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Critical Interpretive Research into the Life World
Experiences of Mature-Aged Workers Marginalised from
the Labour Force

By

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Abstract

This thesis explores the subjective life world experiences of a group of mature-aged workers in regional Australia who are marginalised from the labour market, either by having no employment, or insufficient employment. The context of these marginalised mature-aged workers is shaped by key factors explored in this thesis, including negative stereotypes of ageing, employer discrimination and the emergence of a core-periphery labour market, where many workers remain trapped on the periphery. Given these contextual factors it is not surprising that participants in the study were frustrated by what they perceived as discrimination by employers and employment agencies, based on a perception that they were unable to adapt to the dynamics of the new economy. Participants also complained that services available from both Centrelink and the Job Network were demeaning and inappropriate for their needs. The thesis also explores the impact of labour force marginalisation on participants’ financial, psychological and relationship experiences and concludes that unemployment and underemployment cause considerable disadvantage and distress. The thesis concludes with a discussion of three workshops provided to participants as a means of addressing: firstly, potentially debilitative psychological impacts of labour force marginalisation; secondly, the individualisation of blame for labour force marginalisation associated with neoliberal rhetoric and; thirdly, literacy-based job search strategies that are designed to help participants attain desirable employment outcomes. This study provides some support for the utility of workshops based on action research principles as an intervention-based measure for the benefit of marginalised workers. Overall this study provides qualitative support to complement the existing body of predominately quantitative research in this field.


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