interesting how the post-university level is more opened to reporting their perceptions about feelings related to worry, relaxation and happiness in a clear way. This level remains the more sensitive about meeting people in person during the pandemic and the more enthusiastic too. During the pandemic, meeting others makes people happier only in minor cases and the happiness in meeting people in person during the pandemic is evident in 35 % of the cases only for the post-university level. 51.3% of the respondents do not have a clear approach of their own regarding social contacts referring they do not know. Only 18% of the cases refer that they do not feel happy when meeting others. Should this be a dilemma regarding social connections vulnerability or avoidance of the others, remains an issue to be detected with further analysis.

Table 10. During this period, I feel worried when I meet others Chi-Square tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.484 ^a	8	.176
Likelihood Ratio	11.832	8	.159
N of Valid Cases	205		

a. 3 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .96.

Table 11. During this period, when I meet others, I feel relaxed with levels of education Chi-Square tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.228 ^a	8	.323
Likelihood Ratio	12.392	8	.135
N of Valid Cases	200		

a. 4 cells (26.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.26.

Table 12. During this period, when I meet others, I feel happy with Levels of education Chi-Square

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.903 ^a	8	.443
Likelihood Ratio	8.011	8	.432
N of Valid Cases	199		

a. 7 cells (46.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .81.

Conclusions

This paper represents some findings of a survey study conducted during the Pandemic in Albania to a population of adults who with their own consent filled in an online anonymous survey launched via social channels. Aiming to make an assessment of the economic situation and perceptions, mental health issues and perceptions in association with revenue levels and educational levels and assess the comfortability and worry from social contacts while living in the pandemics, referring to our example, results of the study are as the following:

The financial situation is dependent on the level of revenues reflected in diverse perceptions people have on the situation of the pandemic. Respondents perceive there are more economic problems in comparison with two years ago, despite their level of education. Economic problems have arisen during the pandemic, in (70- 80%) of respondents and they are relevant to the level of personal revenues.

There is a distinctive perception regarding the arise of the mental health problems in comparison with two years ago, as referred from all respondents in the study. Sensitivity towards mental health problems is detected with the rise of the level of education. Referring to our example, respondents with a high school level of education, report 58.6% sensitivity to the concerns of mental health; university and post-university level respondents report in 75- 79.1% of the cases.

The grouped revenue is not an indicator showing people who have the power and hope to resume life as before the pandemic. Mental health concerns are more present in comparison with two years ago to all respondents (in approx. 70% of the cases). Mental health problems are not dependent from the level of revenues people have. People's capacities to resuming life just like before the pandemic has no relationship with personal revenues. Social contacts in person do not make people feel calmer or even comfortable in their contacts. Referring to our example, 30% of the people feel happier when meeting others.

Future Research and Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted online, even though we cannot generalize the results, they represent a trend. The online survey remains the safest data collection technique during the pandemic times however. The sample is not very large and there is a low representation of retirees and old adults, and a major representation of women respondents, hence researchers tried to treat and discuss results with attention. Considering the pandemic changes in our life over the months, the emergence of different viruses and its implication; the insecurities risen because of other huge events in Europe challenging psychological wellbeing, connections and economy, authors of this paper consider important the longitudinal prospective research in this area of study.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the authors.

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