



The psychological implications of unemployment in the general public: a report on differences between employed and unemployed individuals for Self-Esteem, Fears of Negative Evaluation and Perceived Stress

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### **ABSTRACT**

The current level of unemployment in the UK is at a 17 year high; a figure which some researchers claim may explain the increasing prevalence of mental health problems. Literature into the effects of employment status on the General Public is limited and research mostly focuses on the consequences of unemployment in specific groups of individuals. To test the psychological impact of joblessness in the General Public a survey based design was implemented on 66 participants, selected randomly, who were full-time employed (29), part-time employed (12) or unemployed (25) at the time of study. The survey measured Perceived Stress, Self-Esteem and Fears of Negative Evaluation. Data was analysed through MANOVA and follow-up ANOVA and it was found that unemployed subjects reported higher levels of perceived stress, social evaluative anxiety and lower levels of self-esteem than employed subjects. This suggests that unemployment may have negative psychological consequences in the General Public and there may be a need to provide psychological services to assist with the reintegration of unemployed individuals into working society.

<b>KEY WORDS</b>	<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>UNEMPLOYMENT</b>	<b>FEARS OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION</b>	<b>PERCEIVED STRESS</b>	<b>SELF-ESTEEM</b>
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## **Introduction**

In recent years there has been increasing debate on the topic of employment (Darling, 2008). Liemand-Rayman (1982) argues that it is generally assumed that the most severe consequences of unemployment have been reduced by social welfare programs. Despite this however, there is a growing body of research which suggests that unemployment may have severe and long-lasting health consequences (Jacobson, 2011). The Office of National Statistics (2011) asserts that employment rates are lower than 71 per cent for individuals between the ages of 16 and 64; the lowest recorded employment rate in over 17 years (Flanders, 2011). Mitchell (2005) argues that the current level of unemployment may explain the increasing prevalence of mental health problems in the British Public. High levels of depression, morbidity and premature mortality associated to long-term unemployment are well documented (Jacobson, 2011), but some pieces of research indicate that self-esteem, social inclusion and high levels of stress are more commonly found in groups of unemployed individuals (Dooley & Prause, 1995; Branimir, Zvonimir & Maslic, 2008; Wilhelm & Ridley, 1988). The associated health risks of unemployment may mean that the most severe consequences have not indeed been reduced by social welfare programs (Liam & Rayman, 1982) and there may be a need to implement psychometric measures on the General Public to determine the wider psychological impact of joblessness.

### **Employment Status and Stress:**

Giatti, Barreto and Cesar (2010) conducted research into unemployment and health. Logistic regression analysis indicated that there was a statistically significant association between unemployment and an individual's self-rated health. Furthermore, their research indicated that unemployment was associated with high levels of stress; an argument which has received considerable empirical support (Wilhelm & Ridley, 1988; Fitzpatrick & Bosse, 2000). Whilst it could be argued that unemployment may lead to the development of poor health and increased levels of stress, secondary factors should be considered. It may be that unemployed individuals who are financially secure would not suffer from poor mental and physical health. Limited finance could lead to impoverished diet, lack of health services and increased stress; consequences which may impact health. It is therefore not possible to argue that these health consequences are a result of unemployment itself, other aspects associated to unemployment may be implicated. Despite this however, Fitzpatrick and Bosse (2000) assert that the discrepancy between employed and unemployed individuals on measures of stress may come from latent functions of employment. They suggest that employment may act as a buffer against stressful life events. Differences were studied between employed and unemployed bereaving individuals and it was found that employed subjects reported better mental and physical health than their unemployed counterparts. Further to this, regression analysis indicated that the buffering effect of employment was more potent in the early periods following the bereaving event. This suggests that employment may provide a short-term bonus to an individual's ability to cope with stressful life events. This argument has been supported by research conducted by Arijit, Sandro and Melissa (2004) who found that unemployed individuals were more likely to suffer from mental health problems following a large-scale disaster. They studied Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in individuals who were living in New York City during the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and found that employed individuals demonstrated

better coping abilities. Whilst it may not be possible to establish a causal relationship between unemployment and PTSD, prior literature may indicate that unemployed persons are more at risk of developing mental health problems.

Scanlan and Bundy (2009) investigated the self-reported health of unemployed 18 – 24 year olds. They found that during times of high unemployment persons belonging to this age group reported significantly poorer health than their age-matched employed peers. Barrett (1979) conducted research which supports this argument and claims that admission to psychiatric hospitals, infant mortality and deaths from cardiovascular and substance related diseases increase dramatically during periods of economic decline. Furthermore, he argues that unemployment is the most powerful predictor of health decline in these areas. Baum, Flemming and Reddy (1986) support this argument and claim that health decline may be the result of stress. Their research consisted of assigning participants to both a solvable or unsolvable task and later collecting a urine sample. They demonstrated that subjects who were unemployed had increased levels of urinary catecholamines; hormones related to stress. This may be further supportive of the argument that employment may allow for the development of better coping abilities. Furthermore, it may be illustrative of how environmental factors can impact biological function. Despite this however, it may not be possible to establish a causal relationship between unemployment and stress and so it cannot be argued that individuals develop stress as a result of unemployment itself.

Wilhelm and Ridley (1988) conducted research into stress and recent unemployment in couples. They found that unemployment was related to an increase in stress and spousal arguments; particularly those related to finance. They assert that unemployment itself in addition to inter-spousal arguments was more likely to cause stress than a change in financial circumstances. Despite this however, it may be that greater levels of stress developed due to the removal of a possible source of social support (Cimarolli & Wang, 2006). Furthermore, the same level of stress may develop from any major life change, not just unemployment. The findings of Wilhelm and Ridley (1988) have received support from Thomas, Benzeval and Stansfeld (2005) who argue that individuals who transition to unemployment frequently experience greater levels of stress than those who transition to employment. Furthermore, he asserts that these levels of increased stress can often result in inter-spousal arguments.

Longitudinal studies have indicated that recent school leavers' who find employment have better psychological health than those who are unemployed (Dooley & Prause, 1995). Research suggests that employment has several latent functions including time-structure, status and social contact; factors which have been implicated with the development of stress (Jahoda, 1982). Further to this, Erikson (as cited in Dooley & Prause, 1995) argues that unemployed recent school leavers' lack a meaningful occupational identity. Cote and Levine (2002) assert that individuals who fail to develop a meaningful occupational identity may experience persistent occupational and psychological dysfunction. Despite this however, it may not be that some individuals develop stress due to the lack of a work-related identity, but rather due to a change in social support systems. Furthermore, it may not be possible to argue that there is social causation of stress in unemployed persons; individuals may decide to remain unemployed due to pre-existing stress. This may be particularly true for recent school leavers' as adolescence may be considered a period of 'storm and stress' (Hall, as cited in Arnett, 1999).

### **Employment Status and Self-Esteem:**

Research has indicated that employed individuals have greater levels of self-esteem, life satisfaction and wellbeing than unemployed individuals (Pietromonaco, Manis & Markus, 1987). One explanation for this discrepancy is that an individual's self-concept is often heavily derived from their employment status (Burns, 1980). Research has demonstrated that a change in an individual's self-concept as a result of unemployment frequently has a negative impact on their self-esteem (Hagemoser, as cited in Cimarolli & Wang, 2006). Despite this however, it may be that feelings of personal inadequacy as a result of being made unemployed are responsible for diminished self-esteem as opposed to unemployment itself (Shamir, 1986). This has been supported by Dooley and Prause (1995) who found that factors associated with unemployment including non-selected termination of employment, compulsory redundancy and short-term notice of termination were negatively associated with self-esteem.

Warr (as cited in Dooley & Prause, 1995) asserts that there are differences in self-esteem between long-term and short-term unemployed individuals. He argues that self-esteem is frequently more diminished in individuals who have been unemployed for prolonged periods of time. This argument has received support from Sheeran, Abrams and Orbell (1995) who assert that the long-term unemployed or individuals who reside in high-unemployment areas frequently suffer from diminished self-esteem due to perceived similarities between themselves and other unemployed individuals. In this way, the perceived similarities may exacerbate and maintain feelings of low self-worth and self-esteem (Dooley & Prause, 1995). This argument has received support from Shamir (1986) who argues that long-term unemployment is associated with reduced self-respect and feelings of inferiority. Furthermore, these consequences of long-term unemployment may lead to the development of self-sabotaging interview behaviours which result in difficulty finding employment (Leon & Matthews, 2010). In this way, low self-esteem as a result of unemployment may further exacerbate the psychological consequences of unemployment through preventing an individual from finding meaningful work.

Szivos (1990) argues that employed individuals may accrue a sense of self-worth and participation in society which may explain the higher levels of self-esteem frequently demonstrated in employed individuals. She asserts that feelings of low self-worth and a lack of participation in society most frequently affect individuals living with mental impairment or persons who have been unable to find employment for prolonged periods of time. Further to this, she argues that individuals who are unable to find meaningful employment may be unable to accrue feelings of 'normalcy'. Therefore, it could be argued that unemployed persons may feel 'abnormal' and as a result experience poor self-esteem and low self-worth. This argument is supported by Szivos (1990) who asserts that employment provides a valuable source of self-esteem and increases feelings of control. The notion that control is implicated in self-esteem has received support from Cvetanovski and Jex (1994) who found that unemployed individual who demonstrated an external locus of control experienced poorer self-esteem than those who demonstrated an internal locus of control. This would suggest that self-esteem may not be directly impacted by unemployment but rather factors associated to a lack of meaningful work or an inability to find employment.

Kelvin and Jarrett (1985) argue that self-esteem is not sensitive to employment change. They found that individuals who demonstrated high self-esteem whilst employed maintained high self-esteem following unemployment. Despite this however, it may be that individuals who have low self-esteem whilst employed experience further diminished self-esteem whilst unemployed. In this way, it could be argued that high self-esteem may provide a buffer against the negative psychological consequences of unemployment. Kates, Greiff and Hagan (1990) criticise the notion that self-esteem is not sensitive to employment change and argue that unemployment results in reduced self-esteem and increased self-dissatisfaction, self-rejection and self-contempt. Further to this, they argue that unemployed persons who have a greater desire to work frequently suffer from lower self-esteem than those who have a lesser desire to work. This is supported by Winefield and Tiggemann (1985) who claim that ambition to work can impact self-esteem in males. Despite this however, Leana and Feldman (1991) assert that there are no gender differences in self-esteem for unemployed individuals and both males and females are equally affected by diminished self-esteem.

### **Employment Status and Social Anxiety:**

Warr (as cited in Shamir, 1986) argues that there are social implications for unemployed individuals. He argues that unemployment frequently involves the loss of a socially accepted role for a position viewed as inferior by the general public. The Self-concept Theory (Burns, 1980) argues that unemployment may result in an individual changing how they see themselves and how they believe others view them; a change which may result in a level of social anxiety (Szivos, 1990). The view that social anxiety may develop due to changes in how unemployed persons believe others view them is supported by Snow (2009) who found that there was a statistically significant correlation between unemployment and social anxiety. It can therefore be argued that a change in employment status may lead to the development of a poor self-image; in particular for individuals who already suffer from a level of social anxiety (Jesook, 2008)

Szivos (1990) argues that unemployment may lead to feelings of social inadequacy. She states that an individual accrues subjective beliefs of work through a mechanism of reflected appraisal of others. Furthermore, she asserts that these beliefs are integrated into the self-concept through positive interaction with employed persons. It has been suggested that feelings of social inadequacy develop as a result of conflict between an individual's beliefs of work and their employment status (Szivos, 1990). It can therefore be argued that a lack of employment may lead some individuals to believe that they are being negatively evaluated. This is supported by Jesook (2008) who argues that unemployment is strongly correlated to social fears. He asserts that unemployed persons may score more highly on a measure of social anxiety than employed individuals due to fears of negative evaluation and poor self-image.

Tolmam and Himle (2009) investigated unemployment and social anxiety. They found that there were higher levels of social anxiety and a poorer self-image in unemployed individuals. This is supported by research conducted by Ayhan (2009) who found that there was a relationship between unemployment and negative self-opinion; a factor which may explain the social anxiety demonstrated in some unemployed persons. Despite this however, it is not possible to establish a causal

relationship between unemployment and social anxiety. It seems logical to suggest that some individuals living with high levels of anxiety may refrain from entering employment, or they are unable to gain employment due to self-sabotaging behaviours demonstrated in interviews (Leon & Matthews, 2010).

Cimarolli and Wang (2006) argue that employment provides a valuable source of social support. Research conducted into visual-impairment and employment demonstrated that employed persons reported more positive and less negative social support than unemployed individuals. Furthermore, they assert that individuals who are in employment suffer from less anxiety related problems and score more highly on a measure of life-satisfaction. This is supported by Roy, Dimigen and Taylor (1998) who investigated the role of employment and social interaction in blind university graduates. They argue that employed persons reported higher numbers of social interaction over the period of one week and had a larger range of people in their social networks than unemployed individuals. Furthermore, they found that visually-impaired persons who were employed were more likely to socialise in unstructured settings, e.g. public bars. These findings demonstrate that there may be a disparity between the amount of social-support that employed and unemployed persons receive.

Brown and Riley (2005) argue that there are two separate categories of social support; structural and functional support. Structural support refers to the number of individuals who belong to a social network and functional support refers to the actual or perceived quality of social support experienced by the individual. They argue that there are significant differences in both types of social support between employed and unemployed females. Further to this, they assert that unemployed individuals frequently report less social ties to a network than their employed peers. This argument has received support from Danziger (2001) who argues that steady employment is positively associated to social support. Further to this, some research has indicated that job loss is associated to a reduction in both the quality and frequency of positive social interaction (Jones, 1989); factors which may impact social anxiety (Cimarolli & Wang, 2006).

### **The Present Study:**

Prior literature has indicated that specific groups of populations experience differences in their levels of stress, self-esteem and social evaluative anxiety (Giattiet *al*, 2010; Cimarolli & Wang, 2006; Jesook, 2008). Despite this however, there is a large amount of inconsistency in previous research about the extent and causes of these differences. The present study therefore aims to determine if there are indeed any differences between employed and unemployed individuals on measures of self-esteem, perceived stress and social evaluative anxiety. Prior research has demonstrated that employment status may alter an individual's perception of both stress and how they believe others evaluate them (Burns, 1980); the study therefore will investigate stress and social evaluative anxiety but in the forms of Perceived Stress and Fears of Negative Evaluation. These variables are being investigated as there has been little research into the effects of employment status on the General Public and studies mostly focus on specific populations of individuals; visually impaired, bereaving or couples for example (Shamir, 1986). It can therefore be argued that there may be a need to implement psychometric measures on the General Public to determine the wider psychological effects of employment status.

Following the research collected here it seems reasonable to argue that there will be differences between employed and unemployed individuals on measures of Self-Esteem, Perceived Stress and Fears of Negative Evaluation. Furthermore, background literature has allowed for the development of directional hypotheses. Firstly, those unemployed subjects will report higher levels of Perceived Stress than employed subjects. This was proposed as background research indicated that employment was linked to better coping abilities for psychological stress (Fitzpatrick and Bosse, 2000). It therefore seems reasonable to argue that employed subjects may cope with stress more adaptively than unemployed subjects. Alternatively, the disparity between employed and unemployed individuals on measures of stress may be due to perceptual differences for stress. Secondly, the present study hypothesises that unemployed subjects will report higher levels of Fears of Negative Evaluation than employed subjects. This hypothesis was proposed as social evaluative anxiety has been linked to reduced social contact (Dimigen & Taylor, 1998). It seems reasonable to argue that employed individuals may experience greater levels of social contact and so report lower levels of social evaluative anxiety. Thirdly, it has been suggested that an individual's self-concept, a construct which has been associated with self-esteem (Hagemoser as cited in Cimarroli & Wang, 2006), is heavily derived from an individual's employment status (Burns, 1980). Therefore, it is hypothesised that unemployed subjects will report lower levels for Self-Esteem than employed subjects. In summary, the directional hypotheses for this investigation are:

H1: Unemployed subjects will score more highly on a measure of Perceived Stress than Employed subjects.

H2: Unemployed subjects will score more highly on a measure of Fears of Negative Evaluation than Employed subjects.

H3: Unemployed subjects will score lower on a measure of Self-Esteem than Employed subjects.



## **Method**

### **Design:**

A survey based design was implemented to test the relationship between Employment Status and the dependant variables of Self-Esteem, Perceived Stress and Fears of Negative Evaluation. Employment Status comprised of three levels; Full-time Employed, Part-time Employed and Unemployed. Inclusion criteria was introduced in fulfilment of ethical provisos (18 years of age or older). Furthermore, the inclusion criteria was implemented to control for any effects that self-employment, recent change in working conditions or anticipated change in working conditions may have on the dependant variables. Further to this, exclusion criteria were implemented as a control for non-general stress. This exclusion criterion was based upon the Holmes and Rahe (1967) Social Readjustment Rating Scale. Both sections of participation criteria can be found in *Fig. 1* below:

<b>Inclusion Criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion Criteria</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 years of age or older;</li> <li>• Employment status must have remained constant for 2 months or longer;</li> <li>• Not currently planning on changing employment status (e.g. leaving work);</li> <li>• Not currently within education;</li> <li>• Not currently self-employed;</li> <li>• Not currently undertaking volunteer work;</li> <li>• Have longer than 2 years remaining before retirement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divorce/Marital Separation;</li> <li>• Death of a spouse, close family member or friend;</li> <li>• Personal injury/serious illness;</li> <li>• Injury/serious illness of a close family member or friend;</li> <li>• Other major life event (e.g. moving house).</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Participation Criteria.

### **Participants:**

The study comprised of  $n=66$  from full-time employed (29), part-time employed (12) and unemployed (25) individuals between the ages of 18 and 60. Males and females were equally represented; 35 and 31 participants respectively. Comparable numbers of males and females participated in the full-time employed and unemployed groups. However, the part-time group consisted of dissimilar numbers of males and females (4 and 8 respectively). Subjects were selected randomly from across London and Manchester. Further to this, some subjects were approached before or shortly after signing for Unemployment Benefits in Jobcentre Plus offices after the researcher were provided with permission form the office manager. An electronic copy of the survey was uploaded the internet with a stipulation that only individuals living in the UK could complete the questionnaire. A total of 8 participants completed the questionnaire in electronic format. As a result of participation criteria a total of 11 subjects were unable to continue with the study as they reported experiencing one or

more of the exclusion criteria over the last month or did not meet the conditions of the inclusion criteria.

### **Measures:**

The survey consisted of a series of demographic questions and three scales which measure Perceived Stress, Self-Esteem and Fears of Negative Evaluation.

#### **Demographic Questions:**

The front cover of the questionnaire booklet asked participants to provide information about their Sex, Age, Partnership Status, Employment Status and Accommodation Status. Furthermore, subjects were asked to provide information about how long their Employment Status has remained constant for, i.e. how long they had been employed in the same job for or how long they had been unemployed for. A large number of subjects chose not to answer questions relating to their partnership status, accommodation status or employment/unemployment length (39). Therefore it was decided that this demographic information should be discarded due to low response rates.

#### **Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen & Williamson, 1988):**

The Perceived Stress Scale is a ten-item self-report measure of an individual's subjective evaluation of general stress. The scale consists of non-content specific questions and refers to mundane stress only. An example statement from the scale is '*Over the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?*'. Participants responded to such items through a 5-point Likert Scale (0 = 'Never' – 4 = 'Very Often'). Several items were reverse score marked as a control for participants answering the same way throughout the scale (4, 5, 7 & 8).

#### **Psychometric Properties:**

Monroe and Kelley (1995) assert that the scale is the only empirically established index of Perceived Stress with a good level of reliability. This is supported by Stauder and Lonkoly (2006) who claim that the scale has a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.78; an acceptable levels of internal reliability (Field, 2006). Further to this, they argue that the scale has a good level of test-retest reliability ( $r=0.90$ ) for a period of one month. After this period, test-retest reliability decreases; an expected finding as the scale measures Perceived Stress over the period of one month.

#### **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1989):**

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is a ten-item self-report measure of an individual's Self-Esteem. An example item from the scale is '*On the whole, I am satisfied with myself*'. Subjects mark their level of agreement to statements such as these through a 4-point Likert Scale (1 = 'Strongly Agree' – 4 = 'Strongly Disagree'). Several items are reverse score marked (2, 5, 6, 8 & 9) as a control measure.

**Psychometric Properties:**

Robinson, Shaver and Wrightsman (1993) assert that the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale yields a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.77. Further to this, they argue that test-retest correlations indicate that there is a high level of reliability ( $r=0.88$ ).

**Fears of Negative Evaluation Scale – Brief (Leary, 1983):**

The Fears of Negative Evaluation Scale is a measure of social evaluative anxiety (Collins, Westra, Dozois & Stewart, 2004). The brief version of the scale consists of 12-items and is based upon the original 30-item scale. An example statement from the scale is '*I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings*'. Subjects mark their level of agreement to these statements on a 5-point Likert Scale (0 = '*Not at all*' – 4 = '*Extremely*'). Items 2, 4 7 and 10 are reverse score marked as a control measure.

**Psychometric Properties:**

Westra and Steward (2001) assert that the brief scale correlates highly to the original 30-item scale ( $r=0.96$ ). Furthermore, they argue that the scale has a high level of internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ) and good test-retest reliability ( $r=0.75$ ).

**Pilot Study:**

A preliminary pilot study was conducted ( $n=11$ ) on full-time employed individuals to determine if there were any problems with the self-report measures. Subjects reported minor problems relating to the aesthetics and completion instructions of the Perceived Stress Scale. More detailed instructions were added to the measures to emphasise that the scale refers to the last month only. This change was made without removing or significantly rewording item. The data was however omitted from the study.

**Procedure:**

Participants were made aware of the nature of the study, how their data would be treated confidentially and of their right to withdraw. Subjects who agreed to continue with the study were asked to refer to participation criteria (*Fig. 1*) to determine if they could proceed with the survey. Unsuccessful participants were those who did not meet the inclusion criteria or those who reported experiencing one or more of the exclusion criteria over the last month.

All continuing subjects were provided with a clipboard, survey and pen. The researcher collected surveys and materials upon completion. At this point, participants were provided with the opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the investigation or retroactively withdraw their consent. Further to this, they were provided with help-line numbers for anxiety and depression due to the sensitive nature of the survey.

**Analysis:**

Descriptive statistics were formulated between Employment Status and Fears of Negative Evaluation, Perceived Stress and Self-Esteem. To determine if the dependant variables were conceptually related a correlation was conducted. Detailed analysis of data occurred through MANOVA and follow-up ANOVA with Scheffé Post-hoc.

## **Results**

Questionnaire data was entered into SPSS and scale questions were scored and computed into a single variable of mean score. Descriptive statistics appear below:

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Stress, Self-Esteem and Fears of Negative Evaluation by Employment Status.**

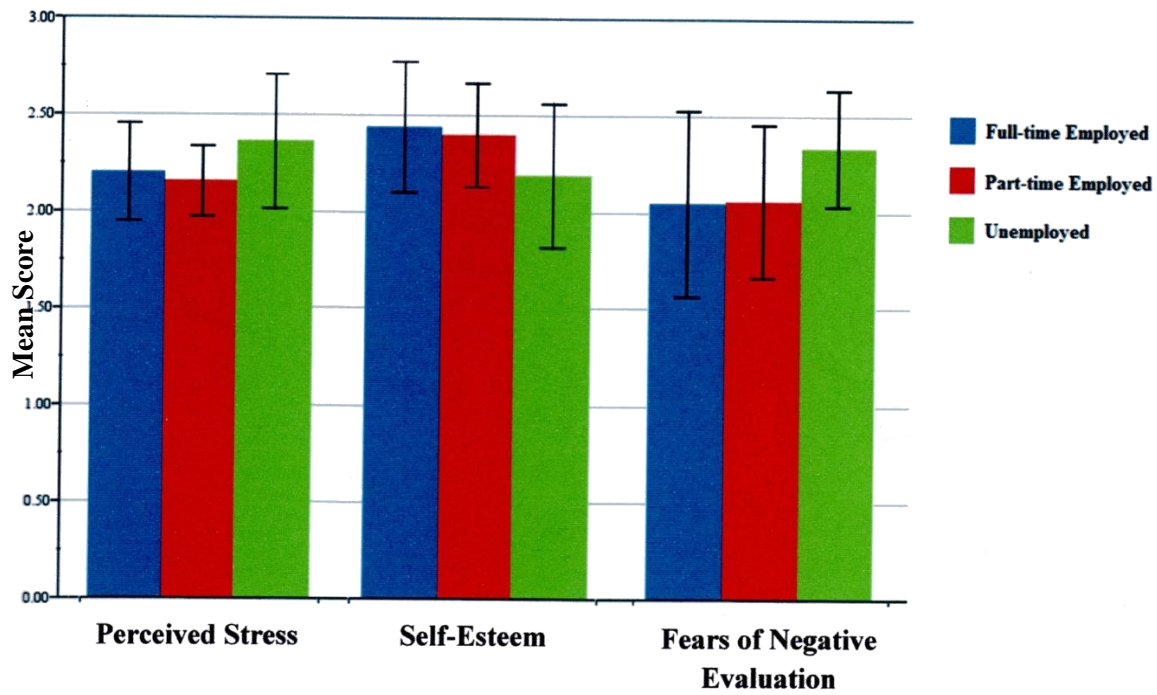
<i>n=66</i>	<b>Employment Status</b>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Perceived Stress</b>	Full-time employed	2.20	0.25
	Part-time employed	2.15	0.20
	Unemployed	2.36	0.24
<b>Self-Esteem</b>	Full-time employed	2.42	0.33
	Part-time employed	2.38	0.26
	Unemployed	2.17	0.30
<b>Fears of Negative Evaluation</b>	Full-time employed	2.04	0.48
	Part-time employed	2.06	0.38
	Unemployed	2.33	0.30

The descriptive statistics illustrate that full-time employed subjects scored higher than both unemployed and part-time employed individuals for a measure of Self-Esteem. However, this difference was largest between full-time employed and unemployed subjects. The descriptive statistics also demonstrate that there was more variance in the full-time employed category for Self-Esteem than either part-time employed or unemployed groups.

Table 1 demonstrated that the means for Fears of Negative Evaluation were lowest in the full-time employed group. Despite this however, this group also demonstrated the greatest level of variance. Further to this, part-time employed subjects scored only marginally higher than full-time employed subjects.

The descriptive statistics indicate that unemployed subjects reported higher levels of Perceived Stress. Perceived Stress was lowest in the part-time employed level with comparable levels of variance to both full-time employed and unemployed groups. Further to this, the standard deviations were considerably lower in this variable than either Self-Esteem or Fears of Negative Evaluation. A visual representation of this information appears in Graph 1 overleaf.

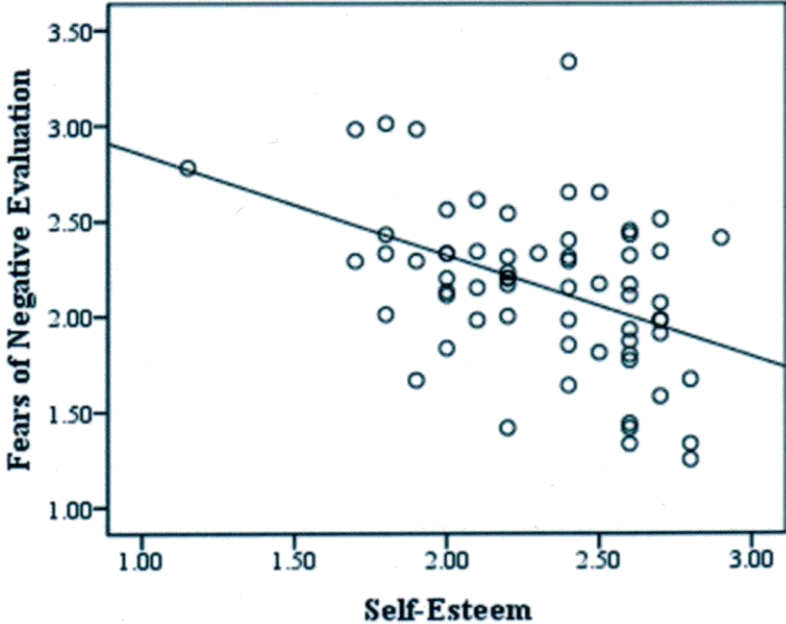
**Graph 1: Bar chart showing mean differences between Full-time Employed, Part-time Employed and Unemployed subjects on measures of Perceived Stress, Self-Esteem and Fears of Negative Evaluation.**



In order to determine if the data was suitable for MANOVA analysis a correlation was conducted between the dependant variables. This test was implemented to determine if the dependant variables were conceptually related; an important factor for MANOVA (Green & Salkind, 2003).

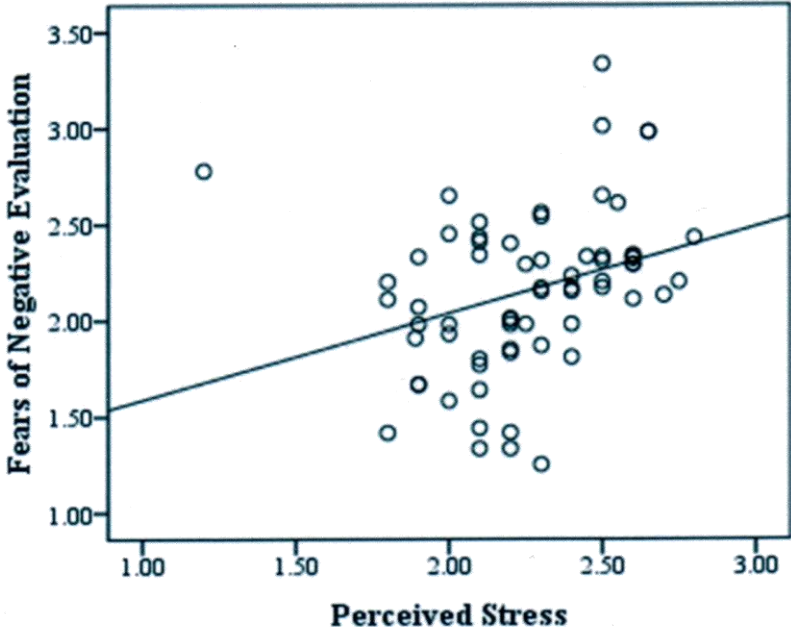
Correlational analysis indicated that there was a statistically significant negative relationship between Self-Esteem and Fears of Negative Evaluation,  $r(64) = -0.44$ ,  $p=0.05$ . Further to this, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between Perceived Stress and Fears of Negative Evaluation,  $r(64) = 0.31$ ,  $p=0.07$ . This correlational analysis indicated that there was a moderate relationship between the dependant variables and so it is possible to argue that they are conceptually related and so suitable to be tested together through MANOVA analysis (Green & Salkind, 2003). Furthermore, the risk of multicollinearity is low due to the weak to moderate relationship between the dependant variables. Significant correlations appear in scatter graphs overleaf.

**Graph 2: Scatter Graph between Self-Esteem and Fears of Negative Evaluation.**

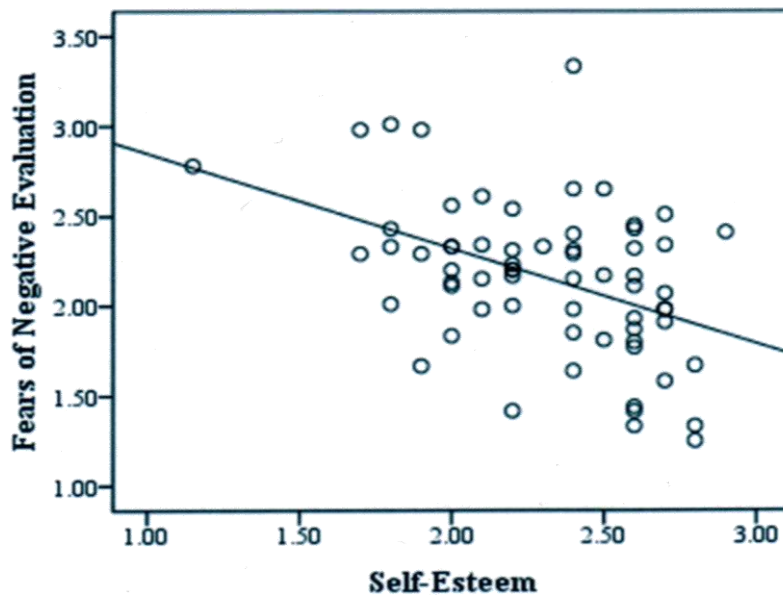


Graph 2 demonstrates that as the Fears of Negative Evaluation Score increases the score for Self-Esteem decreases.

Graph 3: Scatter Graph between Perceived Stress and Fears of Negative Evaluation

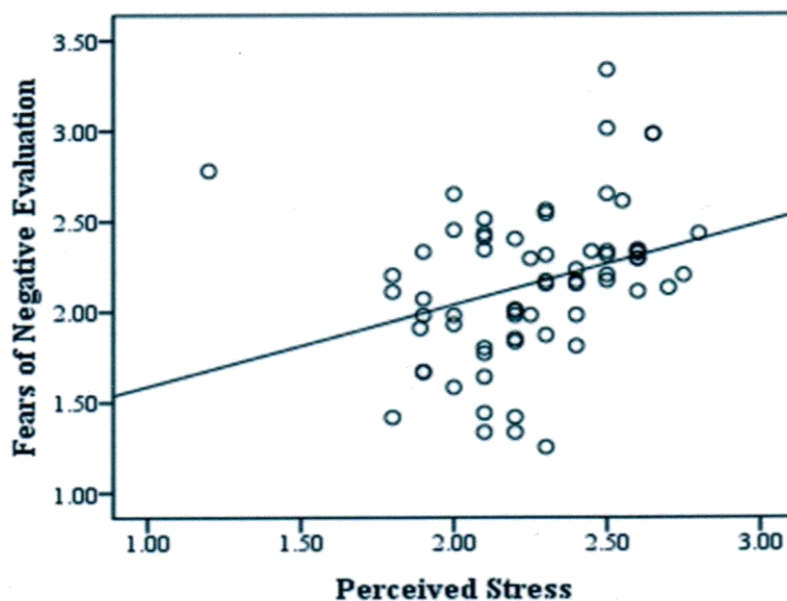


**Graph 3: Scatter Graph between Perceived Stress and Fears of Negative Evaluation.**



Graph 3 demonstrates that as the Fears of Negative Evaluation Score increases so does the score for Perceived Stress.

Graph 3: Scatter Graph between Perceived Stress and Fears of



Due to correlational analysis indicating that the dependant variables were suitable for multivariate analysis, a 2(Sex: Male, Female) X 3(Employment Status: Full-time Employed, Part-time Employed, Unemployed) between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed on the dependant variables of Self-Esteem, Perceived Stress and Fears of Negative Evaluation. Due to the sensitivity of Box's M, an alpha level of 0.01 was selected to evaluate homogeneity assumptions (Green & Salkind, 2003). Box's M test of homogeneity of covariance was not significant

( $p=0.04$ ). Using Wilk's criterion ( $\lambda$ ) as the omnibus test statistic, the combined dependant variables resulted in a significant main effect of Employment Status, Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.81$ ,  $F(6, 116) = 2.18$ ,  $p=0.05$ , partial eta squared = 0.10. However a significant main effect of Sex was not found, Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.89$ ,  $F(3, 58) = 2.30$ ,  $p=0.08$ , partial eta squared = 0.11, nor the interaction between Employment Status and Sex, Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.83$ ,  $F(6, 116) = 1.92$ ,  $p=0.08$ , partial eta squared = 0.09.

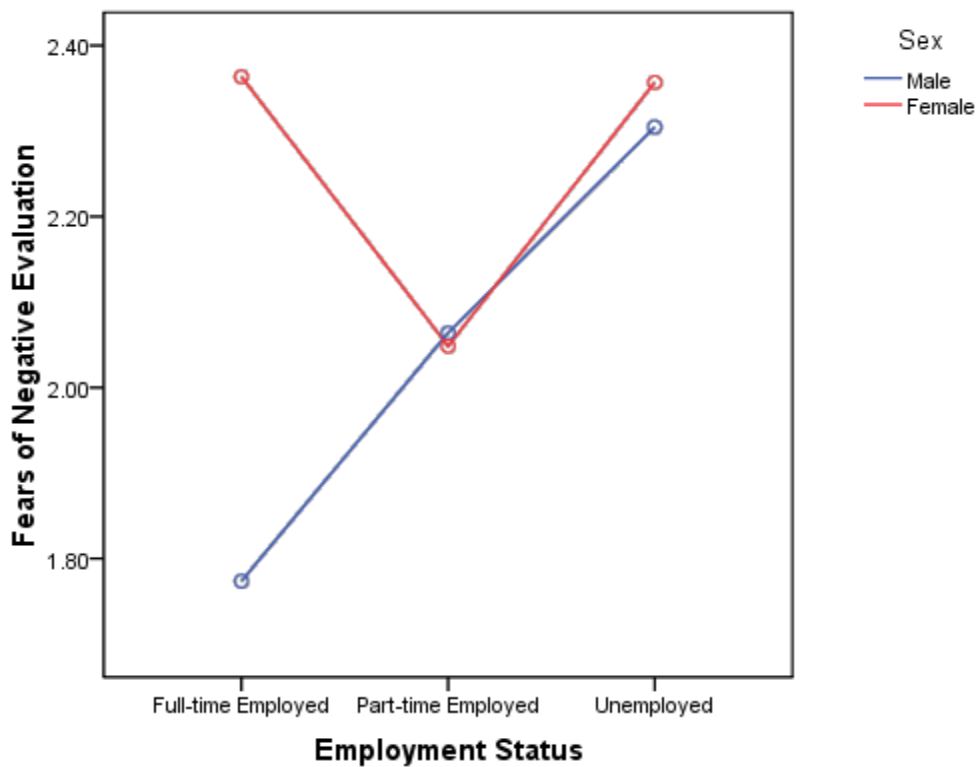
To probe the statistically significant multivariate effects, univariate 2 X 3 ANOVAs were conducted on each individual DV. For Perceived Stress, there was a significant main effect of Employment Status with Unemployed subjects ( $M = 2.36$ ) scoring higher than Full-time employed ( $M = 2.20$ ) and Part-time employed ( $M = 2.15$ ) subjects,  $F(2, 60) = 3.07$ ,  $p=0.05$ . Levene's statistic was non-significant,  $F(5, 60) = 2.04$ ,  $p=0.09$ , and so an equal variance assumed post hoc test was conducted. Using Scheffé's test it was revealed that Perceived Stress was significant between Full-time employed and Unemployed subjects ( $p=0.05$ ). The Part-time group was however not significant between Full-time employed ( $p=0.77$ ) or Unemployed ( $p=0.12$ ) participants. Furthermore, neither the main effect of Sex,  $F(1, 60) = 0.42$ ,  $p=0.52$ , nor the Sex X Employment Status interaction,  $F(2, 60) = 1.02$ ,  $p=0.37$ , were statistically significant.

For Self-Esteem, there was a significant main effect of Employment Status Full-time employed subjects ( $M = 2.42$ ) scoring higher than both Part-time employed ( $M = 2.38$ ) and Unemployed ( $M = 2.17$ ) subjects,  $F(2, 60) = 3.65$ ,  $p=0.03$ . Levene's statistic was non-significant,  $F(5, 60) = 1.07$ ,  $p=0.39$ , and so an equal variance assumed post hoc test was conducted. Using Scheffé's test it was revealed that Self-Esteem was significant for Full-time employed and Unemployed subjects ( $p=0.03$ ). The Part-time group was however not significant between Full-time employed ( $p=0.96$ ) or Unemployed ( $p=0.21$ ) participants. Furthermore, neither the main effect of Sex,  $F(1, 60) = 2.07$ ,  $p=0.16$ , nor the Sex X Employment Status interaction,  $F(2, 60) = 0.95$ ,  $p=0.39$ , were statistically significant.

For Fears of Negative Evaluation, there was a significant main effect of Employment Status with Unemployed subjects ( $M = 2.33$ ) scoring higher than Full-time employed ( $M = 2.04$ ) and Part-time employed ( $M = 2.06$ ) participants,  $F(2, 60) = 4.25$ ,  $p=0.02$ . Levene's statistic was non-significant,  $F(5, 60) = 3.04$ ,  $p=0.06$ , and so an equal variance assumed post hoc test was conducted. Using Scheffé's test it was revealed that Fears of Negative Evaluation was significant for Full-time employed and Unemployed subjects ( $p=0.03$ ). The Part-time group was however not significant between Full-time employed ( $p=0.99$ ) or Unemployed ( $p=0.16$ ) subjects. A significant main effect of Sex was found with females ( $M = 2.30$ ) scoring higher than males ( $M = 2.02$ ),  $F(1,60) = 4.81$ ,  $p=0.03$ . The Sex X Employment Status interaction was also significant,  $F(2, 60) = 4.94$ ,  $p=0.01$ . An interaction graph for this finding appears overleaf.



**Graph 4: Interaction graph between Sex and Employment Status for Fears of Negative Evaluation.**



The interaction graph demonstrates that females in the Full-time employed and unemployed groups reported comparable levels of Fears of Negative Evaluation. For females, the lowest levels of fear were reported in the Part-time employed group. Males reported least fear in the Full-time employed category followed by Part-time employed males. Unemployed males reported the highest levels of Fears of Negative Evaluation across male participants.

## **Discussion**

The present study aimed to determine if there were statistically significant differences between employed and unemployed individuals on measures of Self-Esteem, Fears of Negative Evaluation and Perceived Stress. The findings of this investigation have satisfied the aims of the study and support Hypotheses 1 and 2 as unemployed subjects demonstrated higher levels of Perceived Stress and Fears of Negative Evaluation. Furthermore, the investigation supports Hypothesis 3 as unemployed subjects scored lower on a measure of Self-Esteem. These findings are in line with several pieces of previous research into social evaluative anxiety, stress and self-esteem (Szivos, 1990; Fitzpatrick & Bosse, 2000; Leana & Feldman, 1991).

The present study determined that there were differences in the reported levels of perceived stress between employed and unemployed subjects. Although it is not possible for this study to argue that employment status causes a disparity in levels of stress between employed and unemployed individuals, the results demonstrate that higher levels of perceived stress were reported in the unemployed group. This argument is comparable to that reported Thomas *et al* (2005) who asserts that an individual's level of stress increases significantly following a transition into unemployment; a finding which may support the notion that perceived stress is associated with employment status. Furthermore, the results detailed in the present study into perceived stress may better explain Barrett's (1979) finding of increase prevalence of cardiovascular and substance related diseases in unemployed persons. The original explanation for this trend was that unemployed individuals may have increased levels of stress; recent research however suggests that perceived stress is more strongly associated with negative health consequences (Burns, Drayson, Ring & Douglas, 2002).

The present study found that part-time and full-time employed subjects reported comparable levels of perceived stress. Although the part-time level of employment status failed to achieve statistical significance, the finding suggests that any level of employment may result in lower levels of stress or alternatively allow individuals to accrue better coping abilities. This argument is similar to that proposed by Baum *et al* (1986) who asserts that employed individuals have more efficient coping abilities for psychological stress. Alternatively however, the disparity between employed and unemployed individuals' measures of perceived stress may indicate that there are differences in the perceptions of stress. This may suggest that employment may affect cognitive function at a perceptual level.

The increased levels of perceived stress demonstrated by unemployed subjects in the present study may be explained by the latent functions of employment (Fitzpatrick & Bosse, 2000). It may be that employed subjects reported lower levels of perceived stress due to a possible buffering effect of employment. Literature has suggested that employed persons experience less stress and negative health consequences following a stressful life event (Fitzpatrick & Bosse, 2000; Arijit, 2004). Whilst the present study was not conducted on individuals who experienced a recent stressful life event, and in fact the study controlled for this factor, the notion of latent employment functions may remain applicable to the general public. Further to this, Dooley and Prause (1995) state that employment provides time structure and pro-social contacts; factors which may explain differences in both the levels of perceived stress and self-esteem.

This investigation found that unemployed participants reported statistically significant lower levels of self-esteem than employed subjects. Although the present study cannot establish causality, the findings suggest that employment allows for individuals to develop higher levels of self-esteem. It may be that employed subjects demonstrate higher levels of self-esteem due to their self-concept; a construct which is heavily derived from an individual's employment status (Burns, 1980). Alternatively, the difference may be due to employed individuals having a meaningful occupational identity which is argued to be essential to reasonable psychological health (Erikson, as cited in Dooley & Prause, 1995). Despite this however, the notion of a meaningful occupational identity may be difficult to test empirically and factors such as social-status, as provided through employment, may offer a more well tested explanation as to why employed individuals report higher levels of self-esteem (Dooley & Prause, 1995).

The findings of this investigation may criticise those of Peitromonaco *et al* (1987) who found that part-time and unemployed subjects scored similarly on measures of self-esteem. Not only did the present study find that responses for self-esteem in the part-time employed group were non-significant, but also that their mean scores were highly similar to those reported by full-time employed subjects. This could suggest that any level of employment may help individuals develop higher levels of self-esteem. This argument may be supported by Szivos (1990) who argues that self-esteem may be associated to employment providing individuals with a sense of normalcy and participation in society. These feelings of normalcy may lead to the development of a positive self-image; a construct which has been associated with high self-esteem (Jesook, 2008).

The findings of the present study may be in opposition to research conducted by Kelvin and Jarrett (1985) who assert that self-esteem is not sensitive to employment change. They argue that individuals who have high levels of self-esteem during employment maintain the same level of self-esteem if made unemployed. Although the present study did not measure self-esteem before and after unemployment it seems reasonable to argue that unemployment is likely to have a negative impact on self-esteem (Kates *et al*, 1990). This may explain differences in self-esteem between employed and unemployed subjects. Alternatively however, it may be indicative of how individuals who have low self-esteem may choose to refrain from entering employment.

The present study demonstrated that there was not a significant effect of sex on self-esteem. This finding is in opposition to that found by Winefield and Tiggeman (1985) who argued that self-esteem was more diminished in unemployed males. However, literature has demonstrated that self-esteem may be related to an individual's self-concept (Burns, 1980). It is likely that males experienced greater levels of pressure to enter employment during the time that Winefield and Tiggeman conducted their research. This could have affected the self-concept of unemployed males and led to reduced self-esteem. Support for the present study's finding of sex not being implicated with self-esteem comes from Leana and Feldman (1991) who found that self-esteem was equally as diminished in female subjects following unemployment.

The present study found that unemployed subjects reported higher levels of fears of negative evaluation. This finding is similar to that reported by Jesook (2008) who asserts that unemployment correlates highly to social fears. One explanation for this finding is that unemployed individuals may have a poor self-image; a construct which has been found to be implicated with social evaluative anxiety (Tolman & Himle,

2009). Despite this however, the present study is unable to establish a causal relationship between employment and fears of negative evaluations and so it cannot be argued that unemployment causes higher levels of social evaluative anxiety.

Social interaction may explain the increased levels of fears of negative evaluation demonstrated by unemployed subjects in the present study. Dimigen and Taylor (1998) demonstrated that individuals who experience more positive social interaction suffer less from social evaluative anxiety. It may be that unemployed individuals experience less social interaction than employed individuals. This may suggest the employment status itself may not entirely explain the increase levels of fears of negative evaluation and that latent functions of employment, including social contact, may be implicated.

The present study found that there was a significant interaction between sex and employment status for fears of negative evaluation. The results indicated that both unemployed and full-time employed female subjects reported similar levels of social evaluative anxiety. This may suggest that employment status has little effect on females for fears of negative evaluation. Despite this however, it was found that part-time employed females reported the lowest levels of social evaluative anxiety across female subjects. This finding may indicate that part-time employed females are the least fearful of being negatively evaluated. Shalini (1995) argues that societal norms favour women mainly in their domestic and marital roles. Furthermore, she asserts that females who have employment are frequently regarded as secondary or supportive earners. It seems reasonable to suggest that these attitudes may be internalised into the self-concept of females (Burns, 1990). It may be that part-time employed females report the lowest levels of social evaluative anxiety as they feel they are fulfilling their perceived roles as a 'homemaker' and 'breadwinner'. Conversely, full-time employed or unemployed females may feel that they are neglecting one of these gender roles; a belief which may result in an individual becoming fearful of negative evaluation. The self-concept theory may also explain the difference between employment status and fears of negative evaluation for male subjects. The present study found that full-time employed males reported the lowest levels of fears of negative evaluation and unemployed males reported the highest levels of fears of negative evaluation. Dunham (2003) argues that unemployed males may feel stigmatised as there is a level of expectation that males should work. Although the prevalence of this attitude has declined in recent years, there still exists a stigma for unemployed males (Cunningham, 2008). It may be that full-time employed males feel less fearful of negative evaluation as they believe they are fulfilling their gender role as a primary source of income and accrue feelings of normalcy and social acceptance (Szivos, 1990). Furthermore, unemployed males may accrue feelings of inadequacy (Szivos, 1990) and develop a level of social evaluative anxiety.

The present study found that fears of negative evaluation was positively correlated with perceived stress and negatively correlated with self-esteem. This demonstrates that the variables may be conceptually related. Furthermore it may suggest that fears of negative evaluation is mediated by self-esteem and perceived stress. Despite this however, it is not possible to argue that fears of negative evaluation is caused through low self-esteem or high levels of perceived stress; it may be that self-esteem and perceived stress is affected by fears of negative evaluation or that there is another factor which mediates these constructs. The correlation does however suggest that a change in one of these constructs may result in a change in another.

The present study was based around a self-report method of data collection. Whilst this form of data collection is widely used for psychological research (Schwarz, 1999) and has several principal advantages including low cost, relatively quick data collection and suitable for use on large populations (Kline, 1993), it is not without disadvantages. Firstly, the structure and manner in which questions are worded can affect how well the reported information measures the construct under consideration (MacDonald, 2008). Schwarz (1999) asserts that self-report methodologies result in a fallible source of data; where obtained results can be changed dependent upon how a question is asked. Despite this however, the present study implemented well-tested scales to measure self-esteem, fears of negative evaluation and perceived stress. Literature indicates that the Perceived Stress Scale, Fears of Negative Evaluation Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale have high levels of construct validity and so it can be assumed that they each measure the construct under consideration (Ramirez & Hernandez, 2007; Hagborg, 1993; Carleton, Collimore & Asmundson, 2007). Despite this however, social desirability bias may have affected the study and subjects may have responded to questions in a way which they believed to be desirable (Fisher, 1993). This may have been controlled for through implementing a model which incorporates both direct and indirect questioning (Jo, Nelson & Kiecker, 1997).

The variables measured in the present study may have been mediated by factors which were not considered. For example, financial security may affect an individual's level of perceived stress. It may be that unemployed individuals who are financially secure would not report the same levels of perceived stress as an unemployed individual who is not financially secure. Furthermore, an individual's accommodation status, relationship status and number of dependants may have affected participant's responses. Future research may choose to investigate these areas in relation to differences between employed and unemployed individual's measures of social evaluative anxiety, perceived stress and self-esteem. Despite this however, the study did control for several factors which may have impacted the variables under consideration. Prior literature indicated that self-employment, studying in an educational facility and volunteer work may affect an individual's level of perceived stress, fears of negative evaluation and self-esteem and so individuals who reported these factors were omitted from the study.

Future research may choose to implement a longitudinal design to track changes across employment status transition. This may enable the researcher to draw more causal conclusions about employment status on the variables under consideration. Furthermore, future research may choose to investigate employment satisfaction. It may be that individuals who are more satisfied with their employment status report differently to individuals who are dissatisfied with their employment status. A similar argument was proposed by Kates *et al* (1990) who found that desire to work affected the self-esteem of unemployed subjects. A further suggestion for future research may be sexual orientation. Mireshghi and Matsumoto (2008) argue that sexual orientation may impact levels of perceived stress; therefore sexuality may be investigated in regards to differences between employed and unemployed individuals.

The findings of the present study may have implications for back-to-work programmes. This report demonstrates that there were statistically significant differences between employed and unemployed individuals on measures of self-esteem, perceived stress and fears of negative evaluation. This may indicate that unemployed persons are a high-risk group for conditions associated with

psychological stress. Furthermore, literature had suggested that the unemployed are frequently victims of stigmatisation; theory based programmes could be implemented to reduce the prevalence of negative attitudes towards the unemployed.

The interaction between sex and employment status for fears of negative evaluation demonstrated that full-time employed and unemployed females reported higher levels of social evaluative anxiety. Further to this, some research suggests that females are favoured in their domestic and marital roles (Shalini, 1995). Snowdon (2011) argues that 73 per cent of females report believing that barriers exist to prevent their career advancement. This suggests that there may be a need for continuing effort to change attitudes towards females in employment, especially in senior positions.

Summers (2008) asserts that the financial cost of unemployment is significant and there is a need for employment promoting services. Whilst promoting employment may be viewed as being important for the economy, there may be a need for psychologically based programmes to first target the causes and consequences of unemployment. This report has demonstrated that the unemployed frequently report diminished self-esteem and elevated levels of social evaluative anxiety and perceived stress. Whilst it has not been established if these factors are the cause or result of unemployment, programmes should be implemented to confront these issues. Furthermore, Leon and Matthews (2010) argue that the long-term unemployed are more likely to demonstrate self-sabotaging interview behaviours due to diminished self-esteem; psychological programmes may help an individual develop higher levels of self-esteem and assist them in finding employment. Despite the financial cost of implementing psychologically based services to unemployed individuals, it may result in an increased number of individuals transitioning into working society and thus a reduction in the number of persons claiming unemployment benefits. In this way, psychological programmes may help tackle the psychological issues reported by some unemployed individuals and assist with future economic development.

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