



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploration of Nursing students' views about the economic crisis in Greece

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Abstract

Economic crisis consists a major problem, globally that affects negatively all aspects of human life. The aim of the present study was to explore Nursing students' views of Athens Technological Institute about the economic crisis in Greece.

Method and material : The sample studied consisted of 450 Nursing students, of Technological Institute of Athens in Greece. Data were completed by the completion of a specially designed questionnaire for the needs of the research. Statistical analysis was conducted by methods t-test and χ^2 , using the statistical software package SPSS, v. 17.

Results : Of the 450 participants 83,33% were females and 16,67% males. The mean age of the study participants was $21 \pm 4,09$ years. 46,7% of men and 45,1% of women reported that they had been 'enough' affected by the economic crisis in Greece. 33,3% of men and 33,3% of women reported that economic crisis had 'slightly', affected their studies' performance. 74,7% of men and 70,9% believed that they would be able to find work relevant to their studies. 72% of men reported thinking migration whereas 40, 3% of women reported not thinking migration. 46,6% of men and 41,7% of women reported that the

economic crisis had 'enough' affected their relation with the social environment while 31,5% of men and 36,9% of women reported that the economic crisis had 'enough' affected their relation with family. 89% of men and 88,8% of women believed that the economic crisis had affected the quality of their education. Conclusions : Nursing students of Technological Institute of Athens in Greece seemed to be affected by economic crisis. However, crisis should be held as a unique opportunity for Nursing students to become better professionals and better people.

Keywords: Economic crisis, young, Greece

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Introduction

Economic crisis is a major contemporary problem, globally. It is widely accepted that economic crisis including unemployment, job insecurity and income reduction, implies a threat to humanity and is strongly associated with direct and indirect consequences for individuals, resources and organizations.^{1,2}

The word "crisis" has derived from the verb judge and defines each diversion from the state of normality. The typical cycle of a crisis includes the following stages: a) formulation stage of the condition (Prodromal crisis stage), b) stage of event-peak of the crisis (acute crisis stage), c) stage of effects (Chronic crisis stage) and d) Settlement-stage normalization (crisis resolution stage). If in the first step is applied the correct response then crisis leads directly to step four (solution).²

Economic crisis implies adverse effects since it increases the risk of physical and mental illness. Taken for granted that personality of modern individuals is strongly associated with job and

economic status it is easily understandable that economic crisis means 'collapse of individuals' self image'.^{1,2}

Greece is one of the countries significantly suffering from economic crisis. Interestingly, this crisis has raised concerns about a potential rise in suicide rates. More in detail, between 2009 and 2011, there was a substantial increase in the prevalence of suicidal ideation and reported suicide attempts. Individuals suffering from depression including those with a history of suicide attempts, men and individuals experiencing economic strain were particularly vulnerable. Economic crisis also exerts a negative influence on the young due to lack of job prospects and limited future opportunities. Furthermore, inability to cope with unexpected expenses, is highlighting the importance of saving money and demands hierarchy of needs.³⁻⁷

The **aim** of the present study was to explore Nursing students' views of Athens Technological Institute about the economic crisis in Greece.

Method and material

The sample population of this study consisted of 450 Nursing students of Technological Institute (TEI) in Athens. Data were collected by the completion of a specially designed questionnaire for the purpose of the present research.

Apart from demographic variables, the questionnaire also included other variables about the level that economic crisis has affected the young such as their lives, their academic performance, their relation with social and family environment. The Likert-type 4 scales was used to answer these questions. The four different scales were represented the following answers: None, very, enough, slightly. It also included variables such as : thoughts of migration, of selling personal belongings, of following a master diploma, of changing their studies. The process of filling out the questionnaires took between 15 and 30 minutes.

The reliability index of the questionnaire was (Cronbach's alpha):0.7. Statistical methods used were descriptive statistical analysis, t-test and χ^2 , using the statistical software package SPSS, v. 17.All reported p values were compared to a significance level of 5%.

Students participated in the study after had been orally informed for the purposes of the study and given oral consent for their participation.

Limitations of the study : The study sample was not representative of all students in tertiary education, but a convenience sample. Sampling procedure limits the generalizability of the results.

Results

The sample studied consisted of 450 Nursing students Department A, of Technological Institute of Athens in Greece. Of the participants, 75 were men and the 375 were women. The age of participants was in men 22 ± 3 , and in women 22 ± 4 . The demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Characteristics of the students' according to the gender are presented in Table2.

In terms of academic performance, 78,7% (59) of men and 75,5% (283) of women reported that they owed lessons. Regarding the number of owing lessons, 29,3% (22) of men and 36,3% (136) of women reported that they owed 1-3 lessons, 4-8 lessons owed the 32% (24) of men and 31,5% (118) of women, 9-12 lessons owed the 12% (9) of men and the 5,6% (21) of women. Finally, 6,7% (5) of men and 5,1% (19) of women owed more lessons. At the question : 'how often they absent from classes', 32% (24) of men and 28% (105) of women reported non-absence, 34,7% (26) of men and 35,5% (133) of women absent 'seldom', 16% (12) of men and 21,9% (82) of women reported seldom 'sometimes', 17,3% (13) of men and 13,9% (52) of women reported they had been 'often' absent and only 0,8% (3) of women reported 'always' being absent from



classes. (Table 2)

In regard to the source of economic support, 24% (18) of men and 26,7% (100) of women reported being supported by their work. 70,7% (53) of men and 68,5% (257) of women reported being economic supported by the family. Also 2,7% (2) of men and 2,4% (9) of women reported having support by a subsidy and finally 2,7% (2) of men and 1,9% (7) of women reported being supported economically by other sources. (Table 3)

At the question if 'they had a work concurrently to their studies', 32% (24) of men and 30% (113) of women answered 'yes' (they had a work along with their studies) 46,7% (35) of men and 54,1% (203) of women answered 'no' (they had not a work along with their studies). A part time employment had the 21,3% (16) of men and 15,7% (59) of women. (Table 3)

The students' views about the economic crisis are presented in Table 4. More in detail :

At the question : 'how much they had been affected by the economic crisis' 41,3% (31) of men answered 'very much' and 40,5% (152) of women. 46,7% (35) of men and 45,1% (169) of women reported being affected 'enough', while 9,3% (7) of men and 13,3% (50) women being affected 'slightly'. 2,7% (2) of men and 1,1% (4) of women reported that had not been affected by the economic crisis.

At the question : 'how much the economic crisis had affected their academic performance' 21,3% (16) of men and 16,3% (61) of women reported 'very much'. 26,7% (20) of men and 29,3% (110) of women reported 'enough' while 33,3% (25) of men and 33,3% (125) of women reported 'slightly'. 18,7% (14) of men and 21,1% (79) of women reported that the economic crisis had not affected their studies' performance.

At the question : 'how much the economic crisis had affected their relation with their social environment', 16,4% (12) of men and 10,7% (40)

of women reported 'none', while 23,3% (17) of men and 24,6% (92) of women 'very', 46,6% (34) of men and 41,7% (156) of women reported 'enough' and 13,7% (10) of men and 23% (86) of women 'slightly'.

At the question if : 'how much the economic crisis had affected their relation with their family', 5,5% (4) of men and 9,6% (36) of women reported none, 21,9% (16) of men and 23% (86) of women had been affected 'very'. 31,5% (23) of men and 36,9% (138) of women reported 'enough' being affected, while 41,1% (30) of men and 30,2% (113) of women reported 'slightly' being affected.

At the question if they believed that 'they would be able to find work relevant to their studies', 74,7% (56) of men and 70,9% (266) of women answered 'yes' (positive) while 25,3% (19) of men and 29,1% (109) of women answered 'no' (negative).

At the question if 'they were thinking of immigrating', 72% (54) of men and 58,4% (219) of women answered 'yes', while 28% (21) of men and 40,3% (151) of women answered 'no'.

At the question if : 'they had made cuts in spending money', 34,7% (26) of men and 44% (165) of women answered that they had not made any cuts. 44% (33) of men and 43,2% (162) of women reported having cut their spending 'very much', while 14,7% (11) of men and 11,5% (43) of women reported 'enough' and 6,7% (5) of men and 0,8% (3) of women 'slightly'.

Regarding beliefs-thoughts about economic crisis according to the gender : (Table 5)

89% (65) of men and 88,8% (332) of women believed that the economic crisis had affected the quality of education.

74% (54) of men and 78,3% (292) of women reported that it would be a choice to follow some MSc program.

32,9% (24) of men and 35,8% (134) thought to change studies due to the economic crisis.

15,1% (11) of men and 13,4% (50) of women considered to sell their belongings due to economic crisis (stereos, computers, furniture).

Men participants seemed to report that they had made more cuts in their personal spending money compared to female participants, $p=0.014$.

No other statistical significant results were found regarding gender.

Discussion

The results of the present study showed that the majority of participants had been 'very much' and 'enough' influenced by the economic crisis in Greece. High percentage reported that the economic crisis had affected their academic performance. Interestingly, economic crisis including youth unemployment can affect various dimensions of students' lives such as academic performance, personal and social behaviour.⁸

In the European Union over the past decade, youth unemployment has been about twice as high as that of general population. Fergusson et al.,⁹ who explored the relation between young's' unemployment and psychosocial adjustment problems (mental health, substance use, crime, suicidal behaviours and pregnancy) showed that exposure to unemployment is significantly associated with suicidal ideation, substance abuse and criminal behaviours. According to [Caban-Martinez](#) et al.,¹⁰ unemployed young adults reported higher levels of risky drinking and none management in leisure-time physical activity compared to employed young adults. Furthermore, relevant studies have shown that unemployment is associated with increased practice of deleterious health behaviors, such as smoking, heavy drinking and reduced physical activity.^{8,11,12} According to Arkes young adults usually increase cigarette use when the economy

is weaker.¹³

A high percentage of participants reported that the economic crisis had 'very much' and 'enough' affected their relation with the social environment. Social networks (friends, neighbours and social organizations) play a vital role in mitigating the adverse effects of economic crisis. Usually, public spaces where young men gather allow unemployed young people to erect a supportive social structure. On the other hand, limited livelihood opportunities and poverty may force the young to engage in highly risky activities in order to have their livelihoods.⁸

The analysis also showed that participants reported being influenced by economic crisis within their family environment. It is well known that in early adulthood, individuals seek for independence from their parents mainly through employment opportunities.¹⁰ Indeed, economic crisis significantly influences family environment directly and indirectly. A possible explanation for the present finding is that parents face such economic problems that exert a negative influence on their relation with their children. Similarly, Stein et al.,¹⁴ claimed that economic crisis imposes a heavy burden on family. More in detail, parents' concerns about their children's economic future is responsible for reports of anxiety and depressed mood and for poor parent-child relationship.

The results also showed that 61,8% of participants thought of migrating from Greece to seek for a job abroad. Migration, has become one of the main coping mechanisms adopted by young individuals so as to overcome the lack of employment opportunities at their country.⁸ Given that work web-sites provide easy access to available job opportunities it is understandable why the young often turn to this option. According to [Kosidou](#) et al.,¹² immigrant populations have more than tripled in most Western countries since the 1960s. Though migration is considered to be a possible solution



for the young, however, it is related with many drawbacks.

Hopefully, high percentage believed to find a work relevant to their studies. Nowadays, degree by itself does not always mean to earn an equal or relevant to studies job. Moreover, good grades of students have ceased to be a gateway to employment. It is not rare that many high-performing students either end up moving to their parents or being paid the minimum wage. Consequently, these outcomes delay the transition to adulthood.^{8,14-17}

It is worth noting that young individuals, due to diminishing job opportunities usually seek for alternative employment in the informal economy that involves many risks. Young individuals mainly those coming from poor families or families that the main earner has lost employment are particularly vulnerable to insecure, low-paid and low quality jobs, since they are forced to seek for any type of employment. More in detail, low-quality informal employment not only implies short-term adverse implications for young individuals such as long working hours, low earnings, limited opportunities to acquire skills and absence of social protection but also long-term adverse implications that impede human development and their capacity to escape poverty.⁸ Economic crisis seems to affect both educated and non educated young individuals. For example, young workers with low skills and inadequate education experience higher inactivity and lower employment rates and on the other hand educated youth, experience difficulty in finding jobs suitable to their qualifications.^{8,17} It appears that those with higher levels of education are most adversely affected by the fall in labour demand accompanying the economic crisis albeit with the ubiquitous significant cross-country variation.¹⁸

Results of the present study also showed that 31,7% of the participants reported the wish to get a job in the public sector. Interestingly, work-force

and public sector wages are deteriorating in economic crisis period thus raising significant concerns about about quantity and quality of available jobs.¹⁶ Kalafati¹⁹ supported that in Greece, economic crisis is having a detrimental effect on the country's health service. Government cutbacks have forced hospitals to merge, reduced nurse-to-patient ratios and have led to pay cuts and poorer conditions for staff.

High percentage of participants reported that the economic crisis had affected the quality of education. Economic crisis has direct and indirect effects on the education. For example, low teacher morale in conjunction with reductions in educational expenditure such as paper or photocopying, may have affected the quality of education. Furthermore, the need for young individuals to contribute economically to their households has become greater, thus leading to their absenteeism or increasing the risk of dropping out of their studies.⁸

Conclusions

Economic crisis should be held as a unique opportunity for increasing competitiveness, promoting job creation, developing a better skilled workforce able to take advantage of a new global economy and ultimately to become better professionals and better people.

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ANNEX

Table1.Demographic characteristics of students according to the gender

Variables	Gender		p-value
	Men N=75	Women N=375	
Semester	%(n)	%(n)	
Second	13.3 (10)	20.5 (77)	NS
Third	0 (0)	0.3 (1)	
Fourth	25.3 (19)	21.6 (81)	
Sixth	22.7 (17)	26.4 (99)	
Seventh	18.7 (14)	9.9 (37)	
Eighth	20 (15)	21.3 (80)	
Age	mean ± SD		
	22±3	22±4	NS
Parents' education	%(n)	%(n)	
Primary School	5.3 (4)	7.5 (28)	NS
High School	56 (42)	61.6 (231)	
University	32 (24)	28.3 (106)	
Msc-Phd	6.7 (5)	2.7 (10)	
Parents' Occupation	%(n)	%(n)	
Unemployed	5.3 (4)	7.7 (29)	NS
Civil servant	37.3 (28)	28 (105)	
Private employee	25.3 (19)	29.3 (129)	
Freelancer	22.7 (17)	22.1 (83)	
Household	1.3 (1)	2.9 (11)	
Other	8 (6)	9.9 (37)	
Area of Residence	%(n)	%(n)	
Attica	56 (42)	60 (225)	NS
Prefecture Capital	26.7 (20)	22.9 (86)	

Table1.Demographic characteristics of students according to the gender

Variables	Gender		p-value
	Men N=75	Women N=375	
Village	17.3 (13)	16.8 (63)	
Same residence	%(n)	%(n)	
Parents	73.3 (55)	66.9 (251)	
Husband	2.7 (2)	4 (15)	
Other students	0 (0)	1.3 (5)	NS
University House	1.3 (1)	1.3 (5)	
Other	5.3 (4)	9.9 (37)	
Alone	17.3 (13)	16.5 (62)	
Number of brothers	%(n)	%(n)	
None	10.7 (8)	8.8 (33)	
One	44 (33)	41.9 (157)	NS
Two	20 (15)	21.3 (80)	
More than two	25.3 (19)	25.6 (96)	

**Table2.** Academic performance of students according to the gender

Variables	Gender		p-value
	Men N=75	Women N=375	
Owed lessons, Yes, %(n)	78.7 (59)	75.5 (283)	NS
Number of owing lessons	%(n)	%(n)	
1-3	29.3 (22)	36.3 (136)	
4-8	32 (24)	31.5 (118)	NS
9-12	12 (9)	5.6 (21)	
More	6.7 (5)	5.1 (19)	
How often absent from classes	%(n)	%(n)	
None	32 (24)	28 (105)	NS
Seldom	34.7 (26)	35.5 (133)	
Sometimes	16 (12)	21.9 (82)	
Often	17.3 (13)	13.9 (52)	
Always	0 (0)	0.8 (3)	

Table 3. Economic support of students according to the gender

Variables	Gender		p-value
	Men N=75	Women N=375	
Economic support	%(n)	%(n)	
My work	24 (18)	26.7 (100)	
My Family	70.7 (53)	68.5 (257)	NS
Subsidy	2.7 (2)	2.4 (9)	
Other	2.7 (2)	1.9 (7)	
Work	%(n)	%(n)	
Yes	32 (24)	30.1 (113)	
No	46.7 (35)	54.1 (203)	NS
Part time	21.3 (16)	15.7 (59)	

**Table 4.** The students views on the economic crisis according to the gender

Variables	Gender		p-value
	Men N=75	Women N=375	
How much have been affected by the economic crisis			
	% (n)	% (n)	
Very	41.3 (31)	40.5 (152)	NS
Enough	46.7 (35)	45.1 (169)	
Slightly	9.3 (7)	13.3 (50)	
None	2.7 (2)	1.1 (4)	
How much the economic crisis has affected your academic performance			
	% (n)	% (n)	
Very	21.3 (16)	16.3 (61)	NS
Enough	26.7 (20)	29.3 (110)	
Slightly	33.3 (25)	33.3 (125)	
None	18.7 (14)	21.1 (79)	
How much the economic crisis has affected relation with social environment			
	% (n)	% (n)	
None	16.4 (12)	10.7 (40)	NS
Very	23.3 (17)	24.6 (92)	
Enough	46.6 (34)	41.7 (156)	
Slightly	13.7 (10)	23 (86)	
How much the economic crisis has affected relation with family			
	% (n)	% (n)	
None	5.5 (4)	9.6 (36)	N/S
Very	21.9 (16)	23 (86)	
Enough	31.5 (23)	36.9 (138)	
Slightly	41.1 (30)	30.2 (113)	
Made cuts in spending money			
	% (n)	% (n)	
None	34.7 (26)	44 (165)	0.014
Very	44 (33)	43.2 (162)	
Enough	14.7 (11)	11.5 (43)	
Slightly	6.7 (5)	0.8 (3)	

Table 5. The students beliefs-thoughts about economic crisis according to the gender

Variables	Gender		p-value
	Men N=75	Women N=375	
You'll be able to find work relevant to the subject of study	%(n)	%(n)	
Yes	74.7 (56)	70.9 (266)	NS
No	25.3 (19)	29.1 (109)	
Thinking immigration	%(n)	%(n)	
Yes	72 (54)	58.4 (219)	NS
No	28(21)	40.3 (151)	
The economic crisis has affected the quality of education, yes, %(n)	89 (65)	88.8 (332)	NS
It would be a choice, some Msc program, yes, %(n)	74 (54)	78.3 (292)	NS
Would you change studies due to economic crisis, yes, %(n)	32.9 (24)	35.8 (134)	NS
Sell your belongings due to the economic crisis (stereos, computers, furniture), yes, %(n)	15.1 (11)	13.4 (50)	NS

The reliability index of the questionnaire was 0.7