

A FIELD RESEARCH ON THE NEET POPULATION LIVING IN BALIKESİR PROVINCE*

Onur ÖZAYDIN², Burak DARICI³

Abstract

It is expressed that in recent years, on a global scale, the weight of sectors with high technology and knowledge content in economic activities has increased, the need for manpower has decreased due to this increase, and the employment capacity creation potential of new business areas has decreased. This situation negatively affects the labor force participation of individuals, especially young people, both in developed countries and in Turkey. At this point, the rate of the young population not taking part in education, employment or training (Not in Education, Employment or Training – NEET) stands out as an alternative indicator of the distribution and development performances of economies. While the increase in the NEET rate is essentially an economic problem, it is also a phenomenon that needs to be examined in detail in terms of its social effects. The concept of NEET is an issue that should be emphasized socially, as it refers to young people who do not or cannot participate in the workforce, whose education processes have been interrupted, and who find themselves useless and worthless. In this study, a survey scale was determined to determine the young NEET people living in Balıkesir province, empirical questions appropriate to the determined scale, demographic questions that would shed light on the detection of the problem related to the subject, and a face-to-face survey were applied within the determined sample frame. It is thought that the findings obtained in this way will contribute to clearly presenting the concept and obtaining generally valid inferences.

Keywords: Youth Unemployment, NEET, Struggle with Youth Unemployment, Employment Strategy

JEL Codes J21, J64, E24

BALIKESİR İLİNDE YAŞAYAN NEET NÜFUSA YÖNELİK BİR ALAN ARAŞTIRMASI

Öz

Son yıllarda küresel boyutta, teknoloji ve bilgi içeriği yüksek sektörlerin iktisadi faaliyetler içerisinde ağırlığının arttığı, söz konusu artışa bağlı olarak insan gücüne olan ihtiyacın azaldığı, yeni iş alanlarının istihdam kapasitesi yaratma potansiyelinin düştüğü ifade edilmektedir. Bu durum hem gelişmiş ülkelerde hem de Türkiye’de, başta gençler olmak üzere, bireylerin işgücüne katılımını olumsuz etkilemektedir. Bu noktada, eğitimde, istihdamda ya da yetiştirmede yer almayan genç nüfus (Not in Education, Employmen, or Training – NEET) oranı ekonomilerin bölünüm ve kalkınma performanslarının alternatif bir göstergesi olarak öne çıkmaktadır. NEET oranının artması özünde iktisadi bir sorun olduğu gibi, sosyal etkiler içermesi bakımından da detaylı olarak incelenmesi gereken bir olgudur. NEET kavramı, işgücüne katılmayan ya da katılamayan, eğitim süreçleri sekteye uğramış, kendilerini işe yaramaz ve değersiz bulan gençleri ifade etmesi açısından toplumsal olarak üzerinde önem ile durulması gereken bir konudur. Bu çalışmada Balıkesir ilinde yaşayan NEET gençlerin belirlenmesi adına anket ölçeği seçilmiş, seçilen ölçeğe uygun ampirik sorular, konu ile ilgili problemin tespitine ışık tutacak demografik sorular ile belirlenen örneklem çerçevesinde yüz yüze anket çalışması şeklinde uygulanmıştır. Bu sayede elde edilen bulguların, kavramın net olarak ortaya konulmasına ve genel geçerliliği olan çıkarımlar elde edilmesine katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Genç İşsizlik Ne Eğitimde Ne İstihdamda Olan (NEET), Genç İşsizlik ile Mücadele, İstihdam Stratejisi

JEL Kodları: J21, J64, E24

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² Dr., Bağımsız araştırmacı, ozaydinonur@hotmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9796-8568>

³ Prof. Dr., Bandırma Onyedü Eylül Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi, bdarici@bandirma.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0765-7374>



INTRODUCTION

The World economy, which has been getting more and more globalized since the first day of the humankind has transitioned into social life, has been shaken deeply by the Great Depression after the industrial revolution and its effects have been felt all over the World. Unemployment, which has the potential to be a chronic problem not only economically but also socially, is one of the macroeconomic problems that must be addressed by governments with active policies. It is seen that young individuals that cannot participate in the workforce overtime encounters both economic and social problems. In this sense, young individuals, do not continue with their education throughout the time that they opted out of employment, do not want to attend to a course or a certificate problem in order to join the workforce and feel useless and unworthy as this process continues. It is expressed that the situation in question opens up hard to mend socio- cultural wounds. Young people that have the qualities mentioned are named NEET in the literature.

Even though the NEET concept has been created in order to define the youth at the age between 16-18 who are outside of the education, employment or job search, nowadays it is frequently used for the young people in the 15-24 age group. It is seen that the concept is defined as different age groups in different countries while the widest age groups is from 15 to 35 years. This variation of the definition brings along certain consequences. The biggest problem that arises regarding the grouping of the individuals under the NEET concept is that it tries to frame a wide range of individuals from different backgrounds, cultures and regions into a single category, rather than the age range. The inclusion of individuals from different groups and the World population getting more and more heterogenous day by day enlarges the borders of the concept.

To a certain degree, this way of separation of the population that fits in the definition of NEET has enabled the understanding of the category to evolve and over time, the emergence and development of different government led initiatives. It is important to accept that individuals with common experiences and qualities are not always a member of a homogenous subgroup. For example, it is highly possible that even though individuals with care giving responsibilities share a certain situation, they experience their situations differently and require help in different ways.

In literature it is seen that the most comprehensive studies that are about “NEET” were carried out by developed countries in Europe, America, and Australia. Developed countries carry out these researches on young people that are in adolescent health centers who are estimated to have the potential to belong in the NEET status. It is expressed that by approaching the solution of the problem from this perspective, first the

risk of social exclusion of young people is tried to be eliminated, and later the aim is to increase the economic benefits of the young people in question.

When the national literature is examined, it is observed that the number of studies that are done on the topic of NEET is quite limited. This situation had an intriguing effect on determining the topic of the study and a motivating effect at the completion of the work process. It has been understood that one of the compelling studies in Turkey regarding NEET was the specification of a field research scale within the scope of effect and cause dimensions, and another was carried out by conducting a comprehensive field research in the form of in-depth interviews and focus group studies on women in six major provinces located in different regions of Turkey.

As a result of both national and international literature review, it is noteworthy that issues that are prioritized in studies on the concept are about determining the scope of NEET and the reason to be in the NEET status. Based on this, in this study, the reasoning behind the exclusion of people with NEET status out of education and employment in Balıkesir province was investigated via face-to-face survey and it was aimed to determine the expectations of these young people.

In this sense, in the following sections, information will be given on the concept of NEET, which is understood to cause deep socio-cultural problems as well as its economical. The historical development of the concept and the policy examples developed for its solution will be evaluated and the findings obtained through the method used in the study will be discussed. In this context, it is aimed to provide scientific contribution at the highest level by coming up with policy recommendations, filling overlooked gaps and revealing lacking areas.

THE NEET CONCEPT

The NEET concept is an abbreviation that is created by taking the first letters of the English phrase “Not in Education, Employment or Training”. It seems that the concept is first brought up in year 1988 in England as a result of grouping people under “career services”.

Even though NEET as a concept has emerged in England, in a very short time it made its way into policy literature of many countries, has begun to take place on the agenda of international organizations such as OECD, ILO and EUROSTAT, as it has been accepted as an important indicator regarding the youth employment. It can be deduced that even though the concept is recognized in different ways depending on the country, at its base the definition is accepted as “Not in Education, Employment or Training” (OECD, 2010, p. 16-18). Definitional differences arose concerning the age group that the definition involves rather



than the actual meaning. It is possible to state that while the OECD and ILO accept the age range between 15-29, age range of 15-24 is taken as basis in the European Union Documents (Kılıç, 2014, p. 130).

Although the term was originally created to describe 16–18-year-olds that do not partake in education, employment and training courses, it is now frequently used in relation to people up to the age of 24. However, it is also seen in literature that the upper age limits from different countries expand to include individuals aged 29 or even 34 (Yates and Payne, 2006, p. 19-21). When the boundaries of the NEET concept are wanted to be drawn in terms of age, there are studies that include many different groups such as 15-17, 15-19, 15-24, 15-34, 18-24, 20-24, 20-34, 25-29 for different purposes (European Commission Employment Committee, 2012, p. 2).

As can be seen from the statements, the concept of NEET, which needs to be defined in a common framework, the first topic that needs to be addressed is young people who left their education unfinished or have completed their education. It is seen that there is a direct relationship between a country's social and economic welfare indicators and young population being in education, training or working life. The exclusion of the young population, who is the most active group in the labor market from education or business life carries significant social and economic risks (Taş, Küçüköğlü and Demirdöğmez, 2018, p. 286-287).

It is known that the first place that planned education gets institutional and implemented are schools. Education begins with schools and the aim is to contribute to employment at the end of school life. Through this lens, the concept of transitioning from school to work refers to young people transitioning to well-established and satisfying jobs that are compatible with the education received after the completion of their education (Brooks, 2009, p. 18). Countries generally expect the individuals that complete their education to join the workforce through the school to work transitioning process and the policies and precautions implemented are based on this expectation. In recent years, it has been observed that inversely proportional to expectations, the transition from school to work has become increasingly difficult in many countries (Muller and Gangl, 2003, p. 21).

During the transition from education to employment, young people who want to enter the workforce as soon as possible without wasting time in the transition protocols from school to work in order to increase their job experience, cause disruptions in the implementation of such policies at the country level. One of the most important problems that young people face in the labor market is that employers prefer experienced workers over young workers. Young individuals giving priority to gaining work experience disrupts the education process, causing young people who are not educated or trained to remain outside of employment,



leading to the formation of the NEET concept and becoming a vicious cycle (Rosenbaum, Kariya, Settersten and Maier, 1990, p. 33).

NEET emerges as a concept used by many researchers, national authorities, and international organizations to define young individuals who are disconnected from both education and the labor market. Young people in NEET status ultimately remain outside of education or training, unable to participate in the workforce, and face the risk of social exclusion (Eurofound, 2012).

When considering the historical development of the concept; the first initiative related to addressing the problems experienced or that are likely to occur by young people who must drop out of the education process was seen to be the Youth Opportunity Program⁴. The program implemented in the UK, although not well known or popular, has the distinction of being the first of the youth programs that became a part of the labor market in the 1980s and 1990s. YOP and other similar programs also signify normalization of continuing education and training after compulsory education. With this normalization, social assistance for those in compulsory education was gradually reduced, and it was observed that access to benefits was restricted for those who refused to participate in the programs implemented in the 1980s. Such changes, while initially helping to conceal unemployment levels by eliminating the formal classification of unemployed young people as officially unemployed, directed policymakers to seek new ways to define youth unemployment (Furlong, 2006, p. 557-558).

In the early 1990s, the term "Zero Status" began to be used to define young people who were at the compulsory education age but were neither in education nor in employment. The term "Zero Status" here refers to young people in an inactive state or possibly described as inertness in youth (Istance & Howarth, 1994). However, due to the negative connotations it created the Zero Status label implied that governments were perhaps understandably reluctant to adopt this terminology. According to Williamson (2010), in 1996, a Ministry of Home Affairs Official suggested the term "not in education, employment, or training" as a more neutral alternative to the Zero Status expression, and as can be seen from the information the NEET abbreviation entered the policy discourse thereafter.

When trying to articulate the NEET concept, we encounter the intersection of individuals between the age group of 15-29 who are involved in the work force and however in a state of unemployment, have not received any education or training in the last four weeks, and are not currently receiving it, and those who are not currently participating in the work force, have not received any education or training in the last

⁴ Youth Opportunity Program was a program introduced by the United Kingdom government to help young people aged 16-18 participate in employment. It was introduced under James Callaghan's Labour Party government in 1978 and expanded by Margaret Thatcher's government in 1980 (Cantor, 1989).



four weeks, and are not currently receiving it. These individuals are classified as the young population who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in the fields of education, employment, and training (ETF, 2015).

In general, the concept of being in NEET status is defined using the combination of two negative conditions: not being in employment (unemployed) and not continuing advanced education and training courses (inactive). It is observed that these differences mentioned hinder the concept from having a homogeneous structure. At the core of conceptual heterogeneity, the unique characteristics of the unemployed and/or the reasons behind the inactivity are understood to lie (Mussida and Sciulli, 2023, p. 8).

Even though there have always been a wide variety of individuals with different needs and circumstances within the NEET category, the global population now is highly heterogeneous. The term "young people in an inactive situation" includes graduates who are trying to find a job after leaving university, those temporarily employed, those working in the informal sector in their early 20s, those with low qualifications and no work experience, and women who marry and become mothers at a very young age (Samoilenko and Carter, 2015, p. 1-4).

The heterogeneous structure in question can be seen to be grouped into five basic subgroups. It can be stated that the largest group among the five subgroups are the unemployed (Caliendo, 2016, p. 11). It is observed that mothers who must prioritize childcare, young people who have family responsibilities and are in a sick or disabled status, fall into the group of those who are not available, while those who have lost courage or embraced an antisocial lifestyle fall into the group of those who are available. While it is stated that young people referred as opportunity seekers watch for suitable opportunities that are shaped according to their desires and qualifications, and are willing to wait until they find them, the last subgroup, volunteer NEET youth, volunteer to follow various activities that support the personal learning process around the world, as they have no travel barriers (Ak, Polat, Toktaş and Şahin Söylemez, 2021, p. 9).

Furthermore, NEET youth, due to the heterogeneous nature of the concept, do not always fit into a single common category. For example, a young offender being a caregiver of an elderly person or a parent who needs to take care of a child at the same time is among the possibilities (Furlong, 2006, p. 560). It is important to acknowledge that individuals among NEET youth with common experiences or characteristics do not necessarily belong to a homogeneous subgroup (Finlay, Sheridan, McKay and Nudzor, 2010). For instance, while young people with caregiving responsibilities share a specific situation, it is likely that they may experience their situations in different ways, see them differently, and require different types of support (Russell and Thompson, 2011, p. 98).

When evaluating NEET figures by country with current data, it is observed that the most comprehensive studies published by the OECD. According to the latest NEET figures presented by the OECD, NEET rates are generally higher for women than men in almost all OECD countries, with the highest female NEET rate of 56.2% and the highest male NEET rate of 53% appearing in South Africa (OECD, 2022). Turkey is seen as the country with the second highest female NEET rate among OECD countries at 45.2% and the country with the third highest male NEET rate at 21.6%. The aforementioned figures show that nearly one in every two young women and one in every four young men in Turkey are in NEET status. Considering that the OECD averages are 15.3% for women and 13.3% for men, it appears that the current situation in Turkey needs to be carefully evaluated and the NEET concept should be addressed as an issue that needs to be promptly dealt with (OECD, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Past studies related to the NEET topic, as well as important and relevant examples, are presented in the table below. When the table is evaluated as a whole, it can be seen that women, disabled youth, former convicts, substance abusers, and young mothers face more challenges with dropping out of education and not being able to participate in the workforce. Similarities can also be observed in the studies done in Turkey and the field research conducted in the Balıkesir province, which is the subject of our study.

Table 1: Comparison table of previous years' studies

Author/ Date	Country/ Region	Research Topic/ Method	Findings/ Conclusions
Furlong, 2006	Scotland	The study aimed to investigate the differences in the scope of the NEET concept from a limited and broad perspective during a 16-month period between 2002 and 2003, using the "Early School Leavers" survey as a research method. The reasons why early school leavers were unable to participate in the workforce or why those who were employed later became unemployed were attempted to be determined.	It was found that 36% of the survey participants were in NEET status at least once during the 16-month period that constituted their working period. In the broad definition framework, it was revealed that young people in NEET status who had never been in NEET status before had a higher level of education and a more peaceful family environment compared to those who had been in NEET status at least once or continuously for six months or more.
Pemberton, 2008	United Kingdom	In order to assess the validity of the results obtained in the previous year's studies throughout the UK, field research was conducted among young people predominantly aged between 16-18 to measure their tendency to be NEET socio-culturally and psychologically. The results were compared with the findings of	It is stated that in areas where poverty is more prevalent, a culture of unemployment is formed through peer influence, which, exacerbated by low education levels and weak labor market experience, leads to relatively high levels of NEET figures. Having a positive family environment and supporting participation in higher

		previous year's studies and policy recommendations were made.	education could create positive effects in removing barriers to employment.
Crawford, Duckworth, Vignoles and Wyness, 2011	England	In a study covering the England as a whole, young people were evaluated in three dimensions within the age ranges of 16-17, 18-19, and 20-24, in terms of their demographic characteristics, education, and employment statuses. The relationship between dimensions was attempted to be explained through longitudinal field research methods.	The study revealed that approximately 50% of those who were NEET at the ages of 16-17 were still in NEET status a year later, and socio-economically advantaged individuals in this age group had a lower likelihood of being NEET. It was also observed that young people in the 18-19 age group had low academic achievements, and were at a high risk of being unemployed or working for low wages upon leaving school.
Ranzani & Rosati, 2012	Mexico	In order to compare the results obtained in studies conducted in Mexico up until 2012, a field research was conducted with 696 participants using the dimensional cross-sectional group method to assess the situations of NEET youth in terms of their personal competencies. A scale developed based on average qualifications was used for competency measurements, and the extent to which participants met competency criteria was investigated.	It was revealed that 20% of the survey participants did not have a formal qualification, 17% had a first degree or higher qualification, and more than 60% had second and third level qualifications. Participants identified significant labor market deficiencies as the most important barriers to labor force participation, with 28% indicating a lack of suitable jobs, and 47% indicating a lack of work experience. Additionally, 17% of the participants considered skills and qualification deficiencies as the primary obstacle to labor force participation.
O' Dea, et al., 2014	Australia	A dimensional cross-sectional field research was conducted on 696 participants to uncover the relationship between young people undergoing rehabilitation in two major mental health centers in Australia and those in NEET status nationwide.	It was found that young people in NEET status were predominantly male, had a criminal record, were dependent on substances to a level considered risky, had higher levels of depression, and weaker levels of social functioning. Furthermore, the study revealed that young people in NEET status with mental health problems were at a higher risk of not being able to engage in education or employment compared to those in NEET status due to economic hardship or disability.
Samoilenko & Carter, 2015	New Zealand	Due to the heterogeneous nature of the NEET concept, the situations of individuals currently in NEET status and those who are not yet included but have a tendency to become NEET were measured using trend score matching. An in-depth family, income, and employment survey was conducted on a sample of 645 people grouped as not seeking employment, unemployed, and lacking motivation to work.	It was concluded that individuals who are currently in NEET status have a higher probability of being unemployed and not participating in social life compared to young people with a potential tendency to be in NEET status in the short term. This finding was also deemed significant for individuals in the older age group (20-24 years) within the NEET groups in both the short and long term. In the long term, it is observed that the likelihood of having social security increases within the NEET

Holte, 2017	Norway	The conceptual background of NEET has been approached in terms of anthropology, sociology, and education using face-to-face survey method. The study was conducted at two interconnected levels: methodical level related to how potential participants would be reached and epistemological level between knowledge and its objects.	population, but it does not significantly impact the employment rate.
Gutierrez, Benjet and Borges, 2018	Mexico	The heterogeneity of the NEET category was investigated by considering perceptions related to being NEET, whether different reasons for being NEET were associated with different mental health characteristics. The study was conducted as part of a mental health study of Mexican adolescents, interviewing 1071 participants aged 19-26 face to face to determine participants' psychiatric disorders, substance use rates, suicidal tendencies, and demographic characteristics using a face-to-face survey method.	It is stated that the epistemological fallacy in the literature regarding the heterogeneous nature of the NEET concept is due to the subgrouping of volunteers, young mothers, former prisoners, and substance abusers as three subgroups, which it would be more realistic to explain the heterogeneous nature of the concept.
Bania, Eckhoff and Kvernmo, 2019	Norway Northern Region	Factors determining being in the NEET status among young people and the prevalence of being in the NEET status were measured through a field study conducted in collaboration with NAASH. The study, carried out on 3987 adolescents in the northern region of Norway, used gender, social environment, parental education level, mental and physical health data as explanatory variables.	The findings of the study indicate that NEET young people who are in the volunteer NEET status and those who are not included in the subgroupings other than young mothers have higher rates of mental health and behavioral disorders, substance use, suicidal tendencies, feel less valuable, and perceive themselves as less valuable, as well as having less chance of labor force participation.
Park, Lee, Nam, Noh, Lee and Lee, 2020	South Korea	In a study examining the effectiveness of a youth employment support program in South Korea, survey data collected from participants registered in community welfare centers nationwide for a three-year period was used to focus on two main outcomes: the probability of job search and desire to work, and the probability of being NEET.	It was found that the likelihood of being in the NEET status among young people is approximately 23.5% higher in females compared to males (15.7%), NEET young people do not have a commitment to education, even consider that education does not benefit them, and receiving medical and non-medical help delays the NEET period, leading to unemployment.
Lüktüslü & Çelik, 2021	Türkiye	Due to the thought that the definition and scope of NEET are insufficient in terms of gender dimensions, in-depth interviews and focus group studies were conducted in six major cities in Türkiye - İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Adana, Samsun and Gaziantep in order to understand the similar and different reasons affecting NEET males and females.	The results show that the job search intention of program participants increased by 8.3% over the three-year program period compared to non-participants. The program also has a positive impact on reducing the NEET risk. The likelihood of being in the NEET status for participants in the program decreased by 6.6% over the three-year period compared to non-participants.
			It is stated that the inclusion of young women in education and employment depends on eliminating structural deficiencies and that a comprehensive approach including positive discrimination should be adopted. The statistical findings indicate that the probability of young women being in the NEET status is higher

Tolgay & Çakır, 2022	Türkiye	A field study was conducted to reveal the perceptions of young people in the NEET status towards youth unemployment in Izmir province, with a sample of 397 young people aged 15-24 through a survey conducted in the form of field research.	in Turkey and their likelihood of remaining in the NEET status increases as they age. Most of the young people who enter the NEET status have previous work experience but almost all have experienced informal work experience. Approximately half of the participants have been unemployed for more than a year, and almost all of them stated low wages, heavy working conditions, economic instability, and lack of correct employment policies as reasons for being in the NEET status. The findings indicate that young people are unhappy during the period they are excluded from education and employment, and they express a willingness to go abroad if given the opportunity for education and/or work.
Özaydın, 2024	Türkiye	The study was carried out by conducting a face-to-face survey with 564 people between the ages of 15-34 in densely populated districts of Balıkesir province. In the study, the status of being NEET was evaluated in terms of individual, education, family, environment and labor market dimensions.	Similar to previous years' studies, it has been understood that the status of being NEET is higher in women than in men, and that young mothers, those with a criminal history and people with disabilities have a higher potential to become NEET. In the sample in which the study was conducted, it is seen that wage expectation has a linear effect on being NEET in all dimensions.

METHOD, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In recent years, the increasing weight of high-tech and information-intensive sectors in economic activities globally, in parallel with the developments in the economy field, has become a global trend. The replacement of labor-intensive sectors with technology-intensive activities paves what for young individuals to become NEET, and thus it is thought that the issue of NEET needs to be examined and considered carefully. At this point, in a way that can be expressed from the relevant literature that studies on NEET at the regional level are limited, and studies available are generally carried out nationwide in Turkey. It would not be incorrect to state that there is a need in literature to conduct studies on regional basis.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University's Ethics Committee with the decision dated 16/01/2023 and numbered 2023-1.

In line with the research objectives and findings of previous studies, the fundamental research questions to be answered in this study are as follows:

Q1: What is the demographic distribution of NEET individuals in Balıkesir Province?

Q2: What are the main reasons for NEET individuals to stop looking for work/education?

Q3: Do the levels of participation in risk factors determining NEET differ according to the demographic characteristics of the participants?

In this context, the study is designed on a descriptive pattern, and the universe of the research consists of young unemployed individuals residing within the borders of Balıkesir Province who fit the theoretical NEET criteria. Limiting the research universe to the provincial level has made it impossible to determine the research universe fully and economically. In cases where the number of the universe is not determined, one of the approaches that can be used to determine the sample size that needs to be included in the study is calculated by using the formula $n = t^2x(pxq)/d^2$. In the formula, n represents the sample size, t represents the theoretical value found in the t table, p represents the probability of the event occurring, q represents the probability of the event not occurring, and d represents the sampling error accepted according to the frequency of the event occurrence (Yılmaz, 2014, p. 123).

It is considered that our research will be conducted with a 95% confidence interval. The critical value in the t-table at this confidence interval is 1.96. In cases where the sample is not homogeneous (p=) 0.5 and (q=) 0.5 should be taken (Şener and Akın 2010, p. 300). Since individuals in our research universe do not show homogeneous characteristics, p and q values will be considered as 0.5. In addition, it is envisioned that there may be a sampling error (d) at the level of 0.05 in line with the general principles accepted in social sciences. Based on this information, the required sample size for the research is calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{1,96^2x(0,50x0,50)}{0,05^2} = 384,16 \text{ people, so approximately 385 people.}$$

Following the calculation above, it was decided to collect data by using a convenience sampling method for the needed sample in the research. To take advantage of time and cost efficiency, a survey technique was decided to be used for data collection. In order to develop the survey form, previous studies were first examined, and the survey form was created by evaluating the previously used survey forms. The survey form consists of 2 parts. While the first part of the survey includes questions aimed at determining the basic descriptive situations of the participants (age, gender, education status, etc.), the second part consists of Likert scale questions related to the reasons for participants being NEET. The relevant scale was taken from the study by Şahin, Akgül and Kocakaya (2021).

A total of data was collected from 564 individuals identified as fitting the NEET definition in a convenience sampling method in Balıkesir Province between January-April 2023. Care was taken not to be

limited to a single district during the data collection process, and face-to-face surveys were completed by visiting Altıeylül, Karesi, Bandırma, Erdek, Edremit, Ayvalık, Burhaniye, and Susurluk districts in Balıkesir, which have a high population density. The data obtained from 564 individuals were coded into package programs, classified, and reported under different headings. The first descriptive statistics to be reported in the research are the demographic characteristics of the participants.

The findings regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants (age, gender, marital status, education level, foreign language knowledge, and foreign language proficiency) are presented and evaluated in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of participants

Gender	Number/ Person	Percentage	Job Experience	Number/ Person	Percentage
Woman	301	53,4	Yes	473	83,9
Man	261	46,3	No	91	16,1
Unanswered	2	0,3	Occupational Training Participation	Number/ Person	Percentage
Marital Status	Number/ Person	Percentage	Yes	155	27,5
Married	96	17,1	No	409	72,5
Unmarried	241	42,7	Reason for Leaving Education	Number/ Person	Percentage
Unanswered	227	40,2	Domestic Problems	115	27,78
Foreign Language Knowledge	Number/ Person	Percentage	Having to Work	107	25,85
Yes	193	34,2	Insufficient Income	90	21,74
No	371	65,8	Education System Inadequacy	75	18,12
Foreign Language Proficiency	Number/ Person	Percentage	Other (Mandatory Military Duty, Childcare etc.)	27	6,52
Beginner	59	30,57	Age	Number/ Person	Percentage
Pre- Intermediate	48	24,87	Between 15 – 19	96	17,1

Intermediate	53	27,46	Between 19 – 24	241	42,7
Upper Intermediate	24	12,44	Between 25 – 34	227	40,2
Advanced	8	4,15	Reason for Leaving Job	Number/ Person	Percentage
Unanswered	1	0,52	Got fired	153	32,48
Educational Background	Number/ Person	Percentage	Due to Working Conditions	112	23,78
Primary education	39	6,9	Due to Low Payment	69	14,65
High School	254	45	To Continue Education	55	11,68
Associate degree	146	25,9	Due to Health Problems	25	5,31
Undergraduate	120	21,3	Due to Mobbing	17	3,61
Postgraduate	5	0,9	Other	40	8,49

As seen in Table 2, the majority of the participants are single women aged between 19-24, approximately half of them are high school graduates, and more than half are individuals who do not have foreign language skills. It is observed that the participants who state that they have foreign language skills, are mostly at beginner and basic levels. A very high percentage of the participants, such as 72.5%, have never attended a vocational education/training program, 83.9% have at least one work experience, and 32.48% have become unemployed due to job termination.

Hypothesis and Reliability Tests

After providing descriptive statistics related to the data collected in the study, in this section, the hypotheses put forward within the scope of the research questions are tested. Firstly, in this section, Crombach Alpha analyses will be included in order to determine the internal consistency of the scale, and in the following section, the hypotheses put forward will be tested and interpreted using appropriate analysis methods. Crombach Alpha analysis is used to understand the homogeneous structure and internal consistency of the items in a scale (Yıldız and Uzunsakal, 2018, p. 19). Although there are different approaches to evaluating the Alpha value, generally an Alpha value above 0.70 can be considered as an indicator of high internal consistency of the structures in the scale (Yılmaz, 2018, p. 340).

The alpha coefficient of the entire scale used in the research (28 items) was found to be 0.872. The alpha value for the education dimension of the scale (3 items) was 0.736, for the individual dimension (8 items) 0.772, for the environmental dimension (5 items) 0.836, for the family dimension (3 items) 0.766,



and for the labor dimension (9 items) 0.766. Based on these results, the measurement tool provides scientifically accepted internal consistency both in terms of sub-dimensions and as a whole and will provide reliable results in repeated measurements. Therefore, it would not be wrong to state that it is possible to test the hypotheses put forward in the research in a reliable manner.

H1 Hypothesis Test Results

In line with the research questions, our first hypothesis put forward in the study is as follows:

H1: The levels of participation of participants in factors determining NEET status vary according to gender.

In order to test the related hypothesis, first of all, the relevant data were subjected to normality tests. As a result of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, it was understood that the data did not show normal distribution. However, when data is collected through questionnaires in social sciences, it is recommended to make normality ranking based on kurtosis and skewness values of the data rather than these tests (Gujarati, 2008).

Tabachnick and Fidell (2020) state that if the kurtosis and skewness values of the data collected by questionnaire are lower than ± 1.5 , it will be accepted that the data show normal distribution. Since the kurtosis and skewness values of all statements in the scales used in the research meet this condition, it is understood that the data show normal distribution and therefore hypothesis testing can be done using parametric analysis methods. In light of the above explanations, independent two-sample t-test, one of the parametric difference analysis methods, was used in testing H1 hypothesis. The results are presented in Table 3.

In Table 3, the t-test results related to the hypothesis are provided. While obtaining t and p values, Levene Variance Homogeneity⁵ tests were first examined and the values appropriate for the data were transferred to the table.

⁵ In statistics, Levene's test is an inferential statistic used to assess the equality of variances for a variable calculated for two or more groups. This test is used because some common statistical procedures assume that variances of the populations from which different samples are drawn are equal (Levene, 1960, p. 279). Levene's test assesses this assumption. It tests the null hypothesis that the population variances are equal (called homogeneity of variance or homoscedasticity) (Akbulut, 2013).

Table 3: H1 hypothesis test results

Factor	Gender	Number	Average	t statistic	p (significance value)
Educational Dimension	Female	299	2,4158	1,695	0,091
	Male	261	2,2605		
Individual Dimension	Female	296	2,1744	2,584	0,010
	Male	259	2,0101		
Environmental Dimension	Female	300	3,2213	2,084	0,038
	Male	260	3,0308		
Familial Dimension	Female	300	2,2233	3,010	0,003
	Male	260	1,9654		
Labor Market Dimension	Female	299	2,9156	-0,613	0,540
	Male	260	2,9568		

When the Table 3 is examined, it can be seen that in the dimensions of individual, environmental, and family, the levels of participation in factors determining NEET status differ according to gender, while in the dimensions of education and labor market, there is no difference in terms of significance value (p) by gender ($p > 0.05$).

In other dimensions where differences are seen (individual, environmental, and family), female participants show a higher level of participation than males. In this context, it is thought that women have higher levels of NEET status and potential and also feel the effects in the dimensions of individual, environmental, and family more, similar to other studies in the literature (Holte 2017, Bania et al., 2019, Lüküslü and Çelik 2021).

H2 Hypothesis Test Results

The second hypothesis put forward in the research is as follows:

H2: The levels of participation of participants in factors determining NEET status vary according to their marital status.

In the process of developing this hypothesis within the scope of the research hypothesis, first the relevant literature was examined, and in some important studies in the literature (Furlong, 2006 and Pemberton, 2008), findings indicating that the NEET status and reasons differ according to marital status were reached. In line with the findings obtained, it was hypothesized that the factors affecting participants' NEET status would vary according to marital status in our study.

In order to test the H2 hypothesis, two-sample t-test independent of parametric difference analysis methods was used and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: H2 hypothesis test results

Factor	Gender	Number	Average	t statistic	p (significance value)
Educational Dimension	Female	156	2,2970	-0,614	0,539
	Male	403	2,3598		
Individual Dimension	Female	153	2,0703	-0,487	0,626
	Male	401	2,1050		
Environmental Dimension	Female	156	3,3987	3,687	0,000
	Male	403	3,0263		
Familial Dimension	Female	157	2,4862	5,675	0,000
	Male	402	1,9519		
Labor Market Dimension	Female	155	2,8530	-1,548	0,104
	Male	403	2,9708		

The t-test results for the relevant hypothesis are provided in Table 4. When obtaining t and p values, first the Levene Variance Homogeneity tests were looked at, and the suitable values for the data were transferred to the table. When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the levels of participation in the environment and family dimensions of the reasons for NEET differ according to marital status, while there is no difference according to marital status in the dimensions of education, individual, and labor market ($p>0.05$). As seen in the table, married participants show higher levels of participation in dimensions where differences are observed (environment and family) compared to singles.

The main reason for married participants to show higher participation in these factors is thought to arise due to the children these individuals are responsible for and the social inequalities in the country. When the results are considered from the perspective of married women, it is considered that these individuals are exposed to negative discrimination due to issues like not being selected for job positions, facing difficulties in using leave after maternity leave, due to their responsibilities for childcare, maternity, and breastfeeding leaves. It can be understood that the situation of being NEET according to marital status differs from the example studies in the literature; therefore, when the results are compared and interpreted, it can be understood that in the study published by Furlong (2006), those who are not NEET have a better education level than those who are NEET, live in a happier family environment, and have children.



Similarly, in the study published by Pemberton in 2008, it is stated that through focusing on positive parenting and preserving family integrity, positive effects related to removing obstacles in employment through addressing intergenerational issues can be created. When the hypothesis results are evaluated in comparison to different results shown in the literature examples, it is considered that the differences are shaped according to socio-cultural differences, moral facts, and the functioning of the justice system. In Turkey, the problems faced by women who have children in the employment process often arise in the form of their legal rights being illegally prevented or hindered and their pursuit of rights being suppressed within the framework of moral deprivation and unwritten rules.

H3 Hypothesis Test Results

The third hypothesis put forward in the study is as follows:

H3: Participants' willingness to work at the expected wages significantly affects their participation levels in NEET factors.

It is thought that the main reason for individuals with higher wage expectations to be NEET is that they cannot receive the expected wage. Therefore, as wage expectations increase, it is thought that the reasons for participants being unable to find a job due to other factors related to being NEET become less significant. In order to test the relevant hypothesis, parametric effect analyses were conducted with linear regression analysis. The results obtained are presented in Table 5.

Before reporting the regression analysis in Table 5, in order to test whether the data available is suitable for regression, VIF values and the significance of the F test were examined, and all VIF values indicating whether there is multicollinearity problem among the independent variables were found to be below. This result obtained indicates that there is no multicollinearity problem among the regression variables. Checking the significance of the F test to determine whether the established linear regression is significant, the result of the F test showed that the F test is significant at the 95% level, meaning that the drawn regression line is significant. As a result of the regression analysis, it is observed that as wage expectations increase, the levels of participation in all risk factors determining NEET decrease. Therefore, it is predicted that as individuals' wage expectations increase, their tendencies to remain NEET due to other factors (education, individual, environment, family, and labor) will decrease.

Table 5: H3 hypothesis test results

Dimension	Beta Coefficient	p (significance value)
Educational Dimension	-0,194	0,000
Individual Dimension	-0,203	0,000
Environmental Dimension	-0,190	0,000
Familial Dimension	-0,206	0,000
Labor Market Dimension	-0,111	0,000

CONCLUSION

In advanced or developing countries, it is observed that governments frequently face the problem of youth unemployment during past recessions. As it turns out that during these periods, young people not only deal with the problem of unemployment, but also have to face sociological and psychological difficulties. In this context, the social exclusion among young people and the term NEET, which also implies high unemployment, are frequently used. Managing the sociological deformations caused by the inertia among young people, as well as the economic problems, presents a social cost to governments as well as a cost to public budgets that cannot be ignored.

The development, implementation, and monitoring of preventive and corrective policies that are becoming increasingly necessary, as well as ensuring their sustainability, are important for the integration of NEET youth into society. As seen in the in-depth literature review on the subject, research evidence obtained from longitudinal studies shows that early intervention measures can reduce the likelihood of young people dropping out of education at a later stage. It is observed that being in NEET status not only creates economic losses for the young population individually and does not contribute to the added value created in the country, but also has negative effects on public finances. According to a study published by Coles, Godfrey, Keung, Parrot and Bradshaw in 2010, NEET youth, in other words, affects the economic and financial structure of the state as a whole, thus naturally affecting the entire society.

Due to the introduction of the concept to the literature from the UK, it is seen that the first comprehensive study and reporting on the harm caused by NEET youth to public finances was also carried out in the UK. According to the report published in 2010, young people in NEET status cause damages to public finances amounting to at least £12 billion annually. It is stated that the expected damage to public finances will arise from unemployment benefits, tax losses, social assistance to young people, education expenses, and cash aids. A similar situation is reported in 2021 in New Zealand, where young people in NEET status experience social exclusion and remain outside the labor market, creating short-term public

and long-term social costs for the country's economy. The study conducted by Ak, Polat, Toktaş and Şahin Söylemez in 2021 concludes that the individual cost per person in NEET status is approximately \$27,000. It is noted that there is no cost estimation study conducted or published by relevant public institutions in Turkey. It is considered that such a cost calculation will contribute to determining the economic burden caused by the concept and how significant the problem is. Therefore, it can be said that NEET youth not only provide added value to the country, but also cause significant costs to the country's economy.

A study conducted by Eichhorst and Rinne (2014) also emphasizes the importance of ensuring young people's labor force participation and reviving demand for young labor, as well as the importance of preserving the quality of the positions filled by young people. It is indicated that in this context, priority should be given not only to ensuring young people's access to the labor market, but also to improving the quality and security of the positions they can enter and ensuring that young workers receive a comfortable wage that they can live on rather than just a wage they can survive on. In recent years, the importance attributed to the concepts of green economy and green jobs is increasing.

In this regard, it is understood that young people in NEET status tend to turn towards short-term or informal jobs that offer higher wages close to their wage expectations rather than low-paying full-time jobs. As can be seen that, controlling or preventing participation in temporary work environments such as short-term or informal jobs reduces feelings of inertia, worthlessness, and uselessness felt by young people who lack low-skilled, work experience, and drop out of school, and also makes it difficult for young people to access permanent jobs.

Many studies in the literature focus on the inclusion of young women in education and employment, emphasizing the importance of addressing structural deficiencies and adopting a holistic approach that includes gender-sensitive, positive discrimination. The statistical findings indicate that young women in Turkey are more likely to be in NEET status and that their likelihood of remaining in NEET status increases as they age. The results obtained in the study coincide with the findings obtained from the research conducted on young people in NEET status in Balıkesir province, and it is thought that women individuals in NEET status form the basis of the NEET phenomenon.

Returning to the issue of the burden on public finances; as can be expressed that the cost of subsidizing the damage inflicted by young people in NEET status on the public budget has not yet been taken into account by relevant institutions in Turkey. Even if the cost is not considered specifically for Türkiye, it is considered urgent to address the issue and establish solutions without delay if only evaluated in terms of calculations made by other countries.



AUTHOR STATEMENT / YAZAR BEYANI

Researchers have jointly contributed to the article. Researchers have not declared any conflict of interest.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University's Ethics Committee with the decision dated 16/01/2023 and numbered 2023-1.

Ethics Committee of Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University with the decision dated 16/01/2023 and numbered 2023-1.

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