

The implications of universal basic income for higher education in Austria.

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Submitted to David Leonard, PhD

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Affidavit

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Abstract

Universal basic income (UBI) has emerged as a promising policy proposal to address the concerns of established welfare systems and growing income disparities. While the theoretical benefits seem to offer direly required solutions, further investigations into hitherto unexplored aspects of the subject must be accomplished to assess its potential for success. This research study examines the potential effects of UBI on the tertiary education sector and its implications on the career trajectory of young adults living in Austria between the ages of 18 and 27. By examining existing literature as well as conducting a mixed data collection in the form of a self-administered questionnaire, this research aims to provide policymakers with the necessary information about the impact of UBI on higher education.

From the 222 valid responses received, the results revealed that UBI does not have a significant influence on the quantity of higher education demanded, although the reduction of financial constraints notably influenced the preferred field of education. Furthermore, it was discovered that financial imperatives currently play a crucial role in the choice of work, as respondents chose a profession more aligned with their interests and likely less remunerated under UBI. Lastly, the study demonstrated a significant yet modest reduction in the average amount of time participants would invest in work under a universal basic income, with many aspiring for a four-day workweek.

Keywords: Universal basic income, higher education, career aspirations, Austria

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1 Introduction

As globalisation progresses and the gap between rich and poor steadily increases, governmental safety nets and support systems are apparently failing to maintain societal stability in many regions (Leonhardt, 2017; Alderman & Yemtsov, 2014). Consequently, demands for a fundamental overhaul of these systems is increasing. Universal basic income (UBI) is a socioeconomic welfare policy that could be a solution to counter the stagnating prosperity of low-income households (Mankiw, 2009) and might pose unprecedented benefits to all its recipients (Nikiforos et al., 2017).

Recent years have displayed increasing dissatisfaction with economic development (Statista, 2022b), and the current high inflation rates challenge the efficacy of the welfare systems in place (Joint Research Centre, 2022). In order to keep low-income households from falling into poverty, in 2022, Austria offered momentary assistance by distributing a single, unconditional payment to every citizen (Balgarnov, 2022). While Austria has already successfully tested the impact of one-time unconditional cash transfers, other European countries such as Switzerland have even proposed its adoption on an ongoing basis in the past (Geiser, 2016). Both aim to tackle the issue of financial insecurity, either in the short- or long-run, but the key difference between one-off payments, such as in the case of Austria, and universal basic income is its occurrence and scope. As the Austrian government is planning to repeat the mentioned unconditional support payment, the country seems to be moving closer towards a continuous payment system (Herndler, 2022).

From the 1960s onward, famous economist and former US presidential advisor Milton Friedman advocated for a similar system to alleviate poverty and minimize bureaucratic inefficiencies in his widely-read *Capitalism and Freedom*. Subsequently, US President Richard Nixon proposed to implement a nationwide basic federal minimum, unsuccessfully. British economist Anthony Atkinson highlighted challenges but markedly contributed to further develop universal basic income (Atkinson, 1996). In recent years the concept was once again reintroduced in a public debate in the US, as presidential candidate Andrew Yang centred his campaign around the potential prosperities of universal basic income (Miller, 2021). It can be concluded that universal basic income is not only gaining in popularity among citizens (Baranowski &

Jabkowski, 2019) but has also caught the attention of lawmakers, moving the proposal closer to a possible implementation than ever before.

However, even though the socioeconomic concept of a universal basic income system promises multiple refinements, the success of a nationwide implementation cannot be predicted, as various variables and impacts still need to be researched (Bidadanure, 2019). While various countries have initiated experiments to test the success of universal basic income across a range of metrics, and with generally positive results (Kansaneläkelaistos Kela, 2016; Belik, 2011; Payne, 2020; Ward, 2020), more extensive test runs are required in order to assess its real potential (Gibson et al., 2018). Studies suggest that cash transfers directly affect monetary poverty, education, investments, and employment. However, the nature and extent of these impacts require more investigation in different jurisdictions before informed predictions can be made (Bastagli et al., 2016).

Unconditional cash transfers offer the opportunity to ease the existential distress caused by financial difficulties. Soothing the pressure to support oneself financially through labour opens the possibility to advance in other parts of life. According to Feldmann (2021), many would choose to gain additional education. This suggests that UBI would not only considerably impact Austria's educational sector but also the general proficiency of the population, which could offer entirely new prospects. It is posited that the effect of a universal basic income system on education can have wide-reaching implications; the average amount of higher education demanded in a country not only determines the scope of schooling offered but also shapes the skillset and economic opportunities of its workforce (Parker et al., 2011; De Paz Danez et al., 2020; Dumciuviene, 2015).

This paper investigates how an unconditional cash transfer program might affect the demand for tertiary education in Austria. The data collected in this research and the conclusions drawn from them seeks to inform Austrian decision-makers about an area of impacts that has yet to receive sufficient focus up to this point in time.

Therefore, the following research question can be formed: "How would Austrians' post-school education paths change under a universal basic income?" This question is addressed through a counter-factual, comparative analysis involving a survey which

collects data from participants on their current educational aspirations and those expected under the hypothetical scenario of being recipients of a specific unconditional cash transfer model.

The subsequent literature review will critically analyse and compare various proposed models. First, determinants of the extent and field of education were pooled from previous authors to derive the corresponding hypothesis. Additionally, the literature on the potential impacts of universal basic income on the labour market was reviewed in order to obtain viable predictions. Next, the methodology section discusses the creation and justification of the conducted research, followed by the analysis of the collected survey data. Finally, the discussion and conclusion reflect on the paper by summarizing and interpreting its findings.

2 Literature Review

The literature review of this paper aims to compile past research on the effect of universal basic income on higher education and the labour market. The inspection of the previously collected data will assist in identifying potential knowledge gaps and, therefore, provides the foundation of the research conducted in this study. While the factors that shape the demand for higher education will be discussed to derive the direct effects of universal basic income for the academic sector, influences on the labour market will be evaluated to identify potential indirect determinants.

2.1 An Introduction to Universal Basic Income

Universal basic income is an ambitious policy proposal to replace the existing social security system with a direct cash transfer from a governing body to all members in a community. The monthly payment would be transferred to every individual, regardless of their situation, and without any exceptions (Bidadanure, 2019). While various specific models have been suggested throughout the years, the major common denominator is that UBI payments are not limited to any demographic or other criterion, such as age, income, health, or family status (Ghatak & Maniquet, 2019).

According to Francese and Prady (2018), an unconditional cash transfer system is able to fix major flaws in the social safety nets currently in place. These notable limitations are failure to address the ever increasing gap between socio-economic groups (Francese & Prady, 2018), discouragement to accumulate assets, and low to no growth for the impoverished (Alderman & Yemtsov, 2014). Furthermore, Van Parijs (1997) suggests that a universal payment to every citizen of a community would soothe the perception of unequal treatment some individuals experience by receiving diminished resources from their administrative entity. Balboni et al. (2021) conclude that cash transfer programs are able to decrease the overall poverty in a community by offering a solution to the poverty trap. Universal basic income also has the possibility to enhance the safety net by mitigating financial insecurity during economic fallouts, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Great Recession (De Wispelaere & Morales, 2021). Moreover, Stephen Hawking (2016) raised his apprehensions regarding the accelerating trend of workers being replaced by automatization and artificial

intelligence. The scientist indicated that the effects of an increase in unemployment have to be mitigated by increasing financial support.

2.2 Proposed Universal Basic Income Models

While the basic concept of universal basic income – the regular transfer of a financial grant to every citizen in a population – remains consistent across different proposals, the amount, special conditions, and timing vary (Bidadanure, 2019).

In contrast to the classic universal basic income model, “basic capital” proposes the transfer of one single, quantitatively larger endowment granted to every individual upon maturity (Ackerman & Alstott, 2000). The higher amount of cash available in a single moment in time leads to greater buying power. Following, compared to the monthly instalments of UBI, the financial freedom of each citizen will be enhanced because the higher buying power leads to a greater set of possibilities (Ackerman & Alstott, 2000). However, by transferring the entire amount of financial support at once, its impact might reduce significantly over time due to a loss in the value of the sum. By making uneducated or high-risk investments, one might squander parts or even the entire grant (Prabhakar, 2018). On the other side, Ackerman and Alstott (2000) argue that implementing a framework of certain legal boundaries would minimize mentioned risk. Another aspect to consider is the change of needs throughout various life stages. Someone’s young self might possess certain needs, which then gradually adapt through their life experiences, such that spending patterns when young might be perceived negatively by the older self, who has a different perspective on how the received capital should have been used (Bidadanure, 2012).

Ackerman and Alstott (2000) add to the discussion that a basic capital policy offers the recipient more possibilities, hence, young adults would have greater freedom when it comes to post-school choices. Therefore, recipients would be able to overcome the financial constraints of certain professional pathways, such as private universities with necessary high upfront investments. However, as mentioned before, Bidadanure (2012) suggests that the short-sightedness of young adults might hinder them from choosing the option with the highest long-term value, hence, additional educational possibilities might stay unconsidered.

In contrast to basic capital, partial basic income is the idea of providing the population with a monthly income stream which is not sufficient to live off, but which eases financial pressures. Even though Hoynes and Rothstein (2019) argue that the provision of financial benefits would lead to a drop in the labour supply, Banerjee et al. (2017), as well as De Paz Banez et al. (2020), predict in their research that the labour supply would increase. Here, an important distinction must be made between partial basic income, the model in focus, and guaranteed minimum income, which has been suggested in some places (Coady et al., 2021). The latter is not universal but means-tested and distributed only to those who fail to reach a pre-specified income threshold, which might incentivise some to keep their earned income below that level in order to qualify, which is similar to the concept of the “welfare trap” (Colombino, 2011; Gal and Doron, 2002). Due to its non-universality and consequent weakness in addressing the failure of current welfare systems, guaranteed minimum income is not considered further. In contrast, partial is not means-tested and allows individuals to increase their monthly income by participating in the labour market (Kay, 2017).

Indeed, individuals would need an additional income source to escape poverty under the partial basic income model. According to Gal and Doron (2002) and Van Parijs (2004), UBI serves as a motivator to actively participate in the labour market by helping them to overcome the poverty trap. However, while the rate of unemployment might drop through this mechanism, the total amount of time spent at work might decrease as the fear of financial uncertainty subsides. Given additional free time, recipients might seek to acquire additional education and other forms of personal-betterment or hunt for a superior position (Cesarini et al., 2017).

A commonly expressed concern is that poverty-stricken households would react in an unfavourable way towards an unconditional cash transfer, such as increased spending mainly towards temptation goods, instead of pursuing education or other benefiting expenditures (Castner & Mabli, 2010). However, Evans and Popova (2017) indicate that the amount of cash spent on temptation goods actually decreases in such situations, as education and career are becoming more viable and more important investments (Di Maro & Skoufias, 2008; Feldmann, 2021). This claim is supported by the experiment conducted in Canada, which concluded that a substantial number of recipients reduced their use of alcohol and tobacco products (Ferdosi et al., 2020). It

is fair to say, however, that there are rational arguments pointing in both directions: towards either more or less work and towards either more or less education. For instance, a universal basic income study conducted in the US concluded that regular payments did not significantly affect employment (Jones & Marinescu, 2018). Addressing this knowledge gap is the incentive for this study.

Moving to the next model, full basic income proposes to replace the current welfare system with a universal income model with payments slightly above the poverty line of their community. Hence, recipients are able to afford the necessities of a basic life without having to actively participate in the labour market (Kansaneläkelaitos Kela, 2016). According to Statista (2022a), the poverty line in Austria was at € 1,371.00 in 2021. This policy proposal is mainly advocated on the basis of rising fears that humans are being replaced by artificial intelligence at work, as the automatization in various sectors steadily increases. Following, in case an entire profession would get replaced by technology, financial distress would be a less significant concern (Arntz et al., 2016).

Some might favour full basic income in order to maintain their standard of living while being unemployed or to have the required resources to adapt to the changing labour market. Even though automation and advancements might potentially lead to the extinction of certain fields of human labour, the historical record shows that technological developments have merely altered the market and not reduced the total amount of jobs required (Barany & Siegel, 2020; Gaggl et al., 2021). According to David (2015), technology creates the same number of jobs it demolishes – certain areas become redundant and new ones are created. Others question, however, whether the AI revolution might be qualitatively different to the technological revolutions of the past and dramatically reduce the total amount of labour required in our current economy (Graetz et al., 2022). If this presumption is accurate, we would need to find alternative ways to keep occupied because work is able to give humans a meaning in life and satisfaction can be found in that (Herke & Vicsek, 2022). The future availability and nature of work remains unclear, as do the implications for education; in the “no work” scenario, there may be greater opportunity, but lesser motivation.

Concluding, proposals that promise a higher financial value for recipients are accompanied by an increasing level of uncertainty regarding their feasibility and long-term effects (Bidadanure, 2019). Some universal basic income models, such as full basic income, even question the structure of modern societies, as they fundamentally challenge existing systems. The feasibility and success of a policy that renders labour as optional cannot be predicted at this moment in time, as their impact, structural-change impacts, as well as its public endorsement, require further research (Kansaneläkelaitys Kela, 2016). Nevertheless, the literature on every universal basic income proposal mentioned suggests that the gained financial freedom would postpone the entry into the labour force.

While the full basic income model might be the least feasible option to implement on a nationwide scale at the moment, the concept is rapidly gaining traction in many places. Moreover, the wide uncertainties about its potential impacts make it the model most worthy of investigation. Therefore, full basic income shall be the focus of this research from here on out.

2.3 Importance of Higher Education

As of 2022, Austria has a total of 60 higher education institutions with a total of ~391.000 students, of which females account for 55.6%. Compared to previous years, Austria's tertiary education sector is growing by 1% annually (Statistik Austria, 2023). Economics, law, and management are the most popular fields of study. 16.5% of Austrians between the age of 25 and 64 have completed a degree in higher education, with Vienna containing twice the graduates of any other federal province (Sommer-Binder & Gumpoldsberger, 2022). Overall, the following roles of higher education in a country have been identified:

The tertiary education sector is a common birthplace of new ideas. Innovative products and technologies can upgrade the standard of living and drive a nation's development (Hermannsson et al., 2017). Next to growth opportunities, research is also required to solve current world problems that potentially endanger the human species. For example, climate change and increasing pollution are calling for more sustainable alternatives, which depend on the pace of breakthroughs in science (Chan, 2016). Furthermore, the current distribution of power between nations is mainly

determined by their military capacity. In order to maintain their importance in an international scope, countries have to guarantee competitiveness through continual innovations (Biddle, 2004).

A highly skilled workforce offers greater development potential. Expanding knowledge accelerates economic development due to higher levels of human capital, increased performance, and innovative entrepreneurship. A country with these characteristics is also likely to attract foreign direct investments and external skilled workers (Brennan et al., 2013). New industries stimulate the economy by providing additional jobs and increasing purchasing power and opportunities in a virtuous cycle. In contrast, the inability to create and sustain skilled workers in a country will lead to a downwards-spiral of declining economic competitiveness in the global market (Shevchenko, 2019; Hermannsson et al., 2017).

Despite the relaxing of various social role expectations over time, Austria remains a rather hierarchical society divided into the three classical socioeconomic classes, which are challenging to jump between. Where opportunities for social mobility exist, these are generally leveraged by acquiring additional skills and knowledge through education (Chan, 2016). Due to the low entry barriers to the tertiary education market in Austria, less privileged citizens are also provided opportunities to pursue a professional career and subsequently raise the living standards of themselves and people in close proximity (Murray, 2009). Equal opportunities in education are therefore desirable to decrease the income disparity between classes in a country, as achieving specific goals is not restricted to solely privileged groups (Chan, 2016).

Higher education improves critical thinking and social responsibility among graduates, as those traits students commonly develop through their experiences. Society profits from a more civically-engaged community by encouraging citizens to improve the current conditions and oppose inequalities. Students learn to base conclusions on informed arguments and evidence, decreasing the likelihood of spreading misinformation among individuals. Moreover, according to Brennan et al. (2013), there is a negative correlation between the crime rate and the level of education in a country. Increasing knowledge tends to reduce the likelihood of committing offenses; hence, social benefits can be experienced in various aspects of life (Feinstein et al., 2008).

Higher education encourages cultural development by both preserving a country's cultural identity and sparking development in arts, humanities, and social sciences. Students in akin fields acquire cultural heritage knowledge and are inspired to develop it further (Chan, 2016). A by-product is that cultural goods such as film, music, and literature can contribute to a higher economic performance due to the creation of jobs, additional tourism, and financial profits (Jongbloed et al., 2008).

2.4 Determinants of Post-School Choices

Previous sections established a potential connection between financial freedom and the extent of schooling. Recipients may choose to dedicate less resources towards work in order to make time to improve themselves and their skillset (Cesarini et al., 2017). However, financial considerations are but one factor influencing an individual's educational choices. Therefore, in order to assess the effects of a UBI system on the educational sector, three additional determinants of post-school choices have been identified:

2.4.1 Parental influence

The first major determinant is family relations. After the mandatory years of schooling are completed, young adults strongly consider their parent's education and profession when it comes to choosing between entering the labour market and continuing with higher education, as well as the field of study (Sojkin et al., 2012; Flannery & O'Donoghue, 2009; Malik & Hussain, 2020). Furthermore, students are influenced by the expectations parents have of them and, therefore, tend to decide between work and tertiary schooling based on their opinions (Garcia-Aracil et al., 2007).

Students tend to seek advice and guidance from their parents, who serve as role models and are deemed trustworthy in most cases. Children are exposed to their professions from a young age and might develop similar interests, according to Malik and Hussain (2020). Parents with a background involving tertiary education are likely to recommend their offspring the same or similar paths due to their positive experiences. Children are taught about the importance of intellectual growth, which can promote a drive for educational ambition (Garcia et al., 2019; Ardila et al., 2010). Moreover, being exposed to an academic environment from a young age normalizes

the idea of pursuing higher education as a natural pathway (Hortacsu, 2010). However, Al-Yousef (2009) concludes that parents' level of educational attainment has little effect on their children's choices and, therefore, argues against a correlation between both variables.

A universal basic income model might shift parents' attitudes towards a more favourable opinion on higher education investments. According to Millan et al. (2020) and Akresh et al. (2013), cash transfers incentivize parents to care more about the number of years their children spend in schooling. Adding to that, by being the recipients of a UBI model themselves, the parents might also aim to attain additional education and spend time looking to advance in their profession. As mentioned before, this would have a positive impact on the extent of higher education desired by their children, as parents serve as role-models. Following, this would lead to an upwards spiral, which increases the extent of education demanded on a constant basis (Cesarini et al., 2017).

2.4.2 Financial considerations

The second driver is access to financial resources. Young people with more capital on hand and from a higher socioeconomic background are significantly more likely to choose a tertiary education path after their post-school years (Sojkin et al, 2012; Gorard & Smith, 2007). Ramcharan (2004) raises the concern that the cost of schooling has a direct negative relationship with the average years of education desired. Hence, students that are based in countries with relatively lower tuition fees and financial support from the government, such as the Netherlands and Austria, are facing a lower entry barrier into higher education (Sa et al., 2004). However, adolescents from a lower socioeconomic background possess a higher motivation to start earning income after finishing their mandatory education, indeed, many have no choice, and are likely to perceive tertiary education as relatively less valuable. Furthermore, they are faced with a lower level of family support to pursue higher education (James, 2002).

Rauscher and Elliott (2014) suggest that with increasing income, the desire of attaining additional knowledge increases, as children have more opportunities to gather social capital. Higher cultural knowledge and behaviour enables students to excel in their

academic career. Therefore, parents from a financially higher position are able to transmit more advantages (Lareau, 2011).

It follows that providing a population with an additional unconditional income stream provides greater economic freedom and might lead to an increased perceived value of higher education, especially among lower-income groups (Feldmann, 2021). This aligns with the observation by Parker and Behrman (2011) that less financial stress will postpone entering the labour force (Parker et al., 2011).

According to the argument from financial considerations, universal basic income would lower the number of students dropping out of school and enable more students the option of pursuing higher education (Millan et al., 2019). However, UBI may not affect their educational attainment at school and, therefore, may not affect their chance of being accepted to and/or succeeding in tertiary education (Gaentzsch, 2019). These effects may depend heavily on their individual career aspirations.

2.4.3 Career aspirations

The third determinant is future work aspirations. A common motivator to attain a degree in higher education is the chance of enhanced post-university opportunities (Brinkworth et al., 2009; Montmarquette et al., 2002; Sojkin et al., 2012). Cesarini et al. (2017) indicate that this driver would even gain in importance for recipients of UBI, as their demand to further educate themselves to advance in their professional life increases. It is a common perception that higher education leads to a higher earning potential due to improved opportunities in the labour market (Hilmer & Hilmer, 2012). Attaining a prestigious position requires a strong academic background, as it provides information about the comprehension capabilities, dedication, and expertise of an applicant (Wiles, 1974). Professional requirements set by companies support this assumption, as certain employers require advanced degrees to enter the profession, such as the well-esteemed consulting company McKinsey, which divides applicants and their prospects between undergraduates and graduates (Braun & Brachem, 2015; McKinsey & Company, 2023). Therefore, individuals aspiring to pursue a career in akin sectors may feel compelled to enter the tertiary education market (Carnevale et al., 2018).

While the financial freedom gained through a UBI might certainly enable such a path, however, the question of whether individuals would actually take this path might depend on whether the financial security provided by the UBI also changes their motivations to seek a professional appointment. Looking at harder economic times, research has found mixed results. According to Aldemir and Guelcan (2004), young adults from countries undergoing economic regression/difficulties do not choose to pursue university degrees due to the low demand in the labour market. However, Flannery and O'Donoghue (2009) contradict that statement by indicating that economic downturns increase the demand for tertiary education, as people strive to upgrade their skill set in order to increase their personal competitiveness. The question remains as to whether individuals would be more or less career oriented under a UBI and, consequently, seek more or less higher education. Moving from the quantitative to the qualitative, the question also arises as to whether the introduction of a UBI might shift careers aspirations from one field to another, which could also change educational paths.

Hilmer & Hilmer (2012) indicates that by providing for higher financial rewards and/or job safety in certain professions, society dictates which educational paths should be favoured. Furthermore, the paper concludes that students with the goal of financial well-being predominately choose economic degrees. On the other hand, uncertain and highly volatile fields may appear less attractive to individuals due to the economic risk connected with those professions (Anderson & Pontusson, 2007; Ortiz et al., 2018; Painter et al., 2018). An economy with a universal basic income system, in theory, both lowers the amount of earned income needed for financial wellbeing and provides a financial safety net in instances of mistakes and miscalculations (Young, 2018). If true, this could mean lesser motivation for high paying professions and lesser motivation to avoid risky fields. According to Johnson et al. (2022), individuals would rank the economic prospects of the profession lower and primarily focus on a field that is more aligned with their personal interests to increase their well-being.

In summary, a universal basic income policy would potentially facilitate greater investment into additional schooling (Cesarini et al., 2017) but might also reduce the perceived need to attain higher degrees for financial reasons and could result in a shift in preferences for certain fields (Johnson et al., 2022).

2.4.4 Societal expectations

Finally, the fourth driver is societal expectations. The interpretation of how a “successful” life is resembled depends on a region or country's cultural norms and values, as cited in (Powell, 2009). Hence, the societal expectation of excelling in the academic field can be deeply embedded within a society, and personal values and aspirations are influenced by it from a young age. One might not aim to develop their academic knowledge above the minimum requirements; nonetheless, it can be public pressure that pushes one towards higher education due to the need to cohere with the local societal interpretation of a fulfilling life (Khmil & Popovych, 2019).

Academic degrees are held in high admiration and are considered to be prestigious in Austria. The country recognizes the importance of higher education degrees and sees it as a remarkable accomplishment, which is reflected by its well-regarded tertiary education sector (International Trade Administration, 2022). Such attainments can be used as a tool of social validation and are expected to earn respect and recognition, taught from a young age, as it is deeply connected to social norms (Wan et al., 2014). Universal basic income, in general terms, would offer recipients a greater range of life choices due to the reduction of financial pressure (Van Parijs, 2013). Moreover, higher education would be more accessible, especially to the less privileged. Therefore, considering the need to adhere to the social norms of the country and the demand for tertiary education in the labour market, which was discussed in the previous section, people in a universal basic income system would have a facilitated access to increase their level of education before entering a profession (Di Maro & Skoufias, 2008). However, society's attitude towards career expectations might change at the same time, as financial stability would be present in any profession and, therefore, the importance of the tertiary sector might stagnate (Nieuwoudt & Pedler, 2021).

2.4.5 Knowledge gap

Previous chapters were able to reveal an evident interdependence between educational attainment and financial capital. Nevertheless, various sources cited in this thesis solely base conclusions on hypothetical predictions and limited test groups. Well-founded evidence has yet to be provided, due to the underlining obstacle that universal basic income is yet to be implemented on a national scale. Previous implementations have predominantly focused on groups of people in financial

distress, which might not translate to Austria's predicament due to its socialised approach to assisting lower classes to a greater extent than many other developed countries, particularly in education (Parker et al., 2011; Gitschthaler et al., 2021). More importantly, those studies can, at best, provide some insight into the changing educational choices of one demographic which is generally marginalized in higher education, but they cannot provide insights into the whole population and have little to say about the changes that should be expected under a UBI from those who currently tend to seek tertiary education. Accordingly, papers such as Gorard and Smith (2007), Feldmann (2021), and Bastagli et al. (2016) all appeal for additional and more niche investigations to strengthen the reliability of research in the area.

Existing field studies about conditional cash transfers mainly concentrated on families with school-aged children. While favourable educational impacts were recorded under these treatments, such programs contain notable dissimilarities to universal basic income due to their mandatory tie to academic performance (Bauchet et al., 2018). In comparison, the tertiary education sector under UBI has a dearth of research and received little attention hitherto, given its potential implications (Baranowski & Jabkowski, 2019).

Prior sections of this literature review revealed correlations between the financial position of individuals and choices regarding education. Following, universal basic income might be limited in its influence over choice and extent of higher education to a certain financial threshold, as other variables might gain in importance (Corak et al., 2004). Yet while such generalizations are based on logical reasoning and some evidence, conclusions derived from the literature review must be interpreted cautiously, as the relationships between variables have yet to be examined from every angle (Chohan, 2017). Therefore, further and more focused research on specific areas is required (McDonough & Morales, 2020).

2.4.6 Hypothesis 1 & 2

Preceding sections have suggested various relationships between the extent/field of higher education demanded and parental influence, financial background, career aspirations, and societal expectations. Furthermore, the literature revealed that each determinant has the potential to be influenced by exposing it to a universal basic

income model. However, under consideration that multiple authors indicated contradicting conclusions, the following two-tailed hypotheses (H) are defined by the researcher:

H1: Universal basic income has a significant effect on the demand for higher education in Austria.

H2: There is a significant difference between the desired field of education before and after the implementation of universal basic income.

2.5 The Impact of Universal Basic Income on Professional Choices

As mentioned previously, various researchers predict different effects of universal basic income on the labour supply. Whereas Banerjee et al. (2017) and De Paz Banez et al. (2020) conclude that the participation rate in the economy will increase, Hoynes and Rothstein (2019) categorize partial basic income as a disincentive to work. Occupying the middle ground, Gibson et al. (2018) indicate that the effect on the labour supply is little to not present and that increases occurred solely in women's demand for part-time jobs.

The laboratory experiment of Wenande (2019) displayed that the time spent at work decreases only if there is an opportunity to attain valuable additional education. The same conclusion was made by Cesarini et al. (2017), which displayed that adults use their gained free time to elevate their current life circumstances by acquiring more knowledge and/or being on the lookout for superior positions. On the other hand, the time spent on a traditional profession might decrease as individuals would be more likely to invest their resources towards philanthropic causes, for instance, volunteering (Healy et al., 2013). Adding to that, while overall time spent at work might decrease, increases in well-being can lead to higher productivity (Kangas et al., 2019).

However, according to Adam Smith (2013): "The rational-choice-theory states that individuals will always choose the option which provides them with the greatest advantage by conducting a cost-benefit analysis". In the case of universal basic income, recipients can maximize their financial profits by continuing their traditional profession on a full-time basis and consider the UBI merely as a bonus. Following, time

invested towards work is not supposed to drop, as that would leave beneficiaries worse off in terms of income (Banerjee et al., 2017).

The current labour system in place can exploit predominately low-skilled workers due to their dependency and ineffective bargaining power that lead to poor working conditions as well as low pay (Birnbaum & De Wispelaere, 2016). By providing financial security, such as universal basic income, workers would no longer be bound to their exploitative positions, as the gained freedom would enable them to change professions without being exposed to financial insecurity (De Wispelaere et al., 2013). However, Harrop and Tait (2017), universal basic income would decrease working conditions even more and lower current wages, as employers' bargaining power would increase due to the higher labour participation rate. Nevertheless, a conducted experiment, called the Manitoba Basic Annual Income Experiment, displayed that guaranteed income leads to an increase in wages (Calnitsky, 2018).

2.5.1 Hypothesis 3 & 4

While the main focus of this paper is on potential changes in education, this is influenced by career aspirations. Furthermore, the human capital produced through education subsequently flows into the labour market. Therefore, this study also addresses how the workforce might be affected by a UBI program. Previous researchers have concluded opposing findings when it comes to the effect of a universal basic income system on the desired field of work and time invested towards it. Therefore, the following two-tailed hypotheses were derived from the literature review:

H3: There is a significant difference between the desired field of work before and after the implementation of universal basic income.

H4: Universal basic income has a significant effect on the allocation of time devoted to employment.

3 Methodology

The methodology section of this paper provides details about the chosen data collection approach as well as the survey design and evaluation of the results. The literature review, in general terms, hypothesized a relationship between a student's educational choices and financial background. This chapter will focus on gaining statistically significant information using a mixed-methods design.

3.1 Study Design

At its core, the aim of this research is to predict changes in the extent and type of higher education Austrians would choose under a universal basic income model, as well as the field and hours spent in their profession. To address this research question, a mixed methods approach is used to collect both quantitative data from the sample with the hopes to generalize the results to the broader population as well as qualitative data to gain a deeper insight towards the motivators of the respondents' answers (Hair et al., 2021).

The mixed-methods approach was earmarked for collecting a large number of responses to guarantee the empirical accuracy of the data and to understand the previously unexplored attitudes behind it. Potential relationships between variables, as posited by the hypotheses, were evaluated on statistical significance using primary data collect through closed-ended questions. Furthermore, open-ended questions were utilized to gain meaningful insight into why respondents chose a particular answer option. Providing participants with the opportunity to elucidate the motives behind their opinions was an influential factor for the recommendations of this paper, as it facilitated the understanding and interpretation of the survey results.

3.2 Data Collection

The survey platform Supersurvey (<https://www.supersurvey.com>) was utilized to create and distribute the questionnaire, as it offered the required tools to visualize the format accordingly and due to its compatibility with Talk Online Panel. The digital range of online surveys facilitated identifying and reaching suitable participants, as discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

The data collection started at the end of April 2023 and took approximately one week to gather the predetermined number of respondents. While the vast majority of answers originated from the partnership with “Talk Online Panel,” the researcher also leveraged to send the questionnaire to personal connections. Ultimately, a total of 257 responses were collected.

3.2.1 Data collection instrument

The questionnaire, which was approved by Modul University’s Institutional Review Board in April 2023, started by providing the researcher's contact details, introducing the motives behind the research, and obtaining consent to the storage of data provided by participants. The introduction then provided a general explanation of what universal basic income is. Since it had to be assumed that many may not be familiar with this policy proposal, solely basic terms and necessary information was included to avoid confusion and misunderstandings which might influence respondents' answers. Generally, the rest of the survey was divided into three blocks of questions:

The first block evaluated the current academic position of respondents by providing survey participants with a multiple-choice question that included all stages of the Austrian education system (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung, 2018) as part of a range of demographic questions about their age, country of origin, gender, and the Austrian federal state where they reside. While the questions regarding sex and federal state of origin provide the research with additional information for data analysis, the age and the country are also used to remove data from outside the predefined demographic boundaries of the target population.

The second block aimed to gather information about the current situation and future plans of respondents. Respondents were asked to state their highest completed level of education as well as the highest degree they aim to achieve in the future, using a multiple-choice scale with a predefined list of answer possibilities that included every degree attainable in the Austrian educational system. Furthermore, participants had to indicate the specific field of training in which they are planning to advance. Since answers might be very individualistic and in order to detect even slight differences to

the question under the alternative scenario, an open-ended question was used to capture responses. Lastly, participants had to choose the field of the profession they are currently interested in pursuing and how many working hours per week they plan to invest into it, based on a multiple-choice scale with given answer options.

The third part started by presenting a hypothetical universal basic income scenario, described in the next section, and asking respondents to assume that reality while answering a range of questions with an identical wording and structure to the questions in the second part. Respondents therefore gave answers about what they *would* do under the proposed UBI model. The intention, clearly, is to compare the present answers with the counter-factual answers from the matching questions to determine if and how respondents' goals and attitudes towards education and profession would be influenced. Every question in this part of the survey also included an additional open-ended opportunity to state why they had or had not changed their preferences under the UBI scenario. More information about the proposed universal basic income scenario can be derived from the subsequent section.

Additionally, an attention-check question was embedded in this part of the questionnaire. Self-administered surveys contain an elevated risk of collecting inaccurate data, as the researcher cannot guarantee the desired engagement of the participant (Berinsky et al., 2014). Wrong answers to the attention-check question enable inattentive responses to be sorted out and not considered in the data analysis.

Since the idea of a universal basic income the majority is still unfamiliar to many people, the survey underwent a pre-test based on a convenience sampling method to mitigate the risk of misunderstandings by adapting any phrasing that was unclear or led to misinterpretations.

3.2.2 UBI scenario

It is vital for the validity of the survey answers to state and explain the hypothetical circumstances clearly. As mentioned before, this research aimed to identify potential variances in decisions regarding the scope- and area of education under the current economic system in Austria and a universal basic income system. In order to generate reliable results, assuming that many had little to no prior experience, respondents were tasked to envision being beneficiaries of such a welfare system as a means to indicate their hypothetical decisions. As discussed in the literature review of this paper, the researcher chose to investigate a full basic income model. Participants received the minimum necessary amount of information about the scenario to avoid confusion and to be able to generalize the data to multiple basic income welfare systems. The scenario was stated as followed (translated from the German by DeepL):

Now, suppose that in Austria an unconditional basic income (BGE) system was introduced some time ago and every citizen receives an additional monthly payment from the state.

Imagine that...

- Since you are 16 years old, you receive €1,600 every month. The extra money can be used for anything without any restrictions. (Prices will not increase)
- Work will not affect this payment, so you could increase your total monthly income by it.
- Since this system is very popular in Austria, you are sure to receive this payment for the rest of your life.

The following questions now try to find out whether you would make different decisions based on the scenario just mentioned:

To mitigate any confusion regarding the proposed assumptions, the scenario description was visible throughout the entire third part of the survey. Additionally, the subsequent questions continually directed respondents to consider their answer under the assumption that the scenario applied. The conducted pre-test confirmed that the scenario and hypothetical assumptions were intelligible and straightforward.

3.3 Sampling

Since this research focuses on how higher education paths would change under the implementation of a universal basic income model, the survey sought to collect data from individuals with the best understanding of the current climate. To be more

precise, it was anticipated that older respondents might make different educational and career choices in any hypothetical – not necessarily due to the proposed UBI, but just because the world is now different in many ways to the world in which they made their educational choices and started down a certain career trajectory. Therefore, the population was determined as young adults living in Austria between the age of 18 and 27. These individuals have recently made or are in the process of making educational and career choices and are therefore considered better able to isolate the variable of interest: the introduction of a UBI policy.

To avoid risks connected to language barriers, the entire survey was constructed in the German language. While this requirement placed an additional restriction on participation, it will not have omitted many Austrians, who would be the recipients of the UBI according to the proposal.

The number of respondents was set at a minimum of 200 participants in order to acquire a dataset large enough to provide meaningful and valid findings. In the aspiration that the findings would be generalizable to the broader Austria population, a representative sample was sought. A convenience sample, which often uses university students, would have been highly unrepresentative, particularly given the research topic. Furthermore, the student body of Modul University Vienna is also skewed socio-economically. In an effort to achieve sample representativeness, the author applied for and was granted the Scholarship of Hope, and these funds were used to acquire an appropriate sample.

The self-administered questionnaire was developed as an online survey and distributed on the platform “Talk Online Panel.” The website offers to gather a predetermined number of respondents that cohere with the required sample demographics. This service increased the accuracy and significance of the collected data, as the full scope of the targeted audience with all important subgroups were included. Ultimately, a total of 257 responses were collected. After data cleaning, 222 valid responses were considered for analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis

After the target number of respondents was collected, the data was transferred to Jamovi (<https://www.jamovi.org>) for editing and statistical analysis. The total dataset was transferred from Supersurvey as an Excel file directly to Jamovi. The first step was data cleaning to remove inattentive responses by analysing real response time and flagged attention checks from the dataset. While respondents outside of the target group were automatically redirected back to the online research platform without completing the questionnaire, their information had to be removed from the data file as well. Subsequent to this screening process, 222 out of 257 responses remained for analysis.

In order to check on the representativeness of the sample, descriptive statistics were generated in Jamovi for the demographic questions and compared with Austrian averages. Answers to the matching pairs of multiple-choice questions from the second and third parts were compared in Jamovi using paired t-tests.

A codebook was developed based on the answers to the open-ended questions by a subset of the total sample. The codebook identified categories of commonly occurring attitudes and causes of decisions, and was used to code the open-ended questions in the rest of the sample. Jamovi was used to display the results on fitting charts in order to attain an effective data visualization. Microsoft Excel was used to visualize the findings of the open-ended questions.

4 Results

This section presents, visualizes, and interprets the findings of the data analyses. As the questionnaire was distributed in the German language, DeepL (<https://www.deepl.com>) provided a translation for the following graphs, descriptions, and quotes.

4.1 Sample Descriptives

As mentioned earlier, the survey was distributed through TalkOnlinePanel to collect a larger as well as a more representative sample. To assess the generalizability to its population, young adults in Austria, the whole sample’s descriptives were compared to Austria's corresponding demographical statistics. A total of 222 valid answers were collected.

Proportions - Gender

Level		Count	Proportion
Male	Observed	108	0.49
	Expected	113.99	0.51
Female	Observed	113	0.51
	Expected	108.01	0.49
Other	Observed	1	0.00
	Expected	0.00	0.00

Table 1: Respondents' gender

As for the gender descriptives, 108 individuals (49%) chose the option “Male,” 113 (51%) chose “Female,” and one person (0%) selected “Other” as their answer. To determine its potential for generalization, the observed data is compared to the expected proportions of Austrians between the ages of 20 and 29 (Statistik Austria, 2022a).

χ^2 Goodness of Fit

χ^2	df	p
0.54	1	0.461

Table 2: Chi-squared test respondents' gender

The observed and expected data outputs of Table 1 were evaluated by utilizing a chi-squared test (χ^2). The p-value of 0.461 can be translated to a non-significant difference between the observed and expected variables (Table 2). The sample reflects to be equally distributed and, therefore, can be generalized to the sample population of this research.

Proportions - Age

Level		Count	Proportion
18	Observed	15	0.07
	Expected	19.13	0.09
19	Observed	15	0.07
	Expected	19.64	0.09
20	Observed	14	0.06
	Expected	19.91	0.09
21	Observed	24	0.11
	Expected	20.89	0.09
22	Observed	23	0.10
	Expected	21.29	0.10
23	Observed	25	0.11
	Expected	22.37	0.10
24	Observed	20	0.09
	Expected	23.82	0.11
25	Observed	28	0.13
	Expected	24.44	0.11
26	Observed	26	0.12
	Expected	24.88	0.11
27	Observed	32	0.14
	Expected	25.64	0.12

Table 3: Respondent's age

Looking at Table 3, the age of the survey respondents as well as the respective expected value can be observed. While every age group of the target population is represented, a mild skewness towards the upper limit can be observed. Double as many respondents were from the maximum limit compared to the minimum limit. This pattern matches the shape of Austria's population pyramid, which undercuts at its

base and shows higher numbers of 27-year-olds in the country than 18-year-olds (Statistik Austria, 2022b).

χ^2 Goodness of Fit

χ^2	df	p
7.42	9	0.594

Table 4: Chi-squared test respondents' age

The chi-squared test (χ^2) in Table 4 assesses the generalizability of the observed data. The p-value (0.594) indicates a non-significant difference between the collected number of respondents' age and their respective expected value. Consequently, in terms of age, the sample can be considered representative of the broader Austrian population in that age range. The mean age of the collected data is 23.2 years.

Proportions - Highest degree attained

Level		Count	Proportion
Compulsory education	Observed	21	0.09
	Expected	38.18	0.17
Completed apprenticeship	Observed	34	0.15
	Expected	81.54	0.37
Matura	Observed	115	0.52
	Expected	66.13	0.30
Higher degree	Observed	52	0.23
	Expected	36.14	0.16

Table 5: Respondents' highest attained level of education degree

Table 5 displays the distribution of survey participants by their highest degree attained (observed) and counts that would have been anticipated if the sample matched the Austrian averages for educational attainment between the ages of 20 and 29 (expected), according to Statistik Austria (2022a). Degrees were ranked according to the minimum time investment required to complete, considering the educational prerequisite. In order to compare both datasets with one another, various educational levels of the collected survey dataset had to be aggregated so as to fit the categories of the available national data: compulsory education (9%), completed apprenticeship (15%), Matura (52%), and higher degree (23%) (see Appendix for all answer options).

χ^2 Goodness of Fit

χ^2	df	p
78.52	3	< .001

Table 6: Chi-squared test highest degree attained

Due to the observed skewedness in Table 5, a chi-squared test (X^2) was conducted between the observed and expected values (Table 6). The p-value of < 0.001 indicates a significant difference and, therefore, the findings of the collected dataset cannot be generalized to the whole population.

Examining Table 5, the collected dataset is skewed towards being more educated than the Austrian average for the observed age bracket. Both lower educational categories would be required to be twice their current percental share to guarantee a reliable extrapolation to the whole population. Therefore, findings and resulting recommendations will predominately apply to the subcategory of young adults that attained- their higher school-leaving certificate (Matura) or higher educational successes.

4.2 Changes in Educational Scope

Collected data regarding potential differences in “planned highest educational achievement” between current aspirations and under the influence of universal basic income can be analysed statistically. This section aims to extract information about if respondents of the survey potentially desire additional or less education under the proposed scenario of the questionnaire. The variables were transformed into numerical data to apply various analytical tools of Jamovi.

Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

		W	p
Highest Degree Planned	- Highest Degree Planned_UBI	0.77	< .001

Table 7: Normality test of highest degree planned

Considering the corresponding two-tailed hypothesis (H1), Table 7 displays the p-value by conducting the normality test. The p-value of <0.001 violates the assumption of normality due to its low score, and, therefore, the Wilcoxon rank test has to be utilized to proceed.

Paired Samples T-Test

			Statistic	p
Highest Degree Planned	Highest Degree Planned_UBI	Wilcoxon W	1609.00 ^a	0.959

^a 142 pair(s) of values were tied

Table 8: Wilcoxon rank test of highest degree planned

Descriptives

	N	Mean	Median	SD
Highest Degree Planned	222	6.83	7.00	2.22
Highest Degree Planned_UBI	222	6.85	7.00	2.44

Table 9: Descriptives of highest degree planned

With a p-value of 0.959, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed a highly non-significant relationship between the highest degree planned to attain at the moment and the highest degree planned to achieve under UBI (Table 8). Hence, the demand for higher education would neither increase nor decrease, as the observed sample indicates that the number of individuals pursuing each academic level remains proportionally consistent. Indeed, 142 of the 222 valid respondents indicated that the extent of their education would not change at all under the UBI. Reviewing Table 9, despite the difference being non-significant, the mean value under UBI was higher than in the current scenario, suggesting that any change would be more likely positive than negative, which aligns with much of the literature. The standard deviation, which rose from the current 2.22 to 2.44 under the UBI scenario, indicates an increased heterogeneity among the answers under the UBI, which might reflect the greater freedom of choice such a policy would provide.

Descriptives

	N	Mean	Median	SD
Increase in Education	35	2.80	2	1.68
Decrease in Education	45	-2.27	-2	1.67

Table 10: Variation in highest education planned (own elaboration)

As the Wilcoxon rank test displayed, 142 respondents did not change their desired highest degree. Subsequently, the 80 survey participants that proclaimed to alter their

academic aspirations are outlined in greater detail in Table 10, indicating the numerical difference between “Highest Degree Planned” and “Highest Degree Planned_UBI”. While a lower number of respondents chose to increase the extent of their academic career, they comparatively decided to increase their stay in education by longer than the reductions indicated by those who decided to lower their educational goals. The standard deviations imply an equal distribution of the academical attainments in both groups.

The results imply that the number of enrolments at each academic level would not experience extraordinary differences under a universal basic income system but rather a shuffle of individuals amidst institutions. Therefore, hypothesis 1 (H1), “Universal basic income has a significant effect on the demand for higher education in Austria.”, has to be rejected. The data analysis could not detect any significant influences of universal basic income on the extent of demand for higher education.

4.2.1 Reasons for changing educational scope

This section is dedicated to analysing the open-ended question that corresponded to the educational scope question. Specifically, respondents were asked to *why* they chose a different quantity of education under the presented UBI scenario. Equivalent subsections can also be found in the following three subsequent sections, with each relating to the respective quantitative question. While the quantitative questions allow investigation of *what* changes might be expected under a universal basic income, these qualitative questions are intended to provide insight into the influencing factors and the motives of respondents in selecting a divergent answer under UBI. For each question, a codebook was developed through identification of commonly occurring theses and then applied to the rest of the dataset to display findings comprehensibly and consolidated.

Codebook: Extent of Education

Reason for change	Count	% of Total
New opportunities	18	41 %
Financial freedom	13	30 %
Increased earning potential	5	11 %
Education loses relevance	4	9 %
Life balance	4	9 %

Table 11: Codebook - Extent of education (own elaboration)

Table 11 displays the derived codebook of the open-ended question on why respondents chose to change their extent of education under the presented UBI scenario. Predominately, respondents stated to be interested in pursuing opportunities that were made feasible by universal basic income, such as more choices due to the gained independence, curiosity, and the ability to increase the focus on their academic career by absolving the degree quicker. For example, one respondent expressed: “I must say that I would study purely out of interest or for variety in professional life and not to earn more.” Furthermore, multiple survey participants indicated that the financial prosperity of each possibility strongly influences current decisions; a quote that exemplifies that: “I could not afford to participate in social interactions, leisure activities and often food was not affordable during my school years. – I, therefore, had to earn money early on.” Moreover, while a subset of respondents expressed utilizing UBI to maximize their income, others proclaimed that non-mandatory education lost its value for them. Lastly, a portion of individuals would take the opportunity to have an elevated sense of life balance, such as quoted by one survey taker: “Because based on this basic income, life is easier even with studies and family planning/starting a family at the same time. One does not have to decide whether family or education.”

4.3 Changes in educational field

The previous question revealed no aggregate changes in the amount of education that would be sought under a UBI, but would individuals choose a different field in that scenario? To include every educational subcategory in the hope of detecting even minor changes, the “field of education” variable was displayed as an open-ended question and, therefore, had to be analysed manually. Respondents indicated their

current educational specialization and, afterwards, the planned specialization under universal basic income. The analysis revealed that 56 out of 222 (25.2%) participants decided not to remain in their current educational field. In order to display a comprehensible overview, the individual replies were analysed, and a codebook was derived accordingly (Table 12).

Codebook

	Field of Education	% of Total
CB	No specification	23.2 %
	Higher education	23.2 %
	Drop education	14.3 %
	Medical field	12.5 %
	Social & animals	8.9 %
	Engineering	5.4 %
	Economics	3.6 %
	Sport sciences	3.6 %
	Life sciences	3.6 %
	Abroad	1.8 %

Table 12: Codebook - Field of education 1 (own elaboration)

Table 12 presents the created codebook of the field of education respondents would switch to upon receiving an unconditional income stream. The categories were formed based on open-ended replies and grouped accordingly. The majority of cases fall within “no specification,” representing approximately 23.2%. Respondents did not specify the precise field of education of interest. Nevertheless, their replies indicate reorientation, as they were merely unsure about the particular area. Furthermore, “higher education” constitutes 23.2% of the dataset as well; members of this group either stated to enter higher education overall (predominately) or expand their tertiary educational scope. Category “drop education” holds a substantial proportion, comprising approximately 14.3% of the dataset. Belonging respondents implied to exit their current higher education before completion. 12.5% of the data points belong to “medical field,” whereas the majority of this group stated to pursue a Ph.D. in medicine under UBI. “Social & animals” accounts for approximately 8.9% of the total. Respondents, who currently pursue a more scientific education, were interested in working directly with animals or in a more socially oriented profession. Approximately 5.4% and 3.6% of the data points belong to the categories “engineering” and

“economics.” The comparisons of the open-ended answers implied that the respondents already had experience in similar fields and would aim to expand their knowledge. Finally, the coded data indicates that 1.8% belongs to respondents that would look for further education outside of Austria. Patterns in responses were not identifiable; the motivation for reorientations in the educational field does not appear to be correlated with the current academical area.

As for the hypothesis (H2), “There is a significant difference between the desired field of education before and after the implementation of universal basic income.”, the analysis was able to display a substantial number of individuals choosing to switch their field of education and, therefore, hypothesis 2 can be accepted.

4.3.1 Reasons for changing educational field

Codebook: Field of Education

Coded variables	Counts	% of Total
Enhanced possibilities	15	63 %
Financial independence	7	29 %
Leisure time	2	8 %

Table 13: Codebook - Field of education 2 (own elaboration)

Table 13 provides an overview of participants' motivations for changing their field of education under a UBI. The category “Enhanced possibilities” is the most prevalent, containing approximately 63% of the qualitative responses. Respondents stated to opt for a field of education more aligned with their interests. Moreover, the enhanced possibilities would provide them with a higher success rate in other educational areas and offer entrepreneurship and private university opportunities. According to one respondent, the second factor has similar attributes, as the decrease in financial pressure would lead to greater independence: “I would probably have chosen the same job, possibly even a job in a less well-paid or uncertain industry. Reason: You wouldn't have to be afraid of being without money at the end of the month.” Finally, a smaller proportion of survey participants indicated transferring to a field that offers additional recreational time.

4.4 Changes to Career Aspirations

The variables “field of work” and “field of work_UBI” were analysed by comparing both replies based on the cumulative size of each category and possible patterns. The pre-defined list of answers included an “other” option to mitigate the risk of potentially excluding specific professional industries. Respondents that made use of this field were either assigned to a new or already existing category.

Frequencies of Field of Work

Field	Counts	% of Total	Counts_UBI	% of Total_UBI	Influx Outflow
Education	21	9%	24	11%	+8 -5
Healthcare	19	9%	21	9%	+5 -3
Construction and trade	18	8%	22	10%	+6 -2
Economy & Law	18	8%	20	9%	+6 -4
Sales and marketing	16	7%	8	4%	+3 -11
Engineering	13	6%	8	4%	+1 -6
Finance and accounting	13	6%	13	6%	+3 -3
Public services and government	13	6%	13	6%	+2 -2
Technology	13	6%	6	3%	+0 -7
Hospitality and tourism	11	5%	8	4%	+3 -6
Consulting	9	4%	7	3%	+4 -6
Creative work	9	4%	11	5%	+7 -5
Manufacturing and production	9	4%	6	3%	+2 -5
Science and research	9	4%	14	6%	+7 -2
Community- and social services	7	3%	7	3%	+4 -4
Transport and logistics	7	3%	7	3%	+1 -1
Unemployed	5	2%	5	2%	+4 -4
Media and literature	4	2%	3	1%	+0 -1
Agriculture and natural resources	3	1%	10	5%	+7 -0
Military	3	1%	3	1%	+2 -2
Food services	1	0%	1	0%	+0 -0
Other	1	0%	1	0%	+0 -0

Table 14: Descriptives of field of work

Table 14 represents the field of work categories along with the respective frequencies of selection in each scenario. The distribution of categories reveals that “education,”

“healthcare,” “construction and trade,” and “economy and law” remain the predominantly prevalent industries and even experience modest growth. Currently, “sales and marketing (7%)”, “engineering (6%)”, and “technology (6%)” employ substantial proportions of the respondents, yet the data indicates that these fields might lose some of their workforce under a universal basic income system. On the other hand, “science and research” and particularly “agriculture and natural resources” appear to be captivating sectors which would draw more people if they were offered greater financial stability.

Contrary to findings presented in the literature review, the collected data indicates no change to unemployment, which remains constant at 2%. However, upon closer examination, four out of the five currently unemployed individuals actually chose a professional field in the introduced UBI scenario, while four participants would leave their current corporate jobs in favour of unemployment under a UBI. Although many industries appear rigid initially, fluctuations were observed in almost every observed field. As depicted in the far-right column, the top four sectors in terms of sample size and specifically the field “public services and government” experienced the proportionally lowest fluctuation levels. The opposite trend was detected in the creative work field; while the total number slightly increased, an absolute fluctuation of 12 respondents was recorded from and towards various sectors. “Community and social services,” “hospitality and tourism,” and “consulting” displayed fluctuations of over 50%.

Furthermore, 80 out of 222 respondents (36.0%) stated an intention to change their profession upon receiving an unconditional income stream. Nevertheless, observable patterns between industries could not be identified as individuals that stated to shift their professional focus appeared to be doing it arbitrarily.

Hypothesis 3, “There is a significant difference between the desired field of work before and after the implementation of universal basic income”, meets the criteria for acceptance at the individual level, if not at the societal level. The analysis outlined significant fluctuations of individuals coming to and going from each observed sector, even though the overall distribution of the workforce across the professions remained rather stable. As noted above, however, certain industries might stand to attract more interest under a UBI (e.g., science and research, agriculture and natural resources),

while other sectors seem to become less attractive (e.g., sales and marketing, technology).

4.4.1 Reasons for changing field of work

Codebook: Field of Work

Reason for change	Counts	% of Total
Financial freedom	22	61 %
Higher education	10	28 %
Increased earning potential	4	11 %

Table 15: Codebook - Field of work (own elaboration)

Table 15 displays the codes on why respondents would switch their field of work under a UBI. The most significant factor is financial freedom. Individuals stated an intention to use the opportunity of economic security to pursue a profession that more accurately mirrors their interests, yet which is currently unappealing due to the lower pay. Furthermore, the financial freedom would be used by a proportion to found their own business or withdraw from the workforce entirely, as UBI would cover their expenses. Moving on, higher education is seen as a reason for a career transition, as a higher degree would facilitate currently inaccessible positions and sectors. Moreover, certain respondents would switch their contemporary occupations to increase their earning potential, as they were forced to enter the labour market earlier than desired due to external pressure.

4.5 Changes to Career Time-Investment

Moving to the second and last statistically testable hypothesis, the comparison between the current- and the hypothetical temporal investment devoted to employment under UBI (two-tailed hypothesis). The pre-defined answer options of the survey (0-20 hours; 21-30 hours; 31-35 hours; 36-40 hours; 40+ hours) were transformed into numerical values (1-5) ascendingly. Similar to the analysis of the educational scope, the variable “hours invested towards work” is also statistically analysed through Jamovi. This section focuses on the keenness of respondents to either increase or decrease the amount of time invested towards their profession under the proposed scenario of the questionnaire.

Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

			W	p
Working Time	-	Working Time_UBI	0.85	< .001

Table 16: Normality test of temporal employment investment

Paired Samples T-Test

			Statistic	p
Working Time	Working Time_UBI	Wilcoxon W	3677.50 ^a	< .001

^a 126 pair(s) of values were tied

Table 17: Wilcoxon rank test of temporal employment investment

Once again, the p-value (<0.001) of the conducted normality test in Table 16 revealed a non-parametric distribution of the dataset and, therefore, signaled the need for the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which is displayed in Table 17. Consequently, the p-value of <0.001 is below the benchmark of 0.05, which, according to the Wilcoxon test, indicates a highly significant relationship between both datasets. Following, universal basic income significantly affects the time survey participants would devote to work.

Descriptives

	N	Mean	Median	SD
Working Time	222	3.43	4.00	1.19
Working Time_UBI	222	3.04	3.00	1.25

Table 18: Descriptives of temporal employment investment

The corresponding means indicate in which direction universal basic income is shifting the extent of time devoted to work (Table 18). Current stances of the sample, with a mean of 3.43 and a median of 4.00, reveal that the majority intends to pursue a full-time profession (36-40 hours), which faithfully reflects the underlying reality. As depicted for the UBI variable, the mean, as well as the median decreased to 3.04 and 3.00, indicating a decrease in the overall time individuals would spend on their profession if receiving an additional and unconditional income stream. Therefore, the majority of employees would decrease their working time to 31-35 hours a week. The comparison of the standard deviations displays an increase of 0.06, indicating a

marginally greater diversity of answers, as the impact of universal basic income and its resulting financial benefits depends on one's individual life circumstances.

Therefore, hypothesis 4 (H4), "Universal basic income has a significant effect on the allocation of time devoted to employment", can be accepted. The significant effect of UBI on the time devoted to employment is reflected in a decrease in working time. A prevailing number of survey respondents would choose approximately a 4-day work week under the presented scenario of receiving € 1,600 on a monthly recurring basis.

4.5.1 Reasons for changing working time

Codebook: Temporal employment investment

Reason for change	Counts	% of Total
Financial freedom	48	98 %
Additional constraints	1	2 %

Table 19: Codebook - Temporal employment investment (own elaboration)

Table 19 provides a compact overview of the codebook on respondents' motives to adjust their temporal investment towards their profession. Financial freedom is the underlying motivator for survey participants to decrease their time investment, as UBI will balance out the wage reduction. Respondents' need for additional free time originates in their aspiration to dedicate more towards their interests and family, which is exemplified by a respondent: "I would probably work less and invest more time in hobbies, family, travel, etc. because you probably don't have to worry so much about money." Furthermore, more resources would be shifted towards further education and training. One respondent claimed to be obligated to increase their working time, as business owners in the hospitality industry would be compelled to implement these measures in order to ensure their success.

5 Discussion and Recommendations

Even though not every hypothesis could be accepted, each finding of the conducted online questionnaire offered fundamental insights into the discussion of the feasibility of universal basic income. This research aimed to investigate the potential effect of universal basic income on the tertiary education sector in order to provide recommendations to policymakers in Austria. The enrichment in knowledge serves as a step towards a potential implementation, as an additional uncertainty has been explored. The following section will examine the derived findings and conclude this research paper.

The analysis of the survey data provides several answers regarding how the higher education sector in Austria might be affected by the implementation of a universal basic income model. The first hypothesis (H1), which claimed that UBI significantly affects the demand for higher education, had to be rejected. While a portion of respondents would seek additional education under UBI due to the removal of financial constraints, a larger share became disincentivised and lowered their academic aspirations. The net difference in the total quantity of education was positive, yet insignificant. Nevertheless, these implications present an essential enhancement of understanding, as it indicates that the Austrian educational institutions would not require substantial restructuring as the demand would remain relatively stable. As the qualitative review suggested, the ability to receive higher education increases for some, whereas motivation decreases for others.

The second hypothesis (H2), proposing a significant relationship between UBI and the desired field of education, had to be accepted. While plenty remained loyal to their current educational ambitions, a quarter of the participants stated an intention to alter their specialization. Particularly intriguing is that numerous in this group specified an aspiration to change but not a particular discipline of desire. Once financial concerns are mitigated, people appear willing to detach themselves from their current path to pursue objectives that are more aligned with their interests, according to the qualitative investigation. The literature review also drew a positive relationship between investments in avocations and life satisfaction. Therefore, universal basic income has the potential to increase personal well-being and job

satisfaction. Furthermore, the two most commonly identified areas of increasing interest are both connected to social and community engagements. Although the magnitude is insufficient to draw generalizations, a clear community-oriented trend was observed in the sample.

The third hypothesis of this paper (H3) examined the impact of universal basic income on the field of work. The data analysis revealed substantial fluctuations of individuals between various fields and, therefore, was accepted as a significant correlation. The professional field “Sales and marketing” experienced the largest decline, whereas the most substantial growth was observed in the creative work sector. At the same time, the overall distribution of the workforce did not seem to shift considerably and therefore presents no grounds for concern. The primary stimulus to transfer to an alternative professional sphere was the gained financial freedom. Respondents stated that the financial imperatives which hold them in their current industry would diminishes once UBI was introduced. Also, a consequence of the facilitated access to higher education is an altering skillset of the current workforce. The desire to pursue different educational attainments results in alternative employment prospects. Nevertheless, such a reorientation should solely occur once at the introduction of UBI, as future generations will have these conditions from the outset. Furthermore, unlike previous researchers suggested, the collected data indicates that overall unemployment would not decrease. It was observed that the current jobless were motivated to enter the labour market, which is coherent with the existing literature on the declining effect of the poverty trap. However, an equal number of currently employed individuals opted to discontinue their work and, therefore, kept the number of unemployed stable.

Hypothesis four (H4) claimed a significant relationship between UBI and time allocation towards work. The statement was accepted as the statistical analysis revealed a significant change between the scenarios. On average, survey participants expressed the desire to modestly reduce their time dedicated to work by approximately one workday per week. The vast majority of respondents that would decrease their temporal investment towards their employment perceived UBI as an opportunity to devote a greater amount of time towards social activities and hobby endeavours while preserving their current wage. This observation is coherent with the

demand for a four-day workweek with unchanging remuneration, which is a rising trend at the moment. However, the essential distinction would be that the downtime would be financed by UBI instead of the employer, which might boost its general support. Nevertheless, more than half of the individuals stated an intention to maintain their current working time. Some participants see UBI as an opportunity to spend more time on leisure activities, while others see the opportunity to maximize their income. While both outcomes have been concluded separately by previous researchers, the data analysed in this paper cannot exclude either.

Concluding, this paper was able to fill a crucial research gap by shedding light on the potential shifts in the tertiary education sector and workforce. On the basis of the findings, the researcher cannot identify any objection to the implementation of a universal basic income model related to either higher education in Austria or employment in Austria. Therefore, based on this research, policymakers are recommended to undertake further steps to explore the possibilities of UBI in Austria, as it possesses promising potential to enhance the range of choices for every citizen and, therefore, the quality of life.

5.1 Limitations & Future Research

While this paper obtained 222 reputable responses, it nevertheless faced a range of limitations. Future researchers are recommended to gather a larger sample size to ensure the validity of the results. Further, as indicated in the sample analysis, the collected sample is skewed towards being more educated than the Austrian average. Therefore, conclusions can be mainly generalized solely to the higher academic class. As discussed in the literature review, once an individual enters the tertiary education sector, they are unlikely to disregard the attained knowledge for financial incentives. Considering the skewness of the dataset, the findings might have presented a differing outcome with a more representative sample. Therefore, future research should focus their investigation on the lower-educated population of Austria.

Finally, the qualitative analysis of the variable “field of education” revealed that the greatest share of respondents indicating they would pursue another educational specialization under UBI provided no answer regarding the exact field. Future

researchers should conduct a more in-depth data collection, perhaps through interviews, to derive more precise predictions.

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Appendix

Survey Introductions and questions:

I1:

Sehr geehrte/r Teilnehmer/in!

Diese Umfrage ist Teil meiner Bachelorarbeit, welche die möglichen Effekte der Realisierung eines **bedingungslosen Grundeinkommen (BGE)** Systems in Österreich erforscht. Bedingungsloses Grundeinkommen ist ein Vorschlag, welcher die jetzigen Sozialleistungen gegen eine monatliche und bedingungslose Zahlung an jede/n Bürger/in eines Landes ersetzen würde. Da diese Idee durch das Verschieben von bereits vorhandenen Ausgaben finanziert werden würde, würden sich Preise dadurch nicht verändern. Ein solches System könnte Bürger/innen mehr finanzielle Freiheit bieten und mein Ziel ist es, mögliche Veränderungen in Lebensentscheidungen herauszufinden.

Zuerst werden Ihnen Fragen gestellt über Ihre aktuellen ausbildungstechnischen und beruflichen Ziele unter dem jetzigen Wirtschaftssystem. Darauf folgend wird Ihnen ein bedingungsloses Grundeinkommen Szenario präsentiert und Fragen über Ihre hypothetischen Entscheidung betreffend Ausbildung und Beruf gestellt.

Bitte kontaktieren Sie mich bei Fragen oder für eine Kopie meiner finalen Arbeit:
Sandro Mangold: 61902530@modul.ac.at

Ich bedanke mich im Voraus für Ihre Zeit!

Mit fortfahren dieser Umfrage wird dein automatisches Zugeständnis erteilt, dass die Daten deiner Antworten für Forschungszwecke gespeichert werden und du in dieser Studie teilnehmen willst.

Q1: In welchem Land sind Sie wohnhaft?

- A: Österreich
- B: Deutschland
- C: Schweiz
- D: Anderes

Q2: In welchem Bundesland wohnen Sie?

- A: Vorarlberg
- B: Tirol
- C: Salzburg

D: Kärnten
E: Steiermark
F: Oberösterreich
G: Niederösterreich
H: Burgenland
I: Wien

Q3: Was ist Ihr Alter?

A: 0-17 Jahre
B: 18
C: 19
D: 20
E: 21
F: 22
G: 23
H: 24
I: 25
J: 26
K: 27
L: 28+

Q4: Bitte geben Sie Ihr Geschlecht an.

A: Weiblich
B: Männlich
C: Anderes

Q5: Was ist Ihr höchster Bildungsabschluss? (bis jetzt erreicht)

A: kein Pflichtschulabschluss
B: Unterstufe/Mittelschule
C: Polytechnische Schule
D: abgeschlossene Lehre
E: Meister
F: Matura/Reifeprüfung
G: Bachelorstudium
H: Magister- oder Diplomstudium
I: Masterstudium
J: Doktorats-/PhD-Studium
K: Sonderpädagogisches Zentrum (SPZ) bzw. Allgemeine Sonderschule (ASO)

Q6: Was ist der höchste Bildungsabschluss, den Sie planen zu erreichen?

A: kein Pflichtschulabschluss
B: Unterstufe/Mittelschule
C: Polytechnische Schule
D: abgeschlossene Lehre
E: Meister
F: Matura/Reifeprüfung
G: Bachelorstudium
H: Magister- oder Diplomstudium
I: Masterstudium
J: Doktorats-/PhD-Studium

K: Sonderpädagogisches Zentrum (SPZ) bzw. Allgemeine Sonderschule (ASO)

Q7: Welche Ausbildungsrichtung haben/planen Sie für sich zu wählen?

A: [open ended]

Q8: Bitte geben Sie an, in welcher Arbeitsbranche Sie arbeiten/planen zu arbeiten.

- A: Arbeitslos/keine Berufung
- B: Bau und Gewerbe
- C: Beratung
- D: Bildung
- E: Fertigung und Produktion
- F: Finanz- und Rechnungswesen
- G: Gastgewerbe und Tourismus
- H: Gemeinnützige und soziale Dienste
- I: Gesundheitswesen
- J: Ingenieurwesen
- K: Kreative Arbeit
- L: Landwirtschaft und natürliche Ressourcen
- M: Medien und Literatur
- N: Militär
- O: Nahrungsdienstleistungen
- P: Öffentlicher Dienst und Regierung
- Q: Technologie
- R: Transport und Logistik
- S: Unterhaltung
- T: Verkauf und Marketing
- U: Wirtschaft & Recht
- V: Wissenschaft und Forschung

Q9: Wie viele Stunden pro Woche investieren (planen) Sie in Ihren Beruf?

- A: 0-20 Stunden
- B: 21-30 Stunden
- C: 31-35 Stunden
- D: 36-40 Stunden (Vollzeit)
- E: 40+ Stunden

I2:

Szenario

Jetzt, nehmen Sie an, dass in Österreich ein bedingungsloses Grundeinkommens-System (BGE) vor einiger Zeit eingeführt wurde und jede/r Bürger/in eine zusätzliche monatliche Zahlung vom Staat erhält.

Stellen Sie sich vor, dass...

! Seit Sie 16 Jahre alt sind, erhalten Sie €1.600,00 jeden Monat. Das zusätzliche Geld kann ohne Einschränkungen für jegliches genutzt werden. (Preise werden sich nicht erhöhen)

! Arbeit wird diese Zahlung nicht beeinflussen, sie könnten dadurch also Ihr monatliches Gesamteinkommen erhöhen.

! Da dieses System in Österreich hohen Zuspruch findet, sind Sie sicher, dass Sie diese Zahlung für den Rest Ihres Lebens erhalten werden.

Die folgenden Fragen versuchen nun herauszufinden, ob Sie aufgrund des soeben genannten Szenarios, andere Entscheidungen treffen würden:

Q10: In diesem BGE (bedingungsloses Grundeinkommen) Szenario, was wäre der höchste Bildungsabschluss, den Sie planen zu erreichen?

- A: kein Pflichtschulabschluss
- B: Unterstufe/Mittelschule
- C: Polytechnische Schule
- D: abgeschlossene Lehre
- E: Meister
- F: Matura/Reifeprüfung
- G: Bachelorstudium
- H: Magister- oder Diplomstudium
- I: Masterstudium
- J: Doktorats-/PhD-Studium
- K: Sonderpädagogisches Zentrum (SPZ) bzw. Allgemeine Sonderschule (ASO)

Q11: Falls die Existenz von bedingungslosem Grundeinkommen Sie zu einem anderen Höchsten-Abschluss geführt hätte, erläutern Sie weshalb...

A: [open ended]

Q12: Bitte wählen Sie das Wort "Banane" aus.

- A: Manhattan
- B: Banane
- C: Universität
- D: Nachhaltigkeit

Q13: Falls die Existenz von bedingungslosem Grundeinkommen Sie zu einer anderen Ausbildungsrichtung geführt hätte, erläutern Sie weshalb...

A: [open ended]

Q14: In diesem BGE Szenario, welche Ausbildungsrichtung würden Sie für sich wählen?

A: [open ended]

Q15: In diesem BGE Szenario, in welcher Arbeitsbranche würden Sie gerne arbeiten?

- A: Arbeitslos/keine Berufung
- B: Bau und Gewerbe
- C: Beratung
- D: Bildung
- E: Fertigung und Produktion
- F: Finanz- und Rechnungswesen
- G: Gastgewerbe und Tourismus
- H: Gemeinnützige und soziale Dienste

I: Gesundheitswesen
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K: Kreative Arbeit
L: Landwirtschaft und natürliche Ressourcen
M: Medien und Literatur
N: Militär
O: Nahrungsdienstleistungen
P: Öffentlicher Dienst und Regierung
Q: Technologie
R: Transport und Logistik
S: Unterhaltung
T: Verkauf und Marketing
U: Wirtschaft & Recht
V: Wissenschaft und Forschung

Q16: Falls die Existenz von bedingungslosem Grundeinkommen Sie in eine andere Branche leiten würde, erläutern Sie weshalb...

A: [open ended]

Q17: In diesem BGE Szenario, wie viele Stunden pro Woche würden Sie in Ihren Beruf investieren?

A: 0-20 Stunden
B: 21-30 Stunden
C: 31-35 Stunden
D: 36-40 Stunden (Vollzeit)
E: 40+ Stunden

Q18: Falls die Existenz von bedingungslosem Grundeinkommen Ihre Arbeitszeiten ändern würde, erläutern Sie weshalb...

A: [open ended]