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Motives and Patterns of Student Employment in Germany – Social Disadvantage for Job Entrance?

Theory and Question

An increasing number of students work alongside their studies. Besides improving their economic situation students may gain supplemental human capital by performing a job while studying in order to increase later employability. However, little is known about the motives students ascribe to their current employment. Are financial aspects central or do they emphasize issues of qualification for the later job? Exploring job motivation patterns of students might give valuable insight into the selection of students into promotive versus impeding student jobs. Based on the central idea of bounded rationality I argue that students of subjects with low specificity of later occupational field as well as students with higher socioeconomic background are more likely to express motives of professional qualification.

Data, methods and results

I conduct cluster analyses as well as multinomial regression models on the base of the first scientific use file of the German Social Survey from 2012. My results identify highly distinct motivation groups. Further, I provide evidence that students of subjects of study with unspecific occupational fields as well as students with high financial protection are more likely to include motives of professional qualification into their employment reasoning. Moreover, high parental educational background further promotes qualification motives.

Conclusion and Outlook

Consequently, this study identifies student employment as a so far widely neglected potential source of disadvantage for students of lower socioeconomic background as well as for those of unspecific fields of study.

Based on these results, I further aim to use data from the National Educational Panel Study (NEPS) in order to investigate holistic trajectories of student employment. After identifying groups of employment patterns among students, I will conduct multinomial logistic regressions in order to measure post-graduate job entry prospects.

Keywords: student employment, Social Survey, job entry, social disadvantage, NEPS