

Unemployment

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Unemployment is a difficulty that millions of Americans face on a yearly basis. Unemployment is a multifaceted concern that impacts the individual, including their financial security, their family, and the larger community systems. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported the unemployment rate at 4.1% in 2017, which is the lowest unemployment rate since 2000. Based on the BLS's 2016 statistics, African Americans suffer with the highest unemployment rates, followed by Hispanics, Whites, and lastly, Asians. However, statistics only tell part of the story. According to the BLS, unemployment is classified as "people who are jobless, are actively seeking work within the last four weeks, and are currently available to take a job" (BLS, 2015). What about the individuals who have *given up*, those who are currently unable to take a job, or those who are not captured by the BLS research? These individuals are not included in the reported statistics, making the true unemployment rate is unknown.

Causes and Impacts of Unemployment

Causes of unemployment can be attributed to many factors, such as the economic climate, personal health issues, or the implementation of government policies. There are three different types of unemployment that individuals may face. Frictional unemployment occurs

when an employee voluntarily quits their job and can find another position within a short period of time. This usually occurs when the person feels unfulfilled by their position. Structural unemployment occurs when there are advances in technology and outsourcing of jobs. This can potentially leave an individual unemployed against their will. Cyclical unemployment occurs when there are more applicants than jobs available on the market (Dubina, 2017).

Unemployment has historically shown to have significant effects on individuals, their families, and the community at large. Research on the causal relationships between unemployment, physical illness and mental health issues is ubiquitous. Unemployed workers were shown to be twice as more likely to feel psychological distress than their employed counterparts (Paul & Moser, 2009). This correlation could come from a range of social and psychological factors that individuals face when they are shifted from the workforce to an unemployed state. According to Johada's (1981) latent deprivation model, unemployment causes a disruption in an individual's time structure, social contact, feelings of collective purpose, status, and overall activity.

Conflict ensues within familial relationships as financial hardship increases. In particular, financial hardships from unemployment cause not only spousal tension, but also a shift in outcomes for children. Furthermore, unemployed individuals report markedly lower marital and family satisfaction than those with employment (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005).

Unemployment Resources

There are various agencies and programs that can assist unemployed individuals with their job search. Two major online resources available to individuals are the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (OOH) and the *Occupational Information Network* (O*NET), which are

maintained by the U.S. Department of Labor. OOH is a free database that contains various occupation descriptions to help users find careers that match their skillsets. Its design allows for navigation based on salary, education, training, and long-term outlook. The OOH search filtration process is efficient in allowing users to view jobs in which they qualify.

O*NET is a free database containing various descriptions of occupations in the United States. This database has become a fundamental resource for both increasing awareness about job opportunities and requirements needed for each career path. These tools are useful for those that are unemployed and need guidance on various job prospects.

Unemployment is an issue that impacts multiple aspects of an individual's wellbeing. Mental health professionals should evaluate individuals for unemployment-related issues as well as be aware of the resources available to those attempting to be in the workforce in the hopes of addressing underlying sources of psychological distress.

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