The value of not-working among unemployed persons aged 45+; a qualitative study

Nienke Velterop¹,² Jac van der Klink²,³, Sandra Brouwer², Hilbrand Oldenhuis¹, Louis Polstra¹

1. Centre of Applied Labour Market Research, Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen, The Netherlands
2. Dept. of Health Sciences, Div. of Community and Occupational, University Medical Center Groningen, The Netherlands
3. Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Tilburg University, The Netherlands
Introduction

• Longterm unemployment is increasing among older workers

• How do they deal with this situation?
• What is valuable/important now that they no longer participate in paid work?
• What are markers for a meaningful and healthy life?
Theoretical framework

Latent Deprivation Theory (Jahoda, 1981)

- Latent benefits:

  *Time structure, activity, collective purpose, social contacts, identity*

Capability Approach (Sen, 1980)

- Approach to well-being assessed in terms of *real* opportunities to do the things a person has reason to value.

- *Capability is the extent to which a person is able and enabled to achieve valuable outcomes.*
Aim of the study

To gain insight into what are valuable life domains of older unemployed persons from a capability approach.

Sub aims are to identify:

1. How they succeed in obtaining the things they value (capability).
2. What is necessary to promote well-being in this group.
Method

- 20 semi-structured interviews
- Unemployed individuals aged 45+ receiving benefits
- Purposeful sampling
- Data analysis conform Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
- ATLAS.ti 7
- Latent Deprivation Theory and Capability Approach as frameworks
# Respondent characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Living area:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: 46-64</td>
<td></td>
<td>Duration of unemployment:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-49</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>≤ 5 years</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>≥ 10 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Daily activities

• ‘Work’ (16)
  e.g. voluntary work, informal caregiving

• Passive leisure (11)
  e.g. watching TV, reading, computer

• Active leisure (9)
  e.g. walking, bicycling, gardening
Valuable life domains resembled Jahoda’s latent benefits of employment:

- Being active, structure, social contact,
- having a goal, meaningfulness,
- feeling useful, being healthy, doing things I enjoy, freedom, independence, money.

→ paid work
Capability

• People differed in their success of achieving the outcomes they valued.
• Capability independent of the type of activities performed.
• Capability lower when paid work was valued more.
• Capability was related to well-being.
Conclusion

• Access to work-related benefits possible with non-work activities.

• Access to benefits ≠ capability

• Focus on access to valuable outcomes!

• Further research on the relation between life domains, access to benefits and capability
Thank you for your attention!

Special thanks to the municipalities of Delfzijl and Assen

Questions?