

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

NEET Phenomenon
Investigation of PNEET and NEET young people
in Hungary from the aspect of their socialization

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1. The aim of the dissertation, the delimitation of the topic.

The dissertation examines a special group of young people, the so-called NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), who are unemployed and not members of either the education or training systems.

In both the international and domestic literature, the usual approach to the NEET problem is macro-level, cross-sectional “snapshots” of large representative questionnaires or administrative files aiming at completeness. These include, for example, data from Eurofound, EUROSTAT and the OECD, as well as large-sample youth research in Hungary, mainly the two most recently published works, or data on the Labour Market Mirror NEET group published in 2019. From this macro-level cross-sectional data, a lot of information can be obtained about NEET youth. In general, young people with higher education have better employment rates than those with lower education. There are a significant number of members of the NEET group who have a low or very low level of education that can no longer be assessed from a labour market point of view. Furthermore, even before framing the problem as NEET, it was known that the transition from school to work was much longer for those with a low level of education.

The number of young people in long-term NEET is significantly influenced by education, changes in the Hungarian education system in the wrong direction, and changes in the labour market. In Hungary, the economy has reduced the number of NEET young people, but at the same time this figure has been worsened by the delivery of compulsory education, the failure of young people involved in public work programs but re-established by the NEET, or the failure of the Youth Guarantee Program. International data also show that the number of NEETs is strongly influenced by public policies and their changes in addition to education and employment. In Eastern Europe, for example, there are higher social expectations for dependent family members, especially those caring for their young children, than elsewhere. In these countries, therefore, the number of women among NEETs is higher than that of men. Thus, macro-level and cross-sectional analysis may provide an explanation for the social frequency of NEETs as well as the impact of socio-economic and public policy changes on the macro-dynamics of the group.

However, these data and standard analysis do not say much about the background of young people living in NEET, especially NEETs who are particularly vulnerable, their

experiences in their lives so far, especially the failures resulting from their socialization (mentioned macro-processes and waves how and to what extent they contributed to their individual destiny to fall into the NEET category. In my dissertation, I analysed whether the factors that can be grasped in the antecedents of young people and discussed as a socialization issue in the sociological tradition have characteristics that make a higher risk of drifting into NEET likely. To this end, I researched the characteristics of the primary and secondary socialization of the groups of Hungarian NEET young people included in my study. From my research results, it was established that there are socialization deficits and defects with a high incidence among NEET youth. Furthermore, these socialization disadvantages can be described as a “potential NEET risk” or as a PNEET phenomenon, which can be interpreted as a quasi “vestibule” of later (permanent) NEET existence.

2. Outline of the methods used.

In the first structural unit of the dissertation, in the theoretical part, I basically used document analysis and presented the analysis of statistical data. Document analysis are secondary analysis of international research, as well as domestic research, in several cases my own published works, and the presentation of its results.

I conducted my empirical research in two counties, Csongrád and Hajdú-Bihar counties, as well as in Budapest, at the EMMI Budapest Correctional Institution and at the EMMI Rákospalota Correctional Institution and the Central Special Children's Home. Data collection took place in the second half of 2018 and in the first month of 2019. In my research, I used quantitative and, where possible, qualitative methods.

I created a 33-question, self-administered questionnaire that I tested in several cases before beginning the research. The questionnaire questions basically covered three major areas: young people's past, primarily their family background, their current situation, and their ideas about their future. A total of 136 questionnaires were completed from two counties, their eight settlements, and the two Correctional Institutions. The data of the questionnaires were analysed with the SPSS statistical program, and diagrams and tables were edited from the analysed data with the help of Excel program.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews as part of qualitative research. 10 interviews at the Budapest Correctional Institution, as well as the same number of

young people detained at the Rákospalota Correctional Institution. Furthermore, at the Budapest Correctional Institute, I had the opportunity to conduct a longer focus group interview with teachers who took an active part in the education of young people. In the village of Told, I conducted 8 interviews with local young people in my research, as well as a focus group interview with the staff of the Igazgyöngy Foundation. I compiled the questions of the semi-structured interviews as well as the questions of the focus group interviews myself, which basically followed the structural division and questions of the questionnaire.

I basically divided the young people in my study into two large groups: potential NEET as well as NEET youth groups. Among the PNEET youth, I distinguished those who were still students in student status, but in my opinion, they were already seriously threatened by slipping into the NEET. They are representatives of the first subgroup within the group. The other subgroup is made up of PNEET young people who still had employee status, but based on their characteristics, I also thought they were seriously endangered by being NEETs. The two subgroups are thus the PNEET learner and the PNEET worker subgroups. Furthermore, I was able to divide the young people researched in the two Correctional Institutions into further subgroups. In summary, I named them groups of criminalized potential NEETs and criminalized NEETs. Within this, I created the criminalized potential NEET student and worker subgroups, called K-PNEET student and K-PNEET worker subgroups. The group of NEET youth consisted of a total of two subgroups: the criminalized NEET (K-NEET) and the NEET youth, which I analysed together in the empirical part. Thus, a total of 85 people belonged to the PNEET group, while 51 people belonged to the NEET group, and thus the total sample of 136 people was composed.

I divided the analysis of the empirical data into four chapters. In the first, I analysed the examined PNEET youth in two subgroups: PNEET student and PNEET employee subgroups. In the second chapter, K-PNEET youth was analysed, also in two subgroups: K-PNEET student and K-PNEET worker subgroups. The third chapter is an analysis of the NEET youth studied, in which I merged the K-NEET and non-K-NEET subgroups. Finally, in the fourth chapter, the PNEET and NEET young people studied were analysed and the results compared.

I presented the young people in my study based on five characteristic categories I created. The first is called General Features. In this section, I discussed the gender and age distributions of the groups and subgroups, as well as the issue of ethnicity.

Furthermore, with whom did you live in a household at the time of the survey, what was your marital status, did you already have a child, and did you have a confidential friend whom you fully trusted. The second presented the background characteristics of the family. At the time of the survey, were your parents alive, what was their highest completed education, and did they have a formal, declared job? Furthermore, how many families did the young person live in, that is, how many brothers did he have, and in his opinion, did he consider his parents' financial situation to be satisfactory. The third was named Educational Characteristics. This characteristic meant, on the one hand, what the young person's highest, completed education was, and, on the other hand, whether he or she was studying at the time of the survey, and if so, what level they were. The fourth gave their labour market characteristics. Did you have an official, declared job and, if so, in which sector. If you did not have a formal, declared job and did not study, did you register as an official jobseeker? And finally, did the young man work. The fifth and last feature was given the category name of the visionary category. Questions have been raised in this area, such as whether the young person is planning to pursue further education and / or formal, declared employment. Are you planning all these abroad or just at home? If you went abroad, how long would you stay in that country. On a five-point scale, how confident were you in achieving your goals in the near future, whether you considered yourself successful at the time of the survey, how your friends felt about it, and overall, how you saw your future.

Although the young people included in my study came from two counties, two institutes (and young people detained in the institutes from other counties), my research cannot be considered as a representative sample. The proportion of the total domestic NEET population in youth age groups is unknown. It is precisely for this reason that it is impossible, or only very conditional, to speak of representativeness. A significant part of the Hungarian NEET young people does not register as unemployed, nor do they appear in the fields of view of various services, so the statistical data on their number are not completely accurate either. Based on the data presented, the sample I had the opportunity to research is certainly not representative, even at the county level. The category of potential NEET is new, and neither international nor domestic research has yet taken this category into account. At the same time, I think that 136 young people under study, based on their characteristics, give, if not a fully comprehensive picture, but at least a partial assumption about a group of potential NEETs and NEETs.

3. Thesis-like listing of results.

In my dissertation, I presented a special group of young people, the so-called NEET young people, primarily from the aspect of their socialization. In the theoretical part, I first gave a general description of Hungarian NEET youth. This was followed by the presentation of socialization as a multi-agent, complex process of cognition and learning, based primarily on the research results of domestic and partly international authors. In the third chapter, I introduced a new group category, the category of potential NEET youth. Finally, I presented the effects of socialization among PNEET and NEET youth. In the empirical part, I presented in detail the study of PNEET and NEET young people in Hungary participating in my research.

General features:

The average age of each of the examined groups and subgroups is included in the age characteristics of the definitions appearing in my research. P-NEET student: 15.8 years; P-NEET employee: 22.5 years; K-PNEET student and employee: 17 years; NEET: 18.8 years.

The gender distributions show that the proportion of men is higher than that of women in the P-NEET student, P-NEET employee, and K-PNEET student and employee subgroups. Total: 55 men / 30 women. In the NEET group, however, this ratio has already changed significantly: 18 men / 33 women.

Regarding the members of the examined groups, it can be said in general that at the time of the survey most of them still lived in the same household as their parents, but in addition the form of relationship has already appeared. It is noteworthy that there are several young people in the groups (mainly between PNEET workers and K-PNEET young people) who have already lived in one of the services of the child protection system, which of course does not rule out the possibility that they did not have a relationship.

A significant proportion of young people were either single or in a relationship, but this relationship always meant 'togetherness' or an unregistered partnership. Marriage is usually not typical.

A significant part of the group already had their own children, and those who did have it said that the first child was born at a very young age, or that they already had several

children. In the case of NEET youth, all the women with children used some form of public service and stayed at home with their child.

The members of the examined groups are characterized by the fact that they mostly do not have confidential friends, or their number can be said to be extremely low. Of course, this does not mean that they do not belong to a wider circle of acquaintances, only the relationship with them cannot be considered a close bond of trust.

In terms of nationality, the examined group can be said to be balanced overall. In the PNEET student and K-PNEET student and employee groups, young people of Roma origin were over-represented, while in the PNEET employee group they were more of Hungarian origin. However, the NEET group was balanced in terms of origin.

Family background features:

The highest completed educational attainment of parents of young people in the studied groups is generally markedly low. This means a basic (8th) general education, but in many cases not even that, or a vocational qualification. But presumably - although this research has not been able to show clearly - there may be several families where one parent has a skilled worker and the other 8 has no general or even that education. It should be emphasized that in the K-PNEET group, although in a smaller proportion, the full range of qualifications could be found, despite this, the neglect of young people can be said to be significant.

In the families of young people, a significant proportion (more than half) of parents seem to have a formal, declared job. At the same time, families where only one or none of the parents has a formal, declared job are already appearing prominently. The NEET group should be highlighted here, as more than half of the group had either one or both parents in their family without formal, declared work.

The young people came from (specifically) large families in which the average number of children was high or markedly high.

Educational features:

The highest level of education completed by young people can generally be said to be the eight classes, but in many cases not even, or the vocational certificate. However, in the NEET group, the majority of young people in 8th grade had the highest completed educational attainment, but in many cases, this was not even the case.

Regarding their current studies, it can be stated that among those who have still studied (PNEET) there is also an older age group who are still completing primary education and (K-PNEET student) in addition to compulsory education, also sought to obtain a primary education.

Labour market characteristics:

Overall, it is strongly assumed that a significant proportion of young people (even with their student status) earned income from illegal work. Those who had a formal, announced employment relationship worked in a significant majority of public works programs in various settlements. A significant proportion of young people in the NEET group, despite their group characteristics, did not register with the local employment services as jobseekers.

Vision features:

A significant part of the young people in the examined groups considered the financial situation of their parents to be rather and / or satisfactory or completely satisfactory. In the case of the NEET group, this was true for the vast majority.

It seems that the members of the examined groups would plan further studies in domestic conditions, however, for a significant part of them, further studies abroad are not an alternative. In the NEET group, half of them would or would not plan to continue their studies, but the possibility of further studies abroad was no longer considered.

The same can be said for reported formal employment. The majority of young people planned to work in Hungary. However, there would be much less work abroad, and in this case even more, for a short time, to work as a commuter abroad. In the group of already employees, the largest proportion worked in public works programs.

Overall, a significant proportion of group members were confident that their goals, whatever they may be, would be achieved in the near future. However, a more uncertain layer is already emerging between the PNEET worker and members of the NEET groups, but there was no clear negative attitude to this issue.

The number of uncertainties about their own success is already higher among group members. At the same time, it is important to emphasize here that the members of the K-PNEET group were insecure on the issue because they were placed in Correctional

Institutions; if this had not happened, they would have seen their own success significantly more positively.

The members of the examined groups saw their own future as largely acceptable and even hopeful or completely hopeful.

Relying on the findings of the researchers cited in the theoretical part, it can be said that in the process of appropriate or considered successful socialization, a person's personality is formed, and this can be interpreted as personality development. In this psychological and sociological process, the individual gets to know, acquires, internalizes (adopts, therefore becomes part of his / her self-knowledge and self-identity) the majority social expectations, norms, and values, and in the course of personality development (also through hidden mechanisms) based on the culture of this majority society. In this process of cognition, learning and internalizing, these values expected by the majority society are primarily represented, passed on and introduced to the individual by the family as the primary medium of socialization, and in a broader sense by kinship and the immediate environment. The members of this medium are persons who are irreplaceable, and even the particularly close bonds formed between the individual and the members of the primary socialization medium mediate the foundations of the interpretation of the world around the individual. Secondary socialization, especially the school as an institutionalized socialization medium, builds on the existing values mentioned above in the process of primary socialization, and further develops the individual's personality, and later on special and high provides him with a level of (professional) knowledge that will make the young person more likely to succeed in the primary (but selective) labour market. Thus, the primary socialization medium is the basis for the positive development of the personality, which is used by the secondary socialization medium, and through academic successes it develops its knowledge, which is "utilized" by the selective labour market.

In the process of inadequate or unsuccessful socialization, we can talk about the return (or inadequate development) of the personality. By this I mean a process in which the young person does not know and learn from the primary socialization medium, the otherwise irreplaceable significant others, the culture, norm, value accepted by the majority society, acquires it as a skill, i.e., not those internalizes. Rather, the culture, norms, values of one's own subculture (family, peer group, in a broader sense, its

immediate environment). For example: The parent(s) have a markedly low level of education and a lack of motivation for the child to get (much) higher. The young person grows up without seeing his or her parents work in a formal, declared job (or this is mostly limited to public work), but instead, he learned (internalized) at a skill level, especially at a young age, how to earn income from illegal work activities. Furthermore, that childbearing is based on a family pattern rather than conscious and responsible family planning. At the same time, it also internalizes that close and strong family ties are especially important and indispensable for survival. The secondary medium of socialization, and the school, “receives” this already established, internalized “knowledge” and emerging personality. Thus, a personality should be developed, and it should be passed on to the norms and values accepted and expected by the majority society, who practically did not learn it during its primary socialization or internalized the opposite. This would be a particularly serious challenge for the school as an educational institution, even if it were integrated, as well as for funding, intent, and effort on the part of both decision-makers and educators and parents. At the same time, Hungary's education system is not currently moving in this direction, but rather in the direction of segregation. In other words, a secondary socialization medium (school) “gets” a young person already internalized with this knowledge or can almost only go to a school with this personality that does not necessarily intend to shape its personality and pass on the values of the majority society. It is replaced by low educational attainment (or early school leaving), a peer group whose members also do not see school and learning as a value and very often face it. This cannot be tolerated by the selective primary labour market either, leaving the already well-known public work program or illegal work activity for the young person, for which he may even have contact capital from members of his primary socialization medium. Thus, primary socialization defects, negative examples received from the family, and their internalization lead to the failure of secondary socialization and the resulting deficits, and then the result of these two results in an insufficient labour market situation.

And this process can result in a significant proportion of PNEET youth drifting into and remaining in the NEET. This was demonstrated by the PNEET juvenile spiral model, and I provided examples of this from a detailed study of the PNEET group members in my research. In other words, the primary socialization deficit, which begins at birth and accompanies very young childhood, which rings in, but at the same time maintains and even deepens the secondary socialization deficit as a combined

effect of the two, spirals downward on the child, one of the possible consequences of which is the existence of a NEET. My studies have shown both primary and secondary socialization deficits and, as a combined effect, insufficient and / or unsuccessful entry into the primary labour market among PNEET youth, thus confirming the conceivability of the spiral model. Furthermore, the socialization defects of PNEET youth may be a reason for slipping into NEET and its persistence. At the same time, I must emphasize that the presence of socialization deficits / defects is important, but not exclusively the only reason for PNEET youth to slip into NEET. This can be exacerbated by a number of other factors (e.g. territorial, regional handicaps, or economic downturns, etc.), but once this downward spiral is set in motion, only a very serious set of social measures can help a PNEET youth avoid NEET.

A significant proportion of NEET youth have most likely already gone through some phases of PNEET's downward spiral model. Their primary socialization, from the point of view of majority society and its values, has strayed. They have acquired knowledge, internalized knowledge that operates only in the medium or very similar medium from which they come. They adopted, became part of their self-identity the cultural capital (including habitus) they saw from their parents (relatives, their immediate environment), which they also experienced successfully in the peer group, which only amplified and deepened the internalizing process. It also marked the direction of secondary socialization and its quality. The school was not able to convey the values expected by the majority society, to which the young person was not receptive anyway, as it came from a medium where these were not the primary values. Even if the educational institution and the teachers working there tried to pass on the preferred values, the young person may did not understand them and instead turned to those who were open to his values, that is, to their peers from a similar situation. Eventually, either a low or a particularly low level of education was obtained, or not even, and he dropped out of education prematurely. And they did not enter the primary labour market because of these serious socialization disadvantages; NEET became a young man. So, there are three ways left. One is to become a permanent NEET, which usually does not result in becoming a registered jobseeker, but very often illegal employment does. In this existence, however, the socialization defects that already existed are much more aggravated. And if this young person has already moved out of the age limits, then we will no longer be called NEET young, but long-term unemployed. The other way is to have a child at a young age, which can be strengthened by family tradition,

and even gain a sense of respect in this family tradition. In the case of the young woman (girl) who lives in NEET but cares for her family, just as she saw and experienced during her primary socialization, the existing socialization disadvantages remain or intensify. The third way is to become an “employee” in local public works programs, the framework of which is determined not by demand but by the Government, and in which, in many cases, the young do nothing but rarely do value-creating work. This also provides an opportunity to engage in illegal activities in addition to the “form of work”, which complements the financial resources of the family or the already existing family. Thus, in a sociological sense, even a young woman who is neither studying nor employed, but who is pregnant or has a child can be considered young NEET, especially if she has not been able to enter the primary labour market after childcare (because inadequate education, no job nearby, cannot be mobilized due to income poverty, etc.) and therefore (may) has another child. Furthermore, a NEET can also be considered a young person who works in local public work programs but does not have any opportunity to develop, to have the opportunity to enter the primary labour market after the termination of the program. Thus, pre-existing socialization defects, in particular serious disadvantages stemming from primary and secondary socialization deficits, are amplified and / or conserved by NEET existence, which means that NEET existence is no longer just a special group membership but can also be interpreted as a social phenomenon. In this phenomenon, the dynamics of different coefficients can be grasped, and if we interpret the NEET problem as a phenomenon, the collective responsibility of society also appears in alleviating (or eliminating) the problem and is not limited to individual responsibility.

However, as I have already pointed out in the case of PNEET young people, it is important to emphasize in the case of NEET young people that only and exclusively socialization deficits do not necessarily lead to the existence of NEETs. There are a number of other external circumstances involved. At the same time, based on my research experience and results, I can state that socialization defects are also reasons for the existence of NEETs and contribute greatly to young people finding themselves in NEET. The possibility of interpreting socialization defects as a cause is certainly supported by two circumstances. On the one hand, a variety of socialization disadvantages show a systematic association with the occurrence of NEETs. On the other hand, these socialization deficits or defects prevent young people from becoming NEETs in time. Taken together, all of these may provide a basis for considering the

disadvantages of complex socialization not merely as a correlation with NEET existence, but as one of the important causes of NEET.

4. List of publications on the subject of the dissertation, and other published publications of the author.



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List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian book chapters (1)

1. **Sánta, T. C.:** NEET-kutatás - Szegedre vonatkozó statisztikai adatok tükrében.
In: Kisvárosi fiatalok, kisebbségek, új sebezhetőségek: Csatlakozás az Európai Ifjúsági Térhez 7.0. Szerk.: Jancsák Csaba, Krémer András, Belvedere Meridionale, Szeged, 111-146, 2016. ISBN: 9789638708489(print)

Foreign language international book chapters (1)

2. **Sánta, T. C.:** Analysis of Registered NEETs' Educational Qualifications.
In: Differences in Pedagogical Theory and Practice. Ed.: Karlovitz János Tibor, International Research Institute s.r.o. Komárno, Komárno, 69-82, 2017. ISBN: 9788089691449

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (4)

3. **Sánta, T. C.:** Nők a magyar NEET-csoportban.
Esély. 31 (1), 73-92, 2020. ISSN: 0865-0810.
4. **Sánta, T. C.:** Integrációs dilemmák a magyarországi NEET populációval kapcsolatban.
Belvedere Meridionale. 30 (1), 127-147, 2018. ISSN: 1419-0222.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14232/belv.2018.1.8>
5. **Sánta, T. C.:** Ha tovább maradsz, beleragadsz!: NEET-es fiatalok kormegoszlási arányai Szegeden.
Kult. Köz. 8 (1), 27-38, 2017. ISSN: 0133-2597.
6. **Sánta, T. C.:** Fiatal közmunkások egyik lehetséges jövőképe(?) avagy: a magyar JWT
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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18392/metsz/2016/3/7>

Foreign language scientific articles in Hungarian journals (2)

7. **Sánta, T. C.:** Statistical Research on NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) in a Hungarian City.
Belvedere Meridionale. 29 (4), 43-70, 2017. ISSN: 1419-0222.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14232/belv.2017.4.4>





8. **Sánta, T. C.:** Youngsters who are not in employment, education or training.

Belvedere Meridionale. 28 (2), 120-131, 2016. ISSN: 1419-0222.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14232/belv.2016.2.9>

List of other publications

Hungarian books (2)

9. Szerk. Kiss, M. R., **Sánta, T. C.**, Balogh, P., Laki, I., Szabó, P.: Tanulmányok a Társadalomról IV.: A Szegedi Tudományegyetem JGYPK ATIKI Alkalmazott Társadalomtudományok Tanszék, ETSZK Szociális Munka és Szociálpolitika Tanszék, és a BTK Szociológia Tanszék tudományos diákköri munkái. A Szegedi Tudományegyetem Polgáraiért Alapítvány, Szeged, 292 p., 2019. ISBN: 9786150050553
10. Szerk. Laki, I., Olasz, L., **Sánta, T. C.**, Szabó, P.: Tanulmányok a Társadalomról III. *Belvedere Meridionale* Kiadó, Szeged, 142 p., 2017. ISBN: 9789631290622

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)

11. **Sánta, T. C.:** Brexit vs. Fiatalok (1:0) avagy: Generációk meccse.
Kult. Köz. 7 (4), 29-36, 2016. ISSN: 0133-2597.

Other journal articles (1)

12. **Sánta, T. C.:** Társadalmi integráció: Az egyenlőtlenségek, az együttműködés, az újraelosztás és a hatalom szerkezete a magyar társadalomban.
Kult. Köz. 9 (1), 89-92, 2018. ISSN: 0133-2597.

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