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# Occupational Therapy and Unemployment: Exploration of lifestyle change

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Research Article

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### **Abstract**

Unemployment is a significant social issue in Ireland today with 14.2% of the population unemployed (CSO 2012). Occupational Therapists have the potential to collaborate with this population to promote well-being (AOTA 2009, Douthwaite 1994). This research study is one strand of a larger research project initiated by the Occupational Therapy Department at the University of Limerick. The overall aim of the study was to evaluate an occupational therapy group intervention designed to assist people who are unemployed to stay healthy. The purpose of this research strand is to explore occupational change in participants post intervention. The methodology used for this research was a qualitative phenomenological approach through semi-structured interviews. The themes that emerged from the data include; taking ownership and initiating change, empowered with new skills and confidence, power of group influence and role adjustment. The results highlight the important role of Occupational Therapy in generating positive lifestyle change in unemployed populations. This research also demonstrates the potential for Occupational Therapists and other professionals worldwide who work with unemployed populations to initiate similar programmes.

## **Introduction**

Unemployment is a serious social and economic problem in Ireland today, the unemployment rate has risen from 4.2% in 2007 to 14.2% as of February 2012 (CSO 2012). Employment is central to one's identity, structure, routine and interpersonal relationships (Unruh 2004, Kielhofner 2008). Transition from employment to unemployment requires adaptation of one's volition, habits, roles, performance capacity and context of daily life (Kielhofner 2008). Occupational Therapists have the potential to collaborate with this population group to promote well-being while unemployed (AOTA 2009, Douthwaite 1994).

## **Literature Review**

As this research project is concerned with occupational and lifestyle change in participants after an occupational therapy unemployment programme, search terms around occupational therapy, unemployment and lifestyle programmes were chosen. A wide range of dates were chosen to encompass literature from the previous years of high unemployment. The literature review will examine the concepts of occupational deprivation, disruption and loss, give a brief review of the literature on unemployment and health and explore interventions around lifestyle change.

## **Occupational Disruption and Deprivation**

Unemployment has been identified in the literature as an example of occupational deprivation (Whiteford 2000, 2004). Occupational deprivation refers to the influence of external circumstances that keeps a person from "acquiring, using or enjoying something" (Wilcock 1998, p.145). Whiteford (1997; 2000) distinguishes between occupational deprivation and disruption by stating that deprivation takes place over an extended period of time and disruption is usually temporary. Therefore it can be argued that those experiencing unemployment can be experiencing occupational disruption initially when they become unemployed and occupational deprivation as they become long-term unemployed. Whiteford (2011) describes how occupational deprivation is very much connected with social relations and cultural mores. It could be suggested that the recent unemployment crisis in Ireland has affected all areas of society and impacted on the national culture.

### Effects of occupational loss

The effects of occupational loss have been noted in the literature (Hepworth 1980; Kronenberg et al 2005; Law et al 1998; Winefield et al 1992). Occupational science literature indicates that being engaged in occupation is seen as significantly contributing to well-being (Clark et al 1991, Yerxa et al 1989, Zemke and Clark 1996). Numerous studies have also demonstrated that engaging in meaningful occupation can have a positive influence on health and occupational loss can lead to poor health and reduced wellbeing (Hepworth 1980; Kronenberg et al 2005; Law et al 1998; Winefield et al 1992). Hepworth (1980) recommends that any interventions with unemployment groups should focus on developing resourcefulness so people can make informed decisions about what to do with their time and negate the effects of occupational loss.

### Correlations between unemployment and health

There are strong correlations between unemployment and poor psychological health and well-being throughout the literature (Creed and Macintyre 2001; Kilpatrick and Trew 1985; McKee-Ryan et al 2005; Waters and Moore 2002; Whelan 1992; Winefield et al 1992). McKee-Ryan et al (2005) and Waddle and Burton (2006) carried out meta-analytic studies on psychological and physical well-being during unemployment and revealed that unemployed individuals have lower psychological and physical well-being than those employed.

In terms of theoretical frameworks, Jahoda's latent deprivation theory is regularly cited in key literature around unemployment and its negative impact on well-being (Creed and Macintyre 2001; Kilpatrick and Trew 1985; McKee-Ryan et al 2005; Waters and Moore 2002; Whelan 1992; Winefield et al 1992). Jahoda (1982) argues that the latent benefits of employment include day structure, opportunity to socialise, provide a sense of purpose, increase status and promote activity. Jahoda (1982) considers the loss of time structure the largest predictor of psychological well-being while unemployed. Creed and Macintyre (2001) argue it is the loss of manifest benefit that has the greatest effect on psychological wellbeing of the unemployed.

### Lifestyle change programmes

There is limited research examining the experience of unemployment in well populations from an occupational therapy perspective. To date, the occupational therapy literature linked to unemployment tends to focus on vocational rehabilitation with populations who have physical and mental health difficulties (Audhoe et al 2009, Vinokur et al 1995; 2000, Vuori et al 1999; 2005). A systematic review conducted by Audhoe et al (2009) found weak evidence to support the use of vocational interventions in reducing psychological distress for the unemployed.

There are studies in the literature which aimed to encourage lifestyle change in participants. A principal example of this is Well Elderly Study, a lifestyle redesign programme (Jackson et al 1998). This large scale, randomised controlled trial researched the effects of engaging in meaningful occupations on an ageing population. The results of the study demonstrated that focusing on the benefits of occupation can add to preventative health care and have lasting therapeutic effects that result in wellbeing of the older population (Jackson et al 1998). Mountain et al (2008) and Glass et al (1999) reported similar results from their occupation-based health promoting interventions for older people.

An occupational therapy adaptive living programme (n=19) for young to middle age urban dwelling adults living in a subsidised housing community was carried out by Barnes et al (2008). The programme's main aim was to promote healthy lifestyles and was successful in increasing participant's quality of life and life satisfaction through developing better social skills, increased knowledge of nutrition and improved interpersonal skills.

The range of literature on unemployment and health is wide-ranging; there are many variables such as the overall unemployment rates at the time of the studies, the employment benefits available in the country, the age of the participants, level of education and the length of unemployment. From the literature reviewed there is little evidence from the field of occupational therapy on unemployment and health. Specifically there is an evident gap in published literature on unemployment interventions with well populations facilitated by Occupational Therapists. Occupational Therapists have the capabilities to work with unemployed populations and facilitate reducing the negative health impacts of

unemployment (AOTA 2009; Douthwaite 1994). In order to do this, it is necessary for Occupational Therapists to understand the latent (non-financial) and manifest (income) benefits of employment and how they can assist in replacing these benefits through occupational therapy interventions. This research study is important to occupational therapy as it explores if an occupational therapy intervention specifically for unemployed populations has an impact on the lifestyle and occupations of the participants. This research could potentially add to the knowledge and skills of Occupational Therapists when working with this growing population.

### **“Work Ready” Programme**

This research study is one strand of a larger research project initiated by the Occupational Therapy Department at University of Limerick. The overall aim of the study is to evaluate an eight week occupational therapy intervention; “Work Ready” programme designed to help people who are unemployed stay healthy. The eight week intervention includes sessions on stress management, time management, career exploration, job seeking, job skill development, interview skills, being part of community, the value of structure and routine, the benefits of physical activity, volunteering and understanding the benefits of occupation. The study had multiple strands. The purpose of this research strand aims to investigate if the programme influenced lifestyle changes in participants through occupation, roles or routines.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design:**

A qualitative phenomenological research design was deemed most appropriate for this study as the researcher endeavoured to gain an insight into and an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants (Taylor 2007). The insights and understandings gained from phenomenological research can be used as tools to reflect upon and evaluate the intervention and best inform the research question (Crabtree 1999, Taylor 2007). This was a joint research project, where a second researcher investigated the participant's evaluation of the intervention programme through interviews.



### Data Collection

Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are acknowledged as a highly effective data collection method in gathering rich, unique responses about participant's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge (French et al. 2001, Patton 2002). An interview guide was used for each interview to maintain consistency between interviews while allowing participants the opportunity to raise issues of importance to them (Minichiello et al 2003). The interview schedule was developed following a literature review and reflection on the topic area. It covered the following areas; programme evaluation, health and wellness, daily routine and life roles (Appendix 1). A pilot interview was conducted on a person experiencing unemployment prior to the interview to assess if the interview schedule is realistic and workable (Teijlingen and Hundley 2011). The pilot interview flowed well, yielding rich data, and was therefore considered by the researchers to be appropriate. This researcher and the co-researcher interviewed half of the participants each and the interview questions addressed both research aims. The interviews were conducted in a private room at the University of Limerick, one week after completion of the intervention. The length of interviews ranged from twenty five minutes to eighty minutes.

### Participants

Participants of the intervention programme were recruited through advertisements in unemployment offices and public offices. The inclusion criteria included anyone who was over 18 and unemployed at the time of recruitment for less than two years. Individuals were able to express interest in the programme by contacting the project manager who coordinated the multiple strands of the research project. If they met the selection criteria they were sent information on the programme (Appendix 2) and a consent form. For inclusion in this research strand the participants must have attended more than four sessions of the eight week "Work Ready" programme. Three men and two women volunteered to participate in the study. They were aged between 37 and 53 with a mean age of 43.6. The period of unemployment from recruitment to the programme ranged from one to twenty four months.

### **Data Analysis**

This researcher and the co-researcher shared the interview data and completed transcription of the interviews. The transcripts were cleaned, any identifiable information removed and sent electronically to the project manager for password protected storage. The researcher analysed and manually coded each transcript with NVivo 9 software (QSR International). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data as it is a theoretically flexible approach which can potentially provide a rich and detailed account of the data and produce unanticipated insights (Braun and Clarke 2006). Similar codes that emerged from the data were put into categories (Appendix 3). Mind-maps were used to explore and identify links between categories (Tattersall et al 2011). Themes emerged from this process. The researcher shared category findings and potential themes with the research supervisor and research peers, themes were then finalised.

### **Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, as the researcher is the measurement tool, there is a risk of subjectivity depending on the skill and experience of the researcher (Patton 2002). This bias was minimised by the researcher's use of reflexivity (Finlay and Gough 2003). The researcher addressed this by keeping a reflective journal and taking field notes throughout the data collection and analysis. The researcher also discussed findings in research supervision.

To ensure accurate depiction and interpretations of the participants' unemployment experience by the researcher, all analysed transcripts were subject to member checking (Krefting 1991). A short summary detailing the content of the interview was emailed to the participants 7-10 days after the interview. The participants were given the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of their summary by email. No responses were received.

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical approval for this research was granted by the University of Limerick Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Informed consent was obtained from all the

participants. Confidentiality was assured throughout the process of the study by the use of pseudonyms and changing of any identifiable data. Participants were informed they could withdraw from the study at any stage.

## Findings

Four themes emerged from the data analysis of the interviews post intervention; taking ownership and initiating change, empowered with new skills and confidence, power of group influence and role adjustment.

### Theme 1: Taking ownership and initiating change

The programme enabled the participants to take time to reflect on their current situation of joblessness, take ownership of their situation and then initiate changes. Participants also discussed being depressed and anxious while unemployed and now having the skills to cope with this. Ann describes:

It [being unemployed] made me anxious, it made me cross..

Tom also illustrates:

I was in depression ... I was very disappointed about my rejection of my position .. then I met some people that have exactly the same problem I have so I just look at it [differently].

Participants discussed acceptance, awareness and realisation of their situation since the intervention. Ann describes:

Being able to take ownership of it [being unemployed] and then say you know it won't be forever.

Taking ownership contributed to the participants' self-belief. John mentions:

This course strengthens my resolve... It's kind of reinforced, yeah, I am on the right path, it's to have a bit more faith in yourself

The intervention introduced the concept of structuring one's day more efficiently. Peter explains:

Being able to evaluate exactly how you are using your time and I'd probably be more structured now with designating time for things

The participants understood the importance of lifestyle balance and wanted to implement this in their lives before they began working. Ann explains:

[I plan] to use more of leisure time that I have now and to almost put that in place before I get a job.

## **Theme 2: Empowered with new skills and confidence**

Acquiring new skills and becoming aware of their own capabilities and transferable skills empowered the participants. Kate illustrates:

I wouldn't have applied for those jobs that I did this morning previously. ..I wouldn't have the confidence.., inside there is a bit more of belief in that now.

Peter noted:

I feel definitely more confidence now... and look for work even more so

The participants discussed some of the new skills they acquired on the programme and how they implemented these. Ann explains:

I don't know how to relax. So that in itself, just to be able to go home and sit in the chair and just to be able to relax.

Peter adds:

[voluntary work] it's a great way of getting to know people in the town.. it does make you feel good, a sense of fulfilment.

The programme also facilitated the participants to reflect back on meaningful activities they used to do. Ann explains how she used to love art:

I haven't even picked up a pencil even to scribble in 15 years you know just to get back into something like that

Each participant talked about their hope and vision for the future. This is illustrated by John:

I hadn't actually applied for work in maybe six, maybe eight months .... it has all changed now. This thing has really helped...it's given me more hope and more options.

### Theme 3: Power of group influence

The group dynamic featured strongly throughout the data. All of the participants mentioned how the group provided peer support, advice, encouragement and feedback. Kate describes being in the group:

it's all positive... a kind of support structure

All of the group members were at a similar life stage and all the participants identified this as constructive. Ann explained:

The three of us got on really well, because we were almost in the same age group I suppose.  
And we had the same wants and needs

The participants described relating to each other's comparable experiences as a validation of their own experiences. Ann explained:

It's confidence boost to know that everyone else is struggling the way I am, or has struggled the way I was.

### Theme 4: Role adjustment

The participants talked about the impact of unemployment on their roles and more specifically how it influenced their relationships with their families. For the male participants, they experienced a role reversal and became the homemaker while their wives worked. John explains:

We just swapped roles. So I was the housewife, I did all the cooking and the carrying and the washing

The participants described the transition to unemployment as difficult at first and affected personal relationships. John reports:

The first day that I was unemployed I helped the kids get ready for school and I just wrecked everybody's system

Ann recalls:

It made me fight with the husband at home.. [now I am] able to say, I'm sorry, but I'm unemployed now as well and you know I can't manage everything

Participants discussed how they used their time to reconnect with friends and family. Ann recalled

Unemployment has given me leverage to go back and get in contact with people.

Ann explains her relationship with her daughter:

We have never been closer. We are on Skype for nearly like an hour every night. Whereas before it was hey mum, so busy can't talk to you. And I'd be like, yeah, ditto.

Also the participants all took from the programme the importance of looking after one's own health and wellbeing. John illustrates:

I need to look after myself ... this course made me think a small bit more about myself than I had done for a long long time...

### Summary of key findings

Four key themes emerged from the data. The first theme 'Taking ownership and initiating change' describes how participants took stock of their present situation, acknowledged it and moved on from this. The second theme 'Empowered with new skills and confidence' demonstrated how new skills and realisation of transferable skills empowered the participants and gave them the confidence to return to job seeking and engage in new activities. The third theme 'Power of group influence' described the influential peer support of the group. The final theme that emerged from the data was 'Role Adjustment' where the participants discussed the adaptation to change in their roles.

### Discussion

Occupational Therapy is founded on the health promoting effects of engagement in occupation (Clark et al 1991, Yerxa et al 1989, Zemke and Clark 1996). This unemployment group intervention set out to promote the benefits of occupation on health. The aim of this research was to explore occupational changes in participants post intervention. Overall, the findings confirmed the importance of occupational therapy interventions in promoting living well while unemployed. The findings also showed that participants were able to some extent engage in occupations that resonated with their volition, roles and structure their time use. Ultimately, the participants developed a new temporal structure (Jonsson et al 2000).

Participants reported how the programme gave them skills, confidence, motivation and new ideas. This can be described as *occupational spin-off*; a concept defined by Rebeiro (2001) as building upon a person's motivation to be occupied and, through engagement in meaningful activities, creates a drive for further engagement in a range of other activities. It could be suggested that engagement in activities acted as a vehicle for change in this unemployment group. The programme allowed the participants to assess their skill base and demonstrate how these skills are transferable to other areas. This has resulted in participants applying for jobs in areas they would not have applied to prior to the intervention. Other lifestyle changes post intervention include; taking up new and previous activities such as volunteering, art and reconnecting with friends. Some also felt the programme has put them back in the frame of mind for job searching, given them a sense of focus and more urgency.

A review of the literature by Scanlan (2005) found that there are two groups of unemployed individuals; active and passive. Fryer and Payne (1984), Kay (1989) and Kilpatrick and Trew (1985) argued that the active unemployed are significantly healthier than the passive unemployed and that those who were least negatively psychologically affected by unemployment were those who engaged deliberately in activities that helped to replace their work roles. This could suggest that the participants of this group are "active" unemployed as they were motivated to attend the programme and introduce lifestyle change through routine and new activities. Evidence from Ball and Orford (2002), Walsh and Jackson (1995) and Winefield et al (1992) also support this finding, as those individuals who coped well with unemployment were those who were able to fill their time with meaningful activities.

Many of the participants have introduced routine into their daily lives, structuring their day around planned activities. The participants reported how they are now more aware of their time use. This supports a study by Feather and Bond (1983) which found structured and purposeful use of time and involvement in activities among the unemployed resulted in higher self-esteem. Farnworth (2000) has indicated that people require a balance of daily occupations to maintain their health and well-being.

The participants developed their roles as friends and family members and some acquired new roles. Kielhofner (2008) ascertains that the transition to unemployment includes adjustment and adaptation to an individual's role. This transition can have a significant effect on an individual's self-esteem and self-concept (Blair 2000). Many of the participants reported feeling anxious and depressed about their unemployment status pre intervention. This evolved to feelings of confidence and assertiveness post intervention. From the findings it is evident that the participants took ownership of their situation and reported feeling better equipped to cope with their unemployed status. This resulted in the participants feeling more optimistic and instilled a sense of hope for the future.

The participants felt the programme emphasised their 'wellness' and this led to some participants thinking more about their own health and wellbeing. This confirms other findings from occupational therapy literature, which suggested that to develop one's identity and maintain a sense of self, it is necessary to engage in meaningful occupations (Wythes and Lyons 2006, Vrkljan and Polgar 2007).

This study noted a greater role change for the male participants in the group around home making activities, this is reported in the literature by Velde and Wittman (2003) who noted the issue of renegotiation of roles and acceptance of additional responsibilities in the home when one life-partner becomes unemployed. Scanlan (2005) also found that involvement increases in activities around the home for unemployed populations.

All participants noted how the group cohesion enhanced the programme. The participants ascertained that similar life stages enabled unity among the group. It may be inferred that the participants of this study are experiencing similar transitional life stages including social and occupational trajectories (Levinson 1986).

The participants felt the "Work Ready" group was an opportunity to meet new people in similar circumstances and this led to a validation of their own experience. The group format allowed the participants to share similar fears and anxieties they had around their unemployment experience, offer each other support and develop skills in a new occupation (Finlay 1993). This peer support was highly valued among the participants; some participants described it as a support group. Research has shown that support groups



provide a sense of belonging and empathy (Payne et al 1997, Roberts et al 1997). Creek and Lougher (2008) discuss how group work develops self-awareness, self-efficacy and insight through peer validation and feedback. Finlay (1993) also ascertains that through sharing similar experiences and issues, group members frequently adapt supportive attitudes and coping strategies from each other.

In the literature review it was argued that the manifest benefit of employment is an important factor leading to activity change in unemployment (Creed and MacIntyre 2001). It is not apparent from the findings in this research that financial limitations are the cause of change in activity in unemployment. It is clear from this study and the literature (Warr 1984) that most available activities to unemployed people are those that can be done around the home, or which cost little. Some of the participants described having more time for friends and family, hence developing roles and routines, this is similar to Hammer's (1993) findings that social support from a close social network of family and friends moderated some of the negative effects of unemployment on well-being.

### **Study Limitations**

The findings of this study need to be interpreted with caution and cannot be assumed to be representative of the whole unemployment population. This study was conducted using a small sample size of five participants at a similar life stage, making it more challenging to identify diverse experiences but still making a contribution to the literature in this area. It must also be noted that as a result of occasional absences, not all participants received the same intensity of the programme (Barnes et al 1999).

The researcher recognises how novice interviewing skills may have impacted on the depth of information gathered during interviews. The researcher also acknowledges that the use of a mixed methods approach would have enhanced rigour as they give additional perspectives and insights that are beyond the scope of any single method (Creswell et al 2004, National Institute of Health 1999). An additional limitation could be that the interviews were conducted one week after the programme was completed. This may not have been adequate time for the participants to have fully implemented changes in their

lifestyle. Despite these limitations, the study offered rich insight into occupational change in unemployment populations post group intervention.

## Recommendations

### Implications for Practice

Unemployment is a growing social issue globally. This research provides evidence to support occupational therapy interventions to facilitate living well with unemployment. Occupational Therapists possess a unique skill set that can assist this population group in living well while unemployed hence reducing the longer term health effects of unemployment. Encouraging awareness of the benefits of occupation is a key responsibility of Occupational Therapists (Barnes et al 2008). Occupational Therapists need to promote their capabilities in working with unemployed populations, this requires a shift from the traditional healthcare settings to more vocational community settings. Occupational Therapists are well poised to advocate for this unrepresented client group. Occupational Therapists can assist those who become unemployed understand their current situation and help them to move forward with regards to all aspects of occupational life from assisting with daily routines and planning for further career exploration. These key skills will enable Occupational Therapists to support individuals and to promote and help maintain their health and wellbeing while unemployed. Occupational Therapists are skilled to facilitate occupational adaptation with people experiencing unemployment (Cole 2008). Occupational adaptation encompasses the complex issues and steps that occur when a person is faced with an occupational challenge (Cole 2008). The results of this qualitative study confirm the intricacy and individuality of the unemployment experience and highlights the importance of engaging in meaningful occupations. This research has the potential to inform related areas such organisational and work psychology, occupational health psychology and sociology.

The Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI) could initiate a national advisory committee to inform all practicing Occupational Therapists of the opportunities for working with and development of the area of occupational therapy and unemployment. There is a large area of scope for Occupational Therapy to work with the government on employment initiatives and preparing for work schemes. On a local level, Occupational

Therapists could collaborate with unemployment and training agencies such as Solas (formally FAS) to run similar programmes to the “Work Ready” programme. Occupational Therapists could also work with companies who are making staff redundant, to prepare staff for the transition to unemployment. In response to these dynamic times, educators of occupational therapy should include education around occupational therapy and unemployed populations so new graduates to the field are best equipped to work with today’s changing demographics.

### **Future Research**

Future research should involve a more rigorous mix methods study, of a larger sample size in the form of a longitudinal study. It would also be interesting to explore occupational changes at different stages of the unemployment experience. Further research could include both the pre and post intervention interviews (Dilley 2004), allowing a rapport to be built with the participants and add to depth of the interviews. This could enable a comparison of the participants’ experience of unemployment pre and post intervention to establish a baseline to which future data could be compared (Barnes et al 1999). Further research on interventions limiting the psychological factors of unemployment is recommended as the existing research in the field of occupational therapy tends to focus on vocational rehabilitation and job searching skills. Given the participants in this research were “active unemployed”, further research to understand the passive unemployed population would be of benefit so similar programmes could be aimed for those less motivated to initiate lifestyle changes. Further research into gender differences of the unemployment experience could be explored as the male participants noted a greater role change while unemployed than the women in this study.

### **Conclusion**

Considering the growing worldwide problem of unemployment and its health-related consequences, little has been done to develop effective occupational therapy interventions aimed at living well while unemployed. Interventions specifically targeting people experiencing unemployment are a potential area of research and practice for occupational

therapy. This provides the occupational therapy profession the opportunity to work beyond the typical boundaries of healthcare.

This study highlights that the experience of becoming unemployed constitutes a disruption of everyday life which involves changes in people's roles, routines and engagement in occupation. This research has demonstrated that attending an occupational therapy focused unemployment intervention can lead to occupational spin-off and occupational and lifestyle changes. It confirms how engagement in meaningful occupations is essential for a positive occupational adaptation to unemployment. All of the participants from the study implemented occupational changes in their lives and reported higher psychosocial wellbeing. This correlates with findings in the literature review that being engaged in occupation and having structure, routine and roles facilitates living well while experiencing unemployment.

The research provided an insight into changes of attitude towards health and well-being in participants, as the participants described a shift in their view towards their own health since participating in the programme. In particular, it has demonstrated that facilitating empowerment in unemployed populations leads to initiation of change. These findings add to the limited literature that occupational therapy can facilitate occupational change in unemployed populations. Overall, the study has provided further evidence that occupation is central to maintaining and promoting people's health and wellbeing while experiencing unemployment.

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# Appendices

## Appendix I: Sample Interview Questions Post-intervention Interviews

### POST-INTERVENTION INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### FIRST REVIEW AND SIGN THE CONSENT FORM

##### Introduction

Thanks so much for coming in to meet with me today to discuss your experience of the unemployment intervention. Before we begin I just to mention some ground rules for the interview:

- Please turn off your mobile phone. We should not be disturbed during the interview but if we are I will turn off the tape recorder to deal with the interruption.
- Feel free to interrupt or ask for clarification and let me know if you require a break during the interview.
- If I take notes during the interview it is for me to use as a prompt as part of a question- to assist my memory
- I am interested in your opinions and personal experiences. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions.

Again, please can I have your permission to record this interview?

#### TURN RECORDER ON IF PARTICIPANT CONSENTS

##### OPENING QUERIES:

##### First of all please can you confirm

- Your previous work experience before starting the group?
- How long you have been unemployed?
- Your age?
- How many sessions of the programme did you attend?

#### PROGRAMME EVALUATION

1. What attracted you to this unemployment group?
2. Can you tell me about your experience of the group?  
(format of the programme, content of the sessions, programme facilitation)
3. What were the benefits of the programme for you?  
(most valuable, any surprises)
4. What did you find least valuable about the programme?  
(least useful, least enjoyable)
5. Was there anything you found difficult about coming to the group?
6. Tell me about your most positive experience of the intervention?
7. What is your overall evaluation of the programme?  
(What would you change about the programme if you were start it again?
  - Did it meet your needs?

- Was it what you expected? Can you explain how it did/did not meet your expectations?)

8. Any last comments you would like to make regarding the group and/or the programme?

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

9. Health can mean many things. It can include physical, emotional, social and spiritual health for example. Can you tell me about your current health and wellbeing?

- Have you noticed any change in your health or wellbeing since taking part in the programme? (positive or negative)

- Many people who are unemployed describe feeling worried, anxious, or depressed or being affected by the loss of paid work. Can you relate to these experiences? Have you noticed any changes in these feelings since you took part in the programme?

- Has the programme changed the way you feel about being unemployed? Can you tell me about it?

## DAILY ROUTINE

To answer this section you may want to reflect on the time use diaries that you completed in the group.

10. Please describe a typical day before unemployment? (week day and weekend)

11. Now please describe a typical day during unemployment?

Have there been any changes to your routines since starting this group?

Do you plan to make any changes to your routine following this programme? Can you tell me about your plans?

12. Tell me about activities that you are currently doing?

Were there any activities you stopped doing once you became unemployed?

Following this programme do you plan to take up these activities again? (If yes, tell me more (activity, how often, with whom etc..)

Are there any activities you are interested in pursuing following this programme?, (if yes, which activity, how often, with whom etc..)

## LIFE ROLES

13. Has the programme influenced any areas of your life?

Consider your role as a member of a family, a friend, a community member or other. Have any of these roles and relationships changed since you started this programme? If so, please explain.

(Family and social relationships, leisure, work?)

## WRAP UP

That brings our interview to an end.

Is there anything else you would like to mention regarding the Work Ready group.



Thank you for participating in this interview. A typed summary of your interview will be sent to you within the next 7-10 days so that you can review it.

## Appendix II: Volunteer Information Sheet

### **Evaluation of an Occupational Therapy Programme for People who are Unemployed**

You are invited to take part in a study evaluating an occupational therapy intervention programme for unemployed people run by the Occupational Therapy Department at the University of Limerick. You can take part in the programme without taking part in this evaluation of the programme.

Taking part in this study means engaging in one private interview after the programme. The interview will take 45-60minutes to complete and will take place after the programme ends. The interviewer will be an occupational therapy student. The interview questions will be about your experiences of the unemployment programme and any changes in your daily activities since you started the programme. The interview will be tape recorded. A week after the interview a short summary of the interview will be sent to you to check through.

There are no risks associated with taking part in this study. Getting involved in this programme will not affect your benefit/allowance. All of the information you provide as part of the research study will be kept confidential at all times. Your name or identifying information about you will not be reported in any publications arising from this research. There is no compensation or payment for taking part in the study. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and everyone is completely free to refuse to participate. Participants can withdraw or stop the study at any time without any consequences. You can simply contact Alison Warren via email or phone and say you don't want to continue with the research study. No questions will be asked.

Please contact Alison Warren if you have any questions about this study  
Alison.Warren@ul.ie  
Occupational Therapy Department  
University of Limerick  
(061) 234232

If you have any concerns about this study please contact:  
Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
University of Limerick  
Tel (061) 234101

Appendix III: Categories

