REGIONAL EMPLOYEES PERCEPTIONS ON DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH: LABOUR MARKET OF ALBANIA AND KOSOVO

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Abstract

This research paper is a continuum of our previous research that aimed to identify key perceptions of targeted employees towards decent work and economic growth in labour market of Albania and Kosovo. The key components of SDG 8 - economic growth, basic living costs, equal treatment, safety and security at workplace, and integrity and wellbeing are measured. The questionnaire is used for the study purposes of the research. The sample consists of 350 respondents. Findings reveal that there are alarming differences on perceptions of respondents in terms of decent work between two regional labour markets. The labour market in Albania suffers from weak treatment of employees at workplace; ensuring safe and secured working environment and low promotion of wellbeing and integrity of employees in workplace. The dimension of economic growth and basic living cost is of concern for both labour markets. Consequently, it is strongly recommended that both states address decent work in labour markets of Albania and Kosovo with priority. State instruments shall be enforced to closely cooperate with employee's organizations and syndicates and work on elimination of core barriers that disable employees to feel equally treated at workplace, or safe and secured at workplace or having their integrity and wellbeing protected so that quality of working environment improves and involvement and productivity of employees grows.

Keywords: abour market, economic growth, decent work
JEL classification: J30, J40, R10, R11, R23, O10

1. Introduction

The composition structure of this paper includes inputs from legal cooperation frameworks of Albania and Kosovo where different matters of importance in implementation of SDG 8 are being considered, including responsible institutional bodies and role of international partners. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) deriving from the efforts of the United Nations are to be considered with priority in each government. The goal on economic growth and decent work is known as Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8). This specific goal is set up by the United Nations (UN) and it defines clearly 12 Targets and 17 Indicators to be implemented globally. Concurrently, the responsibility of collecting data from countries, track real metrics on progress of each country, and possibly support under developed countries in enhancing economic growth and promoting decent work is directed by the United Nations.

The government of Albania and the government of Kosova in cooperation with United Nations are parties in working together to implement all SDGs and increase prosperity and wellbeing of the society through the Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (Republic of Albania, 2022; Kuvendi i Kosovës, 2018). Albania renewed its Cooperation Framework starting from January 1, 2022. Kosovo is not a member state of the United

Nations and subsequently is not a signatory to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The United Nations Kosovo Team is the key supporter of the Government of Kosovo in sustainable development (The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015). Activities of the United Nations development system agencies in Kosovo are guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (United Nations Kosovo Team, 2021).
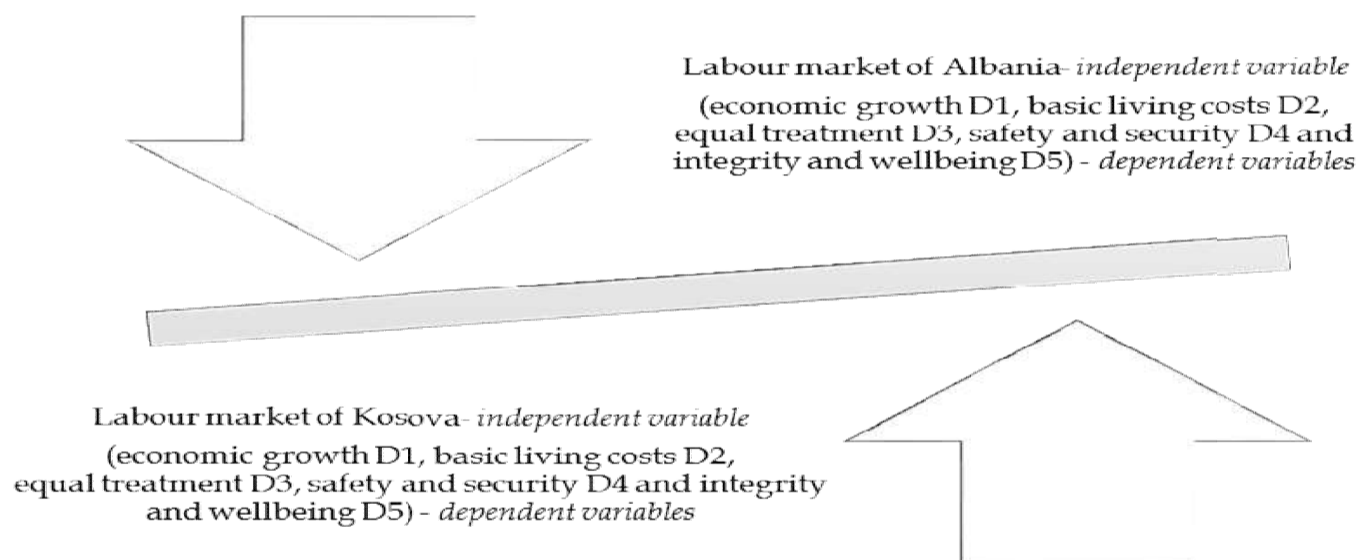
Next part presents facts from various resources and literature review. The methodology of research is explained in details including data analysis and hypothesis test. At the end, conclusions are drawn and compose the closing part of this research.

2. Methodology

The questionnaire is adopted from the previous survey that was compiled by authors of this paper in Kosovo. The targeted population consists of respondents working either in private or public sector during the course of survey administration. Random sampling is used to collect data from 350 respondents during the month of May and June 2022 in different areas of Albania and Kosovo.

The structure of the survey is consisted of two parts. The questions within the first part of the questionnaire, intend to identify where are the respondents coming from (Place), what is their age (Age) and gender (Gender), and in which sector do they work (Public sector/Private sector) and compose the demographic information in terms of sample.

Chart 1: Conceptual framework

Labour market of Albania - *independent variable*
(economic growth D1, basic living costs D2, equal treatment D3, safety and security D4 and integrity and wellbeing D5) - *dependent variables*

Labour market of Kosova - *independent variable*
(economic growth D1, basic living costs D2, equal treatment D3, safety and security D4 and integrity and wellbeing D5) - *dependent variables*

Since the aim of this research is to search if there is any difference on perceptions and believes between employees in Albania and in Kosovo in terms of decent work and economic growth, (see above Chart 1 Conceptual Framework) , the second part of the survey included statements that are grouped under scale called Differences consisted of 5 variables: D1: impact of economic growth, D2: sufficiency of monthly incomes; D3: equal treatment, D4: safe and security at workplace, and D4: wellbeing at workplace. The above-mentioned item is measured by statements using the Likert scale and are presented below: (D1) The economic growth in my country affected positively my incomes. (D 2) I earn enough monthly incomes to be able to cover basic living expenses. (D3) My organization treats all employees equally in all aspects. (D4) I feel safe and physically secured at my working place? (D5) My integrity and wellbeing is protected at my workplace.

3. Literature Review

The literature review of this paper is focused towards various resources such as statistical data, reports, regulations and laws, and research papers. Additionally, inputs from various reports and reliable statistical data on development indicators of countries are given within. The variety of research findings and recommendations are elaborated separately to address each of the variables in this survey research method.

3.1. Development Indicators

According to the SDG 8, the main indicator deals with the annual growth rate and aims to sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries through 2030. (SDG 8 Tracker, 2022). On the other hand, the United Nations Report highlights that:

"Roughly half the world's population still lives on the equivalent of about US$2 a day. And in too many places, having a job doesn't guarantee the ability to escape from poverty. This slow and uneven progress requires us to rethink and retool our economic and social policies aimed at eradicating poverty" (SDG 8 Tracker, 2022).

Chart 2: Annual Percentage growth per capita

Source: World Bank and OECD (2022)

For the purpose of this study, it deemed crucial to present data on growth rate per capita of both countries. Chart 2 shows comparison of the world's annual percentage growth per capita between Albania and Kosovo from 2016 to 2020.The data derive from annual percentage growth rate of GDP per capita based on the local currency, whereas aggregates are based on constant U.S. dollars, as per data of the Word Bank and OECD (2022). In 2020, the world's annual growth marked a decrease from -4.29%, whereas Kosovo marked a decrease of -5.41% compared to the Albania with -3.40%. In 2019, the world's annual growth was 1.52%, whereas Albania marked 2.55% and Kosovo 5.24%. In 2018, the world's annual growth was 2.14%, whereas Kosovo marked 3.06% and Albania 4.28%. In 2017, the world's annual growth was 2.22%, whereas Albania marked 3.90% and Kosovo 4.04%. In 2016, the world's annual growth was 1.64%, whereas Albania marked 3.48% and Kosovo 6.20%.

The Chart 3 presents the income of the average person growth in Albania from 1990 until 2020 and data from Kosovo started to be registered lately. Importantly to note is that data was collected from resources of the World Bank, and data for Kosovo is available not prior to 2007.

Chart 3: GDP based on PPP
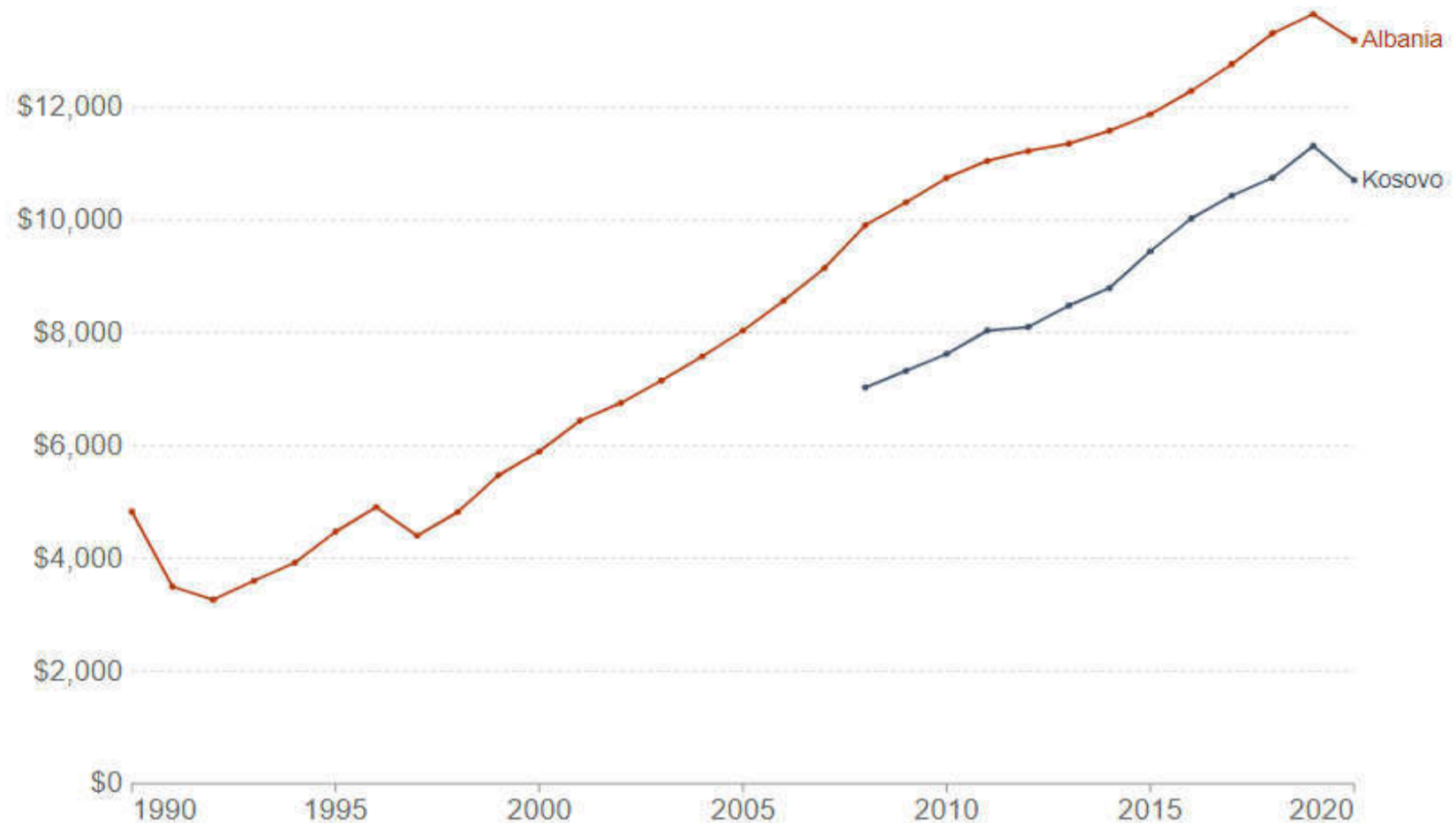
Source: World Development Indicators - World Bank (2022.05.26)

Albania has a longer period of data reporting to Word Bank and OECD, whereas Kosovo's data are newly reported due to its status. Incomes remain highly changing over a period of four decades in Albania and an increase is very evident during last two years. In 2019, Albania rated the highest GDP based on PPP of $13, 657, followed with $13, 317 in 2018 and, $13, 192 in 2020. During last five years, Albania's lowest rate was in 2016 with $12, 292 and $ 12, 771 in 2017. On the other hand , Kosovo rated the highest in 2019, similar to Albania during 2016-2020 period with $11, 318 followed by $10, 755 in 2008 and $10,707 in 2020. During 2016, Kosovo rated the lowest $10,031, followed by $10, 436 in 2017.

3.2. Economic growth

There are different views of scholars toward notion of economic growth. Considerations such as 'providing the world with remarkable improvements in per capita income' (Ahlstrom, 2010) or having 'the worlds ecosystems in a state of extreme distress where the planet will be unlivable in just a few decades' (Sweeney, 2012) are just few demonstrated examples of polarized views and concerns the researchers hold in this line. Bjørnskov & Foss (2016) share their view on entrepreneurial activity as a driving force of productivity towards economic growth by reconsidering the claim 'that the entrepreneurial activity has positive long-run economic consequences in terms of wealth, productivity, and growth'. In addition, Castles & Treasury (2014) balance the 'concept of 'growth' through expanding the options available to realize society's priorities'. In this direction, the first hypothesis of this research is as follows:

H_1: Difference exists between respondents of Albania and Kosovo and rate of satisfaction with economic growth and impact on monthly incomes.

3.3. Basic living expenses

The cost of living is best described as the amount of money needed to pay for the basic common expenses. The cost of living has experienced changes over periods of time and across countries. Research and studies in social and economic science show that from basic items such as food, clothing, housing, furnishings, operation, health, advancement, personal expenses and some other items that are marked as unclassified items or necessities from last century (Hoffer, 1929), the list has enriched with additional items as a requirement deriving from people's demand on standard of living. The inflation is on raise and consumers globally share their worries on its impact on their cost of living including affect on the standard of living. In this regard, for the purpose of this paper it is considered crucial to search about the

perception of employees in terms of economic growth and impact on being able to cover basic living expenses. Hence, it comprises one of the most meaningful variables within this research variable scheme and the second hypothesis is given as in the following:

H_2: Difference exists between respondents of Albania and Kosova and their monthly incomes sufficiency to cover basic living expenses.

3.4. Equal pay

The research addressing gender-based labor market discrimination (Foley & Cooper, 2021),inequality on pay based on occupation, age and persons with disability , gender differences in industries and roles in different countries, scarcity of skills as cause of rising inequality and many other dimensions have had attention of many academics and professionals for many decades (Belingheri et al, 2021; Blau and Kahn 2017; Kumar, 2016; Murphy and Topel, 2016; Marianne et al , 2015). According to UN Women (2015)'Twenty years ago 40 per cent of women were engaged in wage and salaried employment; today 48 per cent of women are being paid wages. Yet, globally, women still work at lower rates than men'. There has been some progress in this regard, but stilt there is a lot of work ahead to restore 'the status quo in the distribution of men and women across workplaces' (Bygren, 2010) and to define 'meaningful work at lower wages or less meaningful work at higher wages' (Maitland, 1989). To address the issue of equal treatment in the workplace it was vital to create a new hypothesis in this research and measure how employed people in two places perceive their treatment at their workplaces:

H_3: Differences exists between respondents of Albania and Kosovo and their equal treatment at workplace.

3.5. Safety, integrity protection and well-being at work-place

When addressing workplace, the most demanding requirement of all employees would be to have a safer, secured, healthier and productive working place. Aspects of different domains such as physical safety, security and health present the continuation of the findings from the research on workplace where instruments such as supportive organization, qualitative working environment for maximizing the level of perceived sense of security, or constructs such as information, training, occupational risks, cultural dimension in various sectors and at different countries helped in establishment of the foundation for extending further the interest in the safe, secured and productive workplace (Kinzl et al, 2005; Raziq and Maulabakhsh, 2015; Irmie et al. 2015; Ip, 2009; Wall et al, 2021). The new segment of protection of labour rights and promotion of decent work has to consider web-based digital labour as well (Trajano, 2021).

Unfortunately, the issue of health, safety and security of employees in developing countries is not addressed adequately. Findings that when employees face physical injury or death at work-place by occasion receive media exposure in country (Uka, 2020), raises the need to deepen research in the country.

The difference between safety and security in the workplace is explained by Boustras (2020) in a way that 'for safety, there is a legal requirement to the owner/manager - in other words, responsibility is personalized. With security, this is not the case as the State authorities provide the backbone.' Hence, the safety culture in organizations becomes an important subject to be analyzed and evaluated (Halaj et al 2018b.), or will be required by law in all sectors (Veľas et al, 2022). In this regard, the next hypothesis is as follows:

H4: Differences exists between respondents of Albania and Kosovo and their feelings on safety and security at workplace.

The legal infrastructure on providing extensive safety, security, integrity and well-being of employees in Albania and Kosovo is governed by codes, laws, administrative instructions, collective contracts, legal acts and employee's organizations such as labour syndicates. Albania strictly obeys to The Albanian Labour Code (No.7961), Law on Health and Safety in working premises (No.10237) and other related laws. The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth is another institutional body to oversee the implementation of such laws through its

Labour Inspectorate Offices. In addition, the International Labour Organization helps continuously the government of Albania and Kosovo in ensuring the proper harmonization of laws as per EU requirements. It has helped in drafting the previous Occupational Health and Safety Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2020 fin Albania. The employment relationship and safety at work in Kosovo is governed by Law No.03/L –212 On Labour, and Law No. 04/L-161 on Safety and Health at Work. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare monitors its implementation through Labour Inspectorate.

The form decisions are made within an organization and who gets involved in that process has an impact on integrity and well-being of employees. Moreover, research is based on many proponents that organizations can apply. As the experimental research from Ghosh (2008) explains the 'ethical standard is a significant explanatory variable regarding the ethics of workplace decisions when corporate values reward integrity and good business practices, or when such values are not professed at all'. Another complementary explanation to this is that of research done by Wojtkowska et al (2021) concluding that 'Employees led by developers and executive managers sustained a high sense of work security and positive attitude to work, while those led by compromisers and deserter managers suffered from the highest drop of subjective security'. In sum, Moriarty (2010) suggests that 'possession of the participation right will vary from firm to firm'.

Sorensen & Sparer (2018) identified six components for protecting and promoting worker safety, health and wellbeing ' leadership commitment; participation; policies, programs and practices that foster supportive working conditions; comprehensive and collaborative strategies; adherence to federal and state regulations and ethical norms; and data-driven change'. The freedom of expression in the workplace is another component within the well-being of employees and Barry (2007) argues that it is excessively and unnecessarily limited in both law and management practice.

H$_5$: Difference exists between respondents of Albania and Kosovo and their feelings on integrity and wellbeing at workplace.

4. Data analysis

This part covers Cronbach Alpha estimations of five items, numbers, descriptive statistics, and cross tabulation analysis and hypothesis test.

The statistical analysis of this survey are coded on SPSS in nine variables. The first step of analysis involved measuring of internal consistency to figure out the scale of reliability of data using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha (α) is the most commonly used measure of internal consistency and generally the coefficient alpha (α) ranges from 0 to 1.00 (Holcomb & Cox, 2017). According to Collins (2007) 'Cronbach's alpha is a way of assessing reliability by comparing the amount of shared variance, or covariance, among the items making up an instrument to the amount of overall variance. The idea is that if the instrument is reliable, there should be a great deal of covariance among the items relative to the variance'. As seen in Table 1, in our case the Cronbach's alpha is 0.695 which indicates an acceptable reliability coefficient level of internal consistency (Hulin et al, 2001) between five items (D1, D2, D3, D4 and D5).

Table 1 Covariance of items

		D1	D2	D3	D4	D5
D1	Covariance	**.922**	.228	.233	.411	.141
D2	Covariance	.228	**.691**	.235	.341	.163
D3	Covariance	.233	.235	**.979**	.471	.377
D4	Covariance	.411	.341	.471	**1.153**	.321
D5	Covariance	.141	.163	.377	.321	**.932**

Source: Author's data

In the table 1 are presented five items that required Cronbach alpha test where N=5 is equal to the number of total items measured, N=5 is equal to the number of items, c̄ is the average inter-item covariance among the items and v̄ equals the average variance. Using the information from the table above, we can calculate each of these components via the following:

$$a = \frac{N\,\bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N-1)\bar{c}}$$

$\bar{v}$ = (.922+.691+.979+1.153+.932)/5= 4.677/5=0.9354

$\bar{c}$ = (.228+.233+.235+.411+.341 +.471+.141+.163+.377+.321)/10=2.921/10=0.2921

$$a = \frac{5\,(0.2921)}{(0.9354) + (5-1)(0.2921)} = \frac{1.4605}{2.1038} = 0.6935$$

Descriptive statistics indicating number, mean and standard deviation of all variables are provided within Table 2. Outputs of means and SD are as follows: gender (M=1.5657, SD=.49637); institution (M=1.5257, SD=.50005), age (M=1.6356, SD=.69972); D1 economic growth (M=2.0943 SD=.96037), D2 basic living expenses (M=1.6543, SD=.83128), D3 equal treatment (M=1.7650, SD=.98950), D4 safety and security at workplace (M=2.3800, SD=1.07386), D5 integrity protection and wellbeing at workplace (M=2.2714, SD=.96532).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of nine variables

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	350	1.5657	.49637
Institution	350	1.5257	.50005
Place of labour market	350	1.5000	.50072
Age	343	1.6356	.69972
Perceptions on economic growth	350	2.0943	.96037
Covering basic living expenses	350	1.6543	.83128
Equal treatment	349	1.7650	.98950
Safety and security at work-place	350	2.3800	1.07386
Integrity protection and well-being	350	2.2714	.96532

Source: Author's data

In this part is presented a summary of respondent's distribution based on gender, workplace and age and what are their perceptions on economic growth and its impact on incomes; perceptions on the amount of money earned and its sufficiency to cover basic living expenses; perceptions on equal treatment at their workplaces; perception on integrity and wellbeing in the workplace; perception on safety and physical security in the workplace.

The first part of the survey is consisted of three variables: gender, age, place of labour market and working sector. Hence the data from sample indicates that 43% are females and 57% are males. Respondents are purposely dived into two categories: respondents from Albania make up 50% of the sample, and 50% of the sample includes respondents from Kosovo. Respondents that work in public sector make up 47% of this sample, and 53% of respondents are working in private sector. The age of employed respondents is categorized in three groups: the first category includes respondent's that ranges from 25 to 34 years old (49%); the second category includes respondent's that range from 35 to 54 years old (38%); and the third category includes respondent's that range from 55 to 65 years old (13%). Respondents were asked about their perceptions on different work-related issues and well-being dimensions. The output of the first statement on respondent's association with economic growth in their country and increase on incomes reveal's that 31% of respondents consider probably not as their answer, 31% say definitely not, and very probably 20%, whereas definitely is an answer of 10% of the respondents in this sample. When analyzed between two countries, in Albania 24% declare 'definitely not', 24% 'probably not', 2% 'very probably', whereas in Kosovo 10% declare 'definitely', 18% 'very probably', 14% 'probably not' and 8% 'definitely not'.

The second statement on monthly earnings and their sufficiency to cover basic living expenses brings up a serious concern where 53% of respondents declared 'definitely not', 35% of respondents declare 'probably not', 8% 'very probably' 8% and 5% 'definitely'. In between countries, respondents from Albania declared 'definitely not' at a large range of 41%, 5 % of respondents declare 'probably not', 3% 'very probably' 8% and 1% 'definitely'. In contrast data of respondents from Kosovo, revels the following: 5% 'definitely', 5% 'very probably', 30% 'probably not', and 11% 'definitely not'.

The third statement on equal treatment within organization in all aspects reveals' that 52% of respondents feel discriminated in any given aspect at their workplace considering answering 'definitely not', 30% 'probably not', 6% 'very probably' and 11% 'definitely'. In Albania 36% declared 'definitely not' and 14 declared 'probably not'. The rest of the sample including respondents from Kosovo provide the following: 'definitely not' 16%, 'probably not' 17%, 'definitely 11% and 6% 'very probably'.

The forth statement on feeling safe and physically secured at workplace, ranges as follows: 27% of respondents marked 'definitely not' scale, 28% of respondents marked 'probably not' scale, 26% of respondent's market 'very probably 'scale and 19% of respondents marked 'definitely' scale. Within two groups, in Albania 24% declared 'definitely not', 22% 'probably not', 3%'very probably' and only 1% 'definitely'. In Kosovo, 24% declared 'very probably', 18% 'definitely', 6% 'probably not' and 3% 'definitely not'.

The fifth statement aims to identify how respondents perceive that their integrity and wellbeing is protected at their workplaces and the results indicate as follows: definitely not 22%, probably not 43%, very probably 20% and 'definitely' 15%. In Albania respondents ranged highest on 'probably not' (33%), 'definitely not' (9%), 'definitely' (5%) and (3%) 'very probably'. In Kosovo, 17% of respondents ranked with 'very probably', 13% with 'definitely not', 10% 'definitely' and 10%'probably not'.

4.1. Hypothesis test

Based on the subject studied, the test of hypothesis is conducted using bivariate Pearson Correlation coefficient, r, which measures the strength and direction of linear relationships between pairs of continuous variables. The Pearson Correlation evaluates whether there is statistical evidence for a linear relationship among the same pairs of variables in the population, represented by a population correlation coefficient, ρ ("rho"). The degree of coefficient values can range from +1 to -1, where +1 indicates a perfect positive relationship, -1 indicates a perfect negative relationship, and a 0 indicates no relationship exists. According to Ratner, B. (2009) correlation degrees can be interpreted as in the following: "the coefficient value is between ± 0.50 and ± 1, correlation is strong; when the value is between ± 0.30 and ± 0.49, correlation is moderate; when the value id below + .29, correlation is weak; when the value is zero, then there is no correlation".

Table 3 presents each correlation estimation for all five hypotheses, p values and number of respondents on which the below correlations are being estimated.

Table 3: Correlations Hypothesis Test

Hypotheses	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Number of respondents	Test
H_1:	.540**	.000	350	Accepted
H_2:	.566**	.000	350	Accepted
H_3:	.481**	.000	349	Accepted
H_4:	.706**	.000	350	Accepted
H_5:	.212**	.000	350	Accepted

Source: Author's data

The independent variable labour market (Albania 1 and Kosovo 2) and dependent variable satisfaction rate of respondents with the impact of economic growth on monthly incomes takes value of r = .540, N=350, p value is .000, p<.001which is less than 0.05. The above-mentioned variables were significantly and strongly and positively correlated. The null hypothesis that the correlation is 0 is rejected. It is accepted that there is a difference between respondents of Albania and Kosovo and their rate of satisfaction with economic growth and impact on monthly incomes.

In the second hypothesis, the independent variable labour market (Albania and Kosovo) and dependent variable sufficiency to cover basic living expenses r = .566, N=350, p value is .000, p<.001which is less than 0.05. Two variables were significantly, strongly and positively correlated. The null hypothesis that the correlation is 0 is rejected and it is accepted that there is a difference between respondents of Albania and Kosova and their monthly incomes sufficiency to cover basic living expenses.

The third hypothesis, consisted of independent variable labour market (Albania and Kosovo) and dependent variable equal treatment r = .481, N=349, p value is .000, p<.001which is less than 0.05. Two variables were significantly and moderately positively correlated. It is accepted that there is a difference between respondents of Albania and Kosova and their equal treatment at workplace.

The forth hypothesis, consisted of independent variable labour market (Albania and Kosovo) and dependent variable safety and security at workplace r = .706, N=350, p value is .000, p<.001which is less than 0.05. Two variables were significantly, strongly and positively correlated. It is accepted that there is a difference between respondents of Albania and Kosova and their perceptions on safety and security equal at workplace.

The fifth hypothesis, consisted of independent variable labour market (Albania and Kosovo) and dependent variable integrity and wellbeing r = .212, N=350, p value is .000, p<.001which is less than 0.05. Two variables were significantly and slightly positively correlated. The null hypothesis that the correlation is 0 is rejected and it is accepted that there is a difference between respondents of Albania and Kosovo and their feelings on integrity and wellbeing at workplace.

5. Conclusion

This research paper has evaluated the differences on perceptions of respondents on decent work and economic growth in labour market of Albania and Kosovo. The key components of SDG 8 - economic growth, basic living costs, equal treatment, safety and security at workplace, and integrity and wellbeing are used as dependent variables in this research within five above-mentioned hypothesis, whereas labour market is used as an independent variable. Hypothesis are testes using Pearson correlation coefficient and are all endorsed. The notable finding from this survey is that, all respondents from labour market of Albania declared that they are not being treated equally at their workplaces (50% from total sampling) compared to 33% respondents (from total sampling) in Kosovo. Importantly 48% of total respondents of this sample coming from labour market of Albania, consider that economic growth has had no impact on their monthly incomes compared to 22% of total sampling in Kosovo. In addition, in labour market of Albania, safety and security at workplace is of great concern and accounts for a larger portion (46% from total sampling), considerably larger than in Kosovo (9%, from total sampling), though they appear to highly contribute on differences between two countries. The next finding on differences is that of 27% of respondents from total sampling that come from labour market of Kosova , considering that their integrity and wellbeing is protected at the workplace, whereas in labour market of Albania is much lesser and counts for not more that 8%.

6. Recommendations

In this direction, it is strongly recommended that both states address decent work in their labour markets with priority. State instruments shall be enforced to closely cooperate with employee's organizations and syndicates and work on elimination of core barriers that disable employees to feel equally treated at workplace, or safe and secured at workplace or having their integrity and wellbeing protected. Hence provide "collaboration with specific institutions and social partners in providing technical assistance, that would help increase the quality of working environment and enhance involvement and productivity of employees.

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