MENTAL HEALTH AND FAMILIES IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

Economic Downturn, Employment Status and Parenthood: The Impact on Portuguese Youth Mental Health

Diana Frasquilho
Doctoral Research in Life Sciences speciality of Mental Health

Supervisor: José Miguel Caldas de Almeida, MD PhD
Co-supervisor: Margarida Gaspar de Matos, MSc PhD
Why Mental Health Matters during economic recessions?
Wider context factors
(Living, working and ageing conditions)

Social and community
- Social Networks
- Social Cohesion
- Urban design
- Neighbourhood

Individual factors
- Genetics
- Biological
- Behaviours
- Lifestyles

Economical
Cultural
Political
Positive mental health is the basis for:

• overall well-being
• effective functioning of individuals
• and their communities.

Individual realizes his or her own potential
Can work productively
Contributes to community
Copes with the normal stresses of life
Negative socio-economic circumstances can affect levels of mental health

Economic crisis

Changes in macro-economic environment
- Job shortage
- Increasing household debts
- Income inequality

Policy responses

Mental health risk factors
- Unemployment
- Poverty, housing problems and family strain
- Impaired access to public services

Mental health

WHO, 2011
There are vulnerable groups...

- Unemployed people;
- Families with children and adolescents;
- Low socioeconomic status or facing debts;
- Precarious workers;
- People with previous mental disorders;
- Elderly people;

Unemployment rate, annual average %, for EU (27) and Portugal. Source: Eurostat.
How unemployment affects mental well-being?
When unemployed...

People lose access to well-being factors, traditionally related to work

- Emotional distress
- Loss of social support
- Social status
- Collective meaning
- Income loss
- Loss of time structure

How unemployment affects families?
How unemployment affects families

**FAMILY**
- Economic hardship, difficulty making ends meet
- Cut backs on health, education and family leisure
- **Changes in relations**
- Proximity and support VS friction and conflict

**UNEMPLOYED ADULT**
- Emotional distress
- Anxiety, worry, anger and bad temper, and sadness

How parents’ unemployment affects young people?

“The well-being of young people depends to a large extent on the environments in which they live” (WHO)
Parents unemployment creates extra pressure on family environment, indirectly affecting young people’s development.

- **Economic hardship**
- **Changes in relations**
- Proximity and support versus friction and conflict
- **Emotional distress***
- **Emotional problems***
- **Low life satisfaction***
- **Low future and educational expectations***

*Frasquilho D et al. (2016, 2014a, 2014b) *(p>0.05)

“The successful recovery of European economies appears to crucially depend on the mental health of the population”

(WHO, 2011)
What can be done to avoid the negative effects ...

Improve access to health
Improve social protection
Improve support for families and youth
Active labour market programmes for adults and youth

YOU MAY SAY
I'M A DREAMER
Want to know more details about this research?

[Image: A mailbox with paper airplanes flying out, symbolizing communication.]

diana.frasquillo@nms.unl.pt

Frasquillo, D et al (2014-2016)