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Transitioning from graduation to employment: unemployed graduate's experiences of finding employment

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Abstract

Using the Schlossberg's Transition Theory, the current research study explored the transition from graduation to employment from the experiences and realities of ten unemployed graduates that are navigating this transition. Through the application of this theory, coping resources as well as strategies that unemployed graduates utilise to secure employment in the external labour market were explored for ten unemployed graduated in Johannesburg. The results obtained showed that the being an unemployed graduate is very frustrating on its own but also because of the added pressure from the graduate's families and communities when they relocate back home. Furthermore, unemployed graduates are faced with racial and social capital disadvantages in the modern labour market which makes it harder for them to secure employment. The research explored the strategies employed by graduates, sources of support they draw upon, perceptions of the self that they hold and perceptions of their personal circumstances (situation) that impact upon and influence their transitions to employment. The study found that acceptance to be an important strategy that is employed by unemployed graduates in order to cope and successfully navigate the transition. It was found that accepting reality of being unemployed post-graduation, attributes of oneself such as race, age, gender, and social networks, and the factors about the labour market influenced their transition to employment. Moreover, in alignment with the Schlossberg transition theory, unemployed graduates relied extensively on the support that they received from their families and close friends as a pivotal strategy. The main themes that emerged from the data in relations to graduates coping mechanisms where 'bad habits', 'accepting reality' and 'keeping busy' while they remain unemployed. Direct actions taken by participants to secure employment in the labour market were also explored and the following themes emerged from the data 'curriculum vitae', 'online application', 'relocating', and 'furthering their studies'.