

EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH IN TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD: THE MODELS DEVELOPED IN BASE OF GENERATION AND GENDER SURVEY

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SUMMARY

Understanding the specificities and patterns of transition to adulthood and timing of young adults' milestones is essential for developing targeted and effective social integration policies that address the needs and vulnerabilities of youth subcategories. The aim of the paper is to develop a typology of transition models within the specific context of Moldova by classifying different pathways that young people follow during the transition into adulthood. This study uses the data from Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) conducted in Moldova in 2020. Pathways are derived from key life events that mark the transition to adulthood, retrospectively observed for young people 25-35 years old (N = 2540). To explore the different patterns of transitions Two-Step Cluster analysis was used. This exploratory model is relevant for creating typologies and processing both continuous and categorical variables. The analysis identifies four main clusters of transition to adulthood, showing variations between them. The "complex transition" cluster includes young people who experience a smoother transition to adulthood, characterized by a higher level of education, followed by stable employment, while demographic events such as marriage and parenthood occur later in this group. The "uncertain transition" cluster reflects a degree of instability and uncertainty in terms of employment, many young people, especially men, are employed temporarily or informally, while women are often on maternity or childcare leave without being employed. The "precarious transition" cluster represents inactive young people in the labor market, most of them having a low level of education. The "early transition" cluster suggests a pattern of early transitions into adulthood, often accompanied by a low level of education and early family formation, especially among women.

Keywords: young people, transition to adulthood, complex, uncertain, precarious, early transitions, Moldova

INTRODUCTION

The youth transition to adulthood is a complex and critical period characterized by the establishment of life goals and aspirations, as well as the acquisition of new social statuses and interdependent roles that shape the path into a distinct stage of human development. It is an intense period in terms of key life events that mark it, including the completion of studies, leaving the parental home, entry into the labor market, marriage and becoming a parent (Coles, 1995; Billari & Liefbroer 2010; Paolini, Horváth, & Motiejūnaitė, 2018). Achieving these milestones is often seen as important for personal development and social integration, which means the movement into social majority and adult independence (Hall & Coffey, 2007; Pitti, 2022).

A significant increase in research concerning youth transition to adulthood is observed over the last decades, focusing on understanding how challenges of social transformations are influencing this process, as well as identifying policy measures to facilitate the transition and mitigate associated vulnerabilities. Studies have shown that regional trends and socio-economic changes, such as increasing inequality and exclusion, labor market insecurity and family fragility have had a greater impact on younger generations compared to the older ones (Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Walther & Pohl, 2007; Unt & Hofäcker, 2021). On the other hand, young people today have more opportunities to explore various life paths and experiences that diverge from traditional or standard trajectories (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Arnett, 2000). In this context, the transition to adulthood is characterized by de-standardization (Walther & Pohl, 2007), meaning the shift away from the traditional, normative timing and sequencing of major life events

(Elzinga & Liefbroer, 2007; France, 2007; Billari & Liefbroer, 2010; Mitrofanova, 2023). The new pattern of the transition to adulthood is, as a rule, characterized as late, protracted and complex (Billari & Liefbroer, 2010). This signifies that young people are experiencing these transitions at later ages, taking longer to complete them, and facing a more complex array of options and challenges compared to earlier generations.

The transition process of young people to adulthood in Moldova is particularly complex. Globalization, mobility and international integration influence how young people attain autonomy from one perspective, especially considering that a significant number of them are involved in international migration for work or studies. At the same time, country socioeconomic context, which has a crucial impact on the youth transition to adulthood, is characterized by instability, high dependence on internal and external shocks, while Moldova is classified as 'small-medium' income country (World Bank, 2022). Thus, in addition to global and regional challenges and trends, young people face a series of specific problems, exacerbated by the poor socioeconomic situation, the inconsistency of reforms in key areas, the structural inefficiency of the labor market, urban-rural disparities and others.

In spite of the extensive literature addressing different dimensions of young people's transition to adulthood and the associated challenges, studies in Moldova have predominantly focused on specific aspects of this transitional period. A comprehensive and cross-sectoral analysis of young people's transition to adulthood remains largely unexplored in scholarly literature.

This article aims to fill this gap by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the transition to adulthood among young people in Moldova. It does so by examining five key life events that are central to this transitional process. The article aims to elucidate

the patterns and timing of these key milestones in their transition to adulthood, while also emphasizing the necessity of a targeted and effective social policy that is tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of various subcategories of young people.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are numerous empirical studies analyzing the complexity of the transition from youth to adulthood, focusing on the timing and interconnectivity of key life events. These studies investigate how events such as completing education, employment, setting up independent living arrangements, starting a family and becoming a parent are interconnected and how their timing varies between individuals and across different cultural and national contexts.

A prominent study in this field has identified a notable shift in the traditional markers of the transition to adulthood across most European countries. The study suggests that indicators such as first marriage and parenthood are no longer adequate descriptors of this transition, as they are increasingly postponed and are less closely linked with age or interdependent with each other. The study highlights variation in patterns of leaving the parental home across countries, with Northern European countries showing earlier patterns compared to Eastern European countries. Additionally, the formation of own family is no longer solely linked to marriage or entry into the labor market, indicating a shift in traditional life trajectories (Corijn & Klijzing, 2001).

A more recent study conducted across eight European countries examined the transition to adulthood based on GGS data analysis. It revealed significant differences in transition models between Western and Eastern European countries. In Western European countries, modern life paths are more prevalent, characterized by a delayed departure from the parental home and extended periods of living alone or cohabitation. In contrast, Eastern European countries tend to follow more traditional transition patterns, which are characterized by early completion of studies, early entry into the workforce, early marriage and parenthood. Gender differences play a crucial role in shaping these transition models. Women are more likely to follow traditional transition paths, especially when starting work early and prioritizing family formation. On the other hand, men are more likely to delay departure from the parental home and partnership formation, particularly when extending their education. Education level also has a significant impact on young people's life trajectories. Higher levels of education are associated with delayed departure from the parental home and delayed parenthood. However, the effect of education varies across countries, with a more pronounced impact observed in Eastern European countries (Schwanitz, 2017).

Several studies have highlighted the impact of social stratification on young people's transition to adulthood. For instance, a study based on GGS data for Austria, Bulgaria, and France indicated that young people from higher socioeconomic status families tend to experience key life events later than those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. These events, including leaving the parental home, cohabitation, marriage and the birth of the first child are pivotal in shaping individual life courses and are socially stratified (Billari, Hiekel, & Liefbroer, 2019).

Researches in Eastern European countries, using GGS data, have revealed significant trends in the transition to adulthood, convergent with regional trends. These include changes in family structures, partnership dynamics, marriage, and reproductive behaviors. Gender differentiation is prominent, with women in rural areas marrying and giving birth earlier, while having a child reduces women's chances of employment and continuing education. Transition models vary based on education level and urban or rural residence, with urban areas and higher education mitigating gender inequalities (Mitrofanova, 2011; Mitrofanova, 2016; Akulova et al., 2018).

A recent study examined six key events that mark adulthood: completion of professional education, leaving the parental home, first employment, first cohabitation, first marriage and first childbirth. Comparing the structure, timing, and tempo of these key life events in selected countries reveals that the transition to adulthood is becoming more standardized, yet still maintains country-specific characteristics. Socioeconomic events typically occur for the majority of Millennials (50-90%) between the ages of 18-20, with a more gradual progression in France and Finland, and a more abrupt transition in Estonia and Russia. Cohabitation emerges as the most common demographic event in the transition to adulthood. In comparison, first marriages and childbirth occur for less than 50% of respondents and at significantly older ages. Russians have the highest prevalence of these events and experience them at a younger age (Mitrofanova, 2023).

Studies analyzing youth transition pathways in Moldova, as mentioned above, have mainly focused on distinct dimensions rather than on interconnected key life events. Thus, research on the transition from school to work has revealed disparities based on residence and gender. Young people from rural areas were found to be more disadvantaged, and young women had fewer chances regarding access to the labor market and the quality of employment. On average, it takes a young person 8.6 months from graduation to obtain their first stable or satisfactory job. Successful transition to the labor market is influenced by the level of education (higher levels) and the residential environment (urban areas). Additionally, studies have highlighted the significant impact of youth migration abroad on the local labor market, leading to a lower participation rate and higher wage expectations among young people (Ganta & Shamchiyeva, 2016; Buciuceanu-Vrabie & Gagauz, 2017).

The analysis on educational path of young people and factors that influence it, showed the persistence of the phenomenon of early school leaving throughout the

last decades (Gagauz et al., 2017; Gagauz et al., 2021). Studies indicated that there is a close correlation between early school leaving and low level of education of parents, as well as rural residence, recorded as another important factor that is influencing on educational trajectories (Crismaru et al., 2018).

Studies focused on the matrimonial and reproductive behavior of young people has shown that in Moldova, as in other European countries, there are trends of fertility restructuring and changes in reproductive behavior in all age groups, with an increase in the proportion of women who gave birth during their reproductive life only one child and a gradual decrease in the proportion of women who gave birth to three or more children during their lifetime, especially within the younger generations (Grigoras, 2018).

This article would contribute to the understanding of the transition of young people to adulthood, a multifaceted concept encompassing significant life changes such as completing studies, entering the labor market, leaving the parental home, establishing a new family and parenthood.

DATA SOURCES AND USED METHODS

The life course paradigm is one of the main theoretical frameworks that studies population and human development. It provides a comprehensive understanding of how various factors, such as chronological age, interpersonal relationships, main life transitions and broader social changes influence individuals' lives (Elder, 1998; Giele & Elder, 1998; Mortimer & Shanahan, 2003). This approach is extensively used in investigating youth transition to adulthood, as it helps in identifying factors that influence an individual's experiences during this life stage. It also contributes to understanding life trajectories at a micro level by considering the individual's personal experiences and choices, while simultaneously recognizing the impact of broader structural processes at the macro level. This integrated approach provides a holistic understanding of the transition to adulthood (Irwin & Nilsen, 2018). Studying the transition to adulthood involves analyzing the key events, including completing education, leaving the parental home, entering the workforce, engaging in cohabitation, getting married and having the first child (Buchmann, 1989; Billari & Liefbroer, 2010). These milestones are commonly recognized as significant markers of the transition to adulthood across different cultures and societies. Understanding how individuals experience and navigate these events provides valuable insights into the complexities of the transition to adulthood.

Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, qualifications, and individual characteristics that contribute to personal, social and economic well-being (OCDE, 2001). These remain the same in any social environment and can be capitalized on the labor market in exchange for economic resources of

any type (Voicu, 2004). This theory is fundamental for understanding intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status, as parental investments in their children's human capital play a significant role in shaping their future socioeconomic outcomes. According to researchers, the dynamic process of human capital accumulation begins long before formal schooling and is influenced by the family background. Early personal and family characteristics are crucial determinants, as they can influence human capital accumulation and in a long run directly impact employability (Becker, 1964). In researching the transition of young people to adulthood, this theoretical framework emphasizes the need for deep exploration of the relationships between investments in human capital, the educational and professional trajectories of young people and the influence of intergenerational and family backgrounds.

Risk society theory (Beck, 2002) emphasizes the impact of structural change and risk in contemporary society, particularly on young people, providing a useful perspective for understanding the context in which they construct their identities and biographies. Young people can particularly feel this structural uncertainty, which can influence their decisions to drop out of education or experience difficulties in finding a job. Increasing uncertainty in everyday life affects individual decisions and planning processes. The theory stresses the loss of the advantages of a regime of certainty that previous generations have had, with young people being directly affected by the continuous changes that influence their commitment to education, careers and participation in society. The use of this theory, together with other conceptions and approaches, contributes to a more

complete and contextualized understanding of the experiences of young people in the contemporary society associated with multiple risks.

Demographic theories emphasize the description and understanding of demographic events and processes, while the transition to adult life is analyzed from the perspective of the occurrence of certain key demographic events, such as marriage, partnership, parenthood. The *theory of the second demographic transition* foresees the primary trends of the demographic transition, which include postponing births to older ages or late fertility, but also later marriages, thus increasing the number of cohabitation, divorce and non-marital births (Van de Kaa, 1987). According to the theory, these demographic changes are the result of changes in values and attitudes, as well as weaker normative regulation

and increased autonomy of women that contribute to a growing demand for self-development, autonomy and individualization (Lesthaeghe, 2014). Therefore, due to the emphasis placed on autonomy, it is possible that young people become less responsive to their parents' preferences or to social and normative expectations, and in their life choices they opt for choices that allow more autonomy, such as independent / solitary living or in a consensual union / cohabitation, rather than in a marriage, to postpone the choices from the point of view of demographic events, which require more involvement and measures. These demographic changes take place at different stages in different countries, and the differences are based on the extent to which the values and behaviors related to the demographic transition have been adopted at a given moment in time (Sobotka, 2008).

MAIN RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data for this study come from the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) conducted in Moldova in 2020 among nationally representative samples of the 15–79-year-old resident population (GGS, 2020). The overall sample size were 19948 households and is nationally representative (excluding the Transnistria region) by residency areas (urban, rural) and regions (North, Center, South and Chisinau municipality). The study utilizes weighted data based on age and gender criteria to ensure the sample is adequately representative, which enables a detailed analysis of young people's transition to adulthood. A particular advantage of the GGS data for the purpose of this analysis is that include

a broad range of variables describing youth transition to adulthood, such as education path, employment and forms of employment, reproductive behavior, relationship history of marriage and partnership (including from intergenerational perspective).

To study patterns of youth transition to adulthood, a sub-sample of age range of 25–35 years was chosen. This age group was selected because most life events marking the transition to adult life typically occur after age 24. The sub-sample comprises 2540 individuals, ensuring a reliable sample size for statistical analyses across various categories of young people (Table 1).

Table 1.

Sample distribution by sex and area of residence (25-35 years)

		nr of observation (n=2540)	%
Gender	Male	1300	51.2
	Female	1240	48.8
Area	Urban	1124	44.3
	Rural	1416	55.7
Region	Mun. Chisinau	576	22.7
	North	491	19.3
	Centre	889	35.0
	South	584	23.0

Data on the occurrence of key life events of interest were systematically collected as part of the life course reconstruction process for each respondent. These events are analyzed across three main dimensions: *educational* (completion of professional education), *working* (employed, unemployed, inactive) and *family*

formation (living outside the parental home, married, have a child). For each event (when such data are available) the average age of occurrence is calculated. This approach enables the examination of potential variations in the timing of these transitions to adulthood (Table 2).

Table 2.

Descriptive information on event variables (25-35 years)

Dimensions	Variables	
Educational	Completion of professional education (not in education)	99.2
Working	Employed	46.6
	Unemployed	22.1
	Inactive	31.3
Family formation	Living outside the parental home	86.2
	Married	61.3
	Have a child	69.6

To identify the specifics of the transition to adult life, cluster analysis was utilized. This statistical technique effectively categorizes individuals into subgroups based on selected characteristics. The aim is to determine the similarities and differences in the transition of young people to adulthood by forming clusters. For this study, *Two-Step cluster* analysis was employed, and this approach first uses a distance measure to separate groups and then employs a probabilistic approach (similar to latent class analysis) to select the optimal subgroup model. It is suitable for this study as it allows for the analysis of both continuous and categorical variables. The following events (categorical variables) were included in the cluster analysis: living situation (does not live with parents), marital status, parenthood

status, and occupational status. Additionally, continuous variables such as the average age at obtaining the highest level of education, average age at first marriage, and average age when becoming a parent for the first time were also considered. However, data are not available for the variables - the age of first employment, and the age of leaving the parental home.

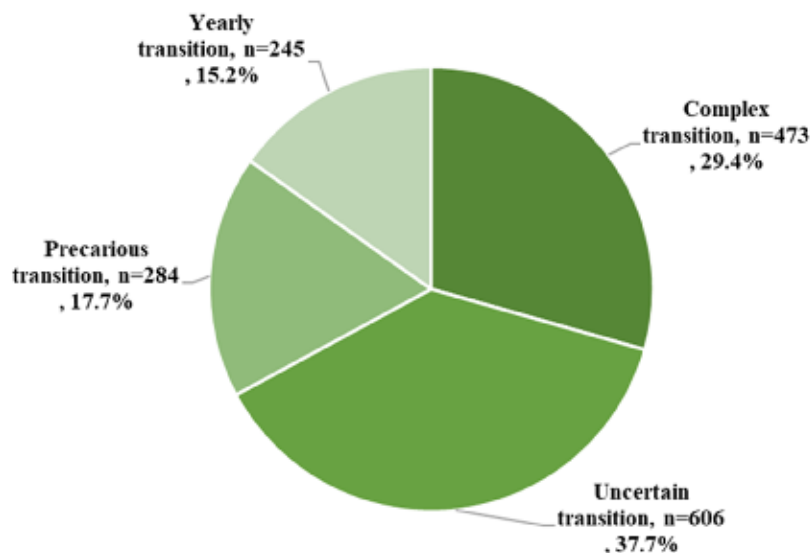
In the cluster analysis, the occupational status of young individuals in relation to the labor market proved to be the variable with the highest weight in determining cluster membership (1.00), followed by the average age at the completion of the educational process (0.735). The other variables had a more moderate weight in establishing the clusters.

DESCRIPTIVE AND MULTIVARIATE RESULTS

Following the cluster analysis, four main types were identified taking into account their occupational, matrimonial and parental status: cluster (1) Complex transition (29.4%); cluster (2) Uncertain transition (37.7%); cluster (3) Precarious transition (17.7%); cluster (4) Early transition (15.2%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Distribution of clusters



Each cluster was subjected to separate analysis regarding individuals' sociodemographic characteristics, including gender, area of residence, level of education, occupational status, mean age of attaining the highest level of education, mean age at first marriage, and mean age at first childbirth (Table 3). The outcomes of the chi-square tests reveal statistically significant differences,

indicating that the clusters diverge significantly concerning gender ($\chi^2(3) = 71.936, p < .000$), area of residence ($\chi^2(3) = 116.958, p < .000$), education level ($\chi^2(6) = 209.152, p < .000$) and occupational status ($\chi^2(5) = 2356.127, p < .000$). These findings suggest that the composition of the clusters varies significantly in terms of these sociodemographic variables.

Table 3.

Descriptive statistics of the main characteristics of clusters by sex, area, education level and occupational status

		Complex transition	Uncertain transition	Precarious transition	Yearly transition
Sex	Female	47.1	66.8	43.7	75.9
	Male	52.9	33.2	56.3	24.1
Area	Urban	57.0	41.1	26.8	20.4
	Rural	43.0	58.9	73.2	79.6
Education level	Gymnasium	15.4	29.7	46.3	45.7
	General secondary /lyceum	8.7	11.2	12.7	16.7
	Secondary vocational	11.8	29.3	20.1	20
	Postsecondary vocational	16.3	11.7	8.5	10.2
Occupation status	Higher	47.8	18.1	12.4	7.3
	Employed	96.6	38.3	10.9	17.6
	Unemployed	0.6	1.8	37.7	20.0
	Inactive - not working / housewife	0.8	1.6	36.6	62.4
	Inactive - maternity/childcare leave	0.8	57.5	14.8	-

In Table 4, each cluster was individually analyzed regarding the average age at which individuals attained their highest level of education, the average age at first marriage, and the average age at first childbirth. A two-way ANOVA was employed to investigate the impact of gender on these variables. The results revealed statistically significant interactions between gender and

the variables: age of attaining highest level of education ($F(3) = 9.600, p = 0.000$), average age of first marriage ($F(3) = 9.600, p = 0.000$), and average age of childbirth ($F(3) = 5.888, p = 0.001$; $F(3) = 3.987, p = 0.008$). These findings suggest that the influence of gender on these life events varies significantly across the clusters.

Table 4.

Average age for highest level of education, first marriage and first childbirth

		Highest level of education		First marriage		First childbirth	
		Mean age	Std. Deviation	Mean age	Std. Deviation	Mean age	Std. Deviation
Male	Complex	21.23	4.300	24.83	3.518	24.90	3.596
	Uncertain	17.88	3.305	23.82	3.466	24.47	3.182
	Precarious	17.19	2.866	23.53	2.539	23.29	3.264
	Yearly	17.63	2.709	24.67	2.934	24.71	3.848
Female	Complex	20.31	3.874	21.75	3.086	22.09	3.064
	Uncertain	19.25	3.805	21.69	3.487	22.01	3.744
	Precarious	17.64	2.931	21.68	3.028	21.38	2.873
	Yearly	16.94	2.781	21.21	3.206	20.98	2.735
Total	Complex	20.87	4.161	23.66	3.675	23.71	3.651
	Uncertain	18.68	3.664	22.91	3.557	23.33	3.647
	Precarious	17.40	2.900	22.65	2.926	22.39	3.224
	Yearly	17.16	2.771	22.30	3.498	22.17	3.562

THE MODELS OF YOUTH IN TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Cluster 1 “Complex transition” comprises 473 individuals, representing 29.4% of the total sample. This cluster is characterized by a more prolonged education path, resulting in a higher level of education. About half of the young people included have higher education. The higher level of education is associated with smoother access to the labor market, but also with delayed demographic events such as marriage and parenthood.

Occupational status is a crucial factor in determining placement in this cluster, with the vast majority of individuals being employed (96.6%). Gender distribution shows that men are slightly more represented in this cluster (52.9%) compared to women (47.1%). Additionally, there is a higher proportion of young people from urban area (57%) compared to rural area (43%) in this cluster.

The defining factor for this group is the level of education, with approximately half of the young people included having higher education (47.8%). These results align with data on the socio-professional integration dimension of young people. Due to the higher level of education, women in this cluster completed their studies at an average age of 20.31 years, while men completed theirs at 21.22 years. This educational trajectory is the most extensive compared to the other clusters. A longer educational path is associated with a later occurrence of demographic events related to marriage and parenthood, particularly among women. The average age at first marriage for women in this cluster is 22.24 years, and the average age at the birth of the first child is 22.49 years. Similarly, men in this cluster experience a delay in these demographic events due to their more extensive educational path.

Cluster 2. “Uncertain transition” is the largest cluster, comprising 606 young individuals, accounting for 37.7% of the total sample. This cluster stands out as the most diverse in terms of occupational status and education level among young people. More than half (57.5%) of individuals in this cluster are on maternity or childcare leave, with the vast majority being women. A significant portion of these young women did not have previous work experience, leaving them socially uninsured and facing uncertainty regarding their situation after the end of the childcare leave (typically 2 years). Additionally, 38.3% of young people in this cluster are employed, mostly men, often in temporary or unofficial positions, further indicating an uncertain situation.

Regarding education level, there is a varied distribution within this cluster, encompassing young people with different educational backgrounds: 29.7% have secondary education, 29.3% have secondary vocational education, 18.1% have higher education, and 11.7% have postsecondary vocational education.

Within this cluster, the average age at which women reach their highest level of education is 19.28 years,

while for men, it is 17.89 years. Similarly, the average age at first marriage for women is 21.69 years, and the average age at the birth of the first child is 22.01 years. As with other clusters, the average age of demographic events among men is higher compared to women.

Cluster 3. “Precarious transition” comprises 284 individuals, accounting for 17.7% of the total sample. This cluster primarily consists of young people who are outside the labor force, including those not working and seeking employment and those engaged in household activities, with a significant proportion having a low level of education.

Thus, among the individuals in this cluster, 37.7% are unemployed and actively looking for a job, with a higher proportion being men. Additionally, 36.6% are not working and are engaged in household activities, with the majority being women. In contrast to the previously described clusters, only about 11% of young people in this cluster are employed.

In terms of education level, there is a high representation of individuals with a low level of education, with 46% having only secondary education. This highlights the precarious situation on the labor market resulting from early school leaving. Individuals with vocational secondary education make up 20.1%, those with specialized secondary education account for 8.5%, and those with higher education represent 12.4%.

Analyzing the average ages related to the educational dimension, it is observed that women in this cluster complete their studies at an average age of 17.67 years and men complete theirs at 17.18 years. Regarding demographic events, the average age at first marriage for women is 21.68 years, and the average age at the birth of the first child is 21.37 years. In contrast, demographic events related to marriage and parenthood occur later for men in this cluster.

Cluster 4. “Early transition” comprises 245 individuals, representing 15% of the total sample. This cluster is characterized by individuals with a low average age of education completion, as well as a younger average age for demographic events, such as the birth of the first child and marriage. This type of transition is primarily observed among women with inactive status and is more prevalent in rural areas.

Regarding occupational status, a high proportion of individuals in this cluster are inactive on the labor market, with 62% not working but engaged in household activities. Only 20% of individuals in this cluster are employed or actively seeking employment. Women constitute the majority in this cluster (75.9%) compared to men (24.1%), and the majority of individuals are rural residents (almost 80%), with only 20% from urban areas.

Education level is a significant criterion in this cluster, with almost half (47%) having incomplete secondary

education (gymnasium), in comparison, only 7% have higher education. The average age at which individuals in this cluster reached their highest level of education is 16.96 years for women, one of the lowest average values among the clusters. Women in this cluster also have the youngest average ages at the birth of their first child (20.98 years) and at first marriage (21.2 years).

For men in this cluster, the situation is somewhat different. Although the average age at which they reached their highest level of education is low (17.63 years), their average ages at marriage (24.69 years) and parenthood (24.71 years) are higher, comparable to those in other clusters.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research findings provide valuable insights into the transition to adulthood in Moldova, revealing distinct patterns characterized by various socio-demographic and occupational indicators. These patterns differ based on gender, area of residence and level of education, having an impact on the occurrence and prevalence of key life events. Completing education, getting married, and having children are significant markers of this transition, while socio-professional integration shows lower rates by age 35. Urban residency acts as a proxy factor, mitigating these challenges through enhanced access to diverse educational, occupational and social infrastructure for young individuals.

The study identified four main types of transition to adult life within the 25-35 age category in Moldova. *Complex transition* is characterized by a more extensive educational path, leading to easier access to the labor market. However, it also results in later occurrences of demographic events such as marriage and parenthood. *Uncertain transition* is marked by a diversification in occupational status and education level among young people. It consists mainly of individuals on maternity or childcare leave (predominantly women) and young people engaged in temporary or informal employment (mainly men). *Precarious transition* consists mainly of young people that are outside the labor market, either actively seeking employment or inactive in relation to it. Most individuals in this group have a low level of education. *Early transition* is characterized by individuals who left the education system early, often leading to a younger average age at the occurrence of their first child's birth and marriage. This transition pattern is more common among women with an inactive status and is prevalent in rural areas.

The study revealed that demographic events related to marriage and the birth of a child are comparable to those recorded among young people from other countries in the region. There is a divergence of transition models with previous generations and a convergence with models demonstrated by countries that are in more advanced stages of family development, the diversification of partnership relationships, the transformation of the reproductive model, known by the concept of the "second demographic transition" (Billari & Liefbroer, 2010; Billari, Hiekel, & Liefbroer, 2019; Mitrofanova, 2016; Mitrofanova, 2023). At the same time, gender differentiation is observed in the transition models, which manifests itself prominently in the occurrence of demographic events: women marry and become parents

earlier than men, the appearance of a child, in the case of women, reduces their chances of employment and continuing education (Mitrofanova, 2011; Akulova et al., 2018).

The study emphasizes the significance of employment for young people in Moldova, as it plays a pivotal role in fostering financial independence and overall well-being. However, the findings reveal that, even after 24 years of age, the proportion of young individuals engaged in the labor force remains below 50% of the total cohort. This indicates a substantial segment of the youth population encountering challenges in accessing or maintaining employment opportunities. These labor market challenges are not unique to Moldova, being prevalent in many countries. Scholars have conceptualized these difficulties as "new social risks", highlighting the intricate interplay between young individuals, the labor market, and their endeavor to harmonize professional commitments with familial responsibilities (Taylor Gooby, 2004; Unt et al., 2021). Moreover, labor inactivity among young individuals in Moldova is notably linked to the female gender and the status of "mother with children", a trend also observed in neighboring countries such as Romania and Bulgaria (Caroleo, Rocca, & Neagu, 2021). This association is indicative of persistent traditional societal norms regarding gender roles, as well as the challenges faced by young women in reconciling work with family responsibilities (Chistruga-Sinchevici, 2021).

The research findings underscore the need for comprehensive and intersectoral policy interventions to address the challenges encountered by young individuals in their transition to adulthood. These interventions should encompass various domains, including education, health, the labor market, governance, political participation, and the enhancement of social protection systems. By adopting a holistic approach that spans multiple sectors, policymakers can better support young people in overcoming barriers to their successful transition to adulthood. Such interventions can help improve educational outcomes, enhance access to quality healthcare, create more opportunities for meaningful employment, promote good governance and political engagement among youth, and strengthen social safety nets to ensure the well-being of young individuals as they navigate this critical life stage.

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