

Atypical Jobs And Family Choices: An Interpretative Model

Flessibilità Del Lavoro E Scelte Di Vita Familiare: Un Modello interpretativo

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Riassunto: L'obiettivo della ricerca, condotta su un campione di oltre 1000 giovani toscani impegnati in lavori con contratti a termine, consiste nello studio delle eventuali implicazioni di una situazione lavorativa "atipica" sulla "transizione allo stato adulto". Si è voluto indagare se e in quale misura le caratteristiche del lavoro possono contribuire a determinare il ritardo nella costituzione di una famiglia propria, che caratterizza la gioventù italiana. L'analisi della sopravvivenza negli stati di "non coniugato", "in famiglia di origine", "senza figli", ha costituito la base per la costruzione di modelli differenziati in base ad alcune caratteristiche rilevanti.

Keywords: Family life strategies, Atypical jobs.

1. Forward and aim of the paper

Recently, the working strategy "job to job" is diffusing also in Italy. On one side, the possibility to engage people with temporary works has concurred to a lessening of young people unemployment. On the other side, the atypical working forms have undoubtedly led to an increase of precariousness and insecurity for the future among young people (Catania *et al.*, 2004; IRES-CGIL, 2005). And this phenomenon regards just those ones that, particularly in Italy, seem to present many difficulties to the "transition to adulthood". Parents have a great role in this transition, because they may contribute to the autonomy of their children, but, at the same time, they may represent an obstacle to their independence. Especially in Italy, where certainly there are cultural factors that "keep" young people into the parental home, we must consider also that parents represent the only support in front of the uncertainties of a fluctuating labour market, due also to the lack of adequate policy (C.N.E.L., 2003; Salvini and Ferro, 2005a; 2005b). The aim of our research, carried out on young people occupied in atypical works and resident in Tuscany, is to find an answer to the following questions. May instability assume a large importance in the delay of the assumption of the responsibilities of the adulthood? And may it produce effects on family life strategies, and finally on the trend of Italian low fertility? To answer to these questions we carry out firstly some exploratory analysis (survival and multiple correspondences analyses) with the aim to find the most discriminative variables and finally an interpretative regression analysis.

2. Data

The study of the relationships between family choices and atypical jobs in Tuscany has been articulated according two lines of research and using two surveys. The first one is a qualitative research, realized through focus groups, the second is a quantitative survey, based on telephone interviews and through a structured questionnaire. From the focus groups it is firstly derived a description of the heterogeneous types of the atypical workers, and consequently a better understanding of the issues to analyse. In particular, the qualitative analysis has permitted to understand attitudes and perceptions of the young people participating to the meetings with respect to the influence of the working situation on the assumption of adulthood responsibilities, on union and parenthood planning, and on their expectations for the future.

These information have been fundamental to delineate the hypotheses of the following quantitative research in a more detailed way and in order to predispose the questionnaire used in the interviews. The survey, carried out with CATI technique, has involved 1027 young people having atypical contracts, classified according to age (25-29, 30-34, 35-39), sex and province of residence (the 10 provinces of Tuscany).

3. The characteristics of the atypical workers in Tuscany

The basic characteristics emerging from the survey carried out in Tuscany show that women represent the largest part of the workers: they constitute 62% of the considered population; the prevalence of young people (44.5% in the age-class 25-29, vs. 31.9% in the age class 30-35 and 25.2% in the age-class 35-39) is evident among men and women. Individuals are, in majority, engaged in occupations that need a high-level education curriculum (41.4% are under-graduates and 44.6% the graduated ones), and organizational and decisional abilities. They are in prevalence not married (respective 81.2% among males and 60% among females). The contractual forms mainly used in these cases are the so called “fixed-term contract” and the “project-contract”. It is interesting to describe the perception of respondents about flexibility of their working contracts. Is it considered a source of freedom or a sort of precariousness? It depends on age and on duration in the state of “precarious worker”. After a short period in the labour market this working situation is perceived as a possibility of making experience (that is to say, almost a prolongation of the educational period), whereas after a longer period the weight of living in an uncertain activity position makes the perception of the economic future pessimistic. Also satisfaction diminishes with years spent in atypical works. Only people aged 35-39 and working at fixed term from more than ten years, are fairly divided between not satisfied and satisfied: for the latter, “the flexible” job strategy is presumably a choice.

4. Young people between atypical jobs and family choices

Looking at the assumptions of family responsibilities, we can point out our attention on three events: leaving the parental home, entering a partnership and becoming a parent. Obviously percentage of young people living with parent diminishes with age increasing: 69% of the men aged 25-29, against 48% for the women, are still living with

parents. Survival analysis (Kaplan Meier estimates) confirms, in particular for women, that more recent generations leave parents later than older cohorts. And - as it concerns future planning – more than half of respondents think that they will enter into a partnership in the next three years, even if they do not plan to have a child. In other words, the thought of the cohabitation does not seem to provoke fear, as it appears for the parenthood projects. Those who live out from parental home, independently from marital status, has already made a choice, and therefore a first step to adulthood. The prevailing reasons of leaving parental home are wedding (53.5%) and cohabitation (8.4%). People who left parental home due to educational reasons and independence are a minority and prevalently men: 12.2% vs 5.7% of the women. Survival functions show dynamics of leaving parental home for single persons and those in union: the two curves are already strongly divergent starting with 18 years of age. The “mirrored” survivor function underlines that there is a strong synchronisation between leaving the parental home and entering the union, particularly for women (Billari, 2001).

The use of techniques of multiple correspondences analysis can help to pick up some aspects discriminating the heterogeneous group of young people engaged in atypical jobs. Three groups of individuals are outlined: the first formed by 25-29 years old people, principally males who, in the greater part of the cases, have achieved the advanced diploma and enjoy a discreet autonomy in their activity. The second group is compounded by 35-39 years old that, in many cases, have caught up residential independence, they have a stable union, a low level of education and carry out substantially executive activities. Finally we found the group compounded by people 30-34 years old, with an advanced cultural level and occupied into activities that need organizational and decisional abilities beyond that executive. This is also the group with a female prevalence.

These results show that there are some variables that can efficiently discriminate population. Therefore, we have thought to deepen the research through an interpretative instrument of analysis: logistic regression models. For each model dependent variable is one of the conditions describing “transition to adulthood”: living out of the parental home, living with a partner, having a child. Analysis is performed on different groups according to the state: while leaving parental home is studied for the whole group, entering a union is analysed only for people who left parental home, and having a child only for women in union. The first model shows, above all, the significant role of sex and age (males are more frequently into parental home, such as the youngest respondents). A significant positive effect is induced by level of education and type of contract: having a “fixed-term contract” vs other unstable ones favours residential independence. This effect may be explained observing that the former type of contract guarantees a high social protection, for example in the case of a disease or of a pregnancy (table 1). Looking at entering a union (table 2), we can deduce that, apart from the role of sex and age (females marry “younger” than their male counterpart), a greater working autonomy and satisfaction induce a lesser delay of marriage/cohabitation. More satisfied people probably have chosen flexibility and are able to organise consequently domains of family life. Let’s examine last step to adulthood, having a child (table 3). The result must be considered with caution, due to the small number of the events. Analysis shows a significant role not only of the type of contract of the respondents, but even of the contract of the partner. In particular, having a partner with a non-atypical job, seems to favour the choice of having a child.

In synthesis we can confirm the relationship existing between atypical works and the

delay in the family formation. If some policy interventions toward a “sustainable flexibility” are not performed, uncertainty in the future may delay transition to adulthood and may represent an obstacle to the just begun recovery of fertility.

Table 1: *Dependent variable “Exit from the parental home”. Results of the logistic model*

Explicative Variable	Odds ratio estimate	Pr > ChiSq
Type of contract: “fixed-term contract” vs other	1,075	<.001
Educational degree: under-graduates vs graduates	0,717	<.0001
Sex: males vs female	0,419	<.0001
Age: 25-29 years vs 35-40 years	0,098	<.0001
Age: 30-34 years vs 35-40 years	0,329	<.05

Table 2: *Dependent variable “In union”. Results of the logistic model*

Explicative Variable	Odds ratio estimate	Pr > ChiSq
Satisfaction about type of contract: “little” vs “a lot”	0,667	<.0001
Working autonomy: “little” vs “a lot”	0,579	<.0001
Sex: Males vs female	0,441	<.0001
Age: 25-29 years vs 35-40 years	0,187	<.0001
Age: 30-34 years vs 35-40 years	0,558	<.0001

Table 3: *Dependent variable “Having children”. Results of the logistic model*

Explicative Variable	Odds ratio estimate	Pr > ChiSq
Type of partner’s contract: “typical contract” vs “atypical contract”	2,074	<.0001
Type of contract: “fixed-term contract” vs other	2,3	<.0001
Age: 30-34 years vs 35-40 years	0,45	<.0001

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