

Perception of Labor Market Changes in the Post-Pandemic Period

Eva Dirgova, Lucia Ludvigh Cintulova* and Anna Beresova

Department of Social work, St. Elizabeth University of Health and Social work, n.o. Bratislava, Palackého 1, Bratislava, Slovakia.

Corresponding Author: Lucia Ludvigh Cintulova, Department of Social work, St. Elizabeth University of Health and Social work, n.o. Bratislava, Palackého 1, Bratislava, Slovakia.

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Abstract

Unemployment is a complex socio-economic phenomenon that negatively affects not only individuals, but also their families and the wider social environment. Long-term unemployment can lead to mental and physical health problems, with its consequences being more intense for older individuals, men and people with lower education. The aim of the research was to analyse changes in the labour market in the post-pandemic period and to examine their impact on the perception of the future among different age and education groups. The research was conducted using an electronic questionnaire, with the research sample consisting of 206 respondents from different regions of Slovakia. The main findings showed that the perception of uncertainty and fears about the future was strongest in the category of people aged 40-50, where 52.83% of respondents desired change, 48.21% felt threatened and 46.67% felt helpless. The results also confirmed that unemployment affects women more, with up to 88.89% of long-term unemployed (13 months or more) being women. The results confirmed the hypothesis that the post-pandemic situation negatively affected people's experiences and caused a pessimistic perception of the future, with the intensity of negative feelings being higher in older individuals and in people with higher education.

Keywords: Unemployment, Labor Market, Experiencing Changes in the Labor Market

1. Introduction

Unemployment is a complex socio-economic phenomenon, the social impacts of unemployment are negative not only for the individual, but this unfavorable life situation affects the entire family of the unemployed and their social contacts. The unemployment situation needs to be addressed before it deepens into health problems [1]. Mental health is unconditionally linked to physical health, which means that if a person has long-term fear of the future, sooner or later it will also affect physical health. Experiencing the unemployment situation is individual, it is perceived worse by older people and men, and people with lower education find it more difficult to find employment on the labor market. These statements were also confirmed by our findings.

2. Methods

The aim of the research was to highlight the changes taking place on the labor market in the post-pandemic period and to examine how they are reflected in people's perceptions, how respondents of different ages with different levels of education feel the impacts of the new situation. The research was conducted using a questionnaire that was distributed electronically. The sample was formed by targeted, deliberate selection. The research sample consisted of respondents

from all regions of Slovakia, living in cities and rural areas, who are registered as unemployed at the labor office under the age of 55. 250 questionnaires were sent out, 206 were returned to us. The majority of women (72.33%) of the total number of respondents participated in our research.

2.1. In Our Research, We Set the Following Hypotheses

H1 We assume that the situation on the labor market in the post-pandemic period negatively affected people's experiences and caused a negative perception of the future, experiences are more intense in older people and with higher education. H2 We assume that long-term unemployment affects more women than men, more people with lower education and in higher age categories. The graphic representation (Fig 1) shows the relationship between age and the experience of the new situation on the labor market. As many as 52.83% of respondents aged 40 to 50 feel a desire to change the current situation. In this age category, 48.21% of respondents feel threatened in terms of health, social and economic risks, 46.67% feel helpless and intractable, and 42.11% feel indignant over the inaction or inadequate action of the state. In the aforementioned age category, the negative perception of the situation is most pronounced.

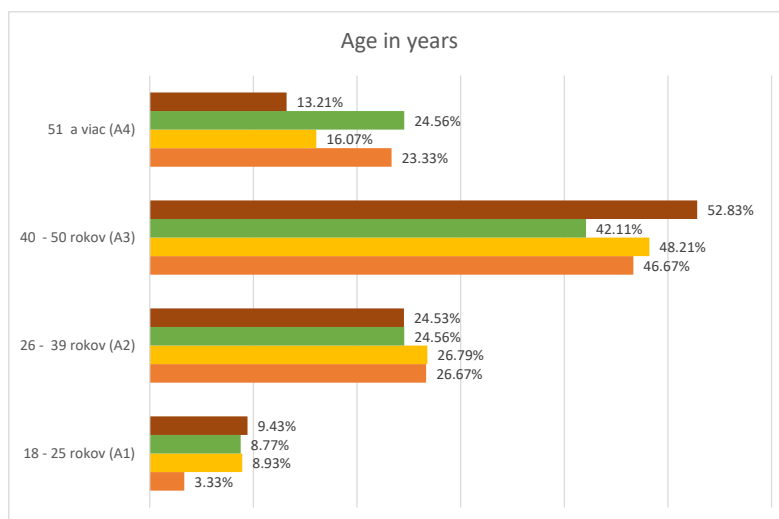


Figure 1: Relationship Between Age and Experiencing a New Situation on the Labor Market

Notes: Brown: willing to changes, Green: inadequate state action, Yellow: state of emergency - socio-economic and health risks, Orange: state of helplessness, an unsolvable situation.

Figure 2 shows the relationship between education and experiencing a new situation on the labor market. We see that up to 42.86% of respondents with a first-degree university education said that they felt threatened in terms of health, social and economic risks, respondents with a second-degree

university education (33.96%) felt a desire for change and an end to the situation, and 38.33% of respondents with a secondary education most intensely experienced a state of helplessness and intractability of the situation.

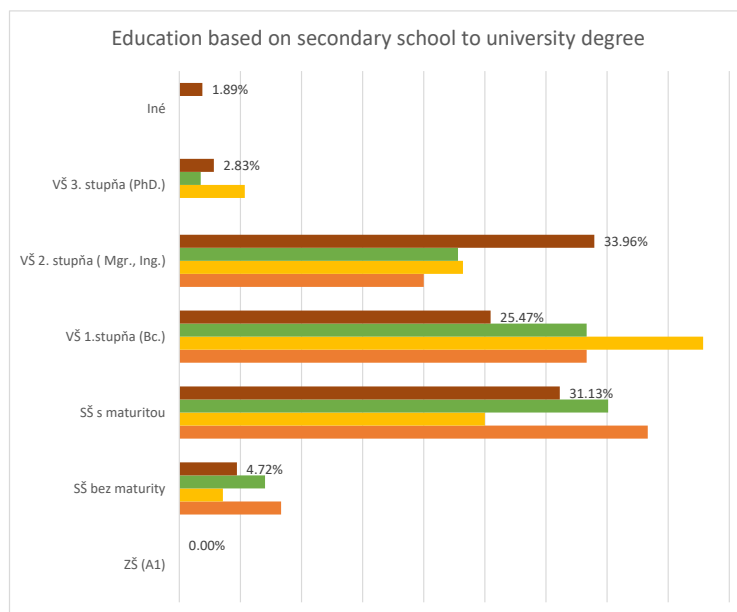


Figure 2: Relationship Between Education and Experiencing a New Situation on the Labor Market

Notes: Brown: willing to changes, Green: inadequate state action, Yellow: state of emergency - socio-economic and health risks, Orange: state of helplessness, an unsolvable situation.

In fig 3, it is possible to see the results of the answers of the respondents who responded to the question about the future, what the upcoming changes in the labor market will bring. The answers included expressions of desire for change, feelings of threat, including for the entire family, to the health, social and economic consequences of the crisis, as well as a perception of a state of helplessness and intractability of the

situation. In their answers, the respondents also expressed their indignation at the insufficient measures, even in some aspects at the inaction of the state. 46.43% of the respondents' experience uncertainty about the future and at the same time a state of threat, especially in terms of health, social and economic risks, and 45% also experience a state of helplessness and intractability of the situation.

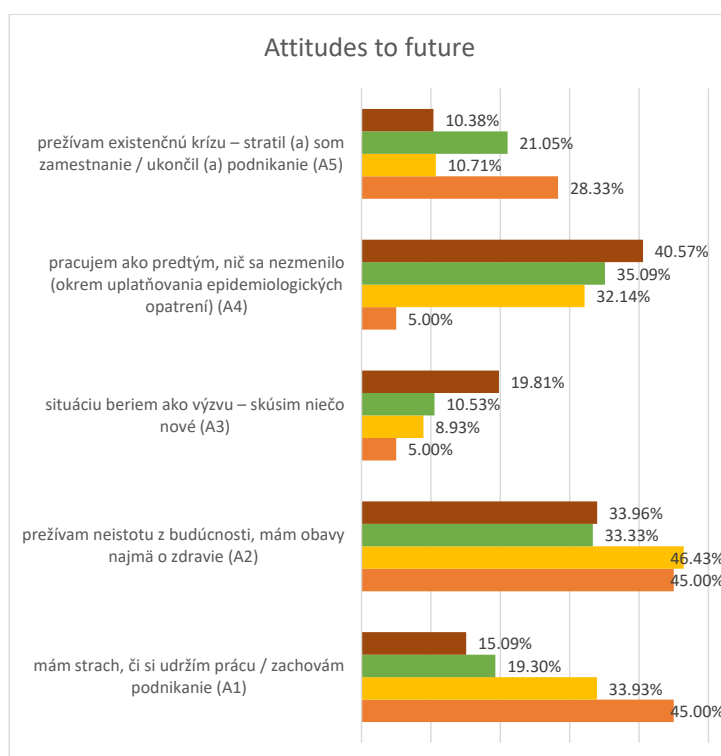


Figure 3: Thoughts About the Future

Notes: Brown: willing to changes, Green: inadequate state action, Yellow: state of emergency - socio-economic and health risks, Orange: state of helplessness, an unsolvable situation A5. have existential problems, A4. I have the same job as before the pandemic, A3. I take it as challenge, I will find something new, A2. I am afraid of the future and about my health, A1. I am afraid of keeping my job.

From the above, it follows that H1 as follows: We assume that the post-pandemic situation has negatively affected people's survival and caused a negative perception of the future, survival is more intense in people of older age and with higher education, was confirmed. In Graph 4, it is possible

to notice a comparison of the duration of unemployment in relation to gender. We see that the highest percentage (88.89%) of unemployed people are women with a duration of unemployment of 13 months or more, followed by 80% of women who have been unemployed for up to 6 months.

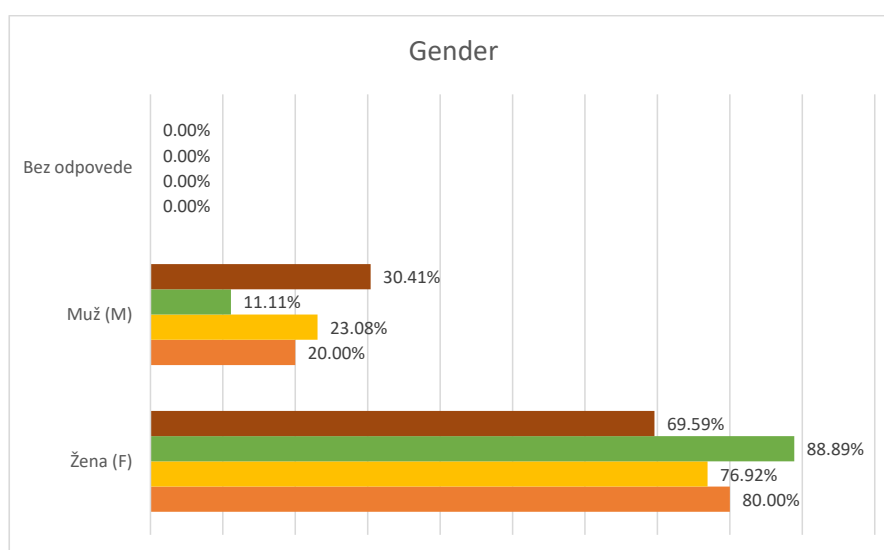


Figure 4: Correlation Between Gender and Unemployment

Notes: brown: I am not unemployed, green: more than 13 months without job, yellow: up to 12 months without job, orange: up to 6 months without job.

The research investigated the relationship between the duration of unemployment and the age of our respondents. As can be seen from figure 5, unemployment affected people between the ages of 40 and 50 the most (44.44%), with this age category having been unemployed for 13 months or more.

46.67% of the unemployed are from the same category of 40 and 50 years old with a duration of unemployment of up to 6 months. It is noteworthy that a high percentage (46.15%) is represented by unemployed people aged 18 to 25 with a duration of unemployment of 7 to 12 months.

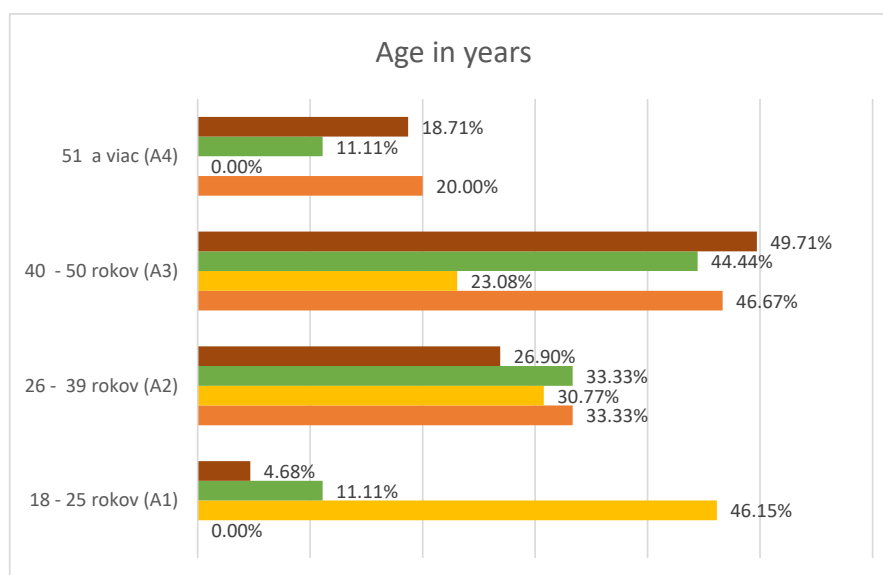


Figure 5: Correlation Between Age and Unemployment

Notes: brown: I am not unemployed, green: more than 13 months without job, yellow: up to 12 months without job, orange: up to 6 months without job.

We also examined the relationship between the respondents' educational attainment and the duration of their unemployment. As we found, the majority of unemployed people between 7 and 12 months are respondents with a secondary education completed with a high school diploma. The research results that long-term unemployment affects more women than men, more people with lower education, and in higher age categories, was confirmed.

3. Discussion

In the research we conducted, we found several key facts. Artazcoz et al. conducted a study focusing on the impact of unemployment on mental health [2]. One of the findings was that while approximately 35% of respondents experience symptoms of mental disorders during short-term unemployment, up to 65% of respondents experience these problems during long-term unemployment. Research indicates that unemployment has a more negative impact on men, because in most cases they are the breadwinners in the family, in which social roles are subsequently reversed and in some cases even broken down. Kali examined the impact of unemployment on mental health and on the social conditions of the family in his research [3]. Findings on the mutual connection between job loss associated with loss of income in the family and a tense atmosphere in the family are also described. Women who lost their jobs more often reported depressive symptoms, nervousness, and increased stress. Parents who lost their jobs felt uncertain about the future. In our survey, we found that up to 37.1% of

respondents felt afraid of the future. Klein found in her study that the psychological impacts of unemployment varied among respondents, especially in relation to the duration of unemployment [4]. Equally important is whether the unemployed person is a man or a woman, what their health status is, and what their background is.

The author found that long-term unemployed people (85%) experience unemployment worse and perceive it as a difficult life situation. She also states that in the case of long-term unemployed people, mental, health, and physical problems are more visible and intense than in the case of people who are unemployed for a short period of time. This is mainly because the problems associated with unemployment worsen over time. According to research by Mareš, Vyhliďal, Sirovátka, the duration of unemployment was shortest among respondents with a university education and longest among respondents with a primary education [5]. As many as 94.2% of university graduates reported a maximum duration of unemployment of one year. 74.7% of secondary school graduates and 51.8% of people with a primary education were also unemployed for less than one year. No respondent with a university education was unemployed for more than two years. Conversely, as many as 11.4% of respondents with a primary education were unemployed for more than three years. People with a primary education were unemployed repeatedly (44%), while in the case of people with a university education it was only 11% [6]. Kořta presents statistics on short-term and long-term unemployment, in

which 41.6% of unemployed without a high school diploma were short-term unemployed, but as many as 58.4% were long-term unemployed [7].

While the group of unemployed with higher education than a high school diploma is mostly made up of short-term unemployed persons (70.2%), 29.8% of respondents were long-term unemployed. Tomanek et al. (2024) showed impact on the pandemic on the several life situations including increased poverty, lower quality of life and higher short term unemployment and also the impact on the social services. Radková, Buzalová, Kenderešová expressed the psychological impacts of unemployment vary significantly among individuals, with key differences arising from the duration of unemployment, gender, health status, and personal background [8]. The findings suggest that long-term unemployment is perceived as a particularly challenging life situation and needs to be provided social services later.

Buzalová added that social services can help to increase the life situation in crisis and also there is need to balance financial support to clients [9,10].

4. Conclusion

Unemployment has adverse consequences for society and for unemployed individuals. The social consequences of long-term unemployment for an individual include, in particular, a reduced standard of living, increased tension in the family and in other interpersonal relationships, depression, loss of motivation and a sense of helplessness. Currently, the labor market is undergoing changes to which it is necessary to adapt.

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