

THE BIO-PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF UNEMPLOYMENT FOR RURAL YOUNG WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA: REVELATIONS FROM CASSEL, NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

The reality of unemployment in South Africa has become a buzz word for the social work profession in tandem with agendas for political parties in their manifestos in the country. For the doubters of political interpretations, the problem seems to have superficial political agendas yet professional analysts have also lamented to its dire bio-psychosocial consequences for the rural young women in South Africa. This paper exposes the bio-psychosocial implications of unemployment for the young women in Cassel in the Northern Cape Province in South Africa. The study employed a qualitative approach which purposely selected eleven unemployed young women between the ages of fifteen and thirty five to provide data saturation point and reveal the bio-psychosocial consequences of unemployment. Thematic data analysis was used which provided significant emergent themes for the study. The findings were that unemployed rural young women are prone to a host of bio-psychosocial problems including alcohol and drug addiction, commercial sex work and associated diseases, family disputes and resentment, homelessness and suicidal thoughts. Deliberate social work interventions have been found to be monumentally lacking yet overtly needed. The paper recommends various social work intervention strategies to help ameliorate the eminent bio-psychosocial problems facing young women in the rural areas of the North West Province.

Keywords: Unemployment, youths, Cassel, bio-psychosocial, implications.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is considered to be one of the most stressful life events a person can experience, because of the loss of substantial material and psychological resources that are provided by employment (Willemse, 2015: 5). Unemployed youth in this paper refers to all working-age youth people who are not employed but available to work and actively seek employment (Department of Women, 2015). The National Youth Commission Act (1996) and the National Youth Development Policy Framework (2002), share that a youth is someone within the age group of 14 to 35 years in South Africa (National Youth Development Agency, 2015). Whilst this general approach to defining “youth” is accepted, in this paper, “youth” refers to an individual who is between the ages of 15 to 35 and can legally be employed in South Africa (Children’s Institute, 2011).

In most countries such as the United States of America, New Zealand, Spain and Taiwan youth unemployment has reached crisis levels (de Witte, Rothmann & Jackson, 2012). In South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa evidence suggests that the impact of youth unemployment interventions are meagre especially that these regions have mainly weaker institutions to support needed interventions (Independent Evaluation Group, The World Bank Group, 2012). The problem of youth unemployment in South Africa has been unacceptably continuing to sour over the past years with the South African government being bombarded

with the blame for structural and political meagre responses (Cloete, 2015). According to the report released by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) (2016) the unemployment rate increased between quarter 4 for 2015 and quarter 1 for 2016. The expanded unemployment rate increased by 2, 5 % points to 36, 3 %. The Statistics South Africa (2016) report pointed out that between January and March in 2016 the expanded unemployment rate for Northern Cape Province was 38,7% and the province experienced the highest rate of youth unemployment.

The composition of the population of the Northern Cape Province is skewed towards females as they form the majority of the population with 51% outweighing males with 49% (Research and Development, Department of Economic Development and Tourism, 2014). The youth dominate the population in Province with 54% of the working age group. These are predominantly Black females, vulnerable and not working (De Lannoy & Mudiriza, 2019).

In 2018, an astounding figure of young people between the ages of 15 to 29 who were described as “Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)” in South Africa stood at 36.5% in the second quarter of 2018, totalling to approximately 5.6 million youth (De Lannoy & Mudiriza, 2018). In the first quarter of 2019, the number of employed persons decreased by 237 000 persons, (Stats SA, 2019), indicating that unemployment continues unabated. De Lannoy, Graham, Patel and Leibbrandt (2018) produced a critical analyses of “What Drives Youth Unemployment and What Interventions Help?” and found that the government of South Africa had put deliberate effort on pieces of legislation that shifted focus from time to time, changed objectives, lacked capacity and implementation with weak institutions.

Young women in South Africa are adversely affected by unemployment with research lens less focused on gender to provide effective analysis. The bio-psychosocial consequences of unemployment among the young women have been found to be lacking access to food, shelter, physical integrity, excessive drug and alcohol consumption, increased risk of getting a mental diagnosis, lowered happiness and self-esteem, doubting of own potential, lowered respect and recognition, poor adherence to family and community norms and culture, (De Witte et al, 2012; Cloete, 2015; Thern, de Munter, Hemmingsson & Rasmussen, 2017; Huegaerts, Spruyt, Vanroelen, 2018).

Strong evidence suggests that unemployment affects mainly Black Africans and female youth mostly, and is highest for those living in rural areas where amenities lack coupled with lower social expectations on young women (De Lannoy, et al. 2018). This prompted the need for this study conducted in Cassel community under Joe Morolong local municipal in John Taolo Gaetsewe District in Northern Cape Province. This is a rural community located between Kuruman and Vryburg town where the rate of unemployment is high and hope for employment lies mainly on the Department of Public Works Expanded Programme which has been criticised for failing to deliver on its job creation mandate.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Constructivist theory

In the views of Teater (2014) social constructivism centres on the premise that individual’s realities are continually transmogrifying and adapting to their experiences which they come across in their lives. Central to the discussion is the fact that people attach different meanings to their socioeconomic world and its meaning within a given social and geographical context. In the context of this paper, young women in Cassel understand unemployment differently and adaptation also differently experienced. Social Constructionists assert that humans produce knowledge and meaning in relation to their experiences and their ideas (Mogashoa, 2014). It

is the line of thought in this paper that different experiences of unemployment have landed young women in Cassel to different adaptation and reaction mechanisms that have a bearing in their bio-psychosocial wellbeing.

Ecological perspective

Ecological perspective holds that people exist within strata of relationships which influence and can also be influenced by the individuals (Bolger & Walker, 2018). The perspective focuses on the person-in- environment and the continual interactions and transaction between persons, families, groups and or communities and their environments (Teater, 2014). The environment plays a role in shaping young women lives depending on whether it provides opportunities needed for meaningful advancement in life. From the ecological perspective, the environment should provide needed resources for young women to use for life needs and career advancement. Failure of the environment to provide such opportunities leads to poor person-in-the environment fit which leads to strain and negatively affect their bio-psychosocial health. The ecological perspective holds that there is a continuous struggle among people to maintain a good person: environment fit through life course (Teater, 2014). Once that has been achieved, the person is said to be healthy and having assumed a good level of adaptedness with a general feeling having strength, resources and capacity to grow and to develop.

A poor level of adaptedness would involve individuals feeling that the environment does not provide necessary sources nor do they feel as if they have strengths, resources and the capacity to grow and develop. Individuals at this moment may feel negatively towards their environment because the resources are unavailable, inaccessible or non-existent. Weyers (2011) adds that a sustaining environment comprises of a wide range of institutionalised and other less intimate services, resources and opportunities that can sustain, enhance, aid or damage a person's wellbeing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study made use of qualitative approach in order to explore the psycho-social effects of unemployment among the youth of Cassel. As argued by Braun and Clarke (2013 p.10), qualitative research has the advantage of providing “rich, exciting and challenging” information and it “captures the complexity, mess and contradiction that characterises the real world yet allowing the researcher to make sense of the patterns of meaning.” In the views of Tracy (2013 p. 4) “qualitative research is excellent for studying contexts you are personally curious about but never before had a valid reason for entering, it can uncover salient issues that can later be studied using more structured methods”. Qualitative approach is “informative and detailed because it offers thick description , and it allows entry to subjective social constructions of people, it presents the information gathered verbally in a detailed and complete form , not in numbers or formulae” (Sarantakos 2013p. 345). Qualitative research enabled the researcher to get significant and elaborate descriptions and interpretations of what unemployed young women shared. It was deemed suitable for this study because it enabled data to be collected in the form of lived experiences of unemployed young women. This method is reliable and conforms to social constructivism to which this study committed itself.

The study made use of phenomenological research design and consistent with qualitative research approach, (Maree, 2015), as it captures the human experience in descriptive context and texts to enable the researcher to comprehend lived experiences of unemployed young women in Cassel.

Population of the study

Earl (2014 p.119) describe the population for a study “as that group (usually of people) about whom the researcher want to draw conclusions”. The population had specific characteristics that the study focused on (Nicholas, 2010). The population characteristics, (Nicholas, 2010), for the study was made up of all the female youths and the leadership of the community of Cassel. The young women were between the ages of 15 and 35 which is the legal age for working in South Africa (Children’s Institute, 2011).

Sampling method

The sampling method adopted in this study was non-probability purposive sampling to choose unemployed young women from Cassel in the Northern Cape Province (Tracy, 2013). This sampling method ensured that only unemployed young women would participate in this study as was the intention of the research. This sampling method is supported by Maree (2015) and Earl, (2014) that the sampling method is used with a specific purpose, which in this case was to engage only young women who were unemployed as participants of the study. Young unemployed women had lived experiences of how it is to be unemployed and provided first-hand information (Grey, 2017).

Data collection method

The study made use of face-to-face semi-structured, (Hennink, Hunter & Baily, 2011), interviews to collect data from the participants so that participants may be able to tell their experiences of being unemployed in detail (D’Cruz & Jones, 2014; Whittaker, 2012). The basis for using face-to-face interviews was that the researcher sought to find first-hand information. Face-to-face interviews also helped in observing non-verbal cues to help in probing for more information during the interviews. An interview schedule was used for one-on-one individual interviews with young unemployed women. During data collection the researcher translated some of the questions to Setswana language (local and mother language of the participants) to ensure that there were no communication breakdown between the researcher and the participants during the data collection process. Their mother language created clarity on questions asked and enabled the collection of more significant information. A recorder was used after obtaining consent from the participants so that important information could not be missed during the interviews with the participants.

Data analysis

In this study, thematic data analysis method was employed. In views of Whittaker (2012 p. 96) thematic data analysis involves “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) in data”. During verbatim transcription of the interviews, the researcher listening to the audio-recorded interviews of the participants to make meaning of their stories. This then lead to the processes of data reduction, and to filtering the information (Hennink, et al, 2011). The researcher then described the data textually as obtained from the participants to create meaning. The data obtained were then compared for observation of patterns in the experiences shared by participants with the researcher (Hennink, et al, 2011). Lastly, the emergent themes were categorised as they emerged from the data extracts.

Ethical considerations

Consistent with research is the observation of ethics in the study. Creswell as cited in de Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont (2012 p.115) maintains that “the researcher has an ethical obligation to protect the participants within all possible reasonable limits from any form of physical discomfort that may emerge from the research project”.

The researcher got ethical clearance, gained access from the gate keepers (community leaders), and sought signed adult informed consent from the young women in Cassel who become participants in the study. As requirements of research, the researcher kept the information gained in the study confidential and private. This was done by using numerals instead of real names of the young unemployed women who become part of the study. The participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and if they felt uncomfortable, they could withdraw from participating in the study without any penalty. The researcher avoided deception of participants by providing all the needed information to the participants (Hardwick & Worsely, 2011).

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study represents information provided by the 11 unemployed young women in Cassel. These participants provided first-hand information and experience about unemployment.

Biographical information of the young women

The biographical information of the unemployed young women who participated in the study provided summarised information about the participants. It provided a biographical picture to give proper understanding of the young women who were participants in the study. The information is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Biographical Information Of Unemployed Women

Participant	Age	Marital status	Highest qualification	Religion	Whom do they stay with	Unemployment Duration
1	25	Single	Matric	Christianity	Parents	5 years
2	21	Single	Electrical Engineering N6	Christianity	Parents	1 year and 6 months
3	21	Single	Matric	Christianity	Parents	2 years
4	22	Single	Matric		Parents	5 years
5	25	Single	Btech Electrical Engineering	Christianity	Parents	8 months
6	20	Single	Matric	Christianity	Extended family	1 year
7	18	Singe	Matric	Christianity	Parents	1 year
8	27	Single	Electrical Engineering N6	Christianity	Extended family	1 year 2 months
9	23	Single	Matric	Christianity	Parents	4 years
10	26	Single	Btech electrical Engineering	Christianity	Parents	1 year

11	19	Single	Matric	Christianity	Parents	1 year
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The biographical information of the participants in table 1 depicted very interesting trends. The ages of the young unemployed women ranged from 18-27 years. From 18 years of age upwards, as gathered by this study, young women seemingly would have attained their matric results and either venture into seeking employment or further their studies. This seems to be the typical ages in which people are expected to complete their matric and tertiary education and seek employment in Cassel. This however, does not exclude the fact that some young women from the age of 15 years can be able to seek employment (Children’s Institute, 2011). In the study, 15 years old girls were also legible to participate.

All the 11 young women who participated in the study were not married and still residing with their parents or extended families. This indicates that despite the fact that some of the participants could be married and having their independent homes, unemployment could have a restricting factor forcing the young women to remain with their families as dependents. This is a possible depressing scenario where a possibly independent women is forced into a lifestyle of dependence by unemployment which she barely can have control over. In explaining how people are affected, the ecological perspective embraces the fact that environmentally induced problems and lack of opportunities lead to poor person-in-the environment fit which lead to strain and thereby negatively affecting their bio-psychosocial health (Teater, 2014).

Of the 11 participants in the study, 4 had qualifications in electrical engineering while the other 7 had matric certificates as shown in table 1. The demanding labour markets in South Africa needs well-qualified people to seek employment and matric qualifications cannot serve to be sufficient to meet the demands of the labour markets. The major economic activity in the Northern Cape province is mining of which none of the participants possessed any mining-related qualification thereby putting them on the side-lines of the labour markets (Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Northern Cape, 2014). The 4 young women who had electrical engineering tertiary education are in outskates of big towns where their qualifications my not be needed. Besides, the unemployment rate among those well-qualified is still souring, adding salt to the wound of having minimal qualifications for the majority, (7 out of 11), with matric qualifications among the young women in Cassel. Christianity religion was dominant among the participants which in many instances serves as solace and provides comfort for unemployed young women (Dube, 2019).

The duration of unemployment differed among the participants with findings showing that those with matric qualifications had been unemployed for longer periods of time whilst those with tertiary qualifications had the least number of years searching for jobs. From the study findings, the lowest number of years without employment is 1 year with the highest number of years being 5 years. Lower educational levels among women have been argued to have consequential psychological effects relating to higher levels of deprivation, lower self-esteem and lower mental health (Huegaerts et al, 2018). For those with post matric qualifications (tertiary qualifications), the lowest duration of stay unemployed is 8 months with the longest duration being 1 year 6 months. This could mean that matriculates stand lower chances of being employed after leaving High School in Cassel while young women with tertiary qualifications stand a better chance of being employed than those with matric certificates only. The Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Northern Cape (2014) and National Youth Policy 2015 highlighted the importance of specialised training in the various sectors for youths to be employable in the North Cape Province which was lacking among the majority of the participants in the study.

Bio-psychosocial implications of unemployment for young women in Cassel

Various bio-psychosocial implications have been found to amass young unemployed women in Cassel. This represents a host of biological, psychological and social problems intertwined inseparably in a manner that influences each other. In this paper, the problems young women face cannot be discussed in separate sections as they intersect systematically thereby presenting a scientifically justifiable term *bio-psychosocial*.

Alcoholism

It is not new that alcohol is synonymous with mechanisms of handling stress and unhappiness among different populations and age groups. As expected, young women in Cassel resort to drinking excessive alcohol to harbour different feels of associated with unemployed. Of the 11 young women participants in the study, 7 have used alcohol to handle the stress associated with alcoholism. This is what some participants in the study revealed during the interviews:

“I take some hard drinks to forget everything. And when I drink a lot I sleep well”, (Participant 1).

“I drink alcohol so that I can forget about not working for a while”, (Participant 4).

“I can’t hide it to you....I DRINK” (adding emphasis), (Participant 9).

Whilst unemployed young women in Cassel find drinking alcohol as a mechanism for handling unpleasant feelings associated with unemployment, there are inherent bio-psychosocial problems associated with the use of alcohol for that purpose. Most of the women who are unemployed and abuse alcohol have been admitted in treatment centres in the Western Cape Province. In terms of their employment status, the study found that 54.8% were unemployed at the time of admission (Dada, Burnhams, Laubscher, Parry & Myers, 2018). Whilst admission to treatment centres presents ill-physical health among women with various manifestations of health problems, psychosocial problems are also associated with alcohol. Poudel, Sharma, Gautam and Poudel (2016) found that psychosocial problems such as interpersonal problems, difficulty in participating in education, legal problems, and adverse impact on relationships with family members, friends, colleagues and members of society are common. The need to deal with intense adverse feelings of being unemployed through the use of alcohol actually aggravates bio-psychosocial problems rather than providing solutions or relief.

Some significant arguments are still open for exploration such as how the young women access alcohol and what kind of alcohol these young women abuse. These questions resonates against the background that they are unemployment to have money to buy alcohol.

Commercial sex work

In some instances, young women are forced into commercial sex work in order to meet their financial needs. Due to financial struggles associated with unemployment, other researchers have also highlighted financial benefits for those engaged in commercial sex work (Phrasisombath, Fixelid, Sychareun & Thomsen, 2012). Thus young unemployed women in Cassel explore commercial sex work to earn a living. However, it is noteworthy that Cassel is a rural area, commercial sex work does not pay enough income to meet their needs. The young women’s

market is also limited to the mine workers in Kuruman where potential buyers exist. Besides, rural populations in the area frown upon commercial sex work due to their conservative ethos owing to rural culture. Commercial sex work therefore faces strong cultural antagonism. Also in spite of being a lucrative source of income, commercial sex work has not yet been legalised in South Africa (Letlape & Dube, 2019). Besides, practising commercial sex work by young unemployed women exposes them to many sexually transmitted diseases which pose a danger to their health. Some participants had this to say:

“I once had an STD, I don’t know where I got it from”, (Participant 1).

“...I once had wounds on my private parts.....they were painful until I went to the clinic for help”, (Participant 3).

“I have not tested for HIV, I am afraid because sometimes I think I have got it...I risked with my life”, (Participant 7).

Practising commercial sex work when all the 11 young women participants have Christian backgrounds can be seen as having the potential to cause psychosocial and spiritual turmoil. Christianity as a religion does not condone commercial sex work hence its practice militates against the Christian belief system (Asijiki, 2015). However, among young unemployed women in Cassel, the study found that it does not serve to curtail the practice of commercial sex work contrary to the general layperson perspective (Letlape & Dube, 2019).

The practice of commercial sex work should not be understood in isolation from other related factors. Alcohol abuse for example creates addictions which need constant sources of income to feed the cravings (Prakash, 2013; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2014; South African Law Reform Commission, 2017). This reason propels unemployed young women in Cassel into commercial sex work and it becomes inevitable to generate income needed to buy alcohol to feed their cravings. This creates a cycle of bio-psychosocial problems difficult to break.

Family disputes and resentment

In the study, the participants also critically revealed the kinds of relationships they had with their families resulting from unemployment. As indicated in the biographical information in table 1, all the participants resided with their families and as such, the study sought to find out how unemployment influenced family relationships.

In the study, it was found that families have run out of coping mechanisms of seeing their family members without work for long and always being at home. Unemployment among young women in Cassel has fuelled family disputes and resentment. Four participants had this to say:

“There are ups and downs. Sometimes I get criticised for not working. When they support me financially they take it as if I am wasting their money when I go for interviews and do not get a job. My family does not understand that when I go for job interview it does not mean I am already hired. It seems like they get tired of hiring supporting me financially, sometimes they shout me and it hurts so badly. I never ask money from them without valid reason but they think when I ask for money I want it for alcohol” (Participant 1).

“Eish! This question... sometimes my parents tell me I am just staying at home doing nothing instead of looking for job. That really hurts me because I am trying my best and it is not easy because I do not have qualifications. The way they treat me sometimes I feel like packing my clothes and go away for 10 years so that I can be at peace”, (Participant 4).

“My family is not supportive at all, they always shout at me saying I should go and work my peers are working” (Participant 6).

“I had to leave home for a long time. I felt I was not welcome anymore. I was going all over looking for opportunities” (Participant 9).

Family disputes in situations of frustrations of unemployment of young women seems inevitable. Seemingly, the families of the unemployed young women in Cassel loose tolerance and begin to blame young women for being unemployed. This is despite the fact that the World Health Organisation (2014) maintained that building strong family relationships are key to preventing and solving mental health problems related to unemployment. The great family expectations get crushed and family resentment of the unemployed young women becomes apparent and a predictor of violence within the family (World Health Organisation, 2014). This sometimes forces some young unemployed women into suicidal thoughts, homelessness and further deepening their poor psychosocial well-being and poor mental health.

Poor Life satisfaction

General life satisfaction among the unemployed young women in Cassel is very low. All the 11 unemployed young women in the study indicated that they were not satisfied with the life of being unemployed. There is always a compulsive urge to compare themselves with others of the same age group who seems to be progressing satisfactorily in life in other parts of the country. This brings feelings of despondence, helplessness, hopelessness and suicidal thoughts. Some participants revealed this in the study:

“I feel different from people who are working and it’s hard. EISH..., almost feel like a failure because my peers are working somewhere. Sometimes I tell myself my time will come because I do try my best to look for job”, (Participant 1).

“I am not happy at all with my life at the moment. It hurts to stay at home doing nothing, no one gives me money and my friends are working. Sometimes I feel hopeless wondering if I will ever work and if there are opportunities in the career path I choose”, (Participant 2).

“I am not satisfied with life now. It’s not good at all because I need so many things and my father is no longer able to provide for me because we have financial problems at home, example is he cannot afford to buy me toiletry”, (Participant 3).

“It’s painful because time is not on my side and there are things I need to do. In order to accomplish those things I need to be employed. I am panicking, I feel like a failure. I sometimes feel like taking my life”, (Participant 5).

From the findings, young women are negatively affected by unemployment and have hurting feelings about being unemployed while their peers are working. It emerged that it makes them feel useless and loose hope in life when they compare themselves with their peers. Cloete (2015) adds to these findings maintaining that unemployment affects youth making them lose hope ending up living recklessly in life. Comparing themselves with other peers elsewhere, young women in Cassel loose self-esteem. In Cloete (2015)'s analysis, it is common for unemployed young people to have lowered self-esteem, feel uselessness and have a sense that life may be meaningless. In addition, Graham and Mlatsheni (2015) add that decreased self-esteem, depression and discouragement caused by unemployment affects the likelihood that an employer will hire them further compounding their fate.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A discussion of the findings of the study is presented in this section according to the emergent themes that were central to this study on implications of unemployment to young women in Cassel. In the discussion, the lived experiences of the unemployed young women which they exposed in the study, theoretical underpinnings and literature control forms the basis for critical analysis and discussion.

Bio-psychosocial implications of unemployment for young women

As emerged in from the findings of the study, an arsenal of the bio-psychosocial problems are resultant from unemployment of the young women in Cassel. A critical analysis of the bio-psychosocial implications indicated that some of the implications of unemployment are direct whilst others are indirect as discussed in the succeeding sections below.

Direct bio-psychosocial implications

Some direct implications of unemployment have been found to be alcoholism, engaging in commercial sex work and poor life satisfaction among the unemployed young women. Drinking alcohol has been revealed in the study as a mechanism directly related to handling stress related to unemployment among the young women in Cassel.

Drinking alcohol seems to be a way to cope with the unpleasant feelings of unemployment. Through the lens of the ecological perspective, there is a continuous struggle among people to maintain a good person: environment fit through life course (Teater, 2014). Once that has been achieved, the person is said to be healthy and having assumed a good level of adaptedness with a general feeling having strength, resources and capacity to grow and to develop. The struggle to adapt to unemployment has seen young women paying homage to alcohol consumption. Whilst consuming alcohol can be seen as an adaptation mechanism, it can also bring a plethora of problems. The quest for handling unpleasant feelings of unemployment has actually done more damage that good by spiralling the existence of more unintended problems in the lives of young women rather creating what this paper calls a *person: environment misfit* (Cooper-Thomas & Wright, 2013).

The other theme that emerged was that young unemployed women in Cassel engaged in commercial sex work to raise money for their upkeep. Directly, young women get income for their needs of their daily living and serves as job creation (Letlape & Dube, 2019). In as much as it is job creation and a source of income for young unemployed women in Cassel, commercial sex work is illegal in South Africa and criminalised by the Sexual Offences Act

(No 23 of 1957) and the Criminal Law Amendment Act (No.32 of 2007) of South Africa as lewd and lascivious, (Barker, 2004), presenting legal implications and bad legal records where friction with law enforcement agents results. Whilst commercial sex work is illegal, the social constructivist theory holds that people attach different meanings to their socioeconomic world and its meaning within a given social and geographical context. In the context of this paper, young women in Cassel understand commercial sex work as a kind of employment and less of a violation of the law in South Africa.

Unemployment creates general poor life satisfaction among the unemployed young women in Cassel. This is a direct implication of having no jobs. Social Constructionists maintain that such feelings towards their lives is a direct interpretation people attach to their life circumstances as humans and produce knowledge and meaning in relation to their experiences and their ideas (Mogashoa, 2014). Whilst this can be understood from a social constructivist perspective, the ecological perspective criticises that feelings of poor life satisfaction when unemployed result from poor adaptation mechanisms to the environment and poor person: environment fit (Teater, 2014).

Indirect bio-psychosocial implications

Indirect bio-psychosocial implications of unemployment were also found to exist among young unemployed women in Cassel. These present themselves as unintended and unintentional implications often stronger and superseding the direct implications of unemployment.

Alcohol abuse and dependence has been a result of the use of alcohol as an inhibitor of the unpleasant feelings, (Sayette, 2017), associated with unemployment. Whilst that can be a temporary coping strategy for young unemployed women in Cassel, alcohol dependency, (Marsden, 2018), becomes inevitable to deal with the recurrent unpleasant psychological feelings of unemployment demanding constant consumption, and consequentially addiction to alcohol. This then causes psychological health issues including depression and suicide (Marsden, 2018; World Health Organisation, 2014). Additionally, the young unemployed woman experiences physical health problems presenting themselves as withdrawal symptoms and the increased risk of having sexually transmitted diseases during intercourse without protection when engaging in commercial work (Letlape & Dube, 2019). There are also higher risks of deaths in instances of overdose and binge drinking (Marsden, 2018).

Emanating from unemployment, social relationships are mostly negatively affected by alcohol usage. Some authorities have noted disruption of social relationships including violence and crime (Poudel et al, 2016), with peers and families. The general lack of life satisfaction has also fuelled feelings of a sense of hopelessness and hopelessness among the unemployed young women in Cassel. Research has established that poor life satisfaction emanating from unemployment is predictor of mental health problems and problematic interpersonal behaviour (Cloete, 2015; Huegaert et al, 2018). Family disputes and resentment are particular social discomforts that unemployed young women in Cassel have to endure. Continued frustrations from the families on their unfulfilled expectations of the young women resulted in family disputes and resentment. Drawing from some behaviour resulting from unemployment such as alcoholism and engaging in commercial sex work, it is expected that family disputes can arise. These are specific human behaviour less tolerated by families in Cassel especially that the families align themselves fervently to Christian ethos as indicated in biographic information of the participants. This then compounds family disputes and resentment stoutly.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the findings of the study, various conclusions were reached and recommendations made. This paper concludes that there are significant bio-psychosocial and consequential implications of unemployment for young women in Cassel. Many of the bio-psychosocial problems were resultant from deep seated frustrations among the young women without significant and formidable interventions available.

The study concludes that whilst unemployment seems to present economic problems to young unemployed women, bio-psychosocial problems are more prominent contrary to the general belief on economic problems. In lieu of this conclusion, alcoholism, forced commercial sex work, lower personal life satisfaction, family disputes and resentment of the unemployed young women are common. These cause further problems that may be difficult to handle in the lives of the unemployed young women.

Many of the coping mechanisms employed by young unemployed women in Cassel do not serve to improve their lives, rather they compound their bio-psychosocial problems making the coping mechanisms less suitable for the young unemployed women in the area.

Whilst the paper analyses direct and indirect implications of unemployment for young women, the study found that indirect implications have more serious implications for young women and present unbearable personal and interpersonal consequences.

As recommendations, aggressive macro-level social work interventions based on well-planned and well-modelled multi-sectorial practices are needed for young women. The problem of unemployment demands the involvement of the Department of Social Development, Public Works, Department of Labour and Department of Higher Education working together with other relevant departments to serve as interventionists for the unemployed young women.

The Department of Social Development needs to provide specific interventions for the psychosocial needs of the unemployed young women including initiating income generating projects in Cassel for the unemployed young women. The Department of Public Works and Department of Labour need to look at specific employment needs and skills of the young women whilst Department of Higher Education can critically examine the training needs of rural women specifically and the dynamics of employment to match the skills with the labour market.

Whilst a multi-sectorial approach can be recommended, well-tailored social work intervention at micro-level can also be implementable (Farley, Smith & Boyle, 2011; Shulman, 2012). This ensures that specific individual needs of the young women cannot be missed in interventions ranging from socioeconomic, spiritual, psychosocial and legal needs which may come afore in individual assessments.

It is noteworthy that meso level social work interventions are needed in Cassel. The group approaches need a psycho-educational approaches to meet their needs for better capacitation of the young unemployed women (Pollak, 2015).

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