THE IMPACT OF INDIVIDUAL AND PARTNER’S UNEMPLOYMENT

A quantitative study on depressive symptoms in Europe

Amanda Nygaard, Emilia Wikner
Abstract

This thesis aims to see how individual and partner’s unemployment affect self-rated depressive symptoms, both for individuals separately, and for individuals in a relationship within Europe. The research questions were examined by using European Social Survey (ESS) data from 2014. An index was created in order to capture the phenomena of depressive symptoms. To investigate the effect of unemployment in relation to self-rated depression, multiple regressions analysis were used. The results show that there is a relationship between unemployment and depressive symptoms, for both men and women. However, men tend to be affected by their own unemployment only, whereas evidence was found supporting that having an unemployed partner affect depressive symptoms in a negative way for women. Hence, women are a more vulnerable group on the labour market, because they are not only affected by their own labour market status, but also by the labour market status of their partners.

Key words:
Crossover effects, Depression, Gender roles, Mental health, Spillover effects, Unemployment.

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1. Introduction
Work can be seen as a predominant phase in people's lives, in some ways it can be said to have a far greater impact on lives than just means for economic support. Some argue that work is a source of identity, and others that it gives people a sense of fulfilment (Brand, 2015). In either case, there is a substantial amount of research on the impact of unemployment and overall health. This speaks to the importance of understanding why work matters, and what the consequences of unemployment entails.

Unemployment and mental health research suggest that being unemployed is something that could have a detrimental effect on the individual’s physical and mental health (Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999). When discussing unemployment, there are many factors that need to be taken into consideration. Some argue that social support plays an important role, where evidence in research can be found that mental health implications, caused by unemployment, varies over different welfare states (Curnock, Leyland, & Popham, 2016). Another aspect that has been prominent throughout research in this field, is the difference seen when looking at gender, where gender norms in society is one possible explanatory factor (Burgard, Brand, & House, 2007; Lewis, Campbell, & Huerta, 2008).

When talking about the impact of unemployment, one must consider that it may affect more than just the individual; it may also affect people living in their proximity (Charles & Stephens, 2004). Relatively new research has started to focus more on this aspect (see Bubonya, Cobb-Clark & Wooden, 2017). It is argued that psychological work related strain can spillover from one area of life to another, which gives a more dynamic and far reaching impact than when just looking at how unemployment affect one individual. When two individuals of a household are out of work it can be referred to as a jobless household, this phenomenon is said to have a great impact on overall health for individuals, and involves both cross-and spillover effects. This “new” area goes beyond just looking at economic aspects as the sole explanatory factor for how unemployment can affect an entire household (Westam, 2001; Charles & Stephens, 2004; Brand, 2015).
The aim of this thesis is to examine the impact of individual and partner’s unemployment on depressive symptoms in Europe. Since previous studies have focused on specific countries, we will aim to provide a broader European context (see Charles & Stephens, 2004; Song, Foo, Uy, & Sun, 2011; Sears et al., 2016). Furthermore, the thesis will focus on the gender differences in the effect of unemployment on symptoms of depression. In order to do so, it is investigated in this thesis:

1. If unemployment affect an individual’s self-reported depression
2. If having a partner without a job additionally makes people more depressed.
3. If the associations investigated in point (1) and (2) differ for men and women.
2. Previous research

2.1 Unemployment and mental health

Unemployment\(^1\) is a broad term that includes both voluntary, involuntary job loss and young individuals who have never been able to enter the labour market. Voluntary job loss is defined as employees who actively separate themselves from a job. Hence, this could be employees that resign by their own will. Involuntary job loss is defined as an employee losing their job due to factors that are beyond the individual’s control, this could be job loss due to downsizings or re-structuring in the company (Brand, 2015).

The individual can be affected by unemployment in several ways, losing one’s job not only puts the individual in a position of financial insecurity. But it can also be seen as a traumatic event that threatens the individual's self-esteem and sense of identity. Research has highlighted the importance of social benefits in the sense that it has an impact on mental health (see Curnock, Leyland, & Popham, 2016). Unemployment has proven to be detrimental to one's psychological health, and even more so if the country does not have sufficient support for the unemployed (Curnock, Leyland, & Popham, 2016). Therefore, it has been established that an increased welfare benefit system works favourably on the individual’s mental health when unemployed (Brand, 2015).

Unemployment can affect social relations with friends, colleagues and family, which often is associated with the individual's loss of self-esteem (Miller & Hoppe, 1994). Additionally, the effect of job loss tends to affect those who value their work highly in a more negative way, than those who simply refers to their job as not important (Nordenmark & Strandh, 1999). Research also show that unemployment leads to self-elected social isolation, where people who are unemployed tend to participate less in activities such as clubs or organizations (Dieckhoff & Gash, 2015). Isolation and loss of self-esteem is as mentioned above, two consequences of unemployment that at a later stage can develop into an overall decline in mental health. Studies have shown that mental health is affected by unemployment, where the risk of developing

\(^{1}\) We have adopted a somewhat broader definition of unemployment, than stated by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) who defines unemployment as not working and not actively searching for a job.
Depressive symptoms is twice as high among those who are unemployed compared to those who are in employment (Burgard, Brand, & House, 2007).

Depression according to the DSM-5 standard\(^2\) is defined as a state of mind where the patient suffers from a lasting condition for at least a two-week period. DSM-5 is a medical term that describes self-reported symptoms of depression (Bech et al., 2001; Olsen et al., 2003). In order to get diagnosed with depression, the condition must have caused a change in the individual's living condition. The patient needs to experience a feeling of depression or have a reduced interest or joy. Additionally, the individual has to experience four or more of the following symptoms; weight loss, sleep disturbance, psychomotor retardation, loss of appetite, reduced energy, concentration difficulties, incapability of making a decision, recurring thoughts about death or feelings of loneliness, weakness, worthlessness and hopelessness (Bech et al., 2001).

Depression is a phenomenon that carries social stigma in today's society, which can consequently lead to reluctance in seeking help or talking about feelings of depression (see Baert et al., 2016).

Unemployment is also a phenomenon that includes stigmatization, in countries where unemployment is not socially accepted (Brand, 2015). Goffman (1990) discusses the term stigma as an interaction where stigmatization is being used in order to identify divergent factors in another individual or group. An internal stigma can leave the individual feeling excluded from society, as well as their friends and family. External stigma refers to factors that are associated with being unemployed such as loss of income, ability to provide for yourself or your family (Goffman, 1990). Dieckhoff & Gash (2015) points out the fact that social exclusion is problematic since it tends to lead the unemployed into a downward spiral, where the lack of social connections prevents the unemployed from finding a new job. Furthermore, it could be argued that this puts individuals in a position where the lack of social connections, prevent them from finding a job at a later stage in their life (Dieckhoff & Gash, 2015).

In research, it is emphasized that women are twice as likely to experience depression in relation to unemployment than men (Burgard, Brand, & House, 2007). This could be explained by stereotypical behaviour, gender roles and family wage-earning systems (Ashby & Burgoyne, 2015).

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\(^2\) DSM-5 stands for Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.
When taking gender norms into account, women are reduced to only obtain a limited amount of roles; where women might only possess role of a housewife or a mother. This two-sided dilemma, puts women in a position where they can increase in depressive symptoms. At the same time being a working mother also poses a risk for women's mental health, as it produces a conflict between the work identity and the identity as a mother (Piccinelli & Wilkinson, 2000). Despite this, researchers are now suggesting that the female role is being redefined from the stereotypical stay-at-home mother to a transitional working mother (Lewis, Campbell, & Huerta, 2008). In recent years, employment among women has increased, both in part-time and full time jobs (Lewis, Campbell, & Huerta, 2008). Moreover, women’s entering the labour market has contributed to more equal gender roles. Even though research are generally seeing a development towards a more egalitarian society, both within households and in the labour market, there is still a lack of egalitarian practice (Ashby & Burgoyne, 2008).

2.2 Spill- and crossover effect
Job loss is not only an individual event when taking family into account; whether it is living with a spouse, an entire family or living apart together (Ashby & Burgoyne, 2008; Brand, 2015). Spillover effect is a term that aims to capture the phenomenon where individuals are affected by their work to the extent that they transmit pressure from one area of life to another. This could e.g. be the inability to leave strain from work, which then consumes the individual’s leisure time (Eby et al., 2005).

It is theorized that family members can be affected and act as a buffer for one another, absorbing each other’s emotional stress that is caused by different life events (Charles & Stephens, 2004; Sears et al., 2016). Being an emotional buffer for another family member subjects the individual to an crossover effect which could lead to a decline in overall well-being. Hence, this transmission could also lead to a decline in self-reported mental health for the individual’s partner or family (Westam, 2001; Bubonya, Cobb-Clark, & Wooden, 2014). In sum, spillover is an internal stressor that affects the individual, while crossover is a later stage where the internal stress of one individual transmits to their partner (Westam, 2001). Research has mainly seen financial strain and general stress of searching for a job, as an explanatory factor to
describe how unemployment can cause psychological distress, not only for the unemployed but for their partner as well (Song, Foo, Uy, & Sun, 2011).

When a family member experiences job loss, the family as a unit is affected in several ways. One possible spillover effect can be increased tension within relationships, which can result in conflicts that spread throughout the family. Research has shown that the effect of job loss has a greater impact on women when their partner loses their job, than it has on men when their partner loses their job (Charles & Stephens, 2004; Sears et al., 2016). However, it is stated that the effect on women stands in relation to a longer period of unemployment, with financial difficulties that exist prior to the husband's job loss (Bubonya, Cobb-Clark, & Wooden, 2014). Hence, research suggests that job loss combined with these spillover and crossover effects can increase the risk of disruption or divorce (Charles & Stephens, 2004; Song, Foo, Uy, & Sun, 2011; Bubonya, Cobb-Clark, & Wooden, 2014).

Furthermore, research has also stated that the overall well-being is affected when the individual as well as their partner is unemployed. It is argued that people in prime working ages between 35-44 are less likely to experience job loss (Härkönen, 2007). However, it is established that individuals in this situation, where both parties are unemployed, experience a detrimental effect on their mental health. Moreover, it is argued that jobless households have a further impact on individual’s health depending on what means the welfare regime provides. It is suggested that a limited amount of welfare has a detrimental effect on overall health, while a sufficient welfare has a positive impact on the overall health (Härkönen, 2007).
3. Method
Data from the 2014 edition of the European social survey (ESS-7) were used in order to answer our research questions. The dataset covers 21 countries and includes both attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns in Europe. However only 20 countries will be represented in this thesis; Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom. The ESS data set is unique in the sense that it addresses both information about the individual’s and partner’s employment status, as well as providing information about mental health. The survey is designed to meet the highest methodological standards. This in order to provide information that is truly comparable across different countries included in the material (European social survey, 2014). The response rate and information about missing data regarding this sample can be found on the web page of European Social Survey (2014). Our analysis is limited to respondents who are between the ages of 18-60 and was carried out in the statistical tool, SPSS; multiple linear regressions were used to analyse and present our results. This in order to see how unemployment effects self reported depressive symptoms combined with our control variables.

The analysis is based on our key dependent variable depression and explanatory variables such as the respondent’s status in the labour market, and their partners’ status in the labour market. We used a variable that measures if the respondent or their partner currently is in paid work or not. Furthermore, a variable that measured if the respondent is cohabiting with a partner or spouse were used. The variable is intended to act as an indicator of whether the respondent is in a relationship or not, this instead of excluding individuals without a partner. Control variables such as years in education, age, gender and country welfare regimes were also used in order to control for the relationship between the key dependent variable, depression, and explanatory variables.

3.1 Ethical consideration
In this study, a pre-existing material were used in order to answer our research questions. However, it is crucial to remember that we are dealing with human subjects and not only numbers. Therefore, one must consider ethical aspects such as; consent, anonymity and...
information about the utilization of the information gathered. The European social survey has an established approach in gathering material, this procedure starts with a random selection of respondents who are then contacted with a letter informing them that they are conducting a survey. The leaflet contains information about the purpose of the survey, and how the gathered information is later utilized, as well as the assurance that they will remain anonymous. Furthermore, the respondents give their consent by agreeing to participate in the survey, and also a separate consent for third-party utilization for future research.

3.2 Key dependent variable
To measure our key dependent variable, depression, The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) were used in order to capture different aspects that cover self-reported symptoms of depression (Radloff, 1977). The CES-D scale is a self-reported scale that measures the feeling of depression rather than the severity of the illness in the general population. The scale is based on clinical literature and factor analytic studies; this scale is not a clinical tool to diagnose depression but rather an instrument to measure symptoms that captures the essence of depression (Radloff, 1977). Symptoms that were found in clinical literature included depressed mood, psychomotor retardation, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance and feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness, as well as hopelessness. The questions included in the scale were constructed to capture the individual's current state of mind, by asking how often in the past week the respondents experienced any of the symptoms mentioned above (Radloff, 1977).

In order to create our key dependent variable properly, we had to make sure that the response scale of all our included variables in our key dependent variable, were set in the same scale. Hence, higher values need to reflect an increase in self-rated depressive symptoms. Two of our variables had a reversed scale, how happy you are and how much you enjoy your overall life. A scale of 1-4 measured these feelings, where higher values indicated a greater joy/enjoyment of life. Since all the other variables included in our index had a higher value that indicated a more depressive state of mind we needed to rescale these two variables so that they would capture the same phenomena as the other variables.
3.2.1 Depression index
By using questions that aim to capture a respondent’s feeling toward a symptom experienced in the last week, we are able to see if our different questions capture the underlying phenomena (Van der Velde, Bracke, & Levecque, 2010). We constructed an index in order to gather these individual variables into one unit as our key dependent variable. The variables included in our depression index are how happy the respondent is in the current state, how much they enjoy their life, how often they experience sleep disturbance, how often they feel that everything felt like an effort, how often they felt depressed, felt lonely, could not get going and how often they felt sad. After selecting our variables for our depression index we tested the Cronbach's alpha to see how well the selected variables captured the phenomena of depression.

When looking at Cronbach's alpha we reached a value of 0.827, which indicates that our variables are capturing our intended phenomena, depression. Moreover, we could also see that our Cronbach's alpha would not increase or decrease if we excluded any of the selected variables, altogether this tells us that our internal reliability is adequate.

After checking our collected variables for reliability and a sufficient Cronbach's alpha value we proceeded with constructing an index with our selected variables. In line with Van der Velde et al’s research (2010) we decided to re-code our variable response scale into values between 0-3 to ensure that all variables had the same response scale. This to make sure that the index will be statistically measurable in SPSS. The scores were then added which resulted in a scale with values from 0-24, where 0 indicates no symptoms of depression and 24 indicates the highest symptoms of depression.

3.3 Explanatory and control variables
When looking at the encoding made in ESS-7, our explanatory variables initially had values of 1-2. To make them statistically manageable in a regression analysis, the dichotomy values of the variables were recoded into dummy variables. Therefore, respondent’s employment status and their partner’s employment status were re-coded in order to get a reference category (i.e. 1 = 0 & 2 = 1). Our gender variable was deconstructed to isolate each gender, since current research reveal that when taking gender into account, females are more prone to experience
depression than men (Van der Velde, Bracke, & Levecque, 2010; Piccinelli & Wilkinson, 2000). Additionally, the age categories were recoded into dummy-variables. A modified version of Van der Velde, Bracke, & Levecque (2010) age categories were used which resulted in an age span of 18-60. This in to order capture individuals who are in a working age. Therefore, individuals who are retired or used early retirement schemes were excluded from our sample. All other values, below or above 18-60, were coded into missing values. The different categories include young adults, middle aged and older respondents (i.e. 18-31, 32-46 and 47-60).

In order to understand the relationship between unemployment and depression in a European context, different welfare state regimes were taken into account. This because previous research has shown that a countries welfare plays som part in understanding the relationship between unemployment and depression (Brand, 2015). In addition, Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) argue that welfare state regimes can help explain broader issues like employment, wages and macroeconomic steering. Countries can be divided into different clusters by looking at each country separately and their own discrete logic of organization. When examining different welfare states Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) created clusters in order to categorize countries according to their welfare regime; conservative, social democratic, liberal, post-socialism and southern European.

The country variable was de-constructed in order to give each country a numeric expression. This as a result of the initial coding in the ESS-7 material which had country variables coded by letters. After deconstructing the variable, the countries were arranged by clusters of welfare regime in line with Esping-Andersen's (1990; 1999) classification. As our study only focused on European countries, Israel who initially were included in the ESS-7 material, were excluded from our analysis; (even though it could be seen as a country that is transitioning into a European country).

When taking all of the information stated above into account, our division of country were made as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Social democratic</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Post-socialism</th>
<th>Southern Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Austria</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Czech Republic</th>
<th>Spain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<td>Hungary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
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<td>Poland</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Slovenia</td>
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</table>

*Figure 1. Country division according to Esping-Andersen's (1990, 1999) classification.*
4. Results

In this following section, we will examine the relationship between unemployment and depression in a European context. We will start with mapping out the unmitigated relationship between respondent’s labour market status and self-reported symptoms of depression. Furthermore, we will then examine the relatively new area of partner’s effect on depression in relation to unemployment. In order to do so, it is examined how partners labour market status additionally may affect the respondent’s self-reported symptoms of depression.

4.1 Labour market status and its effect on the respondent's depression

The result of our key dependent variable depression and our explanatory variable unemployment, show a difference between how respondents rate their depressive symptoms, depending on whether they are in paid work or not. Respondents in paid work tend to rate themselves lower on a scale, which indicate fewer or non-existing symptoms of depression, than respondents without a paid job who generally rated themselves higher on the scale. There are only small differences between the two groups; however, there is an increase on the depression scale for respondents when unemployed. This result can be seen for both genders.
A multiple regression model was used in order to capture the strength of the relationship between depression and unemployment. Variables such as age, years in education and countries welfare state regimes were used to control for the relationship. In this model, each gender category was isolated, i.e. by using a split file command that measures men and women separately.

The constant value in Table 1, model 1 indicate that a young male respondent in paid work who lives in a social democratic welfare regime and has zero years in education, generally experience symptoms that correspond with approximately a 5 on a scale of 0-24, in contrast to a unemployed male respondent, who rate themselves approximately one and a half unit higher on the depression scale. The constant value for young women in paid work who lives in a social democratic welfare regime and has zero years in education, show that they generally experience symptoms that correspond with 6 on a scale of 0-24, in contrary to an unemployed female respondent who rates themselves approximately one unit higher. Moreover, table 1 also show that both men and women tend to be affected by their unemployment, but women are additionally affected if their partner does not work. When combining the constant value for men
and their value for unemployment we can see that they increase to approximately a 6 on the depression scale. Whereas women increase to approximately a 7 on the depression scale when adding the constant value and the value for unemployment.

When taking the control variable age into account, there is a further increase for both men and women in how they rate their depressive symptoms. Table 1 show that self-reported symptoms of depression increase with age, as young adult respondents tend to rate themselves lower on the depression scale than both middle aged and old age respondents. The table also show that for every year in education, the respondent tends to report fewer symptoms of depression. Furthermore, depending on which welfare state regimes the respondent lives in there are a difference between how respondents rate their depressive symptoms. For men, higher values can be seen in post-socialistic welfare regimes, while women experience the highest levels of depressive symptoms in Southern Europe welfare regimes. Moreover, liberal welfare has a decreasing effect on the relationship between unemployment and depression. However, the result can only be seen for women and not for men, as this result it is not statistically significant.

Table 1. Multiple regression between self-rated depression among men and women.
(Ratings: 0= very good mental health, 24= very poor mental health)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
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In sum, respondents’ who are unemployed tend to rate themselves higher on the depression scale than those who are in employment, i.e. unemployment have a negative effect on the individual’s mental health. Both men and women are affected by their labour market status, but in the next step we will examine whether partner’s unemployment also affects individuals to report higher levels of depressive symptoms.

4.2 The individual's’ and partner's labour market status and its effect on depression
To explore if one's partner can affect depression when being unemployed, a multiple regression model was used in order to understand and explain the relationship (see Table 2). Hence, the model includes variables that measure the respondent and their partner’s employment status, as well as the respondent’s relationship status (i.e. in a relationship or not). In addition to this, control variables such as age, years in education and welfare state regime were used.

The constant value of table 2 indicate that a young male respondent in paid work with a partner in paid work who lives in a social democratic welfare regime, and has zero years in education, generally experience symptoms that correspond with approximately a 3 on a scale of 0-24. In contrast to a young female respondent in paid work with a partner in paid work who lives in a social democratic welfare regime, and has zero years in education, rate themselves as
approximately a 5 on the depression scale. Table 2 also show that women generally show higher values on the depression scale if their partner is unemployed, the value for men however is not statistically significant. Hence, men tend to report-higher levels of depressive symptoms when unemployed than women, as they increase with more units on the scale.

The result of table 2 also indicates that respondents’ who does not have a partner or spouse, generally experience higher symptoms of depression as they increase further on the depression scale. There is however a difference between how much they increase, as men tend to experience more depressive symptoms when they do not have a partner; than women.

As seen in previous result (table 1), the control variable age still have an increasing effect on depressive symptoms. Younger respondents tend to report fewer symptoms of depression than both middle aged and old aged respondents. Which indicates that the respondent's age is a part of the explanation of the variation within depression. When taking education years and welfare state regimes into account, education decreases depressive symptoms for both men and women. Men experience the highest increase of depressive symptoms in post-socialist welfare states, while women experience a higher increase on the depression scale in southern European welfare regimes. Moreover, liberal welfare has a decreasing effect on the relationship between unemployment and depression for both men and women, as they decrease on the depression scale.

Table 2. Multiple regression between self-rated depression among men and women.
(Ratings: 0= very good mental health, 24= very poor mental health)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.807**</td>
<td>4.869**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1.325**</td>
<td>1.133**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed partner</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>0.645**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No partner</td>
<td>1.042**</td>
<td>0.646**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle age</td>
<td>0.969**</td>
<td>0.887**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,187**</td>
<td>1,177**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in education</td>
<td>-0,061**</td>
<td>-0,122**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative welfare</td>
<td>0,073</td>
<td>-0,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal welfare</td>
<td>-0,299*</td>
<td>-0,625**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-socialistic welfare</td>
<td>0,764**</td>
<td>0,538**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern European welfare</td>
<td>0,353*</td>
<td>0,787**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Respondent in paid work, partner in paid work, young adults and social democratic welfare regime acts as a reference category. * = 95 percent level, ** = 99 percent level.

In sum, female respondent’s are affected by their partner’s unemployment, as they increase on the depression scale i.e. partner’s unemployment have a negative effect on women’s mental health. Men tend to be more affected by their own labour market status and not by their partner’s unemployment, since there was no statistically significant result for partner’s labour market status.
5. Analysis

5.1 Labour market status and its effect on the respondent's depression

When looking at the impact of unemployment and depression, the result shows an increase in how respondents rate their depressive symptoms when unemployed. This result is consistent with previous studies on the subject, and indicates that there is a correlation between unemployment and depression. According to Burgard, Brand, & House (2007) this could be explained by the isolation and stigmatisation associated with unemployment, as well as depression. On the other hand, Curnock, Leyland, & Popham (2016) argue that the loss of economic factors is a stronger explanation to why an individual is depressed; this relationship could be related to the stress and inability to provide for themselves or their family. Unemployment could also be explained by how it can affect individuals’ differently depending on how they value their work. This argument by Nordenmark & Strandh (1999), is interesting in the sense that it provides a broader nuance in understanding how employment, or lack of it, holds a greater value for some and therefore be more detrimental for one's mental health.

It is prominent that unemployment and depression is a phenomenon that affects both genders, even though men tend to report lower levels of depressive symptoms in general, than women. There is a statistically significant increase in depression for men when unemployed. Moreover, men tend to be slightly more affected and have a higher increase in depressive symptoms when they themselves are unemployed. This could be explained by a reversed breadwinner model argument, where being the sole provider of a family puts the individual in a position of power. It is plausible to assume that this position comes with great responsibility, where unemployment can result in the inability to maintain the position and provide for the family (Lewis, Campbell, & Huerta, 2008). However, it should be emphasized that our results show that women experience a lower increase in depressive symptoms when unemployed but they do have a higher score on the depression scale.

Whereas men in some cases report higher levels of depressive symptoms when unemployed, women show higher levels of depressive symptoms in general. According to Lewis, Campbell & Huerta (2008) this can be explained by gender specific roles, where females often are
undervalued and their social positions are characterized by lower status levels and powerlessness. Another possible explanation is the fact that women are more prone to have a part-time job in order to stay at home and care for their children, which could lead to a lack of social connections (i.e. isolation). Even though Burgard, Brand, & House (2007) argue that women are twice as likely to experience depressive symptoms when unemployed than men, our result only show a certain degree of increase for women and not two-fold.

Women and men are affected by different welfare regimes, which could be explained by the limited amount of social support and cultural aspects in different welfare regimes. Härkönen (2007) argues that restricted social support systems can be detrimental to the individual's overall health. According to Esping-Andersen (1999), both Southern European and Post-socialistic welfare have relatively low social benefits. In these countries, family is one of the main sources of financial and social support. When looking at our results, male respondents tend to experience more depressive symptoms in Post-socialistic welfare regimes than female respondents. This could be explained by the fact that Post socialistic countries have high poverty rates compared to other European countries (Esping-Andersen, 1999). With limited government support it is plausible to assume that the increase seen when looking at male respondents might be explained by the stress of unemployment combined with the fact that there is, little or no security net provided by the state (Lewis, Campbell, & Huerta, 2008).

Women’s increase in depressive symptoms could be explained by the influences of family orientation in Southern European welfare states, where women are expected to maintain the household and care for children (Esping-Andersen, 1999). One could argue that the lack of social benefits from the state, is in some sense excluding women to be equal to men, as social insurance often excludes non-working wives and there are few family benefits that encourage motherhood. Curnock, Leyland & Popham (2016) points out that the absence of sufficient support from the state could lead to a decline in the overall mental health.

5.2 Partner's labour market status and its effect on depression
In the second part of our analysis we will examine both the individuals’ employment status, and their partners’ employment status. This in order to see how spill and crossover effects can
influence the individual to report higher symptoms of depression. To further investigate the relationship, we also controlled for respondent's relationship status. Our results indicate that there is a singular increase in depressive symptoms when one's partner is unemployed for women, but not for men. Moreover, the respondents increase even higher on the depression scale if they are unemployed as well. According to Westman (2001), the increase in depressive symptoms when a partner is unemployed, can be explained by spillover effects where the partner acts as a buffer absorbing emotional stress. Additionally, our results indicated that respondents without a partner also increase on the depression scale and this could be explained by loneliness argued by Bech et al., (2003) to be detrimental to an individual's overall health.

One possible explanation for the increase in depressive symptoms seen in our result, is presented by Bubonya, Cobb-Clark & Wooden (2014), who argue that the economic strain that follows unemployment puts pressure on the individual. This also illustrates the dynamic nature of spillover effects, where strain is transferred from one area of an individual’s life, to another. The stress and pressure that follows are later transmitted to people in their proximity, also called a crossover effect (Song, Foo, Uy, & Sun, 2011). However, the result can only be seen for women. The increase can be dependent on economic factors that pre-exist the unemployment, it is also argued that there needs to be a long-term unemployment for the effect to be prominent (Bubonya, Cobb-Clark, & Wooden, 2014). However, our results indicate that there is an increase that can be seen even without controlling for economic factors or the duration of unemployment.

For male respondents, the results show an increase in depressive symptoms when controlling for the respondent’s relationship status, which illustrates that there is an increase in depressive symptoms for a man who is unemployed and does not have a partner. However, our results show that the relationship between partners’ employment and depression index was not statistically significant for male respondents. The lack of statistical significance is interesting because it is argued that men are less affected by their partners’ employment status (Charles & Stephens, 2004; Brand, 2015; Sears, Repetti, Reynolds, Robles, & Krull, 2016). Hence, it would seem that for men, their own employment status has a greater impact on self-reported symptoms of depression rather than their partners’ employment status. This could be related to Nordenmark & Strand’s (1999) argument regarding the distinction between individuals with an
instrumental attitude towards their work and those who value their work highly. An individual who mainly sees their work as a source of income, does not value their work highly, and might not be as affected by unemployment to the same extent as someone who puts great value in their work. Additionally, it could be argued that stereotypical gender roles might explain the non-significant result for men. As previous research has suggested, women tend to have more part-time employment than men (Lewis, Campbell, & Huerta, 2008).
6. Discussion
In this following section, we will address central parts of the main research questions and how they relate or differ from previous research. Moreover, we will address both strengths and weaknesses of the study, as well as comment on what further research would benefit the area.

The aim of this study has been to examine the impact of individual and partner’s unemployment on depressive symptoms in Europe, when controlling for gender, age, welfare regime and partners’ employment status. Aspects such as economy, general health and childhood environment were therefore not included, due to the limited extent of this report. Seeing how the financial aspect is a commonly used mediating factor when looking at the relationship between unemployment and overall health (see Lewis, Campbell, & Huerta, 2008; Bubonya, Cobb-Clark, & Wooden, 2014; Curnock, Leyland, & Popham, 2016), we decided to restrict our area of interest to capture the unmitigated relationship between unemployment and self-rated depression.

6.1 The use of variables
Self-rated symptoms of depression were used instead of a variable that measures the overall health of respondents. This in order to capture an individual’s subjective feeling of psychological well-being, rather than the wider concept of overall health. Moreover, when taking someone's feelings into consideration, one must be aware of contextual differences, both questions and answers could mean different things across different countries. Our inspiration to use variables that measured depressive symptoms’ is derived from the scale constructed by Radloff (1977), that later were used in a similar context by Van der Velde, Bracke, & Levecque (2011) which confirms that the use of a depression scale it is suitable for a comparative study.

Bech et al (2001) and Olsen et al (2003) defined depression as a state of mind where the individual must experience symptoms for at least a two-week period of time. As this study mainly aimed to examine indications to whether the respondent experienced any current symptoms, it was decided to only look at a seven-day period rather than a two-week period of time. Hence, the index captures a current state of mind, and does not exclude or control for respondents who suffers from a long-term psychological distress. The depression index is
designed to capture respondents experiencing feelings that correspond with depressive symptoms. It is not designed to diagnose or utter anything regarding the respondent’s overall health.

One of our main research questions examined if individual’s partner’s unemployment additionally can affect one's depression. There was however no question included in the ESS-7 material that measured the respondent’s relationship status in a way that we would have preferred, i.e. a question that in a direct way asked if the respondent is single, married or living apart together. So, in order to control for respondent's’ relationship status, we used a variable that measure whether a respondent is currently living with a partner or spouse. This does not include respondents who are living apart together; therefore, we cannot be sure if this group is included in the selection. However, the ESS-7 data documentation stated that the variable aims to capture individuals who are in a relationship, which makes it plausible to assume that the variable is measuring a sufficient amount of respondents who identify themselves to be in a relationship.

Furthermore, it is recognized that clustering countries together could be problematic if one is interested in investigate more than just how countries welfare can affect the relationship between unemployment (both individual and partners) and depression. To understand how social norms and family policies may influence the relationship between unemployment and depression, it would be more beneficial to make a comparison between countries that have a single earning system and a dual-earning system. Hence, it has been taken into consideration that by clustering countries according to their welfare regime, we wont be able to see nuances of how social norms could affect an individual to report higher levels of depressive symptoms.

6.2 Central aspects
For our first research question we could see, in line with previous research, that there is a relationship between unemployment and self-rated depression (see Burgard, Brand, & House, 2007; Van der Velde, Bracke, & Levecque, 2010; Curnock, Leyland, & Popham, 2016). This relationship differs when controlling for gender, men tend to experience a higher increase in depressive symptoms if they are unemployed than women. However, it needs to be taken into
consideration that women have a higher constant value than men, with this in mind women generally experience higher levels of depressive symptoms than men.

Male respondents' also show an increase in depressive symptoms when unemployed. This increase is somewhat bigger than compared to women and statistically significant. The highest increase for men when taking welfare regimes into consideration could be seen in Post-socialistic regimes which could be explained by poverty rates and lack of social benefits in times of need (Esping-Andersen, 1999). The result also shows that depressive symptoms increase with age, where the youngest respondents in our data had the lowest scores on the depressive scale.

Our second research question aimed to examine how partners’ unemployment affected self-reported depression, and how this effect changed with partner’s unemployment. When controlling for partners’ employment status along with the relationship status of the respondents, it was visible that having a partner who is unemployed only affect female respondents to increase on the depression scale; as the result for men was not statistically significant. Furthermore, the result show that women are affected by their own labour market status, as well as their partners labour market status which makes them a vulnerable group. Therefore, it is safe to assume that partner’s unemployment has a negative impact on women's mental health in relation to depressive symptoms. For men, we could see that their partner’s unemployment status has little or no effect in relation to self-rated depressive symptoms, which is in line with previous research. Some research has shown that for men, it is less significant if their partner experience job loss than if the respondent themselves loses their job (see Charles & Stephens, 2004; Brand, 2015; Sears et al., 2016). Spill- and crossover effects, can also explain the effect of partner’s unemployment where the stress transmits from one area of life to another, and ultimately ends up as a crossover effect where the partner experience transmitted stress (Song, Foo, Uy, Sun, 2011).

The use of previous and established research methods provided us with guidance, as well as high reliability and validity for our report. Another strength of this report is the use of the ESS-7 data material. Which is unique in the sense that it provides information about respondent’s employment status, their partner’s employment status and respondent's mental well-being.
Previous research included in the theoretical part of this report, has mainly used data material from earlier waves of the European social services and other data sets. The fact that the ESS-7 material used in this report was conducted in the year 2014, show in line with previous research that there is still a difference in how men and women are affected by job loss. Furthermore, previous studies have focused on specific countries or a limited amount of countries. This thesis gives a broader perspective by looking at several European countries and could therefore be seen as representative for Europe. Moreover, this study contributes with evidence on a topic that has recently received a lot of interest but is, to this day fairly under investigated.

One of the main strengths of our report is that we answer a new research question in this field by using previous and established research methods. There have only been a handful of previous studies that provide evidence on the relationship between individual’s labour market status, their partner’s labour market status and depression. Moreover, our study is one of few that put the relationship between individual and partners unemployment in a European context. However, there are still gaps that need to be filled in this area, which we will discuss in further research below.

Although this study does not find a singular factor that captures the phenomena of depressive symptoms, it needs to be taken into consideration that depression is an extensive area that is not explained fully in relation to unemployment. A wider scope is required to fully map all factors that affect depressive symptoms to occur in the general population. This study only focus on what factors could affect depressive symptoms in relation to unemployment. Hence, our results only show somewhat modest increases in depressive symptoms in relation to unemployment for the individual, as well as their partner, but they are statistically significant and can be generalized over the general population.

6.3 Further research
In further research, it would be interesting to see how unemployment in relation to mental health is affected by using the CES-D scale with the respondents cohabiting situation as an interaction variable to see if it has an effect on the correlation between unemployment and depression. In
doing so it could provide some interesting results in relation to previous research by Härkönen (2011) and highlight not only how it affects overall health but mental health more specifically.

Furthermore, it might yield some interesting results to more specifically investigate what factors affect specific age groups, how the duration of unemployment affect mental health and whether there is mediation correlations that can better explain the relationship between unemployment and mental health. Furthermore, some researchers such as Lewis, Campbell & Huerta (2008), suggest that there has been a development in women’s presence in the labour market which speaks to a transition where women are in employment to a higher degree than ever before. It would be interesting to see over a longitudinal approach how this development has occurred and if it spreads out over all European countries.

Additionally, it would be interesting to create a model that compares family policy regimes with different wage earning systems, one with a single wage earning system and one with a dual wage earning system. This in order to capture how the effect of individual and partners unemployment might differ, depending on which wage earning system the country has. Moreover, it would also be interesting to make two separate analyses for different welfare regimes that have a dual wage earning system.

References


