A New Relationship to Unemployment? Its Impact on Subjective Well-being

Research has shown that work plays a central role in the development and maintenance of psychological health (Blustein, 2008; Jahoda, 1981, 1982, 1997). In the same vein, “traditional” literature widely described the negative effects of unemployment on health and subjective well-being (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005; Paul & Moser, 2009). Nevertheless, in the global context of employment fragility and unemployment as a mass phenomenon, recent literature suggests changes in the way people view and experience unemployment (Clark, Knabe, & Rätzel, 2010; Galatzer-Levy, Bonnanno, & Mancini, 2010; Stam, Sieben, Verbakel, & de Graaf, 2015).

250 French people, 58,8% women (Mage = 38,5 ; SDage = 12,3), unemployed for 6 months or less (41,2%) or more than 3 years (13,6%) completed the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12 ; Goldberg, 1972) and the Unemployment Normalisation Questionnaire (Pignault & Houssemand, 2013) broken down into two headings: What is your opinion about unemployment today? What is your experience of unemployment today?

Results showed a negative relationship between perceived deleterious effects of unemployment and well-being, contrary to an opposite relation between unemployment, discerned as a positive experience (funemployment) and perceived health. Moreover, explaining one’s unemployment by evoking external factors (e.g. the economic crisis) was also positively correlated with perceived health. The communication will discuss the results of the study and its implications for unemployment guidance services and job-finding path.