

SUPSI

Impact evaluation of secondary labour market on individual quality of life

Gregorio Avilés

**Univeristy of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland*

For details: gregorio.aviles@supsi.ch

**Swiss Public Health Conference 2014 «Public Mental Health»
Olten, 21.8.2014**

Background

- Scientific literature showed the beneficial effects of reemployment on mental health and psychological well-being (e.g. McKee-Ryan & al., 2005; Paul & Moser, 2009).
- Secondary labour market: temporary employment schemes in the public and non-profit sectors.
- Such schemes are often targeted at “hard-to-place” unemployed people.
- They represent a kind of “limbo” between unemployment and regular employment (they are a substitute for a set of latent benefits of work).
- Research hypothesis: secondary labour market has a positive impact on individual quality of life.

Field research

- Investigation focuses on a specific scheme: “Attività di Utilità Pubblica” (Social Utility Activities).
- This program is targeted at hard-to-place social assistance recipients in Canton Ticino.
- Goal of the program: social inclusion and (hopefully) work integration.
- Duration: 6 months, but renewable up to 12 months (sometimes even more).
- Economic incentive: no regular wage, but participants receive 200 francs per month on addition of their usual welfare benefits (meals and public transport are refunded).

Research design

- Observational design: panel of welfare recipients eligible or already participating in the program at baseline (January 2013).
- Three waves of data collection (ad hoc questionnaire administered in face-to-face interviews):
 - Wave 1 (March - June 2013): N = 104 (49 in the program).
 - Wave 2 (November 2013 - April 2014): N = 74 (21 in the program).
 - Wave 3 will take place between August - November 2014.

Measures

- 4 dimensions of quality of life (dependent variables):
 - subjective physical health (SF-12v2, PCS; Maruish, 2012)
 - mental health (SF-12v2, MCS; Maruish, 2012)
 - subjective well-being (2 single-item measures: life satisfaction and financial satisfaction)
 - self-esteem (5 items from the RSE; Prezza et al., 1997).
- Independent variable: occupational status coded as: (1) unemployed; (2) employed in the program; (3) other occupational status. In the analysis, the focus has been restricted to unemployed people and participants in the program.

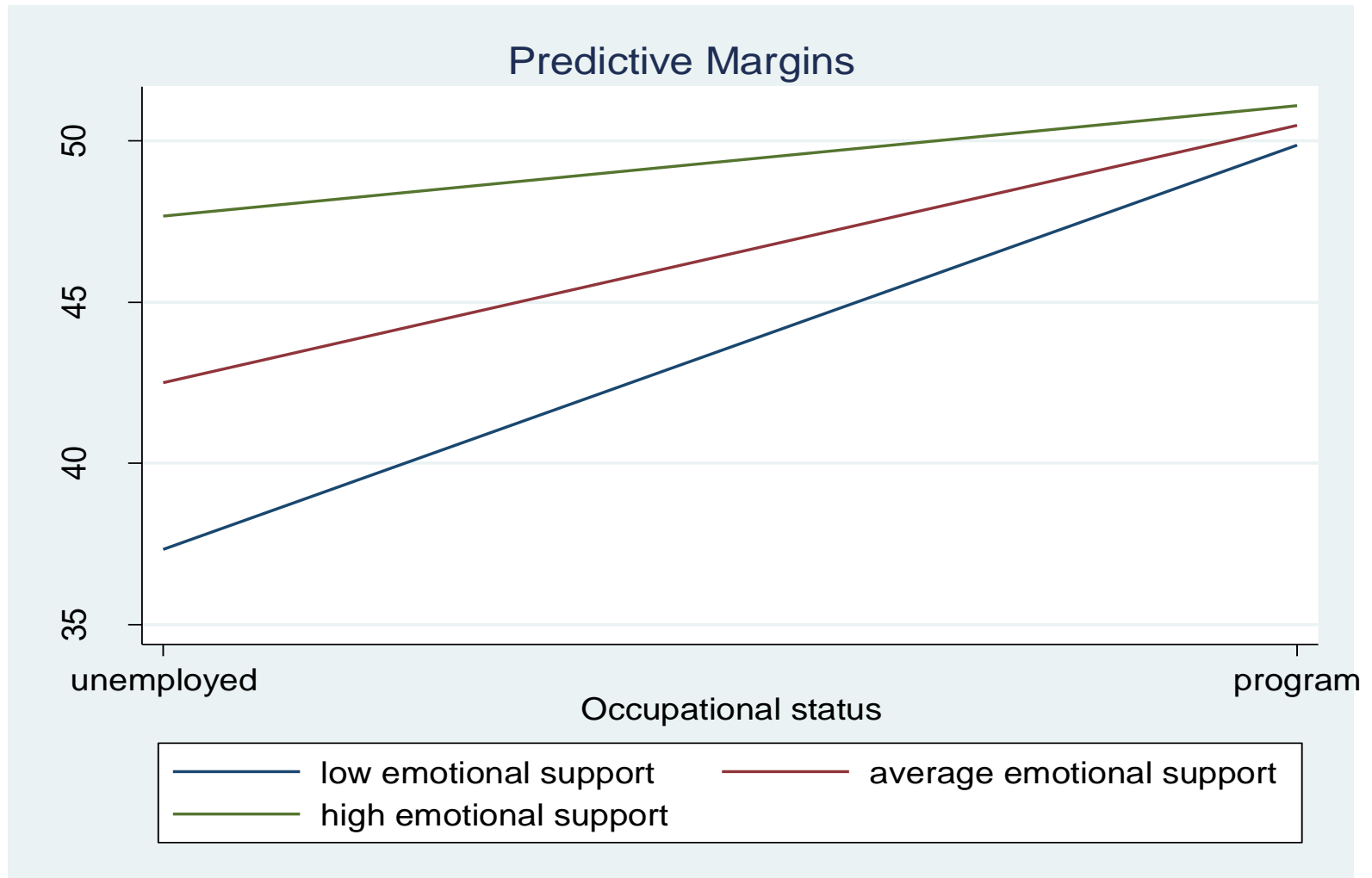
Analysis

- Statistical analysis has been performed using an OLS pooled regression model on data collected at wave 1 and wave 2.
- The model shows interesting patterns of association among variables, but causal inference capacity is limited due to possible unobserved heterogeneity and/or reciprocal causation (results must be interpreted with caution).

Results for mental health

<i>N (observations) = 130 ; Std. Err. adjusted for 85 clusters</i>		<i>R-squared: 0.3892</i>	
Mental health (MCS-12)	Coeff.	95% Confidence interval	
		lower	higher
Employed in program (vs unemployed)	7.99***	4.476	11.512
Perceived emotional support (2-item scale scored 0-8; centered at mean)	2.33***	0.995	3.671
Employed in program##Perceived emotional support	- 2.06**	-3.698	- 0.415
Age	0.33	- 0.143	0.209
Gender (0 = female ; 1 = male)	1.86	- 2.881	6.604
Swiss nationality	1.46	- 2.626	5.542
Educational level (0 = unqualified ; 1= qualified)	0.78	- 3.597	5.165
With dependent children	- 5.78*	- 12.147	0.595
Subjective physical health (PCS-12)	- 0.22*	- 0.451	0.01
Perceived financial strain (2-item scale scored 0-8)	- 1.15**	- 2.091	- 0.209
<i>*sig. p<0.1 ; **sig. p<0.05 ; ***sig. p<0.01</i>			

Results for mental health



Conclusions

- Secondary labour market is significantly and positively associated with mental health (confidence limits : 0.4 - 1.03 standard deviations difference between unemployed people and participants in the program).
- The positive impact is stronger at lower levels of emotional support.
- Although secondary labour market participation is better than unemployment for mental health, it is not conceived as a long-term alternative to job loss. An effective public mental health strategy should also be able to promote the creation of sustainable jobs for disadvantaged people, both in the “regular” market and in social enterprises.

Cited references

- Maruish M. E. (2012), ed, User's Manual for the SF-12v2 Health Survey, 3rd edition, QualityMetric Incorporated.
- McKee-Ryan F. M., Song Z., Wanberg C. R., Kinicki A. J. (2005), „Psychological and Physical Well-Being During Unemployment: A Meta-Analytic Study”, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90 (1), pp. 53-76.
- Paul K. I., Moser K. (2009), “Unemployment impairs mental health. Meta-analyses”, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 74, pp. 264-282.
- Prezza M., Trombaccia F., Armento L. (1997), “La scala dell'autostima di Rosenberg: traduzione e validazione italiana”, *Bollettino di psicologia applicata*, 223, pp. 35-44.