

The Psychological Consequences of Unemployment: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

Background: The psychological consequences of unemployment are an important area of research, as joblessness has a significant impact on a person's psycho-emotional health. Understanding these consequences is crucial for developing strategies to mitigate the negative effects of unemployment on mental health. Despite the growing recognition of this issue, there is limited synthesis of existing research exploring the conceptualization, influencing factors, and theoretical approaches related to the psychological consequences of unemployment.

Purpose: To examine the psychological consequences of unemployment and their impact on mental health, with a focus on defining and conceptualizing these consequences.

Method: The review was conducted according to best practices, and the extended PRISMA protocol for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR) was used for reporting. Data were collected through systematic searches in databases ScienceDirect and Google Scholar, focusing on research from the last decade. All relevant articles were assessed for compliance with pre-established criteria.

Results: The review identified significant psychological consequences of unemployment, including heightened levels of depression, anxiety, and social isolation, as well as reduced self-esteem and cognitive impairments. The analysis revealed that financial pressure and the loss of social identity exacerbate these effects, often leading to chronic stress and long-term mental health challenges. Cultural, gender, and socio-economic factors, along with regional differences, play a significant role in shaping individual experiences of unemployment. For instance, in regions with higher unemployment rates, there is a reduction in stigma, which mitigates some negative effects, whereas in areas with low unemployment, feelings of isolation are intensified. Additionally, gender differences indicate that men often struggle due to societal expectations to be breadwinners, while women face additional stress from balancing domestic responsibilities with job searching. These findings highlight the necessity for targeted interventions, such as social support programs tailored to demographic and regional characteristics, to alleviate the psycho-emotional impacts of unemployment.

Conclusion: The results of this review will help deepen the understanding of the psychological consequences of unemployment, offering insights into how these consequences can be mitigated through targeted interventions. The study will also influence the development of policies and practices aimed at supporting individuals facing unemployment and improving their psycho-emotional health and well-being.

For citation:

Aksenova, A. A. (2024). The Psychological Consequences of Unemployment: A Scoping Review. *Journal of Employment and Career*, 3(4), 41–53. <https://doi.org/10.56414/jeac.2024.4.92>

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Data Availability Statement:

Current study data is available upon request from the corresponding author.

Received: 01.11.2024

Revised: 14.12.2024

Accepted: 15.12.2024

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Declaration of Competing Interest:

none declared.

KEYWORDS

psychological consequences; unemployment; mental health; psycho-emotional well-being; social factors; psychological theories; impact of unemployment, mental health interventions



Психологические последствия безработицы: обзор предметного поля

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Введение: Психологические последствия безработицы представляют собой важную область исследований, поскольку отсутствие работы оказывает значительное влияние на психоэмоциональное здоровье человека. Понимание этих последствий имеет ключевое значение для разработки стратегий, направленных на смягчение негативного воздействия безработицы на психическое здоровье. Несмотря на растущее внимание к данной проблеме, существует ограниченный синтез существующих исследований, посвященных концептуализации, факторам влияния и теоретическим подходам, связанным с психологическими последствиями безработицы.

Цель: Исследовать психологические последствия безработицы и их влияние на психическое здоровье, уделяя особое внимание определению и концептуализации этих последствий.

Материалы и методы: Обзор проводился в соответствии с лучшими практиками, а для отчетности использовался расширенный протокол PRISMA для обзорных анализов (PRISMA-ScR). Данные были собраны путем систематического поиска в базах данных ScienceDirect и Google Scholar, с акцентом на исследования за последнее десятилетие. Все соответствующие статьи оценивались на соответствие заранее установленным критериям.

Результаты: Обзор выявил значительные психологические последствия безработицы, включая повышенный уровень депрессии, тревожности и социальной изоляции, а также снижение самооценки и когнитивные нарушения. Анализ показал, что финансовое давление и потеря социальной идентичности усугубляют эти эффекты, часто приводя к хроническому стрессу и долгосрочным проблемам с психическим здоровьем. Культурные, гендерные и социально-экономические факторы, а также региональные различия играют значительную роль в формировании индивидуального опыта безработицы. Например, в регионах с высоким уровнем безработицы наблюдается снижение стигматизации, что смягчает некоторые негативные последствия, тогда как в регионах с низким уровнем безработицы чувство изоляции усиливается. Кроме того, гендерные различия указывают на то, что мужчины часто сталкиваются с трудностями из-за социальных ожиданий быть кормильцами, в то время как женщины испытывают дополнительный стресс из-за необходимости совмещать домашние обязанности с поиском работы. Эти результаты подчеркивают необходимость целенаправленных вмешательств, таких как программы социальной поддержки, адаптированные к демографическим и региональным особенностям, для смягчения психоэмоциональных последствий безработицы.

Выводы: Результаты данного обзора помогут углубить понимание психологических последствий безработицы, дать понимание того, как эти последствия могут быть смягчены с помощью целенаправленных вмешательств. Исследование также повлияет на разработку политик и практик, направленных на поддержку лиц, столкнувшихся с безработицей, и улучшение их психоэмоционального здоровья и благополучия.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

психологические последствия; безработица; психическое здоровье; психоэмоциональное благополучие; социальные факторы; психологические теории; влияние безработицы; вмешательства в области психического здоровья

Для цитирования:

Аксенова, А. А. (2024). Психологические последствия безработицы: обзор предметного поля. *Журнал работа и карьера*, 3(4), 41–53. <https://doi.org/10.56414/jeac.2024.4.92>

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Заявление о доступности

данных: данные текущего исследования доступны по запросу у корреспондирующего автора.

Поступила: 01.11.2024

Поступила после
рецензирования: 14.12.2024

Принята к публикации:
15.12.2024

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Конфликт интересов:

авторы сообщают об отсутствии конфликта интересов.



INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is a significant social and economic issue that profoundly affects people’s psycho-emotional well-being. Job loss is associated with various negative consequences, such as depression, anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and impaired social interactions (Van den Bergh et al., 2024; Crowe & Butterworth, 2016). The relevance of studying this topic is particularly high in the context of modern social and economic changes, which increase the number of vulnerable groups and complicate reintegration into the labor market.

Existing studies have shown that unemployment leads to long-term changes in mental health, including increased levels of stress and social isolation (Bijlsma et al., 2017; Kusano et al., 2023). At the same time, the impact of unemployment on mental health varies depending on factors such as social support, financial stability, education level, and access to professional assistance (Flint & Shelton, 2013; Crowe & Butterworth, 2016). Despite a substantial amount of research in this field, there are very few review studies that combine these findings and provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

The main challenge lies in the lack of a systematic approach that addresses the key aspects of the psychological consequences of unemployment (Van den Bergh et al., 2024). Cultural and social differences in the perception of unemployment, as well as the role of regional contexts, remain underexplored (Kusano et al., 2023). This makes it difficult to develop social programs and support strategies.

This research aims to synthesize and systematize knowledge on the psychological effects of unemployment by analyzing its conceptualization, influencing factors, theoretical models, and data gaps. It also examines the underexplored role of cultural and social differences.

Research Questions

- RQ#1: What psychological consequences of unemployment have been identified and conceptualized in the context of mental health?
- RQ#2: What individual and social factors amplify or mitigate the psychological consequences of unemployment?
- RQ#3: What is the rationale for studying the psychological consequences of unemployment, and why is it important for understanding psycho-emotional health?
- RQ#4: Are the psychological consequences of unemployment based on any theories, and what theoretical approaches are used to explain the impact of unemployment on psycho-emotional well-being?

METHOD

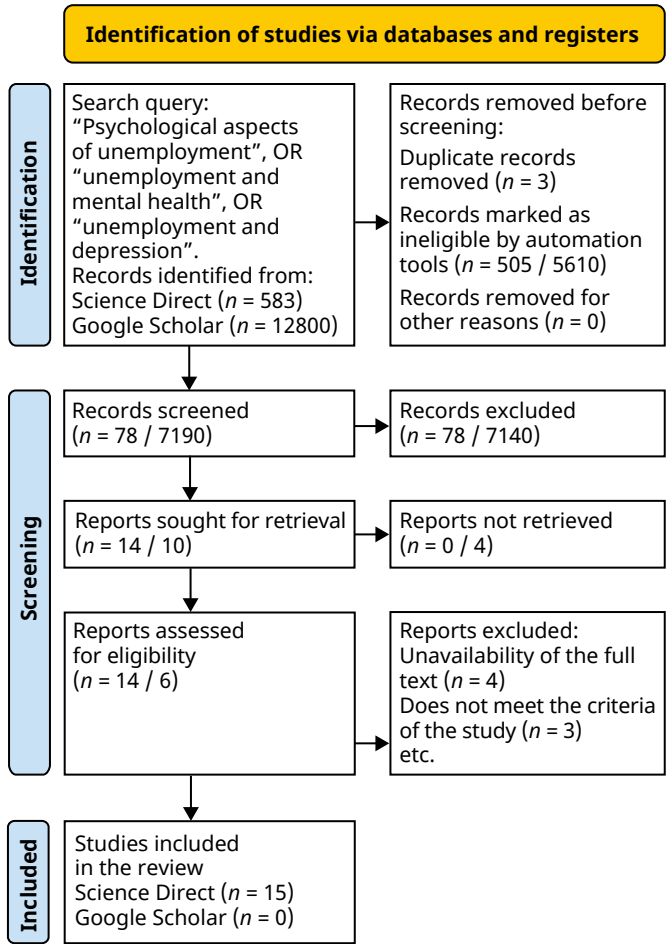
Protocol and Transparency Statement

This study was conducted honestly and objectively. An a priori protocol was developed before the commencement of the review, and any deviations from the protocol will be thoroughly described in the text of the review. The review was not registered. This manuscript represents an accurate and transparent account of the research conducted, with no important aspects of the study omitted. The PRISMA guidelines were used for reporting this review (see Figure 1).

Inclusion Criteria

The document selection criteria were organized according to the recommended structure (Population, Concept, and Context) for scoping reviews, including the type of publication. (Table 1). Additionally, only peer-reviewed articles and scholarly publications that addressed the stated research questions were considered.

Figure 1
PRISMA flow diagram



Sources of Information

The search was conducted in September 2024 using two scientific databases: ScienceDirect and Google Scholar. These platforms provided access to a variety of peer-reviewed scientific articles and empirical studies.

Search

For the document search, I used the following query: “psychological effects of unemployment” OR “unemployment and mental health” OR “unemployment and depression”. The search was conducted in the ScienceDirect and Google Scholar databases, utilizing the Boolean operator (OR) to combine key terms.

The search strategy focused on identifying relevant studies related to the psychological consequences of unemployment, including aspects of mental health and depression. The terms used covered the key elements of the issue under investigation, enabling access to a broad range of publications.

Selection of Evidence Sources

The selected articles from the databases were imported into the Zotero library, and duplicates were removed. The selection process included two stages: (1) Reading titles and abstracts, (2) Reading text of the articles in detail. At

each stage, potentially relevant studies meeting the inclusion criteria (Table 1) were considered. Some documents were excluded because their titles and abstracts were irrelevant, while others were excluded for not addressing the research questions. Additionally, the reference lists of articles selected during the search process were reviewed to identify additional potentially relevant sources. All potentially suitable materials were organized into a data table and analyzed before being included in the final review.

Data Systematization Process and Data Elements

I processed all the selected documents, and the information was organized according to the established criteria. A standardized Excel table was created (Table 2)¹. Each entry includes the main publication details, such as the article title, authors, and year of publication. Key research elements, including the study’s aims, design, context, and studied population, are also presented in the table. In addition, special attention was given to the content section: it briefly outlines the conceptualization of the psychological consequences of unemployment, individual and social factors influencing their intensity, the rationale for the study, and the theoretical approaches used to explain the impact

¹ Full Table is available at https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-Ax_MU8IS9PPu2y9yyMsbRDi59izeJG9/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=103802557963301253133&rtpof=true&sd=true

Table 1
Eligibility criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion	Justification
Population	People experiencing unemployment or job loss, including those facing employment instability	Employed individuals without confirmed periods of unemployment or studies that do not focus on the unemployed	The study is focused on examining the psychological consequences specific to unemployment and job loss
Concept	Studies examining the psychological and emotional consequences of unemployment, including factors such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, or reduced well-being	Studies that focus solely on the physical consequences of unemployment without considering psychological aspects	The aim of the study is to explore psycho-emotional consequences with a focus on mental health
Context	Studies conducted in social, economic, or societal conditions where unemployment or employment instability is a factor	Studies not related to the consequences of unemployment (e.g., work processes or unrelated medical conditions)	The review focuses on contextual factors related to unemployment and their impact on mental well-being
Language	English	Non-English sources	The author of the study is proficient in English, and resources for translation are limited
Time period	2012–2024	Studies published before 2012	This period includes both historical and contemporary data, particularly related to major economic and global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic
Types of articles	Open Sources: peer-reviewed scientific articles, empirical studies, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, analytical articles	Sources without peer review, such as personal opinions, blogs, or articles without empirical data, are excluded	Only high-quality and peer-reviewed sources are used to ensure the reliability and scientific validity of the study’s findings
Geographic	Studies from any geographical location	Studies from any geographical location	The psychological consequences of unemployment are a global issue that requires a geographically inclusive approach

Table 2
Data Charting Elements

Publication details	Associated question(s)cc
Study title	–
Author(s)	Who are the authors of the study/document?
Year of publication	What year was the study/document published?
General details	
Aims / purpose	What are the aims or purpose of the study/document?
Study design	What is the study/document design?
Study Setting / Context	In what context is the research being conducted (e.g., psychology, sociology, economics)?
Study population	Which population is being studied?
Content	
Conceptualization of Psychological Consequences	What psychological consequences of unemployment have been identified and conceptualized in the context of mental health?
Influencing Factors	What individual and social factors amplify or mitigate the psychological consequences of unemployment?
Rationale for Study	What is the justification for studying the psychological consequences of unemployment, and why is this important for understanding psycho-emotional health?
Theoretical Foundations	Are the psychological consequences of unemployment grounded in any theories, and what theoretical approaches are used to explain the impact of unemployment on psycho-emotional well-being?

of unemployment on psycho-emotional well-being. This approach ensures that the materials are aligned with the research questions and that conclusions are as relevant as possible to the study’s objectives².

Summing up and Presenting the Results

Findings were then categorized based on themes and research questions. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns, relationships, and recurring themes, with attention given to variations in findings across regions, populations, or study designs. A narrative summary (a structured, descriptive synthesis of the findings) helped to provide a clear and coherent overview of the key themes, trends, and patterns identified in the included studies emphasizing qualitative interpretation and contextualization of the data. This step also included identifying knowledge gaps where research is limited, conflicting, or absent, and suggesting directions for future studies.

During the analysis, key psychological consequences of unemployment were identified: a decrease in self-esteem, loss of social identity, increased anxiety and depression due to financial pressure, social isolation, stigmatization, and prolonged stress leading to physical health issues. Demographic and social factors, such as age, gender, education level, and regional conditions, were also noted as influencing the extent of the negative impact. Individual resources, such as resilience and stress management skills, as well as social support and economic assistance, were identified as key mitigating factors.

² Table with answers to the research questions is available at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1SDC6UAGozwqKmhYkrYY8RhZ8ADDOJonq/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=103802557963301253133&rtopf=true&sd=true>

RESULTS

Selection of Evidence Sources

An electronic search in the databases revealed 583 potentially relevant documents in ScienceDirect and 12,800 in Google Scholar. After applying filters for publication date, article type, and availability, the number of documents was reduced to 78 in ScienceDirect and 7,190 in Google Scholar. In ScienceDirect, based on the analysis of titles and abstracts, I selected 14 relevant articles. After reading the full text, 12 of them were found to meet the inclusion criteria and were kept for further analysis, while 2 did not address the research questions regarding the psychological consequences of unemployment and the factors influencing them. In Google Scholar, I reviewed the first 100 articles, as the following ones did not meet the requirements. From these, 10 articles based on their titles, abstracts and texts were identified as relevant. Four of them were unavailable due to closed access. After analyzing the full text, one article was found not to answer most of the research questions and was excluded. A duplicate check revealed no matches. As a result, the review included 12 articles from ScienceDirect and 5 from Google Scholar.

Characteristics of Sources of Evidence

The largest number of publications is in 2023 – 5 articles, which indicates a growing interest in the topic recently. The next years in terms of the number of publications are 2021 and 2016 – 3 articles each. The minimum number of materials was published in 2013 – 1 article (Figure 2).

The geographical origin of the articles is diverse. The research is presented from countries such as Belgium, Australia, USA, Finland, the UK, Latvia, Sweden, Germany,

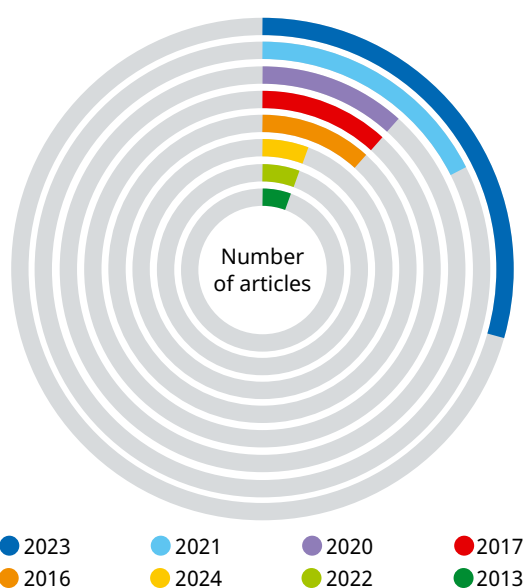
Ireland, Italy, and Bangladesh. There are no articles from Africa, which may reflect regional differences in the availability of research resources (Figure 3).

Keywords Analysis

The analysis of keywords related to the psychological impact of unemployment highlights several interconnected research areas, grouped into clusters of different colors.

Figure 2

Distribution by year



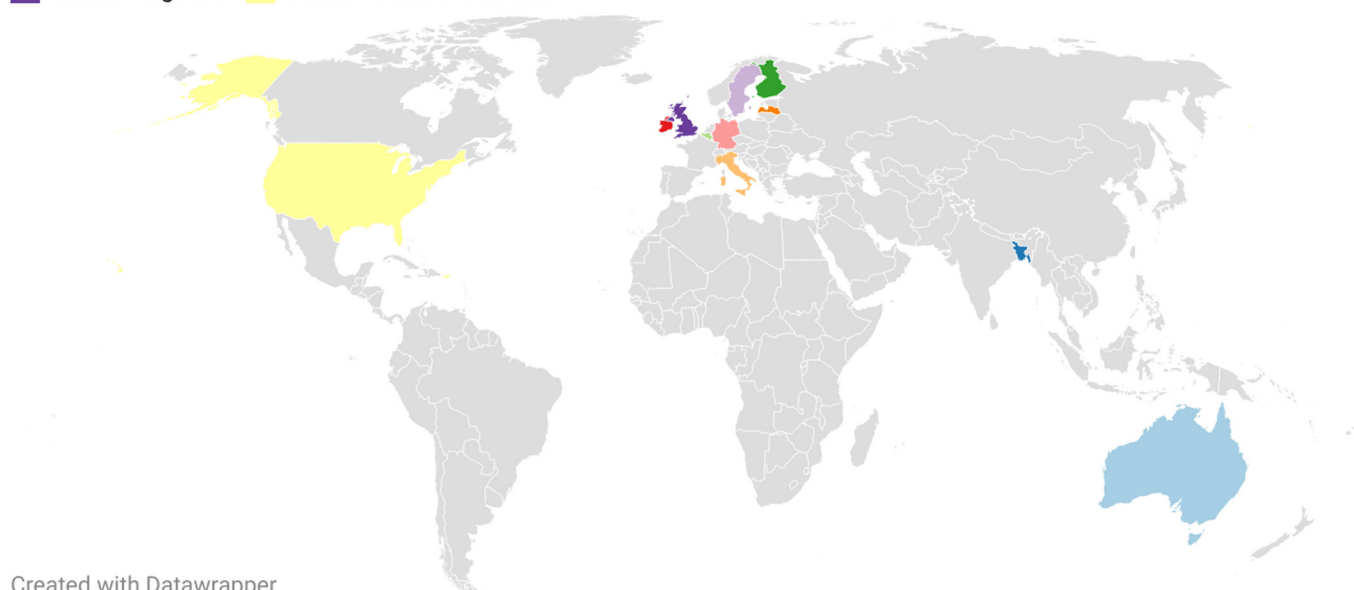
The central focus is on the study of mental health (red cluster), where keywords such as “unemployment,” “depression,” “mental health,” “psychological consequences of unemployment,” “mental disorders,” “distress,” “psychological effects,” and “stress” emphasize the influence of job loss on an individual’s emotional state. Research in this area is primarily concerned with negative phenomena such as depressive symptoms, stress, and the overall deterioration of mental well-being.

Another group of keywords reflects the social aspects and long-term consequences of unemployment (blue cluster). Terms such as “long-term unemployment,” “social determinants of health,” “isolation,” “learned helplessness,” “employment programs,” “financial hardship,” “government support,” and “economic support” underscore the importance of social and state assistance in mitigating the negative effects of prolonged joblessness. These studies address issues like social isolation and financial instability, which are often associated with extended unemployment, as well as the effectiveness of various employment programs.

Cognitive and emotional aspects are also emphasized (purple cluster), where keywords such as “cognitive processes,” “cognitive disorders,” “emotional burnout,” “connection between emotions and thinking,” “self-blame,” and “self-efficacy” demonstrate the impact of unemployment on thought processes and emotional reactions. This research highlights the role of individuals’ perceptions of their capabilities and adaptation strategies in the context of job loss.

Figure 3

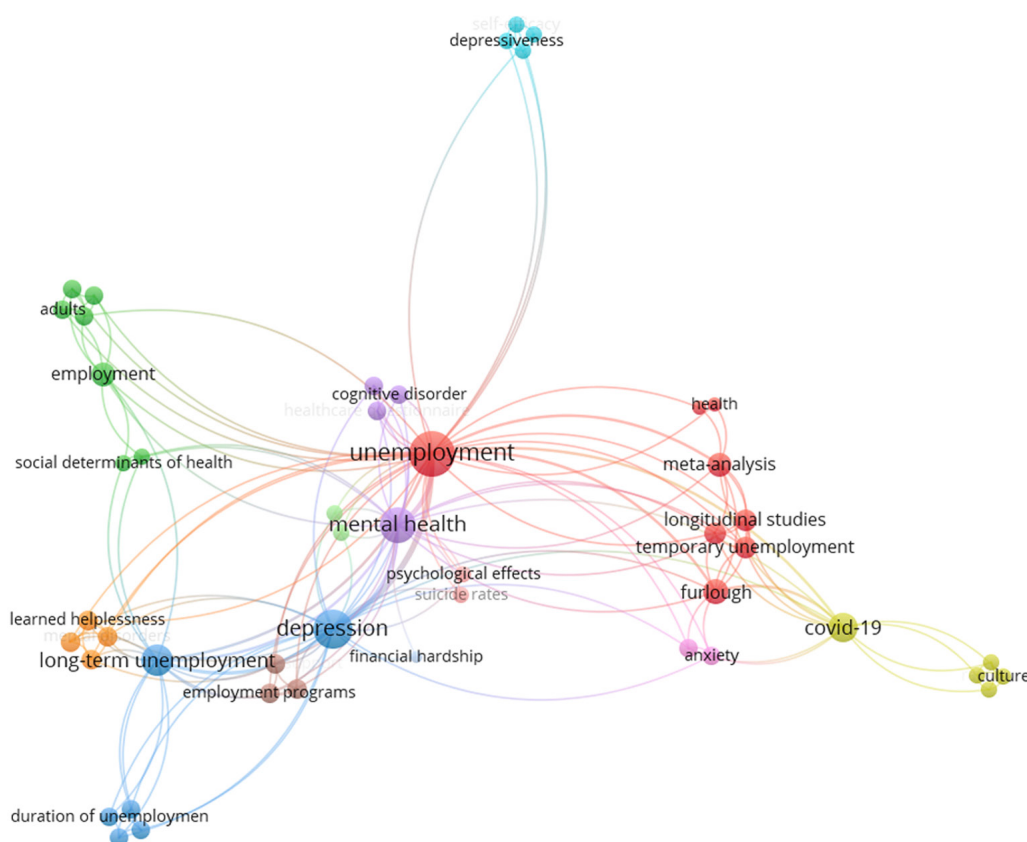
Geographical distribution



Created with Datawrapper

Figure 4

Keywords map co-occurrence in VosViewer



Methods of analysis and research (green cluster) occupy an important place in this topic as well. Keywords such as “systematic review,” “meta-analysis,” “meta-regression,” “longitudinal studies,” “panel study,” “causal inference,” and “g-formula” indicate the extensive use of systematic and analytical approaches to uncover causal relationships between unemployment and its consequences.

A separate research direction is tied to the COVID-19 pandemic (yellow cluster), which has exacerbated many aspects of the issue. Keywords such as “COVID-19,” “temporary unemployment,” “furlough,” “culture,” and “gender differences” point to new challenges that have arisen during the pandemic. These studies examine how temporary unemployment and cultural differences have heightened stress factors, as well as highlight the gender-specific impacts of the pandemic.

Another area of focus involves age and demographic differences (orange cluster). Terms such as “adults,” “young adults,” “working-age population,” and “gender” reflect research interest in how various age groups and demographic factors influence the perception and consequences of unemployment. For instance, young people may face unique barriers in job searching compared to older generations.

The final cluster pertains to aspects of physical health and well-being (light blue cluster). Keywords such as “health,” “well-being,” “heart rate variability,” “healthcare questionnaires,” and “happiness” emphasize that unemployment significantly affects not only mental health but also overall physical condition. Research shows that job loss can be accompanied by health deterioration and a decrease in life satisfaction.

The Mental Health Consequences of Unemployment

Unemployment has a significant impact on mental health, leading to a range of negative psychological consequences. One of the most common effects is an increase in psychological stress and anxiety (Van den Bergh et al., 2024; Crowe & Butterworth, 2016; Blomqvist et al., 2023). Losing a job is often associated with feelings of instability, loss of control, and an inability to meet basic needs, which creates a foundation for the development of anxiety disorders. The financial difficulties that typically accompany unemployment amplify this effect, creating additional stress factors (Crowe & Butterworth, 2016; Van den Bergh et al., 2024). Studies emphasize that psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety may be linked to impairments in cognitive control and reduced emotion regulation, which in turn worsen overall well-being (Blomqvist et al., 2023).

One of the most serious and widespread psychological consequences of unemployment is depression (Wilson & Finch, 2021; Picchio & Ubaldi, 2023; Amanullah & Islam, 2023; Bijlsma et al., 2017; Crowe & Butterworth, 2016; Priestley, 2020; Blomqvist et al., 2023; Kusano et al., 2024; Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020). Losing a job disrupts the structure of daily life, depriving an individual of a source of income, social role, and sense of significance, creating the perfect breeding ground for depressive disorders (Bijlsma et al., 2017; Crowe & Butterworth, 2016; Priestley, 2020). Unemployed individuals face a profound sense of loss, which intensifies as the duration of unemployment increases (Kusano et al., 2024; Blomqvist et al., 2023). The loss of hope for returning to work, feelings of helplessness, and lowered self-esteem become key aspects in the development of depressive symptoms (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020; Kusano et al., 2024). Long-term unemployment plays an especially important role in the development of chronic depression. Research shows that individuals who remain unemployed for an extended period begin to perceive their situation as hopeless. This leads to an increase in feelings of despair, which intensifies as opportunities for finding new employment become less attainable (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020; Bijlsma et al., 2017). Financial instability that accompanies unemployment is also closely linked to the development of depression (Crowe & Butterworth, 2016; Amanullah & Islam, 2023). A lack of resources to meet basic needs exacerbates stress and creates constant pressure on the psyche (Priestley, 2020; Picchio & Ubaldi, 2023). Furthermore, depression can manifest as reduced motivation and apathy, further complicating attempts to return to an active life and find work, thus creating a vicious cycle. Some studies also emphasize that depression caused by unemployment affects not only the unemployed but also their family members, intensifying interpersonal conflicts and causing emotional tension within the family (Amanullah & Islam, 2023; Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020).

Another important psychological consequence of unemployment is social isolation. Losing a job often leads to a loss of social contacts, as many connections are formed through professional activities. Unemployed individuals face a reduction in social activity, which gradually enhances feelings of loneliness and alienation (Crowe & Butterworth, 2016; Morrish & Medina-Lara, 2021; Priestley, 2020). People who are unemployed may avoid socializing due to feelings of shame related to job loss and lowered self-esteem (Crowe & Butterworth, 2016). The loss of professional status and financial difficulties also limit participation in public or social events (Crowe & Butterworth, 2016; Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020). Prolonged isolation can lead to a reduction in social support, which plays an important role in overcoming stressful situations (Wels et al., 2022).

Long-term unemployment exacerbates isolation, as even previously maintained connections gradually break down. This is especially true for vulnerable groups such as the el-

derly, youth, or migrants (Morrish & Medina-Lara, 2021). In some cases, isolation becomes a vicious circle: loneliness increases stress and anxiety, which in turn hinders efforts to establish new connections or return to the job market (Priestley, 2020). Moreover, social isolation affects not only the unemployed but also their families. The lack of stable income and social activity leads to tension in interpersonal relationships, intensifying conflicts and emotional distancing within the family (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020; Crowe & Butterworth, 2016).

Individual and Social Factors that Increase Consequences

The impact of unemployment on mental health can be aggravated or mitigated by various factors. One of the most significant aggravators of negative consequences is financial instability. The lack of resources to meet basic needs causes chronic stress, increases anxiety, and contributes to the development of depression. Financial pressure deprives individuals of a sense of security, fosters feelings of hopelessness, and diminishes motivation to act (Crowe & Butterworth, 2016; Amanullah & Islam, 2023; Priestley, 2020). These challenges affect not only the unemployed but also their families, where emotional tension increases, and conflicts escalate, adding to the stress (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020).

Long-term unemployment exerts particularly severe cumulative effects. The longer a person remains unemployed, the more pronounced their feelings of helplessness, apathy, and loss of social significance become. Prolonged absence from professional activity reduces motivation, undermines professional identity, and may lead to chronic depression (Bijlsma et al., 2017; Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020). Social stigma surrounding unemployment, particularly in cases of long-term joblessness, exacerbates feelings of isolation and hopelessness, making the return to normal life even more challenging (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020).

Social isolation is another powerful factor that intensifies the negative effects of unemployment. Job loss often results in the loss of regular social connections, heightening feelings of loneliness and uselessness (Morrish & Medina-Lara, 2021). In societies where professional activity is closely linked to social integration, job loss is perceived as the loss of not only income but also a social role. This renders individuals more vulnerable to stress and depression.

Cultural and regional characteristics play an important role in shaping reactions to unemployment. In countries with individualistic cultures, where the emphasis is on independence, self-reliance, and personal achievements, job loss is often seen as a personal failure. This is because in such societies, professional activity is a critical indicator of personal success and social value (Ishmuhametov & Palma, 2016; Flint et al., 2013). Meanwhile, in regions with high unem-

ployment rates, a sense of collective crisis emerges, exacerbating the negative impact on mental health. High labor market competition, lack of prospects, and limited opportunities for professional growth heighten feelings of helplessness among the population. This is particularly evident in communities where economic difficulties are perceived as systemic rather than temporary. People in such conditions often experience diminished motivation, as they see limited chances for restoring their professional roles (Flint et al., 2013). Furthermore, the collective sense of crisis can lead to increased social tension. In communities with high unemployment, the likelihood of stigmatizing those who have lost their jobs rises, further worsening their emotional state (Ishmuhametov & Palma, 2016). However, in collectivist cultures with strong social cohesion, unemployment is often viewed as a challenge faced not only by the individual but by the entire community. This encourages mobilization of resources to support those who have lost their jobs, reducing stress and psychological distress in such contexts (Ishmuhametov & Palma, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing issues related to unemployment. Restrictions, economic instability, and social isolation heightened anxiety and depression among those who lost their jobs (Kusano et al., 2023; Blomqvist et al., 2023). In Sweden, for instance, levels of depression significantly increased among individuals who experienced job instability during this period. These individuals simultaneously faced economic instability and social isolation, making them particularly vulnerable (Blomqvist et al., 2023).

Individual and Social Mitigating Factors

Despite the numerous aggravating factors, mechanisms exist that can mitigate the effects of unemployment. Social support plays a crucial role. Emotional and material assistance from family, friends, or communities helps individuals cope with challenges and reduces the risk of developing depression (Crowe & Butterworth, 2016; Wels et al., 2022). For example, government programs such as the job retention scheme in the United Kingdom have proven effective in reducing stress levels among temporarily unemployed individuals by providing financial support and fostering confidence in the future (Wels et al., 2022).

Personal resources, such as high self-efficacy, optimism, and a sense of control, are also essential in overcoming the negative consequences of unemployment. Individuals with these traits perceive job loss as a temporary challenge, actively seek new opportunities, and are more resilient to stress (Petrowski et al., 2017; Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020). Conversely, individuals with a "Type D" personality, characterized by a tendency toward negative emotions and social inhibition, are at higher risk of depression due to their lower activity in problem-solving and greater susceptibility to feelings of helplessness (Petrowski et al., 2017).

Government support and access to retraining programs also help reduce stress among the unemployed by providing them with new prospects and restoring their sense of control over the situation (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020; Wels et al., 2022). In societies with a high degree of social solidarity, individuals feel part of a community, enabling them to receive more emotional and material support and reducing the risk of psychological disorders (Ishmuhametov & Palma, 2016).

Psychological Consequences of Unemployment: the Need for Study and Practical Significance

The study of the psychological consequences of unemployment plays a key role in shaping socio-economic policies, as it helps reduce the costs of treating mental disorders and increases the efficiency of social support systems (Blomqvist et al., 2023). For instance, accelerating unemployment benefit payments and implementing temporary employment programs help mitigate the deterioration of the mental and emotional well-being of the unemployed, thereby stabilizing both their condition and the strain on social institutions (Crowe & Butterworth, 2016; Wels et al., 2022). These measures not only support the unemployed during crises but also lay the foundation for long-term improvements in public well-being.

Moreover, research facilitates the development of targeted support programs for the most vulnerable populations. Youth, ethnic minorities, individuals with chronic illnesses, and those experiencing prolonged unemployment are at higher risk of psychological disorders (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020; Amanullah & Islam, 2023). Creating tailored programs, such as professional retraining courses, not only increases their chances of employment but also enhances their self-esteem and confidence. Such interventions are particularly crucial for the successful reintegration of these individuals into society and the economy (Kusano et al., 2023).

Preventing mental illnesses associated with unemployment is another important focus. Early diagnosis of depression and anxiety caused by job loss prevents these conditions from becoming chronic, significantly reducing long-term social and medical costs (Bijlsma et al., 2017; Crowe & Butterworth, 2016; Blomqvist et al., 2023). Interventions conducted in the first months after job loss, such as crisis support or group therapy, have proven highly effective in reducing the risk of severe mental disorders and improving the overall condition of the unemployed (Blomqvist et al., 2023).

Stabilizing public well-being also depends on studying the psychological consequences of unemployment. Job loss negatively affects not only the unemployed themselves but also their families, increasing conflict levels and reducing emotional support within households (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020; Zhao, 2023; Petrowski et al., 2017). Timely

support measures strengthen family ties, prevent emotional turmoil, and facilitate a quicker return to normal life. This helps reduce overall social tension and increase society's resilience to economic shocks (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020; Zhao, 2023).

The study of the psychological consequences of unemployment also yields long-term economic benefits. Individuals with stable mental and emotional health adapt more quickly to the labor market, find jobs more often, and are less likely to become unemployed again (Bijlsma et al., 2017; Wels et al., 2022; Flint et al., 2013; Amanullah & Islam, 2023). Professional training programs that combine skill development with psychological support are particularly effective in enhancing employability and competitiveness in the labor market. These programs contribute to increased productivity and reduced economic losses (Flint et al., 2013; Amanullah & Islam, 2023).

Integrating psychological support into the social protection system is another significant outcome of such research. Unemployment is traditionally seen as an economic issue; however, its psychological consequences necessitate the inclusion of counseling and support programs in employment centers (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020; Wilson & Finch, 2021). This not only reduces the stigma associated with seeking help but also makes support more accessible, especially for those in crisis (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020; Wilson & Finch, 2021).

Finally, research aids in developing preventive measures during economic and social crises, such as pandemics. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the effectiveness of temporary job retention programs, which minimized the mental and emotional toll on workers (Wels et al., 2022; Blomqvist et al., 2023). The experience of crises highlights the need to create flexible support systems capable of adapting to rapidly changing conditions and protecting both the economic and mental health of the population (Wels et al., 2022).

Theoretical Foundations for Studying the Psychological Consequences of Unemployment

The study of the psychological consequences of unemployment is based on various theoretical approaches that encompass cognitive, emotional, social, and economic aspects. These theories provide valuable insights into the mechanisms of unemployment's impact and serve as the foundation for developing effective measures to mitigate its consequences. Often, the consequences of unemployment are explained through theories of emotion regulation and resilience. These approaches emphasize the importance of cognitive control in managing emotional responses to stress, such as job loss (Van den Bergh et al., 2024). Understanding how people use adaptive or maladaptive strategies helps identify at-risk groups and develop interventions to support mental health during unemployment.

Economic and social theories also play an important role. For example, the concept of the "poverty cycle" shows how people get trapped in a vicious cycle of unemployment and low-quality jobs, where financial difficulties and lack of social support exacerbate psychological problems (Crowe & Butterworth, 2016). These approaches highlight the importance of structural factors, such as financial stability and the presence of social ties, in mitigating the consequences of unemployment.

Classical sociological theories, such as Émile Durkheim's concept of social integration, emphasize the importance of social cohesion and norms for mental health. For example, in regions with high social integration and developed social capital, the suicide rate among the unemployed is lower because collective norms and community support soften the psychological impact of job loss (Kusano et al., 2023). This approach underscores the cultural and societal aspects of unemployment's impact on mental health.

The psychological theory of role loss explains how unemployment disrupts a person's social identity and sense of self-worth. Work provides structure, social connections, and self-esteem, and its loss often leads to depression and feelings of helplessness (Bijlsma et al., 2017). Stress theory complements this by considering unemployment as a chronic stressor caused by financial instability and loss of social status, which intensifies psychological distress (Petrowski et al., 2017).

From the perspective of the resource-based approach, unemployment is seen as the loss of important resources—financial, social, and psychological—which leads to cascading consequences for mental health. This approach emphasizes the need for support to prevent long-term negative effects (Wilson & Finch, 2021). The theory of relative deprivation also suggests that comparing oneself to working peers intensifies feelings of dissatisfaction and isolation, aggravating psychological problems (Priestley, 2020).

Latent deprivation theories, such as Maria Jahoda's concept, explain that work serves not only economic but also important non-material functions, such as structuring time, providing a collective purpose, and facilitating social contacts. The loss of work deprives an individual of these functions, leading to a significant decrease in psychological well-being (Flint et al., 2013; Amanullah & Islam, 2023).

Finally, integrative approaches, such as the biopsychosocial model, consider the interrelationship of biological, psychological, and social factors in the impact of unemployment on mental health. This approach allows for the consideration of both individual vulnerabilities and systemic factors, creating conditions for targeted support during periods of unemployment (Marrone & Swarbrick, 2020; Zhao, 2023).

DISCUSSION

This scoping review analyzed 6,115 articles, ultimately selecting 17 studies to explore the psychological consequences of unemployment and the factors influencing these effects. The findings reveal critical gaps in the existing literature, underscoring the fragmented and often secondary treatment of this topic. Many studies focused on short-term effects or examined unemployment's psychological impact within broader contexts, limiting the depth of analysis and preventing a holistic understanding of its long-term consequences (Dooley, 1996; Jin, 1995; Winefield, 1995; Murphy & Athanasou, 1999; Fecher, 2017). For example, while some studies emphasized specific aspects like depression or social isolation (McGee & Thompson, 2015; Van den Bergh et al., 2024; Kusano et al., 2023; Wels et al., 2022; Bartelink et al., 2019; Milner et al., 2023), they rarely addressed the interplay of factors such as gender, cultural differences, or socioeconomic status.

This review highlights that unemployment has a multifaceted psychological impact, affecting mental health, self-esteem, and social identity. Key findings indicate that financial stress and the loss of social identity are among the most significant exacerbating factors, with long-term unemployment amplifying risks of chronic depression, apathy, and reduced motivation. Vulnerable groups, such as young people, older adults, and migrants, face heightened risks due to their specific social and economic challenges. The findings also emphasize the mitigating role of social and individual resources, such as resilience, community support, and government programs, which reduce isolation and foster recovery.

The findings align with previous research but also expand the scope of understanding. Studies on depression and anxiety among unemployed individuals, for instance, provide valuable insights (Boardman & Rinaldi, 2021; Paul & Moser, 2009; Norström & Grönqvist, 2015), yet they often fail to integrate broader contextual factors like cultural norms or economic conditions. This review's broader conceptual approach allows for a more nuanced analysis of the interaction between individual and structural factors, such as social support systems, which are often overlooked in narrowly focused studies. For instance, cultural differences in stigma around unemployment (Kusano et al., 2023; Petrowski et al., 2017) may significantly influence the effectiveness of support programs, a factor warranting further investigation.

Despite its contributions, this review reveals significant gaps in the literature. The predominance of studies from high-income countries such as the USA, Australia, and Western Europe limits the generalizability of findings to regions with differing economic and cultural contexts. Additionally, the reliance on cross-sectional designs in most studies constrains the ability to examine causal relationships or longitudinal changes in psychological states during prolonged

unemployment. Furthermore, underrepresentation of specific social groups, such as ethnic minorities or marginalized populations, diminishes the inclusivity of existing research. Structural and societal factors, including government support programs, remain insufficiently explored despite their critical role in mitigating unemployment's impact.

This review underscores the need for future research to adopt longitudinal designs that explore the evolving psychological effects of unemployment over time. Such studies should focus on diverse populations, particularly those from low- and middle-income countries, to understand cultural and regional variations. Addressing structural factors, such as the role of social safety nets and community-based initiatives, could provide actionable insights for policymakers. Additionally, the development of culturally adaptive support programs that integrate psychological counseling, professional retraining, and community engagement can help address the emotional and social challenges faced by unemployed individuals.

The thematic synthesis presented in this review contributes to the literature by integrating social, cultural, and individual dimensions of unemployment's psychological consequences. By emphasizing the complex interplay of financial, emotional, and societal factors, it offers a foundation for developing comprehensive interventions and policy frameworks. Future research should also investigate the long-term outcomes of support programs and their effectiveness in preventing chronic mental health issues. Expanding research to underrepresented regions and groups will enhance the applicability and impact of these findings, ultimately contributing to the development of global strategies for addressing unemployment's psychological consequences.

CONCLUSION

This scoping review provides a comprehensive synthesis of the psychological consequences of unemployment and the factors that influence these effects. The findings demonstrate that unemployment has significant and multifaceted impacts on mental health, including increased risks of depression, anxiety, social isolation, and reduced self-esteem. Key exacerbating factors such as financial instability, loss of social identity, and the duration of unemployment further compound these challenges, particularly for vulnerable populations such as young people, the elderly, and migrants.

Despite these insights, the review highlights several critical gaps in the existing literature. The predominance of studies from high-income countries limits the generalizability of findings to diverse cultural and economic contexts. Additionally, the reliance on cross-sectional research designs restricts the ability to assess the dynamic, long-term psychological impacts of unemployment. Moreover, insuffi-

cient attention has been given to structural factors, such as the role of government support programs, and the unique challenges faced by specific social groups.

To address these limitations, future research should prioritize longitudinal studies and explore the intersection of individual, cultural, and societal factors in diverse settings. Special focus should be placed on developing culturally adaptive support programs that incorporate psychological counseling, skills retraining, and community engagement to mitigate the negative psychological effects of unemploy-

ment. By bridging these gaps, future studies can contribute to more effective interventions and policies that promote mental well-being and resilience among unemployed individuals.

Ultimately, this review underscores the importance of integrating psychological, social, and structural perspectives in addressing unemployment's far-reaching impacts. These findings not only inform academic research but also serve as a foundation for developing targeted support measures, benefiting both individuals and society as a whole.

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