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### *The influence of unemployment on functioning of the family*

One of the most painful social phenomena that have recently appeared in our country is high unemployment. Lack of jobs and deteriorating living conditions constitute a serious problem causing a range of negative consequences in individuals, families and in the social dimension. As far as the social consequences are concerned, the effects of unemployment incurred by the unemployed persons themselves and their families are quite significant. The influence of unemployment on functioning of the family is an important social problem, significantly disorganizing its life and making it dysfunctional (1,4,9,10,13,14).

The aim of the studies was to determine the influence of unemployment on functioning of the family with regard to the financial situation and the relationships with other family members.

#### MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the period from April to June 2002, among 200 persons registered in the Regional and District Employment Office in Lublin. The method of research was a diagnostic sounding, and the technique was a polling questionnaire. It contained questions concerning the material situation of the unemployed and the influence of the lack of jobs on the atmosphere of life and the expenses in the family. The results were subjected to statistical analysis.

#### RESULTS OF THE STUDIES AND DISCUSSION

The studied group comprised 200 unemployed persons. 51.5% of them were city dwellers, while 48.5% of the respondents lived in the country. 63% of the examined population were women, and 37% were men. Among the polled people, the most numerous group were people aged 30–39 years (36%). The second most numerous group were the unemployed aged 21–29 years (28%) and 40–49 years (28%), while the least numerous group were people aged 50–57 years (8%). More than a half of the examined population (51.5%) were married people, while 32% remained single. 11% of the examined unemployed people were divorced and 5.5% of them were widowed. Most of the respondents had secondary education (47%). 29% had university education. Much fewer of the polled unemployed people had vocational (21%) and primary education (3%). Most of the polled persons were physical workers. Among the

examined persons teachers with secondary and tertiary (academic) education were a relatively large group (14%). Also, economists with secondary education represented quite a large group. Only 0.5% of the examined population was represented by administration workers. Among the respondents, 81.5% had been previously employed mainly in industry and commerce (54.5%), in education and culture (23.5%), and in health protection (3.5%). Most of those who lost their jobs were made redundant due to closing down of the enterprises (38%), or on the employer's initiative (23.5%), whereas 18.5% were graduates who did not find jobs after they left schools and universities.

The job seeking period is a significant measure determining their chances on the job market, and therefore the type of their unemployment. The studies showed that most of the people registered in Employment Offices were those who had been unemployed for less than a year (43.5%). 23% remained out of work for the period of 1 to 2 years, and 33,5% – for longer than 2 years. White collar workers (especially young women) had been unemployed for longer periods of time than blue collar workers (mainly men). Accumulation of unemployment was a big problem which occurred among people without jobs (35.5% of families). Most frequently it was the polled person's spouse who was unemployed, less frequently their siblings or parents. The unemployment of a few persons in one household can significantly influence the range of negative consequences incurred by the whole family.

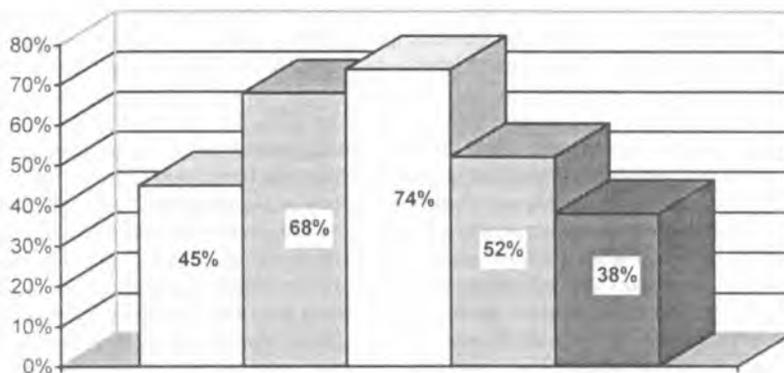


Fig. 1. Reducing expenses in families of the unemployed; 45% - for leisure, 68% - for the purchase of food, 74% - for the purchase of the new clothing, 52% - for cosmetics and toiletries, 38% - failing to pay the flat/house maintenance dues

The results of studies revealed that the level of income in the families of unemployed people was very low. Nearly half of the polled people without jobs evaluated their financial situation as bad. These were usually respondents in whose families the income per person equaled 300 to 500 PLN. 35% of the inquired persons reported especially difficult material conditions. In this group the income per a member of the family was definitely low – it was less than 300 PLN. However, 14.5% of the people evaluated their financial situation as average, and their income ranged from 500 to 700 PLN. Merely 4.5% of the polled people defined their material conditions as good, and their income per person exceeded 700 PLN. 14% of the polled unemployed persons reported that the dole was the only source of support for their families, whereas 33% relied on the earnings of other members of their families (spouse or some other

person living in the same household), 28.5% – on old age and disability pensions, 15% – on nursing care allowances, and 13% made their living from doing odd jobs.

A low income in the family often made the polled persons take advantage of other sources of assistance. Most often it was the help from relatives at home or abroad (31.5%) or from a social assistance center (14%).

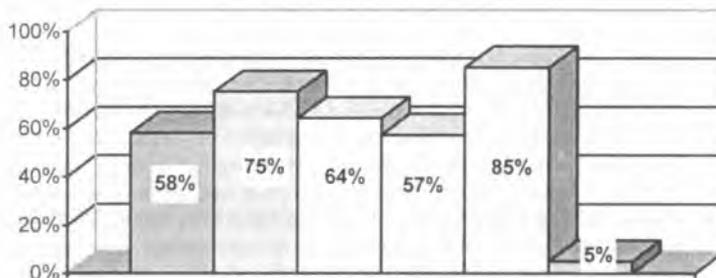


Fig. 2. Additional renunciations undertaken by families of the unemployed; 58% - giving up holiday travels, 75% - giving up treatment in private medical surgeries, 64% - reducing expenses "on children" (holiday camps and trips, pocket money), 57% - giving up children's supplementary education, 85% - reducing expenses on books, magazines and newspapers, 5% not applicable

Lack of jobs may measurably affect the living conditions of the polled people, contributing to the occurrence of economic degradation of the persons and families suffering from it. Results of the studies revealed that a sudden decrease of a family's income often leads to forced saving by means of reducing or giving up many necessities of life. In the families of the unemployed the following expenses were mainly reduced: for new clothing (74%), more expensive food products (68%), toiletries and cleaning products (52%), culture, entertainment and leisure (45%). These data are shown in the Figure 1. The difficult financial situation of the unemployed forced their families to give up some more things. Most often these were expenses on newspapers, magazines and books (85%), treatment in private medical surgeries (75%) and reducing the expenses "on the children". The results of these studies are presented in Figure 2. In addition, worsening of the families' material conditions was caused by running into debts at the grocer's (85%) and falling into arrears with rent and other housing payments (40%). To improve their financial situation, many families raised loans to provide for their basic living necessities (65%), as well as to buy medicines and for treatment (56%). The main reason for raising pecuniary loans by the unemployed was providing maintenance for themselves and their families. Numerous papers contained in the bibliography of the subject confirm the presented results of the studies (1,10).

What results from unemployment is not only worsening of the financial and social situation, but also a tense, unpleasant climate in the families and homes of the people affected by it. The analysis of the studies reveals that unemployment is a cause of many conflicts between spouses (42%), as well as between parents and children (25%). Such a situation especially impairs the emotional bonds between members of the family and significantly disturbs its functions. These data are presented in the Figure 3. The results of these studies comply with those presented in the literature of the subject (9,10).

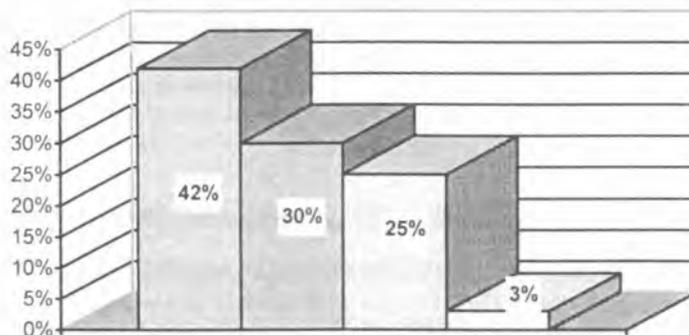


Fig. 3. The influence of unemployment on the atmosphere in families of people affected by it; 42% - conflicts between spouses increased, 30 % - increase of mutual understanding, 25% - the number of situations causing conflicts between parents and children increased, 3% -i have not noticed any changes

Losing one's job is a very difficult and complex situation, not only because of the significant worsening of a person's living (material) conditions, but also of their mental well being. For many people work is not only a source of income, but also a way of self-expression and self-realization. It is a basic element of their lives, it determines their views, attitudes or professional ambitions. The studies reveal that the respondents were definitely pessimistic immediately after they had lost their jobs. Nearly half (46%) of the polled group of unemployed people feel wronged and broken down. They are also terrified and in despair. 22% of them express indifference and helplessness. Such reports of the unemployed are compliant with those presented in the literature of the subject (1,2,3). Generally, it can be said that unemployment leaves permanent marks on the lives of individuals and families, which also significantly influences the standard of functioning and development of the whole society. Recognition of the social effects of unemployment in its individual and community dimension should constitute an important prerequisite for the choice of appropriate methods and means of fighting it and alleviating its effects.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The phenomenon of unemployment caused negative changes in the living conditions of many families. The financial impoverishment made them resign from or reduce satisfying their living necessities. Most often it concerned limiting the expenses on buying new clothes (74%), more expensive food products (68%), toiletries (52%) and expenditures on culture (entertainment) and leisure (45%).

2. Worsening of living conditions influenced the provision of health-oriented needs. In most cases, it absolutely prevented them from taking advantage of payable medical services (75%). There were also difficulties with buying medicines and complying to the doctors' advice (56%).

3. Lack of jobs and deteriorating living conditions definitely negatively influenced the atmosphere and relationships in the family. Most often there occurred conflicts between spouses (42%) and between parents and children.

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#### SUMMARY

The aim of the study was to determine the impact of unemployment on family welfare. It was conducted between April and June 2002 among 200 unemployed registered at the Regional Employment Bureau in Lublin. The method of choice was a questionnaire. The study results demonstrated that the most direct consequence of unemployment is financial impoverishment. Most participants claimed their income did not allow them to cover the basic needs. Managing a very limited budget, they had to give up buying new clothes, more expensive food and toilet items as well as spending money on cultural and leisure pursuits. They were unable to use paid

medical services and to meet household payments deadlines. These consequences were borne not only by the unemployed themselves but also by their families. Those with school children had to cut their expenditures on education and in extreme cases the children were unable to attend junior or senior high school. The results indicate that unemployment had a negative impact on many different spheres of family life and in the long run it has a negative impact on the life of the whole society.

### Wpływ bezrobocia na funkcjonowanie rodziny

Celem badań było określenie wpływu bezrobocia na funkcjonowanie rodziny. Badania przeprowadzono od kwietnia do czerwca 2002 roku wśród 200 osób zarejestrowanych w Rejonowym i Powiatowym Urzędzie Pracy w Lublinie. Narzędziem badawczym był kwestionariusz ankiety. Wyniki badań wykazały, że bezpośrednim skutkiem bezrobocia jest finansowe zubożenie rodziny. Większość ankietowanych deklarowała, że posiadane dochody nie wystarczają na pokrycie podstawowych potrzeb. Dysponując skromnym budżetem, ankietowani rezygnowali przede wszystkim z zakupu nowej odzieży, droższych artykułów spożywczych, środków higieny, a także z wydatków na kulturę i wypoczynek. Sytuacja finansowa uniemożliwiała im korzystanie z odpłatnych usług medycznych i regularne opłacanie świadczeń mieszkaniowych. Konsekwencje braku pracy odczuwane są nie tylko przez samych bezrobotnych, ale także przez ich rodziny. Dla uczących się dzieci są to drastyczne ograniczenia przez rodziców wydatków związanych z nauką, a w skrajnych przypadkach ograniczenia edukacji na poziomie ponadpodstawowym. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych wyników badań można stwierdzić, że zjawisko bezrobocia spowodowało negatywne zmiany w różnych sferach życia rodzinnego, rzutujące w konsekwencji na poziom życia całego społeczeństwa.