



SOCIAL ATTITUDES AND DISCRIMINATIONS TOWARDS THE UNEMPLOYED

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ABSTRACT :

Unemployment is usually seen as an economic issue, but it is also closely connected to our society, culture and institutions. This research paper closely looks at where negative attitudes and discriminations against unemployed people come from, how they show up and what effects they have. It uses ideas from Sociology, Psychology and Intersectionality to understand these issues. By looking at research and theories, this paper explains how jobless people are often unfairly judged, how these discriminations continue and how it is even harder for people from minority or disadvantaged groups. This paper concludes by suggesting policy ideas to reduce these negative attitudes and make society more welcoming for everyone.

Keywords _ Unemployment, Unemployed, Discrimination, Attitudes, Social attitudes, Stigma, Intersectionality

Introduction

Unemployment is a critical social and economic problem affecting individuals, families and societies. It refers to the condition where people capable of and willing to work cannot find suitable jobs. Unemployment is a serious problem around the world, affecting millions of people from many different backgrounds. Its impact is not just about money; it also affects how people are seen and treated in society. Unemployed people often face negative opinions, are left out from social groups and may be treated unfairly, which makes it even harder for them to get jobs again (Oorschot, 2006 and Tyler, 2020). Although many people have started to notice these social issues, but most research and policies focus mainly on the money side, not on how Unemployment really affects people's lives. This paper tries to fill the gap by looking closely at how society views and treats the Unemployed. It examines the cultural, institutional and psychological reasons behind the stigma and considers the effects on both society and individuals. It will help us better understand Unemployment and formulate more inclusive policies.

Objectives

- To analyze the main social attitudes towards unemployed individuals.
 - To Explore the relationship between unemployment and social exclusion.
 - To assess how unemployment affects self-esteem, mental health, and social integration among affected individuals.
 - To suggest strategies and interventions to reduce stigma, promote social inclusion, and ensure equal opportunities for the unemployed
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Backgrounds

1. **Historical and cultural contexts :-** The idea that work is good and being unemployed is bad has a long history, especially in western countries. In these places people have often believed that working hard and being independent are important values (Weber, 1905). Today, many people still believe that having a job makes you a better person and being unemployed means you have done something wrong (Baumberg, 2016). The media also helps spread these beliefs by showing people without jobs as lazy and dishonest (Shildrick et al, 2012).
2. **Empirical Evidence :-** Research shows that people without jobs are often judged unfairly and treated badly. People who have gaps in their work history are much less likely to get called for job interviews, even they have the right skills (Baert et al, 2016). Most people think Unemployment is due to person's own fault and not because of bigger problems in society (Furnham, 1982 and Oorschot, 2016). These beliefs can be seen in strict welfare rules where people who get benefits are closely watched and have to meet tough requirements (Patrick, 2017). Discriminations against the Unemployed is increasing everywhere these days, which is a matter of great sadness and concern for everyone.

Theroretical frameworks

1. Stigma :- Goffman(1963) says that stigma happens when people are looked down because others think they don't fit in or have done something wrong. In societies where having a job is seen as very important, being unemployed can hurt a person's reputation. This makes it easier for others to leave them out or treat them unfairly.
2. Labeling theory:- This theory says that being seen as different or bad; does not come from what someone does but from how society reacts and labels them (*Becker, 1963*). People who don't have jobs are often called UNDESERVING which makes it okay to treat them harshly or keep them out of society.
3. Intersectionality :- This theory highlights how experiences of Unemployment are shaped by the interplay of race, gender, caste, ethnic groups and other social identities (*Crenshaw,1991*). For example, people from racial and minority groups often face extra challenges when trying to get a new job (*Pager,2003 and Kabeer,2015*). Older workers also have a harder time because people often think they cannot learn new things or use new technology as good as younger workers (*Lain,2012*).

Societal Attitudes

1. Who is responsible :- Public attitudes towards the Unemployed are heavily influenced by attributions of responsibility. If people believe someone is jobless because they are lazy or don't have skills or don't try hard enough ; then they judge them more harshly (*Furnham, 1982*). But if people think, someone lost his/her job because of bigger problems like the economy getting worse or new technology taking over, they feel more sorry for him/her (*Baumberg,2016*).
2. Media and Political talk :- These play a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions. In the UK,for example, the rise of 'Poverty porn' television program show that people living in poverty often make benefits claimants,look lazy or dishonest (*Tyler and Jensen,2015*). When politicians say that people in welfare are scroungers or burdens, it leads to tough rules and makes those people feel excluded (*Patrick,2017*).
3. Different countries – Different views:- Different countries think differently about unemployed people. In Nordic countries, where there are strong welfare system and people believe in helping each others, there is less shame around being unemployed (*Oorschot,2006*). In contrast, countries with more residual welfare system, such as the USA and the UK; display higher levels of individual blame and stigma.

Mechanisms of Discriminations

1. Institutional:- This kind of discriminations happens in workplace and government support systems. Employer often use Unemployment as a negative signal; assuming that jobless applicants are less skilled or less motivated (*Kroft et al,2013*). Welfare programmes sometimes have strict rules and punishments that make it seem like unemployed people are lazy or need to be controlled (*Watts and Fitzpatrick,2018*).
2. Interpersonal :- When someone is unemployed, people around them like friends, family or others in their community might avoid them,feel sorry for them or even treat them badly (*Shildrick et al 2012*). This kind of behaviour can make it harder for the Unemployed to get support from others and exacerbate feelings of isolation.
3. Self Stigma and Negative Thinking :- Self Stigma happens when people start to believe the negative things society says about them. This can make them feel worse about themselves, lower their confidence and reduce their level of motivation (*Corrigan and Watson,2002*). Such situations can make the people less likely to look for a job which prolongs their state of being unemployed.

Intersectionality and Compounded Disadvantages

1. Race and Ethnicity :- Racial and ethnic minorities iftefsee higher discriminations while looking for jobs. This happens because of racial bias and people's thoughts about the Unemployed (*Pager,2003*). For example, in the USA, black and Latino job seekers are less likely to get a callback for job interviews than their white counterparts even when the qualifications are identical (*Bertrand and Mullainathan,2014*).
2. Gender :- Ideas about what men and women shuld do at work and home, affect how Unemployed women are treated. People may judge unemployed women more harshly for not fulfilling traditional roles (*Kabeer,2015*). Especially, single mothers face extra stigma because they are both unemployed and may need government help (*Patrick,2017*).
3. Age and Disability :- Older workers and people with disabilities face more than one kind of discriminations, which makes it harder for them to find jobs and can intensify social exclusion (*Lain,2012 and Baumberg,2016*). Negative stereotypes about older people not being able to learn new things or work well,make it even harder for them to get hired.

Social and Psychological Disadvantages

1. Mental health issues :- Unemployment is linked to many mental health problems like feeling very sad, worried and even thinking about suicide (Paul and Moser ,2009). Feeling judged or left out by others make these problems worse, creating a loop between Unemployment and psychological distress.
2. Social Isolation and Losing Identity :- Having a job gives people money, respect and a feeling that their life has a meaning (Jahoda,1982). The loss of work can lead to a social withdrawal, diminished self worth and a crisis of identity. Losing connections with others make them feel even more lonely and make it harder to get helped.
3. Coping Strategies:- Unemployed individual employ a range of coping strategies to manage stigma, including impression management, withdrawal from social situations and seek support from peers with similar experiences (Tyler, 2020). But these always don't fully fix the feelings of social exclusion.

Strategies for Effective Interventions

1. Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) :- ALMP are programs like job training, help finding jobs and wage support. These can help people without jobs get back to work and show that they are also employable; which can reduce the negative attitudes towards them (Bonoli,2010). However, the effectiveness of ALMPs depend on their design and implementation .If they are too strict, they can make stigma worse (Watts and Fitzpatrick,2018).
2. Anti-Stigma Campaigns :- Public education Campaigns that challenge stereotypes and highlights the structural cause of Unemployment can shift societal attitudes and reduce discriminations (Baumberg,2016). Media stories that show unemployed people are skilled and helpful are particularly effective.
3. Inclusive Welfare Policies :- Welfare Policies which emphasize on dignity, autonomy and social inclusion rather than conditionality and surveillance are essential for mitigating stigma (Patrick,2017). Universal Basic Income (UBI) and unconditional cash transfer are examples of policies that give people money to help them, without judging whether they deserve it or not.
4. Community Based Support :- Community organizations and peer support groups can provide vital social and emotional resources for the Unemployed, fostering resilience and countering isolation (Shildrick et al,2012). It's also important to combine mental health services with job support to help people deal with the effects of being unemployed.

Summary

While this research paper offers a comprehensive interdisciplinary overview of social attitudes and discriminations towards the unemployed, it would benefit from recent empirical and theoretical advances. For example, although this paper discusses Goffman's findings on stigma, who has conceptualized stigma as a 'Spoiled Identity', few other scholars said that the long term unemployed navigate stigma through strategies such as 'Getting Stuck', 'Getting by' and 'getting organised' to internalise negative social labeling (Creed et al 2014). Collective actions and weapons of the weak are also important in challenging systemic power relations that perpetuate Unemployment stigma (Scott, 1985). Many scholars have developed scales for stigma consciousness and provided evidence for persistent stigma effects in labour market outcomes (Biewen and Steffes,2010). Furthermore, the intersectional analysis shows that Black Americans face intensified Unemployment stigma due to radicalised stereotypes and must adapt their impression management strategies accordingly (Du Bois Review,2024). Finally the policy recommendations are broad and would be strengthened by referencing comparative evidence from different welfare regimes and by considering the unique challenges faced by youth and marginalized communities in the current global labour market.

Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that, Unemployment is a global issue. People often look down on those who don't have jobs because of long standing beliefs and unfair systems in society. This makes life even harder for the Unemployed people, not just with money but also with their feelings and relationships. To remove the negative views about the Unemployed and Unemployment, we need to modify laws, teach the public and support people in our communities. By recognising the dignity and potential of all individuals; regardless of their Unemployment status, society can foster greater inclusion, resilience and social cohesion.

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