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PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF UNEMPLOYED
INDIVIDUALS WITH TROUBLED ADAPTATION TO LABOR
MARKET

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Abstract

Unemployment as a social phenomenon may act as a stimulus to mobilize personal and social resources of an individual, but it may also cause a number of destructive psychological effects leading to decoupling from the social environment and breakdown of the emotional field of the unemployed person.

The goal of this research is to study the level of psychological well-being of unemployed individuals with troubled adaptation to the job market and its relation with social and demographic characteristics and purpose-in-life orientations of the unemployed individuals.

A group of unemployed individuals with troubled adaptation to the job market was selected during personal interviews with a psychologist from people officially registered as unemployed with the job centre of Cheboksary, Chuvash Republic, Russia. In total, the group consisted of 52 persons, containing 47 women and 5 men. The study used Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being survey adapted by Shevelenkova and Fesenkoo; Meaning of Life Orientation test adapted by D.A. Leontyeva. The obtained result underwent statistical treatment with Pearson's correlation analysis.

As a whole, the level of psychological well-being of unemployed is at the average level. Causes of psychological ill-being are linked to lack of clear conceptualization of life goals, inaptitude to apply their previous experience to the present situation that could define their meaning of life in the future. With age, the subjective feeling of psychological well-being of unemployed individuals decreases. Most of men in the study experience problems in interacting with other people, which is detrimental to their psychological well-being.

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Keywords: Unemployed individuals, psychological well-being, troubled adaptation.



1. Introduction

The problem of unemployment has deep psychological roots besides its obvious social and economic aspects. Unemployment is characterized as a specific state of personality, manifesting in distortion of social perception of reality, activation of negative and depressive complexes, formation of a system of new value orientations.

Modern studies of the unemployment problem in Russian and global science are directed at studying the causes and consequences of unemployment, analysis of behavioral specifics of an unemployed individual in the job market and their personal characteristics.

A number of foreign authors highlight the influence that unemployment has onto the mental health of a person, drawing attention to importance of cross-cultural studies of different strata of society, as well as to duration and strategies to overcome the situation of unemployment, its gender aspect (Chen, He, Wu, Yan & Tang, 2012; Rosenthal, Carroll-Scott, Earnshaw, Santilli & Ickovics, 2012; Strandh, Hammarström, Nilsson, Nordenmark & Russel, 2012).

Russian authors point out negative consequences of unemployment for the psychological, emotional and motivational domains of unemployed individuals (Bendyukov, Savrilova, & Solomin, 2007), changes in the structure of personality (Glukhanyuk, Savrilova, & Solomin 2003; Voloshina, & Grebennikov, 1998), the system of value orientation (Zhuravlyova, 1999) and in deformation of their lifestyle as a whole (Osnitsky & Chuykova, 1999).

Psychological well-being of a person is an important phenomenon that serves as a regulator of human behavior in a society. During the social interaction between the person and the environment, the individual is committed to psychological well-being, but at the same time, the quality and character of the social contacts influence the individual's psychological well-being. Psychological well-being has a subjective nature, for it reflects internal state and emotional experience of well-being, as well as behavior that reflects the well-being.

In foreign psychology, studies of psychological well-being became more intense during the second half of the 20th century (Argyle, 1999; Bradburn, 1969; Costa & McCrae, 1980; Diener, Diener, Oishi, & Lucas 1984; Diener, 2003; Easterlin, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryff, 1995; Waterman, 1993).

Various authors have different definitions of the psychological well-being. E. Diener (Diener, 1984) takes life assessment, positive and negative affects as psychological well-being indicators. M. Argyle (Argyle, 1999) links this phenomenon to satisfaction with life, lack of negative and presence of positive affects, certain qualities of individuality (extraversion, openness, neuroticism). C.D. Ryff (Ryff, 1995) has selected the following basic components of the psychological well-being: positive relations with others, self-acceptance (positive assessment of self and one's life), autonomy (capability to follow one's principles), competence (control over the environment, capability to efficiently control one's life), presence of goals infusing one's life with direction and meaning, personal growth as a feeling of unceasing development and self-actualization. Shevelenkova and Fesenko (2005), consider it as a subjective phenomenon of the integral perception depending on the system of internal assessment of the bearer of this perception that is linked to basic human values and needs, as manifested in the feeling of well-being, satisfaction with oneself and one's life.

In Russian psychology, scientists give special significance to subjective approach in studying of well-being, search for interconnections between the psychological well-being and various personality factors (sense of purpose in life, purpose-in-life orientations, life strategies, sovereignty of psychological space, etc.); influence of various objective and subjective factors onto the psychological well-being of individual (A.V. Baranova, T.V. Beskova, M.V. Buchatskaya, A.V. Voronina, T.O. Gordeeva, I.A. Dzhidarian, O.A. Idobayeva, A.E. Sozontov, E.A. Uglanova, P.P. Fesenko, N.P. Fetiskin, R.M. Shamionov, T.D. Shevelenkova, O.S. Shiryaeva, E.N. Osin, D.D. Suchkov, T.O. Gordeeva, T.Y. Ivanova, S.V. Yaremchuk and others). Researchers reveal interrelations between the subjective well-being and social, age-related, gender (Churilo, 2009) and professional characteristics of research subjects (Osin, Suchkov, Gordeeva, & Ivanova, 2015).

Several authors point out, that the studies of subjective personal well-being shall consider cross-cultural context. R. Fisher (Fisher, 2012) proposes to engage more specialists in cross-cultural psychology in the studies of well-being. R.M. Shamionov (Shamionov, 2014) comes to a conclusion of high social, theoretic and practical significance of ethno-psychological studies of subjective well-being in Russia, basing on the data of peculiarities of subjective well-being determined by ethno-psychological state of the person and the nature of inter-ethnic relationships. Dontsov, Perelygina and Rikel (2016), coming from the theoretical and analytical review, propose a thesis of non-linear interconnection between the subjective and objective well-being and the primary role of culture and social context as mediating factors, influencing deflection of the subject well-being in the context of the objective one. Bocharova (2014, 2015), from analysis of factual data in studies of subjective well-being performed in the ethno-psychological perspective, highlights variety of types, forms, factors and determinants of the subjective well-being, reflective of ethno-cultural diversity of relationships between an individual and society in context of globalization. Klyonova (2013) revealed certain differences in studying subjective well-being characteristics and perception of risk among representatives of different ethnic groups (Volga Germans and Russians).

Vagapova (2014) has shown, that concept of well being has distinctive features depending on ethnic group; core structure is formed and supported in interactions with both insiders and outsiders. Her studies have revealed differences in structure of concepts between the two ethnicities (Russians and Armenians) historically living together, having similar religions, but also having linguistic, climatic and other differences that left their imprint onto the worldview attitudes and image of the world.

Khaschenko (2011, 2015), a prominent scholar in the field of subjective economic well-being, states that this psycho-social, economical, psychological, cultural and historical phenomenon is a major problem for countries undergoing serious transformations, such as introduction and development of market-based economy and democratic political institutions, including Russia (Hayo & Seifert, 2003).

Independent of differences in definitions of the psychological well-being, the major issue is a method of its measurement.

Generally, one may agree with the analysis of well-being studies in the modern Russian psychology performed by Karapetian (2017), stating, that these studies are mainly theoretical and methodological and are usually based upon abstract logical generalizations, that important directions of research in studying this problem are empiric studies of well-being in connection with personality factors and objective

conditions of human development, as well as specification of well-being indicators, analysis of influencing factors and formation dynamics.

The unemployed are a social group, whose psychological well-being has been insufficiently studied in the scientific publications yet.

Due to that, results of research conducted by Yeremina (2017) are of interest; she has defined subjective perception of the psychological well-being among the unemployed individuals and linked it to certain personal characteristics. The study of Shamionov and Yeremina (2017) assumes, that adaptation of employed with stable job and that of unemployed is to be determined by different social and psychological phenomena. It has been shown, that subjective well-being indicators and contemplative spectrum values are the strongest predictors of social and psychological adaptivity among the unemployed.

2. Problem Statement

Despite the fact that studies of emotional, social, financial, familial, medical and political consequences of unemployment are conducted in various countries; data collected on influence of the status of unemployed onto the inner world of a person are insufficient and contradictory.

3. Research Questions

1. What is the subjective assessment of the psychological well-being of unemployed individuals with troubled adaptation to the job market?
2. What is the relationship between the basic indicators of the psychological well-being and social and demographic characteristics of personality of unemployed?
3. What are the relationships between the level of psychological well-being of the unemployed and the nature of their purpose-in-life orientations?

4. Purpose of the Study

The goal of this research is to study the level of psychological well-being of unemployed individuals with troubled adaptation to the job market and its relation with social and demographic characteristics and purpose-in-life orientations of the unemployed individuals.

5. Research Methods

Research methods. To study quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the psychological well-being, we used the survey

- 1) *Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being* developed by C. D. Ryff, as adapted by Shevelenkova and Fesenko (Shevelenkova, 2005);
- 2) *Purpose-in-Life Orientations* test, as adapted by Leontyev and Fesenko (2000). The Purpose-in-Life Orientations Test is an adaptation of the Purpose-in-Life Test (PIL) by James Crumbaugh and Leonard Maholick. The Russian language version of the test was developed and adapted by D.A. Leontyev

The obtained result underwent statistical treatment with descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation analysis.

Research sample. The study was conducted in the territory of the Russian Federation: at the premises of the job center of the city of Cheboksary, the Chuvash Republic and Aspekt training and methodological center.

Research procedure. The study was conducted by surveying unemployed individuals officially registered as such with the job center, on their voluntary consent. The testees filled in the questionnaire forms, stating their sex, age, family situation, parental status, education, duration of being unemployed. A psychologist who was not employed by the job center conducted the survey.

From the results of the survey and after observing the psychological training and individual counseling, a group of unemployed individuals with troubled adaptation to the job market was selected.

This selection was guided by a number of criteria, which are assumed as allowing to refer individuals to the troubled adaptation group:

- 1) during the psychological training and individual counseling, the psychologist notes in their conclusion that there are difficulties in adapting to the job market due to emotional maladjustments, lack of professional plans, increased aggression, low self-esteem, etc.;
- 2) problems are discovered in job search, lack of concrete plans for occupational retraining and skill enhancement;
- 3) women returning after parental leave;
- 4) registered as an unemployed for more than 6 months.

In total, the selected group included 52 unemployed individuals. Among them 47 were women and 5 were men.

6. Findings

Age of studied individuals ranges from 22 to 54 years. Men are from 32 to 49 years old. Women are from 22 to 54 years old.

1 person (1.9%) has basic secondary education; 1 person (1.9%) has secondary education; 12 persons (23.0%) have vocational secondary education and 38 persons (73.0%) have higher education.

Duration of being unemployed: 19 people (36.5%) have been registered with the center for the period of up to 6 months; 21 people (40.3%) have been registered with the center for the period of up to 1 year; 9 people (17.3%) have been registered with the center for the period of up to 2 years; 3 persons (5.7%) have been registered for up to 3 years, and; 6 persons (11.5%) have been registered for over 3 years.

Among the studied, 45 people noted, that they currently have financial support from relatives and 7 people (13.4%) said that they do not have such a support.

Social status: 19 people (36.5%) are single, 1 (1.9%) is a widow, 6 (11.5%) are divorced, 26 (50%) are married.

The results of the psychological well-being assessment among the unemployed have shown (see Table 1), that among the studied individuals one may find average indicators of positive attitude with others average in 42.3 % of the studied group (n=22). It is the evidence, that the studied individuals have limits of trust towards people around them and the limits are not always satisfactory, they may have problems with other people and they not always care of the well-being of others.

53.8% (n=28) of the studied unemployed individuals have shown average level of autonomy. The average level of independent behavior of unemployed individuals as manifested in capability to oppose social pressure forcing a certain manner of thought and action. Also, 78.8 % (n=41) of unemployed individuals have average indicators of control over the environment, high value of this indicator is uncharacteristic for the unemployed, being literally 0%. It characterizes them as dependent on social support, unable to make independent decisions and satisfy their needs. This attribute is the least developed component of personality of the unemployed, and possibly, it is exactly the component that needs special development.

78.8 % (n=41) of the unemployed shows average values of personal growth; there are close to none high values in measurements according to this scale. Lack of concrete purpose in life is the main factor of incomplete actualization; possibly that is why there are also almost no high values in this indicator among the unemployed, while 90.3% (n=47) has average value.

The unemployed individuals also have average values of self-acceptance, 67.33% (n=35) shows this level; it is an evidence that they not always have positive relation to oneself. General indicators of psychological well-being among the studied unemployed individuals also gravitates towards average values characteristic of 71.1% (n=37) of testees.

Table 01. Specifics of psychological well-being of unemployed

Psychological well-being indicators	low		Average		High	
	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%
Positive relations with friends	12	23.0	22	42.3	18	34.6
Autonomy	11	21.1	28	53.8	20	38.4
Control over the environment	11	21.1	41	78.8	0	0
Personal growth	1	1.9	41	78.8	10	19
Purpose in life	13	25	47	90.3	2	3.8
Self-acceptance	13	25	35	67.3	5	9.6
Psychological well-being	7	13.4	37	71.15	8	15.3

Comparative analysis of average indications of the psychological well-being of unemployed shows that in general their level of psychological well-being corresponds to the average. They are quite satisfied with their interactions with other people, aspire for personal growth and self-actualization, while simultaneously experiencing troubles in setting prospective life goals and lacking confidence in their personal characteristics.

Table 02. Average indicators of the psychological well-being of unemployed

Psychological well-being indicators	M	Std. dev.
Positive relations with friends	59.34	3.213
Autonomy	44.2	5.443
Control over the environment	50.41	5.842
Personal growth	56.7	7.893
Life purpose	42.7	5.625
Self-acceptance	49.8	5.234
Psychological well-being	332.8	26.743

At the next stage, we studied peculiarities of purpose-in-life orientations among the unemployed (see Table 3). So, the results of our studies show, that majority of the tested unemployed individuals have average values in the purpose-in-life indicator – constituting 46.1% (n=24), also percentage of low levels in the purpose-of-life is quite high 34.65 (n=18). It indicates that the feeling of purpose in life, directionality and awareness of temporal prospects is not very high among the unemployed. Low values of the purpose-in-life indicator mean that such testees live for one day, which is often in the past.

Therefore, the tested unemployed have shown quite low values according to the life process scale, there are 53.8% (n=18) of such persons. The life process scale reflects to what degree the testees themselves perceive their life as interesting, emotionally charged and meaningful. Low values according to this scale among the unemployed is an attribute of dissatisfaction with their life now.

In addition, we may see, that the majority of unemployed have very low indicators according to the life results scale, there are 55.75% (n=29) of such persons among the testees. This indicator tells that assessment of the past period of life is manifested as dissatisfaction with their actualization in the majority of unemployed.

At that, from the results of our study, the majority of tested unemployed have either low LoC-Me values (30.7%, n=18), or high LoC-Me values (40.3%, n=21). It tells us, that the majority of the unemployed have an idea of self as strong personality, having enough freedom of choice to build their life. Or, as an alternative, they have an image of a weak personality incapable to believe in their powers, to control the events of their own life.

Locus of Control (LoC) among the studied unemployed tends to have average values (characteristic of 46.1%, n=24), a notion that they have power to control their life, to freely make decisions and implement them is at the average level.

Table 03. Study of purpose-of-life orientation among unemployed

	Low		Average		High	
	Abs	%	Abs	%	Abs	%
Life purpose	18	34.6	24	46.1	10	19.2
Process of life	28	53.8	16	30.7	8	15.3
Result of life	29	55.7	17	32.6	6	11.5
LoC-Me	16	30.7	5	9.6	21	40.3
LoC-Life	13	25	24	46.1	15	28.8

Correlation analysis has shown presence of significant negative link (p=0.01) between psychological well-being and the age of the unemployed (r=-0.41). Maybe it tells us, that young unemployed individuals have more positive perception of their life than the elder generation. The older are the unemployed, the more negative and pleasureless is their perception of life and the less they believe in a possibility to actualize their potential.

Women have a more positive perception of the psychological well-being state, unlike men; men almost always have lower indicators of positive attitude towards others (r = -0.33) and the psychological well-being level (r = -0.410). Because providing financial stability to the family is the man's main function, most men perceive unemployment as their personal failure or defeat, which reflects negatively on their psychological well-being and their relations with family members.

Having children significantly increases the level of psychological well-being ($r = -0.428$), which may be an evidence that children serve as the most important justification of their current social status for unemployed women. For women, performing maternal functions serves as an important life assignment, which may seriously justify their professional underachievement.

In addition, it was found out, that the Psychological Well-Being general indicator correlates ($p \leq 0.05$) with such indicators of purpose-in-life orientation of unemployed as: «purpose in life» ($r = 0.384$), «life process» ($r = 0.250$); «life results» ($r = 0.321$). In its turn, the Autonomy scale is interrelated with the Locus of Control - Me ($p = 0.05$) ($r = 0.328$); Control over the Environment with Locus of Control - Life ($r = 0.228$); Personal Growth with Purpose of Life ($r = 0.302$) and Life Process ($r = 0.324$) scales

The results of psychological well-being assessment obtained in this study exceed similar indicators, obtained in studies of other authors (Yeremina, 2017). So, Yeremina's data show that the subjective well-being indicator of unemployed is lower than that of employed. These discrepancies may be caused by the fact, that the sample of our study largely consists of women trying to return to work after parental leave and taking professional retraining courses, both these factors may create increased feeling of fullness of being. In this case, it is necessary to highlight significance of psychological follow-up of unemployed within the framework of social and professional adaptation programs, allowing increasing productivity of employment and raising the level of adaptation of the unemployed to the job market.

7. Conclusion

The results of the study have shown that as a whole, the level of the psychological well-being of unemployed with troubled adaptation to the job market is at the average level, which manifests in direction of their interactions with surrounding people, satisfaction with interpersonal relations, aspiration for self-actualization, personal growth and changing their behavior. The causes of psychological ill-being are linked to lack of concrete conceptualization of life goals, inaptitude to apply their previous experience to the present situation that could define their meaning of life in the future. Discontent with their current status, they subjectively link to a lack or an insufficient level of personal characteristics development.

The unemployed status significantly reduces distinct manifestation of adequate indicators of the purpose-in-life orientations. It is manifested as impossibility to actualize one's potential, thus significantly increasing the general current dissatisfaction with life. Lack of goals to be prospectively actualized significantly changes the objective assessment that the unemployed individual gives to the past period of life, making such people to live in dreams of tomorrow due to inadequacy of today's life.

With age, the subjective feeling of psychological well-being of unemployed individuals decreases, together with trust in prospects and possibility to actualize their potential. Most men experience issues in relations with other people, which deteriorates their psychological well-being, as they perceive unemployed status as their personal failure or defeat.

Interconnection between the psychological well-being and parental and family status is determined by the fact, that the sample largely consists of women trying to return to work after parental leave; their performance of maternal functions largely mitigating their professional underachievement.

Presence of interconnections between the psychological well-being and purpose-in-life orientation indicators of unemployed tells us that the higher the level of personal responsibility, sense of purpose,

ability to use previous experience, feeling of emotional fullness and satisfaction with life, the higher is the psychological well-being level of the unemployed. Lack of faith in one's ability to control one's life, subordination to fate make the unemployed dependent on assessments and actions of others in resolution of critically important issues.

Thus, the psychological well-being of unemployed with troubled adaptation to the job market is linked to them having problems with goal-setting and lack of confidence in one's powers.

Due to this, the strategic objective of the targeted employment policy of the Chuvash Republic is to organize the system of social and psychological help and assistance for the unemployed. The program shall be aimed at formation of personal career plan, increased motivation to active resolution of one's employment situation, broadening of spectrum of employment variants and concepts of professional self-actualization, possibilities for improvement of professional skills and competences, as well as support of constructive attitudes towards oneself.

The programs under development take into account psychological and teaching principles of social interaction (Kozhanova & Mamitova, 2017), criteria and indicators of efficiency monitoring indicators (Kutuev & Mashkin, 2017). Currently, these problems are being successfully resolved during individual counseling and training sessions titled Success Starts With You, Constructive Behavior Workshop, Increase Your Competitiveness and others developed by psychologists of the job center of the city of Cheboksary, the Chuvash Republic and the Aspekt training and methodological center of the Ministry of Labor of Chuvashia.

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