QUALITY OF LIFE
OF THE LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED[1]

Božena BUCHTOVÁ

Introduction

Initially, quality of life used to be examined from the perspective of health and illness. Strauss' monograph (1975) dealing with the quality of life of the chronically ill and aged people was one of the first studies dealing with the subject. Methodologically, scholars concentrated in particular on the effectiveness of healing methods for patients' quality of life and tried to establish intervention approaches (Bergsma, Engel, 1998; McGee et al. 1991; O´Boyle, McGee, 1992; Browne et al., 1994; Browne et al. 1997). It was only later that a broader human life perspective began to be taken into account when studying the quality of life (Emmons, Diener,1985; Ryff, Keys,1995; Oishi,1999; Dzúrová, Dragomirecká, 2000; Hnilica, 2000). It became apparent though that quality of life was not determined solely by a set of identifiable external factors, but also – and substantially – by the individual perception of life's meaningfulness (Zika, Chamberlain, 1987; Frankl, 1994; Thompson, Janigian, 2000; Halama, 2000; Balcar, 1995c; Machovec, 1967; Šmajs, Krob, 2003). The findings and experience acquired from measuring the quality of life have shown the following:

1. Rather than a system of values set and evaluated externally, an individual's own perception of the priorities concerning quality of life is relevant for evaluating his or her quality of life.
2. Various quality of life dimensions have different levels of importance for every individual.
3. The importance of the quality of life dimensions changes during an individual's life span as a result of his or her going through different stages of life and facing various situations.
4. Personal approach to the quality of life is closely related to expressing satisfaction with achieving goals and fulfilling plans.

Our approach derives from the above-mentioned findings as well as from the

__

approach to the quality of life issue by the Irish psychologists C. A. O´Boyle, H. McGee and Swiss doctor C. R. B. Joyce (1994, p. 160): „Quality of life should be defined individually depending on how the person has determined it". Their method called SEIQoL (Schedule for the Evaluation of Individual Quality of Life)[2] currently belongs among the most frequent methods of evaluation. As the sources available to us suggest, we are unique in using SEIQoL for examining the quality of life of the long-term unemployed. Our inquiry was built on the following presumptions:

- Loss of work is a serious milestone in an individual's life with significant effects on his/her quality of life and its evaluation.
- Long-term unemployment has negative effects on the overall quality of life as well as on the composition and importance of the different aspects of life.
- For the long-term unemployed their quality of life is strongly influenced by age, sex, education and duration of the unemployment.
- Long-term unemployment negatively impacts the meaningfulness of life for the afflicted individuals.

Data and methodology

The inquiry took place in 2001 and 2002, there participated 1957 respondents, who were divided into four sub-sets:

1. **The unemployed** (N= 966; 558 women and 408 men, average age 34.5 years, aged between 17 and 65. 6% of the respondents had primary education, 19% had completed apprenticeship, 60% had secondary education, 2% had attended colleges and 13% had university degrees. On average, they had been unemployed for 19.63 months).
2. **The employed** (N=949; 528 women and 421 men, average age 35.7, aged between 19 and 73. 2.7% of the respondents had primary education, 6.3% had completed apprenticeship, 59% had secondary education, 2% had attended colleges and 30% had university degrees).
3. **Homeless** (N=22; 22 men, average age 42.2, 12 men with primary education, one with completed apprenticeship, 7 with secondary school. On average, they had been unemployed for 47 months).
4. **Unemployed mothers** after maternity leave (N=20; average age 34 years, 19 had secondary education and 1 had university degree. In average, they had been actively seeking jobs for 9 months).

The respondents participated in the inquiry on a voluntary basis. Those from the first two sets (the employed and the unemployed) were spoken to by trained inquirers throughout the territory of the Czech Republic. The homeless were interviewed in the Brno region while the mothers after maternity leave at workshops for the unemployed in the Nový Jičín district.[3]

We used the SEIQoL method to examine the quality of life of the unemployed. The concept published by C. A. O'Boyle, H. M. McGee and C. R. B. Joyce in 1994 in the Advances in Medical Psychology (5, p. 159-180) is based on a subjective individual's evaluation of the quality of life. In a structured interview the individual freely contemplates his/her system of values without any previously set criteria. The individual evaluates which aspect of life he/she currently considers to be the most important one and to which of the five aspects of life he/she attributes the greatest importance. For a better understanding of the statement and for an adequate interpretation, the respondents refer to the chosen aspects of life in a descriptive manner rather than just in keynotes; they use free associations and explain what each aspect means for them. The aspects of life considered to be substantial in their current status are assessed in terms of their relevance, i.e. their relative importance for the particular individual. Subsequently, the individual contemplates on his satisfaction with the given aspect of life and whether he or she manages to meet the demands and objectives of his current life situation. For the purpose of the data evaluation, the importance of each aspect of life (given in per cent from 0 to 100) is multiplied by the level of satisfaction (also given in per cent from 0 to 100 where 0 per cent represents the lowest level of satisfaction and 100 per cent represents complete satisfaction). The resulting quality of life figure is a sum total of all the five products divided by 100 to give a number from 0 to 100. The resulting quality of life profiles and the final quality of life scores for the individuals and groups are accompanied by data reflecting the meaningfulness of life in their current stages of life. The individual assessment of the meaningfulness of life is marked by a cross on a sloping line (rising from left to right in a 45° angle) where the bottom is entitled "life is absolutely meaningless" and the top "life is truly meaningful".

The outcomes of the inquiry were processed using the descriptive statistics methods, correlation analysis (Pearson's correlation coefficient, Spearman's rank correlation) as well as the t-test, the Kruskal-Wallis test, the median test and the ANOVA (Univariate Analysis of Variance) method.

Research outcomes, discussion

For each respondent group, we processed the following:
a) sequence of separate life aspects arranged in the order of importance for their lives and for the establishing of an individual's **quality of life** (QL) **profile**.

b) sequence of the separate life aspects evaluated by the respondents **based on their satisfaction levels** (in a scale from 0 to 100) with the particular aspects

The following tables give averages and standard deviations for the different groups of respondents concerning the identified quality of life aspects and their satisfaction with these aspects. Apart from the five most important life aspects we specified also other life aspects for each group that were referred to as less important.

Aspect of life

	Aspect of life	Average QL	Standard deviation
1.	Family	**27,44**	17,01
2.	Health	20,79	15,29
3.	Work	9,33	13,4
4.	Peace of mind	6,32	9,02
5.	Interpers. relations	5,67	8,42
6.	Hobbies	4,64	7,49
7.	Personal improvement	4,52	7,91
8.	Money	**1,07**	4,74
9.	Housing	0,28	2,26

Satisfaction

	Aspect of life	Average satisfaction	Standard deviation
1.	Family	**64,51**	33,30
2.	Health	**58,41**	33,75
3.	Work	**30,13**	37,80
4.	Interpers. relations	26,96	35,41
5.	Peace of mind	**26,60**	35,06
6.	Hobbies	24,57	34,07
7.	Personal improvement	18,41	29,48
8.	Money	3,41	13,72
9.	Housing	0,87	7,41

N=949; significance levels *p ≤ 0.05. **p ≤ 0.01

Table 1 The employed. Quality of life (QL) profile and the level of satisfaction with the particular life aspect

Aspect of life

	Aspect of life	Average QL	Standard deviation
1.	Family	25,28	17,04
2.	Health	20,12	15,11
3.	Work	9,70	14,36
4.	Peace of mind	5,70	8,88
5.	Interpers. relations	5,65	8,47
6.	Hobbies	**5,50**	8,36
7.	Personal improvement	5,06	9,21
8.	Money	**2,13**	8,14
9.	Housing	0,44	3,18

Satisfaction

	Aspect of life	Average satisfaction	Standard deviation
1.	Family	58,03	35,14
2.	Health	53,18	34,23
3.	Work	**28,81**	36,77
4.	Interpers. relations	25,71	34,35
5.	Peace of mind	20,54	30,44
6.	Hobbies	16,82	27,83
7.	Personal improvement	8,60	18,86
8.	Money	3,09	11,90
9.	Housing	1,16	8,50

N=966; significance levels *p ≤ 0.05. **p ≤ 0.01

Table 2 The unemployed. Quality of life (QL) profile and the level of satisfaction with the particular life aspect

Note   Given the numbers of the respondents involved, statistical tests could only be performed between the groups of the employed and the unemployed. Where statistically significant differences were identified, the average figures are given in bold.

The same life aspects are important for the quality of life of the employed and the unemployed respondents, in the following order – family, health, work, peace of mind and interpersonal relations. We identified only one statistically significant difference between these two groups - the "family" value, which was a more important aspect in the life of the employed than in the life of the unemployed, and the employed were also more satisfied with this particular life aspect. While the employed showed significantly

higher satisfaction with their work and health, the unemployed reported hobbies and interests as the life aspects providing them more satisfaction in their current status.

Family

From the judgment analysis we have concluded that family has almost identical meaning for both the employed and the unemployed respondents. 1. Family as a symbol of understanding, satisfaction and fellowship 2. Family as a psychological support (a symbol of security, background and safety) 3. Family as the most important value in life (to have someone to live for) 4. Family as a background where children can be brought up 5. Family as giving life its meaning (self-fulfillment).

However, obvious differences were apparent between both groups in the relative frequency of the family meanings and their ranking by the frequency of reports. Among the unemployed respondents family was primarily associated with a major psychological support during the unemployment. In their families the unemployed reclaim psychological balance, which was previously shattered by the involuntary loss of work and even more by the unsuccessful attempts to find a job. Family often restores mental balance of the unemployed. The employed respondents associate family with the peace of mind, harmony, coherence, and understanding among the family members, and only then it comes as a place of security, safety and backup. This seemed to confirm what we had learned during our previous research: long-term unemployment is a test of the interpersonal relations in a family and is better coped with by those who have close people to rely on and to speak with openly about their situation (B. Buchtová et al., 2002 pp.107, 8).

In addition, we identified differences between the employed and the unemployed in the frequency of reporting family as something that gives meaning to one's life and provides personal self-fulfillment. By losing their jobs, people experience a shift and transformation of their vital energy from work to family, which is an alternative with a changed arrangement from the perspective of roles. Especially for unemployed women family is an alternative working field providing self-fulfillment and easing the burden of the unemployment (B. Buchtová et al., 2002 p.100). The psychosocial burden on the unemployed men responsible for the' livelihoods of their families is much heavier than that on the unemployed women.

Health

Health was reported to be one of the primary life qualities by all the four groups of respondents. Semantically, health was most frequently associated with the following:

1. the highest value in life, 2. a value people become aware of only after they have lost it (increased care for health as a result of illness or injury), 3. a prerequisite for achieving a lasting employment (a prerequisite for productive life), 4. healthy lifestyle (healthy food, physical exercise – care for physical health), 5. a source of physical and mental comfort (with a focus on harmony between mental and physical health resulting in the satisfaction with life), 6. a guarantee of self-reliance (independence from others, in particular in the old age, not being a burden on others), 7. care for the health of family members and close people.

Health is a supreme value from which a number of other fulfillments stem in the quality of life of both the employed and the unemployed respondents. It is also seen (as was frequently reported) as a prerequisite for getting and retaining a job. Health is the most valued asset in today's labor market. The chance of people with disabilities to find jobs is decreasing as a result of the increasing focus on the productivity of work and performance. In general, the period of time they are registered at job centers exceeds that of the healthy individuals many times.

A number of researchers describe in their studies the connection between unemployment and a decline in health. In our studies as well (B. Buchtová, 1992, 1999, 2000), more than a half of the long-term unemployed repeatedly reported subjective symptoms of neurotic complaints such as anxiety, unease, irritation, headache, insomnia, exhaustion. After loosing jobs, both men and women experienced worsening of the existing health problems – hypertension, stomach ulcers, heart disease, spinal cord problems, asthma, etc. Many people in the Czech labor market live in fear of job loss due to being employed for a definite period of time or as they observe the constantly increasing numbers of the unemployed in many regions. Foreign investors recently resorted to large-scale lay-offs as the Czech labor force has become less profitable. Apart from having an impact on those who have lost their jobs, unemployment also influences the behavior and health of the employed. They either experience anxiety and strain from the anticipated loss of work or they have to work in uneasy conditions. It is obvious that the quality of peoples' emotional comfort represented by health is influenced by the changed economic climate whether or not the individual directly experiences the unpleasant job-related events.

Work

Work was ranked in the third place by the respondents considering the quality of their lives. Work was most frequently related to the following needs: 1. self-fulfillment (employing one's abilities, knowledge and skills) 2. financial independence (material support for the family, means of independence) 3. security in life (certain future) 4. ordered life (daily program, time spending, everyday routine) 5. social background (interpersonal relations in the workplace, friendship, celebrations, common eating facilities), 6. emotional response, emotional appreciation (need for success, appreciation, acknowledgment).

A statistically significant difference between both groups was identified in their satisfaction with work. While the employed respondents reported remarkable satisfaction, the unemployed tend to fill in this life aspect with hobbies and interests.

A generation gap is identifiable in the responses of the unemployed respondents. While young people believe they will find a job soon, they strive for self-fulfillment and have plans for the future, older individuals place the basic needs of their families first. Men more often reported age discrimination in the labor market. Repeated failure to find a job leads to depression, feeling inferior, losing confidence. In family life, the unemployed feel like "parasites", men believe unemployment is the reason for their inability to satisfy the basic needs of their families. It is obvious that the importance of labor in human life changes, which has an effect on experiencing and coping with the loss of work.

The employed respondents showed a statistically significant satisfaction with work as well as aspirations to get even a better job facilitating their further strive for better education (in particular as computer literacy and language skills are concerned). Work is conceived as an important place in human community, as a place of fellowship with colleagues, as a second "family".

During the inquiry we detached two specific, less numerous groups from the set of the respondents – the homeless people and the unemployed mothers after maternity leave.

Homeless (N=22; significance levels *$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$)
Among the unemployed homeless people **family** was ranked as low as fourth among the values. Most frequently, the respondents associated family with a desire to establish a functioning family or with a desire to be again with the partner who had left them because of their own excessive alcohol abuse, criminality or imprisonment. Some homeless people do not wish to change anything in their current status. These individuals tend to live alone and freedom is of utmost value for them.

Health achieves the highest average figure in the quality of life rating among the homeless people. Health is often a critical aspect in their lives. It tends to be weakened by staying overnight in the open, by the irregular and low-quality food supply and often by excessive alcohol abuse. Most homeless people associated health with improved health or at least with not worsened health.

Work is characterized by the homeless' desire to find a permanent job, although toned with resignation. Those who would really like to work are aware at the same time that the homeless status gives them poor prospects. More than a half of the respondents do not see work as a relevant subject – they are happy with living on the edge and providing for their livelihood in legally dubious ways.

Unemployed mothers after maternity leave (N=20; significance levels*$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$)
In the group of the unemployed mothers after maternity leave, **family** and satisfaction with family show the highest average figures in the quality of life in comparison with the other three groups of respondents. The assessment is compatible with the mothers' view of their current life status, which is also related to the average rating of and satisfaction with the aspect of peace of mind. Unemployed mothers consider **their own improvement efforts** to be important (some women had been at home for several years with their children). These efforts, which include not only acquiring new knowledge and skills (all the women were at the time of the inquiry attending a retraining program), also require a new view of lifestyle, organization and program of the day. Even though a quarter of the women were single parents, finances were not rated as an important life aspect. Low average rating of **work** seems to correspond with their current status, but on the other hand preparations for the resumption of employment are taken seriously. This happens in spite of the fact

that the particular region showed a high rate of unemployment and the chances for employment were therefore slim.[4]

For average values of the other life aspects among the unemployed mothers after maternity leave and their satisfaction with them see Table 4.

The following part of our research was focused on comparing the average quality of life among the individual groups of respondents. For results see Table 3.

	QL average	Standard deviation	Number of respondents
unemployed	60.3	20	966
employed	70.6	15.8	949
homeless	33.1	19.6	22
mothers after maternity leave	62.3	18	20
Total	56.6	18.35	1957

Table 3 Comparison of quality of life averages for different groups of respondents (in per cent)

The individual evaluation of the quality of life is highest among the employed in all groups of respondents. It is apparent that a loss of employment represents a major milestone in human life, it has a significant effect on the quality of life and impacts mostly negatively the other life aspects and personal goals.

Quality of life aspects and satisfaction with them by age and gender

We have verified the assumed relationships between the quality of life aspects, satisfaction with them and the age and gender variables using the Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results of the statistical testing of correlations between the variables in question confirmed the major links.

The results suggest that among **homeless** people the importance of housing (0.615**) and family (0.487*) increases with age while satisfaction with the importance of income decreases (-0.472*).
Among the unemployed **mothers after maternity leave**, satisfaction with the peace of mind significantly decreases with age (-0.493*).
Among the **unemployed respondents** the importance of health (0.222**), family (0.129**) and finances (0.071*) increases along with the age, while the importance of personal improvement decreases as well as satisfaction with it (-0.168**); the same

---
[4] The conclusions from the inquiry administered to the homeless sample and the unemployed mothers after maternity leave are but preliminary. In order to confirm them, we would need a larger sample from different regions of the Czech Republic.

holds true for interpersonal relations (-0.097**) and peace of mind (-0.079*). In the same group of respondents, satisfaction with family proved to be statistically significant (0.080*) as well as housing (0.081*).

Among the **employed respondents** the age variable positively correlated with the values of family (0.157**) and peace of mind (0.073*) and also with the satisfaction with both. Negative correlation was identified in the importance of and satisfaction with the personal improvement (-0.134**; -0.129**).

		Homeless		Mothers after mat. leave		Unemployed			Employed		
		men	total	women	total	women	men	total	women	men	total
Quality of life	Family	6.11	6.11	39.25	39.25	28.82**	20.59	25.33	29.31**	25.20	27.50
	Health	28.33	28.33	13.50	13.50	20.55	19.64	20.16	22.35**	18.91	20.83
	Work	5.00	5.00	1.75	1.75	11.69	8.27	9.70	11.12	7.94	9.33
	Hobbies	0.00	0.00	2.25	2.25	4.12	7.41**	5.52	3.54	6.06**	4.65
	Interpersonal relations	0.83	0.83	5.00	5.00	5.89	5.36	5.67	6.33**	4.85	5.68
	Money	13.61	13.61	0.00	0.00	1.75	2.65	2.13	0.89	1.31	1.07
	Housing	5.56	5.56	0.00	0.00	0.27	0.66	0.44	0.25	0.32	0.28
	Personal improvement	0.00	0.00	8.15	8.15	5.68*	4.24	5.07	4.90	4.06	4.53
	Peace of mind	0.56	0.56	8.25	8.25	6.11	5.16	5.71	6.73	5.84	6.34
Satisfaction	Family	3.89	3.89	61.50	61.50	65.69**	47.88	58.15	67.99**	60.40	64.64
	Health	30.00	30.00	36.50	36.50	56.63**	48.74	53.29	62.00**	54.16	58.54
	Work	5.00	5.00	2.50	2.50	8.90	8.41	8.60	32.66	28.23	30.13
	Hobbies	0.00	0.00	7.50	7.50	23.51	36.15**	28.86	20.71	29.57**	24.62
	Interpersonal relations	2.78	2.78	26.25	26.25	26.58	24.66	25.77	31.25**	21.67	27.02
	Money	18.89	18.89	0.00	0.00	2.85	3.43	3.10	3.08	3.84	3.41
	Housing	10.28	10.28	0.00	0.00	0.74	1.74	1.16	0.92	0.80	0.87
	Personal improvement	0.00	0.00	28.75	28.75	19.21**	13.65	16.85	20.84**	15.42	18.45
	Peace of mind	1.11	1.11	33.25	33.25	22.24*	18.33	20.58	29.08*	23.58	26.66

N=1957; 851 men, 1,106 women; significance level *p ≤ 0.05; **p ≤ 0.01

Table 4 Average values of life aspects in the quality of life and satisfaction with them from the perspective of gender in all four groups of respondents.

The results show that in terms of gender, both the unemployed and the employed women are more satisfied with family and health life aspects than both groups of men.

In case of both the employed and the unemployed men, there is a positive correlation with the hobby life aspect, which is not observed in women.

Employed women tend to be more satisfied with their interpersonal relations (31.25**) than employed men (21.67). Among unemployed men and women no statistically significant differences in satisfaction with this variable was found.

Both the unemployed and employed women tend to be more satisfied with their personal improvement and piece of mind than both groups of men.

We tested the differences between the groups of the employed and the unemployed men and women in preferences of the life aspects and the satisfaction with them using the Pearson's correlations and testing the individual variables for the different groups (N=1915; unemployed =966, employed =949; significance level *$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$)

The figures suggest that from the gender perspective family is a more important life aspect for women, both unemployed and employed than for men (-0.239**; 0.120**) and women tend to be more satisfied with it than men.

The value of health and interpersonal relations is considered to be more important by employed women than by employed men (-0.112**; -0.088**) and the employed women tend to be more satisfied with these aspects (-0.116; - 0.134**). Between the unemployed men and women gender differences were not confirmed.

The value of work and hobbies is statistically more significant for the employed (0.121**; **0.167**) and the unemployed men (0.117**; 0.194**) than for women. Both the employed and the unemployed men find more satisfaction in their hobbies (0.129**; 0.170**) than both groups of women.

Satisfaction with personal improvement and satisfaction with peace of mind is statistically more significant among both the unemployed and the employed women than among men.

Personal improvement is statistically more significant for the unemployed women (-0.077*) than for the unemployed men. Employed women are apparently more satisfied with their interpersonal relations than employed men. Differences between genders in this value were not confirmed between the unemployed men and women.

For the other life aspects, no statistically significant differences between men and women were discovered.

Quality of life aspect and satisfaction with it according to the achieved education

We checked the relationships between the quality of life aspects, satisfaction with them and the achieved level of education using the Spearman's rank correlation. The results of the statistical testing of the variables in question have revealed significant relationships (N=1915; unemployed =966, employed =949; significance level *$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$). A positive correlation means that the higher education the higher the quality of life or satisfaction in the given area; negative correlation – the higher education the lower the quality of life or satisfaction in the given area.

The results suggest that the higher the level of education in the unemployed group, the lesser the importance of hobbies (-0.089**), value of money (-0.084**) and

work (-0.076*), while the importance of personal improvement increases with education (0.094**), just like that of peace of mind (0.079*).

In the employed respondents' group, the importance of money in their quality of life decreases with the achieved level of education (-0.113**), while the importance of personal improvement increases (0.107**).

More educated unemployed people showed a statistically significant increase in satisfaction with their personal improvement (0.118**) and peace of mind (0.085**) (they better cope with the loss of work) as well as with health (0.065*). On the other hand, their satisfaction with money decreases (-0.095**) along with the satisfaction with hobbies (-0.077*) and housing (-0.064*).

Among the employed people satisfaction with their personal improvement increases with education (0.114), while satisfaction with money decreases (-0.113**).

Quality of life aspects and satisfaction with them according to the unemployment duration

We tested the expected relationships between the quality of life aspects, the satisfaction with them and the duration of the unemployment using the Pearson's correlation coefficient (N=988; homeless=22, unemployed=966; significance level *p ≤ 0.05; **p ≤ 0.01).

Note: In the homeless group some correlations could not be calculated due to the variables being invariable.

The data suggest that the longer a person is unemployed, the more importance he or she attributes to his or her family (0.081*). At the same time, satisfaction with the work aspects decreases (-0.067*).

Among homeless people the importance of housing significantly increases along with the extending period of unemployment (0.566**).

Relationship between the duration of unemployment and education

Having divided the duration of the unemployment into 5 categories (up to 0.5 year, 0.5 to 1 year, 1 year to 1.5 years, 1.5 to 2 years and more), we calculated the Spearman's correlation of duration of the unemployment with education. The resulting correlation was -0.226, statistically significant at 1%. The selected sample of respondents confirmed our assumption that **the higher the level of the achieved education, the shorter the duration of the unemployment.**

These results are documented in the table below showing the different frequencies and percentages in lines, columns and throughout the table. **In bold** there are shown the figures that are more frequent, in a statistically significant manner, than we would assume from the hypothesis of the variable independence, ***bold italic*** refers to figures significantly less frequent.

Education	up to ½ year	½ to 1 year	1 to 1½ year	1½ to 2 years	over 2 years	Total
primary	**10**	**8**	**3**	9	**38**	68
apprenticeship	**58**	62	46	27	**64**	257
secondary	145	**137**	81	50	**72**	485
FE college	5	5	3	1	2	16
university	**54**	27	25	**6**	**15**	127

N=953; primary=68, apprenticeship=257 , secondary=485, FE=16, university=127

Table 5 Duration of unemployment by education

Note: The relationship between the duration of the unemployment and the achieved level of education could be examined only in 953 respondents, in thirteen of the total 966 respondents education was not specified unambiguously.

The relationship between the achieved level of education and the duration of the unemployment is, similarly as in the Spearman's correlation above, statistically significant: $\chi2=94.309$, df=16, p=0.000

As the table suggests, the most frequent combination consists of unemployed people with a secondary education who were jobless for less than half a year (145 persons) and a ½ to 1 year (137 persons).

Significant relationships in the individual categories: people with lower education are significantly more often unemployed for a period exceeding 2 years (primary education and apprenticeship), people with higher education for a period up to 1 year (secondary and university education) – see the figures in **bold**. On the contrary, combinations of short unemployment and low education as well as long-lasting unemployment and higher education are significantly less frequent – see the figures in ***bold italics***.

Quality of life aspects for men and women and satisfaction with them

We further examined in our inquiry the question as to how the average QL figures differ for the different life aspects and the satisfaction with them between men and women (regardless of their employment status) and between the employed and the unemployed men and women. We used the ANOVA (Univariate Analysis of Variance) method for data processing. Respondent group sizes: 1106 women, 851 men, 966 unemployed, 949 employed.

FAMILY. Results of statistical processing show that the average QL figures differ in the FAMILY aspect for men and women regardless of their employment status. Specifically (see the table containing the descriptive statistics), women show an average of 29.06 and men 22.92. The average QL figure for the FAMILY aspect is statistically significantly higher for women than for men.

While the average QL for the FAMILY aspect is roughly the same for the unemployed (28.82) and the employed (29.31) women, in men – whose QL aspect for FAMILY is generally lower than in case of women – there is a great difference between the unemployed (20.59) and the employed (25.2). Among the employed men, the FAMILY aspects shows a statistically significantly higher value than among the unemployed men.

Among the employed men and women, the average satisfaction with FAMILY is higher (64.64) than that among the unemployed men and women (58.15), while women tend to be more satisfied with their families (66.82) than men (54.21) within the whole set of respondents.

In the average satisfaction with family there is no significant difference between the employed (67.99) and the unemployed women (65.69), although among men certain significant differences were discovered. Unemployed men are significantly less satisfied (47.88) with their families than employed men (60.4).

HEALTH. As far as the quality of life is concerned, the average figure for the HEALTH aspect is higher for women (21.43) – both employed and unemployed – than for the employed and the unemployed men (19.27).

In case of both the employed men and women the average satisfaction with health is higher (58.54) than in case of the unemployed men and women (53.29). Women are more satisfied with their health than men (51.48) across the entire set of respondents (59.25). The highest average figure for the satisfaction with health is in the group of the employed women (62.00).

WORK. The average quality of life figure for the WORK aspect is statistically significantly higher for men (11.40) then for women (8.11) across the entire set of respondents.

As was anticipated, satisfaction with the WORK aspect is statistically higher among employed men and women (30.19), than among unemployed men and women (8.62).

PEACE OF MIND. No statistically significant differences between the employed and the unemployed and between men and women in the average quality of life figures for the PEACE OF MIND aspect were discovered among the respondents.

The average satisfaction with PEACE OF MIND is statistically more significant among women (25.58) than among men (20.99). Employed men and women are more satisfied with it (26.66) than the unemployed (20.58).

Employed women show the highest average satisfaction with the PEACE OF MIND aspect (29.08).

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS. Women tend to be more satisfied with the INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS aspect (28.85) than men (23.15) across the entire set of respondents.

The average quality of life for the INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS aspect is statistically higher among women (6.11) than among men (5.1) regardless of their employment status.

While the average satisfaction with the INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS aspect is roughly the same for both the employed and the unemployed men (21.67; 24.66), for women, who generally show a higher average value in the INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS, there is a statistically significant difference between the employed (31.25) and the unemployed (26.58) ones. Employed women are more satisfied with their interpersonal relations than unemployed women.

HOBBIES, INTERESTS. The average quality of life for the HOBBIES and INTERESTS aspect is statistically higher among men (6.73) than among women (3.84) and is higher among all the unemployed men and women (5.52) than among the employed men and women alike (4.65). Among the unemployed men and women you can see a higher satisfaction with this aspect (28.86) than among the employed men and women (24.62). The highest average quality of life figure for the HOBBIES and INTERESTS aspect appears for the unemployed men (7.41) who also feature the greatest satisfaction with it (36.15).

PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT. The average quality of life figure for the PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT aspect is statistically more relevant for women (5.3) than for men (4.15).

Across the entire set of respondents, women are statistically more satisfied with their personal improvement (20.00) than men (14.55).

MONEY. As the table shows, the average quality of life figure for the MONEY aspect is statistically higher for men (1.97) than for women (1.33). An obvious difference also exists between the unemployed (2.13) and the employed (1.07) men and women.

The average figure for the MONEY aspect is statistically most significant among the unemployed men (2.65).

The ANOVA results did not provide statistically relevant differences between the average satisfaction figures for the MONEY aspect between men and women and between the employed and the unemployed.

HOUSING. The average quality of life and satisfaction figures for the HOUSING aspect did not confirm statistically significant differences either between the employed and the unemployed or between men and women.

Meaningfulness of life and long-term unemployment

Our inquiry on the quality of life of the long-term unemployed included an evaluation of the meaningfulness of their lives. First we processed an analysis of the average meaningfulness figures reported by the different respondent groups.

	Average (in %)	Number of respondents	Standard deviation
Homeless	52.286	22	21.389
Mothers after maternity leave	83.590	20	17.057
Unemployed	65.261	966	22.969
Employed	81.270	949	16.137
Total	73.072	1957	21.515

Table 6 Analysis of the average meaningfulness figures in the different respondent groups (in per cent)

As the table shows, mothers after maternity leave found more meaningfulness in their lives (83.590) than any other group. The lowest average meaningfulness was reported by the homeless people (52.286). The average figure across the entire sample (1957) was 73.02%. The average figures indicate remarkable differences between the unemployed (65.261) and the employed (81.270) respondents in their perceiving their lives as meaningful.

We checked the differences in meaningfulness of life between the employed and the unemployed respondents using the t-test.
The difference between the meaningfulness figures for the employed and the unemployed men and women groups is statistically significant. Work brings meaning and order to human life. No activity is a fair replacement for a lost job.[5]
We further compared the meaningfulness of life in all the respondent groups using the Kruskal-Wallis test and the median test.
The results of the test showed that the differences between the respondent groups in their meaningfulness of life evaluation are statistically significant.
We further examined as to whether the meaningfulness of life evaluation is influenced by the duration of the unemployment, gender and age and we also examined the differences between the employed and the unemployed.

	Unemployed	Employed
Duration of unemployment (in months)	-0.111**	.
Gender	-0.158**	0.038
Age	-0.130**	0.056

N=1915; unemployed 966, employed 949; significance level *$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$

Table 7 Pearson's correlations between the meaningfulness of life evaluation and duration of the unemployment, gender and age.

As the data in the table show, relationships are statistically significant for the unemployed group where the meaningfulness of life evaluation slightly decreases with

---

[5] For more details refer to J. Šmajs, 2OO2; M. Machovec, 1968

the increasing duration of the unemployment (-0.111**). The same holds true for men (-0.158**) and for older people (-0.130**). The results suggest that older men who are unemployed for a long time represent a "risk" group suffering worst from the loss of employment.

Conclusion

Our inquiry has not only clarified our understanding of how a loss of a job is experienced by the unemployed, but also our understanding of work and its role in the contemporary life. The notion of the "Quality of Life" arose in the early 1970s as a sociological term referring initially to the amount of positive changes brought into the human life by the social and scientific progress. Later, even the negative effects of illnesses and old age were incorporated into the concept, and one of our conclusions is that the notion will need further theoretical treatment and a better definition.

The classic idea of the Age of Enlightenment that human life can be improved through culture was built on a confidence that although human nature has a mysterious biological element, the elastic social (socio-cultural) element is determining and more important. It was believed that man shapes his own nature about as much as he creates an artificial cultural environment. Yet this optimistic understanding of man and human nature is supported neither by the biological sciences nor by human and social life itself. Just like other mammals, today's human beings are a highly conservative biological species. Any information an individual receives from his environment during his ontogenesis and later life in culture can only be recorded in his current neuronal memory. Although we understand what culture is with our intellect, our genetic adaptation to culture is as slow and blind as was our ancestors' adaptation to the animate and inanimate nature. Hence today's cultural environment also has solely physical and chemical effects on this conservative memory. Again and again, generations of people are born with a necessity to employ physical and intellectual exertion in fighting for survival and in coping with the resistance of their environment. This predicts extinction to the illusion that live human work could be completely replaced by dead work using production and other technology as well as it implies that a return to employing human forces in a well-thought and productive way is not a step back, but rather a perspective solution of the existing stalemate unemployment situation in the technically developed countries. So far however, technical progress in combination with the market and relentless demand for profit steal jobs from thousands and tens of thousands of people every day.

Those who loose paid work through no fault of their own bear a similar load as if suffering from a long-lasting illness. This is why we tried to employ a method in our inquiry which had been used to measure changes in quality of life before and after interventions to ill and old people.

We chose the evaluation of individual quality of life in the unemployed and employed people because the individual feelings from the loss of job are rather resistant to purely objective perspective. Furthermore, the Schedule for the Evaluation of Individual Quality of Life gives the individual a possibility to specify those areas of life he or she considers to be the most important in their lives and to give a percentage weight to

their importance. SEIQoL is a method which, unlike traditional approaches, takes into account mainly the individual perspective.

Although we are well aware that we have to be careful in drawing conclusions from our inquiry, we are confident that it has lead to several substantial findings:

1. Paid work in our young liberal market economy, which did not experience unemployment and its effects for two generations, will be increasingly valued in our lives.
2. Family is not a fading away category with just religious, ethical and educational relevance, but rather a category still important from biological, social and existential perspectives.
3. Even the transformed lifestyles due to increased consumption, traveling and massive expansion of the consumer products such as cars, televisions and computers, cannot make for or litigate the loss of the beneficial effect of work on human satisfaction and health.
4. Should the standard structure of the human psyche, which was formed in the deprived and for people physically demanding Hunting-Gathering and Neolithic cultures, be reproduced even in future, it will be necessary to face not only the extremely consumer life-style of people but also to create conditions for a relevant load on the human body by means of a socially useful, productive labor.