Lived Experiences Of Women Over 50 Who Have Experienced Involuntary Job Loss

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Abstract
This study explored the lived experiences of women over 50 following job loss. Findings indicate women experienced financial, emotional and psychosocial experiences. Age discrimination, organizational practices, technological challenges, and stereotypes emerged as barriers to reemployment. Organizational leaders and policy makers can use the findings to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of women over 50 following job loss.

Procedures
Face-to-face (30-60 minute) interviews with convenience, and snowball sampling. Semi-structured interview guide.

Limitations
Limited to women over 50.

Relevant Literature
Theoretical Framework
Bandura’s (1988) theory of coping efficacy (degree to which a person believes he or she is capable of controlling specific threatening situations).

Leana and Feldman’s (1992) theory of coping behaviors (attempts to gain reemployment and attempts to reestablish a degree of psychological well-being after losing one’s job). Theory was built on Bandura’s (1988) coping efficacy.

Data Analysis
Thematic analysis of three constructs:
Experiences of women over 50 who had experienced involuntary job loss; barriers faced to reemployment; how barriers to reemployment were overcome.

Findings

Research Questions
RQ1: How do women over 50 in a Northeastern metropolitan city describe the experiences of involuntary job loss?
RQ2: How do women over 50 in a Northeastern metropolitan city describe the barriers to reemployment?
RQ3: How do women over 50 in a Northeastern metropolitan city describe how they overcame the barriers to reemployment?
RQ4: How do these experiences compare to other reports focused on the job losses of men over 50?

Procedures
Ten women over 50 located in a northeastern city who experienced involuntary job loss.

Limitations
Limited research regarding women over 50 and job loss.

Problem
Organizational downsizing dramatically increased the overall unemployment and long-term unemployment rates of older workers (55 and older) in the United States (Ikin & Salmon, 2011; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2012).

Dominant themes:
RQ1: emotional, financial, family and social
RQ2: age, organizational practices, technology, stereotypical beliefs
RQ3: job programs, education/retraining, networking, support groups
RQ4: meta-analysis of RQ1, RQ2, RQ3:
1. Men viewed themselves as failures, women did not.
2. All women were breadwinners (supports prior studies indicating societal move from traditional role of men as wage earners).
3. Women and men view and cope with job loss differently.
4. No studies found exclusively on men related to barriers to reemployment and how barriers to reemployment were overcome.

Conclusions
Majority of literature regarding adverse effects of job loss focused on men. Assumption is job loss is less serious for women (Nuttman-Schwartz & Gadot, 2012).

Social Change Implications
Woman in the study may feel empowered as a result of sharing their stories and experiences.

Limitations
Generalizability - focused on one metropolitan area.

Background
Older workers – only group in the U.S. workforce showing a significant increase in the labor force participation rate (Toossi, 2012).

Dramatic change in workforce participation of older women in the U.S. since the 1970s (Macunovich, 2012).

Organizations may have a greater understanding of the needs of women over 50 who have lost their jobs.

More women entered the workforce or increased working hours as the men who were breadwinners lost their jobs (Mattingly & Smith, 2012).

Findings
Women have become the target population for job loss due to a higher number of women entering the labor force (Nuttman-Schwartz & Gadot, 2012, p. 275).

Economic and societal barriers continue to negatively impact reemployment opportunities for women over 50.

Majority of women in the study were not prepared for a changing job market. New skills were needed to reenter the job market.

Challenges:
Economic instability. Barriers to reemployment. Lack of emphasis on organizational policies to keep older workers in the workforce.

Women are the target population for job loss due to the increase of women in the workforce (Forbes, Committee Chairperson). More women entered the workforce or increased working hours as the men who were breadwinners lost their jobs (Mattingly & Smith, 2012).

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