

## SUPPORT IN THE JOB SEARCH FOR LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED SOCIAL BENEFIT RECEIVERS

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### Abstract

Nowadays, when the general rate of unemployment in Latvia is not that high anymore, there are still a lot of people who are unemployed for many years and during all those years they are abusing the budget of municipality by receiving social benefits. The aim of the article was to examine the way how the long-term unemployed social benefit receivers assess the meaning of support in job searching. On the basis of The Theory of Planned Behaviour a questionnaire was developed by the authors, 37 long-term unemployed social benefit receivers registered in Riga Social Service were asked to take part in the survey and gave informed consent. The results show that the respondents who are longer unemployed receive more support from their families. Statistically significant correlations ( $p=0.03$ ) were found between the duration of unemployment and person's determination to search a job, the unemployed who are longer without a job are less active in job searching process. Direct support in the job searching process is deeply connected with the possibility to share individual's thoughts and emotions with the family. There is no statistically significant correlation between men and women responses.

**Key words:** planned behaviour, job searching, long-term unemployed social benefit receivers.

### Introduction

The level of unemployment is decreasing in the capital of Latvia - Riga; in December 2015 the level of unemployment was 5% (Reģistrētais bezdarba ..., 2016). The number of social benefit receivers are decreasing as well in Riga – in 2015 there were 42 253 social benefit receivers in Riga (6% from total number of inhabitants) (Rīgā turpina samazināties..., 2016).

Unfortunately, there is no research carried out about long-term unemployed social benefit receivers and how support can impact their ability to find and keep the job. The amount of that target group is not big, but for Riga Social Service it is important to know why clients are not getting a job if it is possible and what should be done to prevent it.

The long-term unemployed social benefit receivers are able-bodied persons who have received benefits more than 12 times within the last three years and were jobless at least 9 months (Pētījums par..., 2007), and have been receiving social service support at least for the last six months.

The long-term unemployed social benefit receivers are the clients of Riga Social Service and State Employment Agency – there they are able to receive institutionalised support from professionals, but it is important to receive support from family members as well, because time they spend together has more effect than a few appointments with specialists. In Riga Social Service only the client itself gets direct supervision in process of searching a job, the client's family is not involved in this process.

Authors decided to do a research on how the long-term unemployed social benefit receivers evaluate the support that they receive from their families (emotional support), because receiving formal support (from social workers, career counsellors etc.)

is not enough for managing successful career, but for professionals it is important to evaluate support clients receive from families, so they can or can't take it into the consideration while working with clients. Family is one part of the successful career, and it is important to maintain positive relationships and receive the support from family members (Kas ir karjera, 2016).

The aim of the research is to examine the way how the long-term unemployed social benefit receivers assess the importance of support in job searching.

### Materials and Methods

The theoretical part of the research consists of the study and theoretical analysis of the scientific and methodological literature on job search, planned behaviour and perceived support.

To assess importance of support in job search, the empirical part of the research was provided.

Research questions:

1. How do the long-term unemployed social benefit receivers assess support received from Riga Social Service and State Employment Agency?
2. Do the long-term unemployed social benefit receivers consider their job searching as purposeful, planned process?
3. How do the long-term unemployed social benefit receivers assess the support received from their family members?
4. How do the long-term unemployed social benefit receivers assess the impact their social status has on their families?

The current empirical research was carried out in Riga Social Service in November 2015. There were 37 long-term unemployed social benefit receivers

participating in the research, all of the participants gave informed consents. The participants of the research were as follows: 30 females (81.8%) and 7 males (19.2%) between the age of 26 to 59 (Mean (M) = 43.97, Standard Deviation (SD) = 9.76), the age distribution of the respondents is normal (The Shapiro–Wilk  $W = 0.95$ ;  $p = 0.12$ ). Eight respondents have higher education (7 women and 1 man), 24 (19 women and 5 men) – secondary education, 4 women and 1 man have only primary education. Distribution differences of the attained educational level among the genders were not statistically significant (Chi-square criterion  $\chi^2 = 0.28$ ;  $p = 0.87$ ). In the study sample statistically important positive correlation exists between the age of unemployed and their duration of unemployment (Spearman's rho ( $r_{sp}$ ) = 0.47,  $p = 0.004$ ), elderly unemployed are longer without a job.

The survey developed by the authors consists of 12 questions based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour and The Reasoned Action Approach (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005; Ajzen, 2012). According to the theoretical approach, the aim of the survey was to define the long-term unemployed social benefit receivers' ideas about the support they receive.

The participants were also asked to specify their gender, age, and duration of unemployment and the level of education.

MS Excel and R 3.2.3 (The R Project, 2016) have been used to process the research data.

The descriptive statistics indicators (Mean, Standard Deviation, Median, Quartiles, Range and Interquartile Range) were calculated. The Shapiro–Wilk  $W$  was calculated testing for normality of the distribution of participants' age, the non-parametric criteria – Kruskal–Wallis  $\chi^2$ , Spearman rho ( $r_{sp}$ ) and Pearson Chi-squares were calculated analysing differences of distribution among the subgroups.

## Results and Discussion

In 1930 – 1931 in Austria a research about the community of unemployed living in a small village was carried out, where all inhabitants were employed at one factory and after it collapsed all of them became unemployed. Austrian researchers Maria Jahoda and Paul Lazerfeld figured out that village inhabitants described their life as life without a goal, dreams and future plans, they still were trying to maintain family life, but they were feeling guilty, because they were not able to provide all the necessities for their families. Generally, the atmosphere in the village was depressive, negative and passive in all the ways (McLaughlin, 1992).

That research shows us that for an individual it is very important to work not only because of money or opportunity to achieve some goals, but to work because they want to supply their families, to receive

acceptance and support. That means that the status of unemployed means a lack of support and unfulfilled hopes from the side of the family members. For long-term unemployed social benefit receivers it might be hard to realise that society expects them to search and find a job and leave social security system, that is why they are able to receive institutional support (Reardon & Lenz, 1999).

In the process of finding and keeping job not only support of family members is important – it is important to be determined and have reasons for all the actions that will be needed to be done in the field of job search. While searching for a job and trying to manage career in the best possible way for long-term unemployed social benefit receivers, it is important to analyse their level of determination and their behaviour according to it (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014).

R. Kanfer, C.R. Wanberg & T.M. Kantrowitz (2001) define that job searching is not only a process that brings important results, but it is also self-regulative and full of outcomes process. During the job searching process an individual turns on his creative part and brings out some personal resources that were not used for many years if employment goal is not accomplished new resources and features of personality are discovered. Working with the long-term unemployed social benefit receivers it is important to research and use the antecedents of job searching behaviour. Job searching antecedents include personality traits, motives, self-evaluation, social context, biographical variables and generalized expectations. These entire individual features create a unique job searching behaviour for every individual, employment outcomes depend on it - status, time of searching and number of job offers (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001).

In difficult situations, e.g. during job search, two types of behaviour can occur according to the type of the individual's personality. For approach-oriented individuals that might be additional motivation to act more effectively and be more creative in job searching. For avoidance-oriented individuals every failure of additional difficulty is a sign to leave it. Long-term unemployed social benefit receivers are considered to be the second type of individuals (Wanberg *et al.*, 2012).

In 1985, Icek Ajzen invented the Theory of Reasoned Action and defined determination. Determination is an individual ability to be active and creative that activates under changes of attitudes, behaviour intentions, subjective and social norms as well as perceived power and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1985). Determination includes many factors, which interact between themselves, it creates individual –if he is determined and fields this

determination includes, because in many different fields of life level of determination differs.

In the Theory of Planned Behaviour developed from the Theory of Reasoned Action individual's actual control over the behaviour is represented by:

1. Attitudes – how individual judge behaviour and outcomes he is interested in;
2. Behavioural intention – factors of determination, which affect individual learning to be active and create new situations;
3. Subjective norms–includes socially acceptable norms and how they affect individual;
4. Social norms – socially acceptable norms for concrete community, place;
5. Perceived power – strengths which are used for perceiving behaviour and reflecting it;
6. Perceived behavioural control – how easy individual perceives and reflects behaviour (The Theory of Planned Behavior, 2016).

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, people's behaviours are the results of behavioural intentions, 'behavioural intentions are assumed to follow reasonably from their beliefs about performing the behaviour' (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Therefore, a set of specific purposeful actions (e.g., job searching) has to be considered as an embodiment of specific (job search) intention, which in turn follows reasonably from individual's beliefs about performing job searching. I. Ajzen and M. Fishbein found three antecedents of behavioural intention: behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs. These beliefs may be irrational or inaccurate, but they provide cognitive basis for attitudes towards behaviour, subjective (i.e., perceived social) norms, and perceived behavioural control (self-efficacy). The relative weight or importance of each antecedent 'vary as a function of the particular behaviour and the population under consideration' (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Behaviour may be influenced primarily by attitudinal considerations, normative or control factors which are conceptually independent; however, these factors can correlate with each other, e.g., attitude toward behaviour can be influenced by normative beliefs. For example, if people infer that their spouses or other relevant referents would want them to perform job searching behaviour, they may form a positive attitude toward this behaviour. The Social Identity Theory developed by H. Tajfel also argues that perceived norms in relevant social contexts influence individual beliefs and behaviour (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

It was found out in the empirical part of the research that more than half of respondents (18 women and 4 men) estimate support they receive from Riga Social Service and State Employment Agency as sufficient; almost third part of respondents

(9 women and 2 men) estimate received support as not efficient; 4 respondents (3 women and 1 man) consider that they do not receive any support from Riga Social Service and State Employment Agency. Distribution differences of the perceived support from Riga Social Service and State Employment Agency among the genders were not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 0.11$ ;  $p = 0.94$ ). Statistically significant differences were not found among the age distributions in fore-mentioned subgroups (Kruskal-Wallis  $\chi^2 = 1.39$ ,  $p = 0.50$ ). It means that estimation of received support is not related to respondents' sex or age.

Estimation of received support is connected with the respondents' level of education, but distribution differences of the perceived support from Riga Social Service and State Employment Agency among the subgroups of attained educational level were not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 2.12$ ;  $p = 0.35$ ). More than a half of the respondents with higher education claim that received support is not enough, 2/3 of respondents with secondary education consider it as sufficient.

More than 2/3 of respondents (26 from 37) consider, that they often or always are searching for a job purposefully, the biggest part of them (20 respondents – 17 women and 3 men) claim that they always are searching for a job purposefully, six women are doing that often, 1/4 of the respondents (9 respondents – 7 women and 2 men) are doing it rarely. Two men claim that they are not searching for a job purposefully. Because of the small number of men participating in the survey, the differences of the purposefulness of job searching process among the genders are not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 3.11$ ;  $p = 0.07$ ), but there is a tendency that women consider themselves more purposeful in job searching process, more than 3/4 (23 from 30) women claim that they always or often are searching for a job purposefully, men consider it rarely (only 3 from 7).

Statistically significant differences were not found among the age distributions in fore-mentioned subgroups (Kruskal-Wallis  $\chi^2 = 0.98$ ,  $p = 0.80$ ). It means that assessment of job searching purposefulness is not connected with respondent's age.

Statistically significant differences were not found in the purposefulness of job searching process among the subgroups of attained educational level ( $\chi^2 = 2.54$ ;  $p = 0.28$ ). In the group of respondents with primary education 3 from 5 respondents consider that they are rarely searching for a job purposefully, 3/4 of respondents with higher education are often (2 respondents) or always (4 respondents) searching for a job purposefully. In the group of respondents (24) with secondary education 2 respondents consider that they are not searching for a job purposefully, 4 consider that they are rarely doing it, 3 – often and 15 – always. General secondary education connection

with lower job searching intense is mentioned also in the research carried out in 2006 'Regional research about unemployed psycho-social portrait' (Reģionālie pētījumi..., 2006).

Statistically important negative correlation between the period of unemployment and job searching activities (purposefulness) exists ( $r_{sp} = -0.38$ ;  $p = 0.02$ ). It means that the unemployed who are longer without a job are less active (purposeful) in job searching.

A bit less than half of the respondents (17 respondents; 14 women and 3 men) consider that they never receive direct support from their relatives and family members, 14 respondents (10 women and 4 men) consider that they rarely receive it and 6 women consider that they often receive direct support in job searching process. Differences between respondents' gender in receiving direct support are not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 2.27$ ;  $p = 0.32$ ), relatives are showing or not showing signs of direct support to men and women equally.

Received direct support in job searching is not connected with job searching purposefulness. From 17 respondents who never received direct support from relatives, almost 2/3 (11 respondents) consider that they are often (2 respondents) or always (9 respondents) searching for a job purposefully. From 20 respondents who rarely or often receive direct support from family members, 3/4 (15 respondents) are often searching for a job purposefully (4 respondents) or are always doing that (11 respondents). Two men who consider that they are not searching for a job purposefully, they rarely receive direct support from family members, which may confirm that relationships in families of long-term unemployed social benefit receivers are complicated.

Between groups of unemployed in the context of receiving direct support from family members, there is no statistically significant differences in age groups (Kruskal-Wallis  $\chi^2 = 1.91$ ;  $p = 0.38$ ), but statistically significant differences were found in the length of unemployment among the subgroups of perceived direct support in job searching (Kruskal-Wallis  $\chi^2 = 7.20$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ). Those respondents, who are longer without a job, more often receive direct support from family members in job searching process (Table 1).

Direct support from family members is closely connected with the opportunity to freely express thoughts and emotions in the family. 24 respondents (almost 2/3 from all respondents, 18 women and 6 men) consider that they are able to express their thoughts and emotions freely in the family, 18 respondents (3/4 from all respondents) consider that they are able to do so at least rarely. Between 13 respondents (12 women and 1 man), who consider that they are not able to share their thoughts and emotions in the family, only two of them consider that they rarely receive direct support from family members in job searching process. Differences between groups are statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 12.07$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

Opportunity to share thoughts and emotions in the family is not statistically significant connected with receiving condemnation about being unemployed ( $\chi^2 = 1.90$ ;  $p = 0.39$ ). Only one man considers that he often receives condemnation and is not able to share thoughts and emotions in the family; 19 women and 5 men consider that they never have received condemnation about being unemployed; 11 women and 1 man rarely receive condemnation. Eight respondents consider that they are not able to share their thoughts and emotions, but they have never received condemnation about being unemployed, eight other respondents consider

Table 1

**Duration of unemployment in subgroups of unemployed, months**

Statistical indicators* of duration of unemployment	Unemployed, who do not receive direct support from family members, n=17	Unemployed, who rarely receive direct support from family, n=14	Unemployed, who often receive direct support from family, n=6	Sample of unemployed, n=37
Median ( $M_c$ )	33.0	43.0	85.5	42.0
Min value	18	23	27	18
Max value	123	100	156	156
1st Quartile ( $Q_1$ )	25	37	63.8	32
3rd Quartile ( $Q_3$ )	50	78.3	115.5	79
Range	105	77	129	138
Interquartile Range	25.0	41.3	51.8	47.0
* Duration of unemployment does not fit into normal distribution (Shapiro-Wilk $W = 0.88$ , $p < 0.001$ ), that is why nonparametric indicators are used.				

that they sometimes do receive condemnation about being unemployed, but that does not stop them from being open and share their thoughts and emotions in the family; 5 respondents avoid being open and share their thoughts and emotions in the family, and they do receive condemnation in the family about being unemployed.

Although 24 respondents have not received condemnation about being unemployed, problems and conflicts in the family are statistically significant connected between them ( $\chi^2 = 18.65$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), 14 respondents consider that sometimes they have conflicts and problems in the family about being unemployed, but they are not connected with condemnation from family members and relatives. Two respondents consider that they receive condemnations, but it is not the reason of conflicts in the family.

A small number of respondents (5 from 37 respondents, 2 women and 3 men) consider that their status of unemployed has no impact on their families; one woman confirms that she has no family. Thirty from 36 respondents consider that their unemployment has a significant impact on their families (financial impact), that confirms that 25 women and 4 men distribution differences of the impact of respondents' social status on their families among the genders are not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 2.30$ ;  $p = 0.13$ ), 3 women and 1 man from them mention that their status of unemployed has not only financial impact on their families, but also emotional. Almost all respondents with higher education (7 from 8) mention that their families have financial problems because of them being unemployed, almost half of the respondents with primary education (2 from 5) and 4/5 of respondents (19 from 24) with secondary education. Only 1/4 of respondents with higher education (2 from 8) mention emotional impact on their families because of them being unemployed; 1/8 of respondents with secondary education (3 from 24) consider the same. Between respondents with primary education no one mentioned emotional impact on their families because of them being unemployed. Because of too small number of

respondents with higher and secondary education distribution differences of the impact of respondents' social status on emotional climate in their families among the subgroups of attained educational level are not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 1.70$ ;  $p = 0.43$ ), but there is a tendency in the results - the higher is the level of education the more critically the respondent judges about the impact on the family.

### Conclusions

- More than half of respondents (22 from 37) consider the support they are receiving from Social Service and Employment Agency as adequate; only 4 respondents (from 37) consider that they are not receiving support from Social Service and Employment Agency being clients of these institutions. That means that the services institutions are providing are adequate to the needs of long-term unemployed social benefit receivers.
- More than 2/3 of respondents consider their job searching as purposeful, but they are still staying long-term unemployed social benefit receivers, which means that they are not able to evaluate themselves and their own actions in adequate way.
- Almost half of the respondents consider that they never receive any direct support from their family members in the process of job searching. That depends on the way how respondents understand the term 'direct support', as well as it shows that relationships in the families of long-term unemployed social benefit receivers are complicated.
- The largest part of the respondents (30 from 37) considers that their status of unemployed has a huge impact on their families; most of them mentioned financial problems as most important, only few of them are speaking about emotional problems that may appear in the family. That means that long-term unemployed social benefit receivers are more focused on searching for the money source and not on the career building, improving career managing skills and working for the perspective.

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