

Too Old to Work: Views on Reemployment in Older Unemployed Immigrants in Germany

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Abstract Despite active aging discourses and labor force integration goals, unemployment and dependency on welfare institutions among older workers still prevails, especially among vulnerable groups like immigrants or women. However, little is known about how older immigrants understand or cope with unemployment. The present study investigates the interplay between age, gender and immigrant status in making sense of unemployment and reemployment barriers. Episodic interviews were conducted with 12 Russian-speaking and 12 Turkish unemployed immigrants living in Germany. Older unemployed immigrants perceived age as an important barrier for reemployment and used old age to make sense of their unemployment, setting the stage for the internalization of negative age stereotypes. Gender norms may be less important than age perceptions in the context of unemployment. Different intervention alternatives are discussed in relation to the immigrant unemployed aging groups studied.

Keywords Globalization/immigration · Immigrants · Qualitative research methods · Health · Workforce issues · Ageism

Introduction

Traditional lock-step and linear pathways from full-time work to full-time retirement are slowly disappearing due to global economic events like the financial crisis of 2008

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