

THE IMPACT OF LEISURE TIME POLICIES ON ECONOMIC SECURITY

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Abstract

The economic security implies both the objective and the subjective perspectives, both the individual and state aspects, and it is dependent to the stability of the economy, as a result of adapting to the society's needs and evolutions in the context of labour market, opportunities, risks or competitiveness. The economic security represents an important aspect of the state's security status. As such, it becomes a field analysed in relation to social vulnerabilities and emergent changes at individual, the community and the society level.

The contemporary societies, and especially young people, manifest the need for individual leisure time, for free non-working time in order to do the activities they desire or plan, for spending time with the significant ones and so on. The new generation has replaced the past years' generations, for whom the working time represented the central aspect of their lives; the new generation values the leisure time, both the qualitative and the quantitative aspects. A paradox is met here: while trying to escape from the institutional limits of time schedule implied by a working program, the leisure time is managed by leisure industries.

In order to keep its functional aspect and to continue to follow a progressive process, the labour market has to adapt to the new generation's needs and desires in relation to the flexibility of their working schedule and to the stable character of the working place.

Economic security implies the protection from job and income instability, among other aspects like insurance etc. It is seen as "a public good". The study considers the life standards perspective of the economic security concept, defined through individual and community dignity and fulfilment, in relation to the leisure time policies of the working place.

The article analyses the degree in which the leisure time policies have an impact over the economic security of the individuals, defined through the subjective and objective perspectives.

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The analysis reflects on leisure time policies and actions implemented by institutions and employers, in order to respond to the employees' demands regarding the working schedule, the flexibility of working time and also the stability of the job.

Keywords: *leisure time, leisure time policies, economic security, working time, individual economic security, state economic security.*

Argument: How do leisure time policies and economic security merge?

The contemporary societies, and especially the young generations, manifest the need to have a fulfilling career, a fulfilling personal life, a fulfilling family life, desires which come into contradiction to the available free time (Honoré, 2008).

The economic security targets the stability of the state's situation, in relation to the nation's financial possibilities and through the stability character of the labour market and to its flow of openings. The most insecure social categories on the labour market are women, youngsters, rural residents and part-time employees. While the economic security status of rich nations is discussed through the financial possibilities, the developing countries are analysed through the high unemployment rate, and the economic dependency of people to the help of family members or other people who they can rely on from a financial point of view. (UNDP, 1994)

When facing economic insecurity, translated mainly as poverty, people turn to the national authorities for help. Economic security becomes more stable in the context of access to education, to professional training and to job openings (UNDP, 1994).

The new generation changed the perspective of old generations regarding the centrality of their working time into their lives and turned their interest to the amount of leisure time that the working schedule can allow them to have (Twenge et al., 2010). The youngsters find the stability of a job and the flexibility of their schedule more important than the salary (Florida, 2002).

In this new context, as sketched in the figure below, in order to continue to function properly, the labour market must adapt to the needs and expectations of the new generations, in relation to the amount of leisure time.

Figure 1. The flow between leisure market policies and economic security¹

The article analyses the influence of the leisure time policies and values on the actions that provide the economic security of individuals, from a subjective and an objective point of view. To this manner, the discussion also reflects on the economic security of the state as complementary to the individual's economic security. The study discusses the policies and actions developed and implemented by institutions and employer entities in order to respond to the needs of the individuals in relation to the income necessities, reflected on the flexibility and stability of a job's characteristics and on the work-life balance. Consumption necessities are also analysed and discussed in relation to the developments of dedicated industries and services.

The article reflects on the leisure time policies as a component of the economic security of the individuals, in relation to the access to income opportunities and consumption alternatives.

What is economic security and how is it defined in relation to the state and the individual?

Helen Nesadurai (2004) proposes the analyses of economic security, not as a source or as a power instrument, but through the lenses of capitalist

¹ Source: Adaption after Honoré (2008), UNDP (1994), and Twenge et al. (2010).

production and equity. The author considers the globalization as context for addressing economic security, in relation to one's income level and stability, well-being and equal access to opportunities. Appropriate responsible institutions who can serve the interests of economic security are considered at national, regional and at global level (Nesadurai, 2004). But what effect has had the globalization on economic security, and how has it influenced the individuals, the societies and the states? And which type of institutions are appropriate for working in the interest of economic security? These are two main leading questions that Nesadurai (2004) considers in her analysis.

But first, what is “economic security”?

According to Kolodziej (1992), the realist approach relates the concept to military force aspects, like development or conflict. At the same time, the neorealist approach sustains the employment of national economic policies at international level (Moran, 1993). In order to highlight the importance of economic security, development studies have defined “economic insecurity” in relation to the vulnerable response of states and individuals to economic events, as for example economic crises, or losses (Scholte, 2000). The neoclassical approach considers that the economic flows, increases and decreases, are part of a natural course of economy. The globalization process has kept the economic security issues on the top of many states' agenda (Nesadurai, 2004).

The globalization process has brought both positive and negative implications on the economic security, making states' economy interdependent, and, as such, having implications on the design of economic policies (Nesadurai, 2004). Kolodziej (1992) underlines the fact that the status of economic security of a state, while being interconnected at international level, it is dependent of the state's history and strategic position and relations.

Baldwin (1997) concludes that after the end of the Cold War, security has started to be understood also in non-military terms, reaching to the population's realities and needs. The security studies have been divided into national security, human security, societal security and global security (Buzan, 1991). This non-military perspective includes areas like health, the environment protection, crime, or economic falls (Nesadurai, 2004).

After 1980, the analysis of security has started to include on a regular basis economic aspects also (Walt, 1991), including resources, development and risks. One of the main issues followed by states was the effect of trade (Harris and Mack, 1997), of economic dependency and of competition on the state of security of a nation (Zoellick, 1997/1998). Nesadurai (2004)

highlights the fact that the view on economic security has its roots in the traditional military approach, and that it may be relevant to current concerns of certain states or societies, as a result of the historical and social contexts.

Several definitions of economic security at the individual's level, including the human community, emphasizes on the stability of one's financial income resources, in order to maintain a quality life standard for the present and for the future period of time (Rupert, 2007).

From a subjective perspective, economic security implies the absence of fear in relation to the stability of known life standards, while from an objective point of view, it reflects the absence of fear that the known life values will be challenged or changed (Wolfers, 1952).

The economic security is dependent on the modernization of state economy and its characteristics in relation to ways of solving the modern challenges and threats, having as main purpose the insurance of the interests of the society (Grigoreva & Garifova, 2015). As one of the factors of the state economy, economic security is depend on the territorial resources, natural resources, development potential at social level, but also on the degree of development of new technologies (Grigoreva & Garifova, 2015).

The political perspective on economic security is in concordance to the realism approach, highlighting as sources of conflict the different interests of groups within a society. This is an important aspect when discussing economic security, in relation to the capitalist characteristic of the economy and to the way the market rules the economic security interests (Nesadurai, 2004).

The literature that analyses the state economic security identifies several defining components of the concept, as part of two categories: internal and external subsystems. The internal category relates to (Mkrtchyan, 2015):

- the technological aspect, which refers to the ability of the state to contribute to the technological progress and to be present on the international market with national technological products;
- the commercial perspective analyses the import and export capabilities of the state;
- the financial component describes the state's economic stability status and capabilities.

The external category includes:

- the technical component, which ensures the independency of the country in relation to the society's needs;
- the food and raw material perspective implies the provision of the necessary quantity of food and raw materials, at national level;
- the energetic security ensures the necessary provision of energy for use at national level;

- the ecological aspect refers to the ability to protect the environment;
- the informational security in all relevant areas, such as communication, politics, military, economy or social environment.

Mkrtchyan (2015) argues that the components of the state economic security are interconnected, and, moreover, are dependent to the changes that occur within a state at different levels: political, military, economic, social etc.

Liew (2000) identifies two main components of economic security: the micro one has as main subject the individual's access to means of income and consumption; the macro component reflects on the ability of the market to ensure the access to economic opportunities.

The current approaches on security studies emphasize on the domestic sources of conflict, like social differences, disparities, inequality. Economic security may be understood also in relation to the social contract between the society and the state, by approaching processes directed to decreasing the people's fears and to maintaining the already rooted values, like social stability and territorial integrity (Nesadurai, 2004). According to Buzan et al. (1998), protectionism is rejected in terms of ensuring economic security, because of the danger that can represent to market competition. This characteristic actually sets out the limit of economic security and the degree of allowed involvement of policy makers or of stakeholders in the field.

Economic development is understood as a main key in ensuring a state's security, but it cannot be automatically connected to the groups or individuals feeling of security, and in some cases it may also lead to conflict of interests, marginalization, and a rise of the degree of vulnerability (Nesadurai, 2004).

Globalization is often seen as a process with positive effects on the internal domestic economic security, by sustaining the international interaction between states. On the other hand, the negative effects of globalization are discussed in terms of illegal actions and trades (Nesadurai, 2004).

The national, regional and global institutions are considered a mix of entities that equally can contribute to ensuring the economic security within a state. These institutions can contribute to the economic security reported to the impact of globalization by: "(a) providing insurance, (b) aiding policy credibility and (c) encouraging policy adaption" (Nesadurai, 200, p. 18, acc. to Kahler), relying mainly on policies to this regard. Rodrik (1998) argues that the domestic institutions have an even greater role in case of conflict or economic disruptions; in order to be effective, they must present a democratic and non-corrupt character. In case of external disruptions, economic security can be reached and maintained only by an effective partnership and cooperation with other states (Nesadurai, 2004).

Economic security as a “public good”

Economic security is considered a “public good”, when analysed through its role of ensuring stability to humans in relation to their job and monthly income, among other related aspects, such as life insurance. The Human Security Study Group (2007) emphasizes the principles of human security, identifying economic security as one of the component factors of human rights protection.

Barry Buzan (1983) finds no connection between individual and national security, as the state is the entity that ensures the individual security. Inevitably, the individual senses threats, either from the state itself, or born out of side-effects of the state's actions in order to create a secure environment. The author argues that for the individuals, the security gains meaning independent of the state, and it can also determine both problems and determining boosters for the actions taken by the state.

There are views which consider that economic security determines human security, and others that see the two concepts as being opposite. When discussing the security in relation to the individual and referring to the labour or the consumption markets, it can be related to the economic security of the whole community. Any type of interference in terms of attempt to install economic security for the community and for individuals could disrupt the course of the economic market. For instance, neoclassical views point out that economic insecurity can be motivational in terms of integrating on the labour market (Nesadurai, 2004).

Human security and economic security, are, thus, seen as being complementary: while economic security reports to the individual, the market is a referent of the macro-level security, allowing the individuals the access to a legal exploitation of the income and consumption possibilities offered by the market. On the other hand, applying the principle of equity within the rules of market is a must, in order to ensure the access of individuals and their progress in terms of income and consumption. (Nesadurai, 2004)

The human security studies consider the individual as the main beneficiary of the planned and implemented actions, realising him from two main concerns: fear and want (Nesadurai, 2004). The Human Development Report (UNDP, 1994) lists seven main categories of threats to human security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political. The economic security can be ensured mainly by a stable income. Because the labour market has become more and more instable, rich nations are characterised by the fear of not being able to find or to keep a job. The concept of job-sharing has installed itself as a fact in the industrialized societies. It is

not the case for developing societies, where unemployment rate is the measuring unit for economic insecurity.

A high unemployment rate can determine serious political and ethnic tensions. Also, the lack of social safety procedures, the poor individuals cannot manage to live without a regular income source. Family or community support often represent the safety net of this type of individuals, but only for a short period of time, so they find themselves in the situation of being forced to accept any type of job opening (UNDP, 1994). UNDP (1994) identifies as the most insecure categories, in relation to income stability, the farmers, the disabled, and the self-employed. Economic insecurity has negative effects over the population, out of which the most severe one is homelessness, especially in developing countries (UNDP, 1994). Human security protects the individuals "from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, jobs or in communities" and 'safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression" (UNDP, 1994, p. 23).

Leisure time policies and industries: the need for flexibility for an economic security

Nowadays, people aim to gain and maintain equilibrium between their time they allocate to their professional activity and to their personal and family life. Because leisure time does not represent any importance to the development process within a society, the modern capitalism show importance to the working time and activities. John Urry (1994) analyses the leisure time in relation to the working time, as it surely implies working activities for the industries that organize and offer alternatives of spending leisure time. Among this type of activities can be mentioned as organizing entities hotels, restaurants, parks, workout centres etc.

Traditional societies were characterized by the clear delimitation of the working time and leisure time, because of the stability of the working schedule. The non-working time has gained the characteristic of the time to spend money, which determined the development of the industries that offer different possibilities of leisure activities. Especially the private sector has focused on this type of activities, but, in a lower measure, so has the public sector. If the pre-industrial society used to organize them the working and the non-working time, the industrial society has become dependent to the formal economy for coordinating the two types of time. (Robertson, 1985)

Leisure time has become a valuable asset for the new generations, in contradiction to the traditional ones, for which the working time represented the central aspect of their lives. The contemporary society manifests a desire to have the necessary time to spend quality time with their significant ones, to

do individual activities that they wish and to be able to plan these activities in advance. The 19th century has launched the leisure time industries, especially in Great Britain, when people started to define leisure activities and to prioritize them in their lives (Whipp, 1987). From then, the economy has developed continuously, in order to offer alternatives for the new preoccupation of the individuals, which was their leisure time.

A study conducted by Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman and Lance (2010)² shows that for the new generation leisure time represents a life value, and the working time became no longer the main activity of their daily lives. The changes within the population's life values have brought changes within the values of employing industries and within the economic security field. Thus, some companies pay special attention to the balance between their employees' personal and professional life, and put at their disposal different services for relaxation or for solving household chores. For example, Google offers services for doing the laundry and for getting massages, eBay offers facilities for meditation and KPMG offers a longer vacation period during the first year of employment.

Semco Corporation has understood the importance of a flexible working time and location in balance with the employers' motivation to work: the leader has offered the liberty of decision and action, the liberty of organizing the working schedule and to choose the working place, aspects that resulted with the efficiency of work and with financial gain. The same corporation has implemented internal leisure time policies in order to achieve a balance between the professional and the personal lives of its employees, by offering paternal leave long before it was implemented at public level, by offering a flexible working schedule and by strictly separating the communication channels used by the employees for work and for personal reasons. (Semler, 2003)

The industries have become more flexible in relation to offering possibilities of income and of consumption. By understanding the needs of the new generation of having time for family and individual activities and time, the labour market can determine the higher motivation for efficiency. According to Twenge et al. (2010), the employment entities are going through structural changes, in order to rely to the new social and life values in relation to the leisure time. These changes include the flexibility of working schedule and location, human resources internal policies, or motivational services.

² The study has been conducted on a representative sample at national level in the United States of America, in 1976, 1992 and 2006, with a total of 16507 of high school graduates, offering the possibility of comparing the results obtained within different generations of respondents with similar characteristics.

An interesting aspect when discussing economic security in relation to the income issues is represented by the level of integration of women on the labour market, in the context of the (still) traditional cultural expectations towards the gender roles in developing countries. To this respect, the factors that have led to the promotion of women on the labour market (such as the long life access to education, the flexibility of working schedule and policies regarding maternity leave and care) have also determined the need for a flexibility of the economic security in terms of consumption, and the development of dedicated policies and industries.

Leisure time policies can be currently related to the differences between women and men on the labour market, cultural gender differences within the household and work-life balance actions and policies.

Women tend to prioritize their family life to the detriment of their professional life. The tendency for women to dedicate their time to children and household chores to a higher degree than men, has been observed mainly in the case of low or medium income families, while families with higher income levels manifest the habit of relying on specialized services and industries to this manner. The social expectations and the gender stereotypes have a strong impact over the involvement of the women on the labour market (Bryson, 1999).

The European Commission targets the inclusion on the labour market of 75% of women and men until 2020, action which will contribute to the inclusion of women and to the work-life balance (European Commission, 2015). A series of actions implemented within the European Union and its Member States (MS) have targeted the obtaining of a work-life balance and the assurance of equal access of women on the labour market and to leader positions. From 2011 the European Commission has implemented the Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality, presenting and discussing opportunities and barriers connected to subjects such as the access of women in the political field, the labour situation of single parents, the gender segregation on the labour market, a flexible working schedule, the role of men in obtaining gender equality, or the work-life balance (The European Commission, a).

Work-life balance policies and actions that the European Union promotes can be divided in three main categories: the flexibility of the working schedule, support for raising the children and caring services. In 2015, the European Commission has launched the campaign "New start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families". The initiative targets the development of European policies which could (a) offer the frame for a work-life balance for parents with young children, (b) promote

equal dedication of men and women within the household, and (c) promote equity on the labour market. (European Commission, b)

Also in 2015, The European Commission has launched “Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019”. The strategy discusses five aspects of gender equality: economic independency, equal pay for equal labour, involvement in decisions, integrity and dignity, promoting gender equality outside the European Union. (European Commission, c)

This type of policies may have a positive impact on economic security of individuals, registering results at the level of involvement of women on the labour market, at the level of access of men and women to positions in concordance to their level of education and professional training, at the level of independency of working individuals, and it may have as main result the reduction of risk of poverty. At the same time, the policies may have a positive influence at the level of employment entities also, by having access to more qualified and motivated labour force, by registering more efficient results and a higher productivity level. (European Commission, 2015)

Conclusions

The article has addressed the impact of leisure time policies and actions over the status of economic security of individuals, in terms of access to income opportunities and consumption alternatives. Both the subjective and the objective perspectives of the economic security have been analysed to this regards.

The analysis reflected on aspects of human development through the perspective of human security, which opens new opportunities of understanding certain aspects of life in an informative way, as Oscar and des Gasper (s. a.) argues in their paper. The progressive process of the labour market has proved to be dependent on the ability to adapt to the new generations’ needs in relation to the work-life balance and the stability of the job. This can be translated (among other aspects) into the flexibility of the working schedule and place, into the implementation of gender equality policies on the labour market and within the household, into the access to services for supplementing the household chores and the care of children, and also into access to industries dedicated to spending the leisure time.

Being considered “the time for spending money”, the leisure time determined the development of dedicated industries and structural changes within employing industries, offering possibilities and alternatives for both income and consumption, according to the needs, life values and standards of the new generations, trying to eliminate the feeling of “fear and want”, thus ensuring the economic security of individuals and of the state.

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