



The influence of vocational mobilisation of unemployed over 50 years old on their level of unemployment in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship

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ABSTRACT

This work is devoted to the unemployment problem and the difficult situation of people over 50 on the labour market. Because of the mass and sophisticated character of analyzed phenomenon as well as gradually progressing process of aging society for the main purpose of this work accepted the presentation of importance of active labour market policy in accordance with unemployed people over 50, which influences on their professional activity. The analysis was conducted on the base of data from the area of the highest level of unemployment which was Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship. The main hypothesis which concerning on the growth of the employment of the jobless people over 50 as a result of conducted active labour market policy was confirmed by the survey results which show distinct decrease of unemployment which is caused by professional activity of elder people. There are two detailed hypotheses in this work. The first is devoted to active looking for employment by jobless people over 50, the second is connected with the assumption that the main obstacle in finding the job by jobless people over 50 is their age. The correctness of the hypotheses was confirmed by the analyses of the bibliography devoted to people over 50, furthermore, the questionnaire's results in which there was direct question connected with their professional activity and the results of being jobless. The results present that elder people would like to work and be active in the labour market plus their main catalyst is the poor financial situation. Nevertheless, the age discrimination seems to be perceived as the abstraction these days, we can see that it is still understood as the real problem for the people who seek for employment. People over 50 are rarely employed by employers who often regard them as workers

with low qualifications and as people who are not able to be flexible and adjust to changing needs on the labour markets.

Keywords: unemployment, vocational mobilisation, unemployed over 50 years old

INTRODUCTION

Any sort of market existing in industry aims at balance. Though attaining full balance in case of the market economy is purely a hypothetical assumption, still all actions taken on specific markets strive for equalising demand and supply. It occurs also in the job market where imbalance, which stems from a mismatch of supply and demand of work, results in an intricate and multifaceted phenomenon of unemployment. The phenomenon is associated with a number of negative consequences, both in an economic and social aspect. Unemployment does not only stifle economic development but also affects interpersonal and family relationships. Seeing the scale of the problem, actions are taken by the State in order to diminish its appearance. Those actions are being executed with the help of policy of job market via active and passive forms of fighting unemployment.

Apart from issues connected with unemployment, both the Polish job market and other markets in European countries face a great challenge of aging populations. Predictions concerning demography do not have illusions about the fact, that in the near future, the job market will be filled with people over 50 years old. That is the reason, why is it so important to pay more attention to the vocational activity of this particular age group as well as carrying out various forms of mobilisation enabling those people becoming employed.

Having in mind all the consequences that derive from both aforementioned issues, the following dissertation concerns their analysis, which has been done with the help of the overview of literature regarding the topic and the diagnostic survey method.

THE AIM OF RESEARCH AND HYPOTHESIS

The aim of the study is to show the impact of active forms of the fight against unemployment, which concerns the unemployed over 50 years old, on their level of unemployment in the Warmian-Masurian voivodeship. In the following article, the characterization of the generation over 50 years old has been done as well as an attempt of evaluation of effects, which caused the introduction of a particular form of mobilisation.

The main hypothesis is: The pursued policy of active job market towards the unemployed over 50 years old caused the increase of professional activity of those people in Warmian-Masurian voivodeship by the increase of their employment.

Additionally, the following specific hypotheses have been adopted:

1. The majority of the unemployed over 50 years old actively seek employment.
2. The main cause of unemployment of this particular group age is their advanced age.

UNEMPLOYMENT

In spite of the fact, that since Hobson, unemployment is a crucial economic, social and also political problem, the unequivocal definition of the phenomenon still arouses controversies. It is really difficult to define the universal concept of unemployment basing on objective and unambiguous criteria since each field of study is interested in different determinants of the content of this definition. For the sake of the intricate and multifaceted nature of unemployment, distinct questions concern attention of an economist, politician, sociologist or psychologist. Taking into consideration the macroeconomic and macrosocial aspect of unemployment, the mostly given determinant of this concept is a subjective and objective approach to the problem. In terms of objectiveness, the analysed phenomenon is seen as an analytical category of the job market, which means an unrealized labour supply, which is a result of the imbalance of job market (the difference between labour supply and labour demand). Such a way of thinking, which clearly indicates the causes of the phenomenon, considers unemployment as an economic problem. However, a different attitude is presented in a subjective approach, in which the discussed phenomenon is examined from the angle of jobless people. It denotes that, the professional inactivity of people, able and willing to work, and the basis of their existence which is income. This version refers to the social aspect of unemployment and considers it as a social problem

THE UNEMPLOYED OVER 50 YEARS OLD AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL MOBILISATION

One of the foremost challenges, that humanity is going to face in the XXI century, is aging populations. All economically advanced countries will face the problem. Both in Poland and in other European countries, the process of lengthening life of an average person alongside with the low rate of natural increase, is noticeable. Examining the problem of aging populations on the basis of predictions until 2050, it is seen that in the very year, the half of European population will reach retirement age, which will result in the shortage of over 160 million workers on the EU labour market.

For the sake of serious effects which are associated with aging populations, people over 50 years old, who are unemployed have been statutorily considered as a group which is in a specific situation on the market. It denotes, them being taken a specific care of and offered help associated with finding employment. One of the methods of this help is the vocational mobilisation. It involves creating practical ways of helping people to find jobs and also supports existing jobs. In order to increase vocational activity of elderly people, the following actions have been taken: the development of vocational guidance, the increase of effectiveness and realisation of labour offices and the organization of courses developing personal and vocational competences.

THE METHODS OF RESEARCH AND USED MATERIALS

The method of analysis and criticism of literature and the diagnostic survey method have been used in the article. The first method allowed to explain and characterize issues discussed

in the topic of the dissertation. The analysis of literature regarding the topic impressed the scale of the problem of low vocational activity of elderly people and the on-going process of aging population. On the other, by examining the diagnostic survey method, the attempt of evaluating the vocational mobilisation of the 50+ generation, but in a subjective manner, presented by concrete people participating in the mobilisation.

In the conducted survey participated 127 jobless people over 50 years old inhabiting Warmian-Masurian voivodeship. The selection of people to the research was based on the method of random selection conducted among the group of unemployed 50+. The very research was conducted in the Poviát Employment Agency with the consent of deputy director of the Poviát Employment Agency in Olsztyn on March 7-9. In the survey, the prevailing aspect was the social one, which pursued active forms of the fight against unemployment, seeking other effects than only finding employment after undergone mobilisation. The indirect consequences of those actions, which lead to the increase of the level of vocational activity of elderly people, have been pointed out.

THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH

Characterization of the examined group

On the basis of the diagnostic survey, the aforementioned group (127 people) was characterized via asking them 6 questions concerning sex, place of residence, education, time while being without a job and undergone seniority. In the examined population, men were the numerous group, thus representing 52.8 % of all interviewees, whereas the number of women was 47.2 %. According to the statistical data of the Voivodship Labour Office in Olsztyn, women constitute the larger proportion of the total number of unemployed, yet the situation changes after 50 years old, where the prevalence of these people is on the side of men. It might be associated with the fact, that women, who were preoccupied with rising children and taking care of a family, return to the job market. Moreover, their motivation may stem from regaining position in the society.

Another criterion for the division of the examined group was a place of residence. Although, it is thought that the unemployed inhabit mostly rural areas, the study shows that over 60% of interviewed live in a city. Approximately 38% of the interviewed live in the country, 44.9% are the city dwellers (the cities' population do not exceed 20 000), whereas the least, because only 17.3% of the examined population inhabit cities, which population exceeds 20 000. It is essentially a result of a bigger number of job offers and opportunities in big cities.

The level of education alongside with the structural alignment is an important element when considering the causes of unemployment. In the examined group, the largest percentage constituted people with basic vocational education (31.5%) and vocational secondary education (26.8%). Slightly less, because over 20% of the unemployed barely graduated from a primary school. Only 4.7% of the interviewed constitute people who graduated from a university, whereas 14.2% of the interviewed had secondary education. As shown in the aforementioned data, a considerable amount of the unemployed 50+ are the people with low education, which might be associated with hardships for them to find a job. What is more, when it comes to knowledge of elderly people, it shows the deepening mismatch to the requirements, which stem from the technological development of modern enterprises.

The time without a job has a massive influence on the unemployed and their vocational activity. The longer the period takes, the harder it is to find employment again, which negatively affects personal lives of the unemployed and their families. In the case of not having a job over 12 months, unemployment is assumed to be prolonged. Such a situation concerns 72.4% of the respondents. Barely 12.6% of the unemployed stated that the job seeking period did not exceed 6 months, whereas 15% of the interviewed the period from 6 to 12 months. In the contemporary job market, a big role in the requirements of the employer, in addition to the appropriate qualifications, plays professional experience, and so undergone seniority. A similar number of respondents, because 32.2 % and 33.1 % stated in the questionnaire, that their range of the undergone seniority from 5-15 years and over 25 years. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to a crucial asset of employing people 50+, which is their long-time work experience. Only less than 5% of those whose internship does not exceed 1 year.

Vocational mobilisation of people 50+

Demographic predictions, which inform constantly about the deepening process of aging population, give the impulse to the detailed analysis of the ratio of the unemployed 50+ to work, their engagement in seeking employment, competences and possibilities of their improvement. Changes that occur in a social structure, clearly point out the necessity of the increase of activity of population 50+. It is, therefore, necessary to, at first, know their opinions and expectations concerning the topic, so as to be able to match mobilisation programs better and any other actions aiming at increasing their vocational activity.

The answers to the first question gave an initial outlook on their engagement in the process of employment. The question concerned their activity of seeking a job. Unfortunately, the received data shows that almost one in five of the unemployed remains passive in seeking employment. The unemployed, as the main reason for this state, recognised discouragement which resulted from the ineffectiveness of search (42.9 % of the interviewed). Both family duties and the state of health preventing from finding employment was a reason pointed out by 28.6% of the interviewed. On the other hand, the most frequently occurring motivator to find a job, was a bad financial status which 63% of the respondents answered on. A large amount of the interviewed, as a reason for seeking employment, indicated also the possibility of receiving the higher pension in the future (32.3%). Both these variants have a financial foundation, which stimulates the desire to ensure the adequate source of income. Important determinants of seeking employment pointed out by every fifth person were: the possibility of developing interests and the feeling of self-esteem and usefulness in society. As the least important reasons, the interviewed pointed out gaining the respect of others (5.5%) and also the will of establishing new friendships (4.7%), which ascribes mostly to people, who occupied previously higher levels of professional career, educated, professionals in their fields.

Because of the “shrinkage” of labour resources, people 50+ should not be allowed to leave the job market. They are essential in providing a further economic development, due to their long time work experience and obtained skills. It is actually work experience, which is regarded as the strongest asset of 50+ generation. Such an answer was given by 55.3 % of the interviewed. Among all the variants, a number of people marked reliability (18%) and higher availability associated with a lower number of household chores (11.8%). Both exemptions from costs associated with employment and bigger responsibility were indicated by 6.2% of the respondents. Barely 2.5 % of the interviewed stated, that the ease in establishing relations with younger employees as the strongest asset of people 50+.

The generation 50+ considers its age as the main reason for lack of employment. Other reasons of not having a job include: lack of job offers in the closest area (22.9%), low vocational competences (13%) and long term unemployment (10.5%).

The majority of the interviewed assessed their credentials as good (55.1%), whereas 25.2 % consider them even as very good. Unfortunately, the unemployed with a high evaluation of their credentials, very rarely see a reason to improve them or change or training in other professions, for instance, from which there is a demand from employers. Over 17% of the respondents consider their credentials as average, whereas a small number of people (2.4 %) was not able to evaluate them. There are, though, edifying conclusions which can be drawn on the basis of the fact, that despite the fact that 80% of the unemployed consider their credentials as good or very good, more than 65% of the interviewed declared will of improving their competences. It is a definitely positive phenomenon, which proclaims the necessity of constant education and thus the adjustment to requirements of the job market. It allows increasing the possibility of obtaining employment. Approximately 35% of the respondents do not wish to enhance their qualifications, since they state that their credentials are sufficiently high. Such an answer was given by 47.6% of the interviewed out of 48, who did not express a desire for further education. Every fifth person thinks that it will not change his/her situation on the job market, whereas every third does not see a point in enhancing competences at this age.

Due to the aspirations of the majority of the interviewed, a few more words concerning those willing to further education. The very unemployed were asked to evaluate the thematic relevance of conducted trainings.

The difference between people, who found appropriate trainings enabling improving their vocational credentials, and those, who unfortunately did not find such trainings, amounted merely to 5 people. It is a disturbing fact, that 48% of people willing to improve their vocational credentials, were unable to do it due to the inappropriate trainings. It gives a clear cue to the labour offices about the necessity of matching conducted trainings for the unemployed interested in this type of mobilisation.

Basing on the Figure 1, it is seen that labour offices offered mostly participation in trainings. Such a proposition was offered to 41% of the unemployed. Every fifth interviewed pointed out, that he/she had an opportunity to participate in intervention works or he/she was offered grants to start their own business. Internship opportunities were offered to 13.7% of the respondents. A few people, merely 5.6%, was offered with vocational trainings. Worth noting is the fact, that the unemployed were the most willing to accept the possibility of trainings (58.5%), whereas the smallest interest aroused the option of vocational trainings (4.1%), which might indicate the accuracy of the mobilisation offers prepared by the labour offices. As far as the intervention works are concerned, 12.9 % of respondents participated. Relatively a small percentage of people, that is 14.3, participated in internships, which is connected rather with a small number of internship offers than with lack of will to work. A tenth of the respondents decided to accept the grants and started their own business.

In order to gather solid opinions concerning the most effective form of vocational mobilisation, the evaluation is based on the opinions of people, who participated in three or more active forms of fight against unemployment, relying on their experience gathered during each of these activities. Most respondents, that is 46.4%, considered internships as the most effective form of vocational mobilisation. Every third respondent stated, however, that the title of the most effective method should be given to intervention works. Both trainings and grants to start own business were marked by every tenth person.

People participating in the questionnaire survey were asked about effective ways of finding a job (Figure 2).

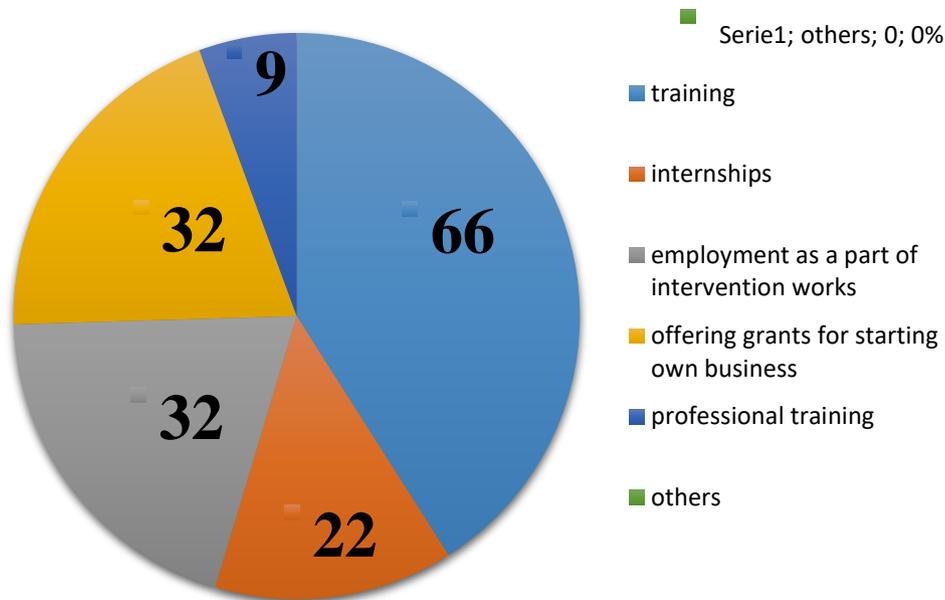


Figure 1. What forms of mobilisation of the unemployed over 50 years old, were offered to you in the labour office? (the number of people) Source: own study based on the questionnaire survey

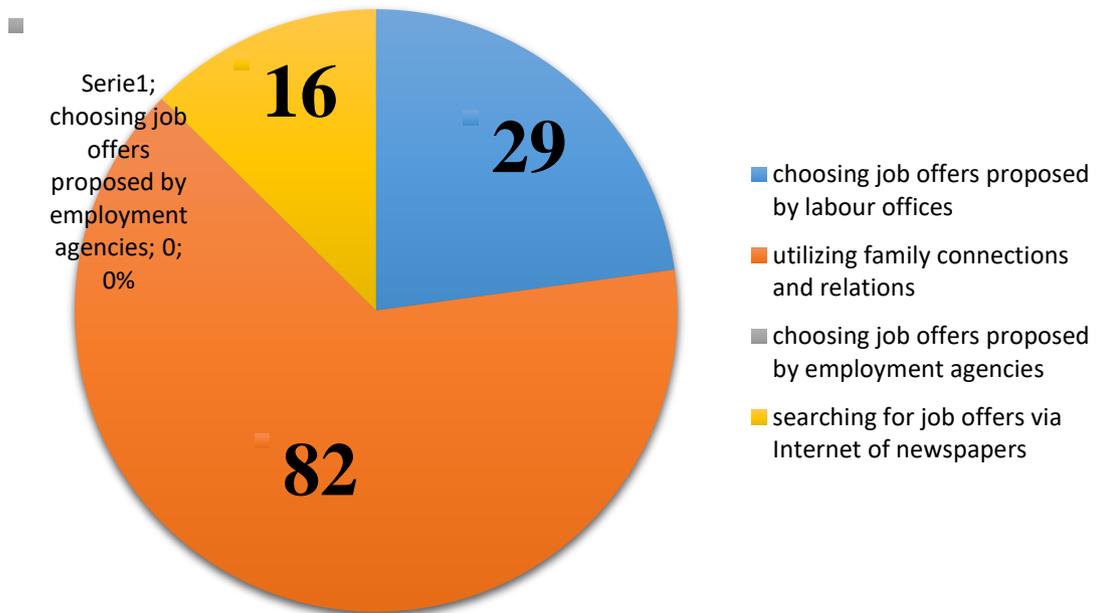


Figure 2. What do you think, what is the most effective way of finding employment? (the number of people) Source: own study based on the research

According to the respondents, and a formulaic opinion of the society, the most effective method of finding employment is to utilize family connections and relations (64.6%). As the second response, the respondents chose job offers proposed by the labour offices, yet the frequency of that choice was much lower (22.8%). One in twelve person replied that the best way is seeking a job via Internet or newspapers.

The most essential case concerning the evaluation of active forms of fight against unemployment is their consequences. Over 43% of the interviewed have been hired due to the participation in the active form of vocational mobilisation. It is relatively a big proportion of people, yet, it had to have a short term effect, as those people are re-registered in a labour office. Such a situation occurs frequently, in case of a conducted internship, when after the specified time in a contract, an employee is fired and he/she is replaced by another unemployed. Such actions are being practiced by dishonest employers, who want to lower the costs. As a result of the participation in the form of vocational mobilisation, every third participant of the diagnostic survey improved his/her qualifications.

It is enormously important in the times of constant changes on the job market. It is also an excellent way to prepare yourself to take a new job. As a result of vocational mobilisation, nearly 4% of the respondents declared bigger engagement in seeking employment, yet 7% of them believe that it has not changed their situation.

While concluding the mobilisation activity the question, concerning the fact whether taken actions are adequate to the expectations of the unemployed, had to be asked. Therefore, the respondents were asked whether the labour offices offer helpful mobilisation programs or not

The opinions concerning the usefulness of mobilisation forms of the unemployed 50+ were divided. Approximately 57.5 % of the interviewed negated the effectiveness of the offered forms. It is assumed, that the psychological aspect of the occurrence of employment may have an influence on such a high proportion of people dissatisfied with the undergone mobilisation actions. Worth noting is the fact that people, who remain unemployed, commence to feel frustrated and sometimes even depressed.

They start to look for reasons of such a state in situations, which they do not have influence on, just to justify staying in the current state. According to the respondents, the reason of ineffectiveness of mobilisation programs is a result of the low engagement of people responsible for conducting those programs (39.7%). Slightly fewer, because 30.1% of the interviewed recognized the inadequacy of programs to the character of the 50+ generation, whereas 26% blamed the insufficient amount of funds devoted to the vocational mobilisation of this particular group. Merely 4.1 % of the respondents claim, that the problem stems from the low engagement of people participating in mobilisation actions.

When having been asked about the main reason of remaining unemployed, the majority of participants pointed out their age. Having this in mind, a question must be asked whether taken actions which aim at preventing ageism are actually effective. On the basis of the conducted survey research, it appears that 34.7% of the respondents doubt the effectiveness of anti-discrimination actions of people 50+, whereas 15% of them are certain of it. Only 30% of the interviewed have a positive opinion about it, while 10.2% of people are ready to decidedly confirm the effectiveness of prevention of inequality of treatment of elderly people on the job market. One in ten people was not able to assess the effectiveness of those actions by marking the answer "it is difficult to say".

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the study has been accomplished through the analysis and criticism of literature and the diagnostic survey method. The aim of the study was to show the influence of active forms of fight against unemployment of the unemployed 50+ on their level of unemployment.

The main hypothesis, which assumed that the increase of vocational activity of the unemployed 50+ caused by the conducted mobilisation actions, has been proved by the results of the research of the diagnostic survey. The data shows that nearly half of the unemployed found employment after the mobilisation, whereas 30% of the participants improved their credentials. It has been also noticed, that the elderly people started to be more aware of the necessity of improving qualifications or retraining which is associated with the constant changes on the job market.

The analysis of the conducted research also shows, that 80% of the unemployed actively seek employment, which authenticates the specific hypothesis about the active search for employment by the majority of elderly people. Unfortunately, this is caused mainly due to the bad financial situation (63% of the interviewed) and the will of receiving higher pension in the future (32.3%).

Another specific hypothesis concerned the main reason of unemployment of this particular group. The main determinant of this state is their age. It has been proved by the respondents, who marked advanced age, out of 7 other possible answers, as the main reason for being unemployed. This answer was marked by 47.7% of the interviewed. It directs attention at the existence of ageism and prejudices towards elderly people, by considering them as being less well educated and being not able to adjust to the constant changes in the job market.

Vocational mobilisation of unemployed over 50 years old is extremely important, but not only for the sake of diminishing unemployment of this group but also for the sake of the social aspect of the conducted actions, after which those people feel more self-esteem, they are more willing to establish new and useful connections and they are more engaged in seeking employment.

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