

# WELL-BEING OF YOUTH: IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Anita Sharma

Psychology Department, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla-05

[anitahpu@gmail.com](mailto:anitahpu@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

**Objectives.** The main objective of the present study was to examine and compare the level of well-being of employed youth with unemployed youth in both the genders.

**Methods.** A 2 X 2 Factorial design was used to study the role of unemployment in Well-being. The subjects were divided into two sub groups of employment i.e. employed (n=200) and un-employed (n=200), these subjects were further divided into two sub-groups based on genders, males (n=100) and females (n=100) included in equal number. A sample of 400 subjects (200 males and 200 females) was drawn randomly from Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh, aged between 21 to 45 years with mean age 38.5.

**Results.** Employed youth have reported significantly higher level of well-being than un-employed youth irrespective of the gender.

**Conclusion.** There is a detrimental impact of unemployment on the wellbeing of youth.

## Introduction

Unemployment is recognized as one of the most challenging social problems currently facing World. In the last two decades and more recently with the global recession high levels of unemployment have become an established feature of the World social and economic landscape, with young people aged 15 to 24 years among those hardest hit by unemployment.

Unemployment puts health at risk, and the risk is higher in regions where unemployment is widespread. The effects of unemployment on health and well-being have been studied in detail since the rise of unemployment in the late 1970s. This has resulted in a substantial body of research concerning the health effects of unemployment- research that shows a strong association between unemployment and ill health. There have been specific studies on the effects of unemployment on women, adult men, but the interest has focused on the effects on unemployment and young people given that employment plays a pivotal role in helping young people to negotiate the transitional period between the child and adulthood, as it is a key factor in healthy identity development (Erikson, 1968).

Population of our country (India) is increasing day by day. It is the second highest population country in the world. In 2011, we have over 1.25 billion people in our country (India) and so is the increasing unemployment rate. Today, we

have both educated and uneducated unemployed people. We have skilled and unskilled unemployed youths both in the urban and the rural areas. Even degree holders are unemployed. The main cause of unemployment is the growing population. Other factors are Recessions, Inflation, corruption, disability, and nepotism.

For most individuals, basic life requirements are met through employment. However, work does much more than supplies the means for meeting physical needs; it also can satisfy creative urges, promote self-esteem, and provide an avenue for achievement and self-realization. Conversely, unemployment might be expected to increase anxiety and depression, lead to lower self-esteem, and produce adverse physical health consequences, particularly when efforts to locate work are met with failure over a long period of time.

Unemployment is associated with a marked decline in self-esteem. Most literature in the field refers either to loss of self-esteem, or to damaged ego, loss of self worth, loss of self-respect, loss of self confidence, feeling inferior, etc., as almost taken for granted in the context of unemployment (Hartley, 1980)

The relationship between unemployment and mental well-being is an issue that has to be thoroughly researched. The great body of sociological and psychological research dedicated to the subject reflects the central position of employment in Western society, and the importance

of unemployment as one of the most serious problems that can affect an individual during the life course. Social psychological interest in unemployment dates back to the classic unemployment research done during, or in the wake of, the inter-war depression. This research graphically showed people's negative psychological reactions to the experience of unemployment (Bakke 1933, Lazarsfeld and Eisenberg 1938, Jahoda *et al.* 1971). Although some more recent research findings have contested this negative impact on the grounds of selection effects, where mental well-being affects job chances (Björklund 1985, Schaufeli and Van Yperen 1992, Claussen *et al.* 1993), the bulk of the research has confirmed the negative psychological impact of unemployment found in the classical studies (although acknowledging the existence of selection effects into and out of unemployment). The relationship between unemployment and low mental well-being has been revealed in a number of large-scale longitudinal studies done in different national settings. In a Scandinavian setting, studies of the development of mental well-being in initially unemployed samples have shown the psychologically beneficial effects of re-employment in Sweden (Korpi 1997) and in Finland (Lahelma 1992). In Norway, the negative impact of unemployment has been shown by studying a nationally representative panel of youths (Hammer, 1993). In Denmark, Iversen and Sabroe (1988), using a sample originally including both unemployed and employed, have shown that transitions both into and out of employment are related to changes in psychological well-being. On the international scene, several British, American and German panel studies confirm the negative effects of unemployment on mental well-being and the positive effects of re-employment (Warr and Jackson 1983, Frese and Mohr 1987, Kessler *et al.* 1989, Patterson 1997).

Simply defining unemployment as a situation in which the psychosocial functions of employment are lacking leaves us without a satisfactory description of the real meaning of unemployment. The status of unemployment might actually bring with it a life situation with its own unique characteristics. Unemployment is, for instance, a status that for all intents and purposes is supposed to be a temporary period in the life course. A person is only supposed to be unemployed between school and the first job, or between two jobs. At the same time, however, unemployment is usually open ended in the sense that it is not known when or even if there will be an exit. Unemployment can become a somewhat permanent 'temporary' situation full of uncertainty about the

future. This insecurity is at the core of the experience of being unemployed, and has – in the form of expectations – been shown to be important for mental well-being among the unemployed. If unemployed people expect their job search to be successful, they have higher mental well-being, and if they have low expectations, they show lower mental well-being (Feather 1992, Baik *et al.* 1989). Fryer and McKenna (1987) describe similar findings from their study comparing workers who were temporarily laid off to those who were permanently laid off. Although both groups nominally shared the same unemployment situation, the temporarily laid off group fared much better. It appeared as if the predictability of the situation – knowing the unemployment period was only temporary – was of some comfort to the temporarily laid off group.

The negative effects of unemployment are understood as a consequence of decreased control over the life-situation. The unemployment situation imposes restrictions on individuals' ability to exercise agency, which results in a lowering of mental well-being (Fryer and Payne 1984, Fryer 1986).

The economic strain of unemployment also reduces the individual's control over the life situation. Economic problems diminish short-term control of the life situation; it becomes difficult to uphold the desired standard of living. This, in turn, reduces long-term control of the life course, as financial problems make planning impossible.

One of the most studied health effects of unemployment is the lower level of psychological well-being among the unemployed (Bartley M. 1994, Janlert U, 1997, Dooley D, Fielding J, Levi L, 1996). However, despite the high prevalence of unemployment and mental health disorders among women, the different position of men and women in the labor market, and gender differences in the social determinants of mental health (Piccinelli M, Wilkinson G. 2000, Qin P, Agerbo E, Westgaard-Nielsen N, Eriksson T, Mortensen PB. 2000, Doyal L, 2000) potential gender differences in reactions to unemployment have rarely been addressed. Indeed, many studies focusing on unemployment have included only men (Bartley M, Owen C., 1973, Leino-Arjas P, Liira J, Mutanen P, Malmivaara A, Martikainen E, 1999 ).

The financial strain of unemployment can cause poor mental health, and studies have reported the beneficial effects of unemployment compensation in such contexts (Rodríguez E, Lasch K, Mead JP, 1997). However, unemployment can also be associated with poor mental health as a result of the absence of nonfinancial benefits provided by one's job, such as social status, self-esteem, physical and

mental activity, and use of one's skills (Bartley M., 1994).

The main objective of the present study was to examine and compare the level of well-being of employed youth and un-employed youth in both the genders.

## METHODOLOGY:

### Selection of Sample:

The present study has been conducted on employed and un-employed youth to see their scores on Well-being. A sample of 400 subjects (200 males and 200 females) was drawn randomly from Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh.

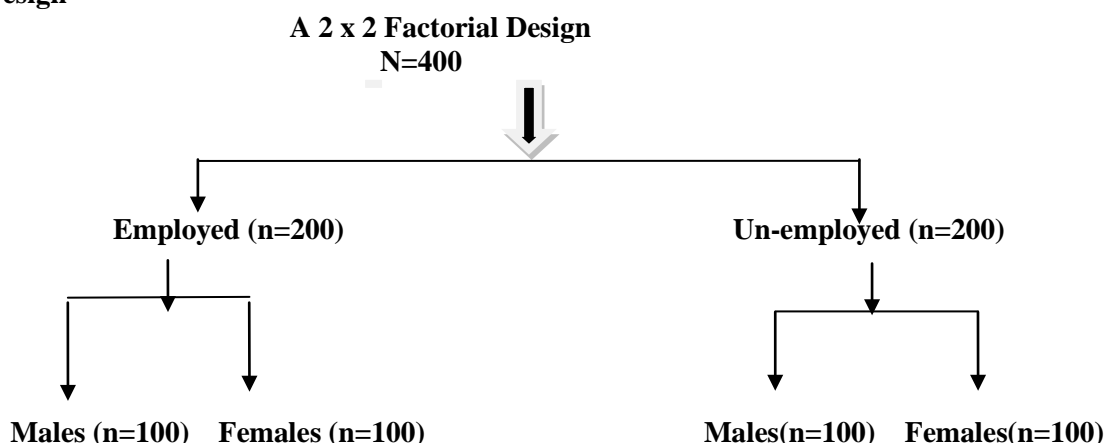
The subjects were taken of the age group 21 to 35 years with mean age 32.5. First of all, they were given PGI General Well-being Measure. Instructions written on the top of the questionnaire were read clearly. They were told to start with the

inventory after giving the instructions. Administration time rarely exceeded 30 minutes. PGI General Well-being Questionnaire was administered to all the 400 subjects individually in a face to face situation. Thus, the design came out to be having the four groups the layout of which i.e. 2x2 factorial design.

### Design of the Study

A factorial design of 2X2 ANNOVA was employed in the present study. The subjects were divided into two sub groups of employment i.e. employed (n=200) and un-employed (n=200), these subjects were also divided into two sub-groups based on genders males (n=100) and females (n=100) were included in equal number, This made 4 conditions, in each condition 100 subjects were used, there by yielding a total sample of 400 subjects.

### Design



### Tools Used and their Description

**1. P.G.I. General Well-Being Measure (The Hindi Version) (Verma & Verma, 1989):** PGI General Well-being Scale developed by Verma & Verma (1989) was used to measure the well-being. It has 20 items and the respondents are required to tick the statements which describe them. The scoring was done by counting the number of ticks. Its reliability was found to be 0.98 by KuderRichardson formula and test-retest reliability was 0.91 for English version and 0.86 for Hindi version. Construct validity by finding correlation between the scores on the scale and Bradbur Well-being scale has been reported to be .53 which is significant at .01 level (Verma, Mahajan & Verma, 1989).

### Instructions

How do you feel these days (past one month)? Kindly tick (✓) the items applicable to you.

### Scoring

Numbers of ticks (✓) are counted and constitute the Well-being score of that particular individual at that time.

### PROCEDURE:

The instrument (PGI General Well-being Measure) was administered to all the 400 subjects individually in face to face situations. Instructions given in the respective manual were followed while administering and scoring the test.

### RESULTS

**TABLE-1 SUMMARY OF ANOVA ON PGI GENERAL WELL BEING**

SOURCE OF VARIANCE	SUM OF SQUARES	df	MEAN OF SQUARES	F-RATIO	SIG.
GROUPS(A)	2970.250	1	2970.250	253.620	.01**
GENDER(B)	5.290	1	5.290	.452	N.S.
GROUPS*GENDER(A*B)	.490	1	.490	.042	N.S.
ERROR	4637.720	396	11.711		
TOTAL	7613.750	399			

**Interpretation****Main Effects**

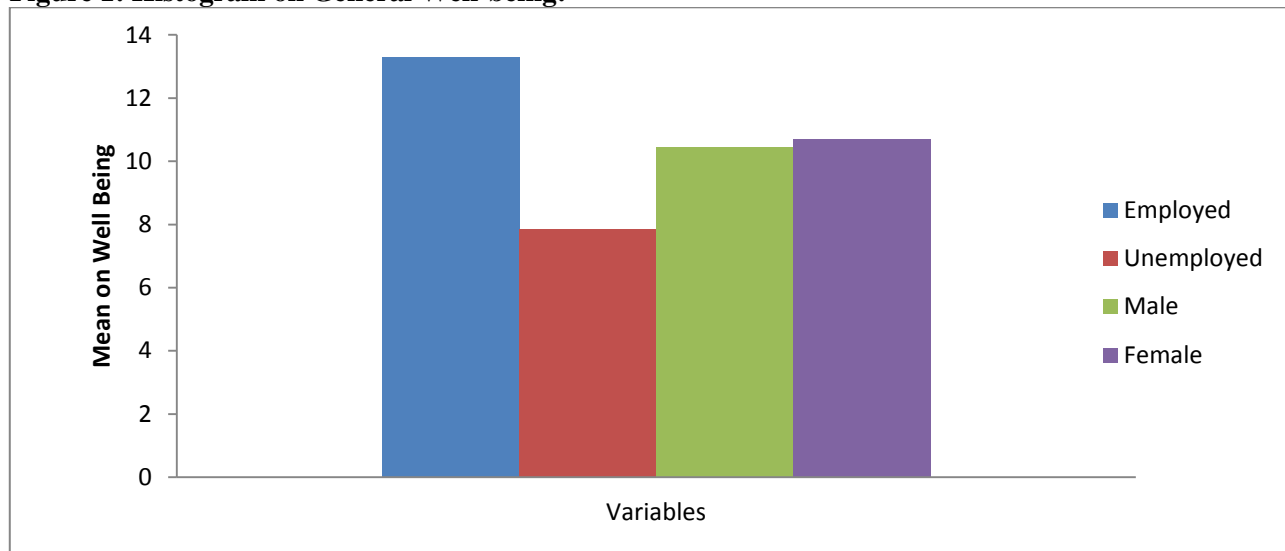
A). Analysis of variance has yielded a significant F-ratio of 253.620\*\* $p < .01$  (Table 1) for the main effects of Group. This indicates those employed people are significantly higher on the variable of general well-being to that of unemployed, means

being 13.3 vs. 7.88 (for means see table-2 along with histogram, figure 1).

B). The main effect of Gender is not significant on the level of general well-being with non significant F-ratio of .452. This reveals that males and females do not differ significantly on general well-being with means being 10.46 vs. 10.69 (for means see table-2 along with histogram, figure 1).

**TABLE 2: GENERAL MEANS TABLE FOR GROUPS AND GENDER ON PGI.GWBM.**

VARIABLES	GROUPS		GENDER	
	EMPLOYED	UN-EMPLOYED	MALES	FEMALES
PGI G.W.B.M	13.3	7.85	10.46	10.69

**Figure 1: Histogram on General Well-being:****Interpretation:**

From the comparison of means on General well-being, Table 2 reveals that the employed youth have scored significantly higher as compared to unemployed with means being 13.3 vs. 7.85 respectively. With respect to Gender on General

Well-being, the scores reveal that females are slightly higher as compared to males with means being 10.69 vs. 10.46 respectively but not significant.

**Interaction Effect**

The two factor interaction effect has been found to be insignificant on the variable of general well-being, which means that there is no interaction among Groups and Gender on the variable of general well-being.

## DISCUSSION

Our main objective of the present study was to examine the impact of unemployment on the well-being of the youth. A 2 X 2 Factorial design was used to study the role of unemployment in Well-being. The subjects were divided into two sub groups of employment i.e. employed (n=200) and un-employed (n=200), these subjects were further divided into two sub-groups based on genders, males (n=100) and females (n=100) included in equal number. This made 4 conditions, in each condition 100 subjects were used, thereby yielding a total sample of 400 subjects. The instrument (PGI General Well-being measure Questionnaire) was administered to all the 400 subjects individually. Prior to administration of instrument, appropriate rapport was established. Standard instructions given in the respective manual were followed while administering and scoring the test.

The present discussion would follow the framework in which the present problem was envisaged in the form of hypotheses. Each salient feature would be unfolded one by one. The various statistical techniques were used for interpretations which are as follows:

A. Descriptive analysis (Comparative Means Analysis for the variable viz. General well-being.

B. ANOVA (Analysis of variance for General Well-Being).

The discussion has been done only for significant findings in the following manner:

### Group and General Well-Being

#### Interpretation

An inspection of Table-1 reveals that on General Well-Being, Unemployed (Youth) group is scoring low as compared to employed group with means being 7.85 vs. 13.3 (see table 2) with significant F-ratio of 253.620,  $p < .01$  (see table-1) which indicates the significant impact of unemployment on general well-being. The reason being that employed people generally feel contented, are happy, and satisfied with life's expectations. They have the sense of achievement (Warr and Jackson, 1983). Moreover, employed people are generally sound economically, can cater to their daily needs and to the contrary,

unemployment reduces life satisfaction and overall general well-being (Knabe et al., 2010 and Graham, 2010). Individual's well-being depends on many things including income, labour market studies, job characteristics, health, leisure, family, social relationships, security etc. But income plays the vital role. Among the working-age population, one of the most damaging individual experiences is unemployment which affects the overall general well-being (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). Researchers have found a wide variety of psychological (e.g., hostility, depression, frustration, anger, guilt, worry, anxiety psychiatric disorders, suicide, and changes in emotional state) and physical (e.g. Perceived health, cardiovascular, immunological, gastrointestinal, biochemical and physical disease) health problems in their study the after effects of unemployment (DeFrank & Ivancevich, 1986 and Hanisch, 1999). Thus, the unemployed group (youth) will show poor general well-being to that of employed youth or vice versa have been proved.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, the results give a clear picture that unemployed youth experience more anxiety, depression, dissatisfaction with one's present life, strain, negative self-esteem, hopelessness regarding the future and other negative emotional states like inadequacy and feelings of worthlessness that further has a devastating impact on their physical health due to their negligent attitude and overall stress level. This further affects their overall general well-being meaning thereby that unemployment puts a financial strain that causes a poor mental health as basic life requirements are not met and produces adverse physical and mental health consequences thus affecting the level of well-being adversely.

In nutshell, results from the study strongly suggest that unemployment has an adverse effect on psychological function, with the unemployed becoming more anxious, depressed and concerned with bodily symptoms. Unemployment leads to frustration, aggression, regression and finally to resignation from life.

## REFERENCES

- Baik, K., Hosseini, M. and Priesmeyer, H.R. (1989). Correlates of Psychological Distress in involuntary job loss, psychological reports, 65, 1227-33.
- Bakke, E. (1933). *The unemployed man*, London: Nisbet.
- Bartley, M. (1994). Unemployment and ill health: understanding the relationship. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 48, 333-337.
- Bartley, M., & Owen, C. (1996). Relation between socioeconomic status, employment and health during

- economic change, 1973–93. *British Journal of Medicine*, 313, 445–449.
- Björklund, A. (1985). Unemployment and mental health: some evidence from panel data. *Journal of Human Resources*, 20, 469–83.
- Claussen, B., Bjørndal, A., & Hjort, P. F. (1993). Health and re-employment in a two year follow up of long term unemployed. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 47, 14–18.
- DeFrank, R. S., & Ivancevich, J. M. (1986). Job loss: An individual level review and model. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 28, 1–20.
- Dooley, D., Fielding, J., & Levi, L. (1996). Health and unemployment. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 17, 449–465.
- Doyal, L. (2001). Sex, gender, and health: the need for a new approach. *British Journal of Medicine*, 323, 1061–1063.
- Feather, N.T. (1992). Expectancy-value theory and unemployment effects. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 65, 315–30.
- Frese, M. & Mohr, G. (1987). Prolonged unemployment and depression in older workers: a longitudinal study of intervening variables. *Social Science and Medicine*, 25, 173–178.
- Frey & Stutzer (2002). How the economy and institutions affect human well-being. United Kingdom: Princeton University Press.
- Fryer, D. & McKenna, S. (1987). The laying off of hands – Unemployment and the Experience of Time. In S. Fineman (ed.), *Unemployment – personal and social consequences*, London: Tavistock Publications.
- Fryer, D. (1986). Employment deprivation and personal agency during unemployment – A critical discussion of Jahoda's Explanation of the Psychological effects of unemployment. *Social Behaviour*, 1, 3–23.
- Fryer, D. and Payne, R. (1984). Proactive behaviour in unemployment: Findings and implications. *Leisure Studies*, 3, 273–95.
- Hammer, T. (1993). Unemployment and mental health among young people: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Adolescence*, 16, 407–20.
- Hanisch, K. A. (1999). Job loss and unemployment research from 1994 to 1998: A review and recommendations for research and intervention. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 55, 188–220.
- Hartley, J. (1980). The impact of unemployment upon the self-esteem of managers *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 53, 147–155.
- Iversen, L., & Sabroe, S. (1988). Psychological well-being among unemployed and employed people after a company closedown A longitudinal study. *Journal of Social Issues*, 44, 141–152.
- Janlert, U. (1997). Unemployment as a disease and diseases of the unemployed. *Scandinavian Journal Work Environment and Health*, 23(suppl. 3), 79–83.
- Kessler, R.C., House, J.S., & Turner, B.J. (1989). Unemployment, re-employment, and emotional functioning in a community sample. *American Sociological Review*, 54, 648–57.
- Knabe, Andreas, Steffen, R., Ronnie, S., & Joachim, W. (2010). Dissatisfied with Life but Having a Good Day: Time-use and Wellbeing of the Unemployed, *Economic Journal*, 120(547), 867–889.
- Korpi, T. (1997). Is utility related to employment status? employment, unemployment, labor market policies and subjective well-being among Swedish youth. *Labour Economics*, 4, 125–47.
- Lahelma, E. (1992). Unemployment and mental well-being: Elaboration of the relationship. *International Journal of Health Services*, 22, 261–274.
- Leino-Arjas, P., Liira, J., Mutanen, P., Malmivaara, A., Martikainen, E. (1999). Predictors and consequences of unemployment among construction workers: prospective cohort study. *British Medical Journal*, 319, 600–605.
- Patterson, M. (1997). Long-Term Unemployment amongst adolescents: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Adolescence*, 20, 261–80.
- Piccinelli, M., & Wilkinson, G. (2000). Gender differences in depression. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 177, 486–492.
- Qin, P., Agerbo, E., Westergaard-Nielsen, N., Eriksson, T., & Mortensen, P.B. (2000). Gender differences in risk factors for suicide in Denmark. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 177, 546–550.
- Rodríguez, E., Lasch, K., & Mead, J.P. (1997). The potential role of unemployment benefits in shaping the mental health impact of unemployment. *International Journal of Health Survey*, 27, 601–623.
- Schaufeli, W.B. and Van Yperen, N.W. (1992). Unemployment and psychological distress among graduates: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology*, 65, 291–305.
- Verma, A., Mahajan, A., and Verma, S.K., 1989. A correlational study of two well-being scales. *Journal of Personality and Clinical Studies*, 5, pp. 93–95.
- Warr & Jackson (1983). Unemployment and psychological ill-health: the moderating role of duration and age. *Psychological Medicine*, 14, 605–614.