Impact of COVID-19 on Employment: Exploring the Perspectives of Job Loss and Mental Health of Individuals From Minimal-Resource Communities

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This qualitative study examines the experiences of COVID-19 job loss by individuals from minimal-resource communities. Six participants were interviewed regarding their experience with becoming unemployed during the global pandemic. In general, participants described experiences that aligned with the core tenets of Gowan and Gatewood's (1997) model of response to job loss, as well as additional subthemes, including (a) internal support, (b) external support/resources, (c) survival, (d) mind-set, (e) emotion regulation, and (f) mental health effects. Implications are provided to career practitioners with consideration of these experiences when working with unemployed individuals who have limited resources.

Keywords: unemployment, COVID-19, mental health, job loss, qualitative

The U.S. economy has experienced detrimental economic effects as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, directly impacting the national unemployment rate. In April 2021, there were 9.8 million unemployed persons because of the global pandemic (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). There is increasing concern that the unemployment crisis has disproportionately affected individuals from minimal-resource communities. Although research shows COVID-19 has exacerbated inequalities, populations of color and communities from lower socioeconomic status have been severely impacted and underserved (Flores et al., 2019; Kantamneni, 2020). Within the occupational realm, workplaces faced great demands to convert some in-person jobs to remote work via online platforms (Dingel & Neiman, 2020). Missing from the literature is a vivid illustration of the unemployment experienced by individuals from minimal-resource communities. In response to the unemployment crisis caused by the COVID-19, the focus of this study was to explore the narratives of individuals who have lost jobs because of the pandemic to better understand how career development interventions can be tailored toward diverse populations. In addition, these narratives (a) provide implications for career practitioners, (b) add to the dearth of literature

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addressing vocational hardships among communities from low socio-economic classes, and (c) indicate directions for future areas of research.

Immediate Impact of Job Loss for Individuals

For some individuals who have experienced job loss as a result of COVID-19 and who identify as being from minimal-resource communities, the unplanned and unprecedented disruption in employment has created a ripple effect of negative consequences related to unemployment status. The shock of being unemployed during COVID-19 has been identified as traumatic for many individuals, with initial emotions including sadness, injustice, and anger (Akkermans et al., 2020; Drosos et al., 2021). In addition to the loss of financial stability, job loss from the pandemic has led to unequal access of power and privilege for historically marginalized populations, creating power differentials that include a lack of credit, status, and mobility (Flores et al., 2019). Researchers have found that individuals who are able to convert their jobs to remote platforms are less likely to become unemployed (Dey et al., 2020). However, Dingel and Neiman (2020) estimated after a review of 1,000 job descriptions that only 37% of jobs can be converted to online platforms; therefore, many nonconvertible jobs were lost as a result of the pandemic. Despite a partial recovery of the unemployment rate, overall recovery has slowed, and many temporary layoffs have become permanent (Handwerker et al., 2020). The transition from short-term to long-term job loss creates the need to evaluate the long-term effects of the unemployment crisis.

Long-Term Effects of Job Loss on Job Seeking

Potential long-term consequences for individuals affected by the CO-VID-19 unemployment crisis include an increased risk of mental and physical health and an increase in relational problems, both of which pose challenges for future employment (Blustein et al., 2019). In response to COVID-19, mandates to quarantine and socially distance have created an increase in mental health disorders not limited to posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. These conditions create an added barrier for individuals who are looking for new employment (Brooks et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2020). Quarantine mandates have influenced and disrupted relational processes that are important to job-seeking behaviors. For example, researchers have found that there is a close association between relational processes and career-associated tasks such as interviewing and networking (Blacker et al., 2020; Motulsky, 2010). Furthermore, social isolation has been found to affect work productivity and decision-making, both vital processes that aid in obtaining future employment (Blacker et al., 2020). The aforementioned circumstances resulting from job loss during the pandemic have created complex dilemmas for job seekers. Therefore, it is important for career practitioners and others to better understand the COVID-19 pandemic work phenomenon to devise best practices for career practitioners.

Theoretical Frameworks Related to Job Loss

The *model of response to job loss* (Gowan & Gatewood, 1997), a theoretical framework implemented for this study, explored four tenets of job loss:

(a) coping resources (including both individual and situational), (b) mediating processes (i.e., cognitive appraisal and coping strategies), (c) immediate effects (i.e., surrounding affective state and reemployment status), and (d) long-term effects on psychological functioning. This model has long been recognized as a model to explain coping with job loss, yet this is the first time the theory has been explored within qualitative research. The first tenet, coping resources, refers to the comparison between available resources and one's ability or inability to meet the demands of job loss (Gowan & Gatewood, 1997). Coping resources can include both individual factors such as upholding positive beliefs about oneself and situational factors such as social support and availability of financial resources. The second tenet, mediating processes, includes cognitive appraisal and coping strategies. Gowan and Gatewood (1997) believed that mediating processes serve as mediators between coping resources and immediate effects, as well as between cognitive appraisal and immediate effects. The third tenet, immediate effects, includes psychological affect and reemployment status, which the authors believed helped in better understanding the role between coping strategies and distress. The final tenet, long-term effects, refers to outcomes relating to the job loss, including psychological, social, and physiological well-being.

In addition, this study is supported by the psychology of working theory (PWT) developed by Blustein et al. (2019). The current study aligns with the many core assumptions of PWT, including the necessity of access to decent and stable work for an individual to survive, and the inseparable nature of an individual's cultural background, family context, and social identities in influencing their work environment (Blustein et al., 2019). In their most recent approach of PWT, Blustein et al. (2019) hypothesized that individuals who have access to decent work also experience general well-being in terms of survival, social connection, and self-determination. Similarly, we anticipated that job loss and lack of employment would result in participants facing many difficulties and adversities in obtaining well-being, particularly mental health.

Purpose and Research Questions of the Current Study

Much of the current research surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic has focused primarily on the specific number of cases and the overarching economic health of the United States. However, there is minimal literature on personal narratives of the impact of job loss among working-class communities. The current study used a phenomenological research design to obtain a better understanding of the unique experiences of job loss during the pandemic. Interviews were analyzed following Gowan and Gatewood's (1997) model of response to job loss, based on the theoretical assumptions that those who experienced job loss during the COVID-19 pandemic will face unique challenges related to coping resources, mediating process, and both short- and long-term effects. The research questions included the following:

Research Question 1: How do individuals who identify with working-class communities perceive their experience of job loss during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Question 2: What challenges and needs are associated with unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic as described by individuals who identify with working-class communities?

Method

Research Team

The research team consisted of three female doctoral-level students working toward their degrees in counselor education and supervision at a large southeastern U.S. academic institution and one female faculty adviser specializing in educational and human sciences at the same institution. All the researchers have varying experience working with underserved and underrepresented populations, and two of the researchers have backgrounds in career counseling and assisting clients with career-related issues. The research team aided the primary researcher (the first author) with key components of the study, including development of interview protocol, data collection, transcription, and data analysis. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of the data analysis eliminated the potential for researcher bias while increasing the trustworthiness of the analysis. Two of the researchers were particularly mindful that their career counseling experiences and backgrounds could influence their approach to the study.

Multiple strategies for trustworthiness were incorporated to ensure the external and internal validity of our study, including peer debriefing of transcripts and reflexivity toward observed interviews. To ensure the credibility and transparency of the study findings, we endorsed bracketing of preexisting bias prior to data collection and agreed-upon positionality inclusion (Morrow, 2005). In addition, we had weekly meetings to collaborate on logistical dynamics of the study and its design and aided with transcription coding and devising themes. Furthermore, the primary investigator kept a journal following each conducted interview, identifying and addressing thought processes throughout the study.

Participants

The primary investigator ensured that each participant met the inclusionary criteria of (a) involuntary job loss, (b) job loss as a result of the pandemic, and (c) an expression of willingness to participate in the study. The participant pool included adults who identified as being from minimal-resource communities. To be eligible for the study, participants must have met the following criteria: (a) at least 18 years of age, (b) currently unemployed, and (c) lost their most recent employment due to reasons related to COVID-19. The rationale for participants falling under these criteria was to fully understand individuals' current experiences, challenges, and needs as they pertained to being unemployed following the global pandemic. Participants were recruited from various avenues of outreach based on networks, affiliation, and word of mouth. Most participants were sampled from a local nonprofit employment assistance organization. Interested participants were provided an initial email containing information about the study, an informed consent form, and a link to the preliminary questionnaire to ensure eligibility.

Ten individuals expressed interest in participating in an interview, and six interviews were conducted of eligible participants. Interviews with four individuals could not be arranged. Demographic information of the participants includes five women and one man; four participants were between 25 and 34 years of age, one participant was between 35 and 44 years of age, and one participant was between 55 and 64 years of age. Two participants identified as White, one participant identified as Black/African American, and three participants identified as "other." All the interviewees were located in the southeastern United States. Table 1 provides additional demographic and employment information on the participants.

Interview Protocol

We developed semistructured interview questions to provide initial talking points during the interviews. Development of the interview questions considered the four major tenets of the response to job loss model (Gowan & Gatewood, 1997). Sample questions are as follows:

- What initial emotions did you portray toward your changed employment status? (immediate effects)
- What actions have you taken toward your socioemotional health following your job loss? (long-term effects)
- What actions have you taken to alter/improve/change your unemployment status? (mediating processes)
- Since COVID-19, how have your interactions with others been affected by your unemployment status? (coping resources)

Because of the unique nature and context of each participants' narrative, additional follow-up questions were asked as new information presented during the interview. The primary researcher conducted all but one of the interviews, with the remaining interview conducted by another member of the research team.

Procedure

After the development of the interview instrument, we obtained institutional review board permission to conduct the study. Each

TABLE 1

Descriptions of the Six Study Participants

Participant	Description
Participant 1	Female, single mother of two, identifying as "other" racial identity. Lost employment as an administrative assistant.
Participant 2	White, married female. Lost employment as a cashier at a hardware store.
Participant 3	Black/African American, female, single mother of one. Lost employment as a teacher.
Participant 4	White, married female, mother of two. Lost employment as a co-owner of a business.
Participant 5	Male, single father of three, identifying as "other" racial identity. Lost employment as an employee at Taco Bell.
Participant 6	Single female, identifying as "other" racial identity. Lost employment working in human resources.

interviewee completed an electronic informed consent form prior to being interviewed. Interviews were conducted through electronic platforms and lasted 30 to 60 minutes, based on the individual narrative of each participant. Because of the pandemic and the potential risks of meeting in person, the interviews took place virtually via an electronic platform. Individual meetings, protected with a unique password, were arranged to ensure participants' confidentiality. Each meeting was set up in a virtual waiting room, requiring the interviewer to verify participants' identification prior to physically admitting them into the interview meetings.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded and then transcribed using Otter AI, a web-based transcription service. Next, all the transcriptions were reviewed to ensure accuracy. Following the transcription, we conducted preliminary coding of themes based on the model of response to job loss (Gowan & Gatewood, 1997). To better understand the extent and nature of participant experiences, we applied an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The goal of IPA is to develop a deeper understanding of lived experiences while factoring in how individuals make meaning of an event (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Researchers using IPA seek answers to questions that focus on the experience and that include contexts of an experience, such as beliefs, feelings, and motives (van Manen, 2017). In our study, coding took place following the four critical stages of IPA: (a) familiarizing ourselves with the reading and rereading the devised transcripts, (b) developing themes that captured and conceptualized the experiences of the participants, (c) grouping themes into clusters/concepts of overarching categories or potential relationships utilizing the categories from the model of response to job loss, and (d) creating a table summary of themes (Gowan & Gatewood, 1997; Smith, 2018).

We divided the participants' transcripts, working in pairs for consensus coding. Each researcher coded three assigned transcripts individually, then met with their assigned partner to review their coding. Next, all the researchers came together to collectively reevaluate and discuss the rationale behind all coding decisions. In total, we reached approximately .75 interrater reliability using Miles and Huberman's (1994) reliability formula. Most of the disagreements were associated with determining whether participants' experiences aligned with individual coping resources or mediating coping strategies, two concepts of Gowan and Gatewood's (1997) model that are similar in nature. We settled this disagreement by associating tangible aspects with individual coping resources (e.g., finding a hobby) and internal aspects with mediating processes (i.e., belief in a higher being). To develop themes, we used bracketing to identify key words or phrases. Collectively, these procedures aided in the holistic visualization and conceptualization of the key characteristics of COVID-19 job loss phenomenon and participants' experiences.

Qualitative research involves studies that are informed by existing literature and questions that help to guide the research process (Ritchie et al., 2018). Our study was supported by existing research exploring job loss, including mental health impacts that were both long and short term.

We used an existing framework to devise interview questions and initial coding based on the theory of job loss (Gowan & Gatewood, 1997).

Results

Our study represents the first time that Gowan and Gatewood's (1997) model of coping responses has been used to explain the phenomenology of involuntary job loss. The model aided in explaining participants' responses; however, additional themes appeared in our findings that were not a part of the original model. From the theoretical framework of the model of response to job loss, six subthemes emerged: (a) internal support, (b) external support/resources, (c) survival, (d) mind-set, (e) emotion regulation, and (f) mental health effects. For the first tenet, coping strategies, the first two subthemes were confirmed, including internal support (individual) and external support (situational). Internal support refers to family and friends, and external support refers to community, government, and organizational support. For the tenet of mediating processes, two new subthemes emerged outside of the original framework, including survival and mind-set (both positive and negative). Because the impacts of COVID-19 were still ongoing and all interviewees were still unemployed, all effects were considered as immediate effects and included subthemes of emotion regulation and mental health effects.

Coping Resources: Internal and External Support

Internal support. The transcripts demonstrated internal support as a resource for coping, finding strategies based on participants' own accessibilities and interests. Areas of internal support included individual factors relating to positive beliefs about themselves relating to their job loss, ranging from actively participating in volunteer work to finding a hobby. Participant 2, a married woman without children, described revisiting old hobbies as an outlet to cope with her job loss:

> Um, so I actually, just about 2 weeks ago, now I bought an old keyboard off of somebody. And so, whenever I'm getting—feeling that like overwhelming feeling again, I've been, you know, trying to play the old songs I used to remember, and it's definitely an emotional release, even though I'm not good at it anymore.

External support/resources. The transcripts revealed participants' use of external coping resources as a way to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. Within the category of coping resources, individuals utilized family and community support. In direct response to the pandemic and the mandate and/or encouragement to quarantine, most participants looked to their family members and their community to provide relief. Participant 1, a single mother with two children, expressed optimism and hope knowing that they were not alone: "Yes, it looks like everything's around us shutting down, but we have community, we have each other."

In addition, participants coped by finding support through external resources from various institutions and organizations. To cope with the pandemic, many participants found monetary assistance through the support of organizations that helped with filing for unemployment benefits, food assistance, and job placement. Participant 6, who was in the highest age range of all the participants, stated,

So I, when I saw the jobs [from the career development program] come across, I said, "You know, I'm going to join. I need this—I need to get some type of help, so that I can maneuver through all of this." Um, I can't do it alone. And, and it's OK to ask for help.

Many participants demonstrated initial reluctance to utilize the resources and programs, but they were able to persevere because of these organizations' ability to reduce the negative consequences of the pandemic.

Mediating Processes: Survival and Mind-Set

Survival. Within the theme of mediating processes, a key subtheme addressed was behaviors relating to survival. Several participants identified prioritizing basic need for housing and groceries when adapting to job loss, as well as abandoning supplemental necessities that they could no longer afford. Specifically, as pressures for survival heightened, participants acknowledged major job loss adjustments that were nested in lifestyle changes. For example, Participant 5, a father coparenting three children, commented, "So ended up losing the place I was at, well, I didn't lose it, when the lease came to renew, I wasn't able to renew it. So I was forced to move in with my ex-wife."

Participants appeared to view their job loss experience as directly related to the social and political impacts of COVID-19. Specifically, sociocultural impacts of COVID-19 seemed to expose participants to events such as transitory remote work demands and stagnation of retail and direct-to-consumer sales. Participants expressed feeling disillusioned with the media reports of the pandemic. Some participants found COVID-19-related constraints modified their engagement with survival needs, making them more aware of the existence of savings, work-life balance, and social support.

Mind-set. Although the responsibilities and pressure of survival presented as a pronounced theme, a surprising theme in our findings was a sense of renewed mind-set in some participants. A reframed mind-set is revealed by participants' comments that included maintaining a positive attitude and the existence of meaning making, alongside pragmatic cognitive assessment. Participants recognized the vulnerability of acting on negative feelings during the onset of the pandemic and the rising unemployment nationwide. For many participants, their progression of emotion regulation was closely associated with aspects of hope despite being overwhelmed by their circumstances. Participant 5 articulated this clearly: "Biggest thing is just finding your happy place. Like that's the biggest thing that I can tell anybody, like you gotta find something that works for you and your family." Participant 1 mirrored a similar positive mind-set, stating, "But I'm like, there's nothing I can control. I can't control my circumstances—the only thing I can control is how I look at it."

Immediate Effects: Psychological Effects and Reemployment Status

Consistent with the existing research regarding involuntary job loss, all participants expressed experiencing immediate effects (Akkermans et al., 2020; Blacker et al., 2020). Gowan and Gatewood's (1997) model demonstrated a clear delineation between immediate and long-term effects; however, the themes observed surrounding these tenets varied

across individuals depending on their situation, such as difficulty finding a job in the midst of the pandemic; constant fear and stress; and losing necessities such as housing, insurance, or childcare. Subthemes that existed across all participants included emotion regulation and mental health.

Emotion regulation. Although all participants varied in their emotional expression, each participant either shared the actual emotion that was attached to their job loss or described the reactions and thoughts they experienced in becoming unemployed. The range of emotions relating to the job loss included anger, shock, and fear—emotions used to describe not only the job loss but also the ambiguous information surrounding COVID-19 during its initial emergence. Participant 6, a woman close to retirement prior to her job loss, shared, "I would say initially, I was very angry. So angry that I couldn't feel any other type of emotions, but anger, I couldn't cry. I couldn't, I was angry."

Participant 3, who identified as a single mother and homeowner, stated,

> What do I do? Now I'm scared, even though they say you'll be in forbearance for 6 months, it's still a fear embedded in you to be like, "Well, what if things never go back to normal, and I don't have the funding to pay my mortgage? Then, what [if] I haven't retired, I'm not gonna be homeless, you know, then my car, you know, loan modification on that."

As demonstrated by Participant 3's statement, another common aspect that was revealed from the participants' interviews was a pattern of ruminating and interrupted thoughts in attempting to describe their emotions following job loss. This was evidenced by participants grouping several questions and thoughts surrounding uncertainty one after another, attempting to process and explain their initial emotions.

Mental health. Three of the participants expressed wanting to see a mental health counselor to address their job loss and COVID-19 anxieties, but they indicated they were not able to access a counselor either because they lost their health insurance or because of their inability to pay for the cost of mental health care given their new limited budget. Participant 4, a former business owner who lost her business during the pandemic, described the challenge of masking her emotions for the sake of her family:

> Yes, I mean, I'm living with my parents right now. I'm, you know, 44 years old. My husband and I, we've always been entrepreneurs, and it's like, you're kind of having a midlife crisis, like, like all this work. And it's like, you know, and trying to keep a brave face, you know, for your children as well, you know.

Among some of the participants, there was a pattern of reluctantly adjusting to the transition of becoming a help seeker. They discussed feeling like they were a burden to those they relied on for help, including spouses and other family members.

The transcripts revealed additional ripple effects of job loss that contributed to participants' emotional and psychological affect and influenced their mental health, including feelings of hopelessness, loneliness, and being stagnant in their career development. Participant 2 shared the following relating to her anxiety: "That's—that's another big thing is like, without working, it feels like you're not moving towards anything; you're not moving forward."

Discussion

This study was designed to explore the phenomenon of job loss during the global COVID-19 pandemic and to gain a better understanding of the experiences and commonalities of those affected to inform the field of career development and career interventions. Six interviews with people who lost their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic were analyzed. Job loss was exacerbated by the complexities of the pandemic. The following discussion situates the results of these interviews in three bodies of literature: (a) career development, (b) job loss, and (c) mental health.

Career Development

This study demonstrated the vast number of factors to consider when working with individuals who are unemployed, including access to internal and external resources. Unemployment affects not only individuals but also family members who are supported by those individuals (Blustein & Guarino, 2020). In response to their job loss, several participants discussed social support from their family and community as they faced various obstacles regarding housing and emotional support. Regarding job replacement, a few participants recognized they needed additional support from outside organizations relating to job search and future career development. Research has shown that efforts to find new employment are often unsuccessful because of the lack of job-hunting skills; however, career interventions have been found to increase one's self-efficacy and overall confidence toward job search (Drosos et al., 2021).

Participants in our study demonstrated personal lifestyle adjustments to persevere through challenging circumstances via internal coping mechanisms. Existing literature has shown that self-regulation processes are a part of resilience, and both serve as protective factors while individuals are recovering from adversities such as job loss (McLarnon et al., 2020; Prescod & Zeligman, 2018). In addition, participants adjusted their internal coping strategies because of the new financial constraints, personal and familial needs, and quarantine mandates relating to COVID-19. The findings of both individual and situational resources align with existing literature, serving as forms of coping with job loss (Gowan & Gatewood, 1997).

Job Loss

Results of this study indicated subthemes relating to mediating processes and emotion regulation. Researchers have found that, initially, job loss leads to strong negative emotions, with unemployed individuals needing to adjust (Drosos et al., 2021). One surprising factor was the participants' ability to carry a positive mind-set despite their difficult circumstances. Job loss can be viewed by individuals as a time for self-evaluation as they reframe lifestyle decision-making and confront long-term aftereffects of personal stagnation and loneliness. The results of this study resonate with emerging literature suggesting that COVID-19 unemployment contributes to people feeling sad and unjustly treated (Akkermans et al., 2020; Drosos et al., 2021). Despite the complexities associated with recovery from unemployment, people from economically marginalized

environments found reconnections with family, moments of gratitude, and eventual acceptance of a collective new norm.

We found it difficult to delineate immediate and long-term effects of job loss, which could potentially be a result of participants still experiencing the effects of unemployment during their interview. Although all participants experienced job loss several months prior to their interview and were still unemployed, it was hard to determine whether the emotions and reactions shared in the interview were experienced immediately following their termination or were still reoccurring. Job loss has been described as traumatic and has been compared with grief, both of which vary in length of recovery depending on the individual (Akkermans et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2021). Although many researchers agree that unemployment affects individuals at various stages, time frame is generally not specified, similar to the model used in this study.

Mental Health

This study's findings demonstrate the emotional and psychological burden of job loss on participants. As stated previously, we found varying emotions across participants related to their unique situations. Research has demonstrated the effects of involuntary job loss on mental health, as well as increased risks of anxiety and depression from COVID-19 quarantine mandates (Brooks et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2020). All participants detailed their experiences of coping with extensive stress, angst about the future, and feelings of hopelessness at some point during their unemployment.

Prior research has explored the intersection between employment status and mental health. Those who are unemployed are more likely to experience increased stress, negative mental and physical health symptoms, and lower life satisfaction (Tang et al., 2021). Much of the reactionary feelings that participants felt reflected similar symptoms of mental health disorders that have resulted from quarantine mandates (Blustein et al., 2019). These findings support the need for career development agencies to communicate possible mental health resources to those who have lost their jobs because of the pandemic.

Implications for Practice

Career practitioners play a vital role in providing resources and career interventions to job seekers, and findings from this study should be considered when working with diverse clients. Furthermore, according to the National Career Development Association's (2015) Code of Ethics, career practitioners carry an ethical obligation to expand their multicultural competence and ensure they stay abreast of the evolving culture and background of diverse clients.

The results of our study support the need for career practitioners to implement culturally sensitive career interventions to meet the unique needs of minimal-resource communities. As theorized within PWT, each participant in this study shared various experiences in which cultural and family aspects influenced their job loss (Blustein et al., 2019). In addition, increases in family and community support were noted among participants; therefore, career practitioners are encouraged to identify relational supports because job-seeking efforts and decisions will more

than likely affect these networks. Furthermore, prior research has identified the correlation between relational processes and their influence on career decision-making and career development tasks (Blacker et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2021). According to Motulsky (2010), having clients identify significant relationships in their personal lives will allow them to assess both positive and negative aspects that may influence career development. Because of the importance of relationship building, career practitioners may want to consider group career counseling interventions, which can assist with an added level of support and aid the development of self-esteem during the job search process (Drosos et al., 2021). Moreover, group counseling may assist clients with development of social skills in response to extensive quarantine mandates.

In combination with recommending social support and connection, career practitioners are encouraged to utilize hope as a motivation in their work with clients, mirroring a strengths-based perspective. Many of the participants demonstrated positive mind-sets despite having a lack of control in their circumstances. Prescod and Zeligman (2018) elaborated on how a combination of hope and resilience building can allow career practitioners to help clients develop meaning and post-traumatic growth after their unemployment. In addition, Akkermans et al. (2015) found that career competencies can help job seekers to increase engagement and resilience in the face of employment setbacks. However, career practitioners should also consider realistic expectations and outcomes for clients, particularly when working with eager job seekers (Chiesa et al., 2020). Expectations regarding reemployment should especially be considered given the high demand of employment from a national standpoint.

To adequately address mental health concerns to help clients recover from this crisis, career practitioners need to be knowledgeable about the psychological, cognitive, and affective impacts on unemployed individuals and their families during the pandemic, particularly those from minimal-resources communities. Participants discussed the emotional distress they felt about becoming unemployed, which can potentially affect their ability to find new employment. Career development agencies can provide information to clients about free or low-cost access to mental health resources in the community or through online providers. These community resources can be delivered through text messaging, video updates, chatrooms, helplines, or other social media outlets. Furthermore, when providing career interventions, career practitioners should view clients holistically from a trauma-informed lens, recognizing the influence that potential trauma from job loss can have on clients' career development.

Limitations and Research Directions

One limitation of this study was the selection of participants, with involuntary job loss serving as a primary criterion. Findings might have been different had we examined those who actively made a decision to terminate their employment because of issues surrounding COVID-19. In addition, we interviewed participants while they were still unemployed and actively looking for work, which might have influenced their answers differently than if they were reflecting on unemployment as a past

event. As the rate of employment rises, future research should examine reemployed participants to see whether their perspectives have changed. Furthermore, researchers should examine our findings via quantitative studies to see if our themes are generalizable to a larger population. Another limitation is that most of our participants were from a local nonprofit employment assistance organization. It is possible that participants' responses were similar because of their involvement with the assistance program, and this has the potential for bias. Future research should consider random sampling from diverse populations.

Counselor educators and counseling researchers have an obligation to understand the extent to which job loss from the pandemic has affected various aspects of individuals' lives to better serve in areas surrounding advocacy, career counseling services, and additional outreach. This article serves to expand the limited literature of job loss among communities with minimal resources by specifically sampling from this population and incorporating qualitative findings about job loss. Future research should include further qualitative research that explores the narratives of those who have experienced job loss. Additional research could explore stigma related to help-seeking behaviors as a response to COVID-19, because this served as an underlying theme regarding external resources. Future research should also focus on other factors that are part of job loss during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as geographic location, cultural background, and specific roles of family systems.

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