

**Coping with unemployment:
Exploring women and men demand for family solidarity in Portugal**

Fátima Suleman

fatima.suleman@iscte.pt

Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), DINAMIA'CET, Lisboa, Portugal

Teresa Amor (corresponding author)

amor.teresa@gmail.com

Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), DINAMIA'CET, Lisboa, Portugal

Abstract

The protection and well-being of unemployed people presupposes a combination of welfare state and family in Portugal. The country is classified as familialist model of social regulation of unemployment. This study examines the coping strategies of a sample of long-term unemployed persons after job loss and explores the protection provided by family to their unemployed members in Portugal. We compare in addition whether the demand for family solidarity varies among women and men. The data were gathered in 2013 through interviews and an open-ended inquiry applied to fifteen unemployed persons (eight women), who were asked to describe their efforts to cope with unemployment. Empirical evidence indicates that unemployed frequently request assistance from family members and friends, namely financial help, food and other goods, payment of other expenses, and housing. Furthermore, some have moved back into their parents' home because their low income caused them to delay or default on the payment of mortgages or rent. However, a number of the sampled unemployed obtain public support and charity, namely from food bank, and churches. We noted striking differences between the behaviour of men and women. Men prefer to obtain charitable aid and are less likely to ask for support from their family. When this is necessary, they are more uncomfortable about doing so and it is quite often the wife or other female member that makes the request. Actually, men seem to feel more embarrassed and ashamed to ask for either private or charitable support. Although women also find this difficult, they do so in order to help their family members. We suggest that the embarrassment and shame exhibits the effects of unemployment on breadwinner status of men, whereas, women expressed concern about the prospect of economic and financial dependence. Ultimately, unemployment might have a significant effect on gender equality.